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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE TO THE 8TH WILDLAND FIRE CONFERENCE

Porto, 16 May 2023

I am pleased to greet the 8th International Wildland Fire Conference.

You are meeting amidst a world in flames.

Even in the Arctic and the Amazon, fires are becoming more frequent – and more deadly.

Entire towns have been erased by fire; entire habitats charred by flames and choked by smoke.

And we are responsible for this devastation.

By flooding the atmosphere with greenhouse gases, we are turning our world into a tinderbox – hotter, drier, and more combustible.

This creates a vicious cycle, with every fire emitting more greenhouse gases, more warming, more drying, and more burning.

By century's end, we could see a 50 per cent increase in extreme fires.

We must – and we can – avoid this future.

First, we must keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

This means urgent action to reach net zero emissions, phase out fossil fuels, and scale up mitigation and adaptation.

Second, we must shift investments from reaction and response to prevention and preparedness.

This means restoring ecosystems, working with local communities, learning from indigenous people, and helping vulnerable countries build resilience.

We will never prevent every wildfire.

But by working together, we can build a safer, more sustainable, and more resilient world for all.

I wish you every success.

Thank you.
