

Africa leads globe in forest fires

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The African continent leads the globe in the frequency of forest fires, the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission learned at its meeting in Mozambique.

Forest fires are a major concern for Africa, mainly due to the traditional practice of using fire for conversion of forest to agriculture or grassland, said the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization.

The frequency of fires is particularly high in northern Angola, the southern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, southern Sudan and the Central African Republic, the agency said.

However, the FAO said more than half of African countries have established new forestry policies and laws over the past 15 years, and two-thirds have an active national forestry management program in place. But implementation and enforcement of these measures remains weak, mainly due to lack of financing and weak national institutions, the agency added.

The net rate of forest loss in Africa, mainly due to conversion of forest lands to agriculture -- 9 million acres per year between 2000 and 2005 -- is the second highest in the world, after that of South America.

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