



Climate Action Network reaction to Amazon forest fires

23 August 2019: The Amazon rainforest fires are a crisis on a catastrophic scale that is a result of putting profit and political gains ahead of the planet. Satellite images showed over 75,000 fires- an 84% increase in fires since 2018 when the Bolsonaro government in Brazil started steamrolling aggressive and destabilising policies. These actions, carried out in close alliance with the agribusiness and mining lobbies, have displaced Indigenous communities and harmed the environment.

Attempts are now in place to put out the fires following international outrage against the apathy of the Bolsonaro government. But there has been far too much damage.

The G7 leaders meeting this weekend at the summit in Biarritz, France, plan to discuss the Amazon crisis. While it is a welcome move to pressure the Brazilian government to retract its harmful policies, the G7 countries, as among the richest in the world, must do much more themselves to stop the climate crisis beyond just expressing outrage. There is no excuse for the continued subsidies to fossil fuels and domestic policies that exacerbate the climate crisis.

As the largest rainforests in the world, the Amazon encompass nine countries in Latin America, with 60% in Brazil. Humid rainforests do not catch fire spontaneously but this year the Amazon has experienced the highest number of fires since 2013.

A source of natural riches, the Amazon is as an indispensable carbon sink to the planet. The recent IPCC report on land and climate and the IPBES report underscored that primary forests must be protected at all costs if we are to stop climate breakdown.

Brazil has a legacy of progressive environmentalism- hosting the 1992 Rio Conference that gave birth to the Climate Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the 2012 “Rio +20” Conference that heralded the Global Sustainability Goals until 2030.

Climate Action Network stands in solidarity with local non-governmental organisations and Indigenous communities who are working at the frontlines everyday to stand up to powerful lobbies.

Quotes from CAN members:

Suelita Rocker, campaigner, 350.org

“The recent data about fires in the Amazon is showing that the current environmental policies are leading us to even more carbon emissions. Scientists, Indigenous Peoples, students, and

other groups are clearly saying that they want a quick and thorough transition to clean energy, stronger measures for forest conservation and real participation of the communities in the government decisions”

Shefali Sharma, Director, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, European office.

“This massive destruction of the Amazon comes as both domestic and international pressure is building against the Bolsonaro government for its complete disregard for the climatic and human rights impacts of this disaster. If European governments are genuinely concerned about the devastation taking place, they must send a strong signal to Bolsonaro and urgently stop the EU-Mercosur trade deal—nothing less than the future of this planet is at stake.

Carlos Rittl, Executive Secretary, Observatório do Clima, Brazil

Ever since they took office, Bolsonaro and his Environment Minister, Ricardo Salles, have dedicated themselves to destroying Brazil's environmental governance and law enforcement agencies. At the same time, they have empowered environmental criminals with promises of opening up Indigenous people's lands for business and keeping environmental inspectors from doing their job. The increased number of fires this year reflects Bolsonaro's irresponsibility, and turns into smoke not only trees but also Brazil's reputation and the health of its people.

Alejandro Aleman, Centro Humboldt & Climate Action Network Latin America coordinator

It is unacceptable that the largest rainforest in the world, home to nature and many native communities, is on fire for days on end with no clear response or political leadership from the nine countries that are blessed to have the Amazon in their territory. Bolsanaro has once again proven his true colours but this is not a matter for single country anymore. The civil society of Latin American is committed to supporting civil society in Brazil to face up to the challenge and demand that environmental integrity and human rights are protected.

Nouhad Awwad, CAN-Arab World regional coordinator

The current fires in the Amazon forest in Brazil are unprecedented and destructive. They exceed last year's number of fires by more than 80% and are still going. Forest fires are burning in many other parts of the world and many are human-made. This shows we need a unified and strong voice to protect forests and must switch to renewable energy. The level of pollution and ongoing fires exceed the power of nature to replenish itself. We must stand hand-to-hand to implement national, regional and international plans to protect forests.

Virginia Young, Australian Rainforest Conservation Society

Bolsonaro has unleashed the apocalypse on the Amazon. He has gutted government environmental agencies, demonized NGOs working for sustainable development and protection, and avowed to open Indigenous land to industry and integrate the indigenous people into national society, that is, relegate them to the lowest rung of the poor in a country. The Amazon fires are caused by lack of government enforcement and perceived lack of consequences by ranchers, loggers and miners who are now rushing to grab whatever land and resources they can. Kayapo indigenous lands are at the forefront of this assault and are working hard to secure their borders.

Øyvind Eggen, Head of Rainforest Foundation, Norway

This is a global crisis, and it is great that the G7 will discuss the unacceptable attacks on the Amazon. However, concrete action must be taken by both politicians and corporations. Until Brazil has (1) reduced its deforestation and stopped the fires, (2) guaranteed security for environmental defenders and indigenous peoples and (3) reestablished the Amazon Fund with its mandate and transparent governance; politicians, companies, investors, and traders must

immediately halt ratification of the EU Mercosur trade agreement, freeze new investments in Brazil and warn current trading partners of further measures.

Nicole Polsterer, Sustainable Consumption and Production Campaigner, Fern

The European Union is the second largest market for Brazil's soy and a large importer of its beef. Yet, the EU will be incapable of ensuring that its future imports from Brazil won't stem from the areas opened by current fires. To ensure Europeans are not complicit in the Amazon's devastation, the EU must urgently adopt new laws that will guarantee that neither agricultural products sold in the EU, nor the financial markets underpinning them, are destroying Brazil's forests and driving land grabs.

Josianne Gauthier, CIDSE Secretary General

For years we have been fighting for ambitious and binding commitments from States and International institutions, on climate justice, on corporate responsibility and accountability, on human rights, and on access to fair and sustainable energy and food systems. All of these questions rise painfully to the surface as we watch the Amazon burn as does our collective responsibility to act.

WWF International

WWF expresses its serious concern about the spread of fires in the Amazon that threatens the existence of the world's largest tropical forest, habitat of thousands of animals and plants and home to more than 34 million people, including around 500 indigenous peoples.

The fires are consuming important areas of forest in the Brazilian and Bolivian Amazon, and in other ecoregions such as the Chiquitano Forest, the Chaco, the Pantanal and the Cerrado, in both Bolivia and Paraguay.

Faced with this ecological devastation, WWF calls on the countries of the region - Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname - to protect the Amazon, fight deforestation and reduce the causes behind these fires.

The Amazon plays an important role in the climate regulation of South America, even influencing the rainfall regime of the region [[read more](#)].

Jennifer Morgan, Executive Director, Greenpeace International

This is a climate emergency demanding urgent action that meets the scale of the challenge. Brazil has a responsibility to the world to protect the lungs of the Earth, but G7 leaders must not use the Amazon fires as a smokescreen to hide their own failures to act at home. G7 leaders must demonstrate to the world the urgency required by rapidly embracing known key solutions to the climate and land crises.

“As fires rage in Siberia and the Amazon, this month's IPCC land report brought to light the critical need to protect and restore forests and for sweeping changes to the global food system. Meat and dairy consumption must be cut 50% globally by 2050 and rich countries such as the G7 should reduce that even further.

“G7 leaders have a duty to respond with everything in their power to end the use of fossil fuels, protect the world's forests and lead agricultural change. They can make those national commitments at this Summit. Our forests and our hopes are running out of time. Expressions of regret over the Amazon fires and offers of help are fine, but are woefully inadequate.”

Catherine Abreu, Executive Director, Climate Action Network Canada

My heart is in my throat today thinking of the emergency the Amazon and the animals and people that live there are facing. One in every five breaths we breathe is produced in the Amazon; the Amazon is the heartbeat of the global hydrological cycle. Ecosystems worldwide

will quite literally collapse if we fail to protect this incredible place. If that's not something for the leaders of the world's richest nations to discuss in Biarritz, along with how to take action on the climate chaos that is egging this and so many other crises on, I don't know what is. We are also calling in Canada to halt negotiations on the Mercosur trade deal until Brazil puts meaningful policies in place to protect the Amazon.

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About CAN

Climate Action Network (CAN) is a global network of over 1300 NGOs in more than 120 countries working to promote government and individual action to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels. More information on www.climatenetwork.org