Forum: General Assembly Second Committee

Issue: The Question of Deforestation in the Amazon and Other Rainforests

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Introduction

Deforestation is an issue currently plaguing many of the world's major tropical rainforests, most alarmingly the Amazon rainforest, which is currently the world's largest existing tropical rainforest, covering around 6 million square kilometres of the Amazon basin.[1] Rainforests (including both temperate and tropical rainforests) are very important for the climate and biodiversity of our earth, hosting a large and varied number of both animal and plant species, serving as major carbon sinks by absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen, also being important for the water cycle of the earth through evapotranspiration, and also for soil health and nutrient cycling.[2]

Deforestation of rainforests is incredibly damaging to the Earth in multiple ways, by harming the ecosystem and destroying the habitats of species living in rainforests, which has led some species to endangerment and even extinction, and also the displacement of indigenous communities. The deforestation of rainforests is an issue that is not only limited to the territories they inhabit, but a global one. Specifically and most critically due to the acceleration of climate change caused by the desecration of these important carbon sinks and more CO2 being released into the atmosphere, impacting human well-being internationally.[3] Mitigating or ending deforestation is addressed as a part of the UN:s sustainable development goal (SDG) 15: Life On Land.[4]

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[1] Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazon_rainforest Accessed 4 January 2026)
[2] National Geographic https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/rain-forest/ (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[3] UN Environment Program https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/heres-what-happens-if-world-loses-its-rainforests (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[4] UN https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal15 (Accessed 4 January 2026)

Definition of Key Terms

Deforestation

Deforestation is the clearing and destruction of forests/rainforests or trees, and converting the land and wood for other uses.[5]

Amazon basin

The Amazon basin is a large area located in South America, drained by the Amazon River. It covers roughly 7million square kilometers of the whole area, about 35.5% of the South American continent, spreading across the territories of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, French Guiana, Suriname, Ecuador, Guyana, Bolivia, and Venezuela, which makes it the largest drainage basin in the world. The majority of the Amazon basin is covered by the Amazon rainforest.[6]

Tropical rainforest

Tropical rainforests are thick, dense, humid and biodiverse biomes with high levels of rainfall that are located near or on the equator. They are home to around 40-75% of all species globally, and are highly threatened by deforestation and other harmful human activities, more so than temperate rainforests, largely due to the territories they inhabit and the scale of loss.[7]

Temperate rainforest

Temperate rainforests are rarer, cooler and moist biomes occurring in temperate zones (regions between tropical and polar regions).[8]

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[5] Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deforestation (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[6] Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazon_basin (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[7] Britannica https://www.britannica.com/science/tropical-rainforest (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[8] Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temperate_rainforest (Accessed 4 January 2026)

Carbon sink

A carbon sink is a natural or artificial system that consumes more carbon dioxide than it emits. They are vital in regulating the Earth's climate and alleviating climate change.[9]

Water cycle

The water cycle is the complex and continuous movement of water between the Earth and the atmosphere.[10]

Evapotranspiration

Evapotranspiration refers to the combined processes of evaporation (directly through canopies, soil, and water bodies) and transpiration (through the openings in plant leaves) for water transferring from the land into the atmosphere as water vapor.[11]

Tipping point (climate science)

A threshold that, when crossed, leads to large and irreversible changes in the climate system, and most likely accelerates global warming.[12]

The Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO)

ACTO is an international organization consisting of 8 nations whose territories are covered by the Amazon rainforest, namely Guyana, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Suriname, Brazil, Bolivia, and Colombia. It was established in 1995 with the goal of promoting sustainable development in the Amazon rainforest.[13]

National REDD+ framework strategy/action plan

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[9] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Carbon_sink (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[10] https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/freshwater/water-cycle (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[11] https://www.bom.gov.au/watl/eto/about.shtml (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tipping_points_in_the_climate_system (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[13] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazon_Cooperation_Treaty_Organization (Accessed 4 January 2026)

The REDD+ framework was established as part of the Paris Agreement with the primary goal of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. A REDD+ framework plan is a comprehensive national plan in which nations partake in REDD+ activities with result-based payment in order to achieve sustainable goals.[14]

Explanation of the Issue

The deforestation of rainforests has multiple reasons, which are often economically driven, such as agriculture, logging, mining, and other industries. Rainforests generally occupy a vast amount of land and cover the territories of multiple nations.

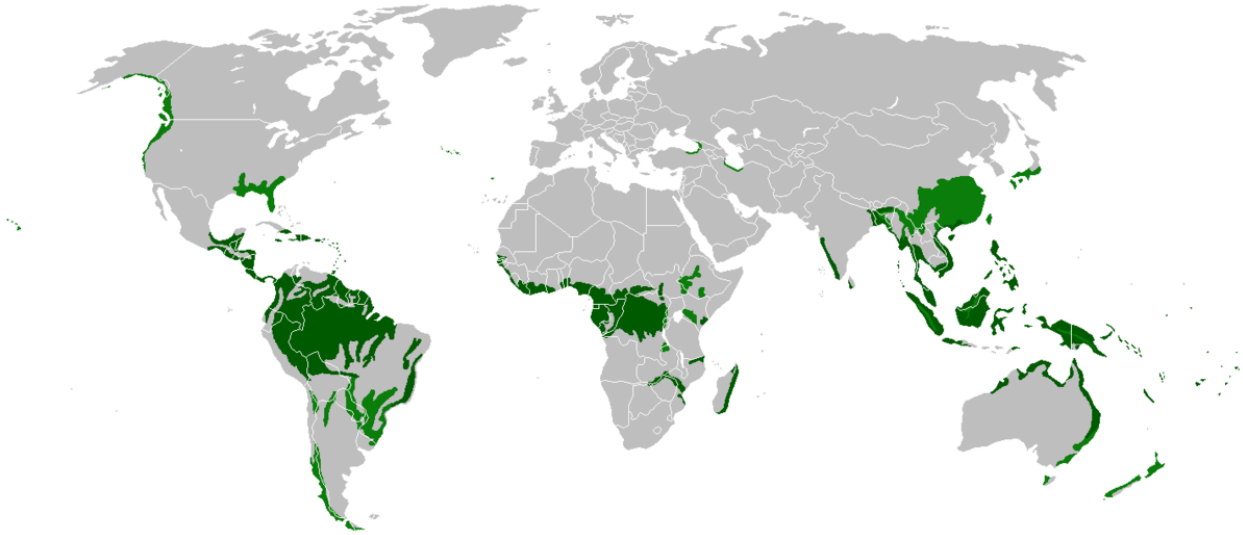

Figure 1: *Map of rainforests throughout the world.* Source: Wikimedia, Koistinen V., (2007)

They also contain a vast amount of resources and potential industrial benefits, which the nations surrounding or inhabiting them make use of.[15] Economic factors are favoured over long-term environmental sustainability and safety. Natural causes of deforestation fueled by climate change, such as forest fires and droughts, are also prominent, along with human-led activities.

[14] https://redd.unfccc.int/ (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[15] https://www.rainforestconcern.org/forest-facts/why-are-rainforests-being-destroyed (Accessed 4 January 2026)

In the case of the Amazon rainforest, which is spread across 9 different nations across South America, the reason for deforestation varies by country, yet most reasons are economically driven. There is also a lack of governance and enforcement of environmental laws, allowing for corruption and illegal activities to take place. For example, a large amount of logging taking place in the Amazon rainforest, being one of the driving factors of deforestation, is not legal.[16]

The rates of deforestation have changed throughout the years. Because a majority of the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest during the past two decades has taken place in Brazil,[17] political or other changes within the nation have a significant impact on the overall statistics of Amazon deforestation.

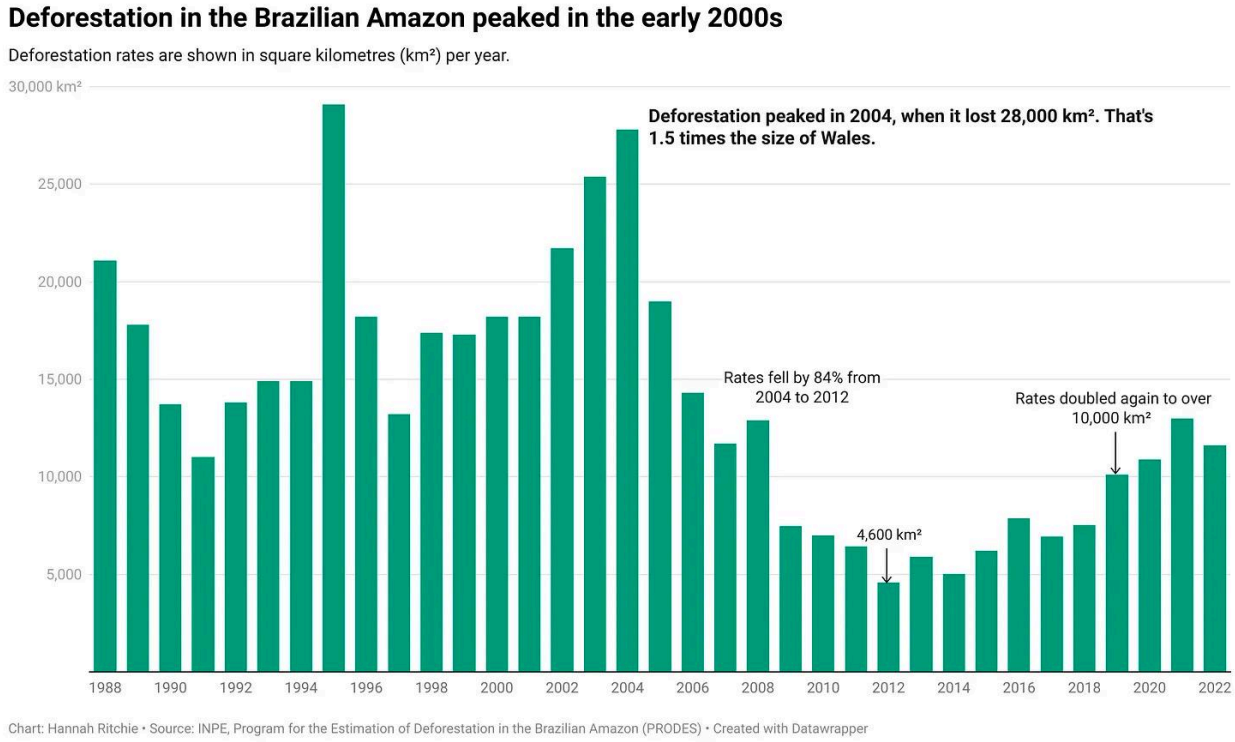

Figure 2: *Chart showing the rates of deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon*. Source: INPE, Program for the Estimation of Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon (PRODES), Ritchie, H. (2023)

Deforestation in the Amazon rainforest saw its peak in the early 2000s, and from there on decreased throughout the 2010s, then started to rise up again from 2014 onwards.[18]

[16] https://www.amazonconservation.org/the-challenge/threats/ (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[17] https://infoamazonia.org/en/2023/03/21/deforestation-in-the-amazon-past-present-and-future/ (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[18] https://hannahritchie.substack.com/p/amazon-zero-deforestation, (Accessed 10 January 2026)

Though the rates of deforestation are not as high as they once were,[19] previous damage and total forest loss, which staggers around 17%, still bring the Amazon rainforest dangerously close to its tipping point, which is around 20% to 25% of forest loss.[20] Crossing this threshold could not only result in the desertification of the rainforest,[21] changing its ecosystem entirely and destroying the habitats of species and communities living there, but also release a large amount of CO2 into the atmosphere and significantly increase global warming.[22]

This issue is not limited to Amazon, even if it is the most widely affected. An important example and area at high risk would be the rainforests located on the Congo Basin, reaching to around 500 million acres of land and covering six countries in Africa, making the area the second largest rainforest biome in the world after the Amazon. Due to their size and their relative intactness compared to the Amazon rainforest and larger rainforests located in Southeast Asia (such as the Indonesian rainforests), they currently stand as the world's most vital rainforest carbon sinks.[23] They are also important biodiversity hotspots for the planet, as well as providing livelihoods to at least 60 million people living on the Congo Basin through fishing, agriculture, the sale of forest products, and hunting. The area also serves as a home to many indigenous tribes, giving it high cultural significance.[24]

The deforestation in the Congo Basin rainforests has mainly been on a smaller scale, allowing it to not suffer the major losses of large-scale commercial agriculture. However, forest loss in Congo's rainforests have reached an alarming rise, the numbers being around 590,000 hectares lost in 2024 specifically in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as visualized by Global Forest Watch.[25]

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[19] https://www.sustainabilitybynumbers.com/p/amazon-2024 (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[20] https://brcarbon.com.br/en/amazon-savannization-may-cause-desertification-in-other-areas/ (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[21] https://www.carbonbrief.org/unprecedented-stress-in-up-to-half-of-the-amazon-may-lead-to-tipping-point-by-2050/ (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[22] https://www.worldwildlife.org/news/stories/the-amazon-in-crisis-forest-loss-threatens-the-region-and-the-planet/ (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[23] https://www.worldwildlife.org/places/congo-basin/ (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[24] https://populationconnection.org/article/the-disappearing-lungs-of-africa-deforestation-in-the-congo-basin/ (Accessed 10 January 2026)
[25] https://www.globalforestwatch.org/dashboards/country/COD/?location=WyJjb3VudHJ5IiwiQ09EIl0%3D&map=eyJjYW5Cb3VuZCI6dHJ1ZX0%3D (Accessed 8 January 2026)

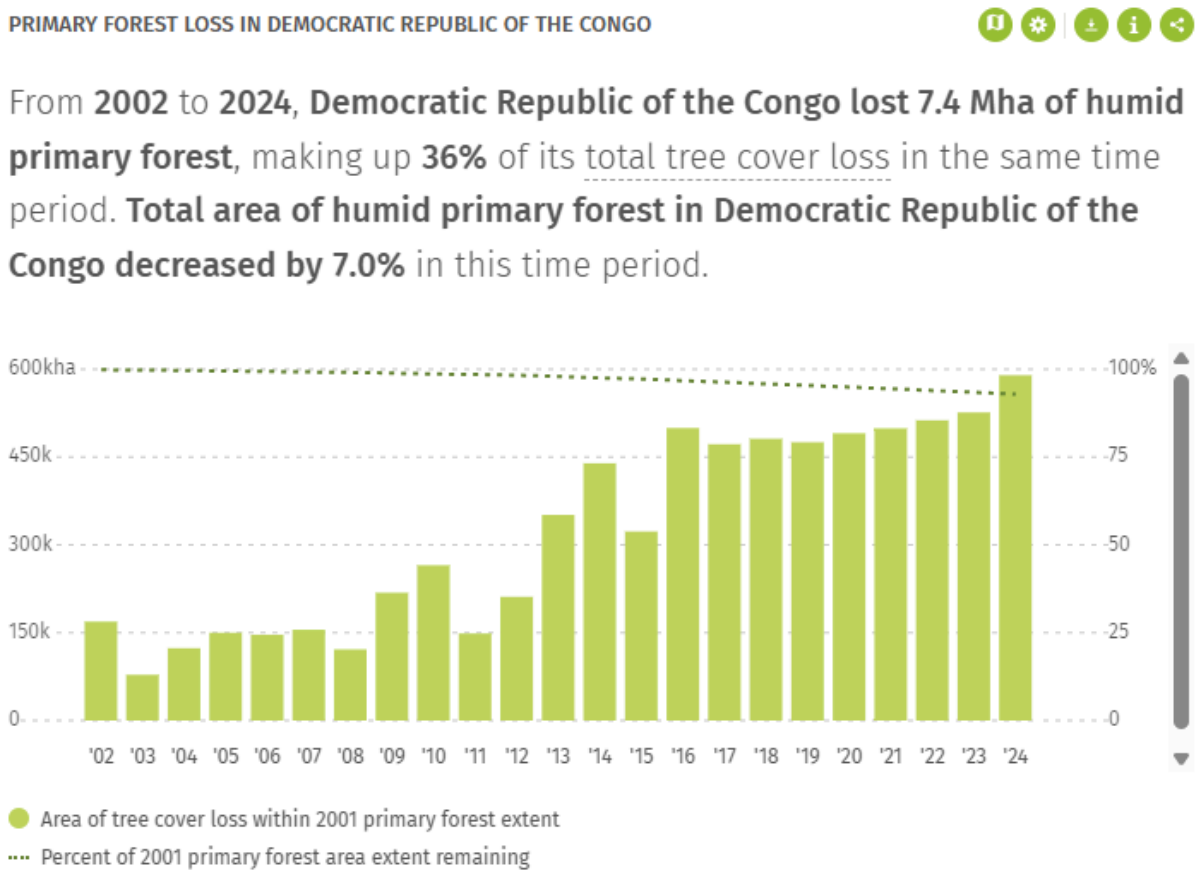

Figure 3: *Chart showing the rising rates of deforestation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Does not account for the whole rainforest.* Source: globalforestwatch.org, (n.d.)

The main driver of deforestation in the rainforests of the Congo Basin is subsistence agriculture,[26] where farming is done primarily to sustain the livelihoods of the farmer and their family.[27] Lack of state support, weakness in governance, poverty, and inequality in the region has caused self-reliance and utilization of the forests' resources for agriculture. Despite subsistence agriculture being less harmful than large-scale commercial farming, the amount of people resorting to it in the Congo Basin for reasons mentioned above has been abundant enough to cause worrying forest loss.[28] Additionally, political fragility in the region has also resulted in the illicit trade of timber, charcoal, and gold, for example. This business has attracted a number of players ranging from struggling civilians to even violent armed groups and military personnel, some of which are deeply connected to local communities by generating economic income and offering protection and, in some cases, social prestige to civilians.[29]

[26] https://www.nicfi.no/partner-countries/the-congo-basin/ (Accessed 10 January 2026)
[27] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subsistence_agriculture (Accessed 10 January 2026)
[28] https://news.mongabay.com/2025/11/drc-hit-by-record-deforestation-in-2024-satellite-data-show/ (Accessed 10 January 2026)
[29] https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/charcoal-timber-trade-eastern-drc-congo/ (Accessed 8 January 2026)

This relationship makes it near impossible to distinguish between legal and illegal activities, especially within a region that already suffers from a lack of governance.

Rainforests in the Southeast-Asian region go through deforestation at a rate of 1,2% loss annually.[30] This is the highest rate of forest loss compared to all other regions, including the Amazon Basin. The rainforests mostly affected are the tropical forests in Indonesia and Borneo (an island between Indonesia and Malaysia), areas known for their production of palm oil, which is the largest production of palm oil in the world, accounting for about 85% of all global palm oil production.[31] This is widely recognized as a major instigator of forest loss within these two specific nations. Logging and other agricultural expansion have been the leading causes in other Southeast Asian nations such as Thailand and Myanmar. [32]

These three regions, the Amazon Basin, the Congo Basin, and Southeast Asia, collectively encompass 80% of the world's tropical rainforests and also have the highest rates of deforestation globally.[33] In 2023, the Three Basins Summit held in Brazzaville, the Republic of Congo, brought these three regions together with a common goal and issue: The deforestation of rainforests in each region and alleviation for the sake of our planet. An alliance and close co-operation between the nations most affected and others would be a crucial development for the future of tropical forests all around the world. Unfortunately, this summit failed to end in co-operation and a tri-basin alliance.[34]

Key member states and NGO's

Brazil

5 million square kilometers of the Amazon rainforest is encompassed by Brazil, thereby also experiencing the most total forest loss out of all the nations affected by deforestation.[35] Being a member of the ACTO and otherwise having been negatively affected by deforestation,

[30] https://earth.org/deforestation-in-southeast-asia/ (Accessed 10 January 2026)
[31] https://eos.com/blog/palm-oil-malaysia-indonesia-thailand/ (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[32] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/652068/EPRS_BRI%282020%29652068_EN.pdf (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[33] https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/?9909916/Three-Basins-Summit-A-critical-moment-for-forests (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[34] https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/press_releases/?9984966/WWF-Three-Basins-Summit-an-important-start-for-cooperation-among-governments (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[35] https://www.nicfi.no/partner-countries/brazil/#facts-about-brazil-and-the-amazon (Accessed 4 January 2026)

Brazil has attempted to combat deforestation in numerous ways, such as with the implementation of the Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon (PPCDAm) since 2004, with a focus of tracking environmental crimes and investing in biotechnology, and the ultimate goal of ending deforestation by 2030.[36]

Bolivia

Bolivia experiences the second largest amount of forest loss out of all the nations affected by deforestation of the Amazon rainforest, despite only having the fourth largest share of the territory (around 7.7%). This is mainly due to farming, agriculture, and livestock. Soy and beef production are prevalent in Bolivia and drives a large part of the Bolivian economy.[37] Production has pushed itself into the areas of the rainforest, resulting in deforestation. Though Bolivia is a member of ACTO, and not directly against mitigation, deforestation hosts important economic benefits for the nation.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

The World Wildlife Fund views the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest as a severe crisis and advocates strongly for its mitigation. The WWF collaborates with governments surrounding the region and has funded and helped launch programs such as Amazon Region Protected Areas (ARPA).[38]

Rainforest Alliance

The Rainforest Alliance is an international organization that advocates for and works with farmers aiming to create sustainable farming solutions, and not accelerate the deforestation of rainforests.[39]

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36 https://infoamazonia.org/en/2023/04/14/ppcdam-new-plan-against-deforestation-includes-technologies-to-anticipate-devastation-and-investment-in-bioeconomy-to-develop-the-amazon/ (Accessed 4 January 2026)

37 https://climate-diplomacy.org/magazine/environment/vanishing-trees-and-lakes-deforestation-bolivias-amazon(Accessed 4 January 2026)

38 https://wwf.panda.org/discover/knowledge_hub/where_we_work/amazon/vision_amazon/models/amazon_protected_areas/financing/arpa/ (Accessed 4 January 2026)

39 https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/our-work/ (Accessed 4 January 2026)

Amazon Watch

The Amazon Watch cooperates with Indigenous people and communities living in the Amazon rainforest in order to push away industries and demand corporate accountability. Amazon Watch concerns itself with the deforestation of the Amazon in accordance with the rights of the Indigenous people.[40]

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has the largest portion of the Congo basin rainforests and also the highest level of deforestation out of all nations in the region.[41] Though the government of the DRC has attempted to ease the situation in ways such as by adopting a National REDD+ Framework Strategy and by establishing some protected areas,[42] the DRC government has also committed to actions detrimental to the issue, such as auctioning oil and gas blocks over large forest areas due to financial and economic challenges in the nation. [43]

Indonesia

Indonesia is one of the world's largest contributors to deforestation, and has the largest rate of forest loss out of all Southeast Asian countries,[44] and along with Malaysia is the largest producer of palm oil globally, which drives deforestation in the nation. In 2021, at the COP 26 climate summit held in Glasgow, the president of Indonesia Joko Widodo signed the pledge of the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, calling for ending and reversing deforestation by 2030.[45] However, Indonesian officials later backtracked, with Environment Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar stating that it would be "inappropriate and unfair" to force Indonesia to commit to fully ending

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[40] https://amazonwatch.org/work (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[41] https://globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/forests/crisis-in-the-congo/ (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[42] https://www.nicfi.no/partner-countries/the-congo-basin/ (Accessed 10 January 2026)
[43] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jul/29/gorilla-habitats-pristine-forest-at-risk-as-drc-opens-half-of-country-to-oil-and-gas-drilling-bids-aoe (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[44] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/652068/EPRS_BRI%282020%29652068_EN.pdf (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[45] https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/INDONESIA_cop26cmp16cma3_HLS_EN.pdf (Accessed 10 January 2026)

deforestation by 2030, and that encouraging environmental sustainability would not come at the expense of Indonesia's economic development.[46]

Timeline

Date	**Description of event**[47][48]
Pre-1700s	Small-scale subsistence farming by indigenous communities. Low damage and sustainable.
1700s-1849	Effects of colonialism With the rise of European Colonization, forest clearance for plantations and agricultural purposes began to popularize
1850-1900s	Technologies developed throughout the industrial revolution made it easier to process certain resources and building infrastructure. Forest clearing for mining, agriculture, fuel, and railways increased.
1900s-1949	The rise of mechanical farming and population growth increased deforestation
1950-1979	Post World War 2 Deforestation of rainforests largely increased after the Second World War due to population growth, leading to large-scale forest clearance.
1980-1999	Extreme increase in commercial deforestation. Different media and NGOs started to highlight the issue more.
2000-2020s	Satellite imagery shows the full scale of deforestation, and warnings begin to increase climate awareness and encourage international discussion.

[46] https://news.mongabay.com/2021/11/indonesias-flip-flop-on-zero-deforestation-pledge-portends-greater-forest-loss/ (Accessed 10 January 2026)
[47] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deforestation (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[48] https://www.fao.org/4/i3010e/i3010e.pdf (Accessed 8 January 2026)
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UN involvement, relevant resolutions and treaties

The UN has addressed the issue of deforestation in multiple treaties, resolutions, and other frameworks. ACTO works within a UN framework and received the status of Permanent Observer in the United Nations General Assembly.[49] Despite this, there are no universally binding resolutions for this issue as of yet. Nevertheless, the most solid treaties, resolutions, and events are the following:

- Paris Agreement, article 5, 22 April 2016[50]
- UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030, 27 April 2017[51]
- UN-REDD Programme, September 2008[52]
- SDG 15: Life on Land, 2015[53]
- COP29: Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use[54]
- New York Declaration on Forests, 2014[55]
- Declaration of Belem, 9 August 2023[56]

Possible solutions

The issue of the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest, and maybe even the addition of other rainforests, requires multiple steps and significant effort both internationally and from the nations involved.

Funding

Funding for these nations is one way mitigation could be pushed. A portion of the nations where deforestation takes place have poor economic and financial situations, or political

[49] https://otca.org/en/acto-receives-status-of-permanent-observer-at-the-un-general-assembly/ (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[50] https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[51] https://www.un.org/esa/forests/documents/un-strategic-plan-for-forests-2030/index.html (Accessed 3 January 2026)
[52] https://unfccc.int/topics/land-use/workstreams/redd/what-is-redd (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[53] https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal15 (Accessed 4 January 2026)
[54] https://globalforestcoalition.org/baku-forest-declaration-press/ (Accessed 10 January 2026)
[55] https://unfccc.int/news/new-york-declaration-on-forests (Accessed 8 January 2026)
[56] https://otca.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Declaration-of-Belem.pdf (Accessed 10 January 2026)

instability and internal conflict, which limits their ability to make major changes in improving the issue. Otherwise, nations may not be willing to slow down their economic development for sustainability. Funding and financial aid of any kind could help lessen the reliance on non-sustainable agricultural methods, and also help encourage nations such as Bolivia to put more effort into preserving the Amazon rainforest.

Establishing more protected areas and world heritage sites on rainforest regions

Officially recognizing rainforests as important culturally and environmentally, and setting up legally protected sites within them, could help the conservation of rainforests. Though such areas already exist, establishing more would lessen the privileges and rights private organizations have to modify certain parts of the rainforest in question.

Enforcing stricter laws

A large issue in many of these regions is the lack of governance, allowing for different parties to pursue illegal logging or other questionable agricultural activities. Many of the nations with poor governance, however, are suffering from internal issues that make it difficult for them to simply strengthen policies and governance in their rainforests. To combat this, deforestation, as well as environmental and climate conservation in general, could be made an issue of international law. It is important for all countries to cooperate in the pursuit of environmental sustainability, and making forest conservation more relevant in international discussions with universally accepted regulations could be a vital improvement for the future of our rainforests.

Increasing international cooperation

Though attempts such as the Three Basins Summit have been made to bring the nations of the three major rainforest regions into alliance, none have been very successful as of yet. More summits and large international conferences need to happen to increase the chances of a potentially strong alliance. This issue also lacks fully binding treaties and resolutions, which does not help the situation. If the international community puts more focus and effort on the issue, it is more likely that further solutions and changes can be made to benefit the rainforests of our world.

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