

Safeguarding Sustainable Forest Management in the UNECE Region through International Cooperation in Fire Management (UNECE Forests 2013-1)

Project Duration: 01 February 2013 to 31 July 2014

Second Project Progress Report Covering all Activities Implemented by the UNECE and its Subcontractor, the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC)

01 February to 31 December 2013

Submission Date: 28 December 2013

1. Introductory Remarks: Objectives, Activities and Deliverables

This Second Progress Report follows the First Progress Report of 21 August 2013. Some remarks are repeated for easy reference.

The objectives and expected outcomes of the project are summarized in the "Project Activities and Deliverables" as laid down in Annex I of the Arrangement signed between UNECE and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, are quoted as follows:

Activities:

1. Study (analysis) of the contemporary and expected future forest fire problems in the UNECE region that are newly arising from changes in land use, socio-economical conditions and climate and which are threatening sustainable forest management and functioning of natural and cultural landscapes.
2. Development of policy recommendations for fire management in the UNECE region to be summarized in a "White Paper on the State of Wildfires and Fire Management in Forests and other Vegetation Resources in the UNECE Region".
3. Development of draft specific guidelines for international cooperation in fire management (guidelines for international cooperation in aerial and ground based forest fire fighting in large fire emergency situations, e.g. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) or guidelines, Rules of Engagement, fire management terminology).
4. Preparation and organization of a UNECE/FAO Regional Forum on Cross-boundary Fire Management (2013) aimed at drafting a proposal for the development of a voluntary or legal protocol on cross-boundary cooperation in forest fire management.

Deliverables:

1. "White Paper on the State of Wildfires and Fire Management in Forests and other Vegetation Resources in the UNECE Region" (summary of the analysis conducted before the Forum, and the recommendations for action as agreed upon by the Forum).
2. Draft SOPs or guidelines for international cooperation in fire management (ground, aerial).
3. Resolution of the *UNECE/FAO Regional Forum on Cross-boundary Fire Management (2013)* on a proposal for a voluntary or legal protocol on cross-boundary cooperation in fire management.

2. Update of Rescheduling and Budget of Project Activities

The Arrangement between UNECE and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany was prepared in late 2012 / early 2013 and signed in Geneva on 03 March 2013. It was originally envisaged to start the project on 01 February 2013. The first disbursement of the project funds were transferred to UNECE on 04 April 2013. In the following weeks, the administration of UNECE initiated the preparation of a grant agreement with the Max Planck Society for the Advancement of Sciences (represented by the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry) (MPG/MPICCh). To that effect and to comply with UNECE requirements, MPG/MPICCh had to provide a number of certificates on its institutional and financial status to satisfy the eligibility criteria of a grantee. While this caused a delay in finalization and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (Grant Agreement) between UNECE and MPICCh on 17 July 2013, setting the official start of project activities on 01 August 2013, the implementation of the project was realized swiftly.

Notes (updated):

1. The budget calculations (or the amount available for spending) for calendar year 2013 (Phases I and II) did not consider that UNECE administrative rules require that 15% of the budget had to be withheld as Operating Reserve (15% of each disbursement) and thus could not be spent. However, together with savings of the travel cost budget, the availability of the Operating Reserve, together with the regular funding of Phase III, will provide a potential budget for 2014, which may take into consideration the results and recommendations of Phases I and II.
2. Accurate accounting is somewhat hampered by the fluctuating conversion rate from Euro to \$US (from BMELV Bonn to UNECE) and the conversion rate from \$US back to Euro from UNECE to the end-recipient GFMC (Max Planck Society).

Project Phases

According to the signed Arrangement, funds available to the project are up to € 268,787.45 and are split in three implementation and disbursement phases:

- Phase I: February to June 2013 (first disbursement of € 110,000.00)
- Phase II: July to December 2013 (second disbursement of up to € 110,875.45)
- Phase III: January to July 2014 (third disbursement of up to € 47,912.00)

Internal Administrative Project Phases agreed between UNECE and the Grantee (MPICH / GFMC)

UNECE is not in the position to sign an MoU for the allocation of a grant to MPICH for the whole calendar year 2013 or for the whole project duration period because its financial rules and procedures do not permit to enter in an agreement for a grant which amount is exceeding the funds received. Therefore, and in this case, UNECE could only enter in three successive MoUs corresponding to the first, second and third installments made by the Federal Republic of Germany. Considering the fact that the start of the Grant Agreement period between UNECE and MPICH was 1 August to 31 October 2013, it was required to highly concentrate work progress within these first three months to catch up with a 6-months delay of project implementation.

According to the Arrangement signed between UNECE and the Federal Republic of Germany half yearly financial reports and supporting documentation would be submitted by UNECE to the Donor/Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMELV), together with the request for the release of the next disbursement from Germany to UNECE. Only then UNECE could prepare the next MoU between UNECE and MPICH.

Since the first reporting period ended on 31 October 2013, this procedure would not have allowed a continuous, non-interrupted contract between UNECE and MPICH, and also not allow receiving the timely disbursement needed for the operational costs of the Forum itself which was finally scheduled for 27 to 29 November 2013. Considering this situation, BMELV kindly agreed, upon request by the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, to exceptionally release the second disbursement upon receipt of an updated Finance Plan in which expected expenditures until end of October 2013 and the required funds that were absolutely necessary for the preparation and implementation of the Forum for the period from 1 November to 31 December 2013 would be provided. This Finance Plan was submitted to BMELV and GIZ together with the first Progress Report. On that basis BMELV released the second disbursement of € 110,875.45.

3. Project Progress between August and December 2013

In addition to the activities reported in the first progress report of 21 August 2013, the following activities have been accomplished by GFMC and the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section:

3.1 Activities of GFMC

September 2013

- Continuation of drafting the regional study (Project Activity 1).
- Start drafting policy recommendations (White Paper) (Project Activity 2).
- Consolidation of inputs of consultants aerial and ground group in preparation of guidelines or recommendations (Project Activity 3).
- Cooperation with UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section in the preparation and sending out invitations for the Forum (Project Activity 4):
 - Draft an invitation letter to be sent to UNECE Member States.
 - Compile a list of addresses of other entities from UNECE Region to be invited (e.g. those in the Team of Specialists (ToS) who are not representing a UNECE government / state).
 - Compile a list of addresses of other regional entities or regional main actors to be invited as participants from outside the UNECE Region and draft targeted invitation letters to be sent to those entities.
- Finalization of draft policy recommendations (White Paper) (Project Activity 2).
- Circulation of the questionnaire to the invited UNECE Member States (in reply to the UNECE invitation) (Project Report 5) (**Attachment 5**).
- Coordination with FAO (visit of Head of GFMC and Deputy Chief of UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section at FAO Headquarters in Rome, 26 September 2013).

October 2013

- Finalization of draft regional study including supporting materials (Project Activity 1) (Project Reports 1 and 4) (**Attachments 1 and 4**).
- Finalize draft policy recommendations (White Paper) (Project Activity 2) (Project Report 6) (**Attachment 6**).
- Finalization of the recommendations of the International Fire Aviation Working Group (IFAWG), with the proposal recommending the adoption of Voluntary Guidelines for Fire Aviation, with final drafts of Parts I and II of the Guidelines (Project Activity 3) (Project Report 3 with two separate Annexes) (**Attachment 3**).
- Finalization of the recommendations of the International Working Group on Cooperation in Wildfire Preparedness and Response (IWG-CWPR), with the proposal „Building Resilience of Nations and Communities within the UNECE Region to Wildfire Emergencies and Disasters“ (Project Activity 3) (Project Report 2) (**Attachment 2**).
- Cooperation with UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section in following-up invitations for the Forum (Project Activity 4).

November 2013

- Evaluation of responses of UNECE Member States to the previously circulated questionnaire.
- Dissemination of Reports 1-5 and 6 to the registered participants of the Forum, accompanied with an explanatory letter (**Attachment 7**).
- Organization of a Round Table in the frame of the “International Congress on Forest Fire and Climate Change: Challenges for Fire Management in Natural and Cultural Landscapes of Eurasia” (organized by GFMC in Novosibirsk, Russian Federation, 12-13 November 2013), with the aim to prepare scientific- technical and policy recommendations to the Forum¹.
- Organization of the meeting of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire preceding the Forum (Geneva, 27 November 2013).
- Organization of the Forum (Geneva, 28-29 November 2013).

December 2013

- Immediate evaluation of Forum outcomes for reporting back to UNECE.

¹ The Novosibirsk Congress website (<http://www.fire-uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/BalticRegion/NovosibirskCongress.html>) provides the text of the „Novosibirsk 10-Point Recommendations“: <http://www.fire-uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/BalticRegion/Novosibirsk-Fire-Climate-Socio-Economic-Congress-2013-Recommendations.pdf> (English version starting on page 7)

- Report back to the Joint session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission in the frame of Metsä2013 (Rovaniemi, Finland, 9-13 December 2013)².
- Organization of a side event at the Rovaniemi joint meetings, entitled "Achievements of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire (1981-2013)" (10 December 2013).
- Submit Second Progress Report and Finance Report to UNECE and BMELV / GIZ (this report)
- Preparation of Phase III of the project.

3.2 Activities of the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section

September 2013

- Send out invitations for the Forum (Project Activity 4).
- Contract an Administrative Assistant responsible for all logistics of the Forum including official invitation writing and preparation of travel arrangements for eligible country representatives.
- Upon the transfer of the second disbursement, initiate preparation of the Second Grant Agreement (MoU) with MPICCh/GFMC for the period November-December 2013.
- Coordination with FAO (visit of FAO in Rome, with GFMC).

October 2013

- Follow-up invitations for the Forum and complete travel arrangements of funded participants
- Finalization and signing of Second Grant Agreement (MoU) with MPICCh/GFMC for the period November-December 2013.
- Submit all draft material reports and a financial report to UNECE Executive Office.

November 2013

- Organization of the meeting of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire preceding the Forum and the Forum.
- Provision of the venue and of all logistical arrangements.

December 2013

- Report back to the Joint session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission in the frame of Metsä2013 (Rovaniemi, Finland, 9-13 December 2013)
- Submission of Second Progress Report and Finance Report to UNECE and BMELV / GIZ (this report) and preparation of Phase III of the project.

3.3 Financial Report: Status of Project Budget by end of Phase II

In an Annex to this report the expenditures by end of Phases I and II are summarized and re-budgeting for Phase III proposed (**Attachment 8**).

The Financial Report reflects some problems of the conversion of disbursements from Euro to \$US (disbursements from Germany to UNECE account), and further the conversion from \$US to Euro in the disbursements from UNECE to the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry / GFMC. Fluctuating exchange rates make the reconstruction of expenditures in the Financial Report imprecise. However, the uncertainties of summarized costs due to exchange rate fluctuations may be in the magnitude of several hundred Euros only and should be considered acceptable.

The expenditures for Phases I and II are summarized by budget lines (Column 4 of the Annex):

Budget Line 1 (Personnel)

The budget was utilized 100% (with a modest overspending of € 719).

Budget Line 2 (Consultant Contracts)

² The report of the joint session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission is available, among other, on the website of the ToS Forest Fire: <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/intro/Report-Metsa-2013-ECE-TIM-2013-2-FO-EFC-2013-2.pdf>

During Phase I of the project it could be foreseen that the “Aerial Group” went ahead with its work before the Project start at the Max Planck Institute (which was 1 August 2013). In this period the consultants were supported by the National Aerial Firefighting Centre, Australia. The “Aerial Group” suggested to save funding for the follow-up work in 2014 to finalize the Aerial guidelines.

Around € 3,400 from the budget for the Aerial Guidelines were used for the International Working Group on Cooperation in Wildfire Preparedness and Response (IWG-CWPR), which developed the proposal „Building Resilience of Nations and Communities within the UNECE Region to Wildfire Emergencies and Disasters“.

Out of the total savings of consultant contracts (€ 10,400) it is proposed to utilize this amount for consultancies or salaries in 2014.

Budget Line 3 (Travel)

Rather high underspending / savings were in the travel budget. First, cost for GFMC travels and meetings (Budget Line 3.1) before the onset of Grant Phase I (1 August 2013) were not eligible for reimbursement according to UNECE rules. This explains savings of more than € 8,500.

Major savings were possible in the travel budget for Forum participants eligible i.a.w. the DAC List of ODA Recipients (Budget Line 3.3). This was due to very economic booking of flights by the Administrative Assistant and the UNOG Travel Unit (AMEX) at an early stage and the financial support of all travel costs of the participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia by the OSCE. High savings by early booking of intercontinental flights of attendees from other regions could be achieved. On the other side several applications for travel support by representatives from UNECE Member States, which were not eligible i.a.w. the DAC list, could not be met.

This explains the extraordinary savings of ca. € 32,000 in the travel budget.

These savings are rather welcome i.a.w. the recommendations of the Forum, which requires substantial follow-up work including travel (cf. item 4.5).

4. Report of the Forum

4.1 Agenda

The Forum was implemented as planned (Final Agenda - **Attachment 9**). It started with a preparatory session of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire (Wednesday, 27 October 2013).

4.2 Attendance

The Forum was attended by 50 participants from the following countries / organizations (cf. complete list of participants in **Attachment 10**):

- 26 participants from 22 UNECE member states
- 8 participants from 4 countries outside UNECE (Africa, South America, Central America, South Asia and Northeast Asia)
- 4 participants from 4 multilateral / international organizations (ASEAN, SADC, OSCE, CoE)
- 4 participants from 4 international and national development organizations and NGOs
- 8 participants from 5 UN specialized agencies, programmes and secretariats (UNECE, UNFAO, UNOCHA/UNEP, UNECE LRTAP Convention Secretariat)

4.3 Statements and Reports

The Forum was opened by the statements i.a.w. the final agenda. OSCE transmitted apologies for not being able to attend and asked the Forum Chair to read a Statement by the Office of the Co-ordinator of

OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) (**Attachment 11**).³ The Forum Chair welcomed the opening remarks by the Secretariat, Euro-Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), Council of Europe, and expressed the appreciation of the GFMC that the EUR-OPA Secretariat had financed the preparatory meetings of the Forum between 2010 and 2012.

The Forum Papers, which had been distributed to the attendees before the Forum, were presented by main authors or rapporteurs of Working Groups:

- Study on the contemporary and expected future forest fire issues in the UNECE region, with reference to "White Paper on Vegetation Fires and Global Change" (Johann G. Goldammer, GFMC)
- Preliminary evaluation of the questionnaire (Peter W. Sheldon, GFMC)
- Proposal of the International Working Group on Cooperation in Wildfire Preparedness and Response (IWG-CWPR): "Building Resilience of Nations and Communities within the UNECE Region to Wildfire Emergencies and Disasters" (Mark Jones, Member, IWG-CWPR, UK)
- Proposal by the International Fire Aviation Working Group (IFAWG): Adoption of "Voluntary Guidelines for Fire Aviation" (Richard Alder, Chair, IFAWG, Australia)
- Draft "White Paper on the State of Wildfires and Fire Management in Forests and other Vegetation Resources in the UNECE Region" (Johann G. Goldammer)

A special presentation was given by the Head of the Secretariat of the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP), Ms. Alben Karadjova. The Secretariat confirmed the significance of agricultural burning on generation and long-range and cross-border transport of air pollutants and their impacts on the environment and human health.

4.3 Essential Discussions at the Forum

The discussions of the Forum Reports were held in the plenary (the earlier suggestion to break out in working groups was abandoned).⁴

At the end of Day 1 of the Forum a draft Forum Statement was prepared and distributed for discussion before the beginning of the first session on Day 2 of the Forum.

The changes suggested during the discussion were noted and displayed on screen during the discussion. It was agreed that a final version would be developed in the week after the Forum, by circulation of the final draft of the end of the Day 2 (29 November 2013) for comments. In the following week a number of comments were incorporated in the final draft.

4.4 Recommendations of the Forum

The official report and the recommendations of the Forum were finalized on 5 December 2013 (**Attachment 12**) and published on the website of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire.⁵ An unofficial translation to Russian is also available on the website.⁶

In summary, the Forum essentially recommended (some abbreviations of extracted items):

- The cross-boundary effects of wildfires require jurisdictions at all levels to cooperate in fire management and to define collective solutions.
- While prime emphasis should be given to cooperation in fire management between jurisdictions sharing common borders, the long-range consequences of fire emissions are calling for

³ Note: The OCEEA supported the Forum by covering attendance of delegates from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

⁴ All oral statements and contributions to the discussions during 28 and 29 November 2013 have been recorded on tape by UNOG. These tapes are archived at the GFMC.

⁵ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/intro/team.html> / <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/intro/UNECE-FAO-Crossboundary-Fire-Forum-Conclusions-Final.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/intro/UNECE-FAO-Crossboundary-Fire-Forum-Conclusions-Final-RUS-ENG.pdf>

- strengthening existing and, if necessary, developing additional protocols addressing the reduction of adverse consequences of wildfire at international level.
- calling for the development of a voluntary regulatory institutional and policy framework aimed at building resilience of nations and communities within the UNECE region.
 - Any recommended measures in building resilience of nations and communities to wildfire require an holistic approach to integrated fire management and wildfire risk reduction.
 - proposes to establish an International Wildfire Support Mechanism (IWSM) for the UNECE Region and globally, that will assist nations to improve their capacity and resilience to wildfire
 - recommends that UNECE member states adopt in principle the Draft Fire Aviation Guidelines and support their continued development.
 - Considering the increasing impacts and damages of fire on the one side, and the required investments in building fire management capacities at global level on the other side, the option should be explored of whether a strengthened mechanism should evolve from the currently existing voluntary framework to a more formalized framework under the auspices of and support by the United Nations taking into consideration, and supportive of, bilateral and regional frameworks.
 - The Global Wildland Fire Network over the past decade has been promoting fire management and networking which is appropriate to continue and expand its role as the overarching framework at the global level to host a new, strengthened global mechanism of cooperation in fire management. This framework should ensure that voluntary initiatives and the wealth of experience of individual, national, regional and international actors be utilized and shared.
 - It is proposed to explore options to establish a UN Secretariat mandated with the implementation of a global fire management programme that should have a key role in facilitating the free and open global transfer of knowledge.
 - The UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fire to jointly prepare a set of possible organizational scenarios that will ensure that the successful work it has carried out so far will not be interrupted, creating a vacuum, but will rather go global with a new mandate and a different setup. ***Based on these scenarios the leader of the Team will approach and seek the interest of UN organizations. The results of the consultation could be discussed at a team of specialists meeting to be organized before July 2014.***

4.5 Implications for the follow-up of the Forum

The Forum, which convened technical fire management specialists (representatives of administrations responsible for fire management and academia), had a character of a consultation, which came up with a set of recommendations directed to the UNECE Member States, policy makers, international organizations and the UN system.

The discussion at the Forum revealed a strong consent that the fire problems within the UNECE Region and globally are increasing and that emphasis should be given to address the global fire problem at cross-sectoral level from national to global and solutions for international concerted and coordinated action to be identified.

In brief: The ToS Leader (head of GFMC) has been tasked to follow up and identify solutions

5. Follow-up of the Forum in the Third Grant Period (January to July 2014, including an option to extend the project until end of 2014)

It is suggested that the GFMC will accomplish the recommendations tasked by the Forum participants.

Details of procedures will be elaborated during January / February 2014 by the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section and GFMC.

For Phase III and the release of the third disbursement for the implementation of the Arrangement the following is proposed:

- In the Forum project proposal it was intended to provide sufficient time for following up the Forum. The Forum recommendations confirm the necessity for a careful follow-up process.

- The savings from Phases I and II of the project (**Attachment 8**) allow to follow the recommendations with (originally non-planned) funding for
 - Travel for meetings with UN agencies / programmes
 - Convening a coordination meeting of heads UN agencies / programmes
 - If an agreement can be reached: Follow-up internally within the UN system and publicly (media, press)
 - Reporting back to and consulting with the members of the ToS

Project management implications:

- If the revised finance plan can be accepted by the signatory parties without modifying the Arrangement signed in March 2013 in accordance with Item 11 of the Arrangement and allowing the flexible handling of revised budget lines, it is suggested to initiate the implementation Phase III immediately

Geneva / Freiburg, 28 December 2013



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