



October 2024

Ms. Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary
Secretariat of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800
Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2Y 1N9

Mr. Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary
Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
P.O. Box 260124
D-53153 Bonn, Germany

Dear Executive Secretary Schomaker, dear Executive Secretary Stiell,

We are writing to urge the CBD and UNFCCC Secretariats to increase attention to the widespread and increasing impact of wildfire on biodiversity in CBD fora, workshops and Expert Groups.

Wildfire is an essential process in many ecosystems and has played a prominent role in the evolution of biodiversity. However, due to rapid global changes in climate, land use, management actions, and vegetation, extreme wildfire events are increasing and natural fire regimes are being altered beyond their natural range of variability.

Altered fire regimes are leading to widespread and profound ecological transformations, posing serious threats to global biodiversity, and in some areas are driving large-scale species extinctions. The ecological effects of wildfire are occurring independently and synergistically with other global change agents, often with cascading impacts and compounding effects (e.g. Canada's 2023 wildfires released nearly 4 times more carbon than global aviation ([WRI](#))). Solutions to the climate and biodiversity crises are urgently needed.

When fire regimes are altered beyond their natural range of variability, ecosystem functioning can collapse and damage natural systems and biodiversity ([Source](#)). A recent [special issue](#) in the journal *Fire* highlights effects of wildfire on biodiversity across world regions, e.g.:

- 2019-2020 bushfires in **Australia** killed about 3 billion animals, and many species became endangered as a result. Australia has the highest rate of **mammal loss**, and bushfires put more than 700 [insect species](#) at risk of extinction. ([Source](#))
- **Bolivia** has 58 Key Biodiversity Areas across all ecoregions, most of which are also identified as Important Bird Areas. Pressure exerted by the increasing incidence of wildfire threatens the survival of **avian species** dependent on these areas. ([Source](#))
- **Colombia** has experienced unprecedented wildfires, impacting *paramos* (**high-altitude wetlands**) in 2024 ([Source](#)). Further, the city of Cali is now experiencing historic wildfire incidents and damage to area ecosystems ([Source](#)).
- Forest fires in **northwestern Africa** are increasing in frequency, intensity, and area, and the area's diverse **insect populations**, which provide vital ecosystem services like pollination and decomposition, are suffering a precipitous decline ([Source](#)).
- In west-central **Spain**, protected areas (particularly those dominated by **pine/mixed forests**) are at the highest risk of large fires, suggesting a need to shift from halting to managing fires and anticipating how ecosystems respond to burns. ([Source](#)).

With this base of evidence, we feel it is critical to bring a comprehensive discussion of wildfire threats to biodiversity into official processes and meetings of the CBD and indicators of the Global Biodiversity Framework, and similarly into processes and meetings of the UNFCCC.



To this end, the Conservation Biology Institute ([CBI](#)) and the Ecological and Forestry Applications Research Centre ([CREAF](#)) co-hosted a series of events on the biodiversity and wildfire nexus on the margins of the Green Zone (see [CBI at COP16](#) webpage for more information on each event):

- (Panel discussion)
Global Challenges to Sustaining Biodiversity in an Era of Changing Fire Regimes
25 October 2024, 14:00-17:00
- (Interactive workshop)
International Viewpoints on Developing Community & Biodiversity Resilience to Wildfire under Global Change
28 October 2024, 9:00-13:30

Building on COP16 activities, CBI will launch a global [Wildfire Academy](#) in 2025 to educate and empower communities to build ecological resilience to wildfire. The Wildfire Academy is framed within a Wildfire Collective of international partners to advance, share and apply leading-edge research and practice in wildfire management and conservation science.

To address wildfire impacts to biodiversity, we, the undersigned, urge the CBD Secretariat to pursue the following actions, to be supported by Parties to the CBD and non-state actors:

CBD and UNFCCC Secretariats

- Create a CBD Technical Expert Group (cf. [TEGFP](#)) on wildfire resilience and biodiversity impacts, to inform official CBD fora, workshops and dialogues before and during COP17.
- Leverage this Expert Group to support CBD Parties in concerted action to address wildfire impacts to biodiversity through technical assistance and funding mechanisms.
- Collaborate with UNFCCC colleagues to facilitate [unified climate and biodiversity pledges and negotiations](#) (as urged by Colombia Environment Minister Muhamad) before COP30.

Parties to the CBD and UNFCCC:

Parties can support the CBD/UNFCCC Secretariats by acting to address the rising frequency, extent, and severity of wildfires and associated impacts to biodiversity through these actions:

- Contribute to the CBD Technical Expert Group on wildfire resilience and biodiversity impacts to inform official CBD fora, workshops and dialogues before and during COP17.
- Include wildfire impacts to biodiversity and identify needs to increase wildfire resilience in revised National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).
- Support concerted action across global agreement with peer CBD Parties to include indicators relevant to wildfire resilience in reporting through the GBF, NDCs and VNRs.

Non-state actors:

NSAs (e.g. Wildfire Collective) can support the CBD Secretariat in taking urgent action to address the rising frequency of wildfires and growing impacts to biodiversity through these actions:

- Contribute to the CBD Technical Expert Group on wildfire resilience and biodiversity impacts to inform official CBD fora, workshops and dialogues before and during COP17.
- Co-create and facilitate country- and community-specific training/curricula on wildfire resilience and recovery through the Wildfire Academy (to be launched in 2025).
- Facilitate regional CBD workshops in the run-up to COP17 with CBD Parties and local and Indigenous communities, in concert with international partners in the Wildfire Collective.

We appreciate your kind consideration, and we look forward to your response.



Yours faithfully,

- **Robin Jones**, Executive Director, Conservation Biology Institute, US
- **Dr. Alexandra D. Syphard**, Senior Global Change Research Scientist, Conservation Biology Institute, US
- **Karl Peet**, Senior Advisor, Global Strategy, Conservation Biology Institute, US

- **Dr. David Bowman**, Director, Fire Centre Research Hub, University of Tasmania, Australia
- **Dr. Lluís Brotons**, Research Scientist, Ecological and Forestry Applications Research Centre, Catalunya, Spain
- **Alicia Perez-Porro**, Head of Policy Engagement & Institutional Relations, Ecological and Forestry Applications Research Centre, Catalunya, Spain
- **Dra. Iokiñe Rodríguez Fernández**, Professor, School of Global Development, University of East Anglia, UK (Venezuela)
- **Manuela Rueda Trujillo**, Ph.D. Candidate, Leiden University, Netherlands (Colombia)
- **Mr. Ricardo Lozano**, Minister, Environment & Sustainable Development (2018-2020), Colombia
- **Dr. Simon Bowring**, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Laboratoire des Sciences du Climat et de l'Environnement, France (UK)