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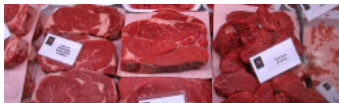
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Forests Need Laws, Not Loopholes

Posted: 09/25/2014 9:02 am EDT | Updated: 09/28/2014 10:59 pm EDT



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Sitting in the towering United Nation's building on New York's east side, it might be hard for world leaders to picture a destroyed forest, but I know just how depressing the site is. In Indonesia, and elsewhere, we've seen vast tracks of land where once the largest and poorest of rainforests stood. We need strong laws to protect the rainforest, which once provided shelter to

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indigenous people, as well as animals like tiger and orangutan. Globally, the destruction of such forests is also accelerating the very climate change that threatens Manhattan, which is why I spoke at the Multilateral and Multi-stakeholder Action Announcement Session on 'Forests' as part of the UN Climate Summit in New York on Tuesday,

My message to politicians and business leaders was clear: Greenpeace welcomes the renewed commitment to halting the loss of natural forests globally, however voluntary commitments cannot replace government action. We need strong laws to protect forests and people. We also need better enforcement of existing laws. While we are celebrating new announcements on paper this week, forests and forest peoples are facing imminent threats that must be averted if we want to live up to the New York Declaration.

Here are five things that governments and my fellow panelists can do to secure the future of the forests and its peoples:

1. Indonesia has taken important steps forward in the past years, and we hope that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono will leave a strong environmental legacy by seizing the opportunity to pass a strong regulation for the protection of carbon-rich peatlands before the end of his presidential mandate. Peatlands in Indonesia store an estimated 60 billion tonnes of carbon, so their protection is absolutely necessary to reduce the release of climate-changing greenhouse gases and prevent future disastrous forest fires. Like the moratorium that the President initiated, the current regulation needs to be strengthened and its many loopholes eliminated.
2. Brazil showed us the way to reduce deforestation by governance, improving law enforcement and designating indigenous reserves and protected areas. But these hard-won victories are under fierce attacks by some of Brazil's industrial agriculturalists. Will the government resist the pressure to reduce Indigenous Peoples' land and forests, and commit instead to strengthening governance in the Amazon and to increasing the amount of protected areas?
3. Greenpeace welcomes Unilever's high-level engagement, but we question Unilever's role with the so-called "Sustainable Palm Oil Manifesto". There is a danger that this group, dominated by Malaysian growers, does not drive genuine change in the palm oil industry and undermines the good work being done to implement "No Deforestation" commitments by some major palm oil producers.
4. Cargill has been instrumental to the success of the Soya Moratorium in Brazil, which has helped to dramatically reduce deforestation in the Amazon. But this success will prove temporary if the moratorium expires prematurely at the end of this year. We urge Cargill to take this opportunity to firmly state its support for extending the moratorium while permanent solutions to Amazon deforestation are agreed.
5. Developed nations governments who contribute with funds towards forest protection should take note of the agreement announced this week by Norway and Liberia, which, if implemented, will be an example for other nations to follow. For the first time, we could see a country adopt meaningful environmental and social standards as part of its legal framework to prevent deforestation and protect the rights of its citizens.

Governments in consumer markets also need to help cut the demand for products and commodities linked to deforestation. We must develop public policies and measures that ensure deforestation-free products for consumers and help level the playing field for companies that have committed to eliminate deforestation and human rights abuses from their supply chain. Let's send a strong signal that deforestation doesn't sell.

Forest protection needs to come in addition to drastic cuts in fossil fuel emissions. We cannot accept so-called 'forest offsets' that allow the fossil fuel industry to continue polluting. So when we all go back home in a couple of days, please stop procrastinating and take measures to protect forests and secure the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. All these declarations are sending the right signals, but there is no excuse for government not to take immediate action. Whether these leaders are in New York's or back home, they can't run away from their responsibility.

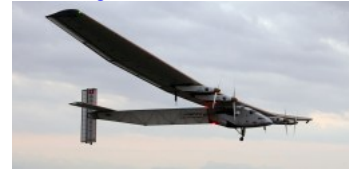
This post is part of a month-long series produced by The Huffington Post in conjunction with a variety of events being held in September recognizing the threats posed by climate change. Those events include the UN's [Climate Summit 2014](http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/) (<http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/>) (held Sept. 23, 2014, at UN headquarters in New York) and [Climate Week NYC](http://www.climateweeknyc.org/) (<http://www.climateweeknyc.org/>) (Sept. 22-28, 2014, throughout New York City). To see all the posts in the series, read [here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/climate-change/) (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/climate-change/>).

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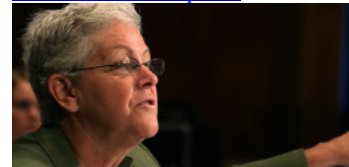
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[Add a comment](#)**Ray Del Colle** · Top Commenter

Amen! "97 percent of top climate scientists and every major National Academy of Science agree that man-made carbon pollution is warming our climate." <http://clmtr.lt/c/MML0cd0cMJ>

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**Teri Parsons** · Top Commenter

When we always talk about saving the big green or Earth's wild, natural ecosystems, they're always in distant places, far away. All wild, natural ecosystems are, alone, the economy of life itself on Earth.

America's ecosystems also generate, produce and flow all support systems and services, like oxygen releasing, the balancing of the gaseous composition of the atmosphere, the natural regulation and moderation of climate and the absorbing and sinking of carbon dioxide for Earth, to name a handful of listed, ecosystem services, including the entirety of Earth's biogeochemistry.

All ecosystems are all integrated and interconnected, and they all, altogether, create the life zone of Earth, Earth's biosphere/ecosphere. And, all ecosystems also have loops and feedbacks to the climate and the atmosphere.

Two sciences state, we're "suicidal" when we kill/deforest/skin any ecosystem, whether it be desert, grassland or boreal. And, we're skinning and raping countless miles of ecosystems for dead fields of solar and wind to help climate.

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**Ray Del Colle** · Top Commenter

it is time to appreciate the Trees of Life! "The sooner we stop burning dirty fossil fuels, the greater our chances of limiting warming to 2 degrees Celsius." <http://clmtr.lt/c/MML0fS0cMJ>

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We should also remember, however, that timber is a valuable renewable resource when harvested in a sustainable way.

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**Marilyn N. Rine** · Contract Manager/Certified Contract Negotiator at Florida

When corp write laws, it's very difficult to make any changes. until there is a major shift where corp serve people instead of people serving corps, it will probably get worse before better...sorry to say

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**Steve Bigboy** · Top Commenter · University at Buffalo

But laws need to be enforced, this takes people on the ground. Problem is our making making our government smaller has laid off most of inspectors.

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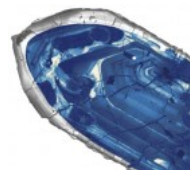
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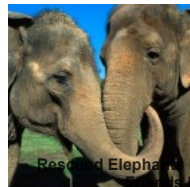
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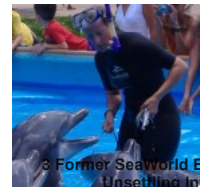
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