

## 6<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference

### Regional Statement of the Northeast Asia Region – An Input Paper to the Conference Statement

13 October 2015

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#### General Fire Assessment

In Northeast Asia, some forest ecosystems are becoming increasingly vulnerable to fire as a consequence of regional climate change, careless fire use and reduced institutional capacities to manage fires. These include mixed forests of the Far East of Russia, which are not fire-adapted but during the last decade have been subject to large wildfires. The same refers to the Northeast of China where wildfires often burn at large scales involving high losses of valuable forests and humanitarian problems such as air pollution, injuries and fatalities of wildland firefighters.

Transboundary fires are noted between neighboring countries which are sharing a land- border, e.g. between China and Russia, or between South and North Korea. Cross-boundary transport of smoke and regional smoke pollution has become a regular phenomenon. The last fire and smoke pollution period in the Northeast Asia Region occurred in April 2015, resulting from wildfires in the Transbaikal Region of the Russian Federation, resulting in long-range transport of smoke pollutants to the Korean Peninsula and stretching as far as the West Coast of North America (Canada, U.S.A.).<sup>1</sup> Such large-scale events require coordinated transboundary actions. As part of such actions, the Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network Cluster was established after the 5<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference in order to synergize with the Regional Wildland Fire Networks covering the vast territories of Asia. In addition, in order to enhance regional fire preparedness and response, the Asia Wildland Fire Training Program was initiated.

#### Conclusions

The work of the Northeast Asia Wildland Fire Network is embedded in the cooperative work of the Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network Cluster. The initial participation of wildland fire scientists and state authorities of some countries has revealed a high interest in sharing information and resources for capacity building and joint fire management in the region. The active participation, including provision of finances, by national authorities and international organizations, however, should be increased. In order to realize this, a strategic plan including a timetable of concrete actions in fostering international cooperation must be developed. One of the important steps is the organization of the follow-up work at national level in each country. The major steps in cooperation must be carried out at the national level, including annual meetings of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks and the biennial participation of the meetings of the UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group (WFAG), and joint projects of implementation. Being aware that in most countries the problems associated with excessive application of fire in land use and socio-cultural activities, the humanitarian and security consequences of fires and fire emissions are not yet solved. The participants of the Northeast Asian region recommend to the authorities at all levels and international organizations:

#### Recommendations

- 1) To support vitalizing the Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network, which was established in Korea in 2013, through developing cooperative cross-boundary regional fire management capacity and enhancing international cooperation;
- 2) To support nurturing the Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network as a hub of wildfire information exchange, education, training and international cooperation;
- 3) To support the operation of the Asia Wildland Fire Training Program in Korea, a follow-up project of the 6th IWFC initiated by the Korean government. In this regard, the government of Korea seeks cooperation from countries around the world on the establishment of the Program; and
- 4) To support the Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Conference (second conference to be held in Indonesia in 2017), which will be held every four years at half intervals between the International Wildland Fire Conferences.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/CentralAsia/MongoliaFireManagementWeek2015.html>