



UNITED NATIONS



UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network

Coordinator and Secretariat: Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Freiburg, Germany

Regional South East European / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network

**Statement Prepared by the Participants of the
Regional Wildland Fire Consultation on the Development of a
Strategy on International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the
Regional South East European / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network**

Sofia, Bulgaria, 19-21 March 2007

Conclusions

On 19-21 March 2007 the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) convened the "Regional Wildland Fire Consultation on the Development of a Strategy on International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Regional South East European / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network" in Sofia, Bulgaria. The consultation was held under umbrella of the UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network through its Coordinator and Secretariat, the GFMC, and was kindly supported and hosted by the National Forestry Board, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bulgaria. The participating countries included Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine. Due to technical reasons invited focal points from Greece, Slovakia and Azerbaijan could not participate in the meeting.

By recalling, confirming and reviewing the recommendations of the Regional Wildland Fire Consultation in Ohrid of 2005, the participants of the consultation the participants of the consultation agreed on the following statement:

Recognizing the importance of forests and other vegetation as providers of environmental services and social, economic, and ecological benefits to humankind in the Southeast Europe / Caucasus region;

Expressing concern about the increasing frequency and destructive force of wildfires in Southeast Europe and Caucasus region affecting human health and wellbeing, economic assets, property, biodiversity, water resources, soil, atmosphere and climate;

Noting that changing land use and rural exodus in some parts of the region is resulting in increased wildfire hazard and vulnerability of ecosystems; likewise urban encroachment in wildlands resulting in increased vulnerability of human populations to fire, notably at the rural-urban interface;

Noting an increase in vulnerability of humans and ecosystems to secondary disasters following fires, including floods, landslides and soil erosion;

Noting that the effects of climate variability and climate change caused by human activities are already producing periods of extreme drought resulting in an increase in the severity of fires in some ecosystems;

Concluding from the analyses and reports of the countries of the South East European / Caucasus region presented at this consultation, it is evident that the majority of countries in the regions have established a regional dialogue on cooperation and exchange of information, research and wildland fire management as a contribution to forest and environmental protection, stability and peace but not enough efficient, yet;

Concluding, after very detailed review of the proposed First Draft Strategy on International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Regional South East European / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network , that the Strategy should be a basic document for the future collaboration among the countries of the Regional South East European / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network;

Recommending the Strategy on International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Regional South East European / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network to be presented on the authorities of the countries of the Regional South East European / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network;

Expressing the intention, using as basic tools the Strategy on International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Regional South East European / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network, Voluntary Guidelines on Fire Management and the Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation on Fire Management, to overcome **current gaps and shortages** in:

- Consistent information and statistics about fires, their causes and their effects
- Applied research in social sciences and humanities, including finances for research
- Integration of social, economic, environmental considerations and institutions in developing tangible policies and practices related to wildland fire
- Integration of fire as a component of land, resource, and forest management
- Community-based approaches to fire management
- Compatible approaches, e.g., global implementation of the Incident Command System (ICS) and the International Wildland Fire Agreements Template

Emphasising the need of:

- Training in the appropriate use of fire (for example, prescribed burning for fuel reduction and nature conservation)
- Training in the safe and efficient use of resources for fire suppression (for example, appropriate equipment for fire suppression, wildland fire safety)

Recalling the recommendations of the International Wildland Fire Summit (Sydney, 2003), the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network (2004), and the FAO Ministerial Meeting on Forests (2005) and its follow-up 18th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry with respect to the management of wildland fires and the strategy to strengthen international cooperation in wildland fire management;

Endorsing the efforts of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR) and its Wildland Fire Advisory Group to assist and strengthen the efforts of United Nations bodies, other international organizations, and non-governmental organizations, to reduce the negative impacts of wildland fires;

Supporting the objectives of the ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network (GWFN) and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) to systematically increase the intra- and inter-regional cooperation in wildland fire management for the world;

Recommend to governments, international organizations and non-government organizations (in agreement with the Strategy on International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Regional South East European / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network, the Voluntary Guidelines on Fire Management and the Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation on Fire Management) the following action plan for cooperation on wildland fire research and management in South East Europe and Caucasus:

Promotion of Dedicated Research

- Secure financing of a regional wildland fire research programme
- Strengthen wildland fire research cooperation between neighbouring countries

- Develop standardization of terminology and procedures
- Develop standardized data collection i.a.w. the further development of global wildland fire data collection
- Encourage increased involvement of the science community in wildland fire-related research programmes (interdisciplinary research)
- Support the establishment of national or regional (international) wildland fire research centers
- Establish a regional wildland fire weather network
- Approach the EU Erasmus / Sokrates programme for developing a dedicated programme for wildland fire exchange

Consolidation of the Regional Network

- Support the expansion of the network to the new member countries in the Caucasus and adjoining countries, such as Ukraine and Romania
- Maintain and develop the network of country Focal Points, preferably with one representative of a government agency and a representative of the academia
- Support the network co-coordinators that are representing the main stakeholders involved (Mr. Nikola Nikolov, Macedonia, Research; Mr. Vladimir Konstantinov, Bulgaria, Forest Service; Mr. Dulijano Grum, Croatia, Fire Service) and co-coordinators from the Caucasus countries (to be determined)
- Seek for widespread membership in the network
- Maintain a publicly accessible website of the network (communication language: English)
- Produce an initial publication of this regional consultation and the network foundation, to be published in UN-ECE/FAO International Forest Fire News, including a summary of previous activities in international cooperation in the SE European and Caucasus Region
- Conduct a first Regional Advanced Wildland Fire Management Training Course not later than 2007, based on experiences in other regions and the FAO courses in Bulgaria; seek support from the German Foreign Office
- Request a FAO Technical Development Project (TCP) or similar technical and financial support for a project "Implementation of a Regional SE European/Caucasus Strategy for International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management", preferably to be conducted in 2008
- Improve access and reliability of regional and country / ecosystem specific early warning information, including automatic distribution
- Participate at the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference, Madrid, Spain (May 2007)
- Convene the next network meeting not later than 2008

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