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**JOINT FAO/ECE/ILO COMMITTEE ON FOREST TECHNOLOGY, MANAGEMENT AND TRAINING**

**Conference on Forest Fire Management and International Cooperation in Fire Emergencies  
in the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and adjoining Regions of the Near East and Central  
Asia**

**Antalya, Turkey, 30 March - 3 April 2004**

**Introduction**

The Eastern Mediterranean Region, including the Balkan countries, the ECE member states of the Near East and Central Asia, and other neighbouring countries of Central Asia, e.g. Mongolia and China, have recently suffered major forest and other wildland fire problems. The causes of an increasing occurrence of wildfires in forests and other wildlands, including the underlying reasons for increasing human-caused fires, vary within the region and are due to:

- transition from centrally planned to market economies
- national to regional conflicts, creation of new nations
- increasing population growth and land-use pressure
- regional climate change towards increase of extreme droughts

It has been recognized that no regional activity is underway to establish cooperation in wildland fire management, including wildland fire science.

Several reasons support the idea for holding a regional conference. First, the Balkan countries, some of them being in a post-war situation and under reconstruction, as well as the South Eastern European countries which are still in economic and political transition, have not participated in recent activities of the ECE/FAO Fire Team and other international wildland fire research and development projects. Second, the neighbouring countries of Turkey, such as the Caucasus states, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, have been quite isolated from recent scientific and technological developments in fire management. Third, the fire problems in Mongolia and northern China, and to a limited extent in Afghanistan, are calling for cooperation with the ECE region.

From the point of view of the ECE/FAO/ILO Team Specialists on Forest Fire and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), which coordinates the work of the team in the ECE region and liaises with the Global Wildland Fire Network, the countries listed above deserve full attention and support to bring them into the family of the international community of forest fire scientists, managers and policy makers.

With reference to the objectives of the Global Wildland Fire Network (facilitated by the GFMC) and the recommendations of the International Wildland Fire Summit (Sydney, Australia, 8 October 2003) the Antalya conference also served as a follow-up of the Summit and provided an opportunity for a joint regional meeting for the Regional Wildland Fire Networks of the Mediterranean, Balkans and Central Asia.

Turkey's experience on fire management and its strategically important geographical situation, presenting similar problems to other Mediterranean countries, was very suitable for bringing together the fire science and management community of the region. This is why the ECE/FAO/ILO Team Specialists on Forest Fire welcomed the generous hospitality of Turkey to host the conference.



International Forest Fire News (IFFN) is an activity of the FAO/UNECE Team of Specialists on Forest Fire and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC). IFFN is published on behalf of UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission and is serving the UN-ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network (GWFN). For the complete IFFN archive see: <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/iffn.htm>

## Objectives of the Conference

The objectives of the conference included:

- Provide a forum in the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkan and adjoining Regions of the Near East and Central Asia;
- Prepare mechanisms for information and resources exchange in forest and other wildland fire management within the region, including the establishment of partnerships for joint activities in fire research, training and policy development, and
- Prepare proposals to governments and international organizations of the region to establish mechanisms for sharing resources in large fire emergencies in accordance with existing international procedures.

The countries discussed the application of the recommendations of the FAO and the International Wildland Fire Summit to use the recommended "Template for International Wildland Fire Management Cooperation Agreements" for developing bilateral agreements for mutual assistance in wildland fire emergency situations. In this context the "Incident Command System" (ICS) was presented as a possible standard for a common global incident management system that will enable any assistance to quickly function in an effective manner.

The conference objectives were in line with the scope of work and recommendations of various international organizations including:

- the ECE/FAO/ILO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire;
- the Interagency Task Force for Disaster Reduction of the United Nations Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and its Wildland Fire Advisory Group;
- the FAO, in accordance with the recommendations of the fire expert consultations on "Public Policies affecting Forest Fires" (1998) and "International Cooperation in Fire Management" (2001);
- the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) and its joint UNEP Environment Unit, Environmental Emergencies Services;
- the European Commission;
- the European Council in the frame of the European Open Partial Agreement (EUR-OPA);
- the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

The Conference was held from 30 March - 3 April 2004 in Antalya, Turkey<sup>1</sup> and organized under the auspices of the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire and in co-operation with the Turkish Government. Mr. Husein Hacıoglu, Assistant Director General of Forestry of Turkey, General Directorate of Forestry (Beştepe, Ankara), served as chair the Conference Organizing Committee. The Organizing Committee was assisted by a Scientific Advisory Board.



<sup>1</sup> This conference had been scheduled originally for 15 to 19 April 2003. Due to the war in Iraq it had been decided to postpone the conference to early 2004.

***Extracts from the Opening Address on behalf of the ECE / FAO / ILO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire and the Wildland Fire Advisory Group, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR) (by Johann G. Goldammer, Global Fire Monitoring Center)***

*Why do we need wildland fire management networks at regional and global levels?*

*Resources of government services and the private sector to cope with the increasing fire problems in the region are limited. This calls for better cooperation and sharing of resources between neighbouring countries. The development and operational use of wildland fire early warning and monitoring systems can often be shared between nations. This also refers to research and training.*

*Cooperation is also needed between agencies involved in the protection and sustainable management of vegetation resources and international organizations to provide the data that are required for assessing regional to global impacts of wildland fires and to develop informed policy at international level. The United Nations have shown an increased interest in the wildland fire arena. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction is offering an international, inter-sectoral and inter-agency platform to harmonize and strengthen cooperative efforts to reduce the negative influences of wildland fires to humanity and the global environment. One of the key activities that have been promoted by the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction was to initiate the establishment of the Global Wildland Fire Network in 2002-2003. This global network consists of Regional Wildland Fire Networks in which nations belonging to a region with common fire problems would work together to share expertise and resources. At international level an inter-regional dialogue is facilitated within the Global Wildland Fire Network through its secretariat at the Global Fire Monitoring Center. This concept has received full support and endorsement by the International Wildland Fire Summit held in 2003.*

*During this conference experts from the region and other parts of the world as well as representatives of the United Nations will discuss basic issues on wildland fire research, fire management, new technologies and cooperation. This conference is offering the opportunity to discuss the objectives and agenda of regional networks within the Global Wildland Fire Network.*

*On behalf of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Global Fire Monitoring Center I would like to congratulate and thank the government of Turkey and the General Directorate of Forestry for taking the lead to bring the regional actors together. I would also like to thank all the delegates attending this conference to contribute to this important meeting.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, with these words, I wish you every success in your deliberations. Thank you.*



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Conference on Forest Fire Management and International Cooperation in Fire Emergencies in the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and adjoining Regions of the Near East and Central Asia  
Antalya, Turkey, 30 March - 3 April 2004

**Antalya Declaration on  
Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean,  
Near East and Central Asia**  
Antalya, Turkey, 1 April 2004

The Conference:

- Recalling the rationale and recommendations of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (Johannesburg – 2002) concerning the international endeavours to secure sustainable development of the global vegetation resources,
- Expressing concerns about the increasing occurrence and destructiveness of forest fires in the regions between the Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean, Near East and Central Asia,
- Recognizing that the reasons for this development are due to increasing population pressure in many countries, increasing socio-economic problems of rural populations, increasing vulnerability of humans and the occurrence of extreme fire seasons that can possibly be explained by climate change,
- Recognizing the endeavours of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE) to address the fire problems in the Northern Hemisphere, notably through the work of the UN-ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire since 1993,
- Endorsing the endeavours of 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,
- 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,
- 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,
- Welcoming the availability of the government of Turkey -- the host country of this conference - - and the delegates of participating nations 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 and deficits in
  - Early warning systems of wildland fire
  - Spaceborne fire monitoring systems
  - Decision-support systems for fire management
  - Wildland fire research
  - Training / capacity building in wildland fire management
  - Transnational agreements and operations for bilateral and multilateral assistance in wildland fire emergency situations

Recommends the following Antalya Plan of Action for the region between the Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean, Near East, Western and Central Asia:

(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
- Introduce the Incident Command System (ICS) as the international standard for all wildland incident management participating in international or interagency agreements and exchanges.
- Regional systems for early warning and satellite monitoring of wildland fires
- Cooperative regional wildland fire research projects and programmes
- Decision-support systems
- Training / capacity building in wildland fire management

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

- Multilateral wildland fire emergency exercises, starting with the multinational exercise EASTEX FIRE 2004 in Bulgaria and the tri-national exercise in Croatia in 2004
- Regional workshops aimed at further defining priority issues to be jointly addressed, especially considering the needs of collaboration with countries of the region that were not represented at the conference

(3) 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

- A Regional Fire Monitoring Center, hosted by the Government of Bulgaria
- A Regional Advisory Board of Senior Fire Officers, hosted and facilitated by the Government of Turkey in Antalya
- Special regional mobile airborne fire response units, based on Public-Private Partnership arrangements, e.g., those companies participating at the conference (Russian Irkut Corporation [fixed-wing aircraft – BE-200] and UT Air [helicopter assets])

(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 forthcoming Meeting of the three Rio Conventions (UN CBD, UN CCD, UN FCCC) (Viterbo, Italy, April 2004)
- The forthcoming 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Near East Forestry Commission, with regard to establishing networking structures in Western Asia (May 2004)
- The World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) (Kobe-Hyogo, Japan, January 2005)
- The FAO Ministerial-Level Meeting, devoted to wildland fire management and international cooperation (Rome, Italy, March 2005)

**Participating Countries:** Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Poland, Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine.

**International Organizations:** ECE, FAO, ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network