

UNECE/FAO Teams of Specialists Reporting 2012 – Forest Fire

1. Name: Team of Specialists on Forest Fire
2. Period covered: January 2012 – March 2013
3. Leader/Deputies and Secretary: Team Leader: Mr. Johann Georg Goldammer (Germany) Deputy Team Leaders: Mr. Nikola Nikolov (FYR of Macedonia) and Mr. Andrey Eritsov (Russian Federation) Secretariat: Mr. Pieter Van Lierop (FAO)
4. Members: (a) <u>Countries</u> : Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, FYR of Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America; (b) <u>International Organizations and Networks / NGOs</u> : Global Observation of Forest Cover / Global Observation of Land Cover Dynamics (GFOC/GOLD), Fire Implementation Team; European Commission - Joint Research Centre; UNISDR Regional Central Asia Wildland Fire Network; UNISDR Eurasia Wildland Fire Network. Detailed list: http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/intro/team.html
5. Meetings held, direct cooperative work and outreach activities (organized by GFMC/ToS or GFMC/ToS prime supporter): (a) Conference on “Climate Change & Forest Fires in the Mediterranean Basin: Risk Reduction & Management”; Nir Etzion, Israel, 24-26 January 2012 (b) International Conference “Vocational Education and Training in Forest Management for State Forestry Personnel”; All-Russian Institute of Continuous Education in Forestry (ARICEF), Pushkino, Moscow Region, Russian Federation. 16 March 2012. (c) Regional Meeting of the ENVSEC Initiative in the South Caucasus, with contribution on Phase III of the ENVSEC Initiative “Enhancing National Capacity on Fire Management and Wildfire Disaster Risk Reduction in the South Caucasus”; Tbilisi, Georgia, 2-4 April 2012. (d) WHO Regional Office for Europe Workshop „Health aspects of wildfire smoke“, with Team inputs on „Transboundary co-operation in management of vegetation fires and fire emissions“; Bonn, UN Campus, Germany, 21 May 2012. (e) Fourth National Round Table on Fire Management in preparation of a National Fire Management Policy for Georgia, conducted in the frame of the ENVSEC / GFMC project “Phase Two - Enhancing National Capacity on Fire Management and Wildfire Disaster Risk Reduction in the South Caucasus”; Tbilisi, Georgia, 29 May 2012. (f) Meeting of the Global Wildland Fire Network / UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group (WFAG) with Team representation; GFMC, Freiburg, Germany, 29 June-3 July 2012. (g) “International Fire Management Week” organized by the Team; Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation, 1-10 September 2012. (h) Fire management training course, national forest fire exercise and Second National Round Table on Fire Management, for developing a National Fire Management Policy for Azerbaijan (ENVSEC) through the Team; Azerbaijan, 22-28 September 2012. (i) International Fire Management Round Table organized by the Federal Forest Agency of Russia <i>Rosleskhoz</i> , with Team contribution; Moscow, Russia, 24-27 October 2012. (j) First Regional Workshop on the Development of “Guidelines for the Defense of Rural Populations, Settlements and other Assets Against Wildfires and Smoke Pollution for the

EECCA Region”, convened by GFMC and Team members from EECCA countries; Skopje, FYROM, 9 November 2012.

(k) Second National Round Table for developing a National Fire Management Policy for Armenia (ENVSEC), facilitated by GFMC and OSCE; Yerevan, Armenia, 3 December 2012

(l) International Symposium on Strategy Development of Advanced Forest Fire Policy and Organization Seoul. On request by the Korea Forest Service (KFS) 4 members of the ToS Forest Fires contributed to the Seminar which was aimed at supporting KFS to devise a national fire management strategy; Seoul, Republic of Korea, 15-16 January 2013.

(m) Inauguration of the Regional Eastern European Fire Monitoring Center (REEFMC) and Regional Seminar and Consultation “Wildfires in the Eastern European Region: Science, Policies and Management”, sponsored by GFMC and the ToS Kyiv, Ukraine, 4 March 2013.

6. Outputs during period by mandate item (Mandates 1 to 3):

(1) To promote a continuous exchange of (new) knowledge and practices on fire management through the organization of meetings on emerging issues in Fire Management in the UNECE region (**Complied – see list of activities above**) and the publication of the International Forest Fire News (**Partially complied – IFFN issues 2009 and 2010 published online, others still delayed due to lack of personnel resources**);

(2) To provide, in close cooperation and coordination with the UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network, FAO, UNISDR, Council of Europe and other partners, guidance to ECE member states on forest fire management and forest fire policies, including bilateral / international cooperation of ECE member states (**Complied – see list of activities above**);

(3) To organize regional seminars and training workshops in fire management (**Complied – see list of activities above**);

Impact achieved: The policy of the Team to preferably organize and support targeted thematic meetings and outreach events has continued in 2012. The year 2012 was especially successful in addressing national and regional governments and policies.

7. Expected outputs over next period by mandate item:

According to the recommendations in support of the implementation of the Joint Programme of Work, the Bureaux of the ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission had recommended (ECE/TIM/2012/11, item 33):

“Discontinue the ToS on Forest Fires, as the issue of fires is no longer addressed by the ECE/FAO programme of work and is better addressed at the global level and through other channels”

There are a few facts that should be considered when taking a decision about the future of the role of forest fire experts in the frame of the Joint Programme of Work. The following suggestions refer to the Draft Elements of the Joint Programme of Work of the ECE Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission for 2014-2017 (ECE/TIM/2012/11):

(1) Item 4 „The programme of work will continue to cover many traditional topics related to forest products and services (as contained in the previous programme of work ECE/TIM/2008/7 – FO:EFC/08/7)

Item 4 introduces new elements to address emerging issues related to sustainable forest management. To some of them fire and fire effects are quite significant:

- **Forest health and disturbance-related issues**
 - > Fire is a significant forest disturbance all over the UNECE region

- **Linkages between Sustainable Forest Management and a green economy, including the contribution of forest products and services to the green economy, and the issue of decent green jobs and employment in the forest sector and**
- **Enhanced emphasis on wood energy and payment for ecosystem services**

> The TL recently submitted ToS FF / GFMC inputs to the Draft “Action Plan for the Forest Sector in Green Economy” – *the proposed items are highlighted in red-bold italics*):

Pillar B.3.5 (Proposed: “Maintain and strengthen *wildfire early warning and monitoring capacities, and promotion of integrated fire management approaches, i.e. the targeted extraction of biomass for both renewable energy provision and reduction of wildfire hazard; and the integration of communities / private forest users in the achieving these goals at local level.*”)

Pillar D.3.1 (Proposed: “Organise a regional forum on forests and human health to review the situation, *including the specific hazards and risks (e.g., air pollution from forest and other vegetation fires affecting human health and security)*, opportunities and challenges, and make recommendations for future work, at the international and national level.”)

Pillar E.0.4 (Proposed: “Develop the capacities (skills, information, institutions, etc.) of all stakeholders (workforce, private sector, administrations, etc.) to implement sustainable forest management *and forest protection*, and monitor progress in its implementation.”)

- **Interactions between forest policies and other sectors, such as the effect of wood energy policies on land use and the effect of urbanization on forest extent and character**

> This is an extremely important issue since other sectoral policies are key for the success in fire management and handling the consequences of fire, e.g. those sectoral responsibilities addressing the main causes of wildfires (= agriculture) or those addressing impacts of fire emissions on human health and climate change, i.e. the public health sector and “climate change” sector.

(2) Item 8 “The joint programme of work is structured around four main functions, or work areas (WA)”

Fire is actually a factor relevant to all Work Areas. Most important, however, is WA2:

Item 15. This component will involve the organization of policy dialogues and specific studies at the UNECE region, and the national level on request from member countries. Subjects to be covered will include:

- Forest and forest-related policy fragmentation
 - > The above-mentioned cross-sectoral role of fire applies particularly here!

(3) Consequently, what could be the role of an out-phased ToS Forest Fire and its successor arrangement?

Under PoW “Partnerships” the Items 42 and 43 are relevant:

42. Partnerships should be established with other sectors, in particular through the work of other ECE Committees. This should serve to demonstrate the value of forests for other sectors (energy, environment, housing, etc).

43. Good examples of cross-sectoral cooperation should be highlighted and showcased whenever possible.

It has been discussed within the ToS repeatedly that there are overlapping networking activities addressing “wildland fire” (not just forest fire) within the UNECE region. For instance there are networking activities of the European Commission (Forest Fire Expert Team) and six Regional Wildland Fire Networks that are operational within the UNECE:

- North America:
NAFC Wildland Fire Management Working Group (including Mexico)
<http://www.fs.fed.us/global/nafc/fire/aboutus.htm>
- Mediterranean UNECE Member States (including neighboring North African countries):
Working Group on Forest Fire within *Silva Mediterranea*
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/35587/en/> (currently not functioning)
- Temperate-boreal (non-Mediterranean) UNECE member States:
UNISDR Regional Eurasia Wildland Fire Network
<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/BalticRegion/BalticRegion.html>
- SE Europe / Caucasus Region (including Turkey and Near / Middle East [Note: not identical with member countries of the FAO Near East Regional Forestry Commission]):
UNISDR Regional SE Europe / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network
<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SEEurope/SEEurope.html>
- Euro-Alpine Region:
UNISDR Euro-Alpine Wildland Fire Network
(dedicated to address specific fire issues of high-altitude ecosystems)
<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/EuroAlpine/EuroAlpine.html>
- Central Asian UNECE Member States (including neighboring Mongolia and China):
UNISDR Central Asia Wildland Fire Network
<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/CentralAsia/CentralAsia.html>

In the end the ToS Forest Fire has worked primarily through these regional networks because the issues tackled by the ToS generally had a regional theme or focus, especially in the EECCA region, not necessarily affecting or involving all UNECE Member States.

Given the significance of impacts of forest fires and other wildland fires on the environment and society, including fires burning in the agricultural domain and impacting forests, it is recommended that the six Regional Wildland Fire Networks would maintain a serving function to the ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission. Due to this high number of networks the GFMC in its function of Secretariat of the Global Wildland Fire Network would continue to serve as facilitator / coordinator for the inputs of the six Regional Wildland Fire Networks.

It is suggested that UNECE Member States to maintain nominating focal points, but not to one large UNECE-embracing Team as before, but to one or more (in case of overlapping boundaries) Regional Wildland Fire Network(s).

Note: Network boundaries are overlapping, and a concrete list of countries for each network can be prepared. For instance, due to its size Russia is member of the Eurasia and Central Asia Wildland Fire Network; or: Turkey is member of the *Silva Mediterranea* Working Group on Forest Fire and the SE Europe / Caucasus Wildland Fire Network.

8. Issues for the attention of the Secretariat and the Working Party:

An important step towards consolidation and future enhancing of cooperation in fire management within the UNECE Region will be the “UNECE Regional Forum on Cross-boundary Fire Management”, which will be held at the United Nations in Geneva, 27-29 November 2013.

This Forum is designed to address the increasing threats of wildfires affecting forests and sustainable forest management, as well as to protect natural and cultural landscapes in which most of the wildfires are originating. Public policies affecting landscape fires need to be reviewed and adapted to changed conditions. International cooperation in fire management offers solutions to exchange expertise in capacity building in fire management, to improve governance and to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of international collaboration in responding to wildfire emergency situations.

For the preparation and organization of the Forum the German Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection is providing the funding. The GFMC as coordinator of the ToS Forest Fire is entrusted with the implementation of the preparation, organization and follow up of the Forum.

9. Comments, lessons learned:

The success of the work of the ToS Forest Fire over the past 20 years has been made possible through the continuous financial and in-kind support by Germany. While it is not possible to exactly reconstruct the exact and complete monetary value of the German contribution to support the work of the ToS, it can be assumed that the direct investments and in-kind value of services of the GFMC (primarily funded by the Max Planck Society for the Advancement of Sciences, the German Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection and the German Foreign Office; in addition by the Euro-Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) of the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) amounted to tentatively **three million Euros** (without the ca. €268,000 for the above-mentioned UNECE Forum in November 2013; cf. Item 8 above).

The Global Wildland Fire Network, which is functioning under the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), and its UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group have proven to provide an appropriate platform for mutually informing and eventually “harmonizing” and “coordinating” the contributions of UN specialized agencies and programmes as well as other international organizations to the arena of global wildland fire and wildland fire management.

On 29 June 2012 the UNISDR Secretariat and the UNECE had convened an Informal Consultation on Global Wildland Fire, and subsequently a review on “UN Inter-Agency Cooperation and Coordination in Wildland Fire Management, Including Key International Organizations” was compiled by the (GFMC) (on file at GFMC; not yet published). This activity and other activities prompted FAO member states, particularly the EU member states, at the COFO meeting in 2012 to suggest to FAO to “*make full use of its comparative advantages and avoiding duplication with the work of other agencies such as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC)*” (COFO 2012/REP, p. 7, item 52).

In conclusion it is summarized that UNECE Member States have benefited from the work of the Team of Specialists on Forest Fire since the late 1980s, particularly in the EECCA region, where access to information and capacity building was comparatively restricted as compared to North American and West European Member States. The bridging of East-West cultures in wildland fire science and management has been the major merit of the work of the ToS and the GFMC, for which the GFMC is expressing recognition and appreciation for the personal and institutional engagement of many partners.

The theme of fire is a cross-sectoral and inter-agency theme. Forest Services are the main partners of the Team, but almost equally the Agricultural Sector, Public Health, and Security and Civil Protection. This is why the Joint Programme of Work should be able to liaise with partners and take advantage of their capabilities even if not formally belonging to the Programme.

The members of the Global Wildland Fire Network and the GFMC are available to follow up the “UNECE Regional Forum on Cross-boundary Fire Management” after November 2013 and to assist in the implementation of the outcomes, either in the further development of voluntary procedures of cooperation, or in the frame of a binding agreement such as a protocol under a convention, e.g. a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe.