

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY
FOREST FIRES AND GLOBAL FIRE PLATFORM**

**PRESENTED BY:
DAMART WILLIAMS
FORESTRY DEPARTMENT
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JAMAICA DELEGATION**

**26TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY
FAO**

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Thank you, Mr Chair

Good afternoon

Distinguished Delegates, International Observers

Ladies and Gentlemen

Jamaica takes this opportunity to, first, commend the FAO for its commitment to strengthening the capacity of countries to implement Integrated Fire Management (IFM) as we shift from a focus on reaction and response to prevention and preparedness where forest fires are concerned.

The invitation extended by the LAC Forestry Commission to the Committee on Forestry to note that forest fire management, particularly fire risk reduction, is of critical importance as climate change influences increase with more intense fire occurrences is fully endorsed by Jamaica. Additionally, the consideration to strengthen the focus on IFM through country-level and regional strategies, normative studies and collaboration among countries is recognized as a crucial underpinning to any forest fire management strategy at the local level.

The vulnerability of Jamaica, and other countries in the Caribbean region, to a number of fire-related impacts cannot be overstated. Environmental impacts of climate change such as more intense and longer dry spells and increased temperatures serve to make worse the detrimental environmental impacts of mostly man-made forest/wildfires. The frequency and severity of these extreme weather and climatic conditions are projected to increase and will continue to result in an alteration of existing fire regimes.

Successful fire management requires participatory approaches with leadership and management that are appropriately shared among all the relevant stakeholders. Ensuring a co-ordinated approach to effective fire management in areas where multiple organisations and stakeholders have responsibilities and interest in the fire programme is, therefore, critical. This is consistent with the first R in the IFM – Review – and forms a significant part of the approach adopted in Jamaica. We have also had success in the Risk Reduction and Readiness elements. However, our ability to Respond and Recover is still in need of additional support.

The recent implementation of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)-funded *Establishment of a Comprehensive Bush Fire Warning Index Project* in Jamaica is an example of an

opportunity for a more effectual response and recovery mechanism to be developed. This system builds the country's capacity to determine critical thresholds for fire outbreaks under different conditions for effective bush fire management. This project is being complemented by the continued exposure of relevant stakeholders to Forest Fire Management training, which focuses primarily on prevention and preparedness. Additionally, critical stakeholders such as the Forestry Department and Jamaica Fire Brigade have recently undergone training in Wildfire Observations and Origin Scene Protection. This was spearheaded by the USFS and should further have the effect of developing the country's response to forest fires.

In recognizing the importance of a IFM approach to fire management and its suitability for implementation in the Jamaican context, we, therefore, support the recommendations that the FAO:

1. continue to apply a systemic approach to the review and analysis of fires to support Members to identify relevant and effective risk reduction measures and strategies;
2. support the development of fire management networks and continue strengthening of or engagement in existing fire management related networks; and
3. implement the Global Fire Management Platform with UNEP and in partnership with countries and relevant stakeholders to promote integrated fire management more broadly.

Mr Chair,

I thank you

Damart Williams – Jamaica Delegation