



Regional Baltic Wildland Fire Network Meeting

Ministry of the Interior and Finnish Forest Research Institute, Helsinki, Finland, 10 May 2004

Helsinki Declaration on Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Baltic Region

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The participants of the Regional Baltic Wildland Fire Meeting:

- Recalling the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and its Wildland Fire Advisory Group in supporting to harmonize and strengthen efforts by the United Nations agencies and programmes, as well as other international organizations including non-government organizations, to reduce the negative impacts of wildland fires on the environment, and to support the application of prescribed fire for the benefit of ecosystem stability and sustainability;
- Endorsing the ISDR-FAO-GFMC Framework for the Development of the International Wildland Fire Accord of 5 May 2004, outlining the concerted international efforts towards international cooperation in wildland fire management;
- Endorsing the goal of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to promote and strengthen bilateral and multilateral agreements for cooperation in fire management,
- Recognizing and supporting the goals and joint endeavours of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Forum of Forests (UNFF) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, to protect the global vegetation resources and the global atmosphere from negative influences by vegetation fires, as well as the promotion of knowledge and techniques to utilize the beneficial role of fire in ecosystem management,
- Recognizing and supporting the recommendations of the ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fires and the recommendations of BALTEX FIRE 2000 (Baltic Exercise for Fire Information and Resources Exchange), concerning international cooperation in wildland fire management between the countries bordering the Baltic Sea;
- Endorsing the recommendations of the International Wildland Fire Summit (Sydney – 2003) concerning common international standards for fire management and the strategy for strengthening international cooperation in wildland fire management,
- Supporting the objectives of the ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network and its Secretariat, the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), to systematically enhance the intra- and inter-regional cooperation in wildland fire management throughout the world,



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- Referring to the objectives of the Forests Sector of the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region
- Referring to the Helsinki Convention Article 15 concerning nature conservation and biodiversity of the coastal ecosystems
- Encouraging the EU to develop protocols and agreement for mutual assistance in wildland fire disaster management
- Encouraging the EU, UN-OCHA, NATO / EADRRC and GFMC to agree on procedures for coordination in international response to (wildland fire) disasters
- Welcoming the availability of the Ministry of the Interior of Finland -- the host institution of this meeting -- and the delegates of participating nations of the Baltic Region to actively cooperate to share experience and resources in wildland fire management
- Concluding from the national case studies and analyses on the wildland fire situation in the participating countries, as well as from the discussions held at the conference, that the majority of countries in the region are available to establish and strengthen a regional dialogue on cooperation in wildland fire research and management
- Expressing the intent to jointly overcome the currently existing gaps, deficits and problems related to
 - The high number of emerging new private small forest owners in Baltic States that have problems to conduct the necessary measures in forest fire management
 - Depopulation and abandonment of country sites, with consequences on changes in vegetation composition, succession, fuel loads, resulting in an increased wildfire hazard
 - Large-scale establishment of exotic tree plantations such as *Pinus contorta* that represent a high wildfire risk for the future
 - Uncontrolled use of agricultural fires that are a major cause of wildfires in forests and other wildlands
 - Lack of local awareness and knowledge of principles in fire ecology and fire management
 - Prescribed burning policies have difficult acceptance by the public and authorities in some countries
 - Lack of finances for fire management systems in some countries
 - Lack of a fire reporting system that allows to distinguish the economic and ecological consequences of fire, i.e. between the various degrees of damages or benefits caused by fire
 - Training for wildland / forest fire management / suppression inadequate in most countries of the region, especially concerning the ability to respond to large and long-lasting fire situations
 - Lack of adequate fire suppression equipment and protecting clothing in most countries
 - Need of further development of fire danger rating systems
 - Aerial assets not necessarily available due to competing demands

Recommend the following **Helsinki Plan of Action for Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Baltic Region**

- (1) The countries participating at the conference encourage governments to develop or strengthen, and international organizations to support
- Bilateral and multilateral agreements on cooperation in wildland fire management, based on international standards as proposed by the FAO and the International Wildland Fire Summit
 - Investigate the introduction of the Incident Command System (ICS) as the international standard for all wildland incident management participating in international or interagency agreements and exchanges.
 - Cooperative regional wildland fire research projects and programmes

- Decision-support systems for large fire situations
- Training / capacity building in wildland fire management
- Community involvement in fire management

(2) To regularly conduct follow-up activities aimed at further promoting collaborative efforts and procedures

- Bilateral and multilateral wildland fire emergency exercises, like those to be conducted between Estonia and Latvia in June 2004, or the NATO PfP exercise RM-04 in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 2004
- Exchange visits and programmes to share lessons learned and solving problems
- Updating online (Internet) access to information related to regional wildland fire management issues
- Regional Baltic Wildland Fire meetings should be organized every 2 to 3 years. The next Baltic meeting shall be organized in 2006.

(3) To investigate the necessity to develop arrangements to support collection and dissemination of wildland fire information, facilitation of regular regional dialogue and joint projects between the countries, and to technically support countries in need of aerial assets for wildland fire suppression by the creation of

- Special regional mobile airborne fire response units, based on Public-Private Partnership arrangements

(4) To inform national governments about the need to prepare statements in favour of enhancing international cooperation in wildland fire management at the following forums:

- The World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) (Kobe-Hyogo, Japan, January 2005)
- The FAO high-level meeting at COFO 2005, devoted to wildland fire management and international cooperation (Rome, Italy, March 2005)

Delegates of the following countries and international organizations participated at the meeting:

- Estonia
- Finland
- Germany
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Sweden
- United Kingdom
- Russian Federation

- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire
- UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN- ISDR), Wildland Fire Advisory Group and Global Wildland Fire Network
- Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC)
- International Technical Committee on the Prevention and Extinction of Fire (CTIF), Forest Fire Commission

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