

## 27th Session of the Committee on Forestry

### Item 8.4. FAO's work on integrated wildfire management

An estimated 340–370 million hectares (ha) of the Earth's land surface is affected by fire annually, including approximately 67 million ha of forested areas. Landscape fires have grown rapidly in intensity, scale and duration due to climate and land-use changes. Major international reports project that the frequency and area burnt by fires will continue to increase significantly, even under the most optimistic climate change scenarios. Landscape fire is a transboundary issue with far-reaching impacts, affecting multiple stakeholders. Since fire is a traditional management tool and a part of many ecosystems, good use of it should be promoted as a mechanism for sustainable land management and keeping emissions as low as possible while allowing for the highest carbon sequestration possible.

FAO is working with partners to lead the paradigm shift from a focus on fire suppression to the holistic approach of Integrated Fire Management (IFM), with two critical aspects:

- a. supporting the use of fire for sustainable natural resource management; and
- b. reducing the negative impacts of wildfires.

Focusing on wildfire prevention is the right way to proceed, and often involves using fire as a management tool along with community engagement as a key and active feature of the entire process. FAO promotes an integrated approach to fire management centred on five elements (also known as the 5Rs): Review and analysis; Risk reduction; Readiness; Response; and Recovery.

FAO, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other key partners are developing the Global Fire Management Hub ("Fire Hub"), which was launched in May 2023 and aims to strengthen the capacities of countries to implement IFM, with the major goal of reducing the many negative impacts of wildfires on people, landscapes and the global climate. FAO continues to collaborate with the Korea Forest Service, the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) and other partners on the global "Assuring the Future of Forests with Integrated Risk Management" (AFFIRM) mechanism, with activities in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam. The FAO Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines have been revised by FAO, the the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) and the International Liaison Committee of the International Wildland Fire Conference (IWFC), in consultation with numerous country experts and other key partners to better reflect the IFM concept and include Indigenous and traditional fire knowledge, and gender equity considerations.

The Committee is invited to:

- a. encourage countries to consider implementation of the principles and strategic actions for IFM as outlined in the updated FAO Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines;
- b. recommend FAO to continue working with partners to lead the paradigm shift from a focus on fire suppression to IFM's holistic approach; and
- c. invite FAO to continue to support Members on IFM activities, including through the Fire Hub and in collaboration with its key partners, with the aim of strengthening the capacities of countries to implement IFM.

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