



The international association of fire and rescue services

CTIF Forest Fires Commission Meeting, Greece, 3rd October 2008



Prior to the opening of the meeting of the Forest Fires Commission, several protocols were observed:

Mr Nikos Sacchinidis welcomed the meeting to Greece and read out a letter from the EU Commissioner, Mr Dimas. He spoke of the importance of wildfires to all countries but especially to those in the Mediterranean regions. The Prefect for the area responded and gave a short speech detailing local firefighting arrangements in the district and the improvements that had been made in recent years.



The formal opening of the meeting and following conference was done by Greece's Deputy Minister for Civil Protection, who spoke of much lower average burned in 2008 (only 20% of 2007). The meeting and conference were also treated to presentations from the Deputy Secretary General of the Greek Fire Service and Herr Ralph Ackerman, Vice President of CTIF.



Agenda Item	Action
<p>Present: Mark Jones (Chairman), Lee Neale (UK), Nikos Sacchinidis (ESEPA), Daniel Ryser (Switzerland), Rui Silva (Portugal), Havard Sormoen (Norway), Alex Held (South Africa), Agoston Restas (independent specialist, Hungary), Michael Bruce (Eurofire project manager), Allard Van Gullick (Netherlands), Javier Baena (Catalonia), Jan Sudmersen, (Germany)</p>	
<p>Apologies: Murray Dudfield, (New Zealand) Markus Pletsch, (EMPL Austria, associate member) Jim Smalley, (USA) Frederic Tournay, (France)</p>	
<p>1. Welcome and introductions</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed all delegates and guests to the commission. He congratulated Tereza from the Czech Republic on the birth of her beautiful daughter, Natalie and wished both of them good health and happiness.</p> <p>The Chairman gave the CTIF and the commission's thanks to ESEPA and the Greek Fire Service for their hospitality and welcomed the CTIF Vice President, Ralf Ackerman to the commission meeting.</p>	


<p>The chairman made particular comment on the professional arrangements that ESEPA had established and the high level of attendance from Greek delegates thanking the very busy politicians for making time for the meeting.</p> <p>Considering the forthcoming meeting the Chairman highlighted:</p> <p>(a) The Importance of Forest Fire preparation as a “civil resilience” issue.</p> <p>(b) The need to link Forest and Wildfires as a policy area with other Climate related problems, i.e. flooding.</p> <p>He expressed a view that Fire Service relationships tend to be formed on a professional interests but sustained by personal friendships and encouraged all present to make new friends.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes of meeting 18th April 2008</p> <p>The Chairman circulated the previous minutes to delegates; the minutes were agreed by the meeting.</p>	
<p>3. Matters arising</p> <p>The Chairman explained that the report referred to under agenda item 5 was not yet ready as he is awaiting reports from a number of the UK delegates who attended the training initiative. Generally, the training was well received and he reiterated the UK’s gratitude to ESEPA.</p>	
<p>4. “Multifunctional forests - balancing timber, water and carbon sink needs” – an article from the EU’s DG Environment</p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/114na6.pdf</p> <p>In sharing this information item, the chairman indicated that it is important to remember that the CTIF is representative of many countries and agencies that are not within the European Union although the EU sources provided information that may be of interest to all commission members.</p> <p>For this reason, and in keeping with the commission’s previous agreement, he undertook to continue to share information gained through the EU committee of experts with the commission and, where appropriate, the CTIF more widely.</p>	<p>Chairman</p>

<p>5. “Forged in Fire” - Scientific Articles from Oregon State University</p> <p>http://oregonstate.edu/terra/2007spring/features/fire.php</p> <p>The Chairman addressed the meeting regarding the importance of remembering that that CTIF was a global rather than just a European organisation.</p>	<p>For Information</p>
<p>6. UN FAO Fire Management Actions Alliance</p> <p>http://www.fao.org/forestry/firealliance/en/</p> <p>The Chairman explained the alliance and that for it to be effective countries need to provide the alliance with data, this is not happening widely enough at the moment. The chairman encouraged commission members to submit data. Michael Bruce asked how many languages this work has been translated into, the Chairman said he had seen approximately six different languages, but he will follow this up after the meeting and report any developments.</p> <p> Englishmessage.doc</p>	<p>All members to consider national reports</p>
<p>7. Survey of Specialised Firefighting equipment</p> <p>Jan Sudmersen has developed a catalogue to align equipment currently used across different countries. The Chairman directed delegates to the questionnaire developed by Jan and encouraged delegates to complete it. This will enable Jan to conclude his research and produce a report.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Jan for the worked he has undertaken</p> <p> Survey of specialized wildland fire fighting t</p>	<p>All members</p>
<p>8. EUROFIRE Update</p> <p>Michael Bruce addressed the meeting from a land manager’s perspective. He said that often response can be prevented by improved land management policies, particularly prescribed burning. EUROFIRE is developing a training/education system ranging from youth to university levels. The goal of this work is to provide a pan European standard for prescribed burning.</p>	<p>For information</p>

<p>The two year EUROFIRE project is due to finish in October 2008 but an extension to the end of the year has been granted. Michael circulated drawings of techniques, which he hopes will eliminate natural language barriers. Michael reassured the meeting that the project is a pilot aimed at exploring ideas, rather than a means of telling firefighters how things should be done.</p> <p>Michael hopes that there will be a EUROFIRE 2 project at some stage in the future. The material will be on the EUROFIRE website and visitors to the website will be encouraged to feedback. In the future the project will look to develop training, equipment, guidance and assessment systems.</p>	
<p>9. European Forest Fires Information System (EFFIS) Newsletters</p> <p>http://effis.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/doc/30/raw</p> <p>http://effis.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/doc/47/raw</p> <p>The 2008 EFFIS monthly updates show a significant downturn in forest fires compared with 2007. The Chairman asked for comments on EFFIS. Michael Bruce spoke about the system being Canadian by design and possibly not working well for alternative ecological types, for example it does not work for shrub fires which are the most significant problem in the UK. It was also highlighted that, for certain northern climates, shrub fires also occur in winter due to frost drying out shrubs.</p> <p>Michael informed the meeting that a study is being carried out at Edinburgh University into the <i>fine fuel moisture code</i> (FFMC). Michael recommended the New Zealand website as a reference source.</p> <p>The Chairman said that EFFIS is attempting to cater for an extremely wide audience, which presents them with some difficulties. The value of accurate data submissions was highlighted.</p>	<p>For Information</p>
<p>10. EFFIS annual report on Fires in Europe 2007</p> <p>http://effis.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/doc/46/raw</p> <p>The Chairman said that the EFFIS annual report does not cover all aspects of the effects of forest fire. The report only discusses scale and number of incidents of fires without considering the human/social impacts. The Chairman recommended the report to delegates.</p> <p>A discussion was held amongst delegates regarding methods of preventing fires caused through arson and negligence. Michael Bruce said that in his opinion fuel hazard reduction in the form of prescribed burning is the only method of preventing these incidents.</p>	<p>For Information</p>

<p>The Chairman challenged this view and highlighted that in some areas such as France, grazing by animals such as Donkeys is employed to reduce fuel. He went on to say that prescribed burning is also not popular with citizens and alternative methods of fuel reduction may be more acceptable.</p> <p>The Chairman recognised that fire services need to be educated that extinguishment may not always be the best response. Nikos Sacchinidis highlighted the importance of working with forest protection experts when planning control strategies.</p> <p>Daniel Ryser informed the meeting of careful reforestation programmes undertaken in Switzerland, which have successfully decreased the number of forest fires. Further discussion was held regarding socio economic issues impacting on forest fires as a policy area.</p>	
<p>11. Article on Deforestation from the EU’s “Science for the Environment” group</p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/5si.pdf</p> <p>The Chairman directed delegates to the article and committed to continue distributing articles of interest. Michael Bruce said that there is a fundamental scientific misunderstanding within the paper, due to timber not being viewed with reference to its value as a building material.</p>	
<p>12. BBC News article on “Fire Safe” cigarettes</p> <p>http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7544619.stm</p> <p>The Chairman explained the principle of RIP cigarettes, and discussed how difficult it was for a discarded cigarette to start a forest fire. He asked the hosts if they were aware of any statistics for forest fires in Greece started by discarded cigarettes. Christos Lampris said that they are not certain but predicted the figure at about 3%.</p> <p>Nikos Sacchinidis stated that the problem was not cigarettes but negligent or uneducated citizens.</p>	
<p>13. 21st Meeting of the Experts Group on Forest Fire Prevention (Aix en Provence, 22-23/09/2008).</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Draft Note.pdf</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Agenda 21st Meeting Fire Experts Group _f</p> </div> </div>	<p>For Information</p>

 <p>Conclusions 21 fire expert group - Valabr</p> <p>The Chairman discussed the papers provided with this item and informed the meeting that he has been invited to join the meeting of the EU Committee of Experts.</p>	
<p>14. Engagement with European Fire Officer's Association (FEU)</p> <p>The Chairman said that he was unable to attend the FEU meeting but he will attend future meeting so the Commission will have a voice.</p> <p>Ralph Ackerman has had discussions with FEU and he informed the meeting that Fire Service organisations have now established a single organisation to discuss issues with EU bodies.</p>	
<p>15. 2008 meeting of the Wildland Fire Advisory Group/Global Wildland Fire Network (July 4-6th Freiburg)</p> <p>The Chairman had attended, and presented to, this meeting in his role as a member of the committee of experts. He indicated that this Committee of experts tended to be mainly academics and that he had emphasised the importance of the input from Fire Chiefs and Fire agencies when debating national and international policies. He undertook to share with CTIF the work of this network.</p>	
<p>16. CTIF Delegate's Assembly, Colmar, France, 19/20th September 2008</p> <p>The chairman spoke of the proceedings of that meeting which had been distributed, explaining that each commission within CTIF provided a report of their work over the previous year. Mr Ackermann spoke of the delegate's assembly and he indicated that agencies such as NATO has approached CTIF with reference to using CTIF services, this would of course need further coordination.</p>  <p>Delegates Assembly Report 2008.doc</p>	
<p>17. National Updates from members present</p> <p>Allard Van Gullick gave an update on the work currently being undertaken in the Netherlands to change political attitudes towards forest fires. This work is having success and forest fires have now been included on the national risk register.</p>	

<p>Mr Kaspikis updated the meeting on developments following the devastating fires in Greece in 2007.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved coordination of different groups • Unification of the ministries for public order and the interior • Extension to the employment period of seasonal firefighters to allow additional training time. • Focus on prevention and education. <p>Alex Held informed the meeting of the Wildland Fire Conference in Sun City, South Africa 9-13 May 2011; Alex will circulate flyers to all members.</p> <p>A forest fire investigation course will be held in Catalonia Spain 6-10 April 2009.</p> <p>The Chairman enquired whether members felt that the commission should be expanded to cover all civil emergencies such as flooding; there is no CTIF commission for these incidents at this time. The Chairman will contact members by email to discuss this.</p> <p>The Chairman has been invited to talk at a conference in South Korea later this month and he will promote the work of CTIF during this visit.</p>	<p>Chairman to send written requests for views</p>
<p>18. Membership</p> <p>(a) CTIF members Three member countries have been expelled for non payment of membership fees. Fees will also go up as CTIF requires additional funding.</p> <p>(b) Forest Fires Commission Membership The Chairman asked members to update the circulated membership spreadsheet</p> <p> CTIF FFC membership update G</p> <p>(c) Role of the Commission</p> <p>The Chairman enquired whether members felt that the Commission should be expanded to cover all civil emergencies such as flooding; there is no CTIF Commission for these incidents at this time. The Chairman undertook to gather views to discuss this issue further.</p>	<p>Chairman to write to CTIF leadership for their views</p>

19. Other business

(a) CTIF Vice President

Ralph Ackerman gave a presentation on the Development and Trend of Fire & Rescue Services in the EU. He spoke about the many differences in Fire Services across Europe and that a unified fire service is a utopia, what can be achieved is networking and information sharing which will provide mutual benefits.

(b) Next Meeting

The Chairman said he would aim to collocate the next meeting with the general assembly in Ostrava, July 2009. This will give delegates the opportunity to see how other CTIF commissions carry out their business. He also said that, if proved necessary, another meeting would be planned for the springtime.

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked ESEPA and the Greek government for their hospitality and contribution to the commission's work and paid tribute to the bravery and hard work of their firefighting organisations. He looked forward very much to the academic conferences that were to follow.