



8TH
INTERNATIONAL
WILDLAND FIRE
CONFERENCE

GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES:
Towards an International
Framework
www.wildfire2023.pt

Porto-Portugal
May 16-19th
2023

8th International Wildland Fire Conference

Global Wildland Fire Network – Statement of the Western Africa Region – Regional Western Africa Fire Management Resource Center (RWAFCMRC)

16 May 2023

Introductory remarks

Wildfires continue to occur in most countries in West Africa and influence many aspects of the global environment such as the carbon cycle and atmospheric climate. For example, an estimated 46.2 Gg C was released from a burnt forest area in a forest reserve in Ghana in 2007. The continuous destruction of forest and savannahs due to recurrent wildfire will likely lead to a shift in their role as carbon sink to carbon sources. Continuous wildfires can also create conditions for more warming and potentially increase fires occurrence, which can affect the world's most vulnerable people particularly poor rural communities that depend upon natural resources and the land for their livelihoods. In West Africa, wildfires show a strong seasonal dependence; vegetation fires are usually more frequent during the dry season. Forecast of increases in temperature due to climate change coupled with increased variability in rainfall associated with the region is likely to cause wildfires that are difficult to control. Continued management actions are needed to manage wildfire in the face of climate change.

Specific landscape fire problems of the region

Lack of systems for forecasting fire occurrence in most countries in the sub region is a major challenge. There is weak preparedness for fire suppression toward annual fire season in most countries in the subregion. Interest in cross boundary cooperation in fire management is currently weak as coupled with weak structures for exchange of information, joint problem solving and sharing experience in fire management. There are also inadequate policies to facilitate mainstreaming of fire management in the natural resources and agricultural sectors in most countries.

Main advances achieved since the last International Wildland Fire Conference: Action taken between the 7th and 8th Conferences

In the period under reporting, the Regional Western Africa Fire Management Resource Center was established and is being hosted by the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR-FORIG). CSIR-FORIG has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) that coordinates the Global Wildland Fire Network to host the center for ten years. The center is currently being supported by Tropenbos-Ghana in terms of provision of office equipment such as laptops, printer, and a scanner.

The centers activities within the period have included consultation with expert in different sectors aimed at generating awareness and fostering cooperation among decision-makers of some agencies regarding the importance of fire management at landscape level. In addition, a pool of experts in different aspect of fire management in the sub region have been put together. The Centre's Head participated in panel discussion of FAO side event on the topic "*Working Together to Manage Fires for Climate and People*" at the conference *Fire Ecology Across Boundaries: Connecting Science and Management* held in Florence,



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Italy (4-7 October 2022). A concept note has been developed and further discussion are ongoing to submit a full proposal to a potential funding agency to fund the activities of the center.

The center is currently supporting Tropenbos Ghana in the implementation of their fire smart landscape project in selected regions of Ghana. The Center has also collaborated with the Land, Landscape and Development Research Lab (LLandDev) that host the Regional Fire Management Resource Center RFMRC-EA on “*Strengthening Fire Management Capacities in Madagascar at National and Regional Scales*” project. The specific activity carried out was the review of wildfire geoportal developed under the project (www.rfmrc-ea.org). The team at the center developed and piloted community fire management strategies to support forest landscape restoration project in Ghana. In addition, the team provided support for development of audience-specific education materials on fire prevention and training of community fire volunteers. The first regional meeting is scheduled to take place in the third quarter of 2023.

Conclusions and recommendations

Wildfires continue to be a problem in Western Africa despite the steps that have been taking in the past to reduce its occurrence. The following are recommendations to improve fire management across the subregion:

- Strengthen capacities in fire management and promote integrated fire management. In member countries
- Develop fire danger rating index for most communities in the subregion
- Establish geoportal to predict fire occurrence in the subregion
- Encourage policy on transboundary fire cooperation among the countries in the subregion
- Establishment of structures for integrated fire management at the community level