



United Nations
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

**UN-ISDR
Wildland Fire Advisory Group
and
Global Wildland Fire Network**

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

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network
GFMC, Freiburg, Germany, 5-7 July 2008**



The GFMC is serving as Secretariat of the UN-ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network and the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group – an advisory body to the United Nations affiliated to the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR) and Member of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The GFMC is an Associated Institute of the United Nations University (UNU).



Meeting of the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network GFMC, Freiburg, Germany, 5-7 July 2008

Minutes

Introductory Remarks

The Wildland Fire Advisory Group is serving as an advisory body to the United Nations system and is operating under the auspices of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). The group includes members of civil society and agencies of countries organized in Regional Wildland Fire Networks / Global Wildland Fire Network, as well as members of international organizations (UN, non UN). For details: See WFAG Member List (Status: 30 April 2008) on WFAG website.¹

The Wildland Fire Advisory Group is supporting the work of the International Liaison Committee of the International Wildland Fire Conferences. The 4th International Wildland Fire Conference concluded, among other (Annex):

- The UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network, the Regional Wildland Fire Networks and the Secretariat of the global network, the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), be supported by national agencies and international donors aimed at fostering international cooperation in fire management, including collecting and disseminating fire information, arranging and enhancing international policy dialogue, and supporting projects;
- A series of Regional Consultations tentatively addressing “Global Change and Wildland Fire: Regional Solutions for Fire Management” – be held globally, within the next 1-2 years, to progress the global issues that are impacting people, resources and livelihoods;
- The 2nd International Wildland Fire Summit – tentatively addressing “Global Change and Wildland Fire: Fire Management Solutions for Mitigation and Adaptation” – be held within the next 2 to 4 years under the auspices of the United Nations and partners.

Whereas the larger financial support for the Global Wildland Fire Network is not yet in place, there is a need to address the second and third recommendation.

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the necessary steps to be taken. Besides a presentation of the status of the fire situation in the regions the following items were presented and discussed:

- Activities of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks
- Creation of a sub-regional network in the European Alpine region
- Discussion about the options for a 2nd International Wildland Fire Summit
- Financing of the outreach activities of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks
- Status and prospects for the Global Wildland Fire Early Warning System
- The Rosersberg Initiative
- 5th International Wildland Fire Conference (South Africa, 2011)
- Global Wildland Fire Assessment 2010 (ground – with FAO, Space with GOFD-GOLD)
- Statement of the Meeting on Global Change and Wildland Fire

Associated with the meeting two side meetings were held:

- Fire Management Actions Alliance (Secretariat and convener: FAO)
- 5th International Wildland Fire Conference (South Africa, 2011) (a business meeting for the ILC will be conducted separately without involving the whole WFAG group, on 7 July 2008)

¹ <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/task%20force/tf-working-groups4-eng.htm> Note: The member list is regularly updated.

Report from the Regions I (Friday, 3 July 2008)

North America

Dennis Brown, Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC)

Dennis Brown presented a report "The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre: A Canadian Risk Management Partnership Based on Interagency Cooperation". The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) was established in 1982 and is a *not for profit* corporation, owned and operated by ten Canadian provinces, two Canadian territories and two federal government departments. Its primary mandate is the coordination of rapid resource exchange (personnel, aircraft, and equipment) among the member jurisdictions and our international partners. From the mid 1990s, with the advent of coordinated national training, CIFFC has coordinated increasing numbers of personnel to meet the peak demands of wildland fire in Canada. As well, there has been an increased demand for water bombing aircraft among the CIFFC member jurisdictions. The adoption of national equipment standards has allowed for the increase in the coordination of the movement of wildland fire equipment.

CIFFC is a cost effective and efficient risk management partnership that balances local provincial needs with variable wildland fire occurrence across Canada and with our international partners. This interagency cooperation is essential to successfully meet the peak wildland fire demands, and will continue to be used to a greater extent as climate change, increased severe weather events, the increasing length of the fire season, insect damage and disease, and lastly the growing wildland urban interface in Canada, will create increasing demands for wildland fire suppression resources. Without this Canadian interagency partnership, the individual member agencies of CIFFC would be subject to enormous annual financial increases to adequately prepare for their individual wildland fire needs.

Dale K. Dague, U.S. Forest Service, Fire and Aviation Management

Dale Dague presented a report on the currently ongoing fire situation in California (June-July 2008). An unprecedented dry lightning storm the weekend of 20-22 June 2008 passed through the State of California. More than 8,000 lightning strikes started 1,000 wildfires. Federal and State agencies have committed significant firefighting resources of all kinds to combat the fires. Numbers of resources at specific locations are not static; resources are moved among incidents, and additional resources are ordered according to needs and priorities. Fires threaten power infrastructures, railroad lines, auto transportation routes, municipal water supplies and more than 10,000 structures. Normally, northern California fire seasons last into October; southern California season last into December.

Bill de Groot, Canadian Forest Service, Great Lakes Forestry Centre, current Chair of the Fire Management Working Group, North American Forest Commission

The North American Forest Commission - Fire Management Working Group (FMWG) was established in 1962 with representation from Canada, Mexico, and the USA. The FMWG chair position and annual meeting location rotate between countries every year. The FMWG has a charter with 3 objectives: 1) To exchange experiences and technological advances regarding prevention, wildland fire management, and fire use; 2) To provide mutual aid and technical exchanges between Canada, Mexico, and the United States in the development of strategy and appropriate fire management actions; 3) To actively participate in programs with other fire agencies throughout the world to support international cooperation and development in fire management. The FMWG frequently participates in fire management study tour exchanges with other countries, and is a strong supporter of the International Wildland Fire Conference series.

Australasia

James Lonergan, Fire Management Unit, Parks and Wildlife Group, Department of Environment and Climate Change, New South Wales, Australia

Mr. James Lonergan, Fire Manager, NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change, Australia, represented Australia/New Zealand. He provided an outline of existing regional network relationships

including the Australasian Fire Authorities Council, Forest Fire Management Group and the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre. He also summarised achievements of these organisations in regional development, inter-regional cooperation, research and guiding regional government policy. In particular he highlighted the need for a continuing regionally coordinated and cooperative research agenda in the face of the challenges of climate change.

James Lonergan detailed how Australian and New Zealand fire and land management agencies are working closely with researchers on Australia's first nationally coordinated research program to help answer how best to manage the bushfire risk. The Bushfire CRC research program covers a broad range of topics including fire behaviour and suppression, fire as part of the natural landscape, fire weather, community self-sufficiency, firefighter safety and building protection. Through this research a substantial research capacity has been generated. Bushfire CRC has 130 researchers working collaboratively with end users to meet the end users needs. In addition to these researchers, there are more than 40 post doctoral research fellows working for the Bushfire CRC and more than 30 graduate students funded through the Bushfire CRC education program.

As a result of the Bushfire CRC activities, a positive culture change of a desire to seek more scientifically based knowledge to underpin policies, procedures and practices has emerged within the fire industry. Planning is also underway to conduct research to meet the industry's knowledge requirements to tackle expected issues in the year 2020.

Issues to be addressed:

- Climate change: CSIRO models predict +6°C by 2070 ... implications on fire
- Other regional issue: Coronial and other legal or parliamentary reviews
- Disconnection between land and fire management

South America

Patricio Sanhueza, Fire Control Department, National Forestry Cooperation CONAF, Chile

Patricio Sanhueza elaborated on the range and diversity of ecosystems, fire regimes and fire seasons on the continent, including the increasing problem of fires burning at the wildland-urban interface. An outline of the activities of the Regional South America Wildland Fire Network was given, particularly the network foundation in Curitiba (Brazil) in 2004 and the participation in the Pan-American Wildland Fire Conference in Costa Rica (2004), the creation of the Fire Management Working Group within the FAO Forestry Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2006) and the participation at the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference in Sevilla, Spain (2007). He underscored the need for following up the recommendation of the Sevilla Conference.

Furthermore he reported on the Strategy for Cooperation in Fire Management in South America, 2006-2010 (Estrategia de Cooperación de América del Sur Para el Manejo del Fuego, 2006-2010), which was prepared in the frame of the development of the Regional Strategy for Cooperation in Fire Management in Latin America and the Caribbean, a Technical Cooperation Project financed by the FAO and jointly implemented in three subregions (South America, Central America, Caribbean) with the assistance of the GFMC.

Recent activities and highlights in regional cooperation included:

- 2007 Belo Horizonte (Brazil) Symposium on Fire Management
- SILVOTECNA XXII: "Incendios forestales: amenazas y desafíos en un escenario de calentamiento global" (8-9 November 2007, Concepción, Chile)
- Regional cooperation: Exchange with Argentina
- Status of the Wildland Fire Early Warning System by Brazil (IBAMA)
- Video conferences
- Fire Management Study Tour in Brazil
- Paraguay 2008: 1st Seminar on Forest Fire
- Chile – more female firefighters have joined the community

He elaborated on the needs for action and further developments:

- Bilateral agreements between South American countries

- National support for training
- ICS application
- High price of gasoline: Back to horses!

Central America

Luis Diego, Programa Nacional de Manejo del Fuego, Comisión Nacional sobre Incendios Forestales (CONIFOR), Costa Rica

Systematic networking in the Central America / Mesoamerica region was started in 2002 at the First Mesoamerican Meeting of Cooperation Regarding Protection against Forest Fires, which was held in Guatemala City, 8-9 July 2002, followed by the

- Pan-American Wildland Fire Conference (San José, Costa Rica, 23 October 2004)
- Development of a Regional Strategy for Cooperation in Fire Management (FAO TCP Report, 2006, with assistance from GFMC), resulting in the development of the Central American Strategy for Fire Management (2005-2015)
- Central American Fire Management Forum (San Salvador, 30-31 October 2007)

Luis Diego described the characteristics and fire issues of the region, including border crossing nature parks, the underlying causes of forest fires and wildfire statistics of 2008. A severe event occurred in Honduras in 2008 when 9 firefighters were killed (soldiers, trapped between fire and backfire). Other issues discussed included

- Regional fire monitoring (by CONABIO)
- Observed increase of wildfires in the Pacific side – due to climate change?
- Wildfire problems increase after hurricanes due to high fuel loads

Caribbean

Marcos Pedro Ramos, Universidad de Pinar del Río, Cuba

Marcos Pedro Ramos apologized the absence of the regional network coordinator, Mr. Raúl González Rodríguez, Cuerpo de Guardabosques, La Habana, Cuba.

Until the year 2004, the Caribbean was included in the Regional Mesoamerica Wildland Fire Network. Today the networking functions as Ad Hoc Fire Management Working Group within the framework of the Caribbean Sub regional Group of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission. The Caribbean Region has a Fire Management Cooperation Strategy. It is part of the efforts of the countries in the region and the international community to increase cooperation and synergies in the region. Some actions developed into the network are: First and Second International Workshop on Fire Management; elaboration and revision of an agreement of collaboration Cuba – Nicaragua, Cuba – Chile, and Cuba – Haiti; coordination actions with the purpose of facilitating the realization of training in Cuba of the Dominican Republic technicians. At this moment is working with the FAO with the objective of presenting a project with the purpose of creating of a fire laboratory and a regional training centre. In the future it's strongly necessary to support the actions identified in the Fire Management Cooperation Strategy for the Caribbean 2006-2011. Finally Marcos P. Ramos stressed the need for availability of finances for implementation of priority actions.

Mediterranean

Pieter van Lierop, FAO

Since the chair of the Forest Fire Group of *FAO Silva Mediterranea*, Mr. Ricardo Vélez, was not able to attend, FAO reported about the Workshop on "Forest Fires in the Mediterranean Region: Prevention and Regional Cooperation", held in Sabaudia, Italy, 13-15 May 2008, and attended by 47 participants from 15 countries, the European Commission (EC), GFMC and FAO. The outcomes of the workshop

included 36 recommendations: 13 on prevention, 10 on information systems, 10 on suppression, 3 for short term action. Some critical comments elaborated on

- In the EC 3-4 directorates are involved working in fire management, little resources on fire prevention
- Information systems other than the EFFIS are needed
- Standardized terminology on training needed

He also urged participation at the XIII World Forest Congress in Argentina 2009 at an envisaged wildland fire session. Furthermore he presented a presentation that FAO gave at the Third International Symposium on Fire Economics, Planning, and Policy: Common Problems and Approaches (29 April - 2 May 2008, Carolina, Puerto Rico) in which the role of FAO was outlined, particularly with reference to the development of the Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines and the follow-up in the frame of the Fire Management Actions Alliance.

South East Europe / Caucasus

Nikola Nikolov, Republic of Macedonia

After a short review of the history of the Regional Southeast Europe / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network Nikola Nikolov elaborated on the main activities after the Regional Scientific and Technical Consultation in Ohrid, Macedonia, 4-5 April 2005:

- The next meeting of the network was held in conjunction with the 33rd Session of the FAO European Forestry Commission, Zvolen, Slovakia, 22-26 May 2006. The regional network coordinator together with the GFMC / Coordinator of the Global Wildland Fire Network presented an initial proposal for the development of a "Regional Strategy on International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network".
- In October 2006 the coordinators of GFMC and the regional network served as the technical lead in the environmental assessment mission under the overall leadership of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to the fire-affected territories in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The mandate of the mission was to assess the short-term and long-term impact of the fires of summer 2006 on the environment in the fire-affected territories based on the UN General Assembly resolution 60/285.
- The mission was followed up by the Regional Wildland Fire Consultation 2007 (19-21 March 2007), hosted by the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) and the National Forestry Board, Ministry in Sofia, Bulgaria. The participating countries included Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine (due to technical reason invited focal points from Greece, Slovakia and Azerbaijan could not participate in the meeting).
- The consultation and in follow-up the participation of most countries of the network region in the 5th International Wildland Fire Conference (Sevilla, Spain, May 2007) was funded by the Council of Europe (CoE) and OSCE.
- In August 2007 a joint GFMC / regional network fire management mission to Serbia was hosted by the Directorate of Forests, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Belgrade, followed by the "Ecological Damage Assessment of the Wildfires in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2007", jointly conducted by the UNEP-OCHA Joint Environment Unit, UNEP, and UNDP under the technical leadership of GFMC and the regional network
- Joint Macedonian-Albanian fire management consultations were held with private forest owners in Macedonia (April 2008) and at a National Inter-Agency Fire Management Round Table in Albania (May 2008), both supported by the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) and GFMC.
- The leader of the regional network contributed to the Workshop on "Forest Fires in the Mediterranean Region: Prevention and Regional Cooperation", held in Sabaudia, Italy, 13-15 May 2008 (see report above)
- An interim report was given on the progress of the trilateral (Macedonia, Hungary, Germany / GFMC) scientific cooperation project "Use of Prescribed burning in Middle-East and South East Europe" funded by SEE ERANET (2007-2008).
- The translation of the UN Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines to Albanian and Macedonian is underway.

- The network leader reported on the recent fire statistics of the region, notably the severe fire season of 2007. Emphasis was given on the fatalities which occurred in Greece and Croatia in 2007.
- The report ended with the encouraging news from the Ministry of Agriculture of Macedonia, in which a supportive statement was given towards the establishment of a Regional Fire Monitoring Center in Macedonia.

Report from the Regions II (Saturday, 4 July 2008)

Euro-Alpine Region

Hartmut Gossow, Austria

Hartmut Gossow, Bodenkultur University, Vienna, was an invited guest to WFAG 2008. He reported about the specific fire issues in the Euro-Alpine Region and provided the rationale for the creation of a specific Sub-Regional Euro-Alpine Wildland Fire Network for the Euro-Alpine region.

By highlighting the situation in Austria he reported that the spring-summer season 2003 gave evidence that under suitable fire weather conditions, it may burn in Austria nearly everywhere, and the predicted increase of weather extremes may also support more wildland fires, alternating with (the up to now more common) avalanche, torrent, and flood disasters. There are regions which appear more forest fire-predisposed, but also seasonally forest fires may happen and concentrate more in spring (like April 2007), or more in summer (like July 2006). Switzerland is aware of that already since the early 1990s, and for the Italian and Slovenian Alps, there is also increasing interest for better fire danger prediction. In Austria, a forest fire research initiative (Austrian Forest Fire Research Initiative - AFFRI) was initiated in early 2008, focusing more on their spring and summer burns, whereas in Switzerland and in the Western Italian Alps winter fires dominate – both with corresponding methodological and cooperation challenges. Reports by Austrian and Italian partners are currently prepared for publication in UNECE/FAO International Forest Fire News (IFFN).

South Asia Region

Sundar P. Sharma, Nepal

The Coordinator of UNISDR Regional South Asia Wildland Fire Network presented South Asian Perspectives on Wildland Fire Management. He provided an update on the 2007 activities, including the Foundation Meeting of the UNISDR Regional South Asia Wildland Fire Network (2-3 April 2007, Kathmandu, Nepal) and the “Three-level Wildland Fire Management Project for Nepal”. That project was supported by GFMC using funds provided by the German Foreign Office, Task Force Humanitarian Aid. The project included the local-level pilot project on Community-Based Fire Management (CBFiM) planning, district level Fire management planning and a National Round Table. He further emphasized on the outreach programmes and creating enabling environment for fire management initiatives in the region. He stressed the need for continuous financial support to build fire management capacity in the region

North East Asia Region

Kim, Dong Hyun, South Korea

Mr. Kim reported on behalf of the Forest Fire Division, Korea Forest Research Institute, led by Mr. Lee, Myung Bo. KFRI is in charge of the coordination of the UNISDR Regional North East Asia Wildland Fire Network. He reported about the history and status of the network. Since the Foundation Meeting in 2004 in the Republic of Korea annual meetings have been held in all member countries (South Korea, Japan, Russian Federation, China) and associated countries (Central Asia: Mongolia, Russian Federation). A number of publications reflect the fire situation in the region and the spirit of cooperation between the participating partners.

He highlighted the challenges of the region that is characterized by the rich cultural variety and assets and diverse languages in the four member countries South Korea, Japan, China and Russia. He

provided fire statistics and details about specific wildfires in South Korea and the problem of border-crossing fires in the De-Militarized Zone between South and North Korea. The progress made in South Korea is revealed by targeted fire research (including research of smoke impacts on human health) and enhanced fire management capacity, e.g., the establishment of camera-based fire surveillance systems, use of aerial assets in firefighting, video-image transfer of wildfires from helicopters, improvement of firefighters safety by using automatic GPS-supported tracking of firefighters.

He indicated the availability of KFRI to convene a Pan-Asian Forest Fire Consultation in early 2009 in South Korea, with the participation of the four Asian Wildland Fire Networks, as well as the creation of a Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network (a cluster of the four regional networks covering Asia) and a Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Conference to be held in South Korea in 2013 (half-way between the 5th and the 6th International Wildland Fire Conferences).

Sub-Sahara Africa Region

Alex Held, South Africa

In his report Alex Held stressed that in most African ecosystems fire is a natural and beneficial disturbance of vegetation structure and composition, in nutrient recycling and distribution. Nevertheless substantial unwarranted and uncontrolled burning does occur throughout the region. Since its beginnings in 2002, AfriFireNet - the Regional Sub-Sahara Wildland Fire Network has had its focus on Capacity Building and Skill Transfer. Main activities include: Capacity Building through Training, Education and Awareness, facilitation of Partnership Agreements / Exchanges, supporting the development of Fire Policies, fostering Information Exchange and Fire Management consultancies.

AfriFireNet / Working on Fire (WoF) has developed PPE standards, SOPs, Management Guidelines and Plans. Fire awareness and public education was identified as a key strategic area for the network and WoF. FireWise South Africa has produced awareness and educational material in great numbers and in a number of African languages. These materials and experiences are available to the network at a cost-cover price. Active involvement in: Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Ghana, Namibia, Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The 5th International Wildland Fire Conference will be hosted by AfriFireNet / WoF 9-13 May 2011 in and around Sun City / Pilanesberg National Park, South Africa (<http://www.wildfire2011.org>).

On behalf of AfriFireNet and the Organizing Committee of Wildfire 2011 Alex Held underscored the need for financial support to establish a Secretariat for the network and the conference preparation. He appealed on international organizations and donors to provide financial support.

Baltic Region

Johann G. Goldammer, GFMC

In the early 1990s the countries belonging to the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) have created a platform for information sharing in fire management. A major focus of networking is among the countries that are bordering the Baltic Sea and neighbouring Western Europe. Clearly, in comparison with the occurrence of wildfires and area burned in the Euro-Mediterranean region the countries of Western, Central and Northern Europe are less affected. However, in 2008 alone several large forest fires reminded the public that those European countries, which are characterized by a temperate climate, are becoming increasingly vulnerable to wildfires. Furthermore, Europe is occasionally affected by wildfire smoke from neighbouring regions – as it happened in May 2006 when the Nordic countries and even Scotland were blanketed by fire smoke from fires burning in Western Russia.

The Regional Baltic Wildland Fire Network has been set up under the umbrella of Global Wildland Fire Network (GWFN) under the auspices and as an outreach programme of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). The network is the core zone of the larger region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in which the "Team of Specialists on Forest Fire", mandated by the member states of the ECE and by the UN, is fostering the international dialogue in fire management since the early 1980s. Since the ECE region includes all countries of North America

(U.S.A., Canada), Europe and Eastern Europe (including all CIS countries), i.e. almost the major part of the Northern Hemisphere, a number of regional networks emerged that are focussing on specific regional fire problems.² Members of the Baltic network are primarily all countries bordering the Baltic Sea, but also neighbouring countries of Western Atlantic Europe and the landlocked neighbour Belarus. After the regional exercise BALTEX FIRE 2000 and the regional wildland fire consultation in 2004 (both hosted by Finland) main emphasis in the Baltic region is on the use of fire in the maintenance and restoration of natural and cultural landscapes of the region.

Johann Goldammer informed the WFAG members that the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has evaluated the work of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Forest Fire in 2008 and will call governments of the ECE region to nominate members for the Team by September / October 2008.

Central Asia Region

Dr. Leonid Kondrashov, Pacific Forest Forum (PFF)

(report given by J.G. Goldammer on behalf of Dr. Kondrashov)

On behalf of Dr. Leonid Kondrashov, Russian Federation, President of the Pacific Forest Forum (PFF) and coordinator of the UNISDR Central Asia Regional Wildland Fire Network, and a main partner of the North East Asia Regional Wildland Fire Network (note: due to its large geographic extent Russia is member of three Regional Wildland Fire Networks – Northeast Asia, Central Asia, and Baltic) the presentation elaborated on the history of the network, which was initially discussed at the UN-ECE/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) and endorsed by the ministers and heads of forest services of Central Asia at the Regional Central Asian Forest Congress “Forest Policy: Problems and Solutions” (Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 25-27 November 2004). Regional meetings were held in 2006 (Irkutsk, Russian Federation) and 2008 at the First International Central Asian Wildland Fire Joint Conference and Consultation “Wildland Fires in Natural Ecosystems of the Central Asian Region: Ecology and Management Implications”, Associated with the First Central Asian Forest Fire Experiment, 2-6 June 2008, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.³ Dr. Kondrashov highlighted the current problems of fire management in Central Asia and urged action to address the increasing wildfire problems in the region, including the need of provision of finances for the network.

Southeast Asia Region

The Secretariat of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) had transmitted apologies for not being able to attend the meeting. A short report by GFMC highlighted the priorities of ASEAN Member States in addressing the fire and regional smoke-haze pollution problems. Under the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, which is meanwhile ratified by 8 of the 10 member states, five priority areas are being addressed: (a) Implementation of the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (2006-2020), (b) promotion of zero and controlled burning practices for industrial enterprises and smallholders respectively, (c) conduction of joint table-top / simulation exercises of management of large fire / smoke pollution disasters, (d) law enforcement and prosecution, and (e) promotion of the regional dialogue, including the international donor community.

² The scope of the work of the Team includes the countries belonging to the six Regional Wildland Fire Networks geographically located within the ECE region (Baltic, Mediterranean, Southeast Europe / Caucasus, Central Asia, Northeast Asia, North America). Similarly to the concept of the Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network (see contribution re NE Asia above) and the cooperation between the three regional networks in Latin America and the Caribbean the ECE region constitutes an umbrella for the six regional networks.

³ http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/CentralAsia/CentralAsia_3.html

Report from International Organizations (Saturday, 4 July 2008)

International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

John Leigh introduced the meeting participants the ITTO organization, including the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC), member countries (consumer and producer countries), ITTO's mandate and objectives of work. Through the Projects Programme ITTO has funded 750 projects and provided \$US 300 M grants, very much focusing on community forestry, forest fires, law enforcement, etc.

ITTO's engagement in fire management activities started with the development of the "ITTO Guidelines on Fire Management in Tropical Forests", which were prepared under the technical leadership of GFMC in 1994-95, involving an expert team from all over the world, and published in 1997, in the same year when the fire and smoke pollution episode in South East Asia started during the extreme ENSO event of 1997-98. Consequently ITTO sponsored the "International Cross-Sectoral Forum on Forest Fire Management in South East Asia" (Jakarta, Indonesia, 7-8 December 1998) and the "ITTO Mission on Forest Fire Prevention and Management to Indonesia and Malaysia (Sarawak)" (1998) for which GFMC provided the technical expert advice. In the follow-up of the regional crisis ITTO sponsored the development of a national fire policy in Indonesia.⁴

At its 33rd Session ITTC (November 2002) decided on support of member countries, co-sponsorship of the 3rd International Wildland Fire Conference and Summit (Australia, October 2003), and cooperation with the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC). As of July 2008 support to member countries has been granted to Peru and Guyana.

ITTO expressed the need for tropical countries to become connected to and develop own capabilities in wildland fire early warning and monitoring, tentatively to be covered by a "ITTO Trop Forest Fire Prevention and Mitigation Programme".

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Pieter van Lierop described the different roles of the FAO in fire management. The FAO coordinated the development of the Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines, and the Fire Management Actions Alliance, a global partnership with a Secretariat at FAO, and both are important tools and mechanisms to strengthen capacity in fire management. All activities under these roles include two approaches which are thought to be crucial:

- A participatory approach through which efforts are made to involve key stakeholder groups in fire management.
- An integrated, intersectoral approach to fire management with horizontal and vertical components:
 - The vertical approach includes all fire management related activities from fire monitoring and assessment, prevention, early warning, preparedness, suppression, monitoring and evaluation up to restoration of damaged lands; and
 - The horizontal approach includes vegetation related land uses (forests, woodlands, shrublands, grasslands, agricultural lands, including the rural-urban interface). The majority of fires start outside forests from other land uses, but some fires can begin inside forests and impact other land-uses, so integrated approaches to vegetation fires are necessary rather than an isolated focus on forest fires.

Future challenges: While the roles and approaches of FAO have changed, new challenges lay ahead; first of all helping countries to develop, adapt and implement their fire management policy, with the help of the guidelines, especially in these countries where integrated and participatory fire management are new concepts. This was said to not only be a challenge for FAO but also for the partnerships which have been so useful in developing the Strategy and Voluntary Guidelines. The recently established Fire Management Actions Alliance will play an important role in this.

⁴ Please see the most important ITTO fire reports and guidelines on the ITTO web page on the GFMC portal at: http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/programmes/itto/itto_start.htm

International Association of Fire and Rescue Services / Comité Technique International de Prévention et d'Extinction du Feu (CTIF)

Mark Jones, chair of CTIF's Forest Fires Commission, introduced the CTIF as an organisation, explaining that it had broad membership from firefighting organisations around the world. The Forest Fires Commission was identified as one of 13 commissions which discuss policies on a wide range of Fire Policy issues. He described the CTIF as "an international technical organization for the exchange of experience in the field of fire protection, disaster relief and rescue"

Mark quoted from his inaugural address from 2005:

"To truly make a difference, I contest that we must work beyond the tradition of developing more and better ways to attack and extinguish fires. My belief is that a comprehensive, integrated strategy that addresses land management practices, fire prevention, community education and *expectation management*, control of building construction, access to high risk areas, and better, more effective deployment of fire fighters will give the best long-term results".

The commission's aims were highlighted:

- To identify the practices, organisations, structures, training regimes and equipment utilised by the operational firefighting forces in each country,
- To seek co-operative opportunities to solve problems related to forest fires,
- To encourage and further develop international collaboration so that lessons may be learned and built upon.

Within these aims, he highlighted the key current intentions:

- To grow the commission so as to represent the majority of CTIF interests
- To identify best practice and new ideas for sharing
- To make the Firefighting community more relevant in planning for wildfire
- To gain influence by advising policy makers

He also spoke of a few of the challenges that exist:

- The difficulty in representing the Fire Community when the governance arrangements differed so much from one area to the next,
- The lack of influence of firefighting organisations on governmental policy development

In closing, he highlighted the EUROFIRE project and stated the commission's wish to develop and strengthen more strategic partnerships.

UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)

Douglas Pattie, head of the UNISDR Early Warning Platform, introduced the UNISDR system. Recognizing the occurrence and severity of and human vulnerability to natural hazards are increasing, the UNISDR builds on partnerships and takes a global approach to disaster reduction, seeking to involve every individual and every community towards the goals of reducing the loss of lives, the socio-economic setbacks and the environmental damages caused by natural hazards. In order to achieve these goals, the UNISDR promotes four objectives as tools towards reaching disaster reduction for all:

- Increase public awareness to understand risk, vulnerability and disaster reduction globally
- Obtain commitment from public authorities to implement disaster reduction policies and actions
- Stimulate interdisciplinary and intersectoral partnerships, including the expansion of risk reduction networks
- Improve scientific knowledge about disaster reduction

The ISDR combines the strengths of many key players through Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) and the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the ISDR (UN/ISDR). The goal of the GPDRR, as the main body of the strengthened ISDR system, is to sustain world-wide momentum to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters.

The Global Platform provides the main global forum for representatives of governments other stakeholders - UN agencies, regional bodies, international financial institutions, civil society, the private sector and the scientific and academic communities to:

- Assess progress made in implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.
- Enhance global awareness of disaster risk reduction.
- Share experiences among countries and learn from good practice.
- Identify remaining gaps and actions needed to accelerate national and local implementation of the Hyogo Framework.

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Holmes, chairs the GPDRR. The GPDRR meets every two years. The first session was held in June 2007 in Geneva, Switzerland, the next will be held at the same venue in June 2009. It is hoped that the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network (GWFN) and the UNISDR Wildland Advisory Group (WFAG) will attend and contribute to the 2009 session.

Global Wildland Fire Early Warning System (UNISDR / GEO)

Bill de Groot reported in his role as co-coordinator of the planned Global Wildland Fire Early Warning System. Wildland fires burn several hundred million hectares of vegetation every year, and increased fire activity has been reported in many global regions. Many of these fires have had serious negative impacts human safety, health, regional economies, global climate change, and ecosystems in non-fire-prone biomes. Worldwide fire suppression expenditures are rapidly increasing in an attempt to limit the impact of wildland fires. To mitigate fire-related problems and costs, forest and land management agencies, as well as land owners and communities, require an early warning system to identify critical periods of extreme fire danger in advance of their potential occurrence.

Early warning of these conditions allows fire managers to implement fire prevention, detection, and pre-suppression plans before fire problems begin. Fire danger rating is commonly used to provide early warning of the potential for serious wildfires based on daily weather data. Fire danger information is often enhanced with satellite data, such as active fire locations for early fire detection, and with spectral data on land cover and fuel conditions. Normally, these systems provide a 4- to 6-hour early warning of the highest fire danger for any particular day that the weather data is supplied. However, by using forecasted weather data, as much as 2 weeks of early warning can be provided.

The proposed Global Early Warning System for Wildland Fire, which is also a GEO Task (DI-06-13 – Implementation of a Fire Warning System at Global Level) aims at providing advanced early warning capabilities at local to global levels. Funding for project implementation is urgently required.⁵

Field trip, other topics and wrapping up (Sunday 6 July 2008)

Before the final discussions were held at the Mathislemühle, a 200-years old farm house in the Black Forest, which is serving as a field station for the Faculty of Forest and Environmental Sciences of Freiburg University (GFMC is associated with Freiburg University and located at the Airport Campus), the head of GFMC introduced the meeting participants in the cultural history of land-use fires in Germany and neighboring countries of Central-Northern Europe.

In large parts of Europe the historic use of fire and other disturbances have contributed to shape landscape patterns of high ecological and cultural diversity and value, e.g. heathlands, open grasslands, meadows, and swidden (shifting) agriculture sites, as well as open and stress-resilient forest ecosystems. The rapid socio-economic changes in the past four to five decades and the recently increasing trend of rural exodus all over Europe, however, have resulted in abandonment of traditional land-use methods. With the elimination of these disturbances by cultivation, including traditional burning practices, large areas of Europe are converting to fallow lands, a process that is associated with ecological succession towards brush cover and forest, and an overall loss of open habitats. Besides the loss of valuable biodiversity the abandoned lands constitute an increase of wildfire hazard – a trend that is revealed by a growing number of extremely severe fire disasters.

⁵ GFMC Early Warning Portal: <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/fwf/fwf.htm>; Global Wildland Fire Early Warning System: <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/fwf/EWS.htm>

Similarly, the exclusion of fire in natural ecosystems such as northern boreal and sub-boreal coniferous forests in Europe / Eurasia has resulted in changing vegetation composition and an increase of wildfire hazard. Changing paradigms in ecology and nature conservation currently have called to reconsider fire-exclusion policies in certain sectors of land / landscape management, nature conservation and forestry.

The Rosersberg Initiative

GFMC briefed the meeting participants about the Rosersberg Initiative. The UNEP and OCHA have established the international Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE) as their most important cooperation and support mechanism for the response to environmental disasters. The AGEE is an international forum that brings together environmental experts from around the world to share information, expertise and lessons learned for improved response to environmental emergencies worldwide, and in particular in developing countries. In 2007 AGEE founded the "Rosersberg Initiative", which aims at strengthening the global regime that governs environmental emergency response and preparedness.⁶ The GFMC on behalf of the Global Wildland Fire Network is currently preparing a procedure for the UN to introduce the ICS as a globally accepted incident management system based on the concept paper for the international use of the ICS developed by the International Wildland Fire Summit (2003)⁷, as well as the International Wildland Fire Management Agreements Template.⁸

Final Discussion and Conclusions

With reference to the agenda of the meeting (cf. p.1) the following was discussed and concluded:

(1) Activities of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks

The discussions on all three days (see reports above) revealed the progress that has been made in the systematic enhancement of international cooperation within the regions and at global level. The representatives of several Regional Wildland Fire Networks underscored the urgent need for finances to support the networks.

In this context the ITTO suggested to go for a GEF project. GFMC reported that such a proposal had been developed several years ago but could not be realized due to the lack of co-funding. Furthermore, ITTO suggested to check UNDP, which is sponsoring the World Conservation Monitoring Center, to look for a similar arrangement.

In response to the question of the coordinator of the South Asia network the representative of ITTO confirmed that Nepal as an ITTO member consumer country is eligible to request a project under the funding scheme of ITTC Decision 6 (XXXIII).

GFMC reported that a proposal to fund activities of the Global Wildland Fire Network has been submitted to the UNISDR Environmental Partnership project.

(2) Creation of a sub-regional network in the European Alpine region

In accordance with the report about the specific fire issues in the Euro-Alpine Region and the rationale provided for the creation of a specific network for the Euro-Alpine region it was unanimously approved to create a Sub-Regional Euro-Alpine Wildland Fire Network. Follow-up action by Austria and Italy.

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<http://ochaonline.un.org/ToolsServices/EmergencyRelief/EnvironmentalEmergenciesandtheJEU/RosersbergInitiative/tabid/2647/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

⁷ Published in: International Forest Fire News (IFFN) No. 29 (2003), p. 15-19
(http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/iffn_29/content29.htm)

⁸ Published in: International Forest Fire News (IFFN) No. 29 (2003), p. 10-14
(http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/iffn_29/content29.htm)

(3) Discussion about the options for a 2nd International Wildland Fire Summit

Discussions were held about the option of organizing a 2nd International Wildland Fire Summit. It was agreed that such a Summit should not be held in conjunction with an International Wildland Fire Conference, but possibly hosted by UNISDR in Geneva.

(4) Financing of the outreach activities of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks

Financial assistance to the Regional Wildland Fire Networks was challenged by the majority of network representatives attending the meeting. GFMC proposed FAO to outsource wildland fire management projects to regional actors and to assist recruiting finances to the networks.

(5) Status and prospects for the Global Wildland Fire Early Warning System

The report by the co-coordinator of the planned system was well received. It was noted that the system, which is also a GEO Task, has not yet received the necessary finances in order to be implemented. ITTO suggested a close cooperation in conjunction with a draft concept on a pantropical fire management project of ITTO.

(6) The Rosersberg Initiative

GFMC is available to follow-up the Rosersberg Initiative (RI) of the international Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE) led by UNEP and OCHA and to provide inputs on behalf of the Global Wildland Fire Network. The next meeting of AGEE and RI will be held at the European Commission (Brussels, 6-8 May 2009).⁹

(7) 5th International Wildland Fire Conference (South Africa, 2011)

The organizer of the 5th International Wildland Fire Conference and chair of the regional sub-Saharan Wildland Fire Network (AfriFireNet) briefed participants on the status of preparation of the event, which will be held in Sun City, South Africa, 9-13 May 2009. The conference will provide a platform to bring together members of the fire community-of-practice who strive to promote learning and innovation, share practices and lessons common to sustainable use of the environment, wildland fire risk management and disaster reduction at local, national, regional and global scales. The conference will be conducted under the auspices of the UNISDR and FAO.

For update information see the conference website: <http://wildfire2011.org/>

(8) Global Wildland Fire Assessment 2010

While it was not yet clear to which extent FRA-2010 will address wildland fire, GFMC reported about the intent of the Global Observation of Forest and Land Cover Dynamics (GOFC-GOLD) group in cooperation with the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network and GFMC to coordinate and conduct a satellite-based global fire assessment. Participants underscored the need for obtaining more precise and reliable data on global occurrence and impacts of vegetation fires for developing informed policies and support predictive modeling.

(9) Statement of the Meeting on Global Change and Wildland Fire

It was suggested to develop a statement, possibly in the form of a "White Paper" or position paper, to be submitted the 2009 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (Geneva, June 2009). GFMC to coordinate.

⁹ <http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1109470>

Side events (Monday, 7 July 2008)

Associated with the meeting two side meetings were held:

- Fire Management Actions Alliance (Secretariat and convener: FAO)
- ILC meeting in preparation of the 5th International Wildland Fire Conference