



4th International Wildland Fire Conference

Conference Statement

As agreed by the Representatives of 13 Regional Wildland Fire Networks and Participants of the Joint Regional Sessions

The 4th International Wildland Fire Conference was held in Sevilla, Spain, 14-17 May 2007. The conference was held under the auspices of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the European Commission and hosted by the Government of Spain and the Regional Government of Andalusia. The conference brought together 1531 participants from 88 countries from throughout the world, representing government organizations and civil society from all regions of the world, the United Nations and other international organizations.

The participants of the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference presented the state-of-the art in fire science, fire management and fire management training in all continents. A commercial exhibition provided insight in innovative fire management technologies, including fire detection, monitoring, suppression, and firefighters and public health and safety. A number of organizations and international associations involved in the wildland fire arena held side meetings and recommended enhancing the international dialogue.

The FAO and partners presented progress in the development of a Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation in Fire Management, requested by the Ministerial Meeting in 2005. The Strategy is being progressed through a multi-stakeholder process and includes a Global Assessment of Fire Management, a Review of International Cooperation and Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines. During the Conference, and as part of the Strategy, the Fire Management Actions Alliance was launched to promote, implement and update the Voluntary Guidelines. At the time of the launching event 35 partners – national agencies, universities and international organizations – had signed up to the Alliance.

Fire management specialists, many of them organized and cooperating in Regional Wildland Fire Networks, reported the state of the fire situation in their home countries and in the 13 regions. With reference to the global developments impacting on the fire situation in the regions of the world, the national and regional analyses of the fire situation and a self-assessment of fire management capabilities, the representatives of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks and the participants of the joint regional sessions recognized the global issues impacting on fire occurrence and the consequences of fire on the environment and humans in the regions of the world, notably the

- Demographic changes resulting in alterations of sustainable fire regimes, e.g. the consequences of rural exodus or – vice-versa – exurban migrations, coupled with a loss of traditional, sustainable land-use systems;
- Widespread poverty associated with unemployment, exurban migrations and land tenure conflicts and resulting in increasing human-caused fires;
- Land-use change involving increasing fire use for conversion of vegetation, notably in the tropics, and expansion of land use to fire-sensitive lands, e.g., peatlands, drained or otherwise desiccating wetlands, and other fire-sensitive vegetation;
- Increasing costs of fire suppression;
- Expansion of the wildland-urban interface in some countries and increasing vulnerabilities and greater exposure of rural settlements to increasing occurrence of severely damaging fires;
- Consequences of, and the contribution to, climate change, resulting in increasing occurrence of extreme droughts in most regions, desiccation of wetlands, thawing of permafrost sites, and a general trend of increasing area burned, fire intensity, fire severity, and longer fire seasons;
- Human health and security threatened by increasing wildfire activity and land-use fires causing release of a greater amount of pollutants and resulting in greater public exposure to

hazardous emissions, including transboundary transport of fire smoke pollution at regional to global levels;

- Human security and peace threatened by fires burning on radioactively contaminated lands, by fires on areas with unresolved conflicts, and on territories with post-war hazards such as landmines and unexploded ordnance.

Being cognizant of the global issues, as listed above, the representatives of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks and the participants of the joint regional sessions agreed to the need to develop synergies through coordinated and collective action to address the most pressing problems related to fire management globally. Further the conference participants recommend that:

- The international wildland fire community pursue the development of a global-scale international resource sharing strategy to assist countries with fire management planning activities (including prescribed fire for ecological purposes and fuels management), and active support during periods of wildland fire;
- The FAO promote the global adoption of Incident Command System (ICS) including the publishing of an annual list of countries which have implemented ICS;
- Regional strategies for fire management be developed and designed to the specific needs of regions;
- An international framework for fire management standards be developed and regional wildland fire training be supported, especially to meet the needs for capacity building in developing countries;
- Scientific research programmes addressing the consequences of changes of climate, land use and land cover, and socio-economic changes on fire regimes, environment and society must be supported at all levels;
- The Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management and the implementation of the Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines be encouraged and endorsed;
- Agencies and groups be encouraged to participate in the Fire Management Actions Alliance in support of their adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines;
- The UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network, the Regional Wildland Fire Networks and the Secretariat of the global network, the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), be supported by national agencies and international donors aimed at fostering international cooperation in fire management, including collecting and disseminating fire information, arranging and enhancing international policy dialogue, and supporting projects;
- A series of Regional Consultations tentatively addressing “Global Change and Wildland Fire: Regional Solutions for Fire Management” – be held globally, within the next 1-2 years, to progress the global issues that are impacting people, resources and livelihoods;
- The 2nd International Wildland Fire Summit – tentatively addressing “Global Change and Wildland Fire: Fire Management Solutions for Mitigation and Adaptation” – be held within the next 2 to 4 years under the auspices of the United Nations and partners.

The conference participants thanked the organizers and hosts of the conference for bringing together the international community responsible for wildland fire management. The participants welcomed the offer of South Africa to host the 5th International Wildland Fire Conference, tentatively in 2011.