



**First International Central Asian Wildland Fire Joint Conference and Consultation (ICAWFCC)**  
**“Wildland Fires in Natural Ecosystems of the Central Asian Region:  
Ecology and Management implications”**  
Associated with the First Central Asian Forest Fire Experiment  
2-6 June 2008, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

### Introduction

Central Asia for the last two decades has experienced an increase in occurrence, area burnt and environmental impacts caused by wildland fires, including their influence on human health and wellbeing. The scale of wildland fire sometimes has transboundary effects, e.g., fires and fire-smoke pollution crossing the borders between Russia, Mongolia and China, demanding regional / international and cooperative efforts to address the problem. Reasons for the escalation of destructive wildfires are, among other, result of the rapidly changing socio-economic conditions, a limited public budget for forest and fire management, and side effects of illegal logging. Projected trends of climate change impacts on vegetation cover and fire regimes, as well as observed demographic and socio-economic trends suggest that wildland fire may continue to play a major role in the destruction of vegetation cover in Central Asia, resulting, among other, in accelerating steppization, permafrost thawing and desiccation of peatlands / wetlands. There is no international operational mechanism in the region allowing rapid response to large-scale, catastrophic fires.

The First International Central Asian Wildland Fire Conference “Wildland Fires in Natural Ecosystems of the Central Asian Region: Ecology and Management Implications” (2-6 June 2008, Ulaanbaatar / Mandal Soum, Selenge Aimag, Mongolia) addressed the most pressing issues in Mongolia and neighbouring countries.

In following up the results of the Working Groups of the conference a national inter-agency meeting was held in Ulaanbaatar on 11 September 2008 in which recommendations and a work programme were drafted for address forest and steppe fire problems in Mongolia and at regional level. Among a broader set of conclusions, which included the call for enhancing fire management capacity of human resources, fire science, the following was recommended

### Legal, Institutional and Policy Framework for Fire Management in Mongolia

Issues addressed included the definition of necessary changes of or additions to legal, institutional and policy frameworks.

#### Priority measures to be taken

- Elaborate a national program on fire prevention and combat
- Renew Mongolian Law on Forest and Steppe Fire Protection
- Modify the regulation on reimbursement of losses of forest and steppe fires
- Clarify the tasks and responsibilities between the MNE and the NEMA
- Elaborate a regulation to increase the budget on fire prevention and suppression
- Elaborate a prevention plan with participation of all stakeholders
- Establish a fund to combat against fire

- Set indexes for fines and reimbursements
- Enact organization of forest and steppe fire prevention activities
- Incorporate information databases of the MNE and the NEMA
- Give rewards/incentives to the person who found the faulty and the community where there were no fire
- Cooperate with international programs and projects and get support from them
- Provide forest fuel free and release them from licenses
- Wastes time to find the person who set the fire
- Provide with handouts and materials on forest and steppe fire prevention

This can be achieved by setting up a **National Inter-Agency Fire Management Council** (or board), in which the main stakeholders in fire management, notably MNE and NMA, but also representatives of local governments, will continuously cooperate and coordinate the necessary measures to be taken.

### **International Transboundary Cooperation**

Issues addressed included the development of proposals to improve international cooperation on prevention and combating of transboundary forest and steppe fires as many wildfires occurring on the territory of Mongolia are spreading across the border from Russia. Vice-versa, wildfires are also spreading from Mongolia to Russia.

There is a lack of international legal agreements to regulate issues related to the prevention and combating of transboundary fires. Although transboundary cooperation is currently in principle following protocols signed between the Head of the General Border Protection Agency and the Head of the Regional Border Authority, Siberia, Russia; and the Cooperation Agreement between the Government of Mongolia and China to cooperate against border region fires (signed in 1999), the efficiency of cooperation is still not satisfactory.

### Further steps and challenges

1. Encourage to establish international agreements and to join to international conventions to develop international / trans-border cooperation on forest and steppe fires.
2. Establish an Inter-Government Cooperation Agreement with Russia to cooperate on transborder forest and steppe fire (clarify if any agreements have been done before between these countries).
3. Enhance the cooperation of similar disaster prevention organizations of the region; introduce advanced approaches, techniques and equipments and nourish the cooperation in the future.

In the follow-up process the **National Council for Protecting Steppe and Forest from Fire** was founded and announced by the government, represented by the Deputy Prime Minister, at the second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (see statement on next page).

Spirit and recommendations of the Central Asian Wildland Fire Conference led to the Regional Conference in Irkutsk in June 2010.



Participants of the First International Central Asian Wildland Fire Joint Conference and Consultation

**Statement by his Excellency Mr. M. Enkhbold, Deputy Prime Minister of Mongolia  
at the Second Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction  
Geneva, Switzerland, 16-19 June 2009**

Mongolia is following the priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in 2005 in its disaster prevention, preparedness, response and risk reduction activities.

We are confident that the successful implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, the international strategy on disaster reduction will substantially reduce disaster losses in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets and in development achievements of country.

The priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action have been incorporated into the Comprehensive National Development Strategy based on Millennium Development Goal of Mongolia for 2008-2021 and being implemented.

As a result of extreme continental climate and global climate change, Mongolia predominantly experiences drought, dzud, and desertification, severe snow and dust storms, steppe and forest fires which cause human, environmental and economic losses.

Considering types and specifics of disasters occurring in country, Mongolia has developed policy documents such as "The State Policy for Disaster Protection" and "The National Program on Strengthening Disaster Management Capacity" improving legal environment of national strategy on disaster management.

The State Emergency Commission that has the responsibility to coordinate immediate disaster prevention, rescue, response and recovery was established under the Government with the representatives of Governmental executive authorities and functions regularly.

*The measures taken by the Government of Mongolia to implement the priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action include approving "Disaster risk and vulnerability assessment procedure" and establishing the **National Council for Protecting Steppe and Forest from Fire** with wide involvement of the governmental organizations and civil society.*

The latest scientific and technological progresses are used for strengthening disaster information and communication network and creating disaster database. The satellite images are applied for identifying forest fires of remote areas.

The campaign to teach young generation for traditional methods and knowledge on forecasting hazardous phenomena, to publish manuals, handbooks and recommendations for disaster preventing based on herders' experience, observation and scientific analysis and researches and to disseminate through media widely and effectively is being organized.

In according to the survey of the last 60 years, the average annual increase of the air temperature by 1.9-2.1 Celsius influences to the nature increasing desertification, pasture land degradation and drying up lakes, rivers and springs. Taking into account climate change and desertification, the Government of Mongolia is taking step by step disaster risk reduction comprehensive measures like improving pasture management, digging out wells, restoring springs and streams, increasing irrigated agriculture and initiating index based livestock insurance.

The involvement of private sector and civil society, the collaboration and cooperation among all stakeholders are essential in disaster risk reduction though the primary responsibility rests with governmental agencies. The Government of Mongolia intensively will work at national and international level to implement the priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action. I am confident that UN and member States will cooperate with us actively in this field.

I would like to request the international community to accept the call of the Government of Mongolia to take into account the desertification, dust storm and sand movement caused by climate change covering not only the territory of Mongolia, but also threatening neighboring and regional countries and to make collaborative efforts against them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the Government of Mongolia, I would like to wish more success for your activities on implementing Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. Thank you for your attention.