

## Background Information

In 2018 more countries than ever were hit by forest fires. And fires are not only made by natural causes. Millions of hectares are burnt each year. Forest fires are part of nature, but degraded forest are particularly vulnerable, especially logged parts of rainforests.

In summer 2019 was recorded an 80% increase from last year in Amazon, making 72,800 fires. Due to new Brazilian policy INPE said that more forest has been cleared in Brazil this summer alone than in the last three years. The ecosystem in Amazon absorbs millions of tons of carbon emissions every year. When those trees are cut or burned, they not only release the carbon they were storing, but a tool to absorb carbon emissions disappears.

Even the Arctic Circle was ablaze earlier this summer. In June, Arctic fires emitted 50 megatons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. July produced another 79 megatons — double the previous record for a single month. By August, the cloud of soot staining the Arctic sky was bigger than the European Union.

There are also places, where forests are burnt deliberately. In Indonesia or Brazil forest fires have been started deliberately to make way for oil palm or soy bean plantations.

## UN Involvement

Because this problem is relatively new, first of all there are lots of biodiversity and climate conferences on schedule. The UN official said the G7 fund was valuable but money, that was offered to help with firefighting in Amazon was not enough.

The United Nations International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) and the Joint United Nations OCHA/UNEP (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) are mandated to coordinate action to combat large international fires. Recently the INSARAG has, however, been requested to limit their activities to urban areas. An international solution will need to be worked out to solve the problems of international support to rural forest fire emergencies.

## Questions to consider:

- What is my country policy when it comes to question if we should allow businesses in forests?
- Does my country have problems with forest fires?
- How do other country policies affect your position?
- Is there evidence or statistic that can support your country's position?

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### Sources and useful links:

[https://wwf.panda.org/our\\_work/forests/deforestation/causes2/](https://wwf.panda.org/our_work/forests/deforestation/causes2/)

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sgsm19755.doc.htm>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/30/amazon-fires-biodiversity-united-nations>