

**Regional Session D: Eastern Baltic, Central Asia, and Northeast Asia**

Sevilla, 14 May 2007 (Monday), 16:00-20:00

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**Regional Fire Assessment and  
Draft Conclusions and Recommendations for Discussion****Self-assessment of the fire situation and fire management capabilities:****Central and Northeast Asia:**

- 1) The Central and Northeast Asian regions for the last two decades are experiencing an increase in occurrence, area burnt and environmental impacts caused by wildland fires;
- 2) In most countries the damage from wildland fires and the cost of their suppression, as well as their influence on human health and wellbeing, are become more noticeable;
- 3) The scale of wildland fire sometimes has transboundary effects and demands international and cooperative efforts for the solution;
- 4) Reasons for the escalation of destructive wildfires are, among other, result of the rapidly changing socio-economic conditions, declining public budgets for fire management, and side effects of illegal logging;
- 5) Projected trends of climate change impacts on vegetation cover and fire regimes, as well as observed demographic and socio-economic trends suggest that wildland fire may continue to play a major role in the destruction of vegetation cover in Central and Northeast Asia, resulting, among other, in accelerating steppization, permafrost thawing and desiccation of peatlands / wetlands.
- 6) There is no international operational mechanism in the region allowing rapid re-grouping of forces to extinguish the large-scale, catastrophic fires;
- 7) There is a lack of a comprehensive understanding among fire specialists, policy makers and the general public of the nature and the role of fire in natural ecosystem processes, and in the concepts of fire management.

**Baltic Region / Western Eurasia:**

- 1) In the Baltic region and adjoining countries (Belarus, Ukraine, Western Russia), which are more densely populated than Central Asia and NE Asia, the extent of fires affecting natural forest and non-forest lands is less than in the Central and NE Asian regions.
- 2) However, an increasing of fires has been noted as a consequence of economic transition, including change of forest and land ownership, as well as the impacts of extremely long droughts and a generally warmer climate as a consequence of regional climate change;
- 3) Fires burning on radioactively contaminated vegetation in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine are an extremely high risk threatening human health and security in the region.
- 4) Fires burning in drained peatlands repeatedly have caused severe air pollution in Western Europe.
- 5) Progress has been made in the use of prescribed fire in nature conservation, forestry and landscape management in Central and Northern Europe. The application of prescribed fire in general is often not yet understood and accepted by some public agencies in the region.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

The participants of the Regional Session “D” recommend authorities in all levels and international organizations:

- 1) To foster the bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of wildland fire management, realization of joint research and practical projects advancing the knowledge on wildland fires;
- 2) To promote utilization of advanced methods and instruments of fire monitoring and taking fast decisions;
- 3) To develop a system of fire specialists training and awareness rise of the population on the role of wildland fires and the rules of fire prevention;
- 4) To arrange a detailed consideration of such documents as “Fire Management: Voluntary guidelines. Principles and Strategic Actions”, proposals for international cooperation development in fire management;
- 5) To support the efforts of the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network, its Secretariat, the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), the Regional Wildland Fire Networks in uniting the international activities in fire management, especially in collecting and disseminating the fire information, arranging the intensive international dialogue, projects, etc.;
- 6) To promote the establishing of International Wildland Fire Training Center having also the functions of the Regional Fire Monitoring Center in one of the NEA countries;
- 7) To consult members of the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network as experts and technical specialists in the elaboration of solutions in complex international disputes and problems.

The participants of the Regional Session “D” urge authorities and international organizations to provide the financial and technical assistance to the Global Wildland Fire Network, and in particular to the three regional networks represented in this session. 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 on the national level, including annual meetings of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks, and joint projects of implementation:

- 1) The network members should take advantage of the accumulated expertise in fire management and international cooperation by international community;
- 2) It must be ensured that results from dedicated meetings, conferences and symposia reach the decision-makers and that these will be challenged to provide the necessary support;
- 3) Member countries should continue to strengthen their commitments to promote regional cooperation, including joint investigations, joint fire management demonstration projects, consultations, and conferences;
- 4) National discussions on the Voluntary Fire Management Guidelines should be held with the inclusion of civil society and all institutional stakeholders;
- 5) Education and awareness campaigns related to forest fire prevention should be a continuing effort by governments;
- 6) The development of a globally accepted fire management terminology and definitions in the most important languages must be put on the priority list of actions;

- 7) Financial support must be provided to the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network and its secretariat, the GFMC, both by national authorities and international organizations;
- 8) Countries belonging to the UNISDR Regional Wildland Fire Networks must contribute to the creation of a Global Vegetation Fire Information System, an endeavour which will include the application of new technologies, advanced satellite systems for detecting and evaluating vegetation fires.

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

- Demographic changes, widespread poverty
- Land-use change and land management
- Climate change
- Human health, security and peace

Concerning the global issues impacting the regions, the participants of the Regional Session “D” recommend to the 4<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference:

1. That a series of Regional Consultations – tentatively addressing “Global Change and Wildland Fire: Regional Solutions for Fire Management” – be held globally, within the next 1-2 years, to progress the global issues which are impacting on the geographic areas covered in this 4<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference’s regional sessions.
2. That the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Wildland Fire Summit – tentatively addressing “Global Change and Wildland Fire: Fire Management Solutions for Mitigation and Adaptation” – be held within the next 2 to 4 years under the auspices of the UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group, aimed, among other, at developing a non-legally binding international accord on cooperation in fire management.

In accord with the desire to see further action on global issues impacting on wildland fire within the geographic regions of the Eastern Baltic Region, Central and Northeast Asia, the Regional Session proposes that the participating networks shall regional preparatory consultations within the next two years.