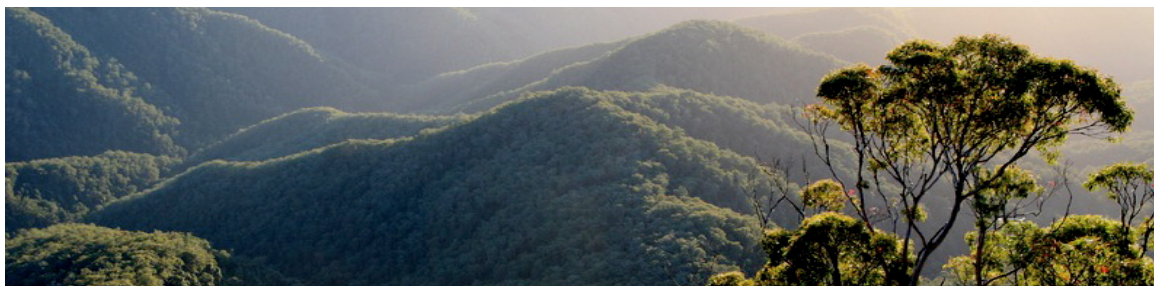


# A Call for U.S. Leadership on Forests and Climate Protection



**Protecting tropical forests is critical to solving the climate crisis, enhancing our security, protecting our economy, alleviating global poverty and creating sustainable livelihoods.**

## **The magnitude of the problem**

As a result of human activity, the earth's remaining tropical forests are disappearing at an unprecedented rate, releasing billions of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. With an acre of tropical forest lost every second, deforestation accounts for roughly 20% of global climate emissions. Astonishingly, emissions from deforestation are doing more to deepen the climate crisis than all the world's cars, trucks, planes and ships combined. We cannot solve the problem of global climate change if we do not address emissions from deforestation.

## **More than just a climate issue**

Ending tropical deforestation is important for many other reasons as well. Forest loss and environmental degradation can be major drivers of violence and armed conflict, displacing local communities and undermining political stability. The World Bank reports that 90% of the rural poor depend on forests for their food, fuel, water or livelihoods. Tropical forests are also home to indigenous peoples and other unique forest-dwelling communities. More than half of the world's species live in tropical forests. Done right, with the necessary social standards and safeguards in place, conserving forests would reduce climate pollution, decrease the vulnerability of forest-dependent peoples, improve living standards, promote political stability, preserve traditional cultures and protect treasured natural places and species. For all of these reasons, forest conservation must become an urgent international priority.

## **Opportunities for action**

Conserving tropical forests does not require new and unproven technologies. All that is lacking is political will, the right policies, credible standards and institutions, and clear economic signals. U.S. climate legislation presents an opportunity to overcome these barriers by creating strong incentives for tropical forest conservation while also protecting the rights and interests of forest dependant people and ensuring equity in the distribution of benefits. At the same time, the United States and the international community have a chance to make tropical forest conservation a central component of the new global climate agreement nations intend to conclude by December of 2009.

## **Time is of the essence**

We cannot afford to wait any longer. Absent dramatic action, most of the earth's remaining tropical forests will be gone in a few decades – exacerbating the risks of catastrophic climate change, poverty and conflict. Right now – at this historic moment – we can conserve tropical forests to help solve the climate crisis, safeguard our security and help the poor. But we must act immediately.

## We call upon the United States to:

1. **Take a global leadership role in combating deforestation.** Protecting forests internationally should be part of a comprehensive U.S. climate policy that ensures and prioritizes substantial domestic reductions in emissions. Both in international agreements and domestically through its own laws, the United States must fashion and advance policies that reflect the many benefits of conserving tropical forests.
2. **Advance a diverse set of solutions including market and non-market based approaches.** There is no silver bullet. The United States must pursue a full range of environmentally and socially sound policy instruments and incentives, including enhanced development assistance, improved forest governance and expanded use of both public- and private-sector carbon finance. All such approaches must protect the rights and interests of forest-dependent communities, include prior informed consent and ensure equitable sharing of benefits.
3. **Engage a wide range of stakeholders while crafting policies.** Any effective approach to the challenge of deforestation must involve the broad spectrum of experts and stakeholders to develop sustainable, scalable and equitable solutions that scientists, developing nations, indigenous groups, local communities, civil society, and industry can support.

**We the undersigned urge the United States to lead the effort in crafting domestic and international solutions to end global deforestation to help solve the climate crisis, enhance our security, save our planet's biodiversity and reduce global poverty.**

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This initiative is being organized by Avoided Deforestation Partners on behalf of a broad spectrum of for and non-profit groups that endorse this message.

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