



4th International Wildland Fire Conference

GOFC-GOLD Side Event Report

The Global Observation of Forest Cover/Global Observation of Land Cover Dynamics (GOFC/GOLD) Program is aimed at improving the availability and use of both satellite and in-situ fire observations.

This one hour side event was focused on three aspects of the program. Firstly, a status report on two program initiatives to i) develop protocols and a strategy for global burned area product validation and ii) a development of a global fire danger program. Secondly status reports were presented on the Southern African Fire Network (SAFNET) and emerging initiatives in West Africa and Sudan. Thirdly an overview presentation was given on a GOFC/GOLD contributory project aimed at improving access to and usability of Fire Information for Resource Management Systems (FIRMS).

The GOFC/GOLD-Fire program is giving special attention to developing capacity in Africa for fire monitoring, tied closely to national level fire management. The presentations showed that progress that is being made to better define the African requirements for fire monitoring but increased support is needed for capacity building in terms of individual training and institutional structures and functions to implement effective monitoring programs.

The capacity building requirements do not only apply only academics and scientists but also to end users such as foresters, local government organizations, national parks. This requires the application of fire monitoring to the daily implementation of natural resource and fire management.

Summary Points:

- In the face of population dynamics, economic development, conflict and climate change, special attention is needed to monitoring and managing fires and fire regimes in Africa.
- For a long term and sustainable fire management, emphasis must be given to community based fire information and early warning systems.
- Recognizing the extremely limited capacity for fire management in Africa the regional fire networks provide an important mechanism for sharing experience and sharing fire monitoring capabilities. The session recognized the synergy between the GOFC regional networks (focused on monitoring) and the UNISDR AfirFireNet (focused on fire management) in sub-Saharan Africa.
- There is an urgent need for increased international support and assistance to strengthen the regional initiatives with particular attention to capacity building in the fire monitoring.
- The GOFC Regional networks are ready to develop and implement a harmonized approach for assessment initially addressing the extent and timing of burning followed by increased emphasis on the causes and use of fire. This activity will require international funding. It was suggested that this might be implemented through the UN FAO FRA in concert with AFRIFIRENET. GOFC/GOLD welcomes the emerging international Fire Management Actions Alliance and the regional networks are willing participants.

Contact: <http://gofc-fire.umd.edu/>