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Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Consultation **Inje University, 4 February 2009**

Introduction

Between 2 and 4 February 2009 the Pan-Asia Forest Fire Consultation has been held in Busan and Inje University. The conference was sponsored by the Korean Forest Service and the Korean Forest Research Institute.

Participants from the four Regional Wildland Fire Networks operating under the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) gratefully acknowledged the kind invitation and sponsoring to attend the Consultation. Foreign national and regional representatives from Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, Russian Federation, and Thailand, as well as from the ASEAN Secretariat and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC).

While on the first day the pressing issues of the implications of climate changes and socio-economic developments on fire regimes in the Asian region were discussed, the second day provided a forum to present and discuss the status of wildfire incident management systems in the Asian countries, and a discussion about the need for developing internationally standardized and harmonized approaches in capacity building and transboundary cooperation in fire management.

The third day was devoted to discuss the development of closer ties for cooperation within the Asian region. After the reports from the four Regional Wildland fire Networks / ASEAN the participants of the consultation discussed the need to create a Pan-Asian Wildland Fire Network and to initiate a series of periodical Pan-Asia Wildland fire conferences in order to foster cooperation in fire management within the Asian region.

Minutes

Part 1 – Reports from the Regional Networks

North East Asia

Dr. Myung Bo Lee, Korean Forest Research Institute, Coordinator of the UNISDR North East Asia Regional Wildland Fire Network, reported the history and status of the network. Since the Foundation Meeting in 2004 in the Republic of Korea annual meeting have been held in all member countries (South Korea, Japan, Russian Federation, China) and associated countries (Central Asia: Mongolia,

The GFMC is serving as Secretariat of the UN-ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network and the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group – an advisory body to the United Nations affiliated to the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR) and Member of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.
The GFMC is an Associated Institute of the United Nations University (UNU).



Russian Federation). A number of publications reflect the fire situation in the region and the spirit of cooperation between the participating partners.

Southeast Asia / ASEAN

The representative of the ASEAN Secretariat, Ms. Riena Prasiddha, built on her previous presentation of the day before and highlighted the priorities of ASEAN Member States in addressing the fire and regional smoke-haze pollution problems. Under the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, which is meanwhile ratified by 8 of the 10 member states, five priority areas are being addressed: (a) Implementation of the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (2006-2020), (b) promotion of zero and controlled burning practices for industrial enterprises and smallholders respectively, (c) conduction of joint table-top / simulation exercises of management of large fire / smoke pollution disasters, (d) law enforcement and prosecution, and (e) promotion of the regional dialogue, including the international donor community.

South Asia

Mr. Sundar P. Sharma, Nepal, coordinator of the UNISDR South Asia Regional Wildland Fire Network, reported about the foundation meeting of the network in 2007 and the first pilot projects conducted in Nepal, with the support of the GFMC and the German Foreign Office. Priorities in fire management in the region is given on participatory approaches, i.e. Community-based Forest Fire Management. A national Round Table on Fire Management was conducted in Nepal. An ITTO-sponsored fire management project, implemented by the Government of Nepal and the GFMC, is currently underway (February – July 2009) to define a national and a regional action programme in fire management. He also underscored the importance of development of a policy, a strategy and building capacities in local, national and transboundary forest fire management in the countries in the region.

Central Asia

Dr. Leonid Kondrashov, Russian Federation, President of the Pacific Forest Forum (PFF) and coordinator of the UNISDR Central Asia Regional Wildland Fire Network, and a main partner of the North East Asia Regional Wildland Fire Network (note: due to its large geographic extent Russia is member of three Regional Wildland Fire Networks – Northeast Asia, Central Asia, and Baltic) elaborated on the history of the network, which was initially discussed at the UN-ECE/FAO Conference on Forest Fire Management and International Cooperation in Fire Emergencies in the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and Adjoining Regions of the Near East and Central Asia (Antalya, Turkey, 30 March - 3 April 2004) and endorsed by the ministers and heads of forest services of Central Asia at the Regional Central Asian Forest Congress "Forest Policy: Problems and Solutions" (Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 25-27 November 2004). Regional meetings were held in 2006 (Irkutsk, Russian Federation) and 2008 at the First International Central Asian Wildland Fire Joint Conference and Consultation "Wildland Fires in Natural Ecosystems of the Central Asian Region: Ecology and Management Implications", Associated with the First Central Asian Forest Fire Experiment, 2-6 June 2008, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Dr. Kondrashov highlighted the current problems of fire management in Central Asia and urged action to address the increasing wildfire problems in the region.

Overview of the Global Wildland Fire Network

The Director of GFMC and coordinator of the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network, Prof. Dr. Goldammer, gave an overview of the remaining nine Regional Wildland Fire Networks in the Americas, Africa, Australasia, and Europe / Eurasia. He highlighted some major problems encountered in some regions and explained on-line the GFMC global information portal, notably the web portal of the Global Wildland Fire Network. He explained in brief the role of the UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group, the last meeting at GFMC in 2008, and the objectives of the series of International Wildland Fire Conferences as a forum of the global network, the next to be held in South Africa, May 2008.

Part 2 – Initial proposal for fostering cooperation between the regional networks of Asia

This session of the consultation was devoted to discuss the development of closer ties for cooperation within the Asian region.

Dr. Gyoung Tae Hur, Director General of the Bureau of Forest Protection, KFS, and the representatives of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks, discussed the need to create a Pan-Asian Wildland Fire Network in order to foster cooperation in fire management within the Asian region.

In support of this proposal, Mr. Hyun Bok Lee, Director of the Division of Forest Fire, KFS, proposed to create the Pan-Asia wildland Fire Network in which the four regional networks, representing 21 countries of the region, would work together.

Furthermore he suggested to initiate a 4-yearly series of pan-Asian wildland fire conference, aimed at bringing together the countries of the region and the regional networks respectively. He suggested that the first conference be held in 2013 in the Republic of Korea.

Part 3 – Discussion of the initial proposal for fostering cooperation between the regional networks of Asia

There was an unanimous consensus of all participants to agree with the proposals for establishing a Pan-Asian Wildland Fire Network – a network of networks representing 21 countries in the region. The delegates of Nepal / S Asia (Mr. Sharma) and Indonesia (Prof. Bambang) expressed the full support of the proposal and the need to coordinate with the series of International Wildland Fire Conferences.

The representative of the ASEAN Secretariat said that she will positively report back to the ASEAN Senior Officials meeting in April 2009 and recommend to positively consider an active participation of ASEAN's member states in the proposed network and conference.

The representative from Thailand, Mr. Akaakara (Director, Forest Fire Control Division, National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department), underscored the necessity of regional cooperation in order to become more efficient. He suggested that conference intervals should be decided at the first regional conference in 2013.

The representative from the Central Asia Wildland Fire Network, Dr. Kondrashov (Russian Federation) supported the idea. He stressed the necessity of creating an Advisory Board to the Asia Network and the Conference. He also underscored that the Asia network and conference should work under the umbrella of the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network.

The representative from Mongolia, Col. Ganbaatar, confirmed the utility of the proposed arrangements, as was revealed by this consultation.

The representative of China, Prof. Shu Lifu, endorsed the proposal and the remarks of the previous speakers.

Challenged by the request for cooperation by Dr. Hur, Korea Forest Service, Dr. Myung Bo Lee, Director of the Division of Forest Fire, KFRI, assured the full support by the KFRI Division of Forest Fire.

Dr. Joon Hwan Shin, Director of the Forest Environment Department, KFRI, congratulated the participants of the consultation to reach consensus for the future cooperation in the region.

Conclusions and recommendations

The moderator and chair of the consultation, Prof. Goldammer, summarized the conclusions and recommendations by the Korean hosts and the representatives of the regions:

- The proposal of the foundation of the **Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network** has been endorsed unanimously
- The network shall operate under the auspices of the **UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network**
- The network should work as **a networking arrangement of the four Asian Regional Wildland Fire Networks**, thus an inter-regional cluster within the Global Wildland Fire Network
- ASEAN member states are encouraged to actively participate in the Asia network
- An **Asia Wildland Fire Network Advisory Board** shall be created in which each of the four regional networks should be represented, primarily by the regional chair and others to be determined
- Countries belonging to the four regional networks should nominate **focal points** to the Asia Wildland Fire Network
- It was endorsed that the **First Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Conference** be held in Republic of Korea in 2013 aimed at bringing the 4 networks and 21 countries of Asia together and foster international cooperation in fire management
- The future dates / sequences of follow-up conferences should be harmonized with the **International Wildland Fire Conferences**; and hosts to be determined.
- A **Regional Liaison Committee (RLC)** for the 2013 conference should be created, in which representatives from forest and / or fire management agencies, academia and NGOs from the 4 regional networks would participate and assist in the preparation and evaluation of the conference.