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Committee on wildfires needs support across political spectrum, Goldammer tells ANA

Not just Greece's ruling party and main opposition New Democracy but all the political parties in the country must agree to support the independent committee that is being set up to investigate the causes of wildfires, the director of the United Nations' Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) Dr. Johann Georg Goldammer said in an interview with the Athens-Macedonian News Agency (ANA) published on Saturday.

Goldammer, who accepted a proposal made by Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras to set up and chair such a committee, noted that this support was essential:

"Logic must prevail over sentiment and political interests. This is an essential condition in my opinion and what I am asking for in order to achieve success," he said.

The Max Planck Institute researcher, GFMC director and expert on the "ecology" of fires met with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras at the Greek government headquarters on Thursday.

Goldammer said he first visited Greece in 1971 and actually helped to fight a fire on the island of Thassos in 1985. He stressed that the problem of wildfires, both in Greece and throughout the world, "is the result of many uncontrollable factors that must be eradicated". As he had pointed out to the prime minister, Goldammer said, fires cannot be fought using only technical means but required a comprehensive approach, while the main thing was to turn the necessary action into law and ensure its implementation.

The committee chaired by Goldammer will be international and have a core team of four scientists, one of which will act as its representative and liaison with the prime minister's office.

"An international committee does not mean that more experts will come in from abroad. Greece has a large number of exceptional professionals and scientists that will participate," he said. The work will start by drawing up a schedule and meetings with all the bodies involved in the coming weeks, he added, after which the situation will be analysed to pinpoint any gaps in prevention and fire-fighting.

While the disastrous fire in Mati had been the trigger that prompted the prime minister's invitation, Goldammer clarified, the committee would not be carrying out an in-depth investigation into the causes of the Mati fire per se, leaving that work to others.

"I have to say this clearly: changes in landscape, changes in land use, mass escape to holiday resorts and subsequent anarchic development – Mati was such an example – climate change and the extreme weather phenomena that this causes, are the results of actions and omissions spanning decades. We at the UN Fire Monitoring Centre and the Council of Europe do not look at these fires in isolation but within this extremely complex framework. All the factors that cause them must be taken into account...later, when we reach our conclusions, it will possibly become apparent that they concern cases like Mati as well."

Source

<http://int.ert.gr/committee-on-wildfires-needs-support-across-political-spectrum-goldammer-tells-ana/>