Regional Session VI: Regional Subsahara Wildland Fire Africa Networks

Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, 13 October 2015

SESSION REPORT

The regional session provided valuable insights into the activities of Regional Wildland fire Networks in Sub-Saharan African as well as country specific reports and success stories and perspectives' on wildland fire management. Overall, the presentations revealed that some networks are doing well whereas others are not. It was noted that though a lot was agreed on concerning the activities of the Southern Africa Network (AfriFireNet) in the past, member countries have not shown commitment. Consequently, implementations of agreed actions have stalled. From the discussions at the regional session, the revival of AfriFireNet was supported. The following suggestions were made to revive the network and move it forward. Some of these recommendations are also applicable to other Networks.

Way Forward for the Regional Network

- The running of the Network should be done by a steering committee and not just one person.
- County focal contact points from member countries and departments can be identified so that new contacts can be made.
- Tangible and specifics objectives need to be outlined for the Network with activities planned to support the network.

Action points to revive the network were as follows:

- Send e-mail to get people to update their records.
- Put together a newsletter and inform members of the way forward from the conference statement.
- Need to continue to seek political support.
- Revisit MOUs signed to look at their implementation.
- Different organization would have to show personal commitment.

Integrated Fire management Concept

The definition of Integrated Fire Management (IFM) was revisited. The following were suggested to be included in the definition.

- The use of traditional knowledge
- IFM must be set within a legal framework
- Information sharing and communication

In line with the above suggestions the definition of IFM was modified to read:

"Integrated fire management is a series of actions, within a legal framework and respecting traditional knowledge, that includes fire awareness activities, fire prevention activities, prescribed burning, resource sharing, co-operation, co-ordination, fire detection, fire suppression and fire damage rehabilitation as well as research and training at local, provincial, national, and regional levels in order to create a sustainable and well balanced environment, reduce unwanted wildfire damage and promote the beneficial use of fire"

To ensure the effective implementation of IFM regionally, IFM should take place in an atmosphere that encourages information sharing and capacity –building amongst stakeholders. In order for this to take place there is a need for the establishment of a co-ordination Centre for the region.

The role of the Centre should be to encourage communication amongst stakeholders' co-ordinate capacity building, training, share and disperse data and weather information and put in place mutual aid agreements for the sharing of resources.

Perspective of SAFNet on Network Activities

SAFNet will continue to function as a voluntary network with its members and funding from IGBP System for Analysis, Research and Training (START) for a meeting/workshop every two years, but recognizes that this is not the best model to ensure the networks sustainability in the future. SAFNet would therefore begin to lobby governments, industry and public and private partners for support of the network.

SAFNet have identified that the products that have been developed for Fire Management in the region is not being disseminated to the various "end users" of the data. Fire products are made available to countries but departments and agencies within the countries are not receiving the data to support their fire management activities. This is an issue that will be the key topic of discussion at the next SAFNet meeting in 2016.

SAFNet, would continue to work with other networks in support of Fire Management in the Region.

Conclusion

The meeting ended with a decision to continue the network activities despite inadequate funding and the challenges. It was mentioned that political will and stakeholder participation and co-operation are needed to move the network activities forward. The various Networks will continue to work with the little resources available but will mobilize resources in member countries to support their activities.