

Statement for item 6

European Forest Institute, COFO, 29/09/2026

Dear Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every summer, the same word appears in discussions about wildfire:

“unprecedented.” Unprecedented fires. Unprecedented heat. Unprecedented droughts. Unprecedented evacuations and losses. But when the unprecedented happens each year, an important question arises: **when does a catastrophic event become the new reality?**

Extreme wildfires result from the combination of ignition with extreme heat, drought, strong winds and landscapes traits with large amounts of combustible vegetation. Land abandonment, declining grazing and reduced management can allow fuels to accumulate. Climate change is intensifying these conditions, but landscape management is key. Different realities require different approaches, but the objective is shared: **create landscapes that are diverse, actively managed and resilient to fire.**

Many tools already exist: sustainable forest management, agroforestry, silvopastoral systems, strategic grazing, etc. **The challenge is to deploy the right solutions in the right places, supported by policies that work together rather than in isolation.**

EFI's recent Policy Brief on “integrated fire management provides a practical framework for policy action. Three areas of action are particularly relevant:

1.: Prevention to reduce wildfire risks through fuel management, grazing, forest diversification and resilient landscape mosaics.

2.: Coordination of farmers, owners, foresters, firefighters, conservation organisations, researchers, policy makers and local authorities to **plan, to decide and act together**, particularly at landscape level.

3: Implementation of integrated wildfire risk management requires sustained funding, coordination, capacity and knowledge exchange.

FoRISK, coordinated by EFI under FOREST EUROPE, can contribute through capacity building, experts' training, knowledge exchange and its rapid response mechanism. A **new report on "Extreme Wildland Fires' is being prepared** currently to capture the latest scientific evidence. It will be launched in early 2027.

In conclusion, the policy direction is clear. Resilience is built long before the first emergency call. Integrated fire management is not only a response to the next fire. It is an investment in resilience before it occurs.