



INTEROPERABILITY WORKSHOP (IOW)

Wednesday 18 October 2017

IOW Statement

The interoperability workshop (IOW), which was convened by the International Fire Aviation Working Group (IFAWG) and the hosts of the Aerial Firefighting Conference Europe 2017, participating members met on the 18th of October 2017 to discuss the issues of interoperability in the field on aerial firefighting. Several of these issues have been tackled, amongst which were the development of the International Fire Aviation Guidelines and the International Manual of Common Rules for Fire Aviation (IMCR), both being developed by the IFAWG, transnational Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) within the framework of the European Canadair Operators Informal Group, reports of various exercises, including the exercise held in conjunction with the AFCE-2017, and the international evolution of aerial firefighting across the globe. With regards to what has been discussed during the session as well as global issues in aerial firefighting, the IOW issues the following statement:

A necessary enhancement of interoperability in aerial firefighting

The participants of the IOW recommend to enhance the interoperability in aerial firefighting, on the one hand through mutual help and cooperation, on the other hand through the adoption of guidelines and SOPs.

Meetings such as organized by IFAWG and this IOW are crucial to the enhancement of interoperability. They provide participating members with a room to discuss various issues and exchange methods, tips, operational tools and technological breakthroughs to one another, which is of great value to develop cooperation, maximise efficiency and diffuse practices amongst firefighting actors. Meetings of this kind shall be held on a more regular basis in order to bolster efficiency and diffusion, which means interoperability in the long term. SOPs shall as well be adopted in order to foster greater interoperability between aerial firefighting actors. Such an adoption would be a major leap forward to gain transnational interoperability.

The need for promoting bilateral and multilateral agreements

The IOW participants furthermore recommend the development of bilateral and multilateral agreements in the field of transnational firefighting. Transnational and transboundary cooperation is too often restricted to isolated fires that generate a temporary need for international help to solve the crisis. The IOW participants recommend that developing such agreements (for example through Memorandums of Understanding) would allow to increase the preparedness of multinational crisis management based on

tools and rules to be prepared before a crisis occurs and to be activated and implemented when needed, rather than *ad hoc* agreements that solely tackle one urgent issue at a time and often reached too late. The IOW therefore strongly believes that developing agreements of this kind will be a leap forward in fostering strong and durable cooperation.

A call for supranational funding and support

The IOW participants call for supranational institutions, especially the European Union, to support the development of internationally accepted voluntary rules, legal protocols and SOPs. As a matter of fact, both public support and funding from supranational organizations is required to gather support and visibility in order to foster greater cooperation and interoperability; to acquire global means and tools and appropriate technologies for firefighting; for enhancing international preparedness for fire crisis management and for capacity building of human resources. The IOW participants raise a united voice before these institutions and authorize the conveners of the IOW to address these recommendations with national and international agencies and institutions.