

## **COFO 28 – statements of the EU and its Member States**

### **AGENDA ITEM: 6. Strengthening actions to address wildfires through the Global Fire Management Hub and FAO's work on integrated fire management (COFO/2026/4)**

1. Ireland is honoured to speak on behalf of the EU and its 27 Member States.
2. The European Union reaffirms its support to the Global Fire Management Hub as the main global mechanism on Integrated Fire Management for capacity building, knowledge exchange, and coordination, while reaffirming FAO's leading role.
3. We also acknowledge the progress made since 2024 in implementing actions on governance, financing, and political commitments in support of IFM.
4. The EU has also continued its efforts to tackle wildfires, in 2026 through a policy framework on Integrated Wildfire Risk Management, in which engagement in international and regional initiatives, including the Fire Hub, is a relevant matter. The EU will continue its cooperation with accession countries and neighbouring partners to strengthen regional resilience.
5. The Fire Hub should complement and connect existing regional and global arrangements, including pan-European instruments such as EU Civil Protection Mechanism and FoRISK. In this regard, we ask FAO to ensure coherence, synergy, and the efficient use of resources, avoiding institutional duplication, fragmented governance structures, overlapping reporting mechanisms, and widening of the Fire Hub's core objectives.
6. The EU supports the mobilisation of resources to strengthen national capacities and facilitate access to finance for IFM implementation, while ensuring transparency, accountability, no conflict of interests, and alignment with existing international and regional financing mechanisms.
7. The EU supports the suggested actions in document COFO/2026/4, kindly considering the next amendments:
  - In para b, we suggest avoiding listing strategies that need to incorporate fire risk reduction, use instead the wording of resolution 7 of UNEA7: “relevant national sectorial strategies, plans, programmes and policies, as appropriate, involving relevant partners and stakeholders and drawing on, as relevant, the *“Integrated Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines”*”.
  - In para c.iii, please add - after National adaptation plans NAPs- “, *land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets*” to reflect the role of fires as a driver of soil degradation and in coherence with the objectives of the Rio Conventions.

- In para c.iii, it is preferable to use “forest management” instead of “forestry”, because it is a broader concept.
  - Finally, we suggest new para c. iv. “support Members, upon request, in stabilising and strengthening cooperative bilateral and multilateral cross-boundary agreements to address IFM, including by promoting interoperability to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of reciprocal assistance in wildfire emergency response”.
8. We would like to stress the need to shift from a focus on wildfire suppression to prevention and preparedness. Sustainable and active forest, agricultural, grazing management and other land management practices can reduce wildfire risk, strengthen ecosystem and landscape resilience and support post-fire recovery. The EU therefore supports IFM approaches, including, where appropriate, prescribed burning and the combination of traditional knowledge and science-based practices, with appropriate environmental and safety safeguards.
  9. As reflected in the Istanbul Report on Integrated Fire Management, it is important to recognise and address the cascading impacts of wildfires, including soil erosion, flooding, landslides, land degradation, pest outbreaks, biodiversity loss and reduced carbon-sequestration capacity, by integrating these risks into prevention, preparedness, reaction and post-fire recovery planning, while promoting community-based approaches, public awareness, education, and the meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders.
  10. Thank you, Madam / Mr. Chair.