



**Outcomes of the International Conference
«Protection of Human Settlements and
Social Infrastructure from Wildfires»
Moscow, 14-15 November 2017**



Recent wildfires in Europe and globally have resulted in severe environmental damages in natural and cultural landscapes, high economic losses and considerable humanitarian problems. Globally more than 280 human lives have been lost by wildfires in 2017, more than 20,000 homes destroyed or damaged, and 380,000 needed to be evacuated. Several key issues affecting wildland fire in the natural, cultural and industrial-urban landscapes of temperate-boreal Eurasia have been identified:

- Increasing rural exodus and urbanization, resulting in abandonment of traditional land cultivation (agriculture, pastoralism, forestry) resulting in an increasing wildfire hazard;
- Urbanization resulting in a reduced rural work force, including availability of rural firefighters;
- Re-privatization of formerly nationalized forests resulting in the absence of forest and fire management in small holder forest estates;
- Increasing occurrence of wildfires affecting the perimeters of metropolitan and industrial areas, settlements and developments dispersed throughout the landscapes;
- Climate change affecting on natural and anthropogenic regimes and the vulnerability of ecosystems to wildfires, e.g., climate-driven transformation of former fire-free or fire-protected natural ecosystems and land-use systems such as peat bogs and high-altitude mountain ecosystems to ecosystems becoming vulnerable to and increasingly affected by wildfires;
- Increase of severity and duration of droughts in all continents resulting in increasing occurrence of extremely severe and difficult to control wildfires that often exceed local, national and even international cooperative capacities in managing such extreme fire emergencies.

In the light of these apparent and the anticipated future changes of wildland fire regimes, a two-day international conference was organized by EMERCOM of Russia and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), supported by the Secretariat of the European Major Hazards Agreement of the Council of Europe (EUR-OPA), the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) and experts from the host country Russia, Italy, Argentina, Belarus, and Mongolia, to identify solution for sustainable management of landscapes and fires herein. The participants of the Conference agreed on highlighting a set of principles that may contribute to wildfire disaster risk reduction, some of which include:

- Risk-sensitive land management provides valuable services for wildfire risk reduction that is currently not explicitly included in ecosystem service valuations. Both at national and at local level there is a need to include ecosystem services in landscape valuations to account for the significant landscape function of reducing the risk of catastrophic large fires;
- The complexity and connectedness of natural, cultural and urban-industrial landscapes and the increasing vulnerability of societies living herein to become affected by wildfires are calling for holistic approaches in landscape fire management involving cross-sectoral and inter-agency cooperation efforts;
- In addressing the targets of Sendai Framework and the SDGs, there is a need to integrate fire management policies in national and local Disaster Risk Reduction strategies as a means to reduce exposure to wildfire risks;
- The involvement and capacitation of local administrations and rural communities, volunteer organizations such as volunteer fire services and CSOs in the safe and ecologically adequate use of fire in land management, the prevention of wildfires and the self-defense of rural assets against wildfires must become imperative and a key element of national fire management policies;
- Innovative collaborative research addressing the landscape fire management at regional and national level will contribute to define effective and efficient solutions for the future.

Based on these principles the Conference Participants,

- Encourage national and local governments to continue shifting the focus of wildfire response to the prevention of and preparedness to wildfires;
- Recommend the national authorities concerned with agriculture, forestry, protected areas / nature conservation, public health and security, other agencies as well as CSOs to develop coordinated and holistic policies and pragmatic approaches in landscape fire management based on advanced technological achievements and recommendations of the scientific and research community;
- Recommend the governments to utilize the potentials of regional and international organizations such as the UNISDR, including the Global Wildland Fire Network operating under the UNISDR, and the Council of Europe/EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement to foster the dialogue and effective cooperation in cross-boundary fire management;
- Recommend in particular to observe the decisions of the Permanent Correspondents and the Directors of Specialized Centers of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement made in Paris (6-7 November 2017) to enhance the cooperation in fire management among the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe;
- Request the UNISDR and Council of Europe/EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement to propose including the topic "Landscape Fire Hazards" to be discussed and followed up in the 2018 European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR) to be hosted by Government of Italy.