



Nelspruit Declaration on Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the SADC Region and adjoining Countries of Sub-Sahara Africa

Released by the Participants of the

Advanced Wildland Fire Management Course
A Joint UN Inter-Agency Training Course for Sub-Sahara Africa
Nelspruit, South Africa, 5 June 2004

The participants of the Joint UN Inter-Agency Regional Wildland Fire Management Training Course:

- Expressing concern about the impacts of uncontrolled fires and excessive application of fire in land-use systems Sub-Sahara Africa on ecosystem stability, including problems related to biodiversity conservation, sustainability of vegetation, soil and water resources, and other environmental resources
- Noting that the effects of human-caused climate change already result in an increase fire severity and destructivity of wildland fires in some ecosystems, particularly threatening drying wetlands and peatlands
- Noting the increasing vulnerability of human populations in Sub-Sahara Africa to secondary disasters, notably flood disasters, landslides and erosion
- Expressing the intent to jointly overcome the currently existing gaps, deficits and problems, notably concerning the lack or weakness of
 - National fire management strategies, plans and legislation
 - Capacities of human resources trained for advanced wildland fire management
 - Participatory fire management arrangements (Community-Based Fire Management in the frame of Community-Based Natural Resources Management)
 - Resources for public awareness and education campaigns
 - Resources for adequate fire management infrastructures and equipment in most Sub-Saharan countries
 - Research capabilities and academic training
- 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 training course, that countries in the SADC region / Sub-Sahara Africa are available to establish and strengthen a regional dialogue on cooperation in wildland fire research and management
- 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;



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- Endorsing the ISDR-FAO-GFMC-GOFC/GOLD 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 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, the goals and joint endeavours of the Partnership on Environmental Emergencies (led by the UNEP-OCHA Joint Environment Unit), 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 objectives of the Regional Sub-Sahara Wildland Fire Network and the Southern Africa Fire Network (SAFNet), concerning international cooperation in wildland fire management between the countries members of and adjoining the SADC Region;
- 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,
- Encouraging countries to develop protocols and agreement for mutual assistance in wildland fire disaster management, for example within the SADC region with special reference to Article 3 of the SADC Protocol on Forestry (dated 3 October 2002), and in close cooperation with the UN-ISDR, FAO, UNEP and OCHA.

Recommend the following **Nelspruit Plan of Action for Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management in the SADC 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
- 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
- Specific transboundary agreements between communities along borders of neighbouring countries
- 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

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

(3) To ensure the funding for continuation and further development of the Advanced Fire Information System (AFIS) developed by the CSIR SAC in collaboration with the University of Maryland and ESKOM (AFIS utilizes satellites such as Terra and Aqua MODIS and MSG to operationally monitor fire events over the whole Southern African region. The pilot system will be available to all SADC countries free of charge for the current fire season June – November 2004. The continuation of

availability of AFIS will be dependant on funding from the SA government as well as regional organisations).

(4) To investigate under the auspices of the GFMC the necessity to develop arrangements and organizational structures 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 and other technical assets for wildland fire suppression by the creation of

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

(5) 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, with focus on international cooperation in wildland fire management (Rome, Italy, March 2005)

(6) To support the following countries with resources needed to improve fire management capabilities; take advantage of specific expertise to be utilized in neighbouring countries; or to follow the specific suggestions made by country representatives:

Angola

- Strengthen international lobbying for cooperation in fire management
- Improve information sharing in SADC

Botswana

- Establish an advanced fire monitoring system
- Introduction of fire education in primary and secondary schools
- Design of a fire management policy and strategy in synchrony with land-use systems and policies
- Develop a national fire management plan
- Develop communication and information systems, including database
- Strengthen wildland fire research

Congo, Democratic Republic

- Identify critical fire zones with regard to biodiversity conservation, socio-economic and health disasters
- Implement SADC Protocol on Forestry by developing a national policy, a national fire management programme
- Strengthen university-based research capabilities and collaborative research with local NGOs and the local and international community respectively
- Establish information databases (fire history, monitoring, early warning; fuel monitoring, including standardization of methods; monitoring of volcanic activities and impacts)
- Focus on relationships between poverty alleviation and opportunities in Community-Based Fire Management
- Strengthen fire awareness campaigns
- Contribute to satellite validation projects
- Establish a Regional Central Africa Wildland Fire Network Office in Kinshasa

Lesotho

- Prioritise research concerning the impact of drought and fire on wetlands
- Strengthen training and capacity building
- Introduce public awareness campaigns

Malawi

- Information on forest fire is done by a number of government institutions, there is need for one body to coordinate forest fire issues, or alternatively, there is need to establish a coordinating body on forest fire management
- In relation to the above, there is need to streamline policies, legislations and plans to implement forest fire management
- Need for adequate training in forest fire management both formally and informally
- Need to establish and develop forest fire research, this should be housed within existing research institutions
- Adequate fire fighting equipment and protective clothing should be made available for fire fighting.
- Regional and bilateral cooperation in forest fire management within the country should be enhanced.

Mozambique

- Support establishment of Community-Based Fire Management in rural communities and support the development of strategies (through GOs, NGOs, international community)
- Provide technical assistance to support personnel, equipment and new technologies
- Develop a programme addressing and mitigating the impacts of climate change and fire on environment and society

Namibia

- Fire fighting equipment and transportation urgently needed
- Upgrade major internal firebreaks
- Upgrade international boundaries, particularly between Namibia, Botswana, Zambia
- Fire management positions to be included in ministries and other relevant organizational structures

South Africa

- Take advantage of the experience and lessons learned of the Ukuvuka campaign (which has created a safe space to test out different approaches, raised funds from diverse sources, garnered political and media support to raise fire awareness in the Cape region) and use it as model to organize and coordinate fire management at community level
- Examine and possibly use the legislation (Veld and Forest Fire Act) as a model for other countries
- Coordinate and standardize wildland fire management training
- Develop further and offer opportunities for higher academic and practical qualification in advanced wildland fire management through Nelson Mandela Metropole University, Saasveld Campus
- Promote involvement of local communities in fire management
- Expand existing fire fighting capabilities in the country

Swaziland

- Development of a national fire management strategy and amendment of appropriate legislation
- Strengthen capacity building (training, infrastructure)
- Strengthen networking (SADC, GFMC, SAFNet, CSIR...)

Zambia

- Develop a national fire management policy
- Establishment of a fire monitoring and management center
- Promote wildland fire research
- Establishment of Community-Based Fire Management Projects
- Promote awareness on the importance of fire and other natural resources management and livelihood

Zimbabwe

- Assistance needed in building capacities in Community-Based Fire Management
- Recognition of indigenous fire management expertise

Annex

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

- Angola
- Botswana
- Congo, DR
- Kenya
- Lesotho
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- South Africa
- Swaziland
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

- Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC)
- UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN- ISDR), Wildland Fire Advisory Group and Global Wildland Fire Network
- GOFC/GOLD Southern Africa Fire Network (SAFNet)
- UN Environment Programme / Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

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<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/Africa/Afrifirenet.html>

GOFC/GOLD Southern Africa Fire Network (SAFNet): <http://safnet.umd.edu/>