



## Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

### Global Fire Management Hub

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Technical Workshop

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FAO Headquarters – Rome

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Colleagues,

I have the pleasure to represent the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

First, I would like to **express once again our thanks to FAO** for inviting us to the second technical workshop of the Global Fire Management Hub.

In the address of the OSCE to the first workshop in November 2023, we have underscored the **comprehensive approach of the OSCE to security** encompassing issues like climate change and disaster management.

In December 2014 in Basel, under the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of 57 OSCE participating States adopted by consensus the **Ministerial Council Decision on Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction**.

This Decision acknowledges that **disasters could be a potential additional contributor to conflict** and that **conflicts, poor governance, mismanagement and degradation of natural resources as well as migratory pressures can affect the vulnerability of society to disasters**.

It also emphasizes the importance of co-operation among participating States towards enhancing governance in disaster risk management, in order to diminish tensions as part of a broader effort to prevent conflict, to build mutual confidence and promote good neighborly relations. Let me mention here that we are currently developing a large programme on DRR across OSCE, particularly supporting pS address this MC Decision.

This Basel Ministerial Decision also includes a specific reference to **fire management** – an area in which the OSCE has been actively engaged since 2006 in close partnership with the **Global Fire Monitoring Center** and **Prof. Goldammer**.

These activities gained a new momentum following the adoption of the **OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on “Strengthening Co-operation to Address the Challenges Caused by Climate Change”** in December 2021 in Stockholm during the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship.

We are already supporting the implementation of this Decision. Our flagship project *“Strengthening responses to security risks from climate change in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia”* facilitates a **regional approach** to addressing climate-related security challenges – **a unique strength of the OSCE in this field.**

Since this Second Fire Hub Workshop is focusing on **“The operation of the Global Wildland Fire Regional Networks and Centers in connection with the Fire Hub”**, I would like to direct you attention to the related engagement of the OSCE in Central Asia, the South Caucasus and South-East Europe.

1) In most countries of Central Asia, the damages from wildfires, including their influence on human health and wellbeing, are increasing. The scale of wildfires sometimes has transboundary effects and demands international and cooperative efforts for the solution.

OSCE’s previous engagement and co-operation with the GFMC, includes our seed funding for the establishment of the Regional Fire Management Resource Center for Central Asia based in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

With the scientific-technical assistance of the GFMC and financial support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the OSCE and the Government of Mongolia inaugurated the Center in September 2015.

The OSCE and the Regional Center are currently exploring opportunities to continue our co-operation in strengthening regional and cross-regional co-operation on landscape fire management”.

2) In South-Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, the project is working closely together with the Regional Fire Monitoring Center for South-Eastern Europe and South Caucasus (RFMC) based in Skopje, North Macedonia. In December 2022, we jointly organized the cross-regional Workshop **“Wildfire Management for Enhancing Climate Resilience and Security”**, bringing together representatives of national authorities and practitioners responsible for fire management and climate change from South Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, Central Asia and Mongolia.

Since 2023, the OSCE in partnership with the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) and the Regional Fire Monitoring Center for South-Eastern Europe and South Caucasus (RFMC), has been implementing a **pilot initiative aiming to strengthen local capacities and foster co-operation in tackling wildfire risks in the shared hotspot of the Shar/Sara Mountains and Korab Massif area.**

As part of this initiative tailored trainings on fire preparedness and response were provided to personnel of park management authorities and the civil emergency response units of the municipalities in the four protected areas of Korab-Koritnik, Mavrovo, Shar Mountain and

Sharri/Šara. The training included field exercises on forest fire suppression in Mavrovo, North Macedonia. Following this practical exercise, representatives of the four protected areas were also trained on early warning systems for wildfire risk assessment and risk-informed decision-making.

3) Finally, in the **South Caucasus**, as a result of the bilateral consultation processes between Armenia and Georgia and between Azerbaijan and Georgia, wildfire management emerged as a common priority for transboundary co-operation to strengthen climate adaptation and resilience in two climate security hotspots (*Northern Armenia & Southern Georgia* and *North-west Azerbaijan & Eastern Georgia*). Relevant project activities are currently being developed in close co-operation with the GFMC and the relevant national and local stakeholders.

The OSCE thanks the GFMC and the regional centers for the excellent collaboration and their invaluable support in implementing joint project activities.

In summary, the OSCE will continue contributing to and benefitting from the work of the Global Fire Monitoring Center – and thus with the ambitious endeavor of **FAO and GFMC to set up the Fire Hub** as a one-stop international facility that will serve the international community towards developing and implementing informed landscape fire management policies.

Thank you very much once again to the organizers **for giving us the opportunity** to be with you (virtually!) in this workshop.

We are looking forward to **ensuring synergies and exploring new partnership areas** in addressing shared challenges not only to be better prepared and to create resilience for future shocks and crises, but also **to reinforce trust and strengthen security for us all**.

Thank you.