

# **International Wildland Fire Summit, 8 October 2003**

## **Background Document**

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### **Wildland Fire '97**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Background**

Wildland Fire '97 took place on May 25-30, 1997 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The conference was sponsored by the North American Forestry Commission, Fire Management Study Group as well as numerous government agencies and private companies. It was endorsed by the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, the Food and Agricultural Organization, and the European Economic Commission.

There were 565 delegates from 38 countries, representing a global cross-section of policy makers, managers, scientists, and private industry. The theme of the conference was wildland fire and sustainable development, including social, economic, and ecological perspectives.

### **Principles**

Wildland Fire '97 delegates agree on several principles.

- \* Fire is a key element of sustainable development.
- \* Fire is both a threat and a tool.
- \* Fire and its effects are not constrained by geographic or political boundaries.
- \* Fire is one of the few natural disturbances that can be forecast and mitigated.
- \* Fire endangers people and communities.
- \* Fire can depress local economies.
- \* Some fire impacts are irreversible.
- \* Fire is an important element of most global ecosystems and atmospheric processes.
- \* Fire's role in the global environment is not fully understood or appreciated.

## **Vision**

In recognizing these principles, delegates to Wildland Fire '97 envision:

- \* Increased awareness of fire's impacts on sustainability, including communities, ecosystems, and the environment.
- \* Increased understanding of fire's role and avoiding irreversible actions.
- \* Increased international cooperation in fire management, fire research, sharing information, and implementing technology.

## **Needs**

Delegates to Wildland Fire '97 acknowledge the work of previous fire conferences and ongoing international initiatives in wildland fire. Building upon this dialogue, we agree that there is a compelling need to:

- \* increase awareness of the impact of fire on sustainable development
- \* incorporate wildland fire into land management policies
- \* compile international data on wildland fire
- \* expand our understanding of fire's role in global processes
- \* establish international partnerships and agreements
- \* coordinate international research
- \* continue international dialogue
- \* implement appropriate technology
- \* share information, knowledge, and experience
- \* evaluate international progress in wildland fire

## **Recommendations:**

1. That a group be formally established under the auspices of the United Nations to facilitate addressing global wildland fire needs.
2. That the global wildland fire community reconvenes in 5 years to evaluate progress in resolving these needs. A consortium of international fire groups should meet to develop and promote a follow-up conference.

### A Statement of Endorsement

The North American Forestry Commission, Fire Management Study Group is pleased to have sponsored Wildland Fire '97 - the latest of a series of international fire conferences during the past decade. Beginning with the 1989 international fire conference in Boston, the global fire community has collectively addressed important international issues related to wildland fire. The Fire Management Study Group endorses the following recommendations made by the 1996 conference, held in Shushenskoe, Russia.


The following are needed at a global scale:

- \* Quantitative information on the spatial and temporal distributions of vegetation fires.
- \* A satellite system to quantify the extent of and impact of wildland fires.
- \* A process to gather and share fire information on the World-Wide Web.
- \* Mechanisms to permit community self-reliance for mitigating wildfire damages and permitting rapid and effective resource sharing.
- \* A research, prevention, and control program for areas with unique threats to the health and safety of firefighters and the public.

For the North American Forestry Commission, Fire Management Study Group

  
Mary Jo Lavin  
United States

  
Oscar Cedeno  
Mexico

  
Albert Simard  
Canada