



Johann G. Goldammer, Coordinator

Tel: +49-761-808011
Fax: +49-761-808012
Cell: +49-170-2 34 74 84
johann.goldammer@fire.uni-freiburg.de

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Mr. Kjell Larsson
Chairman, INSARAG Regional Group for Africa/Europe
Head of International Department, Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA)
651 80 Karlstad
Sweden

Working Group INSARAG-Fire

Dear Mr. Larsson,

This letter is in response to the Circular Letter "Status of the Workplan of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe" distributed by Thomas Peter on 20 December 2002.

In Item 11 of the Work Plan recommendations are given concerning the future of the Working Group Fire:

11) The regional Working Group INSARAG-Fire was requested to review the following at their next meeting, tentatively scheduled in Vienna, Austria, in June 2002:

- The regional network of fire and NBC could better be accommodated in a separate network (not within INSARAG) with OCHA's Environmental Emergencies Section (not FCSS) as counterpart. The INSARAG Secretariat to review this possibility with the Environmental Emergencies Section in OCHA-Geneva.
- With regard to interaction with INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe, the WG on Fire to develop Terms of Reference and a timeframe for activities to address issues related to fire and HAZMAT in USAR operations.
- The Working Group on Fire to provide the results to the INSARAG Secretariat and the Chairman of the Regional Group by 15 September 2002 (action: Working Group on Fire)

Status: Due to lack of relevance and activity, the regional Chairman recommends to discontinue the WG of Fire within INSARAG Africa / Europe Regional Group.

Feedback has been requested until end of January 2003. I am replying now with an **Interim Activity Report** on behalf of the Fire Group (below) in order to clarify the recent history of the WG and to explain that a final response of the WG cannot be delivered in due time. As soon as the meeting of the WG has been accomplished I will report back to you.

With kind regards,

Johann G. Goldammer



The GFMC is sponsored by the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry, Fire Ecology Research Group and co-sponsored by the German Foreign Office as a contribution to the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction, Working Group on Wildland Fire. The GFMC is serving as Coordinator of the UN-FAO/ECE/ILO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire. IFFN is prepared bi-annually on behalf of the UN-ECE Trade Division, Timber Section, and the FAO.

Address for Deliveries: Georges-Köhler-Allee 075 (Old Airport Tower), D-79110 Freiburg, GERMANY

Interim Activity Report of the INSARAG Working Group on Fire (December 2002)

1. Chairmanship of the Fire Group

At the 2000 regional meeting in Hammamet a chairman of the Working Group on Fire, Mr. Peter Nixon (UK), had been appointed by the Regional Group. Mr. Nixon has disappeared from the scene after the Hammamet meeting and never took action. Interim activities, however, have been conducted. See paras. 3-5.

2. Invitation to the last Regional Meeting and Deadlines

The Working Group on Fire had not been invited to the last Regional Meeting in Revinge, Sweden, 23/24 April 2002. Only by chance one of the members, Mr. Frank, participated but was not prepared and authorized to speak on behalf of the WG Fire. Deadlines were set for WG Fire but nobody had been made responsible to call for meetings or observe deadlines.

It is not known if Mr. Nixon had been invited to attend the Revinge meeting.

When the GFMC learned about the Revinge report and the deadlines by mid 2002 I immediately contacted Mr. Thomas Peter and informed him that action would be taken. Mr. Peter agreed that it would be sufficient to report back to the next Regional Meeting in 2003.

It was not possible to set a meeting date in 2002. Most likely the WG Fire will meet on 30 January 2003 or later, depending on an agreed date (see para 5). Accordingly, the WG Fire will not be able to deliver a final response and conclusions to the INSARAG Regional Group / INSARAG Secretariat by end of January 2003 (as requested by the Circular Letter dated 20 December 2002).

3. Interim activities

Since Mr. Nixon was not active the necessary steps for interim activities have been taken by the GFMC which is in charge of the Wildland Fire Subgroup (one of the three Subgroups of WG Fire).

The following actions took place between the Hammamet Regional Meeting in 2000 and now. These activities served to maintain a process of international cooperation in the field of wildland fire disaster prevention and response. Thus, the activities are not restricted to INSARAG-type of response but are also aimed to maintain and expand an international network of institutions and persons involved in fire management that actively or potentially contribute to international response capabilities.

3.1 Status Report of May 2001

On request by the former Regional Chairman, Mr. Laepke, a status report of WG Fire was submitted to him in May 2001. See:

[Attachment 1-INSARAG-Fire-May 2001.PDF](#)

3.2 FAO / ITTO Expert Meeting in March 2001

An international wildland fire expert meeting was held at the FAO in March 2001 in which main emphasis was given to foster international cooperation in wildland fire management, including emergency response. In the following documents cross-cutting issues and interrelationships to INSARAG are found:

3.2.1 Expert Meeting Report

The meeting report has been published in the pages of International Forest Fire News (IFFN) which is distributed by the ECE and also available on the GFMC website. The main body of the report (without Annexes) is included in the attached file:

Attachment 2-FAO Report March 2001 Meeting.htm

The INSARAG relationships are indicated in Para 36 (i). The full report with Annexes is available at:

http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/iffn_24/content.htm

3.2.2 Expert Meeting Follow-Up I

The follow-up activity further investigated the existing legal arrangements for international cooperation in wildland fire emergencies. See bottom of page 3 of the attached report which also elaborates on envisaged relationships to INSARAG:

Attachment 3-FAO-ITTO-Follow-Up.PDF

Note: Footnote 4 on that page has been written at a time when the process of the creation of a SAR Convention was not clear. This footnote is meanwhile obsolete due to the fact that the originally envisaged convention has been replaced now by the UN GA Resolution A/57/L.60 on Strengthening Effectiveness and coordination of international urban search and rescue assistance, dated 10 December 2002.

3.2.3 Expert Meeting Follow-Up II

Furthermore a document has been compiled by the FAO entitled "Legal Frameworks for Forest Fire Management: International Agreements and National Legislation" in which bilateral and multilateral emergency response agreements have been searched and documented in detail. For details see the attached document:

Attachment 4-Wildland Fire Assistance-Legal Framework.PDF

3.3 Preparation of the Global Wildland Fire Summit

The first Global Wildland Fire Summit is currently prepared in conjunction with the 3^d International Wildland Fire Conference to be held in Sydney, Australia, October 2003. The theme of the summit is *Fire Management and Sustainable Development: Strengthening international cooperation to reduce the negative impacts of wildfires on humanity and the*

global environment. The Summit will bring together policy makers and representatives from national and international agencies involved in wildland fire management, including emergency support. The summit will seek for a strategic solution to enhance international cooperation in wildland fire management, including the application of the UN General Assembly Resolution A/57/L.60 or a proposal for the development of a similar process that would lead to an international agreement applicable for wildland fires.

The GFMC is member of the International Liaison Committee in preparation of the conference and summit, and representing the interests of the INSARAG WG on Fire, Wildland Fire Subgroup. Conference / Summit preliminary website:

<http://www.wildlandfire03.com/program.asp>

3.5 The Regional Wildland Fire Networks

The year 2002 was a year in which the building of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks under the umbrella of the GFMC / ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network achieved most progress. The status of the networks can be seen at the GFMC website “Regional Wildland Fire Networks” at

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/globalNet.html>

or summarized in the attached document:

[Attachment 5-Regional Wildland Fire Networks-Status-11-Nov-2002.pdf](#)

Emphasis has been laid on capacity building in fire management in Subsahara Africa. The website of the *Regional Subsahara Wildland Fire Network* is at:

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/Africa/Afrifirenet.html>

It includes the newly established GFMC *Wildland Fire Training Center Africa* (WFTCA) which will offer courses starting in 2003, see:

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/Africa/WFTCA.htm>

4. Other Activities in 2002

4.1 Fire Emergency Response

In 2002 the GFMC and the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit, Emergency Services Branch, responded to one informal request from Viet Nam to assist in a large fire situation. The assessment conducted jointly by UNDP Hanoi, OCHA/UNEP and the GFMC concluded that there was no need for immediate international assistance. Recommendations were mainly directed towards medium- to long-term activities in the field of wildland (peat land) fire reduction. However, the mission revealed that capabilities are in place to conduct UNDAC-type of missions in the arena of wildland fires which could have expanded to an INSARAG-type of mission if on-site response by foreign fire experts would have been required.

For details on the Viet Nam situation in early 2002 see the OCHA Viet Nam Forest Fire Situation Reports No. 1-3 (OCHA/GVA-2002/0081, OCHA/GVA-2002/0088, OCHA/GVA-2002/0094, available on the ReliefWeb) and the attached full report (not edited):

[Attachment 6-Vietnam Fire Report-1.pdf](#)

The Subgroup Wildland Fire carefully observed the tri-laterally agreed fire emergency assistance agreement between the U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand, during the extreme wildland fire crisis in the U.S.A. in summer 2002. Following the first experience in 2000 Australia and New Zealand assisted the United States by dispatching fire experts to support Incident Command System personnel.

4.2 Fire Emergency Exercise

In May 2002 the NATO / Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) conducted jointly with the authorities of Croatia the wildland fire exercise "Taming the Dragon - Dalmatia 2002". The GFMC represented the INSARAG Wildland Fire Subgroup as observer. Active participants in the exercise included, among other, the WG Fire member of Austria (Vienna Fire Brigade). For details see:

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/programmes/nato/nato.htm>

5. Fire Working Group Meeting

The meeting of WG Fire is scheduled for 30 January 2003, at the GFMC (Freiburg, Germany), but not yet confirmed.

6. Conclusions and Outlook

For the time being, in December 2002, no conclusions on the future can be made on behalf of the WG on Fire with all of its three subgroups (Industrial Fire, Hazmat, Wildland Fire). However, speaking on behalf of the Wildland Fire Subgroup it can be stated at this stage that it is intended to continue the international cooperation that has been initiated in the late 1990s. The links to the ISDR and to the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit, Emergency Services Branch, have been proven successful in the arena of wildland fire disaster prevention and situation assessment.

The WG Fire meeting in January / February 2003 will come up with recommendations for building international wildland fire intervention capabilities *sensu* INSARAG response, regardless of its parent body.

GFMC, 27 December 2002

Johann G. Goldammer