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Session I: Strengthening Disaster Risk Reduction and Management at all Levels
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Prof. Dr. Johann Georg Goldammer, Director, Global Fire Monitoring Center, Germany

Supporting the Implementation of OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 6/14 on Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction:
Enhancing National and Regional Capacities in Wildfire Disaster Risk Reduction

1. Introduction

In most OSCE Participating States wildfire regimes are changing and wildfire impacts increasing due to

- Land-use change – associated with rural exodus and abandonment of the rural space
- Consequently, reduced land cultivation resulting in increasing flammability of rural landscapes
- Weather extremes associated with regional climate change (increasing severity and duration of droughts)
- Increasing vulnerability of society to fires affecting rural and peri-urban settlements

The year 2017 – globally the hottest year on record – experienced unprecedented extreme fires through the OSCE Region and globally

- In Portugal 65 people trapped by wildfires and killed
- Canada and the Western United States experienced the worst fire season since the recent decades
- Extreme blow-up of wildfires in South Africa and Chile (January / February 2017)

2. Guiding Statement

Unlike the majority of the geological and hydro-meteorological hazards: Wildfires constitute a natural hazard which

- in most countries is primarily human-caused
- can be predicted
- can be prevented
- controlled, and
- in many cases, can be reduced by advanced methods of application of prescribed (management-set) fires

This is why measures of prevention and preparedness can be very effective and efficient in reducing the likelihood of occurrence, intensity (difficulty to control) and severity (degree of environmental impacts) of wildfires.

3. Factors and developments relevant in the run-up to the MC Decision No. 6/14

Specific observations in the first Decade of the 2000s

- Countries that traditionally had limited wildfire problems are subjected to increasing fire occurrence
- Transboundary impacts and sometimes extended large wildfires may temporarily exceed national control capabilities and have prompted countries to intensify cross-boundary cooperation in fire management
- Dangerous situations resulting from fires burning in areas of armed conflict and post-conflict situations: Threats by Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)
- Secondary threats by fires burning on radioactively and otherwise contaminated terrain

4. The OSCE experience relevant in the run-up to the MC Decision No. 6/14

OSCE through its implementing partner, the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), support to Participating States, e.g. in the frame of the ENVSEC project *Enhancing National Capacities on Fire Management and Wildfire Disaster Risk Reduction in the South Caucasus* (2009-2015)

- National fire management assessments
- Facilitation of national inter-agency dialogue and coordination in fire management

- Initiation and facilitation of developing National Fire Management Policies
- National and regional training / capacity building
- Development of a Regional Fire Early Warning System
- OSCE / ENVSEC supported the translation and application of the OSCE *EuroFire Competency Standards and Training Materials for Fire Management* (developed by the ENVSEC implementing partner Global Fire Monitoring Center – GFMC – funded by EU LEONARDO) from the English base version to several of the 14 languages for the use in 50 countries
- OSCE and GFMC organized joint regional training supporting a culture of transboundary cooperation (First and second International Fire Management Training Courses for the South Caucasus and Western Balkans – attended by 10 Countries, Turkey, 2010 and 2014)

MC Decision No. 6/14

Based on the experience 2009-2014 the MC Decision included item 6:

- Tasks the OSCE executive structures, in particular the OCEEA, within their available resources and mandates, to strengthen the exchange of knowledge and experience, building upon the OSCE's good practices in disaster risk reduction gained particularly in the field of water management, flood risk management, **and fire management**

With regards to *Exchange of Knowledge and Experience in Fire Management* the implementation of the MC Decision has successfully partnered and observed:

- Commitments made by the Global Wildland Fire Network and the GFMC operating under the UNISDR in contributing to the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030
- Enhancing wildfire preparedness globally and within the OSCE Region by exchange of knowledge and expertise through the voluntary *International Wildfire Preparedness Mechanism* (IWPM) (established in 2014)

Further implementation activities after 2014:

- Synergies with the Council of Europe's Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) through the GFMC as mandated Euro-Mediterranean Specialized Center
- EUR-OPA supported the establishment of the **Regional Eastern European Fire Monitoring Center** (REEFMC) as Eastern European Branch of GFMC in Kyiv (Ukraine) – the second regional branch after the foundation of the **Regional Fire Monitoring Center for SE Europe / Caucasus** in Skopje (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Further implementation activities after 2014:

- OSCE support (funded by Switzerland) for the establishment of the regional **Fire Management Resource Center – Central Asia Region** (FMRC-CAR) in Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) to support regional cooperation in cross-boundary fire management in the Eastern OSCE Region
- OSCE support (funded by Switzerland) for the development of a Regional Fire Danger Rating System for the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) – Jointly supported by the Canadian Forest Service (CFS) and the GFMC (2015-2016)
- OSCE (funded by Austria, Germany and Liechtenstein 2014 to 2017) supports enhancing cross-boundary fire management capacities on territories contaminated by radioactivity between Ukraine and Belarus by developing
 - Specialized fire management guidelines
 - Specialized fire management terminology
 - Joint EuroFire training standards in Ukrainian and Russian

Conclusions

Views of implementing partners of the OSCE in Wildfire Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

- For more than a decade the OSCE has been an enduring actor in addressing environmental, economic and security problems arising from wildfires
- The emphasis on development public policies addressing fire management planning, wildfire prevention and preparedness at national level and through cross-border cooperation is the appropriate approach in long-term wildfire DRR

- Multilateral trust and confidence in cross-border cooperation addressing wildfire DRR will continue to be key for effective synergies and thus for success
- The cooperation with existing and incoming new implementation partners having common long-term visions and strategies will increase the sustainability and efficiency of investments
- Close synergies with other regional and international organizations and frameworks, such as UNISDR and the Council of Europe's EUR-OPA agreement, will result in mutual benefits – and increase the credibility of investments opposite civil society, i.e. the taxpayers
- Through this collective endeavor the advancement of sustainable, integrated fire management in Participating States is contributing to the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* by addressing several *Sustainability Goals*, notably Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), Goal 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts) and Goal 15 (Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss).

The REEFMC and GFMC appreciate the opportunity working with the OSCE and will continue to be available to serve the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) for wildfire DRR, capacity building of institutions and outreach to the community of practitioners and civil society.

Short CVs

Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Johann Georg Goldammer is head of the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), which is operating as a contribution of Germany to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and the United Nations University (UNU). At Freiburg University he is serving as professor for fire ecology and fire management. He is also serving as coordinator the UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group and the Global Wildland Fire Network, which is an Implementing Partner of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. He is working closely with a number of specialized UN agencies and programs, such as the Joint UNEP-OCHA Joint Environment Unit, Emergency Services Branch. The GFMC is serving as a Euro-Mediterranean Specialized Center under the Council of Europe's Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA). The GFMC has cooperated with the OSCE since 2006 in building fire management capacities in the Eastern Europe, Southeast Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia in projects aimed at reducing the threat of wildfires to the natural and cultural landscapes as well as society in the Participating States. The GFMC is recipient of the *United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction* (2001).

Professor Dr. Sergiy V. Zibtsev is head of the Regional Eastern European Fire Monitoring Center (REEFMC) that was established in cooperation with the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire and financially supported by the Council of Europe. Prof. Zibtsev teaching silviculture and fire science at the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine (NULESU). The main focus of his long-term research is on fire ecology particularly in the radioactively contaminated Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. REEFMC is based at NULESU, Kyiv, as a center of excellence in wildland fire research and for regional fire information management and exchange, serving national agencies in Ukraine and neighboring Eastern European countries with data and information, capacity building (training) and advisory services for developing fire management policies, and enhancing local and national fire management capabilities. In 2013 Professor Zibtsev was awarded by the Green Cross International / UNEP / OCHA *Green Star Award for Excellence in Preventing to Environmental Emergencies* for his achievements in managing wildland fires in territories around Chernobyl contaminated by radionuclides.