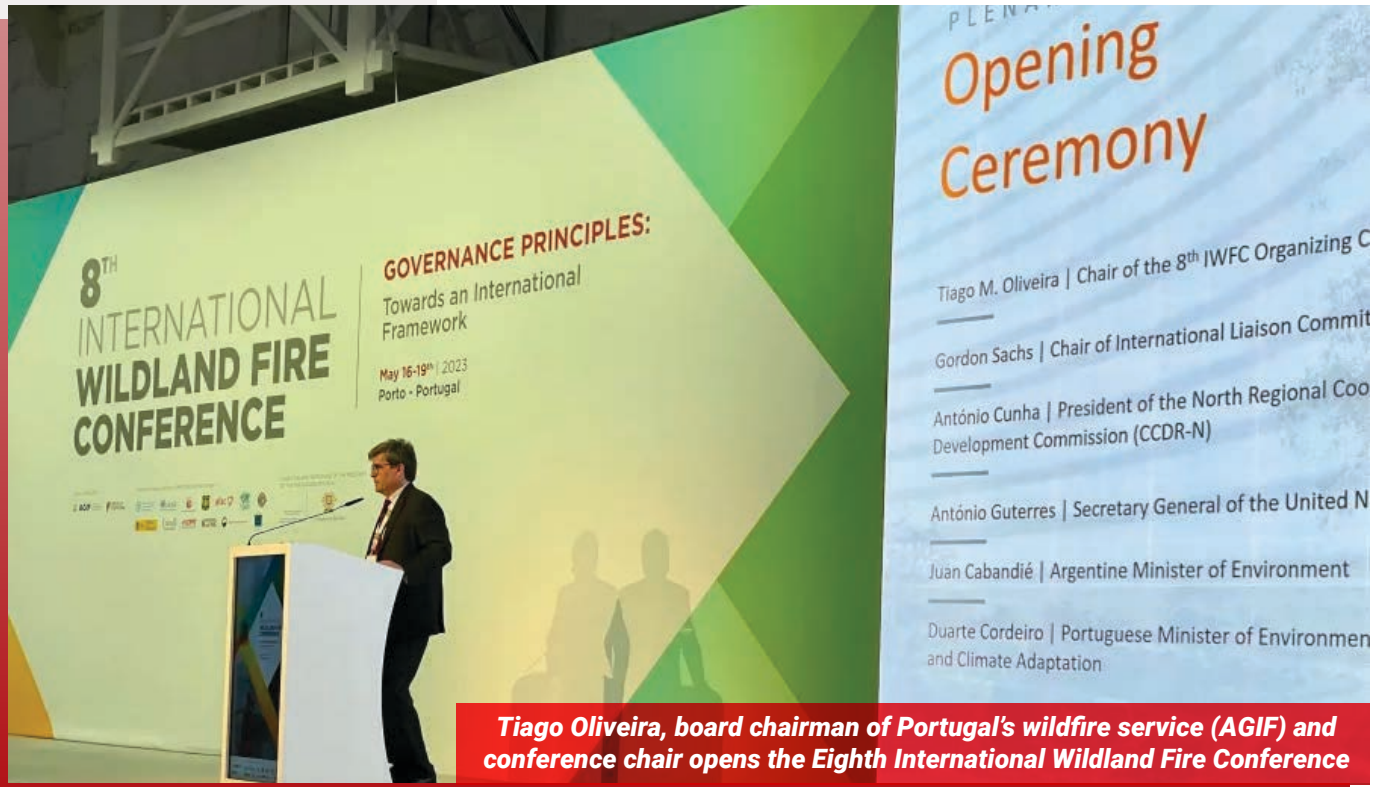


Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture shares expertise on integrated fire management at Eighth International Wildfire Conference



Tiago Oliveira, board chairman of Portugal's wildfire service (AGIF) and conference chair opens the Eighth International Wildland Fire Conference

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture (WoF-Kishugu JV) attended the Eighth International Wildfire Conference (IWFC) in Porto, Portugal. This esteemed conference, scheduled from 16 to 19 May 2023, brought together stakeholders in wildland fire management from around the world.

The WoF-Kishugu JV delegation included three members of the JV's top management ie Trevor Abrahams, project manager; Emile Grobbelaar, aviation representative and Tony Mancos, training representative. Joining them were two women general managers, the Eastern Cape's Phumza Dyanty and the Western Cape's Antoinette Jini.

The IWFC is a vital platform for governments, wildfire practitioners

and private sector entities to exchange knowledge and establish global partnerships. The conference aimed to develop policies, enhance governance and mitigate the impacts of wildfires on both the environment and humanity.

WoF-Kishugu JV's expertise in Integrated Fire Management Solutions (IFMS) has gained international recognition, with successful deployments in countries such as Indonesia, Chile and Canada. Their participation at the IWFC further strengthened their global presence in wildland fire management.

International collaboration is key

According to WoF-Kishugu JV project manager, Trevor Abrahams, international collaboration was a key focus during the conference to

effectively address the challenges posed by wildland fires, which extend beyond national borders in many cases.

"These fires affect multiple countries and regions. Therefore, a coordinated and collaborative approach is necessary to proactively deal with their complex and cross-border nature. The Integrated Fire Management approach, when implemented holistically, provides a framework for comprehensively managing wildland fires. It involves various strategies such as prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, all integrated into a cohesive plan. By adopting this approach, countries can work together to mitigate the impacts of wildland fires more effectively," Abrahams said.

Abrahams added that to ensure the success of integrated fire management, long-term commitments to international cooperation are essential. This includes collaboration in areas such as standards of operation, training, capacity building, cross-border cooperation and knowledge sharing.

He said, "By harmonising policies, guidelines and standards related to fire management, countries can establish a consistent approach across borders. This consistency facilitates mutual understanding and cooperation during transboundary fire incidents."

Women in wildland fire fighting

The IWFC consisted of various plenary sessions, separate break-away meetings, poster talks, a large exhibition, and concluded with a gala dinner. The WoF- Kishugu JV delegation spread itself over several parallel events.

Dyanty and Jini attended the Women Wildfire session, whose objective was to raise awareness about the challenges women face both working with and as leaders in integrated fire management. It also served as a platform to share data and experiences, inspire people regarding women's role in wildfire prevention and response, to promote international networks and mentorship between women and to promote country-based gender-focused opportunities. The women GMs participated in open discussions on experience and inspiration stories



The WoF-Kishugu JV attended the Eighth International Wildfire Conference (IWFC) in Porto, Portugal

on self-care, leadership positions, fire fighting and networks.

A constant participant

The WoF-Kishugu JV has been present at all but three of the eight conferences. According to Abrahams, this conference actively promoted the notion of "landscape fires", referring to what is often called "wildland fires" or "vegetation fires". "This shift in emphasis is reflective of the view of such fires as a product of human behaviour, rather than a simple endomorphic phenomenon. That is, whether, through human-induced climate change, expansion of the wildland urban interface (WUI), changes in land use or actual ignition activities, the phenomenon of such fires has at its root, human behaviour."

There were several other running themes during the conference, which included prevention - the need for more fire awareness education and

engagement with communities, including revisiting traditional fire management practices, the need for greater collaboration, breaking down the silos, greater preparedness and the need for greater policy harmonisation.

The role of research and use of such information in managing wildland fires was also reiterated, as well as the need to ensure academic research on such fires is made accessible to the entire value chain in fire management.

"The Framework Document, "Governance principles: Towards an international framework" launched at the conference is intended to serve as a summation of the conference proceedings to have government policymakers adopt a common approach to managing the threat of wildland or landscape fires in the context of climate change," Abrahams concluded. ▲



Phumza Dyanty and Antoinette Jini attended also attended the Women Wildfire session

