

LEUENBERG DECLARATION

Forest Movement Europe Meeting, 12 to 14 June 2009

If we are to prevent climate catastrophe, we must drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel consumption in industrialized countries and protect the world's remaining forests by halting deforestation and curtailing forest degradation.

We cannot protect forests *instead of* cutting industrial emissions – we must do both.

To keep the forest standing and stop global warming:

Forests must be kept out of the carbon market. Bringing forests into an international carbon market – enabling countries and companies to buy and trade forest carbon credits in exchange for permission to continue polluting the atmosphere – will neither reduce carbon emissions nor halt deforestation. Allowing the purchase of forest-carbon “offsets” would provide an escape route by which industrialized countries could avoid reducing their emissions at home, diverting investments away from clean energy technologies and delaying the much-needed transition to a low-carbon economy.

The future of the world's forests, and global climate security, must not be placed in the hands of the bankers and speculative investors responsible for the recent global financial meltdown. For forest conservation to work, the funding required must be dependable and long-term. As recent events demonstrate, markets are inherently volatile and unreliable: billions have been wiped off the value of shares and investments that were thought to be sound have been revealed to be based largely on poor math and inflated expectations. To date, bailing out the banks has cost governments in excess of \$1 trillion. Trading off our own emissions against hoped-for reductions in deforestation could be a catastrophic lose-lose strategy, the costs of which would be measured not just in trillions of dollars, but in irreversible consequences for the planet.

Alternative, non-market funding sources are already available and there are many innovative proposals for new non-regressive taxes and levies on carbon use or other transactions that could provide the funds needed to improve forest governance and protect forest ecosystems.

These funds could be spent in the first instance on immediate, cost-effective measures that could help prevent deforestation in the long-term, such as supporting the immediate dismantling of industrial logging operations, especially where they are operating on the forest 'frontier', and crucially, strengthening the land rights of the communities that live in and depend on forests.

No natural ecosystem should make way for plantations.

The conversion of primary forests must be stopped immediately. A plantation does not have the same characteristics as a natural forest and should therefore not be included in the definition of 'forest'. Plantations contain only a fraction of the carbon and biodiversity that natural forests have. Monoculture plantations in particular deplete soil quality and water resources, and have many adverse environmental and social impacts. Positive incentives aimed at sustaining standing forests must not end up profiting plantations.

Industrial-scale logging must not benefit from forest-climate funds. Degradation of tropical forests by industrial logging is a significant source of carbon emissions, for example in the Congo Basin (the world's second largest rainforest). The carbon stock of forests subject to commercial logging, even of a selective nature, is on average significantly less than the carbon stock of natural, undisturbed forests.ⁱ Furthermore, roads and other infrastructure built to facilitate industrial-scale logging often open up the forest to further exploitation, leading to deforestation and permanent conversion.

To ensure lasting forest conservation, policy tools and financing mechanisms must be designed to:

Strengthen the tenure rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples and improve forest governance, and forest biodiversity. The best guarantee to keep forests standing is to have them under local control with clearly identified rights to land and resources. Over 90% of the 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty depend on forests for some part of their livelihoods and at least 60 million indigenous peoples depend on forests for their subsistence. The recognition and enforcement of the customary land and resource rights of forest dependent communities, and their right to free, prior and informed consent, must be the basis of any strategy to halt deforestation.

Pay for protection, don't pay-off deforesters. Financing for forest conservation should pay for programmes that support forest stewardship by local communities and Indigenous Peoples, and cover the actual costs of monitoring and protecting forest ecosystems. Forests are worth far more than their carbon. Monitoring must be participatory, transparent, and cover not only greenhouse gas emissions but forest governance, and impacts on biodiversity and rural livelihoods.

Address the demand for wood and agricultural products. We need a just and global transition to a low-carbon economy based on sustainable consumption patterns that do not contribute to deforestation. Climate policies should aim to make carbon-intensive products, such as those that come from converted or degraded forest lands, politically and economically unviable. Programmes should tackle the underlying drivers of deforestation, such as the demand for agrofuels, excessive consumption of meat and paper products, and reward reduced consumption. To reduce deforestation, the EU should urgently put in place a moratorium on all imports of agrofuel, whether certified or not.

Bruno Manser Fonds / Switzerland, Lukas Straumann

BUND (Friends of the Earth)/ Germany, Laszlo Maraz

Ecological Internet, Gaia / USA , Glen Barry

FERN, United Kingdom / Belgium, Saskia Ozinga

Finnish Nature League / Finland, Mauno Sarkka

Friends of the Earth Finland / Finland, Otto Miettinen

Friends of the Siberian Forests / Russia, Andrey Laletin

GeaSphere / South Africa, Philip Owen

Global Witness / United Kingdom, David Young

Greenpeace Switzerland / Switzerland, Asti Roesle

Incomindios / Switzerland, Tanja Mirabile

Pro Natura / Switzerland, Friedrich Wulf

Pro Regenwald / Germany, Simone Horner

Rainforest Action Network / US, Lafcadio Cortesi

Rainforest Foundation / United Kingdom, Simon Counsell

Rettet den Regenwald e.V. / Deutschland, Robert Risch

Terra! / Italy, Sergio Baffoni

Waldportal / Deutschland, Keno Tönjes

World Forests / Scotland, Mandy Haggis

More organizations to follow as signatories after formal approval of the declaration by the relevant executive bodies.

ⁱ Brendan G. Mackey, Heather Keith, Sandra L. Berry and David B. Lindenmayer, Green Carbon – The role of natural forests in carbon storage, 2008