



Statement by the IUCN South American Committee regarding the fire crisis in multiple South American natural ecosystems

From the IUCN South American Committee we express concern and alarm about the extensive and aggressive fires in the natural ecosystems of the Amazon, tropical and subtropical dry forests, the Cerrado, the Pantanal, the Chaco and the Andean Paramo that are devastating millions of hectares of forests and grasslands.

Faced with this pressing situation, we call on:

- The international community, governments, markets and society in general, to admit the biophysical limits of the planet in the face of growth and the prevailing mode of development that promotes social inequality and unsustainable use of natural resources, putting at risk the survival of human societies and the world as we know it;
- Communities and civil society, to promote an urgent paradigm shift that recognizes the intrinsic value of nature and considers it the greatest asset for current and future generations, guaranteeing ecosystem services and the capacity to adapt to climate change;
- The governments of the South American continent, to prioritize the conservation of the natural heritage countries, respect their peoples, discard unsustainable

economic activities which drive deforestation and fires, and promote policies and regulations for the sustainable use of the territory, in accordance with its capacity, respecting natural values, protected areas and biodiversity.

We declare that:

1. The consequences generated by fires in the region infringe the rights of society to a healthy environment, affecting the health and quality of life of the urban and rural population. The fine particles generated by smoke from fires, impacts the health of the population and fauna, causing eye, heart and respiratory conditions, as well as animal movements can expand diseases and in particular some zoonoses.

2. The loss of natural vegetation in protected areas and indigenous territories leads to the destruction and degradation of biodiversity and loss of ecosystem services, affects water sources, drives erosion and desertification and puts at risk our ability to move towards ecosystem-based adaptation.

3. The fires of Amazon forests, tropical and subtropical dry forests, savannas and Andean paramos, are contributing to the greenhouse gas emissions responsible for climate change, impacting global, regional and local levels; disrupting the nutrient cycle and the hydrological cycle, affecting soil fertility and climatic conditions, such as rainfall, vital for agricultural production and food security.

4. Indigenous and local communities, the scientific community and environmental organizations are key allies in participatory ecosystem-based risk management processes, both in prevention, damage and loss analysis and recovery of biodiversity (ecosystems, species) and affected communities.

5. We adhere and support the manifests and declarations of the scientific, environmental and social communities that make urgent action calls to address

this emergency and promote the recovery of damaged ecosystems and affected communities.

We call on the States:

1. About fires in natural ecosystems.

- To prioritize fighting fires and their consequences, requesting and accepting international assistance to achieve it in the shortest possible time.

- Avoid partisan politics in the analysis of the causes and consequences of this fire crisis. The reactions and measures to address this problem should be based on the best available scientific evidence.

2. On the management of areas devastated by fires.

- Stop the sale and land-use allocations in the regions affected by the fires, in order to evaluate the impact produced by objective, technical and legal means.

- Ensure that land-use changes will not be enabled in these areas, allowing recovery, and inviting the environmental and academic community to accompany its restoration with clear and verifiable goals, with guidelines that avoid the use of the lands affected by the fires for agriculture, livestock and colonization, and involving local communities.

- Establish a regional international and inter-institutional programme that involves local communities and contemplates the generation of knowledge and the evaluation of damages and losses as a consequence of fires, as well as recovery and restoration in the affected areas, based on native flora and fauna of each ecosystem.

- Guarantee the quality of life of the affected population, attending health impacts and favoring the development of sustainable and resilient practices at the local level.

3. On public policies.

- Review in each country public policies and norms which contradict international agreements, such as the Conventions on Biological Diversity, Climate Change, and Desertification, among others, and which slow down the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; consolidating an extractive model in detriment of natural heritage and responsible production and consumption.

- Strengthen protection measures, to ensure the safeguarding of areas that have not been affected by these serious fires.

- Ensure compliance with existing regulations that seek to maintain sustainable management of production systems, respecting the protection of forests and discouraging unsustainable practices.

- Guarantee the living conditions of the population, taking into account the impacts on health and their general well-being.

- Stop attacks against human and environmental rights defenders, as well as enforce laws that protect them in carrying out their activities for the common good.

From the IUCN South American Committee, we reject groundless accusations that some governments have made about environmental organizations, linking them to the initiation of fires. Our ties as civil society organizations are stronger than ever to support each other in this emergency situation.

Multiple IUCN member organizations in South America are already in action, with an effective impact on the ground, demonstrating another approach to territorial

management, where the valuation and conservation of nature is possible and necessary for sustainable development.

Likewise, we reiterate the willingness of the IUCN South American Committee and its member organizations to continue contributing from their technical capacities and in favor of greater articulation between civil society organizations, scientists, indigenous and farmer organizations, local communities and governments, for the implementation of the measures set forth herein.

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