



EDITORIAL

Strengthening International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management

The year 2007 started with a number of events in favour of recognizing and supporting the intent of the international wildland fire science and management community to strengthen international cooperation in fire management. The vision of building a global culture of fire management by sharing common goals and action had already received major support by the recommendations of the International Wildland Fire Summit of 2003 (see IFFN Special Issue No. 29) and the activities of the Global Wildland Fire Network (see IFFN Special Issue No. 31).

While there was limited agreement by countries to develop an International Wildland Fire Accord, as suggested by the Wildland Fire Advisory Group (WFAG) in 2004 (see IFFN No. 31) and as laid down in a position paper "Framework for the Development of the International Wildland Fire Accord" jointly developed by the WFAG, FAO and Global Observation of Forest Cover / Global Observation of Landcover Dynamics (GOF/C/GOLD) - Fire Mapping and Monitoring Team¹, the FAO-hosted Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Forest Management and the FAO's Commission on Forestry (Rome, Italy, 2005) called upon FAO, together with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and collaborating partners to prepare a strategy to enhance international cooperation in fire management.

As follow up, an Expert Consultation on Wildland Fire Management (Madrid, Spain, 2006) recommended that the foundation of the strategy to enhance international cooperation in fire management should include: (i) a Global Assessment of Fire Management; (ii) a review of International Cooperation; (iii) the development of Voluntary Guidelines for Fire Management; and (iv) an implementation partnership. The first three products were collectively developed by fire experts from throughout the world, notably by representatives of the Global Wildland Fire Network, and presented to the 2007 meeting of FAO's Commission on Forestry. The Committee requested FAO, in collaboration with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Global Wildland Fire Network and other partners, to finalize the Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation on Fire Management and welcomed the plan to present it at the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference, to be held in Spain in May 2007. The Committee also welcomed the development of Voluntary Guidelines on Fire Management in a multi-stakeholder process. It recommended that Members and forestry stakeholders make use of the guidelines and that FAO and partners facilitate their implementation in order to improve practices on the prevention, suppression and recovery from forest fire. The Committee also recommended that the Guidelines be maintained as a living document, to be updated and improved by incorporating feedback from implementation at country level.

The 4th International Wildland Fire Conference, which was held in Seville from 14 to 17 May 2007, provided a forum for fire management leaders, politicians, professionals, researchers and practitioners from throughout the globe to discuss and work on critical fire issues affecting people, communities, resources and ecosystems in all Regions and work on a cooperative way in the consolidation of a Global Wildland Fire Management Strategy; and to strengthen the effectiveness of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks and support their links into the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network

Freiburg – Geneva, June 2007

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¹ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/Global-Wildland-Fire-Framework-12-April-2005.pdf>