



## National Round Table on Fire Management, Republic of Macedonia

Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, 9 November 2016

### Background and Rationale

As a consequence of climate change and socio-economic and demographic changes the countries of the Western Balkan region are becoming more vulnerable to be affected by large wildfires. The increasing threats of extreme wildfires, which may lead to emergencies and reach disaster dimensions, are calling for enhancing coordinated preparedness to manage wildfires both at national level and by cross-border cooperation.

The Council of Europe (CoE) through the Secretariat of the Euro-Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) cooperates and provides support to CoE Member States in the endeavor to enhance governance for the prevention, preparedness and management of major natural and technological disasters. In the arena of wildfire disaster risk reduction the CoE is working through the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), a Specialised Euro-Mediterranean Center under the EUR-OPA agreement based in Germany.

In order to ensure that initiatives and projects addressing wildfire disaster risk reduction in the Western Balkans are coordinated with the thematic agenda of other regional organizations and agreements the CoE and the GFMC are closely cooperating with

- the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction / United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) in the implementation of the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*<sup>1</sup>
- the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in the implementation of the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 6/2014<sup>2</sup>
- the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative of five international organizations – the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Regional Environment Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)<sup>3</sup>
- the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in following up the *UNECE/FAO Regional Forum on Crossboundary Fire Management (2013)*, co-sponsored by CoE EUR-OPA, notably through the establishment of the (voluntary) *International Wildfire Preparedness Mechanism (IWPM)*<sup>4</sup>

On behalf of the CoE EUR-OPA agreement the GFMC has been a founding partner of the Regional Southeast Europe / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network<sup>5</sup> (one of the 14 Regional Wildland Fire Networks of the Global Wildland Fire Network<sup>6</sup>) and supported the establishment of the Regional Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC) at the Faculty of Forestry in Skopje in 2010.<sup>7</sup>

Between 2004 and 2016 a large number of activities within countries and at regional level within the Regional SE Europe / Caucasus Wildland fire Network have been conducted.<sup>8</sup> Among other the following

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/intro/OSCE-Ministerial-Council-2014-Decision-6-Enhancing-DRR.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEurope/SEEurope\\_8.html](http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEurope/SEEurope_8.html)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iwpm/index.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEurope/SEEurope.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/globalNet.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rfmc.mk/>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEurope/SEEurope\\_1.html](http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEurope/SEEurope_1.html)

activities aimed at supporting nations to develop a National Fire Management Policy and to foster regional cooperation in fire management, notably:

- Proposal for a Regional Strategy on International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network, presented at the 33rd Session of the FAO European Forestry Commission (Zvolen, Slovakia, 25 May 2006)<sup>9</sup>
- Development of the *Guidelines for the Defense of Rural Populations, Local Communities and Municipality Leaders in the Balkan Region* ("Village Defense Guidelines")<sup>10</sup>
- Development of the *EuroFire Competency Standards and Training Materials*<sup>11</sup>
- Organization of two regional fire management training courses hosted by Turkey in 2010 and 2014<sup>12</sup>
- Various national and regional analyses of the fire situation in the Western Balkan countries, the last conducted in 2015 by RFMC on behalf of the Regional Environment Center (REC) (ADA/REC/ENVSEC/RFMC Project *Environment and Security Initiative: Addressing the risk of forest fires in the SEE*), resulting in the publication of country studies for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia<sup>13</sup>

At international level the Western Balkan countries contributed to various voluntary processes and informal agreement address international cooperation in fire management, the latest including

- Continuing participation in the UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group (WFAG)<sup>14</sup>
- The above-mentioned *UNECE/FAO Regional Forum on Crossboundary Fire Management* (2013), notably through the establishment of the (voluntary) *International Wildfire Preparedness Mechanism* (IWPM) (cf. footnote 4)
- The International Wildland Fire Conferences<sup>15</sup>
- The series in International Aerial Firefighting Conferences<sup>16</sup>
- Development of the International Fire Aviation Guidelines<sup>17</sup>

With these activities the CoE EUR-OPA Secretariat is encouraging its member states to intensify the dialogue on national cross-sectoral and regional cross-boundary levels to enhance inter-operability, efficiency and effectiveness of fire management, notably by sharing of responsibilities and resources.

### **Support by the Euro-Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) in 2016**

Following the history and experience of the GFMC in establishing and facilitating national inter-agency cooperation and international cross-boundary cooperation in fire management in many countries and regions globally, the Secretariat of the Euro-Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) proposed to support the Republic of Macedonia to organize a National Round Table on Fire Management and a Regional Consultation on Cross-border Fire Management in 2016. Both events will be facilitated by the Regional Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC) in Skopje.

The National Round Table shall convene the national actors / stakeholders, which have a mandate (agencies) or voluntary commitment (civil society) in fire management (fire management at "landscape level", i.e. on all types of lands including forests, protected areas, agricultural and pasture lands, and the interface areas between residential areas and vegetated lands).

At regional level countries bordering Republic of Macedonia shall be invited to review past experiences in cross-boundary cooperation in fire management and propose future procedures for enhancing the

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEEurope/Strategy-WFM-RSEEFWN-2-02-05-2006.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/Manag/CBFiM\\_11.htm](http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/Manag/CBFiM_11.htm)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.euro-fire.eu/> (BCMS language will be available by late August 2016)

<sup>12</sup> 2014 regional training: <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEEurope/Antalya-2014.html>

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEEurope/SEEEurope\\_2.html](http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEEurope/SEEEurope_2.html)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/Rationale-and-Introduction-1.html>

<sup>15</sup> The last International Wildland Fire Conference was co-sponsored by CoE EUR-OPA and hosted by Republic of Korea in 2015: <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/korea-2015.html>

<sup>16</sup> The last International Aerial Firefighting Conference was co-sponsored by CoE EUR-OPA and hosted by Croatia in 2015: [http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/course/meeting/2015/meet2015\\_03.htm](http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/course/meeting/2015/meet2015_03.htm)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iwpm/ifawg.htm>

effectiveness and efficiency of cross-boundary cooperation in fire management, particularly with regards to enhancing inter-operability for cooperation in wildfire emergency situations.

### **The National Round Table on Fire Management**

The National Round Table on Fire Management will be held on 9 November 2016 in Skopje. The objectives of the National Round Table include:

- Review of the national legislative and institutional framework in fire management
- Review inter-agency coordination and its effectiveness
- Discuss enhancing capacities and coordinated involvement of governmental and civil society stakeholders in fire management

Participants of the National Round Table (proposed):

- National agencies responsible for fire management (fire prevention and fire suppression in forests and other lands), emergency management and land management in general (forests, agricultural and pasture lands, other lands)
- Other relevant state institutions (public health, traffic, communication, Armed Forces)
- Academic institutions involved in wildland fire and fire-related research
- NGOs and other civil society groups, including fire volunteers, environmental organizations, etc.

Expected outcomes of the National Round Table (proposed):

- Recommendations for fostering the national inter-agency and civil society cooperation in fire management in Republic of Macedonia
- Recommendations to the Council of Europe for further action

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