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Workshop on

**Defense of Villages, Farms and Other Rural Assets against Wildfires:
Guidelines for Rural Populations, Local Community and Municipality Leaders
in the Balkan Region**

National Technical University of Athens
13 May 2012, Athens, Greece



Draft Agenda and Logistical Information

Background and Rationale

In some regions of Europe rural settlements (villages, towns, scattered farmsteads) and other rural assets (agricultural fields / crops, infrastructures and other values at risk) are increasingly endangered by wildfires. This trend is driven by the consequences of land-use change, regional climate change and particularly by the rural exodus, which has resulted in the weakening of rural work force and self-protection ability, and increasing wildfire hazard on abandoned lands.

Vice-versa, increasing industrialization and concentration of populations in some areas exert a high pressure on natural resources for land use change, which is reflected by the high frequency of arson and 'unknown'-cause fires in the wildlands. The intermix of human settlements with natural ecosystems and the fires burning at the interface between wildlands and rural settlements in many places create severe problems, which have become a major issue of political debate and confrontation.

Recent major wildfire disasters in Europe reveal that government authorities and civil society, notably rural communities, are not sufficiently prepared to prevent and reduce the risk of wildfires, to defend rural communities and rural assets at risk, and to protect human health and altogether human security against the adverse direct and indirect impacts and consequences of wildfires.

Guidelines are needed that will provide information to local inhabitants (farmers, community leaders, local fire service units, volunteer firefighters and village defense committees) with state-of-the-art information on wildfire damage prevention measures, and pragmatic measures for the defense of settlements and rural assets threatened by wildfires. With such guidelines local communities will be capacitated to apply all fire safety regulations for protecting the structures of the community (clearing vegetation, provide extra sources of water, application of appropriate building codes and use of appropriate materials, etc.) and for the protection of rural populations against the adverse effects of vegetation fire smoke pollution on human health and security. Also, the problem of fires burning on terrain altered by human activities, such as fires affecting dispersed, sometimes abandoned structures, waste deposits / garbage dumps and otherwise contaminated lands, needs to be addressed due to the highly toxic emissions generated by co-burning of natural vegetation and technical / chemical produce.

In addition, the threats arising from fires burning on territories contaminated by unexploded ordnance (UXO) need to be addressed since some forest and non-forest lands in Balkan region are contaminated by land mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) stemming from recent conflicts.

In order to enhance the capabilities of local rural communities to defend themselves against wildfires a set of guidelines are currently developed in order to:

- Provide a practical technical document designed as a support tool for the protection of people and communities in Balkan region from wildfires;

- Serve as a starting point and basis for the exchange of expertise and concepts within the Council of Europe / UNECE member states to continuously expand capacities in rural fire management.

The guidelines are prepared with the support from the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) set up by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The collaborating centers are the European Forest Fire Center (Athens), the Global Fire Monitoring Center (Germany), the Regional Southeast Europe / Caucasus Fire Monitoring Center (Skopje) and the Eastern European Fire Monitoring Center (Kiev). Members of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire and the UNISDR Regional Eurasian and SE Europe / Caucasus Wildland Fire Networks will contribute to the development of the guidelines.

Workshop objective

The Athens workshop participants will review the draft Guidelines for the Defense of Rural Populations, Settlements and Other Assets against Wildfires and Smoke Pollution. This first set of guidelines will be tailored to address the conditions in Southeast Europe.

Main topics

1. Review of Part 1: Guidelines for Municipality Leaders
2. Review of Part 2: Guidelines for Local Community and Population
3. Review of Part 3: Fire training for Local Community and Population

Note: The draft materials will be transmitted to invitees briefly before the workshop, or prints handed out at the workshop.

Workshop Participants

Attendance is by invitation only. Each invitee agrees to serve as resource person.

Venue

National Technical University of Athens

9 Iroon Polytechniou Street, 15780, Zografou campus, Athens, Greece

Contact: Prof. Milt Statheropoulos and staff: Tel. +30-210-772-3109

Or directly Dr. Ioannis Mitsopoulos (ioanmits@for.auth.gr, cell phone +30-6977548333)

Organizing Committee

European Center of Forest Fires (ECFF)

Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC)

Regional Southeast Europe / Caucasus Fire Monitoring Center (RFMC)

Regional Eastern European Fire Monitoring Center (REEFMC)

Sponsors and Supporting Groups

Council of Europe, European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)

Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC)

Global Wildland Fire Network / UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group

UNECE / FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire

Draft Agenda

Monday 13 May 2013

09:00	Participants arrive at the venue
09:15 – 09:30	Welcome and introduction
09.30 – 11:00	Part 1 Review
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 13.00	Part 2 Review
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 15:30	Part 3 Review
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break
16.00 – 17.00:	Final discussion

Logistics

1. Financial support

Invited attendees from outside Greece will receive financial support to cover transport (air, train, car) and accommodation (two nights between Sunday 12 May and Tuesday 14 May 2013). Greek attendees from outside Athens and surrounding may apply for travel support. Contact: Ioannis Mitsopoulos (ioanmits@for.auth.gr, cell phone +30-6977548333).

2. Registration

Please find a registration form attached and send by 22 April 2013 (latest – preferably before) to Ioannis Mitsopoulos (ioanmits@for.auth.gr, cell phone +30-6977548333).

3. Hotel accommodation

Rooms have been reserved in “Golden Age Hotel” for a special rate of € 75 (including breakfast). Please make your own reservation by mentioning “Fire Workshop May 2013, Special Rate 75 Euros”: <http://hotelgoldenage.com/index.php?lang=en>

From the hotels by public transportation

A five minutes walk to the Megaro Moussikis metro station (blue line) and follow the direction to airport. The metro takes you in three stops to Katehaki (four minutes). The trains run every 3-4 minutes. Exit the metro station and cross the street to the opposite side. Then take the bus number 242. The bus takes you directly to NTUA campus. On entering the campus, exit at first bus stop and then follow the directions shown by signs specially placed for this event. The meeting will take place at multimedia room at the central library of the campus.

From the hotels by taxi:

A ride from the hotels to NTUA campus (Politechnio zografou in Greek) takes 10 minutes at a cost of around € 10.