

## FOREST TREATY

(Note: This Forest Treaty was negotiated between representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations [NGOs] of many nations from the South and the North, at the Global Forum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, during June 1992. The Global Forum was a conference held parallel to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The treaty was negotiated over a period of six days of intense discussions using three working languages: Portuguese, Spanish and English. All decisions were arrived at by consensus and the participants in this treaty-making process experienced deep feelings of community with each other. This treaty is now being distributed throughout the world by various organizations. Those who are in general agreement with this treaty and are prepared to put it into practice can formally endorse it and seek the endorsement of other individuals and organizations. The Green Web had two representatives in the NGO Forest Treaty negotiations. We estimate there was a core group of at least 30 people in the negotiations, with intermittent participation by many others.)

### DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided for the purpose of this Treaty:

Natural forests are ecosystems dominated by trees or shrubs [growing] in an original or nearly original fashion through natural regeneration. This definition includes mangroves.

Restored forests are forests planted, seeded, or otherwise restored in such a manner as to emulate the original natural forests of an area.

Plantations are crops of trees artificially established, primarily for specific commercial purposes.

Sustainable forest management means securing benefits for human needs while maintaining the structure, function, and integrity of ecosystems on a bioregional basis, incorporating in perpetuity complete forest successions in each bioregion.

Colonists are non-aboriginal and traditional people who have recently moved into an area.

Native, indigenous, and aboriginal peoples are those who have lived in relative harmony with the environment for many generations, and whose origins, as a people, are in that area.

Traditional peoples are non-native populations who have established non-destructive relationships with their environment and have lived there for generations.

### PREAMBLE

The undersigned Non-Governmental Organizations

Recognizing the vital role of all types of forest in maintaining the ecological processes of the Earth; in protecting ecosystems, watersheds, freshwater resources, coastal areas, estuaries, and

adjacent seas; as a rich storehouse of biodiversity; and in carbon fixation;

Recognizing also that all types of forests embody complex and unique ecological processes which are the basis of their present and potential capacity to provide resources to satisfy the biological needs of all forest-dependent species, as well as environmental, cultural, historical, and spiritual values;

Believing that forestry issues and opportunities should be examined in a holistic manner, taking into consideration the multiple functions and uses of forests, including living space and cultural survival of the indigenous forest people;

Recognizing that many traditional forest dwelling people have had their territories and their ability to pursue their historic cultural activities encroached upon or destroyed;

Noting that the world's forest ecosystems have been dangerously reduced and degraded during more than a century, and that in recent decades the rate of reduction and degradation has been accelerating due to many kinds of exploitation;

Noting also that the consumption of wood products commercially and for fuel wood is at a non-sustainable level; and is being met from natural forests rather than from plantations, recycled materials, and other sources;

Noting further the leading part that national and transnational corporations play in degrading forest ecosystems during exploitation and in trading forest products, with minimum benefit to the people in the locality of origin, often displacing them in the process, and often causing social/economic, environmental, and cultural damage;

Observing that indigenous forest land tenure systems are highly structured and defined, and are commonly overridden by law, political, and market interests, which reshape access to and control over forest resources;

Observing also that the concentration of power and control over natural resources has resulted in an increase of poverty and deprivation putting increased pressures on forest ecosystems;

Emphasizing that the concentration of property and usufruct of forest land and resources in the hands of a few owners and national and multinational corporations, is a major factor responsible for the deforestation and degradation of forests in many countries; and that this limits the ability of local people to influence the uses of the land;

Acknowledging that responsibility for forest management must be accepted by governments, local NGOs, business, and individuals, without prejudice to the rights of indigenous people;

Acknowledging also that indigenous territories, including forests, must be exclusively managed by indigenous and local people in cooperation with other interested sections of society as may be decided by those indigenous and local people;

Declaring that all types of forest and especially wilderness forest areas have intrinsic values of their own and are essential for the conservation of biodiversity; and are a source of knowledge, inspiration, and spiritual renewal for humanity;

Assert that this treaty applies to all types of forests, restored forests, and plantations in all geographic and climatic zones;

And further assert that the purpose of this treaty is to ensure the conservation, rehabilitation, enhancement, enlargement, natural regeneration, planting, protection, and sustainable use of the world's forests, as in each case is appropriate to the particular ecosystem.

## **PRINCIPLES**

1. Forests are essential to life on Earth. The structure, function, and integrity of ecosystems must be seen to have infinite value. Every form of forest life is unique and requires adequate habitat and protection.
2. Forests must be protected to supply the social, economic, ecological, cultural, and spiritual needs of present and future generations, subject to maintenance of the integrity of soil, water, air, and the conservation of biodiversity.
3. Policies on forest conservation shall include the full permanent protection of all forest ecosystem types, the restoration and/or recuperation of degraded or fragmented forests, and the sustainable management of areas under human use.
4. Forest policy must be developed with maximum public consultation and participation especially with local forest people and community groups, and the public must have the right to appeal and enforce decisions made in the forestry sector.
5. Forests are the very life of many indigenous people, and therefore their traditional territories must be legally recognized, demarcated, and guaranteed.
6. Traditional forest knowledge and practices of indigenous people must be guaranteed.
7. The struggle for forest conservation cannot be separated from the struggle for agrarian reform in some countries, and the general principles of democratization, social justice, and respect for the environment.
8. The rights of indigenous and traditional people who make a living from the non-destructive extraction of forest products (such as rubber tapping and nut picking) should be legally guaranteed in areas they have traditionally occupied. These extractive processes should be recognized, protected, and promoted as a form of sustainable forest management, to alleviate pressure on the forests, to benefit local economies, and to help the global environment.
9. Existing monocultural and exotic plantations which have been planted for timber production should be preferentially harvested in order to take the pressure off the cutting of natural forests. These plantations should generally be converted to mixed plantations of native species.
- 10a. In order to maximize biological diversity, natural regeneration of trees should be employed wherever possible.
- 10b. The role of plantations, restored forests and tree crops (such as fruits and nuts) as sustainable and environmentally sound sources of renewable energy should be recognized, enhanced, and promoted. Plantations and rehabilitated forests can be a means of relieving commercial pressure on primary or old-growth forest. No land presently under natural or restored forest should be converted to plantations.

10c. Plantation forestry should only occur on non-forested areas, degraded areas, and areas no longer able to support natural regeneration of the native forests, and that are not suitable for food crops. Plantations should not be subject to chemical or biological control or non-organic fertilizers.

10d. Restoring forests and establishing plantations on degraded land can play an important role in providing regional employment and development for the benefit of local people, national economies, and the global environment. Before any plantation project is undertaken, environmental impact studies should be done to ensure there are no adverse effects on local economies or the environment.

11. Logging practices that do not take into account habitat destruction, soil erosion, loss of biomass, adverse cultural and economic effects, or the securing of ecologically appropriate regeneration, must be internationally condemned.

12. Environmental costs and benefits including economic, social, cultural, and political values, should be incorporated through green accounting into values put on forest resources by market forces and mechanisms and national accounting, and reflected in real prices, permit costs, and fiscal charges, in order to achieve sustainable uses of forests.

13. Government forest agencies should not sell, allocate, or otherwise dispose of forest products unless those transactions show a profit based on the real value of all assets used including trees, land, soil, and water, in each forest area involved.

14. Recycling of wood products, especially paper, along with less wasteful logging and processing practices should play a significant part in protecting environmental values and in relieving pressure of demand for new wood.

## **ACTIONS**

1. NGOs will pursue all avenues open to them to ensure that the intent and meaning of issues expressed in the Preamble and Principles of this Treaty are understood, acted upon, and implemented by all relevant sectors of society.

2. NGOs will take the initiative in supporting local populations in the management, conservation, and recovery of forests, with due regard for the integrity of the forests, preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, promotion of social justice and democracy, and improvement of quality of life of the local people.

3. NGOs, with other sectors of society will formulate global proposals about forestry and climate policies, and will apply pressure so that government decisions on these subjects be taken jointly with other governments.

4. NGOs, in cooperation with local communities and any indigenous people involved, should participate actively in environmental and social impact assessments of projects which impact upon forests and their inhabitants, to ensure that the results of these studies are analyzed in a public forum before decisions are made concerning the implementation of those projects. NGOs will also apply legal and political pressure so that the decisions which result are respected and implemented.

5. NGOs will campaign for the conservation of forests, for the survival and improvement in the quality of life for people living in forests, the implementation of development projects which reduce pressure on forests, and the elimination of pollutants, particularly those contributing to acid rain. NGOs will oppose attempts to manipulate forest ecosystems using chemical or biological pesticides.
6. NGOs will assist in channeling financial and technical support by governmental and international agencies for forest management and recovery programs. NGOs will insist that such agencies will develop policies in accordance with the spirit of this Treaty.
7. NGOs should try to secure for local people prior consultation and active participation, that is, power sharing at all stages of decision making, in conservation management, and develop projects affecting them, regardless of the ownership of the lands in question.
8. NGOs will actively participate in education and information exchange regarding environmentally sound forest practices.
9. NGOs will demand that governments monitor the management of forest resources. Frequent audited reports of the monitoring process should be available to any interested member of the public.
10. NGOs will vigorously oppose the industrial clear cutting of remaining primary and old-growth forests, and will help to seek alternative work and methods of survival for communities which depend on this practice.
11. NGOs, recognizing the highly polluting character of the pulp and paper industry, will encourage research on alternative raw materials and alternative industrial processes for pulp and paper.
12. NGOs will pressure local and national governments to confront the causes of uncontrolled urban and rural growth in forested areas, so as to prevent the speculative use of land in these areas.
13. NGOs, having regard to the complexities of forest ecosystems and sustainability, will support popular agrarian reform initiatives based on criteria of social equity, that deal with land distribution and forest use rights.
14. NGOs will fight against political pressures caused by external debt that increase the rate of deforestation and degradation of forest ecosystems. NGOs will suggest and encourage alternative economic models compatible with conservation of forest ecosystems.
15. NGOs will campaign for the inclusion into CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) of those forest species threatened by extinction.
16. NGOs shall educate others about the importance of forests as wildlife habitat. NGOs shall fight to protect such habitat.
17. NGOs will take into consideration all traditional knowledge of indigenous people and/or local communities when supporting or developing conservation projects.

18. NGOs will denounce forest practices that accelerate soil erosion and cause desertification, hydrological destabilization, or habitat damage.

19. NGOs will encourage and organize recycling and reuse of forest products, and the general reduction of waste where forest resources are concerned.

20. NGOs will encourage coalition making and exchanges at regional, national, and international levels, for the purposes of this Treaty.

(Unfortunately, the original document with signatures of the members of the NGOs who endorsed this Treaty is not available.)

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