

OSCE-supported transboundary exercise for effective joint response to wildfires in Chernobyl- affected areas held in Gomel, Belarus

22 May 2018



Mapping exercise on wildfire management in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, Gomel, 18 May 2018. (OSCE/Evgeniy Maloletka)

A two-day discussion-based tabletop exercise on how to respond to a simulated wildfire in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone organized by the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, in close partnership with the Global Fire Monitoring Center, was held on 17 and 18 May 2018 in the city of Gomel in Belarus near the border with Ukraine.

The exercise brought together the authorities from Belarus and Ukraine responsible for emergency, forest and fire management, and management of the territories affected by the Chernobyl Nuclear Plant accident as well as border guard and

customs agencies.

Wildfires in the Chernobyl-affected areas are likely to become more frequent and intense as a result of climate change. Wildfires respect no borders and responding to them effectively requires joint action and transboundary co-operation.

“This joint exercise contributes to the implementation of management decisions, crisis management and the improvement of cross-border procedures in wildfire suppression in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone,” said Sergiy Dichkovsky, Head of the Gomel Oblast Department of the Emergency Situations Ministry of Belarus.

Sergiy Savinsky, Deputy Head of the Department of the Fire Rescue Organization of Ukraine’s State Service for Emergency Situations commended the initiative: “This exercise will strengthen co-operation between Belarus and Ukraine in jointly addressing wildfire management risks.”

Johan Goldammer, Head of the Global Fire Monitoring Center, underlined the importance of sharing experiences and best practices in wildfire management. “The Global Fire Monitoring Center and the Regional Eastern European Fire Monitoring Center are ready to offer their support for enhancing cross-border co-operation on wildfire management between Belarus and Ukraine,” he said.

“This event is an example of how the OSCE commitments related to disaster risk reduction are translated into action” said Hanna Plotnykova, National Project Officer in Ukraine.

The exercise was organized within the framework of the project *Improving Radiological and Environmental Awareness in Territories Affected by the Chernobyl Accident in Belarus and Ukraine with a Focus on Wildfire Management*, one of a set of projects the OSCE is conducting in co-operation with Belarus. It is funded by Austria, Germany and Liechtenstein.

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