

Dialogues on Forest Fire management in the Amazon and Latin America and the Caribbean region (LAC)

Third Expert Group virtual meeting on Fire management

Place: Zoom

Date: 27/05/2021

Time: 15.00-18.00 CET

1. Participants

The session was led 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 and dialogue on the creation of an Expert Group on Forest Fires (GEFF) in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)
- AOB

3. GEFF's Presentation

3.1. Presentation

Forest fires in the LAC region amount to 200,000 on an annual average, burning 60,000 million hectares. To address this problem that causes deaths and great economic and environmental damage, improving fire management is necessary, as well as supporting policies related to forest fires.

The LAC region has made important progress in this regard, developing regional initiatives such as the Leticia Pact, and supporting global strategies, initiatives and objectives such as the Global Strategy on Climate Change and Emissions Reduction (IPCC), the Global Disaster Reduction Strategy (DRR) and the Sendai Initiative and Global Development Goals (SDGs). Europe has also made progress and it is in the interest of the European Union to share lessons learned and good practices with its partners in the region.

Since the Expert Group on Forest Fires (EGFF) creation at a European level in 1998, the first lesson learned was that the different information systems on fires that the countries had presented, needed to be harmonized. Thus, the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) was created to complement EGFF. EFFIS provides harmonized information, which countries can share through EGFF, a knowledge exchange platform.

The European Union (EU) wishes to replicate these good practices together with its partners in the LAC countries, contextualized to the region through the use of the Global Forest Fire Information System (GWIS) and the creation of the LAC Forest Fire Expert Group (GEFF).



To achieve this objective, the group would be officially created in 2021 and would be established under EU and LAC collaboration, and in coordination with the forest fire management services in each country, and international organizations such as the United Nations Food Organization and Agriculture (FAO), the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (OCTA) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

The Project would be co-financed by the EU and initially managed by the EU Joint Research Center (JRC) in coordination with all participating organizations and institutions.

The GEFf would be established with experts from 11 countries in the LAC region, mainly representing national administrations of Environment, Agriculture or Civil Protection nominated by the Ministries / Governments of each country.

The expected results of the Project are to contribute to:

- The conception and development of GWIS and other regional platforms.
- Harmonization of data / information in the GWIS database and other national and regional platforms.
- The improvement of prevention, preparation and response to fires in the LAC region.
- Sustainable forest management and information exchange to increase forest resilience.
- The design and use of the information in GWIS, the exchange of information on lessons learned in the complete fire cycle, from prevention to restoration, including the discussion and publication of good practices on fire prevention.
- The preparation of an annual report on fires in the LAC region.

The foreseen events would consist of two annual meetings (spring and autumn) and technical and training meetings, agreed upon by GEFf.

The specific tasks and contributions would be:

- To provide GWIS with annual data on fire incidents.
- To annually contribute to the Fires report in the LAC region.
- Ex-post review of the fire campaign during the meeting organized this fall.
- Work on common criteria / harmonized methods for fire risk assessment.
- Recommendations to support efficient forest management and land use measures for fire prevention.
- Other specific tasks, agreed by GEFf LAC.

Finally, the Project has a web page that will function as an exchange tool for EGFF members. A confidential area will be created on the web page, so that experts can publish and exchange information and group results.

3.2. Questions and answers:

- Felipe Dall, *Which are the models currently being used in the region, and why are others not applied? How would the methodology used by the European group relate to that of the new group in LAC?*



Jesús San Miguel Ayanz: In GWIS, the prospective system to be applied in LAC, all data relative to the complete wildfire cycle is available, except data related with erosion and regeneration. We are currently working to develop these two in order to include them, hence covering the full fire cycle.

In Europe, adopting the EGFF is voluntary, since there is no obligation on the countries to join the group. The group itself was formed in 1998 with 7 countries, yet currently 47 countries are members. Member countries do not need to change or adapt their methodologies; the group acts as a discussion platform in which data and good practices are shared, and either bilateral or group collaborations are established. Central European countries, for example, tend to collaborate more extensively with each other because they face common challenges. The same happens with Mediterranean countries, which have in many cases implemented the best strategies on fire extinction and on keeping the society well informed. EGFF is a collaboration and exchange platform, which does not imply any changes at national level. EFFIS provides standardized data that countries can use for comparison purposes. There is a remarkable level of understanding within the group and its member countries.

- Carlos Ortegón, *¿Does the Project include allocating resources to the LAC countries?*

Jesús San Miguel Ayanz: The Project has its own resources. If, for example, capacity building is required, it can be done. This Project is an international collaboration-umbrella, and several colleges from other EU directorates-general such as DG DEFIS or DG INTPA could bring more specific resources.

Paola Gasparini: DG INTPA is preparing a complementary action targeting the countries on the Amazon basin, in order to provide technical assistance and capacity building on control and prevention techniques related to European best practices, and to support guidelines set in motion by the EGFF. This action is expected to begin next year.

Elena Sacher: GWIS is a base system to be used before the expert group begins its action. Perhaps beginners can share their experience in a bilateral manner before the official constitution of the group, regarding the use of GWIS, and the problems and needs they will face.

Jesús San Miguel Ayanz: On a first stage, we are interested in hearing about your experiences, for which until November there will be a disconnection in the contact between the EU and the countries on a regional level. During these months, we planned bilateral meetings with the countries, so that they can share with us their experience on the GWIS use, and the problems and needs that might arise.

This first stage is also important to get to know how each country organizes itself. For example, some countries have several institutions related to managing wildfires, while others have only one. It is also possible that some relevant institutions within the different countries have not yet been contacted or have no interest in participating.

The first GEF meeting is expected to take place by the end of the year, a point in which having a detailed list of countries and people interested in taking part will be paramount.

- Raquel Acuña: *“For us in INFONA Paraguay, it is very important that these meetings continue to be held”*



Jesús San Miguel Ayanz: The idea is to have these bilateral meetings during this first phase, after which we will keep you informed.

- Daniel Segura: “How are the expert group designations made official? As the Ministry of Environment, we have not received any letter, for example, and in many cases, institutions require that this type of procedures and formalities are observed.”

Jesús San Miguel Ayanz: This is what we want to clarify in this meeting. It is important to have an official designation so that this member can express his country’s opinion. In Europe, we deal with a group of experts, which means that the representatives of each country provide an expert opinion on the situation. In this way, it’s not a political opinion, but a technical one.

- Patricio Sanhueza: *Amongst the attendees, we can recognize that certain organizations are not involved. Do the members know or acknowledge any absent governmental organisation?*

Jesús San Miguel Ayanz: I totally agree. That is why being able to build a whole picture of the organizations working with wildfires throughout the different countries is so important. We know that some are absent, who could have potentially contributed with knowledge, or with new ideas to the discussion. They can still join later on, it is important to consider this. We will progressively rectify this situation as we hold bilateral meetings with the different countries. If a letter is required to summon these organizations, for example, we could do it.

- Francesca Majorano: “In Bolivia, the EU Delegation (DUE) has sent letters to the heads of the governmental structures to inform them about the Project, and to request focal points.”

Jesús San Miguel Ayanz: If all the DUEs have acted in the same way, then they have already paved the way. However, the bilateral meetings will be important to evaluate if all institutions working in wildfire management in each country have been notified.

Alfonso Lozano: “The EU offers the possibility of response to wildfires through its Civil Protection Mechanism, and also through advice missions with forest fire experts from the EU.”

Felipe Dall: The initiative is very interesting, and we are interested in collaborating. GWIS is a very important tool to monitor and prevent, and therefore to cover topics such as vegetation growth, forest fires and invasive species, among others. It is also a fundamental tool for the creation of public policies on fires.

- Lenin Beltrán: *The dynamics of tropical forests is extremely active. It may be necessary to test Sentinel 3 in our countries.*

Jesús San Miguel Ayanz: We are currently using MODIS. In Europe we use Sentinel 2. Our goal is to continue incorporating new methodologies. Regarding the regeneration issue, in Europe we are using data from Sentinel 2 and we are incorporating Sentinel 3, although we are experiencing some lag points.

- Arsenio Flores: Are these products generated from the platform's history available?

4. Other business

5.1. Upcoming meetings



It will depend on how the pandemic evolves, but the Project aims to hold the first face-to-face meeting at the beginning of 2022.

5.2. Related documents

- Two Power Point documents presented during the meeting
- Links related to [EFFIS](#), [EGFF](#), [GWIS](#), [GEFF](#)
- Presentation of the Project's [communication materials](#)

Annex

Participants

Bolivia

Brazil

Chile

Colombia

Ecuador

Guyana

Paraguay

Peru

FAO

ACTO

UNEP

EU & EEAS Delegations

EU ECHO

EU INTPA

EU JRC/CCI

EU-LAC PDSF