



10 MAY 2011

VOLUME 1 NO. 1

Dumelang, welkom, sanibonani, welcome

By Louis Buys
Incident Commander, Local Organising Committee

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to Sun City, here in South Africa's North West Province, for the 5th International Wildfire Conference. For those visiting our country for the first time, a special welcome to Africa. This is a remarkable country with a beautiful landscape, a warm and hospitable nation and interesting history, we want you to enjoy our country and, maybe, visit again one day.

Sun City was chosen for our conference because of its close proximity to wildlands and nature. On its boundary is the third largest game reserve in South Africa, the Pilanesberg Game Reserve, a sanctuary for rhino and wonderful place to experience the African bushveld. We thank the park staff for giving their permission and involvement in the planning and execution of the live aerial and ground fire-fighting demonstration taking place on Thursday.

Our conference is conducted under the auspices of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and convened by the regional sub-Saharan Wildland Fire Network, AfriFireNet.

The issues we discuss this week, the information we share and the debates we have will impact on millions of lives as we attempt to understand how to manage wildland fire and the havoc it wreaks. The added complexity for all of us is climate change. No one really knows what the impact of climate change will be in the long term. What we do know is that we have a responsibility to check our actions and preserve our world for future generations. Unmanaged wildfire impacts on food security, destroys livelihoods,

devastates the environment and takes lives.

The aim of the 5th International Wildfire Conference is to provide a forum for fire management leaders, politicians, professionals, researchers and practitioners worldwide to discuss critical fire issues affecting communities, resources and ecosystems, and work co-operatively on the consolidation of a global wildland fire management strategy.

We will work this week to strengthen the effectiveness of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks and support their links into the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network. Wildfire is a cross-border issue and we must strengthen international co-operation and information exchange in fire management practice.

This is an opportunity to create a platform for the fire management industry, research



ORGANISED: Louis Buys, Wildfire conference "Incident Commander" reviews conference logistics with Joseph Magagula conference health and safety while Emile Grobbelaar of the finance registration team looks on.

organizations and fire specialists to display innovations, new technologies, products and methods for wildland fire management, as well as interact with the conference participants.

The programme committee had a difficult task selecting from over 300 high quality abstract submissions, resulting in an excellent spread of posters and presentations and a programme that will find you wanting to be in more than one place at a time!

For this conference we are extremely grateful for the support

of our co-hosts, the South African government, represented by the departments of Environmental Affairs, Water Affairs, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and Co-operative Governance. Thank you, too, to members of the International Liaison Committee for their continuous support and guidance during the preparatory phase following the 4th Wildfire Conference held in Spain in 2007.

This is an opportunity to build relationships, learn more and have fun. Enjoy the week!

UN Secretary-General gives boost to international efforts to curb unwanted wildland fire

It is a pleasure to send my greetings to the participants in this important conference.

The year 2011 has already seen a number of terrifying wildland fires in western Australia, in the high mountain ecosystems of Nepal, in Mexico, the United States, Russia and, most recently, in Europe. Other disasters have made clear how vulnerable our cities and communities are and how much more effort is required to

reduce our vulnerability.

Wildland fires destabilize ecosystems and the global atmosphere, and have clear implications for human health and security. Unlike other natural hazards, wildland fires are primarily caused by human activities.

Measures to prevent them such as education, awareness-raising and capacity-building are well known and within reach. Community-Based Fire

Management is particularly important.

The trans-boundary effects of wildland fires associated with long-range smoke transport and emissions are prompting the international community to strengthen co-operation in fire management. International organizations and civil society groups are working to build capacity, develop advanced technologies and promote sustainable land-use practices.

The UN system is strongly committed to this effort. Our work encompasses many aspects of fire management, including agriculture, forestry, health, science, the environment, emergency response, and weather forecasting and monitoring.

We welcome the efforts of fire specialists to build a culture of prevention and to develop a spirit of global co-operation. This conference, held in conjunction

with the Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva, can galvanize our efforts to reduce risk and vulnerability. I encourage you to identify real solutions that will help communities and nations to better handle the adverse impacts of fires and to build safer, more sustainable societies for all. Please accept my best wishes for a successful conference.

Secretary-General Ban-Ki moon



CONFERENCE SET UP



SHOW US A LEG: Canadian exhibitors get low down and busy setting up their stand.



STANDUP: Korean exhibitors hard at work to get their stand erected in time.



FIREMAN: An Argentinean fireman gets up close and personal with a picture to go on the Argentinean stand.



HELPING HANDS: All hands at work to get the conference brochures unpacked.



REGISTRATION: Sam and Colleen with the conference at their fingertips.



ALL HANDS ON DECK: Firemen assist to pack the delegate bags.



EXHIBIT: Swiss delegates step back to view their stand.



SAND PIT: FFA Group MD Johan Heine and Trevor Wilson Working on Fire general manager, Mpumalanga, add final touches to the sand pit.

Photography by Bruce Sutherland

International delegates flock to South African wildfire conference

More than 700 wildland fire fighting experts from 73 countries are in Sun City to discuss the global impact of wildfire at Wildfire 2011.

Themed: "Living with Fire", addressing global change through integrated fire management, this is the first time the conference has been held in South Africa.

Climate change is likely to be a major concern during the discussions as it is increasingly impacting on wildland fire fighters. Rising temperatures, water shortages and changing weather patterns mean wildland fires are becoming hotter, more aggressive and burning in areas previously not at risk.

Internationally respected scenario planner Clem Sunter

will open Wildfire 2011 today with an address on risk management in a catastrophe. He will be followed by Felician Kilahama from Tanzania's Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism who is speaking on integrated fire management in that country.

JT Williams from the United States will talk on the findings and implications of a global assessment on recent selected mega fires.

Naomi Brown from the Australasian Fire Authority will discuss the controversial, "stay or go" approach for communities under fire.

The conference will also provide a forum for launching new wildfire fighting technology as well as new research in

controlled burning and creating fire breaks.

South Africa's wildfire fighting community is among the most advanced in the world. A government job creation programme called Working on Fire has trained thousands of impoverished rural youth to fight wildfires to great effect. This programme is administered by the FFA Group.

The international wildfire event takes place every four years and was last hosted by Spain. The next global conference will be hosted in 2015 at a country still to be announced.

NOTICEBOARD

Post conference fire tour to the Kruger National Park (14th - 16th May 2011)

Dear participants:

Please can you complete the information form for the tour, that is posted at the delegate information centre in the main foyer at the conference centre.

We will be departing Sun City for Kruger at 9am on Saturday the 14th of May 2011 in three vehicles (meeting point will be given later).

For more information, please can you contact Navashni Govender on 0846252006

LOST AND FOUND

If anyone finds a black A5 Moleskin notebook - there are pressed butterflies inside - please can you hand it in to the incident commander or call Evelyn on 082 658 6007. The notebook contains information critical to the conference.

Africa - a continent of fire

Fire ecologists have called Africa a "continent of fire".

Annually, in the continent's southern, western, and eastern regions the trees and grass of the savannah dry out and become extremely flammable during the dry seasons.

Quite how climate change will affect this situation is contentious. Some scientists at the Wildfire 2011 conference argue that drought will lessen the number of wildfires, others point out that incidents will increase.

It is estimated that 90% of wildfires in Africa are human-caused. Researchers at the University of Freiburg in Germany found that people setting fire to waste vegetation after harvesting or honey hunters smoking out hives are frequently the cause of fires which then rage across the grasslands and through the forests.

Lightning is also a major source of wildfire as Africa is highly prone to lightning storms.

Climate change will cause more, fiercer fires in many parts of the world but probably not

on the African savannahs. This is a synopsis of several research papers on the extent to which climate change will fuel wildland fires, and the implications for nature and human settlements.

Mike Flannigan of Natural Resources Canada and several colleagues reviewed all the research into how climate is expected to affect fires in countries across the world. They found that in general more fires will affect greater areas, burning more fiercely, than during the past few decades.

Flannigan also mentions research predicting more fires in the savannahs of South America, Australia and Africa.

However, South African researchers have found the opposite.

"Drought in Africa means less fire," says Sally Archibald, senior researcher at the Natural Resources and Environment division of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). "This is because the savannah dries out every year anyway, and during a drought it

dries out even more so there is less fuel for fire.

"This is very different from in Canada and the USA, where drought means more dry fuel for fires."

Van Wilgen and CSIR colleague Greg Forsyth found evidence that the number of fires is increasing in the fynbos-covered Table Mountain National Park (TMNP). Research into fire records shows that the average time between fires decreased between 1970 and 2007, from 31.6 to 13.5 years.

Most of the fires in the TMNP were small, and the increase in the number of fires was probably due to a burgeoning human population in the area as apartheid influx control laws were scrapped, Van Wilgen and Forsyth concluded.

Flannigan's paper deals primarily with the northern hemisphere and estimates a 78% increase in area burnt in the US, due to more lightning, should there be a doubling of the carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere. In Canada, the area burnt would



It is estimated that 90% of wildfires in Africa are caused by people. Lightning is also a major source of wildfires.

increase by 40% due to more fire-conductive weather. Another study predicted a 62% increase in the area burnt in the Canadian state of Alberta.

The fire season would start earlier in Russia as well as Canada, and much larger tracts of the Amazon would burn.

In the Mediterranean region of Europe there would be more severe fires due to a longer fire season. However, the area burnt and the number of fires were likely to decrease in Germany, and there would probably be fewer fires in France.

Flannigan's paper quotes predictions that changes in fire patterns will increase carbon emissions. If substantial emissions

are released the tropical peatlands burn, as happened in the 1997-1998 fires in Indonesia, he reported. Africa is a major emitter of emissions due to wildfires, owing to frequent and extensive burning of grasslands and savannahs, his paper found.

However, Archibald points out that fires could only increase the carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere if the burnt vegetation did not grow again. If it did grow, it would recapture the carbon.

"Blaming fire for climate change is totally off the mark," she cautions. "Most of the increases in fire seen today are due to deforestation or logging or other human activities."

Global wildland fire experts focus on regional crises

Representatives of the 73 nations attending Wildfire 2011 will spend one afternoon this week with regional colleagues building networks while addressing local problems and solutions.

Six regional sessions will take place concurrently on Wednesday, May 11 from 15h50 to 18h00. The regional session for South America will be in Spanish.

Gary Morgan, from Australia, and Bill de Groot, from Canada, will chair the North American and Australian session.

Discussion will centre on how their respective countries co-ordinate fire management agencies. The discussion will also look at opportunities for international collaboration.

The South American, meso-American and Caribbean contingent will assess a host of cross-border wildfire issues. René

Cifuentes and Patricio Sanhueza from Chile will share their experience of multi-national co-operation in a mega fire that happened in the Torres del Paine National Park.

Representatives from northeast, southeast and south Asia will discuss bilateral and multilateral co-operation agreements in wildland fire management. At the same time European countries will look at the influence climate change is having on wildfire in Mediterranean countries and the Alpine region. Their goal will be to identify more opportunities for collaboration.

Delegates from Eurasia, southeast Europe, the Caucasus and central Asia will talk about enhancing international co-operation in wildland fire management. This session will be co-chaired by Andrey Eritsov of the Federal Forest Agency,

Nikola Nikolov from the Regional Southeast Europe/Caucasus Fire Monitoring Centre and Wildland Fire Network, and Johann Goldammer of the Global Fire Monitoring Center and Eurasia Wildland Fire Network.

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa will focus on effective fire management in Africa through strengthened networking systems. This session will be co-chaired by David Asare from Ghana's Forestry Commission and Alex Held representing AfriFireNet. This crucially important session will give African countries a unique opportunity to hear presentations and take part in discussions on a common platform towards fire management in Africa.

Of special interest will be the Ethiopian presentation on the causes of recurrent and extensive forest fire incidence in the Bale Mountains National Park.

Africa at a glance

It's the second largest of the seven continents – covering about 30 million square kilometres – some 22% of the world's total land area.

It's home to one billion people in 54 countries and a hundred million of them live urban lifestyles. Of the cities, 67 have populations that number more than a million each. The biggest city is Cairo with 17 million residents; the smallest capital city is Maseru, Lesotho with about 14 000 citizens.

The most populated country is Nigeria with anywhere between 125 and 145 million people, no one knows for sure. Egypt is the second biggest with more than 76 million. Because of rapid population growth over the last 40 years, Africa's general population is relatively young. In many states, more than half of the population is under the age of 25.

Quite how many ethnic groups – or tribes – inhabit the continent is difficult to estimate. Some demographers put it as high as 3 000 distinct ethnic groups, with more than 370 in Nigeria alone.

Not surprisingly there are a considerable number of languages, some 2 000, in fact. Arabic (in various dialects) has the highest number of speakers, more than 170 million, mostly living in North Africa and the Horn of Africa. English and French serve as common languages across most of the continent.

Islam is currently the largest religion in Africa, with Christianity following closely behind. Adherents of these two religions make up 85% of the continent's population, the remainder follow traditional African religions or are non-religious.

Sun City – a fantasy realised

There once was a dictator called Lucas Mangope who ruled over a country called Bophuthatswana. It wasn't so much a country as a scattering of 'independent' parcels of land within greater South Africa. Mr Mangope's country wasn't recognised as a country by any other government except for the apartheid government of South Africa whose planners had so carefully given Mr Mangope some of the poorest agricultural land in the region.

But Mr Mangope's country was independent. Which meant that South Africa's onerous laws didn't apply. You could drink till late at night without being arrested. You could gamble. You could watch topless dollies dancing. You could consort across the colour bar. In other words you could behave quite normally as people did in most countries in the world. Except, in the beginning, there was nowhere in Bophuthatswana for you to do this.

So along came an astute businessman called Sol Kerzner. Mr Kerzner became friendly with Mr Mangope. Mr Kerzner said to Mr Mangope, If you let me I will build an extravaganza here, of such opulence and magnificence it will dazzle the imagination. It will look like a palace, it will look like a lost city from some mythical African past, there will be hotels, cabanas, a casino, a golf course, a sky train, glitzy boutiques and top notch restaurants. I will throw in a beach with waves, a wildlife park, I will bring out top entertainers like Frankie-baby (aka Frank Sinatra), Queen, Rod Stewart, Elton John, Tina Turner, Julio Iglesias, and Elaine Page to play in the Superbowl. We'll call the place Sun City. People will flock here. Waddaya say, Mr Mangope?

And Mr Mangope said, I like it.

And lo it came to pass that Sun City was built and people flocked there from nearby

Johannesburg and Pretoria and it became known as Sun City. The men in hats in the apartheid government hated it. They rapped Mr Kerzner over the knuckles. He said, Gentlemen, I am doing no wrong. They sent diplomatic missions to Mr Mangope. He sent back diplomatic notes that they should not interfere in the business of an independent country.

Then in 1985 a pop star called Steven van Zandt from Bruce Springsteen's band said, Enough of this. Apartheid is wrong. It's racist. He talked to Bob Dylan and Peter Gabriel and Little Steven and Miles Davis and Lou Reed and Keith Richards and Bono and they decided to form an activist group, Artists United Against Apartheid. We'll never perform at Sun City, they pledged. 'I ain't gonna play Sun City,' they sang.

Thus began the time of the cultural boycott. Well, some stood in solidarity, some didn't.



The Palace of the Lost City was built after Sun City. It is a fairytale palace with exquisite interior mosaics and hand-painted ceilings.

It's not for us, said Queen's Freddie Mercury. 'The band is not political – we play to anybody who wants to come and listen.' The international music press went wild, lambasting them. Stop creating such a fuss, said Freddie, we'll give some of our earnings to charity.

But it wasn't good enough for the activists. The time of the cultural boycott was a dark time, indeed. Until a new age dawned when Nelson Mandela walked out of prison and called off the boycott. Almost overnight the independent state of

Bophuthatswana disappeared back into South Africa. Mr Lucas Mangope disappeared into his presidential palace never to be heard of again. The strange story of Bophuthatswana became a footnote in history.

And Sun City? Sol Kerzner's glorious Sun City got bigger and more prosperous and more sought after as an international holiday destination. Nowadays it hosts global conferences and massive golf tournaments. Pop stars of every stripe want to book the Superbowl. The dark days are over, Sun City is a national treasure.

The game reserve in a volcano

Pilanesberg Game Reserve, named after a powerful local chief, is home to the Big Five, and almost all species of mammals that occur in South Africa – and much more besides.

For one thing the area is fringed by three rings of hills, and is the crater of a long extinct volcano, the result of eruptions some 1 200 million years ago.

Apart from being one of the largest volcanic complexes of its type in the world, the rare rock types and formations make it a unique geological feature. A number of rare minerals occur in the park.

But that's not all. Scattered throughout the park are various sites that originate from the Stone Age and the Iron Age. It's been a place of human habitation for a long while.

It's history is equally fascinating. During the nineteenth century, Pilanesberg served as a sanctuary for Mzilikazi's rebel Zulu warriors as they fled the wrath of Zulu king, Shaka. Not long after this, during the Second Boer War, General Christiaan de Wet's guerrillas hid from the British among these hills.

Wild animals were re-introduced into the area

during the late 1970s when President Lucas Mangope of Bophuthatswana – an apartheid homeland – proclaimed it a game reserve. The 52 cattle farmers in the area were bought out, and the town of Pilanesberg was flattened. All that remains is the old magistrates court, which is now called the Pilanesberg Centre.

During the 1980s, some 6 000 animals were introduced as part of Operation Genesis, the largest game resettlement programme ever undertaken in South Africa, and believed to be the largest undertaken anywhere in the world. There



Elephants – one of the Big Five – are to be found at Pilanesberg Game Reserve.

are now 10 000 animals in the park, including the highest concentration of hyena in any South African reserve.

Apart from the Big Five (lion, elephant, rhino, leopard, buffalo), there are also cheetah, giraffe, zebra, hippo, numerous

buck species, and crocodiles. More than 360 bird species have been counted.

Pilanesberg Game Reserve covers an area of 572 square kilometres and has 188 kilometres of road, most of it dirt.

Diverse South Africa

South Africa is a nation of diversity, with 50 million people and a variety of cultures, languages and religious beliefs.

Despite a constitution which advocates non-discrimination, the government still uses the old apartheid

racial classifications in its demographic statistics.

According to Statistics South Africa, the black indigenous people (Africans) are in the majority at almost 40 million, making up 79.4% of the total population. The white population is estimated at 4.5 million (9.2%), the coloured population at slightly less

4.4 million (8.8%) and the Indian/Asian population at just more than one million (2.6%) Females make up 51.3% of the population.

South Africa's constitution, which came into effect on 4 February 1997, recognises 11 official languages. These are: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho sa

Leboa, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. According to the 2001 census, isiZulu is the most common home language spoken by nearly a quarter of the population. It is followed by isiXhosa at 17.6%, Afrikaans at 13.3%, Sepedi at 9.4%, and Setswana and English each at 8.2%.

Sesotho is the mother tongue of 7.9% of the population, while the remaining four official languages are spoken at home by less than 5% of the population respectively.

Most South Africans are multilingual and many speak English, which is the lingua franca of official and commercial life.



Call for international collaboration at Wildfire conference

International co-operation through the exchange of technology and trans-boundary partnerships can reduce the impact of wildfire, Jose Antonio Prado from the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), said in his opening address.

"This conference can provide the forum for this collaboration," he said. "The FAO is committed to working with interested partners to promote a strategy for international collaboration to reduce damage caused by wildfire worldwide."

Prada said new and more holistic approaches were needed to fight wildfire, especially the growing number of mega-fires that are becoming a major issue as the effects of climate change are felt.

The conference opening ceremony was a sea of yellow with 800 Working on Fire wildland fire fighters giving a spectacular display of African singing and dancing. European, Australian and American delegates said they were overwhelmed by the spirit and enthusiasm of the fire fighters who are drawn from the country's poorest and most remote communities.

Johann Georg Goldammer, director of the Global Fire Monitoring Centre in Freiburg, Germany, announced that Wildfire 2011 will be linked via video to the Third Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, currently meeting in Geneva, Switzerland.

Three panellists from Wildfire 2011 will be in discussion with three senior policy makers in



BELTING IT OUT: Jonny Blundell and The Rhythm Workshop performing at the opening ceremony of the Wildfire Conference. The words of the song - Rise Up - especially written by Blundell for the conference and sung memorably on the opening can be found on page 4.

Geneva. Their discussion, planned to focus on the implications of wildfire in developing communities, will be broadcast to an estimated 2 000 people in Geneva.

Goldammer also read aloud the message from United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, in which he, too, asked for "a global spirit of co-operation."

Wildfire 2011 and the Disaster Risk Reduction meeting could galvanize efforts to reduce risk and vulnerability, Ban Ki-moon said.

Guy Preston, chair and national programme leader of South Africa's National Resources Management Programmes, outlined how South Africa's Working on Fire

Programme grew out of the Working for Water programme after team members removing alien vegetation lost their lives in a wildfire. He said there were opportunities to fight shack fires in South Africa's informal settlements using the same principles of early detection and quick response used by the forestry industry.

Wildfire conference warned of new mega-fires threat

Risk of mega-fire is on the increase worldwide as droughts deepen, fuel loads increase and landscapes change, Jerry Williams, former national director of Fire and Aviation Management for the United States Forest Service told the Wildfire Conference.

Williams said mega-fire was a new phenomenon and the most costly, devastating and damaging of all wildland fires.

"These are fires that exceed all control and can only be stopped through a change in

the weather or a break in fuel," said Williams. They were fires that defeated the objectives of ordinary wildfire protection.

Williams was presenting a paper, commissioned by the Food and Agriculture Organization, under a volunteer arrangement of authors from all parts of the world.

He highlighted the scale of the fires by reminding delegates that the "Black Dragon" mega-fire had destroyed one tenth of the world's forest reserve when it raged across China in 1987. The following year a mega-fire

broke out in the Yellowstone National Park in the US.

The causes of these blazes were often subtle and apparently unrelated to the actual event, Williams said.

"Sometimes no action has a consequence."

The causes of these mega-fires needed to be better understood especially because they were challenging some of the strongest wildland fire fighting programmes.

"The growing number of these incidents, along with the ever-higher suppression

costs, property losses, and environmental damages, beg a better understanding of the factors that may underlie their occurrence."

The global community was at a critical crossroad, he said. Until now fire fighters, managers and policy makers had attempted to match increasing wildfire threats with greater suppression force.

"But this approach is not answering the mega-fire problem. Even in developed countries, where, despite enormous investments in larger,

more able fire-fighting capacity, better predictive systems, increased technology, improved co-operation, and larger aviation fleets, mega-fires still occur," said Williams.

"The alternative is to take a step back and look at our ability to deal with these disasters and what should be done to prevent them."

**Clem Sunter
see page 4**

Runaway wildfire poses new risk for British fire fighters

Wildfires raging through the United Kingdom over the past weeks have caused fire and rescue authorities to consider expanding the training of firemen to cope with these events, Paul Hedley, from the Chief Fire Officers' Association, said in an interview at the International Wildfire Conference.

Firemen in the United Kingdom are almost all "structural" fire fighters who are skilled at dealing with a burning building but are generally unfamiliar with how to control a flaming forest or moorland.

"There has to be a renewed effort in raising public awareness of the risk of these fires, which all indicators

suggest are going to increase as the impact of climate change is felt," Hedley said. Particularly at risk would be moorland and woodlands. With a drier, hotter climate the risk of wildfire in these areas was likely to become "extremely high" more often, he predicted.

Hedley is attending the conference along with his colleagues Simon Thorp, director of the Heather Trust and vice-chair of the England and Wales Wildfire Forum, and Steve Gibson, a fire expert from Northumberland Fire and Rescue Services.

Wildland fire, never a serious challenge for the United Kingdom, looks set to become an increasing problem for Britain with the temperatures in March

and April this year the hottest on record for these months.

Already this month firemen have fought to control a wildfire in Swinley Forest, Royal Berkshire, about 80 kilometres from London. At the same time wildfires were also burning in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, Lancashire, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and Wales.

"The Fire and Rescue Service in the United Kingdom has never had to deal with wildfire on this scale. If this is what climate change means we have to change our approach," Hedley said.

Thorp said there was a commitment from all partners involved in land management to work with Fire and Rescue Services to understand the risks associated with wildfire and to



RUNAWAY WILDFIRE: The Fire Rescue Service in the UK has never had to deal with wildfire on this scale.

establish strategies to control a wildfire.

"There are partnerships in place in parts of the country where wildfire is an issue, like Northumberland, but these partnerships have to be expanded into more communities," he said.

Wildfire had always been an issue in Scotland, home to 75% of the world's heather, he said. "Heather has to burn,

it is part of its natural cycle, but it has to be managed to ensure it regenerates and is not destroyed."

Gibson said forest managers now had to consider the risk of wildfire in the development of new plantations. "Until recently trees have been planted with no thought given to wildfire, it cannot stay that way," he said. "Wildfire is now, more than ever, a global issue."

"Stay or Go" has come and gone, says Aussie fire boss

by Graham Barlow

In a searching address, Naomi Brown, CEO of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authority Council (AFAC), pinpointed the difficulties of the contentious 'Stay or Go' approach to wildfire.

This common position was adopted by the AFAC in 1993 as the 'prepare, stay and defend, or leave early' concept, and generated much discussion at the 2007 Wildfire Conference in Spain.

Brown pointed out this complex concept became known colloquially as the 'Stay or Go' policy, a simplification in word and process she feels predicated the eventual failure and inevitable criticism of the policy.

On Saturday 7 February 2009 in Victoria, Australia, the practice was sorely tested through the catastrophic fires now known as the "Black Saturday Fires". Tragically, 173 people lost their lives during this destruction of 450 000 ha

of land that caused (Australian) \$4 billion (R29bn) worth of damage.

In the wake of this disaster, focus inevitably fell on the simplified 'Stay or Go' policy, and a Royal Commission was promulgated to investigate the calamity. This commission highlighted six major aspects of wildfire that needed examination.

Six Issues

Brown itemised these six issues and gave insight into what has happened in Australia subsequently.

Primacy of life was the obvious principal focus in the wake of public, government and media questioning: saving lives is non-negotiable, regardless of potential loss of property.

The other five major concerns were: additional options – middle ground between staying and leaving; adequate warnings;

the decision-making processes governing 'Stay or Go';

vulnerable groups and the concept of shared responsibility.

Until recently, community fire safety issues were left to fire agencies and attracted little attention from government; however the shock of "Black Saturday" brought unprecedented focus on fire policies nationwide.

While this is in itself a good thing, it has the potential of generating a "top-down" policy designed by bureaucrats with little or no fire experience, and a reliance on technology that does not take local conditions into account.

As a result, says Brown, "'Stay or Go' has gone, and 'leave before the fire arrives' is the preferred message, with evacuation as a consideration.

"But when wildfire threatens," Brown concluded, "the reality is that leaving or defending are still the only options available."

NOTICEBOARD

Transport arrangements from Sun City to OR Tambo International Airport

If you have any queries regarding return transport arrangements to OR Tambo International airport please contact Chandra at the registration desk between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 a.m. Alternatively call her on 073 0127939.

Shuttle Buses

* Sun City has agreed to provide additional buses to assist delegates transfer between the various hotels in the complex and the conference centre.

Programme Updates

* Daily programme updates are posted on the notice board in the foyer.

Post-conference fire tour to the Kruger National Park (14th – 16th May 2011)

Dear participants,
Please can you complete the information form for the tour that is posted at the delegate information centre in the main foyer at the conference centre.
We will be departing Sun City for Kruger Park at 9am on Saturday 14th May 2011 in three vehicles (meeting point will be given later).

For more information, please can you contact Navashni Govender on 0846252006

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Delegates are reminded to take particular care of their possessions and keep valuable items with them at all times. This is especially applicable to cameras, laptop computers and mobile phones. Orange backpacks must be clearly marked to avoid embarrassing situations where one bag may be mistaken for another.

Ghana moves to reduce wildfire damage in rural areas

The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) had made a massive contribution through a host of projects to the reduction of poverty in rural Ghana, David Duodu-Asare told the International Wildfire Conference yesterday.

Duodu-Asare from Ghana's Forestry Commission, presented a paper highlighting how ITTO projects in the West African nation had impacted the economies of rural impoverished communities, many living in tropical forests.

by Carol Campbell

For the paper Duodu-Asare with Edward Obiaw, director for the Forestry's Commission's Resource Management Support Centre, questioned 200 beneficiaries from 20 communities receiving ITTO aid, to draw lessons that could be used to improve similar projects.

"About 70% of Ghanaians live in rural areas surviving on an income of less than US\$1 a day. This compels these folk to engage in activities that impact

negatively on effective wildfire management and sustainable land use systems," he said.

He explained how traditional practices such as shifting cultivation, bush burning for hunting, farming and festive purposes; tree cutting for traditional medicines and the production of charcoal and alcohol were having serious consequences on the environment and in some cases leading to desertification.

"One must understand the poverty levels in such rural communities are so low that



SURVIVING: traditional practices can have serious consequences on the environment and may lead to desertification.

people engage in the above activities not as a matter of interest but for survival."

Most of ITTO's projects are governmental with agreements being signed with the respective national forestry

authorities that also implement the project. This arrangement indicates the collaborative efforts by these institutions to tackle the challenges of poverty as identified in the Millennium Development Goals, he said.

Global link-up for wildfire conference

The International Wildfire Conference was linked via video conference to the Third Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, currently meeting in Geneva, Switzerland last night.

The discussion centred on global forest loss and degradation which is estimated to cost the global economy between US\$2 trillion and US\$4.5 trillion a year in lost revenue. The Geneva conference heard that wildland fires affect up to 350 million hectares of vegetated lands annually.

The special round table, which included panellists from both the north and southern hemisphere, was organised

by the Wildland Fire Advisory Group. The discussion laid out the wildfire catastrophe currently facing the global community with all expressing eagerness for cross border co-operation.

The meeting was organised at the request of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who is attending the Third Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Global Platform is managed by the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and is the world's foremost gathering of stakeholders committed to reducing disaster risk and building the resilience of communities and nations.

Over 2 000 policy makers and practitioners, from government, international organizations, NGOs, academia, and the private sector from both developing and developed countries are involved in the Geneva-discussions.

Doctor Professor Johann Georg Goldammer, director of the Third Fire Monitoring Centre in Freiburg, Germany, facilitated the discussion in South Africa.

South Africa-based panellists included Sundar Sharma, a professional forester from Nepal, representing the UNISDR-Regional South Asia Wildland Fire Network; Bambang Hero Saharjo, professor of forestry from Bogor Agricultural

University in Indonesia, and Kholiwe Luvuno representing South Africa's Working on Fire programme.

Paola Deda, chief of the Forestry and Timber Section of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe facilitated the discussion in Geneva.

The speakers in Geneva were Alexander Chupriyan, Deputy Minister for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Natural Disasters for the Russian Federation, Pilar Gallego, Director General of Civil Protection and Emergencies in Spain, and Phil Cottle, Managing Director of Forestry Ltd, in the United Kingdom.

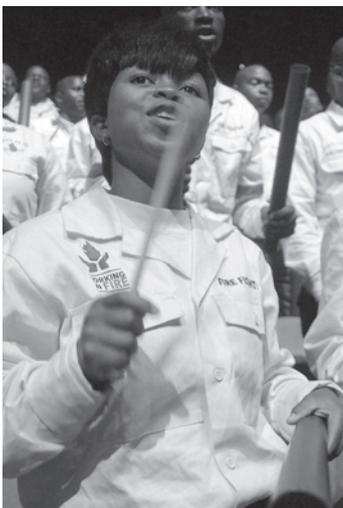
Cottle said recent fires in Europe (Switzerland) and United Kingdom, near London, were unheard of and would change the insurance landscape.

"There is so much change happening we (the insurance industry) have to use (mathematical) modeling to see where the danger lies. Nevertheless, wildfires need not be catastrophic," he said, "we can do something about it."

As an introduction to the discussion, the Geneva delegates were told that it is estimated that fire-induced vegetation degradation contributes to about 0.6 billion tons of permanent carbon transfer to the atmosphere.

Welcome to our exhibitors





BEAT: Delegates and Wildfire fighters enjoy the drumming of the Rhythm Workshop at the opening of the Wildfire conference yesterday.

Rise up!

One in spirit, one in heart and mind
We are united, in this world of fire
Linked together arm in arm
Comrades to the end
Infernos blazing close at hand
But we will never bend

Chorus

Rise up, rise up!
Can you hear the cry
Vukani simunye!
The call of the wildfire
Like the phoenix from the ashes
We will always fly once more
Singaba phumelelayo
Rise the sun into blue skies

Protectors of our mother earth
And defenders of our nation
We serve with pride and bravery
And a deep determination
To do our duty without fail
It's what we love to do
Ready in one heartbeat
You for me and me for you

Chorus

We face danger all the time
And overcome our fears
Stick together through thick and thin
Through blood and sweat and tears
We have walked the hell on earth
And seen the darkest night
Overcome the blazing beast
And once more taken flight

Chorus

Rise up, rise up!
Can you hear the cry
Vukani simunye!
The call of the wildfire
Like the phoenix from the ashes
We will always fly once more
Singaba phumelelayo
Rise the sun into blue skies

* This song written by Jonny Blundell was written and performed by The Rhythm Workshop at the opening ceremony of the conference: for more information about The Rhythm Workshop see: www.therhythmworkshop.co.za

Scenario guru tells world fire experts "to think like foxes"

Global wildfire experts need to "think like foxes" in their planning for catastrophic events.

This means being able to respond quickly to change and take advantage of opportunities, the internationally respected scenario planner, Clem Sunter, told the International Wildfire Conference during his keynote address yesterday.

Sunter, who with Chantell Ilbury is the author of the bestseller "Mind of a Fox", outlined how wildfire experts needed to consider the bigger picture. This was particularly important as external changes were continuously impacting the scale of wildfires.

In writing the book he explained how he and Ilbury borrowed from the ancient Greek poet, Archilocus, who said there were two types of people, hedgehogs and foxes. A hedgehog leader was inclined to have a good idea and then march the organisation

collectively towards that vision.

"That's fine provided the future is how the hedgehog imagines it, otherwise they can march everyone over the edge of a cliff," he said. "Foxes, on the other hand, were natural contrarians constantly looking for new opportunities and then responding quickly with decisive action."

While organisations needed both types of people, survivors tended to think more like foxes.

"Foxes are quick-witted, adaptable animals, which any organisation aspiring to be world-class has to be if they are to function in today's fast-changing environment,"

To think like foxes organisations (such as the global wildfire community) needed to think of their occupation as a game. "Games have much in common with business in that competing teams win or lose

based on skill, strategy and tactics.

Moreover, games are full of risks and uncertainties. Their outcome often turns on factors that are beyond control or appear minor at the time they manifest themselves," he pointed out.

Crucial to the success of an organisation was the ability of its leaders to imagine a future using different scenarios and be able to adapt as events unfolded.

Sunter said, scenario planners were not focussed on budgets or bottom-lines but rather more philosophical issues that impacted on long-term health and survival.

"When we work with a business the first question we put to them is one that Socrates would ask 'Why do you exist?'" Answering that question often enabled an organisation to begin imagining different scenarios for its future, he said.

Words of wisdom from Nelson Mandela

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

"No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."



WILDFIRE 2011
The 5th International Wildland Fire Conference

**CONFERENCE
NEWS**

VOLUME 1 NO. 3
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Field day promises a visual feast

by Graham Barlow

After two days of theory, insight and analysis in the conference rooms, today's activities take delegates to the reality of wildfire fighting in Southern Africa: the field day in Pilanesberg Park.

The programme of activities starts at 08h00 with air displays and ground-training exercises. The afternoon's highlights feature demonstrations and prescribed burns, including block burns and an Air Ignition Technique exercise.

The Harvard Display Team kick off the morning with an aerial extravaganza at 09h00 which will be followed by a skydiving demonstration.

Chris de Bruno Austin, joint MD of FFA Operations who is overseeing the fire fighting display, says that 600 tons of fuel are being utilised, and ideal weather conditions are expected for the burns. Cessna spotter planes, Dromader fixed wing bombers, Huey helicopters and eight highly trained Working on Fire ground teams will be operating in tandem



NOSE: Hello Huey

under the control of an Incident Commander to demonstrate the effectiveness of joint ground and aerial wildfire suppression.

Of course such an intense burn could adversely affect the vegetation of the operational area. To mitigate against this the area was closely examined to ensure the flames would not cause any ecological damage. Obviously the demonstration will be stringently monitored to prevent any untoward problems. The demonstrations promise to give delegates an unparalleled opportunity to observe the efficiency of aerial fire suppression techniques.

Delegates can visit an

exhibition of the fire fighting aircraft at the Pilanesberg airport during the course of the day, and meet with the fifteen pilots.

Working on Fire, South Africa's wildland fire fighting job creation programme, is holding a training camp about 19km from Sun City. Delegates will be taken to visit this facility between 09h15 and 11h30 to witness the training methods being used to prepare fire fighters for the fire season starting 1 June 2011. The training includes a physical fitness programme, practical fire fighting exercises, fire safety and survival lectures. The teams will parade at 11h00 – a wonderful example of the discipline that is a vital part of their training.

The day's activities culminate with a boma braai (barbeque), a traditional South African meal with lashings of hospitality and great food.

Buses will leave from the conference foyer for the training camp from 07h30.



HUERAY: Crowds gasped as a Huey helicopter lifted into the air outside Sun City yesterday evening in a spectacular display of precision flying. The chopper was flown to the Pilanesberg Game Reserve airfield in preparation for the field day to be hosted for delegates today.

Photography by Bruce Sutherland

We must look after what we have

By Carol Campbell

"We do not have forests to burn, we do not have extra land or water or fishing stocks to waste, we must nurture what we have and create more where these have been destroyed," Duncan Hindle, special advisor to

South Africa's minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, told the Wildfire Conference yesterday.

Hindle was speaking on behalf of the country's Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries minister, Tina Joemat-Pettersson who had been scheduled to address the conference.

Over the week discussion has focused on the impact of climate change which is emerging as the most pressing issue facing wildland fire fighters across the globe.

"Climate change is already affecting us in a myriad of ways," Hindle said, "and it's going to get worse before it gets better with wildfire one

of the consequences."

Surface air temperature had warmed significantly since the 1950s which was having a direct impact on wildfire. "Climate change is the greatest threat to the sustainable development of our country and will undermine our ability to achieve the Millennium Goals," he said.

Later this year, Durban will host COP 17, the

United Nations Framework Convention on climate change.

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Climate change and wildfire – an inflammatory mix

One subject guaranteed to generate interest and controversy at a wildfire conference is the effect of climate change on wildfires. Delegates attending a session chaired by Bill de Groot had their attention focussed on this contentious issue by four hard-hitting presentations.

Adapting to climate change has generated considerable research during the past decade, and the presentations in this session concentrated on both the technical and social aspects of the phenomenon, with an emphasis on the potential effects on international wildfire activity.

Mike Flannigan, of the Canadian Forest Service of Natural Resources, set the scene by discussing the interactions between wildfire and climate change. He presented some disturbing statistics, not the least of which was a statistic that between 350 and 450 million hectares burn globally each year. Some 90% of these devastating fires are started by humans.

Of particular concern to many delegates from countries in the southern hemisphere was the revelation that 70% of these occurrences are in lands below



VICIOUS CYCLE: Mike Flannigan, the cycle continues

the equator. These fires feed into a vicious cycle, because, as Flannigan pointed out, they release large volumes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. (For example, wildfires in Indonesia generated 700 million tons of CO₂ during 1997-1998 alone.) Higher volumes of carbon dioxide result in general warming. And the higher the temperature, the greater the number of wildfires.

Flannigan's scenario model predicts a potential average annual temperature increase of between 1.6 and a staggering 6 degrees C by the end of this century. With every percentage increase in temperature, a 10% increase in precipitation is required to offset this climatic change. Unfortunately, the rainfall graph is also dropping, and this leads to another potentially catastrophic consequence – an increase in fuel loads. Higher

temperatures, lower rainfall, increased wildfire/urban interfaces and enormous increases in fuel loads are a recipe for mega-fires, as Jerry Williams pointed out in an earlier presentation.

The presentations of Guido van der Werf of the University of Amsterdam, Johan Goldammer of GFMC Germany, and Cristina Montiel-Molina, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, all added to the concerns voiced by Flannigan. Without exception all four presenters made it clear that this cycle could be controlled, even if reversing the effects was impossible. Control would be dependent on authorities monitoring causative factors, sharing research and systems, and, when possible, taking rectifying action. The trick, they argued, was to motivate the international community to heed the warnings of the experts.

UK fires old as time

by Michael Bruce

The perception that wildfires do not occur in the United Kingdom and that they are a new event, is untrue. Large areas of moorland (rangeland) have been managed with fire by private landowners for hundreds if not thousands of years. The landowners do the burning to improve the habitat for red grouse, a famous hunting bird ... and brand of whisky!

The earliest legislation to regulate muirburn, the traditional term for prescribed burning, was by an act of the Scottish parliament in 1424. The common phrase "as fast as a wildfire" has its equivalent in Scots of "which spread like a moor burne". The first recorded use of this term was in 1716!

The private sector are also heavily involved in the current efforts to suppress wildfires in the UK. It is the landowner, affected by a fire, who generally pays for helicopter support. Moorland owners also often provide experienced staff and specialist all-terrain vehicles and fire fogging pumps. These fire fogging

systems, developed over the last 30 years, have the same fire suppression productivity as smaller helicopter based systems.

Landowners, farmers, foresters, gamekeepers and other land agency staff have developed partnerships – wildfire groups – with fire and rescue services to share resources at wildfires. The longest established wildfire groups were first developed in high risk areas. This spring everywhere was a high fire risk area in the UK and big fires broke out in regions normally considered very wet!

There is now an active drive supported by private sector trade associations, the Forestry Commission, the Scottish Wildfire Forum (www.scottishwildfireforum.org.uk) and Fire and Rescue Services to establish more temporary wildfire groups using existing land management organisations as the base. In an era of public sector budget cuts those with the assets at risk may have to do more to protect their own and society's interests – the private sector has a role in fire management.

Spectacular Friday flypast and parade finale not to be missed

by Graham Barlow

Friday's finale, to be held outside the conference centre, promises to provide a fitting climax to the 2011 Wildfire Conference. The terrain lends itself to the visual spectacle that promises to bring the event to a magnificent conclusion. Delegates will have a grandstand view.

The scene will be set by the arrival of the largest South African flag in the world: it will literally drop in on proceedings in the hands of eight skydivers.

This will be followed by an aerial display when the Flying Lion's Aerobatic Team in their Harvards wing their stuff. The Harvard is an iconic aircraft used for many years by air forces around the world – including the SAAF.

Fifteen Working on Fire aircraft – bombers, spotters and helicopters – will then perform a flypast; a unique opportunity to see the unmistakable yellow flying machines en masse.

This aerial spectacle heralds the arrival of the Working on

Fire ground teams for their post training camp passing-out parade. This, too, sets a record, comprising as it does the largest number of fire fighters at a single parade in the history of Working on Fire. The winning teams will receive due accolades, and then the massed teams will raise many a lump in the throat when they sing selected songs plus the National Anthem to close proceedings.

If you missed anything during this incredible conference, make sure it is not this wonderful display.

NOTICEBOARD

Thanks a million!

Suppliers who worked tirelessly to make the Wildfire Conference a success have been singled out by Conference Incident Commander Louis Buys for their commitment.

"I know everyone involved has worked very hard, but I believe special mention must be made of Sindy-Ann Esterhuizen from Workwear Depot (Pty) Ltd in Nelspruit. Conference organisers placed late orders with the company for 2 000 cricket hats, conference shirts and for the printing of logos on 2 000 backpacks for delegates.

"There was much fancy footwork required to meet our extremely short deadlines. Sindy-Ann gave us excellent service, commitment and delivered on time," he said.

He also complimented IT specialists PC Logic for their work in keeping the conference "connected", especially Darrell Cleaver and Kobus van der Merwe. Kudos also went to Marius Smit of Ristar for printing and Graig Hilligan for radio contact communications.

Bead lanyards create work for locals in need

The colourful bead lanyards Wildfire Conference delegates were given for their name badges were made especially by a group of disadvantaged and HIV+ men and women at a job-creation centre in Cape Town.

The 15 crafters are based at African Hope Crafts in Fish Hoek, on the southern Cape Peninsula, and all live in the nearby community of Masiphumelele. The craft centre is run by American missionaries Bill and Anne Eames who moved to South Africa more than six years ago with the sole purpose of creating opportunities for the country's most vulnerable people.

"The Wildfire Conference was a big project for us," says Anne, "it created enough beading to give the whole group an extra half a day of work over six weeks."

The lanyard has seed beads and two hand-rolled, clay beads bearing the conference logo strung on its nylon rope. It is designed so that it can



CRAFTING A LIVELIHOOD: Masiphumelele shack dwellers are part of an uplifting project.

be used as a sunglasses strap after the conference.

The crafters who made the lanyards work an average of 10 hours a week and are paid per item they produce, says Anne. Each worker is also given a hot meal during the shift along with spiritual and emotional support.

Crafter Veliswa Qubekile, a single mother to her six-month old son Endinako, originally hails from a village near Umtata in the Eastern Cape and says she is working for her child.

"This job lets me spend time with my baby and make enough money to buy food to eat."

Beading has always been part of her life because, in Xhosa culture, it is used for traditional purposes, says Veliswa.

Crafter Avuyise Lumani and her husband, Benjamin, a security guard, and their five-year-old daughter, Leyonela, come from East London and live in a shack in Masiphumelele.

"We came to Cape Town for work but it's not an easy life living in a shack especially in the winter with the rain," she says. Her goal is to learn to drive and to get business management skills so that she can open a business in the Eastern Cape one day.

Anne and Bill Eames, who run the project, are missionaries from the Kensington Community Church in Troy, Michigan.

Bill is a retired engineer and is currently also supervising the building of two homes for orphans in Masiphumelele.

Co-ordinated response to wildfires essential - or havoc will result

Strategies to prevent wildland fire are often fragmented, unco-ordinated and inconsistent, yet climate change means these fires will get bigger and more dangerous in coming decades.

A team of researchers from Mediterranean countries presented a paper at the Wildfire Conference this week pointing out that better communication and co-operation between policy makers, fire fighters, farmers and property owners was essential or wildland fire will wreak havoc in the future.

Researcher Ana Sebastián-López, and others, introduced delegates to the European Union's Firesmart project which aims to connect communities involved in forest fire prevention.

The main tool of the initiative is a Firesmart website (<http://www.firesmart-project.eu>) but other activities such as international and local technical workshops as well as personal interviews are also organised.

In their paper the team presented preliminary findings into obstacles preventing the effectiveness of fire fighting measures in four local areas.

Their paper also recommends ways to integrate prevention practices into regular forest management plans.

The areas they researched included the Pinhal Interior Norte region in central Portugal, Valencia in Eastern Spain, south-eastern France, in the metropolitan area between Aix-en-Provence and Marseille, and the Cagliari Province in south-eastern Sardinia. All these areas suffer from regular uncontrolled wildland fires.

They concluded that climate change meant that fire danger, fire occurrence, the length of the fire season, and annual areas burnt are all going to increase. Warmer and drier conditions, especially in areas such as the Mediterranean, are expected to increase the frequency, duration and intensity of fires, and greater amounts of fuel in unmanaged forests will cause more and wilder fires.

The researchers quoted an earlier paper that says the most severe portion of the fire season may shift to later in the summer, resulting in potentially greater fire occurrence. In addition the burnt area is expected to increase by as much as 80% over the next 100 years due to the projected climate warming.

Thanks to the exhibitors





WOOSH: In a spectacular display of precision flying a Working on Fire fixed wing Dromader bomber drops a load of water during a controlled burn in the Pilanesberg Game Reserve while a Working on Fire Hot Shot ground team beats back flames. The fire display was co-ordinated for the benefit of Wildfire 2011 Conference delegates. *Photograph by Bruce Sutherland.*

Korea here we come

by Carol Campbell

The 6th International Wildfire Conference will take place in Korea, probably at the end of May 2015, Eunsung Oh from the Korea Forest Service confirmed yesterday.

The 12-member Republic of Korea delegation, led by Younghyo Ha, deputy minister of the Korea Forest Service, has spent the week at Sun City gathering information to

establish what will work best for their event in four years time.

"Korea experiences about 450 wildfires a year," said Oh. "Our natural forests have been badly damaged and we cannot afford to ignore wildfires."

Oh explained that 40 years of Japanese occupation from 1910, followed by World War Two and then the Korean War had decimated the indigenous landscape which was only now being restored.

"South Africa has a beautiful, unspoilt landscape which must be preserved and cherished," she said.

The damage to Korea's forests has impacted not only on botanical biodiversity but also pushed the tiger to the brink of extinction. South Korea is home to a wide variety of birds such as the Baikal teal, which was once endangered but whose population numbers are now increasing. A fifth of South Korea's mammals are forest-dwelling bats. These include the kobayashi bat and the brown long-eared bat.

Conference Accord

International co-operation and a strengthening of wildland fire science and management skills are key to stemming the escalation of wildland fire, according to an "accord" drawn up by the 5th International Wildfire conference.

The "accord" comes after almost 500 wildfire experts from 61 countries met at Sun City near Johannesburg in South Africa this week for

the 5th International Wildfire Conference.

The conference produced the document following exhaustive regional discussions in which the delegates pledged to work together in taking steps to control the growing phenomenon of wildfire in their communities and across the world.

In the accord they appealed to the global community to confront an issue that was affecting all humankind.



Accolades for SA wildfire conference

Wildfire 2011 has been a resounding success with international delegates all agreeing the aerial display followed by the braai in the Piliansberg Game Reserve yesterday was the highlight of the week.

Dale Dague, chair of the International Liaison Committee, said the aerial fire fighting display was an eye-opener for many people who saw fixed wing bombers, helicopters with bambi buckets and spotter planes in action for the first time.

"It was very well co-ordinated and most educational," said Dague.

This was supported by Silvia Kloster from the Max Planck Institute of Meteorology in Germany, whose work focuses on

global fire computer modelling.

"It was fascinating to see something I work on every day on computer, play out in practise," she said.

Joaquin Ramirez from the company Tecnosylva in Spain said, the organisation of the Piliansberg display had been "perfect".

"This is going to be a tough act for Korea to follow," he said. "I really enjoyed the week."

Natasha Ribeiro from Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique said, watching Working on Fire in action had been spectacular.

"This is a programme we need in Mozambique. The discipline, the co-ordination and the underlying motive of poverty relief, is exactly what we need for our youth."

Both Ramirez and Kloster complimented the Wildfire Conference on the social networking sites saying they had enjoyed the Facebook and Twitter updates.

"These are great resources for future conferences and should be utilised by the Korean team," said Ramirez.

The delegates also enjoyed the daily newspaper saying it kept them up to date on the programme and was a valuable resource to take home.

WATER ON THE SMOKE: An FFA Aviation helicopter, branded in the Working on Fire colours drops a bambi load of water on the flames at a demonstration burn at Piliansberg Game Reserve yesterday.



Wildland fire fighters attend special parade

Nine hundred wildland fire fighters, who have completed an intensive pre-fire season training camp, will attend a passing out parade at Sun City today.

The wildland fire fighters underwent their refresher training at the Mogwase Stadium, close to the Piliansberg Game Reserve in Northwest Province, this week.

The wildland fire fighters are members of the South African government's Working on Fire (WoF) programme. Their training coincided with the Wildfire Conference.

The WoF programme is implemented by the FFA Group

Thirty-eight Hot Shot teams from all over South Africa attended the camp. "This was the biggest training camp in the history of Working on Fire," said Pieter van der Merwe, Managing Director of FFA Operations.

"The training camp was an enormous success, and the delegates from the conference, who saw the Hot Shot teams in action yesterday, were very impressed by the wildland fire



HEAT: Wildland fire fighters are taught how to run through fire as part of their training

fighters fitness, discipline and dedication."

The WoF Programme funded by the South African government, is one of the country's most successful poverty alleviation, job creation and community

upliftment initiatives.

Through the programme young men and women are recruited and trained as skilled wildland fire fighters to be deployed throughout the country to reduce the personal and economic harm caused

by unwanted wildfire.

There are currently more than 3 000 wildland fire fighters in the programme deployed at more than 100 WoF bases across length and breadth of South Africa.

Hot test for Argentinian backpack

A bright red fire retardant backpack, made in Argentina, was tested by Working on Fire's Hotshot crews at the fire demonstration in the Piliansberg Game Reserve yesterday.

Luthfia Cader, head of Working on Fire's advocacy department, said the backpack was being considered by the Working on Fire programme for its wildland fire fighters.

It is manufactured by fire fighting equipment specialists, Inforest, in Cordoba, Argentina, and comprises a double-layered bag with a 22-litre collapsible tank, made of PVC, inside. The tank can be replaced if it ruptures. Attached to the tank is a hose with a hand-pump which can spray water up to 12 metres in a straight jet or three metres in a fog jet.

"This is a good quality product that we can afford," said Cader. "We are very interested to see how it performs under South African conditions."



SPECTACULAR: The global wildland fire fighting community were treated to a impressive display of flames, planes and yellow-shirted wildland fire fighters when South Africa's Working on Fire Programme, supported by the FFA's Aviation wing showed off their prowess, at the Wildfire Conference in the Pilanesberg Game Reserve yesterday. Delegates were transported to the country's third largest game reserve early Thursday for the day-long wildfire display. This included eight Working on Fire Hotshot teams dousing a roaring blaze, followed by a skydivers demonstration. In the afternoon, FFA Aviation showed their skills during an aerial fire-bombing display. The 30 plus pilots in the aerial teams are all highly skilled, many working in the crop-spraying industry out-of-season. The aircraft on display at yesterday's event included Cessna spotter planes, Dromader fixed-wing bombers and Huey helicopters. In the evening the South Africans did what they do best and hosted a braai in the reserve introducing their international guests to "tjoppies, boerewors and local brewed beer!" with the call of hyenas in the distance.

