
March 21st | UN International Day of Forests

In 2012, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared March 21st the International Day of Forests. Every year a different theme is chosen. For this year it is **“Forests and Biodiversity: Too Precious to Lose”**.

But how can the UN highlight this when its main policies related to forests and biodiversity allow for large-scale deforestation and biodiversity destruction?

The [UN Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#), for example, has as one of its long-term goals to achieve “No net loss by 2030 in the area and integrity of freshwater, marine and terrestrial ecosystems [...]” The word “net” is crucial and it is at the heart of a mechanism called [“biodiversity offsetting”](#). It means that a mining company, for example, can destroy forests, fertile land and biodiversity, suggesting this destruction can be “offset” by “restoring” or “protecting” another “comparable” area. This mechanism promotes corporate expansion even into areas before not open for business. Hence, it heavily affects communities, both where the destruction is taking place as well as where the “offsetting” is being established.

The [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#) has facilitated and promoted the [REDD+ mechanism](#), based on offsetting, carbon trading and results-based payments. While being promoted as the main international forest conservation policy by the UN in 65 countries, it has failed to protect forests and biodiversity. A major reason is that REDD+ was never designed to protect forests or reduce deforestation in the first place but rather to enable corporations and industrialized countries to continue burning fossil fuels. Even worse, REDD+ falsely singles out small-scale farming and shifting cultivation as the main cause for deforestation. It has also proven to be totally ineffective in halting corporate-driven large-scale forest destruction.

The [UN Food and Agriculture Organisation \(FAO\)](#), in turn, which monitors the state of the world’s forests, insists in defining a forest as an area covered by trees only. This means that the Congo Basin Forest in Central Africa, for example, is considered as much a forest as a plantation of genetically engineered eucalyptus trees, sprayed with agROTOXINS. For FAO, the only difference is that the latter is called a [“planted forest”](#). But [industrial tree plantations](#) lack interconnected life cycles and the structural diversity that are necessary to support a diversity of life forms. Plantation companies also enclosure forest areas to pretend having a concern about biodiversity. By doing so, communities are hit twice, when their lands are taken away for plantations, and when they are denied vital access to forest areas.

Another UN International Day of Forests is useless if the UN keeps facilitating and greenwashing corporate practices that lead to more forest destruction and biodiversity loss. Communities are increasingly under threat by extractive companies, offset projects, industrial plantations, conservation areas, supposedly “sustainable” logging companies, “reforestation” and “forest restoration” schemes. **If the UN is serious about its slogan for this year’s International Day of Forest, it must put a halt on its own policies driving large-scale deforestation and biodiversity loss!**

March 21st, 2020 – World Rainforest Movement

Please check our videos, open letters to FAO and other materials from previous years related to March 21st, International Day of Forests, [here](#).