

Press release - IV Meeting of the Expert Group on Forest Fires in Latin America and the Caribbean (EGFF LAC)

The 4th meeting of the **Expert Group on Forest Fires in Latin America and the Caribbean/ EGFF LAC** took place in the city of **Porto, Portugal, Portugal** on **15-16 May 2023** with the objective of facilitating the exchange of experience and knowledge of the preparation, analysis and evaluation of the 2023 fire campaign between experts from Latin American national fire management agencies, representatives of the **European Union (the Joint Research Centre and EU Delegations)** and international organisations (the **Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations/FAO**, the **United Nations Environment Programme/UNEP**, the **Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation/ACTO**).

In addition, members of the Expert Group on Forest Fires in Latin America and the Caribbean/ EGFF LAC had the opportunity to exchange experiences with members of the European Expert Group on Forest Fires (EGFF), with the aim of identifying advantages and opportunities for collaboration between countries in both regions in the prevention and management of forest fires.

This meeting is part of a collaboration between the **European Union** and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) under the project **Support to wildfire management in Latin America and the Caribbean**, an initiative that aims to improve national capacities to prevent forest fires from a regional perspective, relying on EU best practice: the **European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS)** and the **European Expert Group on Forest Fires (EGFF)**.

During the meeting, Latin American countries presented initiatives and challenges in forest fire prevention and response, highlighting the importance of exchanging knowledge and best practices in ecosystem preparedness, appropriate forest management and legislation to strengthen these activities. In this context, European Civil Protection Mechanisms shared experiences of European collaboration in civil protection and disaster response. The principle of solidarity is fundamental to such cooperation. In Europe, shared teams and protocols have been established, and the [rescEU project](#) adds further capability. Work is still ongoing on operational standards, training and overcoming language barriers to improve international response.

Another key element of the meeting was to highlight the need to invest in prevention, raise community awareness and use data as a basis to support integrated fire management policies. During Pieter Van Lierop's address, FAO highlighted the work on early warning systems based on hot spots and vegetation. Collaboration with UNEP on regional projects to address cross-border fires was highlighted, and the development of a global platform for knowledge exchange was discussed.

The participants underlined the importance of having accurate and coordinated information, such as that provided by the **Global Wildfire Information System (GWIS)**, in developing strategic actions to minimise the impact of wildfires in the region and to improve fire policies at the national and regional levels. Emphasis was placed on technical ethics and effective communication based on





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scientific facts. The relationship between institutions and political power was also highlighted, as well as the need to work in partnership at local, national, regional and international levels. During Francesco Gaetani's talk, UNEP highlighted the role of the programme in fire prevention and collaboration with other organisations. The link between fires and climate change was recognised, and a partnership between the Forum of Ministers and the working group of forest fire experts was proposed to address this challenge together.

Finally, the GEFF LAC experts identified common challenges, such as strengthening rules and regulations, improving coordination between institutions, and increasing investment in prevention and personnel training. The use of scientific information to drive prevention was highlighted. ACTO representatives Isaac Ocampo and Margarita Medina highlighted the work in promoting regional and international collaboration to address these challenges, strengthening its member countries in international agreements and supporting joint actions in preserving the Amazon. In addition, activities were proposed for the period 2023-2027, including collaboration between countries and the EU, publication of reports and dissemination of forest fire campaigns.

Joining forces for integrated forest fire management in Latin America and the Caribbean

GEFF LAC comprises fire managers in relevant ministries and agencies responsible for fire management in various phases of the fire cycle, from prevention, preparedness and firefighting to the restoration of forest fires.

Under the "**Support to Forest Fire Management in LAC**" project, three previous **EGFF LAC** meetings have been organised (in December 2021 online, in July 2022 in Santiago, Chile and November 2022 in Brasilia). During these meetings, the members of the Group actively collaborated in the creation of the first "[Annual report on the impacts of forest fires in Latin America in 2021](#)" and the "**Mapping of fire information systems in Latin American countries**", as well as proposing a series of initiatives to improve forest fire management in their region.

In March 2023, experts in prevention and early warning systems from national fire management agencies in Latin America and the Caribbean participated in the "**EGFF LAC Seminar on prevention and early warning systems for forest fires**" in Punta del Este, Uruguay.

For more information, click here:

<https://rp-americas.undrr.org/es/2023/agenda/dias-de-preparacion-rp-americas>

<https://gwis.jrc.ec.europa.eu/projects/support-wildfire-management-lac>

