ENVSEC Project Fiche
Fiche overview

Project title	**Improving radiological and environmental awareness in territories affected by the Chernobyl accident in Belarus and Ukraine with a focus on wildfire management**
Trust Fund project number	xxxx
Beneficiary region	Eastern Europe
Beneficiary countries	Belarus and Ukraine
Thematic focus area	Hazardous substances reduction, transboundary management of natural resources
Project objective	Reduce public health, environmental and security risks posed by wildfires in the territories affected by the Chernobyl accident in Belarus and Ukraine through improving awareness about effective wildfire management in contaminated areas.
Project outputs	**Output 1.** Recommendations for setting up system for regular exchange of transboundary information (with relevance to the wildfire management in and around the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone - CEZ) **Output 2.** Recommendations on organization of joint system response **Output 3.** Guidelines for firefighters on suppression of forest fires in the Belarusian and Ukrainian parts of the CEZ **Output 4.** Multilateral workshops including Belarus and Ukraine
Leading ENVSEC Partner organisation	OSCE
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Implementing ENVSEC partner organisations	OSCE and UNEP
Local partner(s)	• Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Belarus • Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine • Institute of Radiology of the Republic of Belarus • State Agency on Management of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone of Ukraine • Staff responsible for fire management, members of fire crews in the Belarusian and Ukrainian parts of the CEZ • Authorities responsible for public health • Local authorities and communities in the areas affected by the Chernobyl accident in Ukraine and Belarus • Regional Eastern European Fire Monitoring Center (REEFMC) at the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences (NULESU), Ukraine
Project duration start and end date	April 2016 – March 2018
Total budget in EUR	140,000
ENVSEC source of funding	Germany (EUR 35,000)
Other sources of funding	To be mobilized
Fiche Submitted to Secretariat by Regional Desk Officer	Mahir Aliyev 6/02/2014
Fiche submitted to the Management Board Programme Coordinator Date	Approved by the ENVSEC Management Board on 16/04/2014

Fiche Narrative

1. Project rationale	A lot of attention and investment is given to ensure that the sarcophagus of the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl is safe. However, often forests contaminated with radionuclides around Chernobyl that are at high risk of wildfire are overlooked. Forest fires occur regularly in the Polessie region on the national border between Belarus and Ukraine, including in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (CEZ). Their frequency and magnitude are likely to increase as a result of the changing climate. Radioactively-polluted forest and turf land in fire trigger releasing radionuclides from soil and vegetation and carrying them over considerable distances thus affecting both the CEZ and remote areas depending on wind direction and other atmospheric conditions. At the same time proper forest management in the area is hampered by the radioactive pollution itself, regulated human safety in the CEZ, and the transboundary nature of the problem. Current approach for suppression of radioactive fires, its strategy and tactics in both countries does not include prevention measures for reducing personal doses for firefighters from radioactive smoke and is not based on the best modern practices of fire suppression including indirect fire attack methods and use of modern technical tools for firefighting. International facilitation is required to improve radiological and environmental awareness with a focus on wildfire management in Belarus and Ukraine and support both countries in jointly addressing the risk and building modern capacities for safe suppression of forest fires in the contaminated forests. Since the initial assessment of environment and security risks in Eastern Europe in 2006-7, ENVSEC has paid attention to Chernobyl-related issues where their resolution in particular required cross-border collaboration. The ENVSEC project *Radioactive contamination of the territory of Belarus in the Polessie State Radiation-Ecological Reserve* was implemented in 2008-11 and prepared a state-of-the-art assessment of the radioactive contamination in the Belarusian part of the CEZ matching earlier obtained Ukrainian data. Among other issues, the project evaluated fluxes of radioactive material released through forest fires. Another ENVSEC project *Assessment of Environmental Risks in the Exclusion Zone along the Ukrainian and Belarusian borders Environmental risk analysis in the exclusion zone near Belarus-Ukraine border* implemented by the OSCE in 2013-15 supported the physical demarcation of the state border between Belarus and Ukraine. At the same time, the project further advanced ENVSEC's support to bilateral cooperation on radiation and environmental issues in Chernobyl-contaminated areas. UNEP prepared a project to be funded by the Global Environmental Facility to manage carbon stocks and biodiversity in forest and non-forest lands and promote sustainable development in Ukraine's part of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. The project provides an important connection to overall forest management practices in Ukraine's part of the area. Finally, cooperative fire management has been one of ENVSEC's important areas of work in the South Caucasus, and OSCE's respective experience will be used in Eastern Europe. The present project will consider other work and activities accomplished, e.g. the pre-project OSCE study "Best Practices and Recommendations for Wildfire Suppression in Contaminated Areas, with Focus on Radioactive Terrain" and the outcomes of the Advanced Seminar *"Wildfires and Human Security: Fire Management on Terrain Contaminated by Radioactivity, Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and Land Mines"*, which was held in Kyiv / Chornobyl, Ukraine, in October 2009. The seminar was co-sponsored and organized jointly by the Global Fire Monitoring Centre (GFMC), the OSCE / ENVSEC and the Council of Europe European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA agreement). The cooperation in cross-boundary fire management so far has been informal, e.g. by mutual invitations to seminars and workshops, or indirectly through the work of the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) addressing fire management in both countries. Formalized relationships / agreements between Belarus and Ukraine, as envisaged by the project, are not yet in place. The project should also contribute to fostering a transboundary dialogue in the framework and obligations of the 1992 Convention on the Transboundary Effects of

	Industrial Accidents, which has been designed to protect humans and the environment against industrial accidents, and which promotes active international cooperation between countries, before, during and after an industrial accident. Furthermore, the project should facilitate the implementation of the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (1979), which aims to limit and, as far as possible, gradually reduce and prevent air pollution including long-range transboundary air pollution. The Gothenburg Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone" (1999) was amended in 2012 to include national emission reduction commitments to be achieved in 2020 and beyond and includes fine particulate matter including black carbon emissions from agricultural fires. The revised Protocol also introduced flexibilities to facilitate accession of new Parties, mainly countries in Southern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.
2. Objective	Reduce public health, environmental and security risks posed by wildfires in the territories affected by the Chernobyl accident in Belarus and Ukraine through improving awareness about effective wildfire management in contaminated areas.
3. Outputs	**Output 1. Recommendations for setting up a system for regular exchange of transboundary information (with relevance to the wildfire management in and around the CEZ)** There is no system for proper national and international monitoring and communication. Such a system should allow for e.g. quick exchange of information on weather conditions, activities in the CEZ, emergency situations, and should include a hotline for the public (who often identifies fires first), including the possibility of exploring the utility and feasibility of cell phone applications, as well as for those responsible for decision making and firefighting. **Output 2. Recommendations on organization of a joint system response** The recommendations will include mutually accepted terminology and a system for coordinated response to forest fires across the national border. **Output 3. Guidelines for firefighters on suppression of forest fires in the Ukrainian and Belarusian parts of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone** The guidelines will allow the firefighters of both countries to operate in a coordinated manner. The guidelines will be tested at a field exercise and will later be taught to trainers. **Output 4. Multilateral workshops including Belarus and Ukraine** An inception workshop will allow for considering current expertise into project implementation while a closing workshop will serve as a platform for dissemination of the project results.
4. Activities	The project will promote safe practices for suppression of wildland fires on radioactively contaminated lands that will (a) reduce risks of receiving additional radiation doses by fire fighters, and (b) in general reduce risks from fires in radioactively-contaminated forests in the CEZ and adjacent areas. The following activities are planned: **Activity 1.1.** Development of the report on the current system for national and international fire monitoring and communication The activity will include the following interventions: • Analysis of the current system for national and international monitoring and communication with recommendations on its improvement considering international practices and relevant protocols. **Activity 1.2.** Discussion and consultations of the above report The activity will include the following interventions: • Wide distribution of the final draft report and integration of the comments into its final version. The final draft report will be distributed among local partners in Belarus and Ukraine (list on p. 1) as well as academia concerned with fire

	management issues in both countries. **Activity 2.1.** Development of recommendations for a coordinated response to forest fires The activity would include the following interventions: • Development of the Ukrainian version of the multilingual wildland fire terminology • Development of recommendations for a coordinated response to forest fires • Development of a draft bilateral agreement on transboundary fire management **Activity 2.2.** Discussion and consultations of the wildland fire terminology and the bilateral agreement The activity would include the following interventions: • Wide distribution of the final draft papers to local partners in Belarus and Ukraine (list on p. 1) as well as academia concerned with fire management issues in both countries. and integration of the comments into its final versions. **Activity 3.** Development of the guidelines on suppression of forest fires in the Ukrainian and Belarusian parts of the CEZ The activity would include the following interventions: • Development of the guidelines • Organization of one training of trainers and one workshop for affected communities. • One transboundary field exercise based on the recommendations for coordinated response to forest fires developed under Activity 2.1 (to be held on safe non-contaminated terrain) • Finalization of the guidelines considering lessons identified at the training workshop and exercise **Activity 4.1.** Conducting of the inception stakeholders workshop with participation of the local partners of Belarus and Ukraine (list on p. 1) The activity would include the following interventions: • Organization and conducting of the inception workshop • Discussion between project partners on the project objectives and activities laid down in the Project Fiche and possible suggestions for fine-tuning **Activity 4.2.** Conducting of the closing stakeholders workshop The activity would include the following interventions: • Organization and conducting of the closing workshop • Discussion and agreement between project partners on the further use of project results for safeguarding the sustainability of achievements
5. Beneficiaries	The project will contribute to raising radiological and environmental awareness and increasing environmental safety via involving in dialogue, communication and training representatives of the national and local authorities of the territories of the exclusion zones in Belarus and Ukraine and their vicinity, representatives of local communities, local NGOs, personnel of forest enterprises responsible for fire management and professional fire fighters, and national NGOs. In particular, the project beneficiaries include: • Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Belarus • Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine • Institute of Radiology of the Republic of Belarus • State Agency on Management of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone of Ukraine • Staff responsible for fire management, members of fire crews in the Belarusian and Ukrainian parts of the CEZ • Authorities responsible for public health • Local authorities and communities in the areas affected by the Chernobyl accident in Ukraine and Belarus