

144 Mobilise urgent action to prevent and combat wildland fires

ALARMED by the unprecedented scale of wildland fires in 2025, with more than 1 million hectares burned in Europe (compared to an average of 350,000 from 2006 to 2024) and 8.8 million in Canada, significant loss of human life in California and South Korea and by data published by the World Resources Institute (WRI) in 2025 showing that, for the first time, mega-fires affected both tropical and boreal forests in 2024, with South America alone accounting for a quarter of global losses;

SERIOUSLY CONCERNED about the growing impacts of large scale wildland fires on the climate, biodiversity, ecosystem services provided by forests, wetlands and other ecosystems, the economy, human health, populations and the increase of fires in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI);

CONCERNED that many recent wildland fires have affected areas of high conservation value, both inside and outside protected areas, including habitats of threatened species, geological heritage and other ecologically sensitive zones, causing significant ecological damage;

RECOGNISING that the ecological role of fire varies across ecosystems, that some ecosystems are fire-dependent and that policies must be adapted to each ecological and social context, in relation to climate change;

AWARE that the increasing frequency and intensity of large scale wildland fires has the potential to increase the vulnerability of species, ecosystems and protected areas, leading in some cases to the decline or loss of species;

RECALLING the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scenarios with temperature increases that could exceed +4.5 °C, exacerbating droughts and heat waves that increase the frequency, size, intensity and extent of wildland fires;

ALSO RECALLING the recommendations to immediately begin adapting to climate change, as specified in the IPCC's sixth assessment report;

WELCOMING ongoing international efforts to collaborate on integrated wildland fire management including the establishment and work of the Global Fire Management Hub, initiated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as well as the publication of Integrated Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines (2024);

EMPHASISING that rural, peri-urban and island communities, particularly in countries and regions most vulnerable to climate-induced wildland fires, are on the front line when it comes to the intensification of fires, often without having sufficient resources and tools to deal with them or to support recovery after a disaster;

FURTHER EMPHASISING the need to strengthen access to funding, real-time data and early warning systems and tools through partnerships with national and regional authorities, universities, NGOs and international organisations; and

RECOGNISING the importance of strengthening technical capacities to improve wildland fire mitigation and management, and underlining that the integration of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT), Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and other technologies allows for better assessment of fire risk, early detection and decision-making based on spatial data;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

1. CALLS UPON States and local authorities to:

a. make effective wildland fire management a priority, including through its integration into national strategies and plans, in particular National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and through the regular reporting thereon, and to strengthen cooperation and coordination working across all levels

and sectors;

b. mainstream wildland fire management as part of an integrated, landscape-planning approach, taking into account local ecosystem contexts:

c. promote and finance, where appropriate, awareness of wildland fires through information campaigns and dialogue with relevant sectors and audiences to better adapt land use practices and involve them in wildland fire mitigation, preparedness, and response and enhance access to early-warning systems through international and regional cooperation, prioritising vulnerable communities and ecosystems;

d. identify and map areas of high conservation value, including areas that are difficult to restore in the event of a fire, both within and beyond existing protected areas, and integrate them into national and regional wildfire prevention and response plans, in order to ensure that:

i. specific prevention efforts are focused on reducing fire risk in these areas;

ii. operational firefighting plans take into account their exceptional ecological value, prioritising their protection to avoid the loss of irreplaceable natural heritage;

iii. when prevention measures take place in areas that are —or could become— ecologically valuable open habitats, management should respect and, where appropriate, enhance these values and the species associated with them; and

iv. understand the geodiversity of territories to take effective measures to mitigate wildfire and to protect vulnerable geological heritage from fire damage;

e. study burned ecosystems and integrate biodiversity and soil protection into wildland fire risk mitigation, preparedness and response planning, as well as post-fire restoration activities, preventing conversion into other land use types, where appropriate, and prioritise natural regeneration where appropriate as the first option (“nature as a solution”), or, where necessary, support recovery through human-assisted Nature-based Solutions;

f. collaborate with the FAO Global Fire Management Hub to leverage research, tools and technology that forecast, identify, and monitor wildland fires with information and data available to local authorities and communities;

g. draw on different knowledge systems as appropriate, including science, traditional and Indigenous knowledge, and that of local communities to better understand and respond to wildland fires and their impacts; and

h. strengthen governance and support traditional and locally adapted land-use practices that have proven effective in maintaining fire-resilient ecosystems and preventing rural land abandonment; and

2. REQUESTS the Director General and the Commissions to:

a. develop guidelines distinguishing between different wildland fire contexts (fires resulting from the natural cycle of ecosystems, cultural or controlled burning, extreme fires), ensuring inclusive measures, the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and with a focus on tools to support the most vulnerable;

b. develop guidelines for fire risk management in protected and high conservation value areas, working with organisations such as the FAO Global Fire Management Hub; and

c. systematise existing knowledge on changing fire ecology and its impact.