



Regional Session III: Asia Cluster: The Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network – Northeast, Southeast, Central and South Asia

11 May 2011, 15:50 – 18:00

Conclusions and Recommendations

General Fire Assessment

Ecosystems throughout the Asian region are undergoing changes in wildland fire regimes. These changes are primarily induced by humans and aggravated by climate extremes. In equatorial Asia the use of fire in converting native primary or secondary vegetation is highest in the region. Main current burning activities are related to conversion of peatlands to plantations, notably biofuel plantations, clearing agriculture land and slash-and-burn agriculture. Wildfires spreading from land-use fires are favoured by dry spells or extended droughts during El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events. Increasing severity and frequency of ENSO events are a consequence of global climate change.

In the seasonal forests of mainland South and Southeast Asia regular seasonal smoke pollution caused by wildland fires are aggravated by industrial pollution and other burning activities such as trash burning. The so-called *Asian Brown Cloud* or the seasonal smoke pollution in Northern Thailand and southern range of Hindu Kush Himalayan region are a consequence of multiple sources of fire. Wildfire-generated smoke pollution at local level but also in remote locations due to long-range transport is also regularly observed in Central and Northeast Asia, with negative consequences on human health and security.

In the mountain regions of the Himalayas regional warming linked to climate change is predicted to alter the snow and ice regimes in high-altitude ecosystems. Rapidly melting glaciers will not only impact the drinking water supply of around one billion people but also may affect regional vegetation dryness and fire regimes.

There is increasing interest and proactive actions in Community-based Forest Fire Management (CBFiM) Approach in most of the countries in this region.

In Northeast Asia, notably in the Far East of Russia, mixed forest ecosystems are becoming increasingly vulnerable to fire as a consequence of regional climate change, careless fire use and reduced institutional capacities to manage fires.

In Central Asia (which due to technical and thematic reasons participated in Regional Session V (Eurasia, Southeast Europe / Caucasus and Central Asia) the accumulating effects of land-use change, widespread non-sustainable forest use including illegal logging, regional climate change and wildfires are resulting in an expansion of grassland / steppe ecosystems at the expense of forest cover.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Being aware that in most countries the problems associated with excessive application of fire in land use and the humanitarian and security consequences of fires and fire emissions are not yet solved, the participants of the Regional Session "III" recommend authorities in all levels and international organizations:

South Asia

1. To support countries to conduct national fire and fire management assessments, formulate legal frameworks and strategies, build sustainable fire management capabilities and institutions, develop fire management plans and human resources;
2. To develop National Fire Management Guidelines;
3. To give emphasis to improvement of participatory / community-based fire management approaches and institutional and technological capabilities at all levels;
4. To promote education and awareness-raising programmes on wildland fires;
5. To support countries in developing/ providing fire fighting tools and equipments;
6. To enhance cooperation among countries in the Asia region aimed at sharing technology, expertise and data in fire management;
7. To implement the objectives of work of the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network and Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) and to support implementation of building fire management capability at both local and national levels, as well as through bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements;
8. To establish a regional South Asian Fire Monitoring Center, which in future may also serve as a regional coordination centre for wildfire disaster response;
9. To create an enabling environment from all possible donors including national, international, bilateral, multi-lateral and private foundations for financial, technical and other resource support for sustainable fire management;
10. To develop the non-legally binding bilateral and multilateral agreements on cooperation in wildland fire management including Global Strategy of Cooperation.

Southeast Asia

1. To strengthen forest fire research work conducted in the region by providing funding, exchange between forest fire scientist and periodical meetings with scientist within the region
2. To promote inter-regional cooperation in disaster reduction through ASEAN, GOFC/GOLD Regional Network, UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network and Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) network.
3. To integrate forest fire management in the REDD++ projects hence lowering the risk of fire occurrences in long-term projects
4. To develop mitigation and adaptation strategies of the anticipated higher fires frequency in future climate scenario
5. To encourage and support communities in organizing forest fire management at community level. Experiences of successful community-based fire management can be shared throughout the region.
6. To develop rehabilitation techniques in degraded burnt peat swamp forest and forest lands.
7. To share and transfer of technology which can help in detecting, monitoring and controlling wildland fires.

Northeast Asia

1. To establish a UNISDR-Pan-Asian Wildland Fire Network representing four regional Networks consisting 21 countries in the region. The secretariat of the Network shall be established in South Korea.
2. To hold a 4-yearly series of Pan-Asian Wildland Fire Conference and the first in 2013 in South Korea.
3. Translate the International Fire Management Dictionary also into Korean language.
4. Hold a consultative inter-regional meeting among the networks of South Asia, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia and Central Asia, by inviting the Sub-Saharan Africa Wildland Fire Network for sharing knowledge on Community-based Fire Management (CBFiM) approaches in 2012.

The participants of the Regional Session III urge authorities and international organizations to provide the financial and technical assistance to the Global Wildland Fire Network, and in particular to the three regional networks represented in this session. In order to realize this, a strategic plan including a timetable of concrete actions in fostering international cooperation must be developed. One of the important steps is the organization of the follow-up work at national level in each country. The major

steps in cooperation must be carried out on the national level, including annual meetings of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks, and joint projects of implementation:

1. The network members should take advantage of the accumulated expertise in fire management and international cooperation by international community;
2. To foster the bilateral and multilateral cooperation in wildland fire management, realization of joint research and practical projects advancing the knowledge on wildland fires;
3. Member countries should also promote inter-regional cooperation, including joint investigations, joint fire management demonstration projects, consultations, and conferences.
4. To strengthen the UNISDR Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network;
5. Technological and financial support must be provided by donor communities to financially disadvantaged countries in building capability in wildland fire management.