



## Support to wildfire management in the Amazon and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region

### First virtual meeting of the Experts' Group on Wildfire Management

**Place:** Zoom

**Date:** 21/04/2021

**Time:** 15.30-17.30 CET

#### 1. Participants

The meeting was conducted by Jesús San Miguel Ayanz, European Commission – Joint Research Centre (JRC) Directorate E – Space, Security and Migration Disaster Risk Management Unit (E.1) The list of participants is included in the annex.

#### 2. Agenda

- Presentation of the EU-LAC wildfire management Project
- Questions & Answers
- AOB

#### 3. EU-LAC wildfire management Project

Wildfires are raging in many regions of the world. It is estimated that wildfires burn yearly 400 million hectares (ha) worldwide causing significant human, environmental and economic loss. In 2020, in the Amazon, wildfires burnt 76 million ha and in Europe 400.000 ha.

Both the European Union (EU) and the countries of the Amazon region are implementing initiatives and activities to tackle this problem from a regional perspective.

Wildfires cause significant damage and also create challenges that must be addressed. Data related to forest fires comes from diverse sources and collection methodologies, and there is no uniformity of criteria for its systematization and management.

This same situation, which also occurs in European countries, led the EU to develop the European Forest Fire System (EFFIS) and to establish the Expert Group on Forest Fires (EGFF). Both initiatives are implemented in EU countries, and thanks to the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), they are also implemented in North Africa and the Middle East regions.

It is in the interest of the EU to exchange 20 years of work experience in Europe for the creation of EFFIS and EGFF and good practices with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and to replicate these initiatives through the use of the Global Wildfire Information System (GWIS) and the creation of a group of experts.

The initiative has three general objectives. The first objective consists in reducing the impact of wildfires in the Amazon region and neighboring countries, through cooperation with LAC



countries and regional organisations, providing evidence for policy making. The second one entails sharing EU's experience on EGFF's establishment and the development of wildfire early warning and monitoring systems in the European region. Finally, the third objective consists in establishing cooperation mechanisms with fire management services in the countries and organizations operating in the region.

To achieve these general objectives, the initiative proposes to:

- Establish a common base of information on wildfires and support data harmonization in the region – supported by GWIS.
- Establish an expert group on wildfire management in the Amazon region, supporting wildfire monitoring through GWIS.
- Support fire management in the countries towards better prevention, preparedness and response to wildfires, and facilitate exchange of information, experiences and best practices among the countries.

#### 4. Questions & Answers

- *Francesca Majorano, EUDEL Bolivia: How did the Project originate? How was the interaction with OCTA? and how can the EU Delegations support the initiative through the provision of technical assistance?*

*Jesús San Miguel, EU.*

*The project's initiative came from JRC, which had already had contact with some countries in the region (Chile, Bolivia, Guatemala, Peru, etc.) in the framework of civil protection actions / DG ECHO, and had identified the need for a regional platform in LAC on the issue of harmonization of information on wildfires, within the framework of GWIS. On this basis, JRC in collaboration with EEAS, presented a proposal to the EU-LAC Policy Dialogue Support Facility to seek support for the implementation of the initiative, which was approved in December 2020.*

*At the same time, the EU had from the beginning the intention to collaborate with international or regional organizations such as FAO, UNEP, OCTA, with which it already had contacts. Cooperation with OCTA has initially been established through contacts maintained by the EU Delegation in Brazil. Reports related to wildfires in the Amazon region prepared by JRC in 2020 have been shared with OCTA. As a result of these contacts, meetings were organized to study collaboration possibilities in deforestation areas / forest degradation, biodiversity and wildfires. Later, in early 2021, JCR and EEAS's proposal was presented to OCTA after its approval.*

Technical support from EU Delegations is very important and welcome. Sessions can be held directly with a Delegation if required. The particularity of GWIS is that it is an easy-to-use system.

- *Patricio Sanhueza, CONAF, Chile: How does GWIS discriminate fires – wildfires, hotspots, legal or illegal fires, landscape fires, vegetation fires-?*

Jesús San Miguel, EU. When GWIS was created, the first discussion that took place was about its name, mainly related to its definition. Wildfires was selected. The fires detected are high temperature detections through sensors in different satellites, which does not allow



determination of legal/illegal but can determine if it is a forest area or not. More than 90% of fires are caused by human action. There are filters that eliminate false alarms.

- *Carlos Salinas, OCTA: Given the relevance in tackling the wildfire problem at a regional level, OCTA supports the initiative. OCTA has extensive experience in the field. Since 2019, there are two regional initiatives – the protocol of the Leticia Pact and the memorandum of understanding on wildfire. Each country is keen to demonstrate its good practices and find agreements to share ideas, definitions and risk management measures. Currently, technical issues, course's organisation, and the elaboration of agreements of understanding are being worked on. At the next OCTA meeting, it will be proposed to share a summary of what has been done. The idea of creating a Forest Observatory in the Amazon will be proposed. In the memorandum of understanding, the countries agreed to create a network of experts in the Amazon, more comprehensive than the one existing in the Leticia Pact and focused on the elimination of wildfires. It raises the possibility of integrating the network to the group of experts. However, it is OCTA's interest that the group is related to countries from the Amazon region and not LAC.*

Jesús San Miguel, EU. Collaborations with OCTA are very much appreciated as it is unthinkable to implement the initiative without collaborating with OCTA. Perspectives in building on existing action to avoid duplicating efforts on already developed topics is shared.

- *Francesco Gaetani, PMUMA: Are you considering the development of specific products during the next 18 months?*

Jesús San Miguel, EU. All the activities are planned to be implemented within the next 18 months. The elaboration of specific products is feasible. An example would be the elaboration of an annual report on wildfires in LAC. This report would be available for June 2021. These kinds of initiatives are very much welcome because GWIS is an interesting instrument to design policies.

- *Jorge Saavedra Saldías, CONAF, Chile: There is a commitment with the South American colleagues, but there is an absence of information that offers photographs of data. In this sense, GWIS is immensely necessary as each country by itself cannot solve the wildfire problem. Can GWIS be used to establish if a fire is associated with more events(hotspots)?*

Jesús San Miguel, EU. This is a very important point. The system uses hotspots to count individual fires, which is meaningless since they are often associated to the same fire. GWIS uses two different systems and the heat sources are grouped into individual fires that are considered as a single event. That is, the number of fires in GWIS is different from the number of hotspots.

- *Carlos Ortegón, Is there a verification protocol for hotspots? If there is, could it be shared?*

Jesús San Miguel, EU. Yes, we can share the progress made on the subject.

- *Lawrence, Congratulations on the project. There are many advances in this regard in Brazil and the products generated through GWIS are very interesting. It would be beneficial to incorporate additional information into the system in an integrated way.*



*Would this be possible? As for the higher spatial resolution of sensors on the Sentinel-2 satellites, is there a forecast for the production of data on burned areas?*

Jesús San Miguel, EU. Yes, GWIS can incorporate additional information. Regarding the forecast of data on burned areas from Sentinel-2, there is a forecast to enhance it as soon as possible; however, there are two issues related to this point. On the one hand, the need to capture a burned area before the tropical areas regenerate and cover it, hindering its detection. On the other hand, there is a cloud cover problem, making it difficult to acquire satellite data with the desired frequency, and we are working on it.

- *Wilder Canales: Which are the characteristics that you have thought about for the conformation of the expert group?*

Jesús San Miguel, EU. This is a discussion that we would like to have with you so that we can jointly define these characteristics. In the EU, the ministries of environment and civil protection of each country nominate a representative. As previously mentioned, EGFF is an official expert group registered by the General Secretary of the European Commission. Currently, when dealing with virtual meetings, there is no limit to participation. However, in the future, it will be an important issue to define.

- *Pieter Van Lierop, FAO: In my experience, it is very important that the focal points not only represent an institution, but also a country. When countries officially send a specific person, the impact is greater.*

Jesús San Miguel, EU. EU representatives are nominated by a ministry or several ministries in each country. The country sends a letter or an email and this person joins the list of participants of the group of experts. The concept is important, because although the person is not a diplomat, he/she officially represents his/her country in the regional group of experts.

- *Ángela Sierra, Instituto Sinchi Colombia: How often are the burned areas maps made? It is interesting to know the methodology implemented for this purpose.*

Tomás Arte, EU. We have a GlobFire database based on MOD64A1 and GWIS NRT. GWIS NRT is under development, it gives an estimate of the burned area for each event and we continue to work on improving it. The NRT tries to identify events from thermal sources.

- *Carlos Ortigón: Is it possible to access technical documents?*

Duarte Oom, EU. Technical documents are public and available in the following websites [EFFIS](#), and [GWIS](#).

- *VIDECI, Bolivia: It would be very valuable to have specific trainings related, for example, to the topic of strengthening prevention aspects and capacities.*

Jesús San Miguel, EU. We could organise a bilateral session to conduct trainings on these topics.

- *Claudia Contreras, IDEAM, Colombia: How is capacity building reflected through the project in a country level?*

Paola Gosparini, EU. Within the framework of the TEI Amazon Basin that will begin next year, training of the organisations that are involved in the group of experts on prevention issues can be foreseen. That could be jointly identified in the course of these first exchanges and months of work with Jesús.



- *Ana Celia Salinas IDEAM, Colombia: Are there financing instruments aimed at improving the technological infrastructure?*

Jesús San Miguel, EU. This initiative does not have funding instruments dedicated to technological infrastructure, however, colleagues who implement similar initiatives can be consulted to address this possibility.

## 5. AOB

### 5.1. Next meetings

- Second virtual meeting of the Experts' Group on wildfire management: 4 May 2021
- Third virtual meeting of the Experts' Group on wildfire management: 26 May 2021

### 5.2. Related documents

- *Two Power Point documents presented during the meeting*
- *Links to the websites of [EFFIS](#), [EGFE](#), [GWIS](#).*

## Annex

Bolivia

Brazil

Chile

Colombia

Guyana & Surinam

Paraguay

Peru

FAO

OTCA

UNEP

EU Delegations & EEAS

EU ECHO

EU INTPA

EU JRC/CCI

EU R&I

EU-LAC PDSF: