

September 23, 2014

Action Agenda for the New York Declaration on Forests

Forests Matter

Forests are essential to our future. More than 1.6 billion people depend on them for food, water, fuel, medicines, traditional cultures and livelihoods. Forests also support up to 80% of terrestrial biodiversity and play a vital role in safeguarding the climate by naturally sequestering carbon. Yet, each year an average of 13 million hectares of forest disappear, often with devastating impacts on communities and indigenous peoples. The conversion of forests for the production of commodities—such as soy, palm oil, beef and paper—accounts for roughly half of global deforestation. Infrastructure, urban expansion, energy, mining and fuel wood collection also contribute in varying degrees.

The world can slow, halt and reverse global forest loss while simultaneously enhancing food security for all. Reducing emissions from deforestation and increasing forest restoration will be extremely important in limiting global warming to 2°C. In fact, forests represent one of the largest, most cost-effective climate solutions available today. Action to conserve, sustainably manage and restore forests can contribute to economic growth, poverty alleviation, rule of law, food security, climate resilience and biodiversity conservation. It can help secure respect for the rights of forest dependent indigenous peoples, while promoting their participation and that of local communities in decision-making.

Already much has been achieved:

- Brazil has demonstrated that progress can be made at huge scale. By 2013, Brazil had reduced deforestation by 71% compared to the 1996-2005 annual average, while at the same time increasing agricultural production and rural incomes. In terms of the size of emissions avoided, this may well be the largest climate success to date globally in any sector.
- Indonesia has embarked on comprehensive reforms to land use policies, customary land rights, regulations and law enforcement to meet its pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 26% by 2020 (41% subject to international support).
- Congo Basin countries have made important advances in sustainable forest management, including through adoption of management plans and certification, and in ecosystem conservation through the creation of protected areas and the use of conservation concessions.
- Colombia is making progress on its Amazon Vision – an ambitious plan towards meeting the zero net deforestation goal in its Amazon region by 2020.
- Mexico has adopted a law on climate change that incorporates the goal of reaching zero net deforestation.
- A number of nations have strengthened legal protections for and implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples.
- Some 75 countries are drafting or implementing comprehensive national strategies and action plans to reduce forest loss, increase forest cover and sustainably manage their forest resources, both as part of their climate contributions under the UNFCCC and to promote the objectives of other related initiatives such as the UN Forum on Forests and its non-legally binding instrument on forests.
- Since 2010, donor governments have provided a total of over \$5 billion in finance to over 50 countries for programs that support efforts to slow, halt and reverse deforestation.
- Large REDD+ transactions are being tested, through Norway's bilateral deals (including the USD 1 billion partnerships with Brazil and Indonesia), Germany's REDD Early Movers Program, and multilaterally through the Carbon Fund of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility.
- The Governors' Climate and Forest Task Force brings together 26 states and provinces covering a quarter of all tropical forests, committed to pursuing low emissions development. In the Rio Branco Declaration of

August 2014 they pledged ambitious cuts in deforestation, supported by results-based payments, with a substantial share of revenues going to indigenous groups and local communities.

- Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change established in 2013 the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, completing the guidance needed for nations to qualify for results-based payments for verified reductions in forest emissions.
- Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity agreed in Aichi, Japan, in 2010, to various targets related to forests, in particular:
 - *By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.*
 - *By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification.*
- A number of countries have committed to restore deforested and degraded lands, as part of the Bonn Challenge target to restore 150 million hectares by 2020.
- Multilateral initiatives have provided more than \$1 billion of support for REDD+ efforts and forest investments across 75 countries, encompassing over 55% of the world's tropical forests, as well as dry lands and boreal forests. They bring together key stakeholder groups at national, regional and global levels, and have generated knowledge and experiences to advance the REDD+ agenda.
- Commodity producers and traders have made commitments to zero-deforestation production and trade of commodities, zero conversion of carbon-rich peatlands, respect for human rights, transparency, traceability, third party verification and responsible management practices.
- The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF), a global alliance of 400 large companies with global sales of \$3 trillion, has pledged to eliminate deforestation from consumer goods supply chains by 2020 and called for a legally binding climate agreement, including provisions for REDD+ implementation.
- Individual consumer goods companies are making progress towards eliminating deforestation from their supply chains, often partnering with NGOs.
- The Tropical Forest Alliance 2020, a public-private partnership, is bringing together governments, companies and civil society organizations to promote supply chain transformation and reduce tropical deforestation related to key agricultural commodities by 2020.
- A group of international banks has come together under the umbrella of the Banking Environment Initiative, to make public commitments (via the 'Soft Commodities' Compact with the CGF) to using the banking industry's services to help end deforestation in commodity supply chains by 2020. This has triggered the banking industry to work to stimulate trade in sustainably sourced commodities through trade finance instruments, and to explore supporting banking standards.
- Institutional investors representing US\$15 trillion are requesting information on deforestation risk via CDP, formerly known as the Carbon Disclosure Project.
- Research and advocacy by civil society organizations has improved scientific understanding, built public support for conservation and restoration policies, and helped to encourage companies to take action.
- Local civil society organizations in forest countries have helped strengthen natural resource management, transparency, accountability and rule of law, and have built public support for forest conservation and legal protections.
- Many indigenous peoples and local communities around the globe have long proven that they can sustainably and equitably manage natural resources, and have served as effective defenders of their rights, traditions and communities.

- Several tropical countries have implemented effective satellite-based deforestation monitoring systems, with support from U.S. and European space agencies. In addition, Global Forest Watch has emerged as a tool that could help achieve powerful new levels of transparency and participation, both locally and globally.
- Policies and measures by timber-producing and timber-consuming countries to tackle illegal logging have proved very effective in reducing forest loss. Examples include enforcement, certification, legality verification and bilateral voluntary partnership agreements.
- There is growing evidence that areas where communities have clear and enforced rights over forests have reduced deforestation. In Nepal, deforestation has been virtually eliminated in areas under community management.

Governments, Companies and business associations, indigenous peoples, civil society organizations and multilateral institutions should do much more, however, acting individually and in partnership, to achieve the goals of the New York Declaration on Forests. All have different opportunities to lead. Below is a menu of key actions they can take, on a voluntary basis, to promote their shared objectives.

Governments can:

- Augment efforts to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets by 2020.
- Put forward climate mitigation contributions that include ambitious goals to reduce forest emissions and/or ambitious provisions to generate demand or finance for verified emission reductions from REDD+, both before and after 2020.
- Facilitate REDD+ actions at scale by implementing the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ to ensure that countries and provinces that take action are rewarded economically for their efforts including through scaled up payments for verified emission reductions.
- Align fiscal and other economic incentives for forest conservation and restoration.
- Institute policies to protect and sustainably manage natural forests and shift agricultural expansion to non-forested and degraded lands, while promoting sustainable and equitable development.
- Strengthen implementation and enforcement of legal frameworks for protecting and sustainably managing forests.
- Promote and support participation and respect the rights of indigenous peoples, including to their lands, territories and resources, consistent with applicable law.
- Clarify rights in land tenure systems to improve land security, strengthen community management of natural resources and resolve overlapping forest clearing concessions.
- Provide support to producers, in particular smallholders, to adapt better management practices, comply with relevant policies and increase productivity on existing farms and new non-forested lands.
- Support the development of alternative economic opportunities to those relying on forest loss.
- Use real time satellite imagery and on the ground monitoring to clamp down on illegal deforestation and degradation.
- Promote public procurement systems that favor sustainably sourced commodities, and educate citizens about responsible consumption.
- Stop the importation of illegally sourced commodities.
- Support partner countries, including through development assistance and economic incentives, to undertake policies and measures that help address deforestation.

Companies and business associations can:

- Commit to eliminate deforestation from their supply chains, including third party suppliers, as soon as possible, and collectively by no later than 2020. Leading consumer goods companies, commodity producers and traders have already committed to ambitious timelines to phase out deforestation, some with immediate effect. More companies should be encouraged to follow suit, including companies from other sectors such as animal feedstuffs, construction and food service.
- Adopt the highest possible standards for forest conservation particularly as they relate to protection of high carbon stock landscapes, no expansion onto peat lands and the protection of human rights and land rights.
- Commit to traceability and transparency in their supply chains.
- Commit to world-class standards for responsible forest management.
- Strengthen and expand commitments by banks and other financial institutions, building on the work of the Banking Environment Initiative. This includes rolling out financial instruments to support sustainable commodity production and trade, and deforestation-free banking operations and standards.
- In partnership with others, tighten and make more precise the standards that define sustainably sourced commodities in ways that facilitate ambitious action.
- Commit to invest in and purchase commodities preferentially from countries and jurisdictions that have ambitious plans to halt deforestation and that succeed in reducing emissions.
- Commit to clear, quantifiable emissions reduction targets in their agricultural value chains.
- Support and promote sound forest governance and strong forest policies, including economic incentives for action.
- Evaluate and disclose the deforestation footprint of their sectors and organizations, with a view to creating greater transparency and understanding, and stimulating implementation of solutions.

Indigenous peoples can:

- Exercise and promote their rights to traditional lands and other natural resources in ways that protect and conserve forests, especially when such rights are secured, consistent with applicable law.
- Work with governments to secure their distinct right to participate in decision-making in order to improve transparency, strengthen forest governance, reduce illegal logging and deforestation and increase overall public participation in decision-making.
- Work actively with governments to shape national REDD+ strategies and policies and make their own contributions to REDD+ implementation, tailored to national circumstances and in accordance with applicable law.

Civil Society Organizations can:

- Build public support for strong forest policies, including economic incentives for action and to strengthen the environmental integrity of forestlands.
- Contribute to the development of forest conservation and restoration policies through appropriate channels for public input and participation.
- Assist governments and companies to set and implement ambitious standards for defining sustainably and equitably sourced commodities.
- Expand the technical support and assistance they provide communities, governments and companies.
- Educate the public through public awareness campaigns, including by promoting sustainable consumption and production.

Multilateral institutions can:

- Support partner countries through development assistance, capacity building and climate finance to implement policies and practices to address deforestation and forest degradation as well as to promote sustainable land and resource use.
- Test and scale up forest and land use investments and systems to deliver results-based REDD+ payments.
- Work with the private sector to mobilize capital to scale up sustainable land-use practices and accelerate the greening of supply chains.
- Include greenhouse gas accounting in appraisal and impact evaluation of projects and promote low-emission land-use finance policies to direct finance towards sustainable land use.
- Help countries deliver REDD+ at scale using the instruments of the World Bank, United Nations, the Global Environment Facility and other relevant international organizations, by offering an integrated platform of services that includes capacity building, knowledge exchange, investments and performance-based payment systems.

Together, governments, companies and business associations, indigenous peoples, civil society organizations and multilateral institutions can:

- Work collaboratively at the global level to strengthen the policies and decisions referenced in the New York Declaration on Forests.
- Promote national and jurisdictional approaches consistent with national REDD+ strategies that align the provision of REDD+ payments with private sector investments in (and commodity purchases from) provinces, states, regions and municipalities that are reducing deforestation.
- Develop and apply sustainability criteria for commodity sectors and other economic sectors impacting forests, including deforestation free sourcing.
- Collaborate to improve the yields and productivity of smallholder farmers so that they can improve their incomes without having to expand into forested areas.
- Develop new sources of income for forest dwellers and indigenous peoples in ways that recognize their rights, including pertaining to their lands, territories and resources.
- Support information-based, flexible and informal platforms for shared implementation and monitoring of private sector and government forest conservation and restoration commitments.

Everyone is invited to participate in these efforts through appropriate platforms for collaboration.

- Consumer goods companies can augment existing efforts under the Consumer Goods Forum.
- Commodity traders and growers can work with peers to coordinate implementation of best practices and strengthen existing forums, including the sustainable commodity roundtables.
- Banks and other financial institutions interested in developing innovative financial services that help companies, investors and governments take action can join the Banking Environment Initiative and CDP.
- Countries, companies, business associations and civil society organizations seeking to support the goals in the New York Declaration on Forests can join the Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 or similar public-private partnerships.
- Indigenous peoples who are forest dwellers can maintain their life ways, participate directly in decision-making, and continue their role in the ongoing dialogues to safeguard forests.
- Civil society organizations and indigenous peoples' organizations interested in strengthening transparency can contribute to the use and implementation of Global Forest Watch.
- Governments can increase bilateral cooperation and participate in the multilateral forest and climate programs of the World Bank and United Nations, including the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, BioCarbon Fund, and the UN-REDD Programme, as well as the Global Environment Facility.