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Item 7(a) of the provisional agenda

FAO global activities**The FAO Fire Management Umbrella Programme****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The FAO fire management programme reflects an integrated approach which deals with vegetation fires throughout all land uses. This note gives an overview of relevant developments and actions taken by FAO and its partners in implementing previous recommendations by the European Forestry Commission, other Regional Forestry Commissions and COFO. The paper concludes with some suggestions for discussion and consideration by the Commission in order to strengthen the FAO Fire Management Programme.

I. Follow-up to recommendations of the thirty sixth session of the European Forestry Commission and activities in the region related to the FAO fire management programme

1. Since the last session of the Commission, a fire management project was concluded in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
2. At the time of writing a UNECE / FAO Regional Forum on cross-boundary fire management is under preparation for November 2013 and is expected to elaborate recommendations for member countries of the European region and the Council of Europe to develop an agreement on international cooperation to enhance the fire management capability. The Forum will take advantage of recent insights and solutions of contemporary and expected future wildfire problems in the region, notably in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Inputs from UNECE member states and other regions from outside the UNECE will

provide expertise in developing formal and informal bilateral and multilateral agreements on transboundary cooperation in fire management.

II. Follow-up on the recommendations of the twenty first session of the Committee on Forestry, of other Regional Forestry Commissions and FAO fire management activities

3. The Committee requested FAO to strengthen the FAO fire management programme by actively seeking financial support for the Multi-Donor Trust Fund proposal, now called the “Smart Fire” Umbrella Programme. This Programme will be mainly included in the new FAO Strategic Objective 5 (SO5): *Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises*, and to a lesser extent in Strategic Objective 2 (SO2): *Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner*. As such, it will be part of the efforts of both the Forestry Department and of the Strategic Objectives’ teams to promote its implementation, including resources mobilization. Support to fire management at country level was requested at the last sessions of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission (2012), of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (2012), at the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (2013), and also at the FAO Conference held in June 2013. However, resources from inside the Organization or from Member countries have not yet been identified. The new GEF-6 cycle, which will start in June 2014, has included Disaster Risk Reduction and Fire Management as areas of work and maybe a potential source of funding.

4. FAO human resources related to fire management are now partly assigned to the development of the new FAO Strategic Objective 5: *Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises*. This is considered to benefit the future implementation of the FAO Forestry Programme, especially in the prevention of forests and trees being affected by emergencies but also where forests and trees can help to prevent or mitigate other emergencies.

5. The Committee also requested FAO to propose a coordination mechanism between the different UN agencies and programmes working on topics related to fire management by making full use of its comparative advantages and avoiding duplication with the work of other agencies such as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and the Global Fire Monitoring Centre (GFMC). In implementing this decision, discussions have started with UNISDR on this issue and more progress and tangible results, like a coordination meeting of UN agencies, are expected in 2014.

6. The Committee on Forestry (COFO) had described forest fires as a major source of greenhouse gases (GHGs) and called upon countries to include forest fire management in their programmes for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD). Since the last Commission Session, FAO has implemented a fire management project in Kalimantan, Indonesia, funded by REDD funds from Norway to reduce GHG emission by substituting fire with other agricultural methods on and nearby peatlands and by preventing wildfires in the community-owned rubber plantations. The Smart Fire Umbrella Programme also includes one component on fire management and climate change. FAO Forestry Paper 172: *Climate change guidelines for forest managers* includes recommended adaptation actions and mitigation strategies for forest managers related to expected increase in the number, frequency, size or severity of wildfires.

7. Finally, the Committee requested FAO to develop, in partnership with other relevant institutions and based on the Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines, a set of international guidance tools for managing wildfire-related risks at the landscape level, including transboundary fire issues. Two initial themes were selected to implement this decision. One

is the development of Community Based Fire Management Guidelines for District Officers and NGO's. A preparatory meeting to develop such guidelines took place with global experts, at the end of 2012, in order to define the outline and focus of such a tool. A similar regional meeting took place in Arusha, Tanzania. The guidelines are planned to be ready and launched at the International Wildland Fire Conference in 2015 in the Republic of Korea. The second theme, climate change and fire management, was included in *FAO Forestry Paper 172*. However, more specific guidelines may be needed in the future.

Requests from other regions

8. FAO was requested by the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission to update regional statistics on wildfires. The next Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015 will include trends of fire incidence and areas burned over the last 12 years as measured from satellite data.

9. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) secretariat asked FAO to help implement the Community Based Fire Management component of the SADC Fire Management Programme, which would fit very well under the new "Smart Fire" Umbrella Programme. FAO is waiting for the official request from the SADC secretariat.

Projects

10. Since the last session of the European Forestry Commission, fire management projects or components were concluded in Syria and Tanzania.

11. Fire management projects or components of projects implemented by FAO or with FAO involvement are ongoing in Algeria, Futaah Djallon watershed (West Africa), Lebanon, Morocco, Swaziland and Tunisia.

12. Projects or project components on fire management are in pipeline for: Algeria, the Futaah Djallon basin, The Gambia and Zimbabwe.

Upcoming event

13. As part of the International Liaison Committee, FAO is strongly involved in the preparation of the next International Wildland Fire Conference in 2015 in the Republic of Korea (www.wildfire2015.kr). Similar to the last Conference in 2011 in South Africa, the Forestry Department of FAO will again advocate for a programme which reflects Integrated Fire Management.

III. Points for discussion/consideration

14. Forest and other vegetation fires continue to be a severe concern. It can be anticipated that climate change will increase the intensity and frequency of wildfires. Increasing vegetation fire will contribute to more greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere. Individual country requests for FAO support and recommendations from the regional forestry commissions, COFO and the FAO Conference to strengthen the FAO fire management programme call for an increase of resources from within the Organization and/or from Member countries. Human and financial resources for fire management, however, are limited and decreasing. The Commission may wish to:

- discuss the increasing risk of uncontrolled wildfires in the region and suggest measures to counter this development, for example through the establishment of a close linkage of fire management with climate change related initiatives;
- to discuss the role and contribution of FAO and the existing fire management networks in Europe (FAO Silva Mediterranea Working Group on Fire management, European Commission Expert Group on Forest Fire, UNISDR subregional network for the Balkan) towards reducing the negative impacts of Wildfire
- to discuss ways and opportunities to include fire management in a broader landscape approach;
- recommend Member countries to support the FAO Smart Fire Umbrella Programme with allocation of resources; and
- mandate FAO with identifying more and additional financial and human resources to implement the Smart Fire Umbrella Programme.

15. The commission may also wish to make recommendations for the organization and programming of the International Wildland Fire Conference in 2015 in the Republic of Korea (www.wildfire2015.kr).