

Programme Status: 15 March 2007



Draft Programme Outline of a 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

1. Background Information on Regional Cooperation in Fire Management

The demographic, socio-economic and political changes in many countries of Southeast Europe, the Caucasus region and adjoining CIS States in the early 1990s, have resulted in an increase of wildfire occurrence and wildfire disaster risk, destabilization of fire management capabilities and increased vulnerability of ecosystems and human populations. In some countries some of the main reasons for this development include the transition from centrally planned to market economies, national to regional conflicts, creation of new nations, involving political tensions and war, and land-use change. New solutions are required to address the increasing fire threat. The Regional Southeast Europe / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network promotes cooperation in fire management between the South East European countries, notably on the Balkan, and also with the neighbouring countries of East and West Europe.

Cooperation and networking on forest fires within the ECE region and the region of the European Forestry Commission has a long tradition. In 1981 the FAO/UNECE Team of Specialists on Forest Fire was established as an activity of the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training. The team's main task is to provide a platform for communication and cooperation between fire scientists, managers and policy makers. The main activities include (1) the production of International Forest Fire News (IFFN); (2) organization of seminars; and (3) promotion of synergistic collaboration between governments, non-government institutions, and individuals, especially science and technology transfer. The Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), based in Freiburg (Germany), is in charge of team coordination and editorial office of IFFN. GFMC is serving as secretariat of the Global Wildland Fire Network and the Wildland Fire Advisory Group of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR).

With the creation of the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network in 2002 and its recognition as an activity of UNISDR since 2004 the networking on forest fires in the region began to diversify in regional settings and activities.

Regional networking in South East European was initiated in 2002, at that time called "Regional Balkan Wildland Fire Network". A major regional activity was the "UNECE/FAO Conference on Forest Fire Management and International Cooperation in Fire Emergencies in the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and adjoining Regions of the Near East and Central Asia" (Antalya, Turkey, 30 March - 3 April 2004). The conference was followed by a regional forest fire exercise "Eastern European, Near East and Central Asian States Exercise on Wildland Fire Information and Resources Exchange - EASTEX FIRE 2005". At a regional consultation in the Republic of Macedonia in 2005 members of the Balkan Network decided to invite neighbouring countries and to expand its area of joint activities to Southeast Europe. Subsequently the network was renamed "Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network". With the growing interest of the countries adjoining to the regional, notably in the Caucasus region, it was suggested in 2006 to broaden the geographic scope of the region by adding Caucasus region. Representatives from the Ukraine have indicated a strong interest to join the network.

2. Visions and Goals of a Regional Cooperation Strategy

The vision of this regional strategy is to enhance and strengthen bilateral / multilateral and international cooperation in wildland fire management for creating synergies and sharing knowledge, technical and human resources between countries in the Region by accepting and promoting principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures within a guiding framework agreed upon by individual countries.

Mechanisms of cooperation in wildland fire management in the Region will include:

- Bilateral / multilateral cooperation between two or more countries at national level within the region: This type of cooperation generally includes mechanisms for assistance in major emergencies to suppress fires, and technical assistance in specific cases. Cooperation should be extended to other areas of wildland fire management, such as wildland fire prevention, establishment of common databases, training programmes, etc.
- International (including inter-regional) between international donors and countries in the region: This type of cooperation will require financial and technical assistance mechanisms. Other elements of international cooperation may include the development of norms and rules that would not require any additional finances.

The Regional Strategy on Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management will give priority to:

- Strengthen existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms
- Develop new bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms
- Reach consensus by participating countries on agreed principles, norms, rules and decision making procedures in wildland fire management
- Create an enabling atmosphere for international cooperation in wildland fire research and management, including international donors.

The mid-term goals include:

- Provide a forum for a dialogue between governments, national focal points, NGO's, civil society, and regional and international stakeholders.
- Serve as catalytic and mutually supporting link between national wildland fire strategies.
- Enable sharing of resources between neighbouring countries in the region.
- Reinforce national and regional technical capacities in wildland fire management.

Long-term goals:

- Support the development of national policies.
- Support sustainable cooperation between countries of the region.
- Strengthen the Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network.
- Support the development and implementation of a global strategy and / or the development of an international agreement on cooperation in wildland fire management.

The specific objectives include:

- To contribute to the development and implementation of a national and regional organizational framework with principles, alignments, procedures and technical-operational formats agreed upon between the countries.
- To favour the development and strengthening of national fire management policies and strategies and in keeping with the same, improved legal frameworks regarding the issue.
- To establish a fire information system available, standardized and agreed between the countries of the region to support decision making.
- To develop fire detection early warning systems to enable prompt fire detection and to improve response time in an effective, organized, and safe manner leading to the minimization of effects on countries in the region.
- To improve national emergency control cooperation between countries of the region.

- To support sustainable cooperation between the countries of the region based on a concerted strategy and bilateral or multilateral programmes agreed to in terms of fire prevention, training, extension and research.

3. The Political Dimension of a Regional Cooperation Strategy

To accomplish the goals of the strategy and to provide the basis for creating permanent cooperation between countries of the region, it is essential to attain political commitment and support at the national, regional and international level. Consequently it is necessary that the strategy be elaborated in a clear and structured way, defining objectives, commitments and needs.

At the **national level** it is important that the individual countries of the region will adopt the regional strategy as well as the role and mandate of the Regional Wildland Fire Network. Some of the activities addressed by the strategy might require bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements. Others might require informal agreements between countries (agencies, institutions, individual scientists). Preferably the informal agreements should receive official support and adoption by national government agencies. Strengthening or establishment of national structures / capabilities in fire management are prerequisite for efficient cooperation between countries and organizations.

At the **regional level** it is necessary that the mandated regional institutions or cooperation mechanisms will incorporate the regional strategies, as well as the Regional Wildland Fire Networks, within their structure and the implementation of their overall work programmes.

At the **international level** institutions and organizations (for example UNEP, FAO, UNISDR, OSCE, CoE, GFMC, GTZ, World Bank, etc.) must be encouraged to provide financial and technical assistance.

4. Aim of the Regional Consultation

The regional consultation shall serve as a platform for

- Discussion of a strategic concept paper, which has been developed by the coordinators of the Regional Southeast Europe / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network and the Global Wildland Fire Network (Global Fire Monitoring Center), sponsored by the German Foreign Office, and presented to the 33rd Session of the FAO European Forestry Commission (Zvolen, Slovakia, 25 May 2006).
- Consensus building for most urgent action items on capacity building in fire management in the region
- Preparation of inputs to the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference (Sevilla, Spain, May 2007)

5. Auspices

Following the success of the earlier regional meetings organized by the network, the consultation will be held under the auspices of the Global Wildland Fire Network.

6. Venue and Date

The consultation will be held in Sofia, Bulgaria, 19-21 March 2007. Details to be confirmed. A draft timetable is provided in Annex A.

7. Target Audience / Participants

Representatives from the regional, notably those who are already actively working in the regional network, are invited to contribute to the consultation. A draft list of invitees is provided in Annex B.

ANNEX A: Draft Timetable

Day 1: Sunday 18 March 2007

Arrival of participants

19:30 Joint dinner at Rodina Hotel

Day 2: Monday 19 March 2007

09:00-09:30 Opening of the Consultation (J.G. Goldammer)
09:30-10:30 Presentation of the draft strategy (N. Nikolov)
10:30-11:00 Coffee Break
11:00-13:00 Short national wildland fire reports
13:00-14:30 Lunch Break
14:30-16:00 Short national wildland fire reports
16:00-16:30 Coffee Break
16:30-18:00 Elaboration of conclusions and recommendations (2 Working Groups)
19:00 Dinner

Day 3: Tuesday 20 March 2007

09:00-10:30 Continuation of discussion: Reports back from Working Groups
10:30-11:00 Coffee Break
11:00-13:00 Continuation of discussion: Reports back from Working Groups
13:00-14:30 Lunch Break
14:30-16:00 Finalization of discussion
16:00-16:30 Coffee Break
16:30-18:00 The way ahead: Contribution to the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference
18:00 Wrap up, closure of consultation (N. Nikolov, J.G. Goldammer)
19:00 Farewell Dinner

Day 4: Wednesday 21 March 2007

Additional post-consultation programme hosted by Bulgaria:

10:00-16:00 Field Trip: Ecology, culture, land use and fire in Bulgaria

ANNEX B: List of Participating Institutions and Countries

Resource Institutes

GFMC

The Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC)

Macedonia

Faculty of Forestry

Department for Forest Protection
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy

Host Country Bulgaria

National Forestry Board
Ministry of Agriculture and Forests

Bulgarian Association of Independent Private Forest Engineers

Albania

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Water Administration
Directorate General of Forests and Pastures (DGFP)

Armenia

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water, Economy and Forestry

Croatia

National Directorate for Rescue and Protection, Fire Service

Georgia

Fire Fighting Administration
Emergency Management Department
Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

Romania

University "Transilvania"

Serbia

Directorate of Forests
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

Forests Estate "Šuma" Leskovac
Public Enterprise "Srbijašume"

Slovenia

Forest Protection Service
Central Unit, Slovenia Forest Service

Turkey

Faculty of Forestry, Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi

Ukraine

Institute of Forestry and Landscape Architecture
National Agricultural University of Ukraine