



UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network
Coordinator and Secretariat: Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Freiburg,
Germany



Regional South Asia Wildland Fire Network

Foundation Meeting “Fire and Livelihoods in the South Asian Region”
Kathmandu Nepal, 2 to 3 April 2007

Kathmandu Declaration

The foundation meeting for the UNISDR Regional South Asia Wildland Fire Network under the auspices of the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) and within the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network, funded by the GFMC and hosted by Nepal, was successfully held in Kathmandu, Nepal, 2-3 April 2007. Participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka attended and contributed to the meeting.

The participants of the foundation meeting of Regional South Asia Wildland Fire Network:

Aiming at enhancing existing regional capability in fire management, including monitoring, early warning and impact assessment, and facilitating international cooperation in wildland fire management;

Recognizing the values of forests as providers of economic, social, and ecological benefits and environmental services to humankind globally;

Recognizing the region has diverse ecosystems, socio-economic and cultural settings and forest types resulting from a wide range of land-use systems and climate consequently having diverse fire regimes and vulnerabilities;

Recognizing the importance of information sharing, technology transfer with collaborative efforts for transboundary haze pollution reduction, establishing upstream-downstream linkages within the greater Hindu Kush - Himalayan region for reduction of negative impacts caused by wildfires;

Recognizing that not all fires are destructive and that fire management is an essential part in ecosystem management;

Being concerned that fire-induced vegetation degradation has resulted in reduction of carbon in forests in Asia in the last decades and that appropriate measures of fire management, including the application of prescribed burning, will contribute to an increase in carbon sequestration in the long run;

Noting the high expectations from sustainable vegetation cover, which provide goods and services including non-wood forest products and recreation, maintains biological diversity, mitigates the consequences of climate change, conserves watersheds, improves air quality and helps to reduce poverty through livelihood support to rural populations;

Recognizing social and cultural traditions and traditional knowledge related to the use of fire in reducing the incidence and impact of wildfires; the need to improve prediction, prevention, monitoring, rapid response to emergencies and restoration following fires; the need to use planned fires for reducing fuels

and wildfire, for silvicultural purposes and habitat management; and the need to increase capacities of local communities with reference to their resistance and resilience to fires;

Recognizing community-based fire management and the need for institutional and technological capability development at all levels,

Recognizing the international instruments particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 1992), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR, 1971), Tribal Peoples Convention (International Labour Organization – ILO, 1989), International Plant Protection Convention (FAO, 1951, revised 1997), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD, 1994), International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTO, 1994);

Supporting the Declaration of the Tenth SAARC Summit Colombo 1998 on Environment;

Supporting the development of a non-legally binding instrument under the auspices of the United Nations Forum on Forest (UNFF); as well as the International Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation in Fire Management, including the Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines in accordance with the recommendations by FAO-COFO / Ministerial Meeting 2005, and FAO-COFO 2007;

Agreeing on outcomes of the International Wildland Fire Summit 2003.

Supporting the objectives of work / terms of references of the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network and Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC);

Expressing the intent to prevail over current gaps and problems in wildland fire management in prevention, preparedness, suppression, response and relief, rescue, and recovery and rehabilitation measures, integration of socio-cultural, economic, environmental considerations and institutions in developing policies and practices related to wildland fire, consistent information and statistics about fires, their causes and their effects, integration of fire as a component of land use and forest management, integrated community-based approaches to fire management, capability in the appropriate use of fire (for example, prescribed burning for fuel reduction and habitat management), capability in the safe and efficient use of resources for fire suppression (for example, appropriate equipment for fire suppression, wildland fire safety), capability in remote sensing, Geographical Information System and use of satellite imageries for wildland fire management, development and use of community-based fire hazard mapping, adaptive measures in the fire disaster;

Expressing interest in partnering and assisting in human resource development, institutional development, developing facilities and improving research tools and fire management and monitoring at regional and global levels

Expressing gratitude to the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) for the funds provided for this meeting;

Acknowledging the efforts and leadership of the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network through its Coordinator and Secretariat, the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), in the wildland fire management arena within the region and internationally;

Recommend to governments, international organizations, non-government organizations and civil society the following action plan for cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels on wildland fire research and management in South Asia:

- Stress on national focus and technical resource development for sustainable wildland fire management programme;
- Stress on national policy development and institutional set up for dealing with all wildland fire issues;

- Encourage countries to estimate the impacts of wildland fires;
- Conduct assessment and research on wildland fire outbreaks, suppression, ecology and management;
- Stress on development and improvement of national legal frameworks, resource generation and allocation and law enforcement;
- Stress on strategy formulation, fire management plan development and programme implementation;
- Give emphasis on improvement of community-based fire management and institutional and technological capabilities at all levels;
- Develop appropriate fire fighting tools;
- Conduct campaigns to raise the awareness about wildland fires in all sections of the society;
- Enhance cooperation amongst the countries for sharing technology and data;
- Incorporate wildland fire management courses in disaster management curricula at school and college level education specially in natural resource management courses;
- Encourage and endorse the use of FAO's Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines 2006;
- Develop guidelines in fire management at all levels;
- Conduct a first Regional Advanced Wildland Fire Management Training Course not later than 2008, based on experiences in other regions;
- Participate in the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference, Sevilla, Spain (May 2007);
- Convene the first regional network conference not later than 2008;
- Request FAO / GFMC support to conduct "National Assessments on Wildland Fire" within the region;
- Request FAO Technical Development Project (TCP) and/or other donors on "Development of a Regional South Asia Strategy for International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management", preferably to be conducted before 2008;
- Seek support from all possible donors including national, international, bi-lateral, multi-lateral and private foundations for financial, technical and other resource support to accomplish the above tasks.