

6th International Wildland Fire Conference

Regional Session V: Regional Eurasia, Southeast Europe / Caucasus, Euro-Alpine and Central Asia Wildland Fire Networks

13 October 2015

SESSION REPORT

Introductory Remarks

The meeting was attended by representatives from the Regional Wildland Fire Networks of Eurasia, Southeast Europe / Caucasus, Central Asia and the Euro-Alpine Sub-regional Wildland Fire Network and other conference participants. The presentations and discussions focused on the four Regional Statements. The countries that are actively participating in the four networks are Member States and / or Participating States of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Council of Europe through its European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (European Open Partial Agreement – EUR-OPA) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) respectively. These countries attended the *UNECE/FAO Regional Forum on Cross-boundary Fire Management (28-29 November 2013, United Nations in Geneva)*¹ and the preceding International Congress “*Forest Fire and Climate Change: Challenges for Fire Management in Natural and Cultural Landscapes of Eurasia*” (Novosibirsk, Russia, 11-12 November 2013). Among other, the congress resolution included recommendations, which were relevant for the rationale and outcomes of the Regional Forum.²

The recommendations of the Congress and the Forum and the follow-up implementation action were in the focus of the discussions. The detailed statements of the four participating Regional Wildland Fire Networks are available on the post-conference website.³

Conclusions and Recommendations

By referring to the outcomes of the Geneva Forum, the predecessor congress in Novosibirsk and the Regional Wildland Fire Network Statements, the attendees of the Regional Session V conclude and recommend:

- Governments of the region and globally are alerted and warned by the scientific and the professional fire management community that the threat from wildfires in the region will become increasingly dangerous in the coming years as a consequence of climate change and socio-economic and demographic changes;
- Governments of the region and globally are urged to take all necessary measures to develop integrated fire management concepts and put in place capabilities to manage fire at landscape level by considering the potential contributions of vegetation fires to climate change, or the potential for mitigation climate change consequences; a reduction of unnecessary application of fire in land use and land-use change, and the state-of-the-art application of prescribed fire where appropriate should be considered;
- Consequently, in complying with the Gothenburg Protocol to the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), the extent of unnecessary burning of agricultural, pasture and steppe ecosystems must be halted; appropriate measures would include:
 - Review and further development of the legislation, law enforcement and management responsibilities of authorities concerning the use of fire on agricultural and pasture lands, as well as on abandoned agricultural lands;
 - Review and promotion of alternatives to agricultural burning by rural extension services;
 - Introduction of subsidies for supporting the agricultural sector to apply alternative technologies, following the examples of subsidies in the European Union.

¹ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iwpm/index.htm>

² <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/BalticRegion/NovosibirskCongress.html>

³ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/korea-2015.html>

- Urban and rural areas must be prepared to protect populations against the adverse effects of wildfire smoke pollution; and publish transparent and open data about people affected by smoke pollution (hospital admissions, premature deaths);
- Rural communities must be supported in the self-defense of rural assets (farms, villages, recreational sites, infrastructures) against wildfires by the;
- Fire management plans for protected areas, which consider the vulnerability of some ecosystems, and the fire tolerance or fire dependence of other ecosystems, must be developed;
- Special attention must be given to develop capacities to manage wildfires occurring on vegetated lands that are contaminated by radioactivity, chemical and other industrial deposits or threatened by military assets including unexploded ordnance stemming from armed conflicts or military training;
- A dialogue must be established at regional level between relevant agencies that encourages participatory approaches by inviting representatives of civil society to define fire management solutions at landscape levels (including forests, agricultural lands, abandoned agricultural lands, conservation / protected areas, and other lands);
- Consequently, national fire management policies or doctrines must be developed that take these recommendations into consideration, notably the needs for integrating the function of natural and management-set prescribed fires in stabilization and regeneration of fire-dependent and -tolerant forests and taking into consideration the needs for reducing unnecessary emissions and stabilizing or increasing terrestrial carbon;
- Fire Management Resource Centers must be established at a regional level which will train professionals and volunteers in fire management, disseminate information to the public on early warning and real-time information for ongoing wildfires, and facilitate mutual support between neighbouring regions in wildfire emergency situations; the existing Regional Fire Monitoring and Fire Management Resource Centers must be financially supported to meet their tasks of fostering regional capacity building and cooperation in fire management;
- Countries are encouraged to test and use the International Wildfire Preparedness Mechanism (IWPM) and the voluntary International Fire Aviation Guidelines as initial internationally concerted means for strengthening cross-border cooperation and developing interoperability in fire management

With regards to the follow-up of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire, which phased out in 2014, the Session endorsed the recommendation of the UNECE that the scope of work of the Team should transit to and be addressed at global level. Within the UNECE region the active engagement of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks should continue under the auspice and support of the Council of Europe through its European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (European Open Partial Agreement – EUR-OPA) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), based on the 2014 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 6/2014 “*Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction*”, which tasked the OSCE executive structures and the OSCE Office of Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) of DRR, with emphasis on exchange of knowledge and experience in fire management.

Furthermore the Session concluded that the Global Wildland Fire Network through the Regional Wildland Fire Networks should actively contribute to meet the challenges of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

In preparation of the Conference Statement the attendees suggested to formulate recommendations to be submitted to the upcoming 21th Conference of the Parties (COP 21) of the UNFCCC (Paris, December 2015) to address vegetation fires, including fires threatening or affecting the carbon pools of wetlands / peat lands, as source of greenhouse gases and to recognize fire management as a vital and accountable measure towards reducing the anthropogenic global warming.