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**Minutes of the Meeting of the
INSARAG Europe-Africa Fire Group
Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Freiburg, Germany
7 February 2003**

Introduction and Background

At the Meeting of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe (Revinge, Sweden, 23-24 April 2002) three workshops were held to define the Work Plan for the Regional Group Africa/Europe. One of the workshops was on "Regional INSARAG Working Group on Fire and NBC (INSARAG-Fire)". Under the Work Plan item 11 the regional meeting agreed:

- The regional Working Group INSARAG-Fire was requested to review the following at their next meeting, tentatively scheduled in Vienna, Austria, in June 2002:
- The regional network of fire and NBC could better be accommodated in a separate network (not within INSARAG) with OCHA's Environmental Emergencies Section (not FCSS) as counterpart. The INSARAG Secretariat to review this possibility with the Environmental Emergencies Section in OCHA-Geneva.
- With regard to interaction with INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe, the WG on Fire to develop Terms of Reference and a timeframe for activities to address issues related to fire and HAZMAT in USAR operations.
- The Working Group on Fire to provide the results to the INSARAG Secretariat and the Chairman of the Regional Group by 15 September 2002 (action: Working Group on Fire).

Since the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Fire Group retired after the 5th Regional Meeting in Hammamet in 2000 without notifying the INSARAG Secretariat and the Fire Group there was no overall coordination between the Subgroups on Industrial Fire, HAZMAT and Wildland Fire. The Fire Group was not invited to the Revinge meeting. The report of the Revinge meeting was distributed on 5 July 2002. Until then there was no action from the Fire Group because the Revinge decision was not known. On 5 July 2002 the Convener of the Wildland Fire Subgroup immediately contacted UN-OCHA. It was agreed to convene the Fire Group meeting later than requested in the Revinge report, at any time scheduled but in due time before the next Regional meeting in April 2003. Difficulties in identifying a meeting date that would suit the active members of the three subgroups resulted in a delay of the meeting until early February 2003. In preparation of the Fire Group meeting the Convener informed the members of the group with a comprehensive package of information containing the most important events and products achieved since the last meeting was held in Tunisia in 2000. That information package was also sent to the Regional Chair and Co-Chair, the INSARAG Chairman and the INSARAG Secretariat.

This report includes the minutes of the meeting, the conclusions and recommendations.



The GFMC is sponsored by the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry, Fire Ecology Research Group and co-sponsored by the German Foreign Office as a contribution to the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction, Working Group on Wildland Fire. The GFMC is serving as Coordinator of the UN-FAO/ECE/ILO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire. IFFN is prepared bi-annually on behalf of the UN-ECE Trade Division, Timber Section, and the FAO.

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Minutes of the Meeting

1. Opening and Introduction

The Convener of the Subgroup Wildland Fire welcomed the participants from Finland, Poland and Germany (the list of participants is provided in Annex I). He also welcomed the remote inputs and conveyed the apologies of the representatives of Austria and Switzerland who were not able to attend the meeting. Looking retrospectively to the two-years period between the Tunisia Meeting in November 2000 and the end of 2002 the convener he reviewed a number of activities of the Fire Group in the field of fire disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation. These activities have been conducted in conjunction with arrangements under the FAO, the ECE and the ISDR. A comprehensive set of documentation has been transmitted to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe on 27 December 2002 and in copy to the Fire Group members.

In his *tour d'horizon* on fire disasters during the last two years he elaborated on the wildland fire problems and losses in urban areas and at the urban-wildland interface. The extremely high losses of structures and infrastructures during the wildland fire crises in the U.S.A. and Australia in the biennium 2001-2002 reveal the increasing vulnerability of urban and peri-urban populations. Smoke pollution generated by wildland fires is increasingly affecting both rural and urban communities. South East Asia, Australia, the Americas and Russia suffered extreme pollution burdens in the past years that resulted in respiratory infections in adults and acute respiratory infections in children, acute and chronic changes in pulmonary function, respiratory symptoms, asthma attacks, and cardiovascular diseases. An increase of hospital admissions was noted in many cities. At present no information is available on increased daily mortality due to wildland fire smoke pollution. This lack of information is due to the lacking awareness of authorities and hospitals.

2. Reports of Fire Group Members and Invited Guests

German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW)

The representative of the THW, Mr. Richard van Hazebrouck, reviewed the capabilities of the THW to provide logistical / catering support for all kinds of emergency situations including fire. In 2002 help has been requested, among other, by the EU during the oil spill crisis on the Spanish Atlantic coast. The THW provides a database of experts and expert groups (jointly with the Frankfurt Fire Department) and its capability to charter short- and long-range transport aircraft and ships at short-term notice. THW provides eight rapid response units and maintains a SAR Task Force. THW underscored the need for the Fire Group to stay under the umbrella of the INSARAG Network, especially considering the INSARAG mandate that is required to obtain short-term funding for emergency response.

Frankfurt Fire Department (Germany)

The representative of Frankfurt Fire Department, Mr. Karl-Heinz Frank, provided a retrospective on the formation of the Fire Group in 1999, the controversial debate within the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe, the lack of terms of reference for the group, questions of membership and responsibilities, the still lacking resource database (that should represent an added value to the EU database), the need for specific fire guidelines following the INSARAG template, and the interface procedures with other networks. He underscored the necessity the Fire Group to stay within the INSARAG Network to provide off-site consultation, on-site consultation and on-site response.

Ministry for the Interior, Finland

The representative of the Ministry for the Interior, Finland, Mr. Timo Heikkilä, described the recent activities in Finland to increase the national capabilities in wildland fire research and development, the FINRESCUE UNDAC Support Module that is ready for deployment. The Ministry for Interior strongly suggests to strengthen the INSARAG Regional Africa/Europe Fire Group.

State Fire Service, Ministry of Interior, Poland

The delegation from Poland, represented by the Deputy Chief of the State Fire Service and of National Civil Defence of Poland, Mr. Ryszard Grosset, and Chief of the National Centre for Coordination of Rescue and Protection of Population, Mr. Marek Komorowski, highlighted the similarities of USAR operations and response to other disasters. The delegation questioned if another parallel or duplicated network should be founded to host disaster response other than SAR in collapsed urban structures and strongly underscored the need to maintain the Fire Group within INSARAG. With relation to newly emerging disaster issues, such as the recent floods in Europe, the delegation urged to think about a Flood Group within INSARAG. Like in the case of fire problems it is necessary to have specialized response teams for flood disasters.

BASF Fire Department (Germany)

The representative of the BASF Fire Department, Mr. Siegfried Fiedler, reported about the specific requirements for Hazmat disasters and the required expertise of Hazmat specialists to provide off-site and on-site advice or on-site technical support. He underscored the need of maintaining the Hazmat subgroup within INSARAG and the need to have service-level agreements for paying the services of Hazmat incident response.

Public-Private Partnerships and INSARAG

The representative of the HELOG Group (Switzerland), Mr. Günther Klemm, introduced the capacities of the group to provide specialized helicopter services for fire support of USAR and fire emergencies. The company operates Super Puma AS 332 C1 and K-Max K-1200 helicopters and has representations in Switzerland, Germany, Austria and France, as well as in other continents. Rapid long-distance deployment of Super Puma helicopters by Ukrainian AN-124 is a routine mission.

The representative of the Aerospace Project Group, Mr. Hermann Hagen, reported about the cooperation with BETA AIR (Taganrog, Russia), the producer of the Russian Berijev Be-200 multi-purpose and fire-fighting amphibious aircraft. The new aircraft type is offering an interesting option to replace the over-aged fleet of fixed-wing fire-fighting planes. The Aerospace Project Group and BETA are registered (accredited) with UNFCC and available to offer conceptual and technical advice for planning international response to large-scale fire emergencies.

3. Discussion

The discussion on the future of the INSARAG Fire Group focussed on various aspects summarized below:

INSARAG Requirements

The meeting participants and the remote meeting contributors of the Fire Group unanimously underscored the necessity to have in place a strong regional or international response capability to fire (industrial fire, Hazmat, wildland fire). A large fire disaster, possibly in conjunction with

regional wars, terrorist attacks or as a secondary consequence of natural disasters, may occur at any time and requires the preparation of response capabilities.

The Group concludes that it would be irresponsible if such arrangements would not be built at international level. No parallel structure to the Fire Group should be established outside of INSARAG in order to allow concentration of efforts, especially considering limited resources.

UN General Assembly adopted the Resolution A/57/L.60

The GA resolution is an important vehicle for promoting and strengthening the effectiveness and coordination of international disaster assistance in future. The INSARAG Group as well as other organisms of the international fire community will provide the necessary inputs to the UN Secretary General for his report to the 59th Session of the GA to broaden the resolution and include all natural and technogenic disasters in addition to the classical USAR tasks. It is aimed to discuss the GA Resolution A/57/L.60 at the upcoming Global Wildland Fire Summit (October 2003) and call for a modified GA Resolution or an international convention.

INSARAG Guidelines

There is a clear need for specific guidelines for fire response as well as for newly emerging disasters in the Africa/Europe Region, particularly floods. Joint guidelines should be developed for the Industrial Fire and Hazmat Subgroups. The Wildland Fire Subgroup will elaborate on a strategic concept that will adopt the Incident Command System (ICS) for wildland fire emergencies at international level. It is planned to address this issue at the upcoming meeting of the International Liaison Committee of the 3rd International Wildland Fire Conference and Global Wildland Fire Summit (October 2003).

Europe - Africa Partnership

Following the experience of recent wildland fire disasters in Africa and the response by the Vice Chair of the INSARAG Africa/Europe Group, Mr. M. Belkhir, as expressed in his letter to the Fire Group dated 10 January 2003, there is an urgent need to establish firm partnerships between Europe and Africa in order to assist the disadvantaged countries of Africa in coping with fire disasters. Most important is a program that will ensure the preparedness of African partners for possible fire emergency situations. In the field of wildland fire the GFMC is currently preparing the International GFMC / ISDR Training Course Integrated Fire Management for Fire Managers in Sub-Sahara Africa which will be conducted in South Africa 12-30 May 2003 (pending on funding by the German Foreign Office). Through on-site capacity building of key personnel recipient countries will be enabled to request and integrate incoming INSARAG support in case of fire emergencies.

INSARAG - Fire Network and Focal Points

Considering the limited resources of the INSARAG Secretariat / FCSS the Fire Group will organize itself by establishing a database and networking activity.

The THW Germany has offered to serve as a liaison / Focal Point to the INSARAG Secretariat / FCSS for the whole Fire Group. THW in conjunction with the Frankfurt Fire Department will establish a database for the Industrial Fire Subgroup. BASF Germany will take over responsibilities to establish a database for the HAZMAT Subgroup, in conjunction with already existing systems in Germany (TUIS/VCI) and Europe (ICE/CEFIC). The GFMC will be available to continue to serve as a Focal Point for the Wildland Fire Subgroup and continue to provide its regional and global network capabilities.

4. Conclusions, Decisions and Recommendations

In accordance with the presentations and discussions the Fire Group concluded, decided and recommended the following:

Conclusions

The INSARAG Africa/Europe Regional Fire Group evaluated the trend of increasing natural disasters and the increasing vulnerability of urban and rural populations to the impact of natural disasters and secondary technogenic disasters. The group concluded that the coupled consequences of climate change and human-induced global changes and the increasing vulnerability of human populations and urban/residential environments require the establishment and strengthening of international cooperation in disaster preparedness and response. Fire and floods must urgently receive highest priority because international mechanisms for cooperation have not been addressed adequately.

The proposal to accommodate the Fire Group in a separate network (not within INSARAG) was rejected because it would create unnecessary additional networking structures. A separate network would not necessarily be recognized by OCHA and governments to become eligible for dispatch and cost reimbursement.

It is clear, however, that in the case of fires occurring in natural systems (= wildland fires) it is mandatory to coordinate with OCHA's Environmental Emergencies Section which is responsible for responding to environmental emergency and natural disaster events. The interface procedures that have been signed between the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) in 2001 intend to strengthen the cooperation in this type of disaster.

However, an operational INSARAG Fire structure would offer capabilities that go an important step beyond the off-site and on-site assessment and coordination capabilities of UNDAC teams: INSARAG Fire would provide on-site capabilities to contribute to efficient and fast response to a fire or Hazmat emergency.

There is no doubt that agreements must be sought between INSARAG Fire and other groups that could be utilized as well to strengthen international cooperation in disaster response. In case of Wildland Fires the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit is the key partner at UN level. The Industrial Fire Subgroup will identify linkages to CTIF, and the HAZMAT Subgroup will check common interests with the European Chemical Association.

Decisions

The INSARAG Fire Group decided to organize itself at operational level without being dependent on a chairperson. The German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW) will serve as an INSARAG focal point for all fire emergencies and consult with the three Subgroups Industrial Fire, HAZMAT and Wildland Fire accordingly. The Subgroups will:

- Develop specific terms of reference
- Develop specific guidelines as subchapters of the INSARAG Guidelines
- Set up a database and networking capabilities

Recommendations

The Fire Group recommends the INSARAG Africa/Europe Regional Group

- to provide an enabling atmosphere for the Fire Group to operationalize dedicated Subnets under the INSARAG umbrella;

- with respect to the emerging threats of other natural disasters on urban and rural assets and populations, such as extreme precipitation and flood events, INSARAG is urged to consider broadening its mandate towards including other disasters affecting urban and rural populations.
- With respect to promoting and strengthening the effectiveness and coordination of international disaster assistance the Fire Group will seek the support of the INSARAG Regions to modify the GA Resolution A/57/L.60 towards a broader scope that would include all disasters.

Timeframe for activities

The timeframe of activities will be implemented after the Netherlands meeting in April 2003. It must be noted at this stage at the late publication of the next meeting of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe on 16-17 April 2003 has led to a collision with other events, notably a regional fire conference in Turkey, scheduled for the same week.

Fire Group Focal Point

- THW to set up focal point (liaise with INSARAG Secretariat / OCHA FCSS) and provide hotline arrangements with HAZMAT (BASF) and Wildland Fire (GFMC)

Industrial Fire Subgroup

- Develop Draft Joint Industrial Fire / HAZMAT Guideline Chapter(s) to be included to INSARAG Guidelines, based on the draft of and in cooperation with Vienna Fire Department (Austria)

HAZMAT Subgroup

The HAZMAT Subgroup is the focal point for a three level assistance within the INSARAG involvement:

Level 1: Advice by phone

Level 2: Advice at the scene

Level 3: Technical support at the scene

Activities:

- Develop Draft Joint Industrial Fire / HAZMAT Guideline Chapter(s) to be included to INSARAG Guidelines, based on the draft of and in cooperation with Vienna Fire Department (Austria)
- Set up a HAZMAT structure within INSARAG
- Equipment and personal recruiting out of existing systems and listed in a database
- Service Level agreements

Wildland Fire Subgroup

- Develop Draft Wildland Fire Guidelines to be included to INSARAG Guidelines, based on recommendations / Working Group to be set up by the 3rd Int. Wildland Fire Conference and Global Wildland Fire Summit (October 2003)
- Conduct ECE/FAO/ILO International 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, 15-19 April 2003), including multinational Wildland Fire Exercise EASTEX FIRE 2003.
- Utilize the 3rd Int. Wildland Fire Conference and Global Wildland Fire Summit (October 2003) for furthering international cooperative efforts in fire emergency response.

Annex I: Meeting Participants

M = Member, G = Guest

Addresses of INSARAG Fire Group members are attached in a separate file

- * Mr. Siegfried Fiedler, BASF AG Fire Department (M)
- * Mr. Karl-Heinz Frank, Frankfurt Fire Department (M)
- * Mr. Johann G. Goldammer, GFMC / UN-ISDR/IATF-WG4 / UN-ECE/FAO (M, Convener)
- * Mr. Ryszard Grosset, State Fire Service, Poland (M)
- * Mr. Hermann Hagen, Aerospace Project Group (G)
- * Mr. Richard van Hazebrouck, German Disaster Relief Organization THW (M)
- * Mr. Timo Heikkilä, Ministry for Interior, Finland (M)
- * Mr. Günther Klemm, HELOG Group (G)
- * Mr. Marek Komorowski, State Fire Service, Poland (M)
- * Mr. Wolfgang Lindner, Hamburg Fire Department (M)

- * Mr. Andreas Casper, GFMC Staff (Host)
- * Mr. Alexander Held, GFMC Staff (Host)
- * Mr. Daniel Nagy, GFMC Staff (Host)