



Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation in Fire Management

The FAO Ministerial Meeting on Forests and the 17th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry, March 2005 (Rome, Italy 2005) called upon FAO, in collaboration with countries and other international partners, including the UNISDR, to develop a Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation in Fire Management, that advanced knowledge, increased access to information and resources and explored new approaches for cooperation at all levels. They also requested preparation of a Voluntary Guidelines on the prevention, suppression and recovery from forest fire. The need for such tools to assist in international cooperation had also been highlighted at the 3rd International Wildland Fire Conference and the International Wildland Fire Summit (Sydney, Australia 2003) because of the increasing incidence and severity of impacts of major fires globally.

FAO coordinated an international expert consultation in wildland fires (Madrid, May 2006) that agreed upon the components of the Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation in Fire Management.



The components of the overarching Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation in Fire Management include:

- Fire Management Global Assessment to assess and analyze fire management in each region of the UNISDR Regional Wildland Fire Networks and detail global conclusions and recommendations (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0969e/a0969e00.htm>);
- Fire Management Review of International Cooperation 2006 to detail priority themes, key actors, activities and scope for future international cooperation in fire management (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/J9406E/J9406E00.htm>);
- Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines that outline the Principles and Strategic Actions necessary for policy, planning and senior management decision makers to achieve more integrated and cross sectoral approaches to fire management (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/j9255e/j9255e00.htm>); and
- Fire Management Actions Alliance for implementing the Voluntary Guidelines, enhancing international cooperation, sharing knowledge and technology and reviewing the Voluntary Guidelines (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/firealliance/en/>).

These tools have been tailored primarily for land-use policy makers, planners and managers, including the Governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to assist in the formulation of policy, legal, regulatory and other enabling conditions and strategic actions for more integrated and cross-sector approaches to fire management. Their scope includes the positive and negative social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts of natural and planned fires in forests, woodlands, rangelands, grasslands, agricultural and rural/-urban landscapes. The fire management scope includes monitoring, early warning, prevention, preparedness (international, national, sub-national and community), safe and effective initial attack on incidences of fire and landscape restoration following fire.

The Process

The Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation in Fire Management and the component documents were formulated and reviewed through a multi-stakeholder process. Technical core group meetings (FAO, Rome, Italy March, July and September 2006) and an expert consultation (Madrid, Spain, May 2006) held working sessions for participation of fire specialists from Governments, private sector associations, non-governmental organizations and inter-governmental organizations to prepare and revise the draft documents.

The Fire Management Global Assessment 2006 and the Fire Management Review of International Cooperation provided valuable baseline information that highlighted priority focus areas (technical and geographic) that were necessary in preparation of the Voluntary Guidelines and the Fire Management Actions Alliance.

The Fire Management Strategy and Voluntary Guidelines were presented to, and discussed at FAO's six Regional Forestry Commissions and at the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) fire management meetings during 2006. The Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines were available to fire management stakeholders to provide feedback from July-December 2006. A final draft of the Voluntary Guidelines was presented to, and supported by, the 18th Session of FAO's Committee on Forestry (Rome, Italy, March 2007) and the Voluntary Guidelines and Fire Management Actions Alliance were launched at the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference (Sevilla, Spain, May 2007) to foster international partnerships for implementation, particularly to strengthen developing country capacities and capabilities in fire management.

The FAO Committee on Forestry, in March 2007, acknowledged the progress and furthermore:

- Requested FAO, in collaboration with the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network and other partners, to finalize the Strategy to Enhance International Cooperation in Fire Management,
- Welcomed the development of the Guidelines in a multi-stakeholder process and recommended that members and forestry stakeholders make use of them;
- Recommended that FAO and partners facilitate implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines; and
- Recommended that the Voluntary Guidelines be maintained as a living document, to be updated and improved through feedback from implementation.

The Fire Management Actions Alliance was a response to these expectations.

FAO's collaborating partners that provided inputs on an "in kind" basis included members of the USDA Forest Service; Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC); UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network; The Nature Conservancy, the Government of Spain and the International Liaison Committee of the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference. A broad stakeholder group of experts representing Governments, the private sector, IGOs and NGOs also gave of their valuable time.

The Voluntary Guidelines

The Voluntary Guidelines provides a non-legally binding framework of priority principles and strategic actions for integrated and cross sectoral approaches to balance the social, cultural, environmental and economic dimensions of fire management and to prescribe key actions for the planning and

management of fires. This framework supports achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: particularly Goal 1 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Goal 7 to ensure environmental sustainability; and Goal 8 to develop a global partnership for development.

Fire Management Actions Alliance

The Alliance was launched in May 2007 during the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference in Seville, Spain with 40 founding members. Further membership applications are under consideration.

The Fire Management Actions Alliance is an international partnership to:

- Review and update the Voluntary Guidelines based on implementation experiences;
- Encourage stakeholders at all levels to adopt and use the Voluntary Guidelines;
- Review experiences from applying the Voluntary Guidelines; and
- Strengthen international cooperation in fire management.

Any organization, agency, or group, willing to adhere to the Charter of the Alliance, can apply for membership that is decided by an Advisory group to the Secretariat. Membership implies a commitment to:

- Promote the Voluntary Guidelines;
- Use the Voluntary Guidelines in implementing fire management activities;
- Share knowledge, information and data on activities and progress in fire management, with reference to the Voluntary Guidelines;
- Enhance international cooperation in fire management.

Applications for membership from a wide range of organizations involved in different aspects of fire management are invited.

FAO, through its Forest Management Division, in collaboration with the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network and with support of members, provides communications, coordination and related services to the Alliance through the Secretariat. The Secretariat operates with voluntary contributions from members.

IFFN Contribution by

Jim Carle
Senior Forestry Officer (Plantations and Protection)
Forest Resources Development Service
Forestry Department
FAO of United Nations
Viale Delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Rome
ITALY

Tel: +39-06-5705-5296
Fax: +39-06-5705-5137
e-mail: Jim.Carle@fao.org