

G7 pledges millions to fight Amazon fires

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The G7 will give \$20 million (18 million euros) to send firefighting planes to tackle the blazes engulfing parts of the Amazon, the presidents of France and Chile said Monday.

"We must respond to the call of the forest which is burning today in the Amazon," France's Emmanuel Macron said as President Sebastian Pinera of Chile, a guest of the G7, underlined that "countries of the Amazon are in dire need of fire brigades and water bomber planes."

Nearly 80,000 forest fires have been detected in Brazil since the beginning of the year—just over half of them in the massive Amazon basin.

Macron had declared the situation an "international crisis" and made it a priority of the summit of the G7, which comprises Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

G7 leaders gathered in Biarritz held talks on the many environmental challenges facing planet Earth, with a focus on the record number of fires destroying swathes of the Amazon.

Macron has threatened to block a huge new trade deal between the EU and Latin America unless Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, a climate change sceptic, takes serious steps to protect the fast-shrinking forest from logging and mining.

Bolsonaro lashed out at the French leader over his criticism and suggested NGOs could be setting the fires to embarrass him—without giving any evidence to back the claim.

But at the weekend, he finally caved in to international pressure to save a region crucial for maintaining a stable global climate, deploying two aircraft to douse fires and authorising the army to help tackle the blazes.

'Universal heritage'

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his country would

send a water bomber plane to fight the Amazon blazes and contribute some \$15 million to the effort.

The G7 also agreed to support a reforestation plan to be unveiled in September, the leaders said.

Brazil would have to agree to any reforestation plan, as would indigenous communities living in the world's biggest rainforest.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said new planting was needed "to preserve this universal heritage, which is absolutely essential for the well-being of the world's population."

He said the issue would be discussed during the UN General Assembly in New York in September.

Macron told France 2 it was hoped "at least 30 million" dollars could be raised for the project.

On Monday evening, the French leader met Brazilian indigenous chief Raoni Metuktire, who said he had asked Macron to "help us preserve our lands."

"The forests and lands of Brazil help the entire planet live," said the chief, an advocate for indigenous rights.

Greenpeace executive director Jennifer Morgan welcomed the G7 aid, but said the club must also "stop fuelling the destruction of the Amazon through the import of agricultural products associated with deforestation and soil degradation."

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised 10 million pounds (\$12 million) for Amazon reforestation projects, while luxury fashion giant

LVMH pledged 10 million euros.

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