



Progress on the
New York Declaration on Forests
An Assessment Framework and Initial Report

Executive Summary

November 2015

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Climate Focus. 2015. Progress on the New York Declaration on Forest – An Assessment Framework and Initial Report. Prepared by Climate Focus, in collaboration with The Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, Environmental Defense Fund, Forest Trends, The Global Canopy Program.

Executive Summary

In September 2014, a broad coalition of governments, corporations, indigenous peoples' organizations, and nongovernmental organizations signed the New York Declaration on Forests (NYDF), thereby endorsing its 10 goals. Achieving NYDF goals could reduce the global emissions of greenhouse gases by 4.5 – 8.8 billion metric tons every year.¹

Goal 1 is to halt natural forest loss by 2030, with a 2020 milestone of a 50% reduction. Most other goals are subsidiary to Goal 1, including halting deforestation from agricultural supply chains (Goal 2), reducing deforestation from other economic sectors (Goal 3), and supporting alternatives to deforestation driven by poverty and basic needs (Goal 4). One goal is aimed at restoring 150 million hectares of degraded land by 2020 and an additional 200 million hectares by 2030 (Goal 5). Another set of goals aims at improving the enabling environment to help signatories and other entities meet the deforestation goals. These goals include establishing a strong international framework (Goals 6 and 7), better financing (Goals 8 and 9), and improved forest governance with more secure forest and land rights for local communities and indigenous peoples (Goal 10).

The NYDF is supported by an action agenda, but lacks a process or methodology that would allow monitoring progress toward achieving its goals. *"Progress on the New York Declaration on Forests: An Assessment Framework and Initial Report"* seeks to fill that gap by proposing a framework of indicators that could provide an initial assessment and monitor progress over time. This report is supported by a website (www.forestdeclaration.org) with supplementary material, including a detailed assessment of the status of each goal. The creation of this framework is intended to support the monitoring of progress toward meeting the NYDF goals.

For an initial assessment, we propose a number of imperfect indicators and proxies that allow the measurement of progress toward the goals. We anticipate that indicators will improve over time as data gaps and shortcomings of existing datasets are filled.

One year after the adoption of the NYDF is too early to draw conclusions about progress in most areas. But in the past year, new initiatives have been launched, additional commitments have been made, and implementation of relevant programs has begun (see Box 1). These are important steps in the right direction and may help accelerate trends toward achieving the NYDF goals. Still, overall progress remains slow and more action is urgently needed.

Box 1: Action taken in the last 12 months

Since the signing of the New York Declaration on Forests in September 2014, early achievements have already emerged. Most notable has been the inclusion in the final text of the Sustainable Development Goals of an ambitious target to halt deforestation by 2020. Also noteworthy are national government pledges to restore nearly 40 million hectares of forest, tripling the previous amount. In terms of forest finance, early indications are that 2014 official development assistance commitments to reduce emissions from the forest sector were the largest to date, though they have yet to be officially reported. Finance for clean, efficient cookstoves, in particular, has accelerated dramatically. Large private-sector actors continue to make sustainability pledges, with one-third of all pledges to reduce or end deforestation from supply chains made since 2014. Large institutional investors are beginning to consider the forest implications of their investments. For example, the Norwegian Pension Fund has begun to divest shares in companies associated with unsustainable palm oil production, and has introduced new guidelines to exclude investment in companies whose activities entail unacceptable greenhouse gas emissions. Some progress has also been made to further strengthen forest governance and the rights of indigenous peoples. With respect to the latter, indigenous, community, and civil society organizations have launched the first global initiative to map indigenous and community land.

Summary analysis for the New York Declaration on Forests goals:



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

Key messages:

- Globally, the annual loss of natural forest area appears to be declining, if forest regrowth is counted as offsetting forest clearing.
- At the same time, there is no sign that the annual rate at which natural forests are being cleared or harvested is slowing.



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.

Key messages:

- Half the forests providing wood fiber for paper are under sustainability certified production. Certified sustainable palm oil has grown to 18% of the global market. Certified sustainable soy is only 2% of the global market. There is no data on beef products. For palm and soy, most certification is through sustainability offsets rather than on-site certification.
- The number of companies pledging to reduce deforestation has grown rapidly in recent years and for palm oil and wood fiber represents a large percentage of production. Overall it is still a small percentage of agricultural commodity market actors. Companies that endorsed the NYDF generally have better-than-average sustainability ratings.



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

Key messages:

- The most significant nonagricultural drivers of forest loss are infrastructure development, human settlements, and mining.
- Though some interventions can be highlighted, there is no coordinated effort to track effort to reduce the forest impact of these sectors.



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

Key messages:

- In the absence of data on interventions to tackle subsistence agriculture as a driver of forest loss, we focus solely on woodfuel interventions for which data is available.
- The global distribution of clean cookstoves is accelerating rapidly, almost doubling every year from 2008 to 2013. Global investments in clean cookstove distribution have also increased in recent years, peaking at US\$260 million in 2014.



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.

Key messages:

- Since 2011, countries, regions and organizations have committed to restore 62.6 million hectares of forest landscapes under the Bonn Challenge—approximately 42% of the 2020 restoration target. To meet the 2020 target, restoration pledges will need to be made at a greater rate to cover the remaining 90 million hectares.
- Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have committed to restore, reforest, and/or afforest about 122 million hectares as part of their land-sector intended nationally determined contributions—approximately 35% of the 350-million-hectare 2030 restoration target.



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.

Key messages:

- An ambitious and quantitative target for forest conservation has been adopted as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, namely to halt deforestation by 2020.
- However, no ambitious and quantitative target for forest restoration has been adopted.



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.

Key messages:

- Although the contents of the post-2020 agreement to be reached in December 2015 are not known, it is unlikely that the main agreement will include more than a high-level reference to forests.
- Of the 122 countries that have submitted public outlines of their post-2020 mitigation contributions (INDCs), 40 have included specific actions on land use and forests, while 18 have excluded land use and forests.



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

Key messages:

- In the 12 years from 2002 to 2013, though varying significantly from year to year, bilateral ODA for reducing forest emissions in developing countries increased from an annual average of US\$365 million during 2002-07 to US\$744 million in 2008-13.
- There is not sufficient data to track public finance flows between developing countries, or domestic spending in developed and developing countries to reduce forest-related emissions, but indications are that it is increasing. Neither is there sufficient data to track private investment in strategies to reduce forest emissions but indications are that it is also increasing.



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.

Key messages:

- Between 2008 and 2014, over US\$3 billion was committed, almost exclusively from international public sources, for performance-based REDD+ payments. Disbursements, at just over US\$1 billion, have lagged behind commitments.
- The forest carbon market expanded rapidly to US\$237 million in 2011, but growth has subsequently leveled off.



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.

Key messages:

- Forest governance has improved modestly in recent years, coinciding with a significant expansion of bilateral and multilateral programs providing financial support to that end.
- Illegality remains high in the wood-based products market.
- Forest communities continue to live under the threat of violence, with killings related to land disputes continuing unabated.
- The proportion of forests over which indigenous people and local communities have recognized rights has increased by over one-third since 2002, though the rate of recognition has decreased since 2008.

Endnotes

¹ See United Nations Climate Summit. (2014). Section 1, New York Declaration on Forests, available at <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/07/New-York-Declaration-on-Forest-%E2%80%93-Action-Statement-and-Action-Plan.pdf>

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