



**Proposal for a
Regional Strategy on International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in
the Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network**

**To be presented to the
33rd Session of the FAO European Forestry Commission
Zvolen, Slovakia, 25 May 2006**

Prepared by

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1. Rationale

The demographic, socio-economic and political changes in many countries of Southeast Europe in the early 1990s, particularly on the Balkan, have resulted in an increase of wildfire occurrence and wildfire disaster risk, destabilization of fire management capabilities and increased vulnerability of ecosystems and human populations. In some countries some of the main reasons for this development include the transition from centrally planned to market economies, national to regional conflicts, creation of new nations, involving political tensions and war, and land-use change. New solutions are required to address the increasing fire threat. Cooperation in fire management between the South East European countries, notably on the Balkan, and also with the neighbouring countries of East and West Europe, is promoted by the Regional Southeast Europe Wildland Fire Network.

Cooperation and networking on forest fires within the ECE region and the region of the European Forestry Commission has a long tradition. In 1981 the FAO/UNECE Team of Specialists on Forest Fire was established as an activity of the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training. The team's main task is to provide a platform for communication and cooperation between fire scientists, managers and policy makers. The main activities include (1) the production of International Forest Fire News (IFFN); (2) organization of seminars; and (3) promotion of synergistic collaboration between governments, non-government institutions, and individuals, especially science and technology transfer. The Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), based in Freiburg (Germany), is in charge of team coordination and editorial office of IFFN. GFMC is serving as secretariat of the Global Wildland Fire Network and the Wildland Fire Advisory Group of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR).

With the creation of the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network in 2002 and its recognition as an activity of UNISDR since 2004 the networking on forest fires in the region began to diversify in regional settings and activities.

Regional networking in South East European was initiated in 2002, at that time called "Regional Balkan Wildland Fire Network". A major regional activity was the "UNECE/FAO Conference on Forest Fire Management and International Cooperation in Fire Emergencies in the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and adjoining Regions of the Near East and Central Asia" (Antalya, Turkey, 30 March - 3 April 2004) (Annex I). The conference was followed by a regional forest fire exercise "Eastern European, Near East and Central Asian States Exercise on Wildland Fire Information and Resources Exchange - EASTEX FIRE 2005" (Annex II). At a regional consultation in the Republic of Macedonia in 2005 members of the Balkan Network decided to invite neighbouring countries and to expand its area of joint activities to Southeast Europe. Subsequently the network was renamed "Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network" (Annex III).

2. Introduction

This document provides a draft outline of aspects to be considered for the development of a Regional Strategy on International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network.¹ It will be subject to initial discussion at a sub-regional workshop for the Region of South East Europe in tandem with the 33rd Session of the FAO European Forestry Commission.² It is proposed to develop the regional strategy under the joint auspices of FAO and UNISDR. Financial assistance is proposed in the frame of an FAO TCP.

This document has been drafted on the basis of earlier work accomplished by the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) in conjunction with the development of a "Regional Cooperation Strategy to Prevent, Control and Combat of Forest Fires" (FAO Project TCP/RLA/3010-C) and in line with the currently ongoing consultative process of the development of the *Fire Management Code* and the *Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation in Implementing the Fire Management Code*.

¹ Note: During 2005 several activities took place, which provided the basic framework for developing the regional strategy. The most important was Regional Balkan Wildland Fire Network / Global Wildland Fire Network International Technical and Scientific Consultation "Forest Fire Management in the Balkan Region", which was held from 4 to 5 April 2005 in Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia. There was recognized the need of regional approach for cooperation in solving the wildland fire problems in the region.

² Zvolen, Slovakia, 25 May 2006.

3. Vision and Goals

The vision of this regional strategy is to enhance and strengthen bilateral / multilateral and international cooperation in wildland fire management for creating synergies and sharing knowledge, technical and human resources between countries in the Region of South East Europe by accepting and promoting principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures within a guiding framework agreed upon by individual countries.

Mechanisms of cooperation in wildland fire management in the Region of South East Europe will include:

- Bilateral / multilateral cooperation between two or more countries at national level within the region: This type of cooperation generally includes mechanisms for assistance in major emergencies to suppress fires, and technical assistance in specific cases. Cooperation should be extended to other areas of wildland fire management, such as wildland fire prevention, establishment of common databases, training programmes, etc. (Annex IV gives an overview on existing cooperation activities in the Region. Detailed information will be provided at the regional workshops; Annex V provides the “International Wildland Fire Management Agreements Template” which was adopted by the International Wildland Fire Summit).
- International (including inter-regional) between international donors and countries in the region: This type of cooperation will require financial and technical assistance mechanisms. Other elements of international cooperation may include the development of norms and rules that would not require any additional finances.

The Regional Strategy on Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management will give priority to:

- Strengthen existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms
- Develop new bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms
- Reach consensus by participating countries on agreed principles, norms, rules and decision making procedures in wildland fire management
- Create an enabling atmosphere for international cooperation in wildland fire research and management, including international donors.

The mid-term goals include:

- Provide a forum for a dialogue between governments, national focal points, NGO's, civil society, and regional and international stakeholders.
- Serve as catalytic and mutually supporting link between national wildland fire strategies.
- Enable sharing of resources between neighbouring countries in the region.
- Reinforce national and regional technical capacities in wildland fire management.

Long-term goals:

- Support the development of national policies.
- Support sustainable cooperation between countries of the region.
- Strengthen the Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network.
- Support the development and implementation of a global strategy and / or the development of an international agreement on cooperation in wildland fire management.

The specific objectives include:

- To contribute to the development and implementation of a national and regional organizational framework with principles, alignments, procedures and technical-operational formats agreed upon between the countries.
- To favour the development and strengthening of national fire management policies and strategies and in keeping with the same, improved legal frameworks regarding the issue.
- To establish a fire information system available, standardized and agreed between the countries of the region to support decision making.
- To develop fire detection early warning systems to enable prompt fire detection and to improve response time in an effective, organized, and safe manner leading to the minimization of effects on countries in the region.
- To improve national emergency control cooperation between countries of the region.
- To support sustainable cooperation between the countries of the region based on a concerted strategy and bilateral or multilateral programmes agreed to in terms of fire prevention, training, extinction and research.

4. Accomplishment of goals

The following chapters provide general directions for the accomplishment of these goals. Specifically four issues are addressed: (1) responsible actors, (2) the political dimension, (3) thematic areas of cooperation, and (4) financing mechanisms.

4.1. Actors responsible for the implementation of the strategy

To accomplish the goals of the strategy, it is necessary to identify actors responsible for implementing the strategy. In this sense a significant role should be played by the focal points of all countries of Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network.

Thus, it is necessary to define and clarify the role; structure and functioning of the network, taking into account the following considerations:

- In view of the fact that the TCP is confined to assisting in the development of the regional strategy, an institution should be identified that would host regional network and that will carry on its activities after the termination of the TCP to ensure the sustainability of the process initiated by this project.
- The cooperation procedures with the Global Wildland Fire Network, the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), FAO and other responsible agencies, programmes and conventions of the United Nations must be clearly defined.
- Expectations identified by several national representatives towards the role and priority functions of the Regional Wildland Fire Network include:
 - Provide high-level training
 - Ensure availability of appropriate equipment for forest fire management
 - Establish national forest fire monitoring centres that would support the whole country
 - Support national government by advising in the development of national strategies, policies and legislation
 - Support the coordination of national fire activities
 - Serve as a platform for fire specialists in the region to exchange knowledge and information, and work together on solutions for problems common in the region
 - Identify wildland fire problems in the region and form interdisciplinary groups for each cooperation area in order to overcome those problems
 - Provide the frame for establishing bilateral agreements on mutual support and assistance in combating forest fires
 - Develop demonstration projects and organize regional study tours

4.2. The political dimension of the strategy

To accomplish the goals of the strategy and to provide the basis for creating permanent cooperation between countries of the region, it is essential to attain political commitment and support at the national, regional and international level. Consequently it is necessary that the strategy be elaborated in a clear and structured way, defining objectives, commitments and needs.

At the **national level** it is important that the individual countries of the region will adopt the regional strategy as well as the role and mandate of the Regional Wildland Fire Network. Some of the activities addressed by the strategy might require bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements. Others might require informal agreements between countries (agencies, institutions, individual scientists). Preferably the informal agreements should receive official support and adoption by national government agencies. Strengthening or establishment of national structures / capabilities in fire management are prerequisite for efficient cooperation between countries and organizations.

At the **regional level** it is necessary that the mandated regional institutions or cooperation mechanisms will incorporate the regional strategies, as well as the Regional Wildland Fire Networks, within their structure and the implementation of their overall work programmes.

At the **international level** institutions and organizations (for example FAO, UNISDR, GFMC, GTZ, World Bank, etc.) must be encouraged to provide financial and technical assistance.

4.3. Thematic areas of cooperation within the region

First the existing cooperation activities and agreements between the countries in the region (see Annex IV) must be evaluated. This will be done by regional analyses at the regional workshops. Second, building on the existing structures and achievements in the region, the detailed thematic areas and action items to be addressed by the strategy must be discussed. To guide these discussions, a list of proposed thematic areas has been developed (Table 1).

Table 1. Proposed thematic areas and justification of enhancing cooperation within those areas.

Thematic area of cooperation	Justification of enhancing cooperation within those areas
Terminology	A clearly defined and agreed terminology in wildland fire science and management is not available in the languages of the region (Albanian, Bulgarian, Bosnian, Croatian, Turkish, Slovenian, Greece, Macedonian, Moldavian, Hungarian, Romanian). Bilateral / multilateral cooperation must be based on a proper, agreed terminology. The updated FAO Wildland Fire Terminology which does not include these languages would serve as a starting point.
Statistical Database	An internationally agreed methodology and procedure for the establishment of a wildland fire database is not yet in place. Such a database is important for decision support at national, regional and international levels. The statistical format of the Global Wildland Fire Assessment 2004 (GFMC) would serve as a starting point.
Information Sharing	A regional clearing house for receiving, processing and disseminating-wildland fire data as well as other information on wildland fire, connected with a network of national fire management agencies must be established. It will be connected to the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC).
Wildfire Prevention and Use of Fire	Valuable experiences and methods in the prevention of wildfires and application of fire in land-use systems have been developed in the region and could be applied in other countries, particularly community involvement (Community-Based Fire Management – CBFiM).
Early Warning	Methods and dissemination of information on early warning of fire danger have been developed in some countries of the region and could be applied in other countries lacking such systems. Priority must be given to the end-users of early warning information – particularly local communities.
Detection and Monitoring	The use of spaceborne assets for the detection and monitoring of wildland fires is not yet fully utilized by all countries of the region. Information generated by existing institutions that already have satellite data receiving and processing capabilities must be systematically disseminated and utilized by all countries of the region.
Wildland Fire Suppression	During extreme fire situations (wildfire emergencies) a country may be short of fire suppression resources, including command and coordination personnel. Standardized protocols, agreements, command systems and methods would ensure that countries delivering to, or receiving assistance from other countries will effectively cooperate. Besides clearly defined bilateral or multilateral agreements it will be important to utilize the Incident Command System (ICS) as a unified standard procedure for cooperation in wildfire incidents.
Capacity Building / Training Courses	Many countries in the region do not have own resources in capacity building in wildland fire management. Wildland fire specialists from throughout the region must be trained in the thematic areas listed above. Such training programmes must be built on previous training experiences and achievements conducted by OFDA. Besides training at national level it would be desirable to conduct regional training courses for wildland fire management specialists working at high-level positions in their home country. Such international training courses would support the development of a culture of transnational cooperation and mutual understanding.
Policies, Legislation and Strategies	Some countries in the region have developed policies, legislation and strategies in wildland fire management and gained experience in implementation and enforcement. This experience should be shared with other countries. Through the harmonization of efforts in the development of policies, legislation and strategies synergies could be developed to meet the requirements of regional or international agreements (e.g., secondary disasters, biodiversity conservation, combat of desertification, combat of air pollution, reduction of greenhouse gases, and poverty reduction).
Research	Wildland fire research needs to address the environmental, social and political changes that affect fire regimes and otherwise have detrimental impacts. Similarity of conditions in neighbouring countries should encourage the development of regional wildland fire research projects in which resources will be economized and synergies created. The involvement of the academia (the wildland fire research community) in the overall concept of regional cooperation will contribute to the sustainability of cooperative efforts.
Other	To be defined

4.4. Financing mechanisms in support of the strategy and the networks

The possibilities of financing or otherwise supporting the proposed activities of this strategy and the functioning of the networks must be carefully investigated. Even though some activities might not need specific additional financing, others will definitely be in need of it.

If adequate medium- to long-term financing mechanisms will not be provided, most activities of the networks and the regional strategies will not be able to carry on in a sustainable manner.

Financing resources must be identified for all levels of implementation of the strategy, including international, regional and national, as well as for all activities to be determined within the thematic areas.



Conference on Forest Fire Management and International Cooperation in Fire Emergencies in The Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and Adjoining Regions of the Near East and Central Asia

Antalya, Turkey, 30 March - 3 April 2004

**Antalya Declaration
On Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean,
Near East and Central Asia
Antalya, 1 April 2004**

The Conference:

- Recalling the rationale and recommendations of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (Johannesburg – 2002) concerning the international endeavours to secure sustainable development of the global vegetation resources,
- Expressing concerns about the increasing occurrence and destructiveness of forest fires in the regions between the Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean, Near East and Central Asia,
- Recognizing that the reasons for this development are due to increasing population pressure in many countries, increasing socio-economic problems of rural populations, increasing vulnerability of humans and the occurrence of extreme fire seasons that can possibly be explained by climate change,
- Recognizing the endeavours of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE) to address the fire problems in the Northern Hemisphere, notably through the work of the UN-ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire since 1993,
- Endorsing the endeavours of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and its Wildland Fire Advisory Group in supporting to harmonize and strengthen efforts by the United Nations agencies and programmes, as well as other international organizations including non-government organizations, to reduce the negative impacts of wildland fires on the environment,
- Endorsing the goal of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to promote and strengthen bilateral and multilateral agreements for cooperation in fire management,
- Recognizing and supporting the goals and joint endeavours of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Forum of Forests (UNFF) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, to protect the global vegetation resources and the global atmosphere from negative influences by vegetation fires, as well as the promotion of knowledge and techniques to utilize the beneficial role of fire in ecosystem management,
- Endorsing the recommendations of the International Wildland Fire Summit (Sydney – 2003) concerning common international standards for fire management and the strategy for strengthening international cooperation in wildland fire management,
- Supporting the objectives of the ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network and its Secretariat, the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), to systematically enhance the intra- and inter-regional cooperation in wildland fire management throughout the world,

- Welcoming the availability of the government of Turkey -- the host country of this conference -- and the delegates of participating nations to actively cooperate to share experience and resources in wildland fire management
- Concluding from the national case studies and analyses on the wildland fire situation in the participating countries, as well as from the discussions held at the conference, that the majority of countries in the region are available to establish and strengthen a regional dialogue on cooperation in wildland fire research and management
- Expressing the intent to jointly overcome the currently existing gaps and deficits in
 - Early warning systems of wildland fire
 - Spaceborne fire monitoring systems
 - Decision-support systems for fire management
 - Wildland fire research
 - Training / capacity building in wildland fire management
 - Transnational agreements and operations for bilateral and multilateral assistance in wildland fire emergency situations

Recommends the following Antalya Plan of Action for the region between the Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean, Near East, Western and Central Asia:

(1) The countries participating at the conference encourage governments to develop or strengthen, and international organizations to support

- Bilateral and multilateral agreements on cooperation in wildland fire management, based on international standards as proposed by the FAO and the International Wildland fire Summit
- Introduce the Incident Command System (ICS) as the international standard for all wildland incident management participating in international or interagency agreements and exchanges.
- Regional systems for early warning and satellite monitoring of wildland fires
- Cooperative regional wildland fire research projects and programmes
- Decision-support systems
- Training / capacity building in wildland fire management

(2) To regularly conduct follow-up activities aimed at further promoting collaborative efforts and procedures

- Multilateral wildland fire emergency exercises, starting with the multinational exercise EASTEX FIRE 2004 in Bulgaria and the tri-national exercise in Croatia in 2004
- Regional workshops aimed at further defining priority issues to be jointly addressed, especially considering the needs of collaboration with countries of the region that were not represented at the conference

(3) To develop arrangements to support collection and dissemination of wildland fire information, facilitation of regular regional dialogue and joint projects between the countries, and to technically support countries in need of aerial assets for wildland fire suppression by the creation of

- A Regional Fire Monitoring Center, hosted by the Government of Bulgaria
- A Regional Advisory Board of Senior Fire Officers, hosted and facilitated by the Government of Turkey in Antalya
- Special regional mobile airborne fire response units, based on Public-Private Partnership arrangements, e.g., those companies participating at the conference (Russian Irkut Corporation [fixed-wing aircraft – BE-200] and UT Air [helicopter assets])

(4) To inform national governments about the need to prepare statements in favour of enhancing international cooperation in wildland fire management at the following forums:

- The forthcoming Meeting of the three Rio Conventions (UN CBD, UN CCD, UN FCCC) (Viterbo, Italy, April 2004)

- The forthcoming 16th Session of the FAO Near East Forestry Commission, with regard to establishing networking structures in Western Asia (May 2004)
- The World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) (Kobe-Hyogo, Japan, January 2005)
- The FAO Ministerial-Level Meeting, devoted to wildland fire management and international cooperation (Rome, Italy, March 2005)

Participating Countries:

Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Poland, Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine.

International Organizations: ECE, FAO, ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network

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Annex II



MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR DIRECTORATE NATIONAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SAFETY SERVICE

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Eastern European, Near East and Central Asian States Exercise on Wildland Fire Information and Resources Exchange 2005 (EASTEX FIRE 2005)

Report and Analysis by the Host Country Bulgaria

The International exercise "EASTEX FIRE 2005" on forest fire extinguishing was held at the field exercise area "Koren", Haskovo Region, Bulgaria, 20-22 April 2005, with the participation of forces and equipment of fire services from the Republic of Bulgaria and neighbouring Balkan countries

This exercise was held in pursuance of the written statement approved by the "Conference on Forest Fire Management and International Cooperation in Fire Emergencies in the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and adjoining Regions of the Near East and Central Asia" which was held in Antalya, Turkey, 30 March - 3 April 2004.

This event was organized in accordance with the "Working plan 2005 of the Standing Committee for management of forces and equipment of Ministry of the Interior during crisis situations", as well as the "Annual working plan 2005 of the Standing Committee on population protection in case of disasters, emergencies and crashes at the Council of Ministers" of Bulgaria.

The exercise was a practical drill with imitation of real situation. Participants in this event were the institutions responsible for the prevention and extinguishing of forest fires in the Republic of Bulgaria and fire crews from the Balkan countries.

Objectives of this exercise were as follows:

1. Improvement of the interaction between competent bodies from Balkan countries during forest fires management.
2. Carrying out of united management of forces and equipment in the conditions of forest fires and working off the procedures on interaction and co-ordination between institutions responsible for crisis management in the Republic of Bulgaria and the leaders of international crews.

3. Provision of logistics for the needs of participants in similar operations.

This exercise was held in two main stages:

- First stage – organization actions and staff drill.
- Second stage – practical actions of specialized crews within the zone of the wildfire crisis.

Following activities were included in the first stage of this exercise:

- Receiving of a call with a report on the outbreak of the fire. Undertaking of due measures by the competent institutions from the Republic of Bulgaria. Concentration of forces and equipment at the fire location.
- Provision of permanent information exchange concerning fire development between the head of firefighting operations and representatives of executive and local authorities. Alerting, information and taking immediate measures for the deployment of forces and equipment in the zone of crisis situation.
- Introduction of action plans for crisis situations intended for institutions responsible for extinguishing of forest fires, which might develop into emergency situations.
- Provision of information to neighbour countries about the crisis situation and implementation of procedures for request of assistance. Creation of organization for reception and escorting of foreign crews.

Following practical actions of participants were included in the second stage:

- Survey and observation of the fire region; management of forces and equipment; emergency rescue and fire fighting operations; closing off the disaster area; provision of escorting and movement of crews taking part in the operation; creation of additional organization of moving within crisis zone; medical and psychological assistance for the sufferers and personnel, taking part in firefighting and their transportation to the hospitals; specifying the places of natural and man-made barriers suitable for fire spread stopping; determination the needs of equipment for making of cuttings.
- Creation of organization for reception of foreign fire crews from neighbour countries at border control checkpoints and their escorting to the place of crisis situation. Provision of communication with the forces, dispatch to render assistance for fire elimination. All participating crews were instructed about labour safety measures during extinguishing of a forest fire.

In the course of exercise different tactical actions intended for extinguishing of forest fires were worked off depending on the equipment of participants. Representatives of the countries having predominant deciduous vegetation like the Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina used backpack fire extinguishers and impulse fire extinguishing systems for fighting forest fires of low intensities. Representatives of fire service of Romania used equipment for water supply from the natural and man-made water sources. Crews from the Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Greece and Republic of Turkey, where coniferous vegetation is predominant, used fire vehicles with high cross-country capability and larger quantities of fire extinguishing media, owing to the lack of enough water sources at the territories of their countries. Heavy engineering equipment was used for cutting firebreaks with the purpose of limiting the fire spread.

Following results were achieved during the exercise:

- There was good organization for efficient co-ordination and interaction between institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria responsible for the forest fires elimination and leaders of foreign crews during the operations for limitation and elimination of the forest fire.
- United centralized management of all operations and efficient communication between all participants in the exercise EASTEX FIRE 2005 were realized.
- This exercise contributed to the strengthening of cross-border co-operation with respect to management of forces and equipment of Balkan countries during elimination of forest fires developed into crisis situations.
- EASTEX FIRE 2005 was a further step towards the establishment of the Regional Southeast Europe Wildland Fire Network under the Global Wildland Fire Network of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster reduction (UNISDR) and its cooperative activities between the Balkan countries. It is closely related to the initiative of Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) within the framework of European Union program INTERREG III B, priority zone 4 "Environment Protection, Resources Management and Risk Prevention". The Central Adriatic Danube Southeast Region (CADSES) is referred.
- This exercise contributed to the strengthening of international co-operation with respect to forest fire management and mitigation of their consequences; the improvement of co-operation between competent institutions at the Balkans responsible for extinguishing of forest fires; the consolidation of capacity for fire management.

EASTEX FIRE 2005 demonstrated the capacity of Balkan countries to cope with forest fires, spreading on large areas and having undesirable environment impact.

Annex III



UNITED NATIONS



UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network

Coordinator and Secretariat: Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Freiburg, Germany

Regional Balkan Wildland Fire Network / Global Wildland Fire Network International Technical and Scientific Consultation "Forest Fire Management in the Balkan Region"

Ohrid, Macedonia, 4 to 5 April 2005

Conclusions

On 4-5 April 2005 the Republic of Macedonia hosted the International Technical and Scientific Consultation "Forest Fire Management in the Balkan Region". The conference was sponsored by the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network through its Coordinator and Secretariat, the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC). Funding of the consultation was provided by the German Foreign Office (represented by the GFMC) and contributions by the participating and contributing countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Turkey).

The participants of the consultation:

Recognizing the importance of forests as providers of environmental services and social, economic, and ecological benefits to humankind in Southeast Europe;

Expressing concern about the increasing frequency and destructive force of wildfires in Southeast Europe affecting human health and wellbeing, economic assets, property, biodiversity, water resources, soil, atmosphere and climate;

Noting that changing land use and rural exodus in some parts of the region is resulting in increased wildfire hazard and vulnerability of ecosystems; likewise urban encroachment in wildlands resulting in increased vulnerability of human populations to fire, notably at the rural-urban interface;

Noting an increase in vulnerability of humans and ecosystems to secondary disasters following fires, including floods, landslides and soil erosion;

Noting that the effects of climate variability and climate change caused by human activities are already producing periods of extreme drought resulting in an increase in the severity of fires in some ecosystems;

Concluding from the analyses and reports of the countries of the Balkan region presented at this consultation, it is evident that the majority of countries in the regions are ready to establish and strengthen a regional dialogue on cooperation and exchange of information, research and wildland fire management as a contribution to forest and environmental protection, stability and peace; bilateral and multilateral agreements should be considered;

Expressing the intention to overcome **current gaps and shortages** in:

- Consistent information and statistics about fires, their causes and their effects
- Applied research in social sciences and humanities, including finances for research
- Integration of social, economic, environmental considerations and institutions in developing tangible policies and practices related to wildland fire
- Integration of fire as a component of land, resource, and forest management
- Community-based approaches to fire management

- Training in the appropriate use of fire (for example, prescribed burning for fuel reduction and nature conservation)
- Training in the safe and efficient use of resources for fire suppression (for example, appropriate equipment for fire suppression, wildland fire safety)
- Compatible approaches, e.g., global implementation of the Incident Command System (ICS) and the International Wildland Fire Agreements Template

Recalling the recommendations of the International Wildland Fire Summit (Sydney, 2003), the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network (2004), and the FAO Ministerial Meeting on Forests (2005) with respect to the management of wildland fires and the strategy to strengthen international cooperation in wildland fire management;

Endorsing the efforts of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR) and its Wildland Fire Advisory Group to assist and strengthen the efforts of United Nations bodies, other international organizations, and non-governmental organizations, to reduce the negative impacts of wildland fires;

Supporting the objectives of the ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network (GWFN) and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) to systematically increase the intra- and inter-regional cooperation in wildland fire management for the world;

Expressing gratitude to the Faculty of Forestry of Skopje, represented by Mr. Nikola Nikolov, for the preparation and organisation of the consultation;

Recommend to governments, international organizations and non-government organizations the following action plan for cooperation on wildland fire research and management in Southeast Europe:

Research

- Secure financing of a regional wildland fire research programme
- Strengthen wildland fire research cooperation between neighbouring countries
- Develop standardization of terminology and procedures
- Develop standardized data collection i.a.w. the further development of global wildland fire data collection
- Encourage increased involvement of the science community in wildland fire-related research programmes (interdisciplinary research)
- Support the establishment of national or regional (international) wildland fire research centers
- Establish a regional wildland fire weather network
- Approach the EU Erasmus/Sokrates programme for developing a dedicated programme for wildland fire exchange

Consolidation of the Regional Network

- Expand the current focus on the Balkan Region to a “Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network” and invite countries adjoining to the Balkan region to cooperate
- Establish a network of country Focal Points, preferably with one representative of a government agency and a representative of the academia
- Support the network co-coordinators that are representing the main stakeholders involved (Mr. Nikola Nikolov, Macedonia, Research; Mr. Vladimir Konstantinov, Bulgaria, Forest Service; Mr. Dulijano Grum, Croatia, Fire Service) (initially nominated for a 1-year period)
- Seek for widespread membership in the network
- Maintain a publicly accessible website of the network (communication language: English)
- Produce an initial publication of this regional consultation and the network foundation, to be published in UN-ECE/FAO International Forest Fire News, including a summary of previous activities in international cooperation in the SE European Region
- Conduct a first Regional Advanced Wildland Fire Management Training Course not later than 2006, based on experiences in other regions and the FAO courses in Bulgaria; seek support from the German Foreign Office

- Request a FAO Technical Development Project (TCP) on “Development of a Regional SE European Strategy for International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management”, preferably to be conducted before 2007
- Improve access and reliability of regional and country / ecosystem specific early warning information, including automatic distribution
- Participate at the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference, Madrid, Spain (May 2007)
- Convene the next network meeting not later than 2006

Annex IV

BASELINE INFORMATION

Current State of International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management of countries belonging to the Regional South East Europe Wildland Fire Network

For the preparation of the regional strategy an overview of bilateral / multilateral mechanisms / agreements of cooperation in place in the Region of South East Europe is provided (Table 1). Table 2 provides an overview of existing agreements between individual countries of the region and countries of other regions.

Table 1. Overview of bilateral / multilateral mechanisms / agreements of cooperation in place the Region of South East Europe and Turkey

	Al	BiH	Bg	Hr	Gr	Hu	Mk	Md	Ro	SCG	Si	Tr	
Al													
BiH				x									
Bg					x		x			x		x	
Hr		x				x					x		
Gr			x				x						
Hu				x						x	x		
Mk			x		x					x			
Md													
Ro										x			
SCG			x			x	x		x				
Si				x		x							
Tr			x										

* The abbreviations used in this table correspond to the following countries:

Al – Albania

Hr – Croatia

Mk – R. of Macedonia

SCG – Serbia and Montenegro

BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina

Gr – Greece

Md – Moldova

Si – Slovenia

Bg – Bulgaria

Hu – Hungary

Ro – Romania

Tr – Turkey

Table 2. Overview of existing agreements between individual countries of the region and countries of other regions.

	Italy	Slovakia	Poland	Austria	France	Russian Federation	Ukraine	Germany
Albania								
Bosnia and Herzegovina								
Bulgaria								
Croatia	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Greece								
Hungary								
R. of Macedonia								
Moldova								
Romania								
Serbia and Montenegro				x		x		x
Slovenia	x							
Turkey								

Institutional framework relevant for regional cooperation in wildland fire management

Information on institutions responsible for wildland fire management at national level and responsible for international cooperation at national and regional levels will be provided in the regional report.

Legal framework relevant for regional cooperation in wildland fire management

This information will also be provided in the regional report, for the national level.

Annex V

International Wildland Fire Management Agreements Template Adopted by the 2003 International Wildland Fire Summit³

Introduction

The 3rd International Wildland Fire Conference held in Sydney, Australia 4-6 October 2003 and the subsequent Summit on 8 October 2003 provides important forums for discussions of how to manage the future of international wildland fire management and share solutions to global problems. This paper offers a template and information on cooperation in wildland fire management to countries interested in entering into formal relationships and agreements with other countries facing similar issues.

This paper is intended to enhance current international coordination and cooperation by providing information on the following:

- A Template outlining areas to consider when developing international cooperative agreements;
- Listing of the types of cooperation and assistance that may occur between countries;
- The responsibilities of countries sending assistance and of those receiving assistance;
- Websites containing information and examples of existing cooperative agreements and arrangements.

Template for International Cooperative Agreements

The following is an outline for a template of areas that need to be considered when countries are developing international cooperative agreements. There may be other areas that need definition and consideration besides those listed below. This template is drawn from an annex of a UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) document *Legal Frameworks for Forest Fire Management: International Agreements and National Legislation*. This FAO document provides excellent reference materials, which should be reviewed prior to entering into international agreements.

Developing countries will require special consideration because they may not be able to reciprocate in a partnership as fully as a developed country can.

The important role of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) should be considered as part of any bilateral or regional assistance arrangement.

It is strongly recommended that the parties to a mutual assistance agreement should exercise the agreement through exchanges, field exercises and low-level assistance prior to it being activated at a time of crisis.

Outline for International Cooperative Agreements

1. Parties to the Agreement
 - Includes governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations at a variety of levels.
2. Purpose
 - Defines areas and forms of cooperation.
 - Define the scope of the cooperation.
3. Definition of Terms
 - Defines terms used in the agreement to insure there is no confusion or misinterpretation as to the meaning of the content of the agreement.
5. Expenses and Costs

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- Personnel- Defines how personnel costs will be set such as per person, per crew, per day or per assignment.
 - Equipment - Defines how equipment cost use will be set such as per day or per assignment.
 - Reimbursement of costs – Sets the procedures, amount, and criteria for reimbursement. Some agreements call for reimbursement only after a certain threshold of time or level of support has been reached.
 - Non-reimbursable – Under certain agreements all parties may agree to assist each other on a mutual aid, non-reimbursable basis.
6. Information and Coordination
- Communication channels – Defines the protocols and methods to coordinate and exchange information.
 - Information exchange – Defines the types, amount and timing of information exchange.
 - Notifications – Sets the notification procedures for emergencies or for other significant events.
 - Coordination of work – Defines how and under what organizational structure the coordination of work will take place.
7. Liabilities, Claims and Compensations
- Cross-wavier of claims/exemption from liability – Lists and defines how and when the cross-waivers and exemptions are in force for personnel that are being exchanged.
 - Exemptions to cross-wavier of claims – Lists and defines those areas or circumstances where the exemptions do not pertain to personnel that are being exchanged.
 - Damage to a third party – Outlines remediation methods and limitations for third party damage.
 - Medical assistance for injured personnel – Defines the protocols and procedures for assisting and possibly evacuating injured personnel.
 - Compensation in case of injury or death – Defines the timing, levels and limitations of compensation for injury or death. This may also be addressed above in the cross waivers and exemptions.
 - Privileges and immunities for the assisting personnel – Describes and defines the levels and limitations of privileges and immunities that the receiving country will provide to assisting country personnel.
8. Operating Plans / Operational Guidelines
- Provision for operating plans/operational guidelines – Operating plans/operational guidelines are a critical component of all cooperative agreements. They should be carefully crafted and reviewed by all parties to the agreement. The plans and guidelines outline and define specific operational areas to insure that the agreement can implemented in a timely and efficient manner. They include items such as points of contact, procedures for requesting resources, entry procedures, annual updates of costs, reimbursements, and cross waivers, and updated standards, qualifications or training requirements Also identifies how often and by whom the plans and guidelines will be reviewed, updated and the method for revalidating the contents of the plans and guidelines.
9. Border Crossings
- Sets protocols and procedures for simplifying of border crossing taking into account sovereignty issues, including the following:
 - Opening of alternative border-crossing points to facilitate the assistance
 - Customs provisions:
 - Concerning personnel
 - Concerning equipment and materials
 - Concerning officer responsible for equipment
 - Concerning aircraft
- Portions of this information will also be included in the operational plans and guidelines.
10. Link to Disaster Management Plan for the receiving country.
- Explains how the fire assistance plan sits within the wider disaster management plan for the receiving country, including legislation giving the necessary powers.

11 General Provisions

- Entry of force of the agreement - Defines when agreement is activated.
- Duration – Specifies how long the agreement will remain in force
- Withdrawal – Defines how countries or organizations can withdraw from the agreement.
- Termination – Defines under what circumstances the agreement will terminate.
- Interpretation – Provides understandings and interpretations for countries and organizations concerning under what circumstances and limitations each party is entering into the agreement.
- Settlement of disputes – Defines the method of dispute resolution.
- Amendments – Defines when and how amendments to the agreement may be submitted, reviewed, and acted upon.

11. Standard Operation Procedures

- These procedures describe in detail the methodology to be followed when the agreement is activated, especially in relation to command and control, fire suppression procedures to be followed, communications systems and safety procedures to be used.
- The SOPs should be tested and refined using tabletop exercises, dry field exercises and low scale operations before being deployed in a full scale emergency.

12. Other Provisions

- Provides the opportunity for any country, agency or organization signing this agreement to define other areas of cooperation that they want to include in the agreement such as:
 - Shared training activities, including materials
 - Study tours, technical exchanges, and joint exercises
 - Relationship of this agreement to other agreements
 - Standards for personnel
 - Safety equipment
 - Limitations on the type and use of telecommunications equipment
 - Method of recall of firefighting resources

12. Participating Countries/Agencies/Organizations Signature Page

- It is important that all potential participants review and confirm their authorities to sign such an agreement.

Types of Cooperation and Assistance

International cooperation and assistance occurs in a variety of ways. Some agreements are non-reimbursable while others call for reimbursement. Some assistance is offered on a technical non-reimbursable basis and other assistance is offered or solicited during periods of disaster. When countries develop international cooperative agreements the purpose and method of cooperation and assistance need to be clearly identified and understood between all parties. The following describes several types of cooperation and assistance that currently exist.

Mutual Assistance:

Mutual Assistance agreements often deal with fire management issues along shared borders. Assistance by one country to another is usually non-reimbursable with the understanding that both countries may benefit at different times from assistance along mutual borders

Cooperative Assistance:

These agreements are for assistance and cooperation throughout the countries or states that have signed the agreement, not just for the border areas. These agreements are usually set up on a reimbursable basis.

They may also include non-reimbursable exchanges of experts. These exchanges may include areas such as fire prevention and mitigation, prescribed fire, personnel exchanges, and broad based study tours of fire management programs.

Technical Exchanges:

Activities carried out under technical exchanges are similar to cooperative assistance agreements but are much more informal and exchanges are not always tied directly to an ongoing agreement. These are usually self-funded, non-reimbursable activities that occur on an as needed or as desired basis.

They remain at technical and informational exchange level and do not include exchanges of resources to help with direct fire suppression activities.

Technical Assistance:

An offer of or a request for technical assistance may or may not be a part of a formal agreement. Technical assistance provides experts from one country to another country in need of technical assistance, to improve and strengthen the receiving country's abilities and capacity to deal with wildland fire management issues. The goal of technical assistance should be to reduce the need for outside assistance in the future. This type of assistance is usually non-reimbursable and is paid for by the country offering the assistance.

Disaster Assistance:

When wildland fires involve trans-border issues from a humanitarian, ecological, medical, economic, or diplomatic standpoint, some countries will offer immediate disaster assistance to affected countries on a non-reimbursable basis. Disaster assistance is meant to assist the affected country during a critical time period and may or may not be based on existing cooperative agreements. Disaster assistance may be the genesis for future cooperative agreements or technical assistance programs.

Responsibilities of Sending Country and Receiving Countries

Countries sending or receiving assistance through the methods and agreements identified above need to understand that certain responsibilities are inherent in these relationships. The following paragraphs identify the responsibilities of all countries, agencies, or organizations involved. There are certainly more issues than those listed below that should be discussed prior to sending or receiving assistance but the information below attempts to identify some of the key elements of the responsibilities involved in these types of arrangements.

Sending Countries:

It is important to note that as countries enter into formal cooperation agreements with other countries, the success or failure of those agreements rests just as much on the personal conduct of the sending country's representatives as it does on the effectiveness of their fire management capabilities. It is critical to always send the country's most appropriate and qualified personnel, as the receiving country will quickly detect whether they are receiving the help they need or individuals who were selected on rank or seniority and not on skills and capabilities. This is especially critical with reimbursable agreements. Of particular importance is cultural sensitivity towards the people of the receiving country. Personnel being sent will be seen as ambassadors for their country and qualities appropriate to such a role should be included in the selection criteria.

Teams and individuals must also be made aware of local issues dealing with laws, customs, language, dress, food, etc. They must also be briefed on the command and control arrangements and their role and responsibilities within the fire management system of the receiving country.

Sending countries should prepare lists of resources, funding, materials and manpower that may be made available to receiving countries. It is essential that this information is kept accurate and current.

Both sending and receiving countries should maintain and exchange data on the nature, extent and frequency of fires so that the level of assistance sought and made available can be anticipated in any particular season.

Receiving Countries:

Just as sending countries have certain responsibilities, receiving countries must also accept the responsibilities involved in hosting personnel from other countries. Receiving countries must be prepared to brief sending country teams and representatives on the issues mentioned above as well as fire issues such as fuels, weather, topography, safety, management structure on the fires, fire fighting techniques and equipment, types and lengths of assignments, etc. Of particular importance is briefing on communications and legal issues within fire management as well as political and social sensitivities within the wider community. Receiving countries must also be prepared to provide logistical and operational support including welfare support as required.

Websites with Examples of Cooperative Agreements and Arrangements

National authorities are encouraged to contribute brief case studies, based on their own national experiences, to illustrate the different types of cooperation/assistance agreements that are currently in place or being prepared. Case studies can be forwarded to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Forestry Department (FORM) at Mike.Jurvelius@fao.org. The information will be incorporated into the FAO documentation "Legal Frameworks for Forest Fire Management: International Agreements and National Legislation" which will be updated continuously. This document and other supporting reports are provided on the websites of FAO and the GFMC at:

- <http://www.fao.org>
- http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/emergency/int_agree.htm

Conclusion

The fire management issues identified and discussed at the 3rd International Wildland Fire Conference highlight the connections and common concerns of the global community about wildland fire. This Summit represents an extension of the work accomplished at the Conference and provides a mechanism to identify ways to continue that progress. This paper has identified issues and provided a template to encourage countries to cooperate in dealing with wildland fire.