



IFFN Special Issue

The Global Wildland Fire Network and the FAO Ministerial Meeting on Forest: Towards an International Agreement on Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management

In accordance with the Framework for the Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) suggested, in 2000, to create an interagency "Working Group on Wildland Fire" under the auspices of the ISDR Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction (IATF). This proposal was in line with several declarations made in international conferences during the last five years and intended to bring together both the technical members of the fire community and the authorities concerned with policy and national practices in wildland fire management to realise their common interests of wildland fire disaster reduction at global scale. The IATF at its second meeting on 11 October 2000 agreed to establish the Working Group on Wildland Fire. Through the Working Group it was envisaged to create an interagency and inter-sectoral forum under the auspices of the UN. One of the priority fields of activity to be addressed by the Working Group on Wildland Fire was:

Establishment of a global network of regional- to national-level focal points for early warning of wildland fire, fire monitoring and impact assessment, aimed at enhancing existing global fire monitoring capabilities and facilitating the functioning of a global fire management working programme or network.

At the 2nd meeting of the Working Group on Wildland Fire (3-4 December 2001) it was decided to establish a "Global Wildland Fire Network". This network would consist of a set of Regional Wildland Fire Networks that would include existing formal or informal network structures and initiatives, be formed where such arrangements are not yet in place. The envisaged timeframe for setting up the network was January 2002 - July 2003. The 3rd Global Wildland Fire Conference and the International Wildland Fire Summit (Sydney, 3-6 and 8 October 2003) was used as a platform to convene representatives from several regional networks. The strategy agreed by the International Wildland Fire Summit that followed the 3rd Global Wildland Fire Conference included the following agreement:

"The Regional Wildland Fire Networks will be consolidated, developed and promoted through active networking in information sharing, capacity building, preparation of bilateral and multilateral agreements, etc. This process will be facilitated through regional Wildland Fire Conferences and Summits in cooperation with the International Liaison Committee and the UN-ISDR Working Group on Wildland Fire".¹

In 2004 a series of consultations were held in the following regions:

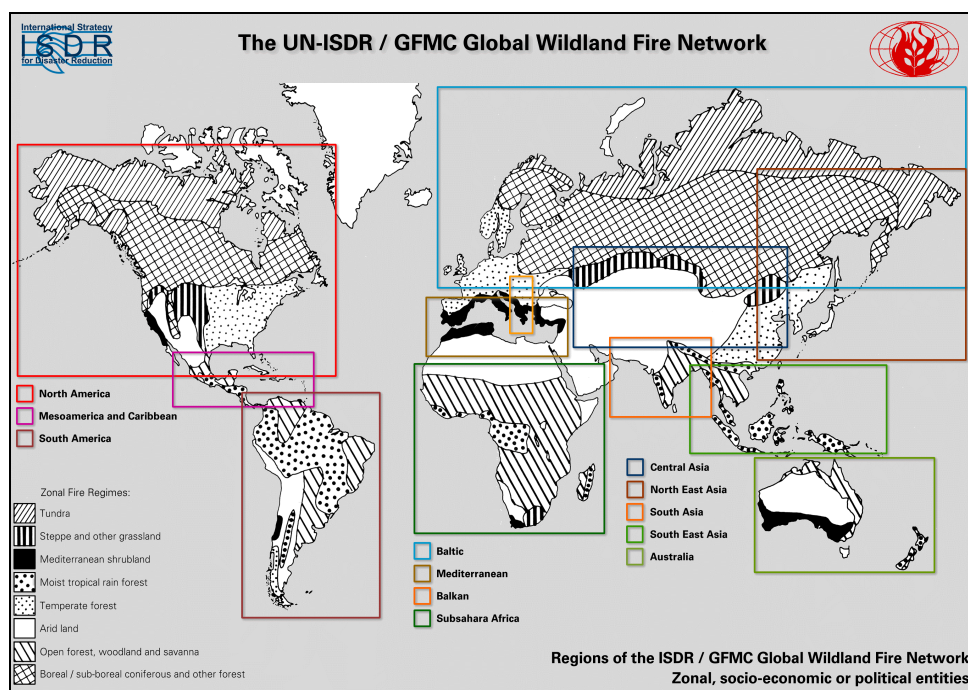
- Northeast Asia (Korea, March 2004)
- Eastern Mediterranean, Near East, Balkans, Central Asia (Turkey, April 2004)
- Baltic Region (Finland, May 2004)
- Sub-Sahara Africa (South Africa, June 2004)
- South America (Brazil, June 2004)
- Australasia (Australia, October 2004)
- North America (U.S.A, January 2004)
- Pan-American Region (Costa Rica, October 2004)
- South East Asia (Viet Nam, November 2004)
- Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, November 2004)

¹ For details of the preparation and outcomes of the International Wildland Fire Summit see:
<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/summit-2003/introduction.htm>



These consultations had quite diverse organizational settings and objectives:

- Regional Wildland Fire Networks were formally initiated in some regions, e.g. in Northeast Asia or South America.
- In other regions various initiatives were brought together aimed at creating or consolidating the efficiency of transnational cooperation in wildland fire management, e.g. at the Pan-American Wildland Fire Conference.
- Some networks are already operational in the field and conducting outreach programmes, e.g. the Regional Sub Sahara Africa Wildland Fire Network, which is offering training courses in advanced wildland fire management, introduction of the Incident Command System (ICS) and on Community-Based Fire Management (CBFiM).
- Other regional networks established prior to the creation of the Global Wildland Fire Network, e.g. the Fire Management Working Group of the FAO North American Forestry Commission and the Australian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC), formally joined the global network.



In December 2004 the first meeting of the WFAG was convened at the GFMC (Freiburg, Germany). The objectives included, among other:

- Evaluation of the regional consultations held in 2004 and the GFMC/ISDR/FAO "Framework for the Development of the International Wildland Fire Accord" (May 2004)
- Formulation of a recommendation of the WFAG / Global Wildland Fire Network for the Development of the International Wildland Fire Accord, directed to the FAO and UNFF Ministerial Meetings (March 2005 / May 2005), and the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR), Japan, January 2005
- Discussion on the participation of the Global Wildland Fire Network at the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference (Madrid, 2007)

This special issue of IFFN is prepared for the ministerial meetings at FAO and UNFF and provides background information and reports from the Regional Wildland Fire Networks and the Wildland Fire Advisory Group.²

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² Readers of IFFN are encouraged to visit the website of the Global Wildland Fire Network which is regularly updated with the latest news and developments in the regions and at international level:
<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/globalNet.html>