

SAVE THE DATE

UNFCCC COP24, 6 December 2018

15.30-17.00, German Pavilion

The trace of haze: Peat fires as local and global challenges

Over the last decade, Indonesia, South Africa, and Russia have been subject to devastating fires on drained peatlands, whereas in 2018 also European countries (e.g. UK, Latvia, Germany) suffered under hardly controllable peat fires. Peat fires are unique as they are very difficult to extinguish and may burn undetected underground for months, even after rainfall and under snow cover. They cause huge emissions of greenhouse gases – some 1,800 t CO₂ per hectare - and pollute the atmosphere with health damaging carbon monoxide, fine particulate matter and (semi-)volatile organic compounds.

The only sustainable way to avoid peat fires is to restore the water level in drained peatlands. Adequate rewetting does not only prevent fires, but also reduces greenhouse gas emissions, stops soil degradation and subsidence and enhances biodiversity, and where suitable, paludiculture (wet agriculture and forestry) enables continuation of productive use.

This session highlights the importance of peatland rewetting for climate change mitigation and adaptation, human health and biodiversity with special attention to peat fires. Speakers from Indonesia, Germany, Poland, Russia and the UK will share key lessons and will highlight the benefits of peatland protection, rewetting, restoration and drainage-free livelihood such as paludiculture and eco-tourism. The session will strengthen a coalition for climate action by embedding this network of governments and experts within the Global Peatlands Initiative - a global effort to save peatlands.

The session will also showcase national-level coalitions e.g. the Restoring Peatlands in Russia Project, which has been working with local and national partners and was awarded a UNFCCC “Momentum for Change” award in 2017, and share the progress of the Indonesian Peatland Restoration Agency in its efforts to rewet millions of hectares of drained peatlands, and which in 2017 has rewetted more peatland than all of Europe in its entire history.

Panelists:

Hans Joosten, Greifswald Mire Centre, GERMANY

Andrey Sirin, Institute of Forest Science Russian Academy of Sciences, RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Wiktor Kotowski, Warsaw University, POLAND

Ruandha Agung Sugardiman, Director General of Climate Change Control, INDONESIA (tbc)

Mark Reed, Newcastle University, UK

Moderator:

Dianna Kopansky, UN Environment

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Global
Peatlands
Initiative

