WAC statement on the on-going wildfires and the destruction of the Indigenous Homelands and the Quilombola communities of the Amazonian Basin

The Indigenous Peoples of the Amazonian Basin, who have lived for generations in the rainforest, are subject to increasingly intensified and wide-spread attacks, illegal invasions and occupations, and systematic destruction of their homelands and ancestral landscapes. More than 3,000 Quilombola communities, descendants of escaped slaves, also live in the basin, and they are also among those who have suffered from serious and systematic infringements of basic human rights, that are encouraged, and often organised and orchestrated by business interests, whose activities are not only tolerated but also supported by the States whose sovereign territories include the Amazonian Basin. The situation is being exacerbated by on-going general environmental devastations, including the spread of COVID-19 Coronavirus into the area.

The wildfires, that were widely reported by world media in the Summer 2019, are still raging in the Amazon, and they are a visible metaphor for the violent effect of limitless and uncontrolled economic growth and its impacts, resulting in the unprecedent human and environmental crisis unfolding in front of us. The World Archaeological Congress stands in solidarity with the communities that live on the frontline of this crisis, and we believe it’s time to listen with intensified attention the voices of those who call the rainforest ‘home.’

We believe the loss and destruction of Indigenous homelands constitute an infringement of basic human rights and Indigenous rights, the protection and promotion of which the
governments and political authorities of the world are obliged to strive for. Once again, we express our solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples and Quilombola Communities of the Amazonian Basin, and appeal to the governments of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela and the concerned authorities to fulfill their duties and to do their utmost to stop the on-going destruction of the homelands of the Indigenous Peoples and Quilombola Communities of the Amazonian Basin.

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on behalf of the WAC Council representing the membership

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Background information
The World Archaeological Congress, with members in more than 90 countries, is the only fully international and representative organisation of practicing archaeologists. WAC’s mission is to (1) promote professional training for disadvantaged nations and communities; (2) broaden public education, involving national and international communities in archaeological research; (3) develop archaeological practice so that it empowers Indigenous and minority groups; (4) contribute to the conservation of archaeological sites threatened by looting, urban growth, tourism, development or war; and (5) re-dress global inequities amongst archaeologists.