

Progress on the New York Declaration on Forests

# FIVE-YEAR ASSESSMENT REPORT

## Fact Sheet

*Updated 9 Sept 2019*

### Table of Contents

**Key Findings** ..... 1

**Key Messages** ..... 2

**Goal 1: Halting the Loss of Natural Forests**..... 2

**Goal 5: Restoring Forests**..... 3

**Goal 2: Efforts to Address Deforestation in Agricultural Supply Chains** ..... 4

**Goal 3: Reducing Deforestation Derived from Other Economic Sectors**..... 4

**Goal 4: Alternatives to Deforestation Driven by Basic Needs** ..... 5

**Goals 8 and 9: Mobilizing Finance for Forests**..... 5

**Goal 10: Improvements in Forest Governance** ..... 7

**The Ten Goals of the NYDF** ..... 7

**Forest Glossary** ..... 8

**Main Drivers of Deforestation**..... 9

**Types of Forest Cover Change**..... 9

### Key Findings

- **Tropical forests are at the forefront of recent global deforestation, accounting for between 91 and 94 percent of all deforestation between 2001 and 2015.**
- On average, an area of tree cover the size of the United Kingdom was lost every year between 2014 and 2018.
- **Humid tropical primary forest loss grew by almost 44 percent** after the NYDF compared to before the NYDF, from 3.0 to 4.3 million hectares per year.
- **Globally, annual carbon emissions from tropical tree cover loss are equal to the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of the European Union.**

- There is also insufficient restoration of natural forests. A systematic global literature review found that only 18 percent of the 2020 forest landscape restoration goal (26.7 Mha of 150 Mha) are documented to have undergone forest restoration since 2000.
- A more in-depth analysis of the Mekong region using satellite data reveals that **most restoration in the area since 2010 has taken place outside of forests**; tree cover is increasing on croplands, shrublands, and other non-forest land uses at a higher rate (75 percent) than inside forests (25 percent).
- **None of the 350 most influential companies** with forest-relevant operations is on track to achieve their commitments to deforestation-free supply chains by 2020.
- Finance for forests does not match their potential contribute to climate targets. Investments in stopping deforestation in tropical countries comprise **less than 1.5 percent**—only USD 3.2 billion—of the USD 256 billion committed by multilateral institutions and developed country donors since 2010 to climate change mitigation.
- Indigenous communities manage at least 22 percent (i.e. 293,000 megatons) of the total carbon stored in forests across 52 tropical and subtropical countries.<sup>1</sup> **One-third of this managed area** (containing 72,079 megatons of carbon) **is located in areas where indigenous communities' tenure rights have not been recognized**.

### Key Messages

- We must preserve natural, and in particular primary, forests, *as well as* restore natural forests, with a particular focus on protection and restoration efforts in tropical developing countries.<sup>2</sup>
- Restoring forests is essential but does not offset deforestation, particularly of primary forests, because it takes decades to centuries to recover lost ecosystem function and services.
- Efforts to fight deforestation and forest landscape restoration should to be pursued in coordinated and integrated processes seeking to maintain and increase forest cover – currently they are not.
- To date, efforts address the drivers of deforestation and provide the conditions (e.g. finance, governance) needed to protect and restore forests have been inadequate to meet global climate and conservation targets.
- In addition to new finance, there is an urgent need to shift existing, mainstream finance from activities that may be harmful to forests to activities that have a clear conservation or sustainability outcome for forests.
- More legislation and enforcement are needed for producer and consumer countries to protect tropical forests.
- Effective conservation of forest ecosystems includes recognizing the contribution of indigenous peoples and local communities to forest conservation.

### Goal 1: Halting the Loss of Natural Forests

**Instead of slowing down**, the global rate of **gross tree cover loss<sup>a</sup> has increased by 43 percent** from an average loss of 18.3 million hectares per year before the NYDF<sup>b</sup> to 26.1 million hectares per year after the NYDF.<sup>c</sup>

Particularly concerning is the loss of primary forest, which are, by definition, irreplaceable and act as invaluable carbon sinks.

**Latin America still loses the most tree cover per year, but West Africa has recently experienced a sharp increase in the rate of loss.**

- Of the ten countries with the highest absolute amounts of tropical primary forest loss on average, four are in Latin America (Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru), three in Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia), two in Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo and Madagascar), and one in Oceania (Papua New Guinea).

**Success story: The rate of deforestation in Indonesia went down significantly in 2017 and 2018**, by more than 30 percent.<sup>d</sup> A combination of factors contributed: actions taken by government (e.g. peat moratorium), the private sector, and civil society organizations – but also wetter weather conditions, which helped reduce fires. A new wave of fires in July and August 2019 is putting the recent policies to the test.<sup>3</sup>

## **Goal 5: Restoring Forests**

Pledges under the Bonn Challenge totaling 170.6 million hectares **indicate significant political will to restore landscapes.**

However, **only a small amount of forest landscape restoration has been reported**, and limitations in the data to monitor restoration periodically make progress difficult to quantify.

- Our systematic global literature review found that **only 18 percent of the 2020 forest landscape restoration goal (26.7 Mha of 150 Mha) are documented to have undergone forest restoration since 2000.**
- A more in-depth analysis of the Mekong region using satellite data reveals that most **restoration in the area since 2010 has taken place outside of forests**; tree cover is increasing on croplands, shrublands, and other non-forest land uses at a higher rate (75 percent) than inside forests (25 percent).
- Furthermore, **deforestation in the Mekong region has continued at a higher pace than forest restoration**, amounting to an **overall net loss of natural forests (-0.3 Mha)**. These results indicate that greater efforts are needed to protect and restore natural forests and the important forest ecosystem functions they supply (e.g. biodiversity and carbon sequestration).

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<sup>a</sup> Current monitoring tools are not able to separate tree cover loss from natural forest loss.

<sup>b</sup> Baseline period of 2001-13.

<sup>c</sup> Over the period 2014-18.

<sup>d</sup> compared to the average annual loss rate over the reference period of 2001-16.

## **Goal 2: Efforts to Address Deforestation in Agricultural Supply Chains**

**Deforestation will not be eliminated from the production of agricultural commodities by 2020.**

In general, company commitments are too weak to be effective – for example, not covering all of the company’s supply chains.

- Few (8%) of the 350 most influential companies assessed by Global Canopy’s Forest 500 have a zero-deforestation commitment for all their supply chains and operations.

Companies don’t report enough on actions taken and progress made toward achieving their commitments.

- Of the 350 influential companies assessed by the Global Canopy, 50 companies have taken some action to achieve their commitments but no companies report on all of these actions.

**Without transparency, there can’t be accountability.**

- Tools and initiatives (e.g. the Accountability Framework Initiative) have been developed to guide tracking and make reporting easier.

**The most advanced and successful interventions to address deforestation have been sector-wide efforts**, such as a soy moratorium in the Brazilian Amazon; a suite of public and private efforts to protect peatlands in Indonesia; and demand-side timber regulations.

**Jurisdictional approaches** – public-private collaborative actions at the jurisdictional level - in many producer countries are coming online. However, the implementation of these approaches is **still in the early stages** and their impact on deforestation from agriculture is yet to be seen.

## **Goal 3: Reducing Deforestation Derived from Other Economic Sectors**

**Mining, extraction, and infrastructure pose clear risks for forests.**

- Over a quarter (27%) of global forest area overlaps with the 50-kilometer buffer zones of forest mines (where forest loss is mostly likely to occur).
- Almost a fifth (19%) of intact forest landscapes overlap with extractive concessions.
- Currently there are no examples of fully forest-smart mines.

**Economic development models that rely on infrastructure development and resource extraction are difficult to reconcile with the need to protect and restore forest areas** due to differing priorities amongst key actors.

**There is an ongoing trend of changing the status of protected areas to facilitate new infrastructure development.** Intact forest areas in the Amazon, the Congo Basin, and Indonesia are particularly at risk for deforestation and fragmentation. Plans and current construction to build new infrastructure through intact and biodiversity-rich forests puts forests further at risk.

- **Brazil particularly trends in the wrong direction:** recent changes to the mining code in Brazil could open up **9.8 million hectares** of protected area to mining development by 2025, while President Jair Bolsonaro's administration recently announced its intention to alter over **60 conservation areas** to facilitate new infrastructure.

**Good news: High-level support for mainstreaming forest and biodiversity protection across economic sectors has grown** - Recent years have seen an increase in high-level support for protecting forests and biodiversity from destruction due to economic activities, as evidenced by the adoption a long-term strategy to **mainstream biodiversity management** into economic sectors such as mining, energy, and infrastructure at the UN Biodiversity Conference in November 2018.

Communities are pushing back against extractive activities and major infrastructure projects – including indigenous communities in South and Central America. **These movements are gaining international recognition and winning some legal victories, even as the mining sector is responsible for the most killings of environmental defenders in 2018 (43 deaths).**

#### **Goal 4: Alternatives to Deforestation Driven by Basic Needs**

Poverty and a lack of livelihood alternatives underlie deforestation driven by basic needs.

**To be effective, forest conservation measures have to address poverty as well.**

- Wood harvesting (primarily for woodfuel) and small-scale crop production (e.g. swidden agriculture) are the two most common basic-needs activities which may have a negative impact on forests. These activities often lead to forest degradation, rather than deforestation, which makes impacts more difficult to observe and measure.

**A lack of livelihood alternatives and increased population pressures (from both migration and population growth) are important socioeconomic factors that can trigger unsustainable forest use** to meet basic needs. Each of these factors can lead to an expansion in agricultural land, which is the most significant cause of poverty-driven deforestation.

Artisanal and small-scale mining can be another significant source of forest loss in certain areas, causing, for example, over 50,000 hectares of deforestation in the Peruvian Amazon since 2011. At the same time, small-scale mining is a source of livelihood or support for over 150 million men, women, and children around the world

Vulnerable populations often operate in informal sectors. Because over 70 percent of small-scale miners operate in the informal sector, efforts to reduce environmental impacts from this activity often focus on formalization. Interventions to formalize these sectors can inadvertently harm populations.

#### **Goals 8 and 9: Mobilizing Finance for Forests**

Finance still has to shift from baseline, business-as-usual investments to support investments with clear conservation goals, or at least backed by strong safeguards.

**Development finance for agriculture amounts to 15 times more than climate mitigation finance with a forestry objective.** Finance remains systemically grey (i.e. without any stated

objective or safeguards to protect forests). Greening grey finance would make deforestation-free the default, rather than the exception.

Companies and governments continue to provide subsidies and support to activities that potentially harm forests. Financial institutions and lenders lack the safeguards to ensure that investments and finance are sustainable.

### **Finance for forests does not match the climate mitigation potential of protecting and restoring forests.**

- From 2010-17, developed countries and multilateral institutions committed USD 5.1 billion in forest sector finance for mitigation-related development– the majority (62%) to countries with high levels of deforestation. Another USD 1.3 billion has been pledged for regional or unspecified support to the forestry sector.
- However, investments in forests in tropical countries with high deforestation comprise less than 1.5 percent – only USD 3.2 billion – of the USD 256 billion committed by multilateral institutions and developed country donors since 2010 to climate change mitigation.
- **Comparatively, the renewable energy sector alone has received over 100 times more commitments of finance than forests since 2010.**
- Just over USD 1.8 billion has been of REDD+ finance has been committed by multilateral sources for the development, capacity building, and implementation of strategies that reduce emissions from deforestation since 2010. Half (54%) has been disbursed.<sup>e</sup>

Nearly USD 4.7 billion of **results-based finance for verified emissions reductions** has been committed by bilateral or multilateral sources since 2010. About one third (35%) of payments have been disbursed or announced<sup>f</sup> – mostly by Norway to Brazil.

**There have been landmark payments for verified results of greenhouse gas emissions, but commitments and other agreements lag.** Two landmark payment announcements in 2019:

- The payment from the GCF for deforestation-related emissions reductions was confirmed. Nearly USD 100 million will be paid to Brazil over the course of six years for results achieved in the Amazon biome from 2014 to 2016. In reaction to the lack of will by the new Brazilian government to continue policies to stop deforestation, Norway and Germany put payments to support Brazil for efforts related to slowing deforestation on hold in August 2019.
- It was also announced that the first results-based payments would be made to Indonesia for their reductions in carbon emissions from deforestation in 2017. It is estimated this will amount to USD 20 million. Norway, who pledged up to USD 1 billion to Indonesia in 2010, has guaranteed compensation for 4.8 million tons CO<sub>2</sub>. About 13 percent of the total pledge has been spent so far in support of the efforts of the Indonesian government to address deforestation.

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<sup>e</sup> As of December 2018.

<sup>f</sup> As of April 2019.

## **Goal 10: Improvements in Forest Governance**

### **Poor forest governance correlates with high deforestation and enables illegal activity.**

Most of the tropical deforestation in recent decades was due to the illegal conversion of forests for commercial agriculture, in particular for the “big four” commodities: palm oil, soy, paper/timber, and cattle/beef.

### **Demand-side measures play an important role in achieving sustainable supply chains.**

International pledges have been made to eliminate imported deforestation from commodity supply chains, such as the Amsterdam Declaration. However, **only the timber sector has seen concrete actions and regulatory measures adopted (e.g. European Union Timber Regulation, United States Lacey Act).**

### **Communities protect forests but lack fully secure tenure and rights**

- It has been shown that when Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) have full land rights to govern forest territories, these forests and the carbon they store are better protected over time. Despite this, IPLCs are still struggling to achieve full recognition and protection of land rights.
- About half of the world’s land is subject to long-standing customary claims by IPLC groups who have used, owned, and occupied it for generations.
- IPLCs also face harassment, criminalization, and violence in land use conflicts. At least 164 forest and land defenders were killed in 2018, according to data from Global Witness.<sup>4</sup>

### **Empowerment strengthens forest defenders**

- **IPLC empowerment can come from strength-in-numbers** -- through forest and farm producer organizations, which serve as vehicles for broader political participation, along with increasing the economic security of their members—**and participation on the global stage** – like through the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples’ Platform (LCIPP) launched at COP24 to enhance community engagement in global climate governance processes.

## **The Ten Goals of the NYDF**

**Goal 1.** At least halve the rate of loss of natural forests globally by 2020 and strive to end natural forest loss by 2030

**Goal 2.** Support and help meet the private-sector goal of eliminating deforestation from the production of agricultural commodities such as palm oil, soy, paper, and beef products by no later than 2020, recognizing that many companies have even more ambitious targets

**Goal 3.** Significantly reduce deforestation derived from other economic sectors by 2020

**Goal 4.** Support alternatives to deforestation driven by basic needs (such as subsistence farming and reliance on fuel wood for energy) in ways that alleviate poverty and promote sustainable and equitable development

**Goal 5.** Restore 150 million hectares of degraded landscapes and forestlands by 2020 and significantly increase the rate of global restoration thereafter, which would restore at least an additional 200 million hectares by 2030

**Goal 6.** Include ambitious, quantitative forest conservation and restoration targets for 2030 in the post-2015 global development framework, as part of new international sustainable development goals

**Goal 7.** Agree in 2015 to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation as part of a post-2020 global climate agreement, in accordance with internationally agreed rules and consistent with the goal of not exceeding 2°C warming

**Goal 8.** Provide support for the development and implementation of strategies to reduce forest emissions

**Goal 9.** Reward countries and jurisdictions that, by taking action, reduce forest emissions – particularly through public policies to scale-up payments for verified emission reductions and private-sector sourcing of commodities

**Goal 10.** Strengthen forest governance, transparency, and the rule of law, while also empowering communities and recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples, especially those pertaining to their lands and resources

## **Forest Glossary**

**Afforestation:** the process of establishing new forests in naturally non-forest ecosystems such as natural grasslands, or areas that have not been forested for at least 50 years.<sup>5</sup>

**Deforestation:** the conversion of forest to other land use or the permanent reduction of the tree canopy cover below a defined minimum canopy cover threshold.<sup>6</sup>

**Forest:** though definitions vary by government, organization, and intended use, generally an area of land of minimum 0.5 hectares with a tree cover density of 10-30 percent, where trees have potential to reach a minimum height of 2-5 meters at maturity in place.<sup>7</sup>

**Forest degradation:** the reduction of a forest's capacity to provide the full suite of forest ecosystem services, such as biodiversity, carbon, or hydrological services.<sup>8</sup>

**Forest landscape restoration (FLR):** the long-term process of regaining ecological functionality and enhancing human well-being across forests and related ecosystems that have lost their structure, function, biodiversity or have otherwise been damaged or degraded.<sup>9</sup>

**Gross forest loss:** the magnitude of annual change, counting all tree cover or forest area cleared or reduced below a defined tree cover density threshold, over a defined period of time, without regard to any regeneration or reforestation of natural forest<sup>10</sup>

**Natural forest:** both primary and secondary forests that are naturally regenerated with primarily native species.<sup>11</sup>

**Net forest loss:** the change in forest area from one reporting period to another, calculated by subtracting the area of regenerated or reforested area from the area of gross forest loss over the period.<sup>12</sup>



**Primary forest:** natural, mature forests that have not been cleared and regrown in recent history (i.e. the past 30-50 years).<sup>13</sup> Consisting of native species, these forests are largely free from industrial-scale land uses and infrastructure, and ecological processes have not been significantly disturbed.<sup>14</sup>

**Reforestation:** the human-driven establishment of a forest on a land area that had been previously deforested.<sup>15</sup>

**Secondary forest:** forests that have regenerated largely through natural processes after significant removal or disturbance of original forest vegetation (primary forest) by human or natural causes.<sup>16</sup>

**Tree cover:** all vegetation five meters or taller with a default canopy density threshold of 25 percent.<sup>17</sup> Tree cover indicates the biophysical presence of trees but may not meet many definitions of “forest.”

**Tree cover gain:** the increase in vegetation five meters or taller in an area which previously had no tree cover or tree cover below a defined density threshold; may include natural forest growth or tree plantation establishment.<sup>18</sup>

**Tree cover loss:** the removal or mortality of trees within a defined area; loss may be permanent or temporary.<sup>19</sup>

## **Main Drivers of Deforestation**

The main direct drivers of deforestation are **commercial agriculture of forest-risk commodities**, in particular the production of cattle, soy, palm oil and timber; and **mining and infrastructure** which, though they directly drive comparative little forest loss, act as enablers of other drivers by opening the forests. **Subsistence and small-scale commercial agriculture, along with woodfuel collection**, also drive much deforestation and degradation in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Certain country governments and subnational jurisdictions, supply chain companies, and financial institutions **have all been taking steps to address forest loss** – from zero-deforestation commitments, to policy interventions, to forest risk disclosure for loans. **However, the sum of these efforts has not been enough to reduce the rate of forest loss globally.**

## **Types of Forest Cover Change**

**Deforestation** generally refers to the longer term – often permanent – conversion of **forest** to other land use, such as agriculture, roads, or settlements. Human action or natural events can remove trees from a landscape and not all forest clearing necessarily leads to deforestation. **Forest loss** associated with forestry, fires, and shifting agriculture is often temporary and forests regenerate after disturbance. This means that **forest cover change** can but does not have to lead to deforestation. Regardless of the type of forest loss and subsequent land use change, **ecosystem services** are always negatively impacted and may take decades to centuries to recover. **Primary forests** can be cleared and in a short amount of time be converted into short-rotation timber plantations. While fast-growing trees can be established within 10 or 20 years, the loss of biodiversity, a significant part of the **carbon storage** and the hydrological functions of the land, may be lost for good. The same plot of land that was deforested could also be abandoned and followed by natural regeneration which, over a much

longer time period (20–200 years<sup>20</sup>), may help to restore most of the original forest's ecological structure and function.

When accounting for deforestation, it is also important to differentiate between **gross** and **net deforestation (or forest loss)**. Gross deforestation refers to the total amount of forests lost, while net deforestation describes the total amount of forest loss minus the amount of forest gain. Net deforestation counts forests regrown or restored against the deforestation that took place over the monitoring period. In the context of forests, it is important to emphasize gross numbers because regrowth often has lower ecological functionality and cannot compensate for avoiding deforestation in the first place. Because primary forests cannot be restored within a human timeframe, the net loss of primary forests is the same as gross loss of primary forests.

Forests can also suffer damage from **forest degradation**. Forest degradation is the loss of canopy cover that is insufficient to be classified as deforestation (e.g. selective logging), and results in losses of biodiversity and other ecosystem services as well as significant greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>21</sup> Annual emissions from tropical forest degradation have recently been estimated to account for approximately a quarter of forest-related emissions (2.1 Gt CO<sub>2</sub>e/yr).<sup>22</sup> In some regions, such as South Asia and East Africa, carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) emissions from degradation make up at least 75 percent of the total CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from forests. Degradation can take place gradually over years, at finer scales, and through the chance of recovery, biomass gains can partially or wholly offset biomass losses.<sup>23</sup> Studies of deforestation rarely include land degradation and most studies on degradation focus on regional scales.

In contrast to forest loss, a gain in forest cover can be achieved through **restoration**. Restoration has various interpretations due to the different types of degradation that it seeks to remedy, the actions involved, and the different objectives of the land managers promoting restoration. In 2000, a group of experts established the term **forest landscape restoration (FLR)** to incorporate multiple objectives in landscape mosaics that include regaining ecological integrity and enhancing human well-being.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to site-based ecological restoration, where the focus is to recover forests back to their reference condition or the practice of **reforestation** or **afforestation** to create productive forests, the FLR approach encompasses a range of activities that balance environmental and socioeconomic needs. While the process and intent of FLR is well-defined, there is no universal set of defined FLR activities.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Global Witness. (2019). *Enemies of the State? How governments and business silence land and environmental defenders*. Retrieved July 30, 2019, from <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/enemies-state/>.

<sup>5</sup> UNFCCC. (2002); FAO. (2016a).

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<sup>7</sup> FAO. (2016a); Chazdon, R. L. et al. (2016).

<sup>8</sup> FAO. (2016a).

<sup>9</sup> Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration. (2018).

<sup>10</sup> Climate Focus. (2016).

<sup>11</sup> CBD. (2006, November 30).

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