

Open letter to the Brazilian people about the fires in Amazonia

The majority of the Coordinators* of Post-graduate Programs in Biodiversity, which are part of the Brazilian Government's Higher Level Education Coordination Agency (CAPES), publicly declare their preoccupation with the increases in the rates of deforestation and burning in Amazonia in 2019.

The number of focal points of fires registered in Amazonia has increased and the smoke from these is being detected by satellites of INPE (Brazilian National Institute for Space Research) and NASA (US National Agency for Space Administration). According to INPE, this increase is 84% higher than in 2018 and the highest since 2013. The destruction of forest, has also increased rapidly in recent months (IMAZON – Amazon Institute for Man and the Environment), causing the situation to worsen.

The Federal Government and the State Governments of the north and central-west regions of Brazil should take efficient steps to combat deforestation in the region. Significant reductions in the budgets of IBAMA (Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Sustainable Resources), and the Ministries of Science, Technology and Education, which promote research activities, environmental education, prosecution for environmental crimes and the monitoring of biodiversity and of the forest, should be immediately restored. For this, all the funds and mechanisms available must be mobilized, especially the Amazon Fund through the *Prevfogo* program of IBAMA.

Decades of research, in part developed by the Post-graduate Programs which we represent, have allowed us to know with confidence that the Amazon Forest is responsible for important environmental services which benefit the economy and society, such as maintaining the cycle of rains in much of the national territory, reduction of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, contributing to the reduction of global warming, water storage in rivers and drainages, pollination, innumerable natural products, amongst others.

The Amazon Forest is a natural patrimony of South America, with Brazil being the main country where it grows and it should be protected for the benefit of all of society since it is fundamental for the quality of life of the people, and of future generations.

We emphasize that in Brazil today, CAPES' post-graduate research network in biodiversity includes 143 internationally recognized programs, producing qualified professionals for the environmental sector. We are at the disposition of society to construct science-based public policies for Amazonia and the other Brazilian biomes.

* Up to the time of publishing of this letter, 139 of the Coordinators of Programs in Post-graduation in the area of Biodiversity of CAPES have indicated that they agree with the content of this letter and its distribution.