



**United Nations – Nations Unies**

---

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction – Stratégie internationale pour la prévention des catastrophes

## **WORKING GROUP 4 WILDLAND FIRE**

Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Freiburg, Germany

**WG-4 report presented to the  
Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction  
8<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
Geneva, 5-6 November 2003**

**Geneva-Freiburg, 23 October 2003**

### **Contents**

1. Short Report of the Chair
2. Annexes:
  - Communiqué of the International Wildland Fire Summit (8 October 2003)
  - Agreed Strategy of the International Wildland Fire Summit
  - Summit Opening Address by the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs

## **1. Short Report of the Chair**

### **Focus of Work in 2003: The International Wildland Fire Summit**

Main emphasis of the work of WG-4 and the GFMC in 2003 was the support of the preparation of and participation at the first International Wildland Fire Summit (8 October 2003, Sydney, Australia). An opening address by USG Jan Egeland set the stage for the Summit (see Annex). The Summit recognized the present role of the ISDR, the IATF and particularly the Working Group on Wildland Fire / GFMC. The Summit also recommended the UN to take over the lead in the follow-up process, notably through the Global Wildland Fire Network. Details of the Summit recommendations are included in the Annex (Communiqué and Strategy).

### **Working Group Membership and Meeting**

In 2003 the Working Group was joined by two new members. Following the invitation of the Director of the ISDR Secretariat the Secretariats of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Forum on Forest (UNFF) accepted membership in the Working Group and contributed directly and indirectly to the International Wildland Fire Summit. The Secretariats of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) which were also invited by the Director of the ISDR Secretariat discussed common issues with WG-4 at the Second Conference on Early Warning (EWC-II). After EWC-II the chair of WG-4 has initiated a follow-up. It is expected that both secretariats will join WG-4 soon.

The chair of the Working Group used the Summit to convene a side meeting on 5 October 2003. Besides Working Group members and the FAO Forest Fire Management Officer representatives of the following groups working under the auspices of the UN attended:

- UN ECE/FAO/ILO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire
- FAO North American Forestry Commission (NAFC), Fire Management Working Group
- FAO *Silva Mediterranea*

All groups that have overlapping membership agreed to continue cooperation. Strongest emphasis is given on enhancing the cooperation between the FAO and the GFMC / WG-4. There was an unanimous consensus within the members of Working Group 4 to urge the IATF to maintain an Advisory Group on Wildland Fire, even if Working Group 4 would be dissolved.

### **Early Warning Conference II**

WG-4 has supported the preparation of the Early Warning Conference II in the regional consultations and participated at the conference. A special paper on early warning of wildfire was prepared by an international group of experts. A special session on wildland fire was held at EWC-II.

### **Other Business**

In June 2003 consultations were held with the Government of Guatemala concerning cooperation between the *Mesoamerican Cooperation Regarding Protection against Forest Fires* and the GFMC. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Mesoamerican Permanent Technical Group on Forest Fires (Grupo Técnico Mesoamericano Permanente sobre Incendios Forestales), represented by Mr. Ronaldo Herrarte, President of the Coordinating Council of the Sistema Nacional de Prevención y Control de Incendios Forestales (SIPECIF), Guatemala, and Executive Coordinator of the Presidency of

Guatemala, and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), Working Group on Wildland Fire, represented by the Chair, Dr. Johann G. Goldammer, concerning Cooperation in the Global Wildland Fire Network through active participation of the Regional Mesoamerica Wildland Fire Network.

WG-4 also contributed to the Workshop on Multilateral Assistance Against Forest Fires in the Mediterranean Basin, Regional Mediterranean Wildland Fire Network (10-11 June 2003, Zaragoza, Spain).

The chair of WG-4 contributed to the establishment of the International Technical Committee for the Prevention and Extinction of Fire (CTIF) Commission on Forest Fires (Budapest, 18 September 2003). The commission will concentrate on capacity building for European fire brigades in the field of forest fire disaster prevention and control.

A very active cooperation between the FAO and GFMC / WG-4 during 2003 led to numerous coordinated efforts. Joint activities in the near future will include the organization of the *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 the *FAO/GFMC/ISDR Regional Sub-Sahara Workshop on Community-Based Fire Management* (Nelspruit, South Africa, October 2004).

Other activities in the frame of the Africa Outreach programme of GFMC / WG-4 include capacity building in wildland fire management<sup>1</sup> and the publication of the Wildland Fire Management Handbook for Sub-Sahara Africa.<sup>2</sup>

### **Conclusions for Discussion at the 8<sup>th</sup> IATF Meeting**

The Working Group suggests the IATF to support the further establishment and strengthening of the Global Wildland Fire Network as a key instrument to foster the international dialogue and efficient cooperation in the arena wildland fire. Given the inter-sectoral nature of wildland fire and the number of UN agencies and programmes involved, as well as other international organizations and civil society, it is suggested to maintain an advisory body for the UN within the IATF.

Freiburg-Geneva, 23 October 2003

---

<sup>1</sup> See GFMC-ISDR Wildland Fire Training Center Africa (WFTCA): <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/Africa/WFTCA.htm>

<sup>2</sup> The handbook has been financed through the contribution of the German Foreign Office to the IATF WG-4. The book is in press and will be available for users in Africa by end of 2003. Further details can be obtained from the GFMC.

# International Wildland Fire Summit

8 October 2003

## Summit Communiqué<sup>3</sup>

### Introduction

The Summit was convened following the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference to propose and agree on pragmatic and sustainable solutions to the human health, environmental, and economic consequences of unwanted wildland fires. Each person attending the Summit provided valuable experience and insight that contributed to developing synergistic solutions intended to strengthen international cooperation in order to reduce the negative impacts of wildland fires on humanity and the global environment. The Hon Tony Kelly, MLC, NSW Minister for Emergency Services hosted the Summit. The Hon Neville Wran QC, former Premier of NSW, chaired the Summit.

The drive to hold a Summit came from a widely held concern that more needed to be done to improve cooperation at an international level in the prevention and suppression of wildland fires. The overall goal of the Summit is in line with, and supported by, the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).

The Summit participants reviewed, and discussed four papers tabled to stimulate ideas, solutions, and strategies to improve communication and coordination between agencies and organizations, and to improve fire management practices for the sustainable use of natural resources and the safeguarding of food security. Adoption of the principles and outcomes provided in the papers will assist organizations attempting to build a coherent response in reducing the negative impacts of wildland fires on humanity and the global environment, while encouraging ecologically and socially beneficial fire use where this is appropriate.

### Participants

The Summit was for invited participants with a key interest in the outcome. Invitees were selected for their expertise in wildland fire management and their capacity to influence the implementation of the outcomes of the Summit within their own domestic jurisdiction. In all, 92 people accepted the invitation from 34 countries and 12 international organizations.

### Summit Outputs

The Summit participants discussed and agreed either in principle or in substance to a series of strategies that will build on the work of many groups, conferences and regional summits: (An agreement in principle means that the participants agree that the strategies have merit and will begin to discuss and/or implement the strategies either within their agency or work with local partners to implement the strategy in the region.)

1. An agreement that the **principles** presented in Summit Paper 1 should apply to international wildland fire management projects and exchanges when adapted to local ecological and social conditions.

---

<sup>3</sup> The communiqué was agreed at the Summit on 8 October 2003 and edited on 14 October 2003. This version has been edited by the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) for UN-ISDR and FAO. The original communiqué additionally includes (1) an executive summary, (2) a list of sponsors (funding support) of the Summit, (3) Summit programme, and (4) annexures with the lists of invited countries and international organizations, and a list of participants. For details see the two Summit websites at: <http://www.wildlandfire03.com/summit.asp> and <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/summit-2003/introduction.htm>.

2. An agreement that an ***international agreement template*** presented in Summit Paper 2 can be used by agencies wishing to form a cooperative or mutual aid arrangements with one or more other countries for.
3. An agreement that an ***Incident Command System (ICS)*** presented in Summit Paper 3 should become the international standard for all wildland incident management participating in international or interagency agreements and exchanges.
4. An agreement to a ***strategy for future development*** as presented in Summit Paper 4.

#### **Specific Actions by Summit participants:**

- ♦ Agreement with the concept that a series of regional conferences, summits, or roundtables will be held and lead into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Wildland Fire Summit no later than 2007, and the 4<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference and Exhibition in Spain in 2007.
- ♦ Agreement to work individually and collectively to secure resources and funding for hosting the regional sessions and implementing other Summit outputs. The regional summits will be hosted and supported financially by local agencies or organizations. The agenda and themes will be developed locally. The meetings can be held in conjunction with established conferences and meetings.
- ♦ Agreement that the Summit outcomes will be transmitted to the following organizations: The United Nations through the International Strategy For Disaster Reduction (ISDR); the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO).
- ♦ Agreement to request the assistance from the UN to lead the implementation of the outcomes of this strategy, including securing funding in support of the establishment of regional networks, conferences, and summits.

#### **Follow-up Action**

- ♦ Establish an interim secretariat to ensure that the Summit outcomes are taken forward.
- ♦ Paper # 1 to be further developed taking into account the comments of the Summit. Comments to be provided to the interim secretariat by 31 October 2003.
- ♦ Develop a Paper # 5 on Community-Based Fire Management by FAO by 31 December 2003.

#### **Other Issues and Business Carried Forward**

In addition to the actions noted above, a number of other issues were identified that require further attention, possibly at a future Summit.

These issues carried forward include:

1. The role of gender in fire management;
2. Fire danger rating and fire early warning systems
3. Linking Incident Command System with community-based fire management systems

## International Wildland Fire Summit Paper #4

# Strategy for Future Development of

## International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management

### AUTHORS:

**Denny Truesdale**, Assistant to the Deputy Chief, USDA Forest Service, USA

**Johann G. Goldammer**, The Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC)

### Introduction

The attendees of the Sydney Summit are searching for pragmatic and sustainable responses to the human health, environmental, and economic damage caused by unwanted wildland fires. Each country has valuable experience that will provide a contribution to developing synergistic solutions. Many countries and international agencies, especially those with well-developed wildland fire management systems or with resources to share, are in a position to assist others.

### Theme

The theme of the summit is: *Fire Management and Sustainable Development: Strengthening international cooperation to reduce the negative impacts of wildland fires on humanity and the global environment.*

### Objectives

The Summit participants will review, discuss, and recommend strategies to improve communication and coordination between agencies and organizations to build a coherent response in reducing the negative impacts of wildland fires on humanity and the global environment. The objectives of the Summit are:

1. Based on the international conventions, the state-of-the-art knowledge generated by the international science community and the recommendations of prior conferences on wildland fires as well as the outcomes of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), participants will develop strategies and organize resources to support and enhance the networks and information sharing between agencies and organizations.
2. Agree to develop and support implementation of appropriate mechanisms to improve global and regional communication and knowledge sharing on wildland fire management issues and solutions.
3. Agree to work regionally to implement key Summit outputs intended to facilitate the interagency cooperation and implementation of ecologically sound, community based wildland fire management programs.

## Intended Outputs

The Summit participants will discuss, recommend, and adopt as appropriate a series of strategies that will build on the work of many groups, conferences and regional summits and produce a series of actions building towards enhanced international cooperation in wildland fire management. These processes will pave the way towards a Global Wildland Fire Summit and the 4<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference.

The proposed Summit outputs are position papers. The papers will be discussed and finalized during the Summit with participants agreeing either in principle or in substance to the paper and to implementation within their agencies. The level of agreement will depend on the participants' ability to commit their agencies to policy. An agreement in principle will mean that the participants agree that the strategies have merit and will begin to discuss and implement the strategies either within their agency or work with local partners to implement the strategy in the region.

5. An agreement on the **principles** that would apply to international wildland fire management projects and exchanges. The principles would be used and applied to projects with participation or funding from international or interagency partners.

### *Specific actions for Summit participants:*

- ♦ Agreement in principle with the concept of adopting wildland fire management principles;
- ♦ Agreement to work individually and collectively to adapt and apply the principles to local and regional activities.

6. An agreement on an **international agreement template** that can be used by agencies wishing to form a cooperative or mutual aid arrangement with one or more other countries for mutual assistance and technology exchange on wildfire management. The template will build on the FAO report of May 2002, *Legal Framework for Forest Fire Management International Agreements and National Legislation*.

### *Specific actions for Summit participants:*

- ♦ Agreement on the concept that a common template for international wildland fire agreements is useful;
- ♦ Agreement to adapt the template to specific local and regional conditions when instituting new agreements.

7. An statement of support from Summit participants to adopt an **Incident Command System (ICS)** as the international standard for wildfire incident management for all agencies participating in international or interagency agreements and exchanges. The statement will include examples of agencies currently using ICS, and sources of technology, training, and technical assistance.

### *Specific actions for Summit participants:*

- ♦ Statement of support for adopting ICS as the international standard;
- ♦ Agreement to introduce ICS to their agencies and organizations and begin discussions with cooperating agencies for implementation.

8. An agreement to a **strategy for future development** of the issues and international responses to wildland fires, including commitments to a series of regional conferences,

an international wildland fire congress, and the 4<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference in 2007.

*Specific actions for Summit participants:*

- ♦ Agreement with the concept that a series of regional conferences, summits, or roundtables will lead to a Global Wildland Fire Summit (date to be determined);
- ♦ Agreement that the International Liaison Committee (ILC) of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference work with a local steering committee to prepare the 4<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference by active support through regional meetings and conferences;
- ♦ Agreement to work individually and collectively to secure resources and funding for hosting the regional sessions and implementing other Summit outputs.

## **Operational Procedures**

### *Global Wildland Fire Network*

The Regional Wildland Fire Networks will be consolidated, developed and promoted through active networking in information sharing, capacity building, preparation of bilateral and multilateral agreements, etc. This process will be facilitated through regional Wildland Fire Conferences and Summits in cooperation with the International Liaison Committee and the UN-ISDR Working Group on Wildland Fire.

### *International Liaison Committee*

The ILC will meet annually in 2004 and 2005 and biannually in 2006 and 2007. A portion of the agenda for each meeting will include preparation for the 4<sup>th</sup> Conference. In order to encourage the regional fire networks to actively work towards solutions to regional problems related to the Sydney Summit outcomes, the ILC will offer to hold meetings in the regions and devote a portion of the agenda to a Regional Summit with invited political, agency, and organizational representatives to discuss development of protocols and establishing networks for exchanging technical, scientific, and other information.

The regional summits will be hosted and supported financially by local agencies or organizations. The agenda and themes will be developed locally. The meetings can be held in conjunction with established conferences and meetings.

## **Background Information**

Background information for the Summit is provided on the website of the GFMC / Global Wildland Fire Network at:

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/RationaleandIntroduction.html>

and

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/summit-2003/introduction.htm>

## Annex 1

The outcomes of the Conference and Summit and the work of the ILC are built on a series of actions and the sustained work of many groups, both formally and informally to promote and advance fire management activities throughout the world. Without an appreciation of the work that has gone on prior to this effort, the wildland fire community runs the risk of expending energy on redundant activities, or worse, missing opportunities to build and leverage the valuable work of others.

One of the actions envisioned for the Summit participants is an agreement to develop an **organizational structure** for international liaison in wildland fire issues. This Conference follows the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> conferences sponsored by the North American Forestry Commission (NAFC) – Fire Management Working Group (FMWG). NAFC is one of several forestry commissions established over 35 years ago by FAO. The work of the FMWG is a good example of how established organizations combined with the individual, or ad hoc, efforts have resulted in international agreements, bi-lateral programs among the member agencies, and, most notably, the three international conferences. With the success of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference and Summit as a benchmark, the ILC and the conference organizers envision an organizational structure that builds on the strengths of both the established organizations, and the creative energy of the ILC.

Examples of the established mechanisms include the United Nations programs and conventions, non-UN international organizations and programmes, the civil society, and the Global Fire Monitoring Centre (GFMC). Examples of individual or ad hoc efforts are the work of the ILC at international and regional levels and some of the individual and collective fire networks being established by the ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network.

Below is a summary of some of the major programs and activities that can be the building blocks for future activities within the wildland fire community. It is suggested that Summit participants become familiar with the work of these groups and use them to leverage ongoing and future activities.

- ♦ The Global Wildland Fire Network under the auspices of the UN-International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, Inter-Agency Task Force, and the GFMC;
- ♦ The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), through the Emergency Services Branch, Environmental Emergencies Section (EES), in coordination of international assistance in case of wildland fire disasters;
- ♦ The Type II Partnership "Integrated Approach to Prevention for and Response to Environmental Emergencies in Support of Sustainable Development" coordinated by UN-OCHA;
- ♦ The Global Forest Fire Assessment 2005 within the frame of the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2005 supported by the FAO, the GFMC, and the Global Observation of Forest Cover/Global Observation of Landcover Dynamics (GOFC/GOLD) - a project of the Global Terrestrial Observing System [GTOS] programme, sponsored by the Integrated Global Observing Strategy [IGOS].

The ILC envisions several future activities that will lead up to the 4<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference and Summit in 2007. These activities will build on the actions of the established groups and programs and will continue the work of the ILC, the FMWG, and the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) the organizers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference and Summit in Sydney. The ILC, and its partners, will work to gain widespread support and involvement to build global support and participation in the 4<sup>th</sup> Conference. Some key activities include:

- ♦ A post-Summit activity to prepare an input paper to the UN General Assembly that seeks the support of countries to strengthen international cooperation in response to wildland fire disasters and post fire mitigation;
- ♦ Additional support for the ILC organizational structure from individual agencies and international organizations and programs;
- ♦ Participation with FAO, GFMC and GOFCC-GOLD in support of the Global Forest Fire Assessment 2005;
- ♦ Recruit additional agencies and international organizations and programs to fund and staff the Global Wildland Fire Network and the ILC;
- ♦ Preparation for the follow-up Global Wildland Fire Summit.

**Global Wildland Fire Summit  
Sydney, 3-6 October 2003  
Opening Address by Jan Egeland,  
UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs**

**(Delivered by Juan Carlos Brandt, Director UNIC Sydney)**

**Wildland Fires – a Growing Environmental, Economic, and Humanitarian Problem**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would have very much wished to be with you today as the subject is of crucial importance to our work. Unfortunately, previous commitments have prevented me from being here in person.

We need few reminders of the terrible damage that outbreaks of vegetation fires can cause. In the Australian summer of 2002-3, one of the worst fires in the country's history occurred in Canberra, causing widespread destruction to literally hundreds of homes. This year fires of equal scale and ferocity also broke out across the European and North American continents in the course of a northern hemisphere summer heatwave.

The incidence of extreme wildfire events is increasing throughout the world, with adverse impacts on economies, livelihoods, and human health and safety that are comparable to those associated with other natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, droughts and volcanic eruptions. Many fires are the result of communities' increasing vulnerability due to growing populations, economic and land-use pressures.

Fortunately, the international community has made great strides over the past decade and has shown itself both willing and able to engage international cooperation to reduce the negative impacts of wildland fires. To cite a few of our achievements to date:

- Wildland fire science and new technologies, particularly space-borne remote sensing systems, have contributed significantly to a better understanding of the impact of wildland fire on humanity, ecosystems and the functioning of the planetary system.
- Many countries have signed bilateral agreements signalling their willingness to cooperate on wildland fire management along common borders and to provide mutual assistance in the large fire emergencies that occur. Similarly, we have seen a significant increase of technical and scientific cooperation projects.
- The capacity of developing countries to handle the sustainable management of vegetation resources, including fire management is being strengthened, and rural populations in countries are increasingly involved in community-based fire management projects.

Many of you will already know that the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) has a Working Group on Wildland Fire, which reports to the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction. One of the principal functions of this Working Group is to advise the UN system on all matters related to the reduction of the negative impacts of wildland fire on human societies and the global environment, as well as foster inter-sectoral cooperation within and among the UN, international partners and civil society.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In the course of your discussions at this Summit you will have occasion to touch on the issue of *reducing risk and vulnerability* to wildland fires, and seek to identify appropriate mechanisms to improve global communication and knowledge sharing on wildland fire management. You will also be called on to commit yourselves, in principle, to take all necessary steps to manage wildland fuels and fires and to adhere to a five-year global plan of action which we hope will result in positive outcomes in the reduction of the damage caused by wildland fires.

Your discussions will contribute to the current review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World that was adopted in 1994 at the First World Conference on Disaster Reduction. At the Conference, concrete actions on disaster preparedness, mitigation and prevention were outlined at the international, regional, national and local scale. The ISDR Secretariat has since been requested by the UN General Assembly to review the implementation of Yokohama Strategy, identifying good practices, remaining gaps, emerging issues, and calling for global action in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Governments, practitioners, civil society, UN and international organisations are invited to participate in the review process through their involvement in meetings such as this Summit. An opportunity to increase political and financial commitment for disaster risk reduction will take place at the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction – to be tentatively held in Kobe and hosted by the Hyogo Prefecture in January 2005 – where the results of the review and a Programme for Action for the period 2005-2015 will be presented, and endorsed.

Lastly, as today is the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, the day we celebrate the UN International Day for Disaster Reduction, let me quote from UN Secretary-General's Kofi Annan's message to commemorate the Day:

“Natural hazards are a part of life. But hazards only become disasters when people's lives and livelihoods are swept away. The vulnerability of communities is growing due to human activities that lead to increased poverty, greater urban density, environmental degradation and climate change.”

“On the International Day for Disaster Reduction, let us remind ourselves that we can and must reduce the number and impact of disasters by building sustainable communities that have the long-term capacity to live with risk.”

Ladies and gentlemen, with these words, I wish you every success in your deliberations.

Thank you.