



# EU FOREST COMMITMENT 2024-2029: How the EU can support healthy forests globally

June 2024

## Forests support life

They create soil, make rain, store carbon and offer protection from heatwaves, droughts, hurricanes and floods. They provide livelihoods for one fifth of humanity, are home to 300 million people and shelter more creatures and plants than anywhere on earth.

The world is home to a diverse array of forests. They inspire both awe and fear and are fundamental to numerous cultures and traditions. Many of our most cherished fairy tales, folklores and myths take place in them.

The world's remaining forests are increasingly unhealthy, still standing thanks to the stewardship of the Indigenous Peoples, local communities and continuous-cover foresters who care for them, with the support of scientists and civil society organisations. We need to stand shoulder to shoulder with these groups by ensuring European

policies and consumption help halt deforestation and degradation globally and limit clear-cutting.

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***The EU has the power and responsibility to protect and restore global forests and ensure the world is just and liveable for all.***

We, the signatory civil society organisations, therefore commit to working with the EU and other stakeholders to fully implement the EU 2030 Forest Strategy and to deliver on the following actions.

## 1

## Support fair reduction of European consumption of forest-harming products

According to the EU's own scientists, EU resource production and consumption presently exceeds planetary boundaries. The EU must prioritise the resource reduction targets it committed to in the 8<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme.

This must happen fairly since many people are already struggling with the costs of food, heating and transport. Over-consumption of high-deforestation products such as paper packaging, electric vehicles, biofuel and industrial meat must be brought down, without negatively affecting those struggling to afford their basic needs. Extreme poverty is being exacerbated by the impacts of the climate crisis. The EU cannot choose to tackle one or the other; we need a just transition that brings a decent life for all.

Priority EU actions should include:

- **Promoting highly efficient, well insulated buildings** and tools such as heat pumps to reduce demand for energy, instead of replacing coal with comparably polluting substitutes like wood.
- **Developing an EU sustainable food systems law** which mandates large companies to ensure the meat content of what they sell is in line with a fair EU share of global resource consumption, with a particular focus on prepared foods and ready-made meals.
- **Promoting public transport and smart mobility** including by making public transport more affordable.

## 2

## Fund a just, equitable and inclusive transition away from harmful forestry and farming

Every year, the EU spends billions of green funds subsidising harmful activities such as wood burning in power stations and the creation of large-scale monoculture tree plantations (often of exotic species), which worsen the climate and biodiversity crises.

These same funds could be used to support foresters and community forest managers (who say they have a hard time accessing them), in particular women, to shift to species-diverse continuous-cover forestry, thereby restoring biodiversity, making forests less susceptible to

climate change, delivering more sustainable, local jobs and high-quality timber.

Similarly, the Commission should deliver on its commitment to improve the position of farmers and foresters in the food supply chain such as by requiring companies to never pay them less than production costs – including the costs of complying with any sustainability norms. Public subsidies should be used to support greener agricultural practices, not to compensate for prices that larger corporations have pushed lower and lower every year.

# 3

## Increase resilience, restoration and protection of European forests

Climate crisis induced problems such as increased heatwaves, forest fires and pest attacks are having a devastating effect on forests, biodiversity, local communities, human health and the revenues of forest-based industries. Plantation forests and forest management that damages soil and decreases species and tree age diversity makes forests more susceptible to such problems. In Europe, forests are also being lost to infrastructure projects, including mining for critical raw materials. In Europe and many other continents there are few old-growth forests left, so they should be mapped and their protection urgently prioritised.

When adopted, the EU Nature Restoration Law and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework will go some way towards supporting such actions, but it needs to be complemented by actions the Commission committed to in the 2030 Forest Strategy, including agreeing a Forest Monitoring Law to help target resilience activities, and to hold Member States to account for meeting agreed targets such as those set by the Land Use Land Use Change and Forestry Regulation.

Finally, the EU's [2040 climate target](#) must commit to carbon neutrality by 2040 and must consider the role played by forests and land use – ensuring that forest protection and restoration is conducted as well as, not instead of, emissions reductions.

# 4

## Support implementation and development of supply chain regulations

The EU has developed the Regulation on deforestation-free products, the Forced Labour Regulation, the Battery Regulation and the Corporate Social Due Diligence Directive. All mandate more sustainable corporate conduct and supply chain traceability, so as to limit the negative social and environmental impacts of Europe-consumed products.

These regulations will require sufficient resources and political will-power to swiftly start implementation, support smallholders to comply, and take corrective action where needed.

Forested countries should be supported to tackle the root causes of deforestation and degradation such as poor forest governance.

The United States, the United Kingdom, China and other consuming markets are considering similar regulations, and looking carefully at what the EU is doing. It is crucial that the EU works with other regions to ensure market leakage and the impacts of mining are reduced. EU Member States must also implement and enforce regulations ambitiously.

## 5

## Pursue international partnerships that empower mutual action to protect forests, and promote good governance

We cannot tackle the climate crisis or achieve global security and economic stability without building international partnerships and trading relationships that benefit those with least power, improve governance, reduce overconsumption and end deforestation and degradation.

The importance of a global conversation is particularly important when considering questions around access to the raw materials that are needed to drive the green and digital transitions. The race to access fossil fuels led to war, land-grabbing and untold harm. We cannot make the same mistake again. When accessing critical raw materials, the EU must negotiate partnerships with countries in an inclusive and

transparent way that incentivises efforts to tackle deforestation's root causes, which include weak forest governance and unclear land tenure. These partnerships must promote sustainable, resilient local economies, and include enforceable provisions that make EU market access conditional on protection of forests, respect for customary tenure rights, and compliance with international agreements, such as Indigenous Peoples' right to Free Prior and Informed Consent.

To do this, the European Commission must ensure coordination between the Directorate Generals with portfolios for international partnerships, the environment, trade and foreign affairs.

## 6

## Protect and promote civic space

None of the above can be achieved without strong, active civil society organisations. Well-functioning civil society supports good governance by holding governments to account, raising awareness of malpractice, and supporting citizens to understand and uphold their rights.

But civic space is threatened, both in Europe and globally. The EU must therefore devote resources to protecting human and environmental rights defenders, in particular women, and promoting human rights and political freedom. Without easy and effective access to justice, civil society will be unable to fulfil their watchdog function.

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# Signatories



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