

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 12, 2019

The Honorable Steven T. Mnuchin
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20220

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Mark Green
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Independence Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Secretary Mnuchin, Secretary Perdue, and Administrator Green:

We are writing to urge immediate financial and technical assistance to combat the tens of thousands of fires burning across Brazil, including in the Brazilian Amazon. Scientists at Brazil's National Institute of Amazonian Research have determined that rampant deforestation, which has increased exponentially in 2019, has pushed the Amazon to an ecological tipping point, and the fires currently burning across the Amazon are exacerbating this situation. Further, President Jair Bolsonaro's hostility to indigenous peoples' land rights and existing Brazilian conservation law is intensifying the crisis. Should President Bolsonaro accept the G-7's offers to aid Brazil during this crisis, the U.S. must engage constructively with other G-7 members towards working with Brazil to halt and reverse the alarming rate of deforestation in the Amazon.

While the Brazilian government is ultimately responsible for the stewardship and conservation management of its territory, the Brazilian Amazon, is widely regarded as a natural resource whose viability is critical to the health and sustainability of the global environment. For that reason, the U.S., and many other foreign governments have for decades contributed millions of dollars to efforts to preserve and protect the Amazon. This investment and our historical leadership on global conservation warrant the U.S. to offer both emergency assistance to efforts on the ground to extinguish and control the fires as well as technical assistance to improve wildfire, forestry, agricultural, and watershed management capacities of national and subnational authorities in Brazil responding to the crisis.

President Bolsonaro is largely dismissive of the severity of the fires. He has claimed that Brazil does not have the resources to combat the fires, and without evidence, accuses his critics of setting the fires. Despite the President's claims, we urge USAID, the Treasury Department, and

the U.S. Forest Service to respond by offering assistance to the Brazilian government, local authorities and non-governmental actors working to fight the fires. We also strongly encourage you to exercise United States leadership through multilateral organizations like the Global Environmental Facility, the World Bank, and the Green Climate Fund to mobilize funds towards addressing the Amazon crisis.

The Congress has programmed \$11 million in the current fiscal year's appropriations legislation for bilateral environmental cooperation with Brazil. These funds should be immediately re-directed to aid in forest preservation efforts and emergency conservation programs. Additionally, the Congress provided \$125 million in the current fiscal year for sustainable landscapes programming to prevent forest loss. Unobligated balances in this account should be directed, to the extent practical, to help Brazil cooperatively combat the drivers of wildfires in the Amazon and other fire-affected regions. We need to demonstrate to President Bolsonaro that he cannot credibly claim that his government lacks the resources to confront this crisis.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for taking our concerns seriously as you engage with the Brazilian government on this localized environmental crisis with serious global consequences. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



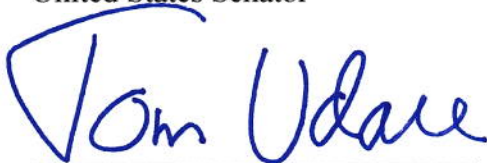
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United States Senator



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United States Senator




Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



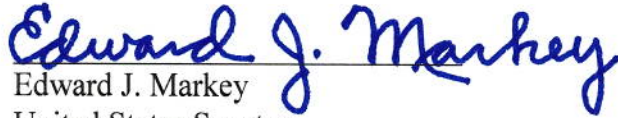
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



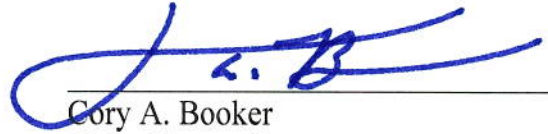
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