

**2nd Technical Workshop
Global Fire Management Hub
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Address by Krzysztof Zyman

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Council of Europe

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you once again in my capacity of the Executive Secretary of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA).

Please allow me to begin my brief address by referring to the Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in Reykjavík, Iceland, in May 2023.

At that gathering, member States adopted a Declaration “United Around Our Values” in which they underlined the urgency of taking co-ordinated action to protect the environment by countering the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change, and loss of biodiversity. The Declaration, which provides guidance for future priorities of the Council of Europe affirms that human rights and the environment are intertwined and that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of human rights by present and future generations.

Already in 2011, the EUR-OPA Agreement adopted the “Ethical principles on disaster risk reduction and people’s resilience”, aimed at improving preparedness and dealing with ethical problems related to the victims of disasters. More recently, in 2021, the Agreement adopted guidelines and a recommendation on enabling and protecting persons with disabilities during public health emergencies resulting from pandemics”.

More broadly, we are very pleased at the sustained level of EUR-OPA’s collaboration with the UN Specialised bodies, in particular the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNESCO, and of course the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

We co-organised the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (Matosinhos, 2021) and we are currently working preparing the European Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction planned for November 2024 in Montenegro. We have also contributed to the UN Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction (Indonesia, 2022).

These opportunities allow the Council of Europe to ensure coordination with both EU and UN global initiatives, and to promote the values that the CoE stands for: Human Rights, Democracy, the Rule of Law and Democratic Participation. Furthermore they create a framework, allowing the Council of Europe to contribute to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very grateful to FAO for having given me the opportunity to speak at this important 2nd Technical Workshop of the Global Fire Management Hub. Our collaboration demonstrates the enduring complementary and shared common goal of Cutting disaster risk to boost equality and improve resilience.

In following-up my introduction of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement of the Council of Europe, which I presented at the 1st Technical Workshop in November 2023, I would like to revert to the role and significance of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks and the Regional Fire Monitoring Centers.

Between 2006 and 2009, the Secretariat of the Major Hazards Agreement became involved in a number of field missions and consultations addressing fire management in Eastern Europe, Southeast Europe and the South Caucasus. In the frame of our cooperation with the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) we prioritized the development of solutions concerning wildfires burning on terrain contaminated by radioactivity and remnants of armed conflicts. After the GFMC joined our Network of Specialised Centers in 2007, we supported the endeavor of GFMC to establish regional centers of excellence and competency in landscape fire management.

With seed funding provided by the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, the GFMC set up its first two regional centers. In 2010, the Regional Fire Monitoring Center for Southeast Europe and the South Caucasus was inaugurated at the Faculty of Forest Sciences, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Engineering in Skopje, North Macedonia. The opening of the Eastern Europe Fire Monitoring Center at the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine in Kiev, Ukraine, followed in 2013.

With great pleasure, the Council of Europe has noted that the family of Regional Centers has been growing since then, currently comprising eight Centers in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. All centers are established at academic institutions and designed to address the accelerating problems of wildfires and excessive application of fire in land use and land-use change at the science-policy interface.

One of the main tasks of the Regional Centers is to bring the state-of-the-art knowledge in integrated landscape fire science and management to the community of practitioners and thus to application. Most important, however, is their advisory support to countries interested in developing national fire management policies. Furthermore, the Regional Centers are fostering cross-boundary cooperation in fire management within the regional neighborhoods.

The decision of FAO, UNEP and partners to utilize the expertise of the Regional Networks and Regional Centers provides an opportunity for all – for the Fire Hub and – vice versa – for the outreach work in the regional domains.

Thank you for your attention