



Regional Session B: Australasia and North America
Sevilla, 15 May 2007 (Tuesday), 16:00-19:00

Standardization in Fire Management – A Key for Cooperation

During this Regional Session, the use of the term ‘Fire Management’ was that as defined within the Voluntary Guidelines.

Self-assessment of the fire situation and fire management capabilities:

The Australasia and North America Regional Session was presented with, and subsequently supported the findings of the FAO Fire Management Global Assessments of 2006, conducted within the framework of the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005, (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/en/>).

Global issues impacting on the two regions were identified and discussed. They included:

- Fire suppression challenges – steadily increasing costs, demographic changes (limited young recruitment), increasing fire activity and greater demand on limited resources, equipment renewal and upgrades, and litigation
- Wildland – Urban Interface (WUI) – continuous expansion of the WUI and greater exposure to fire regimes of increasing fire activity
- Land management – focus on the core issue of fire in land management rather than the suppression of wildfire
- Climate change – consistent general trend of increasing area burned, fire intensity, fire severity, and longer fire seasons
- Air quality – increasing wildfire activity causing release of greater amount of pollutants, resulting in greater public exposure to hazardous emissions

Conclusions / Recommendations:

This regional session has highlighted the existing strong cooperative approach between the two geographic regions in fire management and fire research. Both regions are experiencing similar issues of increasing fire activity, increasing threat to human life, health and property, and greater demand on limited suppression resources. Resource sharing and multi-agency integration (through the Incident Command System, ICS) are key strategies for adapting to new emerging fire regimes, and the Australasia and North American regions are in a unique position to strengthen their capacities in this regard due to hemispheric differences in fire season timing. These factors have paved the way for enhanced cooperation through the signing of several Memorandums of Understanding:

- *Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre and the United States Forest Service*
- *Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre and the Australian -New Zealand Forests Fire Management Group*
- *Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre and the Australasian Fire Authorities Council*
- *United States Forest Service and the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre*

The Australasia and North America Regional Session recommends to the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference:

1. That a series of Regional Consultations be held globally, within the next 1-2 years, to progress the global issues which are impacting on the geographic areas covered in this 4th International Wildland Fire Conference's regional sessions.
2. That the 2nd International Wildland Fire Summit be held within the next 2 to 4 years under the auspices of the United Nations, aimed at developing a non-legally binding international accord on cooperation in wildland fire management.
3. That the international wildland fire community pursue the development of a global-scale international resource sharing strategy to assist countries with a) fire management planning activities (including prescribed fire for ecological purposes and fuels management), and b) active support during periods of wildland fire disaster.
4. Adopt the Strategies and Voluntary Guidelines for fire management and that the United Nations develops standards (e.g. training, fatigue management) to assist with the implementation of the Guidelines.
5. Encourages organizations to participate in Fire Management Actions Alliance as one part of the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines.
6. That the United Nations promotes the global adoption of ICS including the publishing of an annual list of countries which have implemented ICS.
7. That a Symposium be held for fire management training professionals, within the next 2 years, to encourage global collaboration on training.

In accord with the desire to see further action on global issues impacting on wildland fire within the geographic regions of Australasia and North America, the Regional Session proposed that the Australasia and North America collaborators shall hold a joint Regional Consultation, in 2008.

The joint Regional Consultation will draw upon the collective intelligence to provide specific actions for global issues including the impacts of climate change, Wildland–Urban Interface, water availability, and management of the changing vegetative cover. In recognition of the need for scientific evidence to underpin the management policies, the Regional Consultation will bring together both academic and operational fire managers.