



Wildland Fire Side Event

**Hosted by the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Professor
Goldammer**

5 June 2006, 13:15 – 14:45 (Room 14)

— The escalating use of fire in land-use change and extended wildfires throughout the World resulted in unprecedented environmental damages and affected human health and security. In South East Asia alone more than 250 million people were affected by the impact of extremely long lasting smoke pollution, resulting in increasing mortality and sickness.

- Similar extreme fire and smoke episodes were observed in the Americas and particularly in Northern Asia.

- Recognizing the humanitarian and environmental dimension of the fire problem as a consequence of a globally escalating fire situation, also recognizing the first signals of regional climate change and its impact on land use systems, forests and fire, the Federal Foreign Office of Germany and the German Max Planck Society for the Advancement of Science agreed to set up the Global Fire Monitoring Center - GFMC.

- With the financial support of the Federal Foreign Office the GFMC was developed as a center of excellence and a global facility operating under the UN international Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction - IDNDR. Between 1998 and 2002 the Federal Foreign Office supported GFMC projects which aimed at the setting up of a global monitoring and information system regarding wildland fire. Between 2003 and 2006 the support provided by the Federal Foreign Office focused on the setting up of the so-called Regional Wildland Fire Networks within the framework of the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network.

For almost a decade GFMC has now been working together with a worldwide network of institutions to provide international services, such as early warning of fire danger near-real time monitoring of fire events; interpretation, synthesis and archive of global fire information. It supports local, national and international entities to develop long-term strategies or

policies for wildland fire management, including community-based fire management approaches and training for decision makers.

Furthermore, GFMC provides an emergency hotline and liaison capabilities for rapid assessment and decision support in response to wildland fire emergencies under cooperative agreements with UN-OCHA.

The Global Wildland Fire Network promotes the application of sound fire management methods in order to reduce those wildfires which are threatening sustainable land use, biodiversity, human health and security -- reducing the risk of wildfires that are also contributing to environmental degradation, desertification and -- through the release of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere -- to climate change.

The Global Wildland Fire Network is an arrangement that promotes synergies between countries and regions in order to share knowledge, human and technical resources in jointly addressing the disaster dimension of fire. Capacity building in fire management, notably at community level, is a key focus and includes the wise use of fire in those natural and cultural ecosystems that require a certain amount of ecologically beneficial effects of fire.

Since 2003 the GFMC is serving as the Secretariat of the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group -- an advisory body to the UN system -- and the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network.

In today's Side Event the Director of GFMC, Mr. Johann Goldammer, has invited partners to present recent progress in international cooperation in wildland fire disaster risk reduction - from global to local scales. One of the key activities are the development of a Global Wildland Fire Early Warning System, which has been endorsed by the Third International Early Warning Conference, held in Bonn, Germany, last year. This global Early Warning System will meet the demands of the Global Multi-Hazard Early Warning System as postulated by the former UN-Secretary General Kofi Annan and as a key element of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

The German Foreign Office recognizes the valuable cooperation of the partners contributing to this Side Event and wishes the participants all the best in the continuation of their inter-agency and international cooperation aimed at reducing the risks of wildland fire disasters globally.