

Opinion Column to save the rainforests: "We want to live with tropical forests"

On this International Day of Forests, as tropical forests disappear (<https://www.globalforestwatch.org/blog/fr/data-and-research/donnees-mondiales-sur-la-perte-de-couvert-arbore-2021/>) and degrade in the context of increasingly alarming climate change (<https://reporterre.net/Canicules-manque-d-eau-inondations-le-Giec-decrit-un-sombre-avenir-pour-l-Europe>), we, researchers and students, sound the alarm for the conservation of tropical forest ecosystems so that our planet remains habitable for future generations.

We want a world where our political leaders go beyond the spin and lip service at COPs and other global summits, and show determination to stop the conversion of tropical forests to agriculture, ranching, industrial plantations and mining.

We want a world where actions against deforestation and degradation are fair, consider social contexts, and are based on shared responsibility and solidarity between countries, as well as on the knowledge and forest monitoring tools developed by scientific research.

We want a world where tropical forests are conserved and restored through sustainable management practices that take into account all their inhabitants, human and non-human. We want the countries involved in the Bonn Challenge initiative, which aims to restore 300 million hectares of forests by 2030, to finally meet their commitments through concrete actions, in consultation with local stakeholders and for the benefit of rural populations and society in general.

We want a world where the right of indigenous peoples and forest populations to manage their own forest resources is recognised and where forest management by these populations is encouraged by public policies.

We want a world where natural tropical forests are no longer the sole and main source of timber for most tropical producer countries. We want a world where public policies decisively combat illegal logging of timber and energy, the main source of forest degradation, and encourage certified sustainable logging, primarily by and for the benefit of forest communities.

We want a world where forest restoration programmes are seen as opportunities to develop new ways of producing wood, such as the development of plantations or agro-forests.

We want a world where incentives for forest conservation are no longer limited to putting a market value on the ability of forests to offset our CO₂ emissions by capturing it. We want a world in which the other services provided by tropical forests that enable the production and maintenance of human well-being are recognised at the same level: biodiversity, climate regulation, soil and surface water protection, cultural and symbolic identities. We want a world that respects the habitat and livelihoods of vulnerable people, including 60 million indigenous people.

We want a world where tropical forests are no longer seen as an obstacle to economic development in the South, but as key ecosystems for sustainable and productive agriculture in the future, benefiting from the services provided by forests. We therefore want a world that engages in an agricultural transition capable of proposing alternative agrarian systems that no longer develop at the expense of natural forests, capable of maintaining themselves on already deforested areas or expanding on degraded land.

We want a world that recognises that these forests provide well-being and countless ecological services to all environments, rural and urban. We recognize the identity, cultural and symbolic values that they underpin, but also their simple existence value, and we are not afraid to say that they provide the beauty that we all need.

We want a world that takes responsibility and stops the destruction of tropical forests and the life forms that depend on them now. Deforestation and degradation of tropical forests are not inevitable, they are the result of political choices, encouragement or laissez-faire. Numerous concrete examples in the recent past have shown that with a determined political will, it is possible to reverse the trend (<https://reporterre.net/Lula-Bolsonaro-une-election-capitale-pour-l-avenir-de-l-Amazonie>). It is no longer time for announcements, but for action; our survival is at stake, as is that of all living things, for our planet would not be habitable without forests.