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## ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY COMMISSION

### TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

Rotorua, New Zealand, 5-8 November 2013

#### SHAPING THE FAO FIRE MANAGEMENT UMBRELLA PROGRAMME, MANAGING WILDFIRE-RELATED RISKS AT THE LANDSCAPE LEVEL, AND IMPROVING INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

#### Secretariat Note

### Introduction

1. FAO's Fire Management Programme reflects an integrated approach which deals with vegetation fires throughout all land uses. This note gives an overview of relevant developments and actions taken by FAO and its partners in implementing previous recommendations by the Asia-Pacific Forest Commission, other regional forestry commissions and the Committee on Forestry (COFO). The note concludes with some suggestions for discussion and consideration by the Commission in order to strengthen the programme.

### Follow up to recommendations of the Twenty-fourth session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission and activities in the region related to the FAO Fire Management Programme

2. The Commission recommended discussing a paper on 'Integrating the Management of Wildfire-related Risks in Rural Land and Forest Management Legislation and Policies' tabled by the delegations from Australia and New Zealand, at the next COFO session, as well as the proposal of a multidonor trust fund proposal. See paragraphs 5 and 10 of this paper.

3. Since the last Commission Session, FAO has implemented a fire management project in Kalimantan, Indonesia, funded by the Government of Norway; it is designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by substituting alternative land management practices that use fire on or near peatlands, and to prevent wildfires in community-owned rubber plantations.

4. As part of the International Liaison Committee, FAO is strongly involved in the preparation of the next International Wildland Fire Conference, to be held in 2015 in the Republic of Korea (<http://www.wildfire2015.kr>). As with the previous Conference held in 2011 in South Africa, FAO will again explore options for a programme that reflects integrated fire management, including community-based fire management approaches.

### Follow up to recommendations of the Twenty-first session of the Committee on Forestry, of other regional forestry commissions and FAO fire management activities

5. COFO requested FAO to strengthen the FAO Fire Management Programme by actively seeking financial support for the multidonor trust fund proposal, now called the 'Smart Fire' Umbrella Programme. This programme will be included in the new FAO Strategic Objective 5 (SO5): *Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises*, and to a lesser extent in Strategic Objective 2 (SO2): *Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner*. As such, it will be part of the efforts of both the Forestry Department and of the Strategic Objectives' teams to promote its implementation, including resource mobilization. Support to fire management at the country level was requested at the last sessions of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission (2012), of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (2012), at the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (2013) and also at the FAO conference held in June 2013. However, resources from inside the organization or from member countries have not yet been identified.

6. The requested attention for fire management can only be realized through additional allocation of resources. The new GEF-6 cycle, which will start in June 2014, has included Disaster Risk Reduction and Fire Management as areas of work. Preparatory work has started to come up with suitable project proposals and FAO is planning to initiate discussions with potentially interested countries and regions. In order to strengthen the programme, partner countries may wish to manifest their interest and provide support for implementation of the programme.

7. At headquarters level, human resources related to fire management are now partly assigned to the development of the new FAO Strategic Objective 5: *Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises*. This is considered to benefit the future implementation of the FAO Forestry Programme, especially in reducing negative effects of emergencies and disasters on forests, trees and the forestry sector, but also where forests and trees can help to prevent or mitigate emergencies and disasters.

8. COFO also requested FAO to propose a coordination mechanism between various UN agencies and programmes working on topics related to fire management by making full use of its comparative advantages and avoiding duplication with the work of other agencies and institutions such as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and the Global Fire Monitoring Centre (GFMC). In implementing this decision, discussions have started with UNISDR and more progress and tangible results, such as a coordination meeting of UN agencies, are expected in 2014.

9. COFO had recognized forest fires as a major source of greenhouse gases and called upon countries to include forest fire management in their programmes for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD). The project in Kalimantan (paragraph 2), aimed at preventing wildfires and using alternatives to the use of fire in land management, responds to this call. A greater focus on alternatives for using fire in agriculture was also a recommendation of the previous International Wildland Fire Conference in 2011. The Smart Fire Umbrella Programme also includes one component on fire management and climate change. The recently published *Climate change guidelines for forest managers* (FAO Forestry Paper 172) includes recommended adaptation actions and mitigation strategies for forest managers related to expected increase in the number, frequency, size or severity of wildfires.

10. Finally, based on the *Fire management voluntary guidelines*, COFO requested FAO to develop, in partnership with other relevant institutions, a set of international guidance tools for managing wildfire-related risks at the landscape level, including transboundary fire issues. Taking into account other ongoing activities, two initial themes were selected to implement this decision. One is the development of *Community-based fire management guidelines for district officers and NGOs*. A preparatory meeting to develop these guidelines was convened with global experts at the end of 2012 to define the outline and focus of such a tool. A similar regional meeting took place in Arusha, Tanzania. The guidelines are planned to be ready and launched at the International Wildland Fire Conference in 2015. They will be based on successful field experiences and be prepared with support from experts from all

regions of the world who will also contribute to the review process. The second theme, climate change and fire management, was included in the recently published *Climate change guidelines for forest managers* (FAO Forestry Paper 172, see paragraph 6). However, more specific guidelines may be needed in the future.

#### *Requests from other regions*

11. FAO was requested by the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission to update regional statistics on wildfires. The next Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015 will include trends of fire incidence and areas burned over the last 12 years as measured from satellite data. This analysis will provide information on the total area burned and on forest area burned. Data will be made available to countries for revision as part of the FRA 2015 reporting process.

12. FAO was invited to participate in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Forestry Stakeholder Workshop in South Africa (2013), organized by the SADC Secretariat with support from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The workshop developed recommendations for JICA to support the SADC Forestry Strategy as well as the SADC Fire Management and REDD+ programmes. During this meeting, FAO was asked by the SADC Secretariat to help implement the Community-based Fire Management component of the SADC Fire Management Programme, developed in 2010 in Maputo, Mozambique. This would fit very well under the new 'Smart Fire' Umbrella Programme, and FAO is waiting for the official request from the SADC Secretariat.

#### *Projects*

13. Since the last session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission, fire management projects or components were concluded in Syria, Tanzania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

14. Fire management projects or components of projects implemented by FAO or with FAO involvement are ongoing in Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, Swaziland, Tunisia and the Fouta Djallon region in West Africa.

15. Projects or project components on fire management are in the pipeline for Algeria, the Fouta Djallon Basin, the Gambia and Zimbabwe.

#### *Upcoming event*

16. A UNECE/FAO Regional Forum on cross-boundary fire management is planned for November 2013 and is expected to elaborate recommendations for member countries of the European region and the Council of Europe to develop an agreement on international cooperation to enhance fire management capabilities. The forum will take advantage of recent insights and solutions of contemporary and expected future wildfire problems in the region, notably in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Inputs from UNECE member states and other regions from outside the UNECE will provide expertise in developing formal and informal bilateral and multilateral agreements on transboundary cooperation in fire management.

#### **Points for discussion**

17. Forest and other vegetation fires continue to be a severe concern. It can be anticipated that climate change will increase the intensity and frequency of wildfires. Increasing vegetation fires will contribute to more greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere. Individual country requests for FAO support and recommendations from the regional forestry commissions, COFO and the FAO Conference to strengthen the FAO fire management programme – through, for instance, implementing the 'Smart Fire' Umbrella Programme, establishing a fire management UN coordination mechanism,

developing new guidelines – call for an increase of resources from within the organization and/or from member countries. Human and financial resources for fire management, however, are limited and decreasing. The Commission may wish to:

- Discuss the increasing risk of uncontrolled wildfires in the region and suggest measures to counter this development, for example through increasing intraregional cooperation as well as the establishment of a close linkage between fire management and climate change-related initiatives;
- Discuss ways and opportunities to include fire management in a broader landscape approach;
- Recommend member countries to support the FAO ‘Smart Fire’ Umbrella Programme with allocation of resources devoted to:
  - field projects in developing countries;
  - normative global work.
- Mandate FAO with identifying more and additional financial and human resources to implement the ‘Smart Fire’ Umbrella Programme; and
- Propose that investments in REDD+ and other climate change-related initiatives may include a component on fire.

18. The Commission may wish to make recommendations for the organization and programming of the International Wildland Fire Conference in 2015 in the Republic of Korea ([www.wildfire2015.kr](http://www.wildfire2015.kr)).