



Taking stock of the Amazon

The path from COP28 to COP30 to avert the forest's collapse – and global havoc

Avaaz media
briefing for COP28

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What happens at a COP doesn't stay at a COP. It has ramifications at the national level and other areas of international cooperation. But it also connects with, and partly determines, the agendas of the COPs to come. COP30 in 2025 will be a major landmark this decade, happening in the heart of the Amazon forest, and it is already around the corner.

But the Amazon, as well as the current state of global climate ambition, is on the brink of collapse. Political, economic, and financial decisions have pushed the Amazonian ecosystems to their limit, driving them to be very close to a [tipping point](#). Activities such as oil and gas exploration and extraction, extensive industrial agriculture and cattle raising, and mining, are forcing the displacement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPs and LCs) and pushing the forest to its limit.

This emergency is global: without the Amazon forest, we cannot keep global warming [under 1.5°C](#). **If we lose the Amazon, we will lose the fight against climate change.**

Standing against the drivers of destruction, the Indigenous peoples and traditional communities who have inhabited the rainforest for millennia are responsible today for the management of the healthiest portions of the Amazon, and are the main leaders towards our climate stability.

That is why their voices and knowledge are essential more than ever to ensure climate justice and an ambitious action agenda is on the table at this COP and moving forward. As Parties conclude the Global Stocktake process in Dubai, it is important to ensure that the next round of NDCs, to be presented at the COP30, in Brazil, include concrete milestones on land tenure for climate action, with indigenous peoples and local communities at the center of this process.

With COP28 kickstarted and moving towards the intensive negotiations days, Avaaz offers a quick briefing to help you navigate what is at stake for the Amazon at this COP, and why avoiding its collapse is crucial for the success of the climate agenda.



Three pillars to avoid the Amazon collapse and further climate breakdown

Since the Amazon Summit, held in Belém - Brazil, this past August, world leaders from the region set forward some good intentions towards a joint position to protect and conserve the rainforest, and to recognize the rights of IPs and LCs, but they [failed to agree on an ambitious agenda with concrete measures to achieve such goals](#), such as ending oil extraction and committing to zero deforestation in the Amazon.

In the last months between the Amazon Summit and COP28, the region has experienced alarming emergencies, ranging from [severe droughts](#) and [fires](#) from Brazil to Bolivia, sparked by a dangerous combination of deforestation, climate change effects, and the El Niño climate pattern. **Besides being a climate emergency, the Amazon collapse is a [human rights emergency](#):** entire communities have been left without clean water, they lost their crops, and become isolated by the dry rivers once used in their commutes.

Now, at COP28, the Amazon, along with Indigenous leadership, must be at the center of the discussions. Concrete results must emerge from this conference, demonstrating the commitment of global leaders to save the Amazon from the tipping point and ensuring the rights of the people living in the forest. The focus should be on protecting and conserving Amazonian ecosystems, respecting the human rights of IPs and LCs, and prioritizing an urgent shift towards equitable and inclusive sustainable development.

Avaaz outlines three key pillars that delegates should be considering in their negotiations, and the media should be on the lookout for. These pillars are critical to achieving conservation and sustainable development in the Amazon, protecting the crucial role it plays in regulating weather patterns in the region and climate around the world. Conversely, this sets the foundation that could benefit other crucial carbon sinks around the world, precisely those made of primary forests.

The Amazon in numbers



Deforestation and degradation have reached

26%
of the Amazon.

[Read more](#)



Currently

100 million

hectares of indigenous lands are under dispute or awaiting formal government recognition.

[Read more](#)

14% of the Amazon

— an area larger than Texas — has been converted to croplands or cattle pasture in the past half century.

[Read more](#)



Less than

50%

of the Brazilian Amazon has been designated either a protected area or Indigenous territory

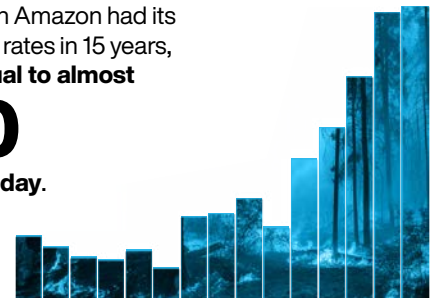
[Read more](#)

In 2022, the Brazilian Amazon had its worst deforestation rates in 15 years, losing an area equal to almost

3,000

football fields per day.

[Read more](#)



Pillar 1: Averting the tipping point through a moratorium on extractive activities and through protection measures

In 2019 scientists Thomas E. Lovejoy and Carlos Nobre [warned of the existence of a tipping point](#) and that the Amazon was perilously close to reaching it. They established that the tipping point in the Amazon might occur once deforestation and degradation combined cross a 20-25% threshold. Their research refers to the eastern, southern, and central Amazon.

At that time, they warned that deforestation was at [17% across the entire Amazon basin and approaching 20% in the Brazilian Amazon](#). Some scientists affirm that deforestation and degradation have now [reached 26%](#) across the entire region.

While there has been some recent progress in policies to protect the Amazon- such as [President Lula's commitment](#) to halt deforestation in the Amazon by 2030, and evidence of a [59%](#) decline in deforestation in Brazil between January and September 2023 compared to the same period 2022- urgent and drastic measures are imperative to halt deforestation and restore critical areas. This is especially true consid-

ering escalating deforestation in neighboring countries like [Peru](#) and [Bolivia](#).

However, recent developments by the Brazilian government signal a worrisome lack of appetite for phasing out fossil fuels: the country is set to join the OPEC+, [and a recent study points out that](#) if the government moves forward with its plan to drill oil in the Equatorial Margin, the greenhouse gas emissions from new fossil fuels would cancel out the gains made by reducing deforestation in the Amazon.

To ensure sustainable development in the region, protections for Amazonian ecosystems should be aligned with halting their increasing degradation by extractive and extensive industrial activities. Undesignated lands are especially vulnerable to land grabs and unsustainable or illegal activities, as well as privatization. In line with what has been proposed for the protection of the Amazon and [averting its tipping point](#), Avaaz highlights the importance of COP28 meetings in delivering a moratorium on extractive activities (public and private) in the Amazon, including on Amazonian undesignated lands, and for a formal commitment to protect these lands and its peoples.



Pillar 2: Enabling Indigenous leadership for climate action

Nearly 45% of the intact forests in the Amazon are in [Indigenous territories](#), an area larger than France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Norway, and Spain combined. Indigenous territories, including those not formally recognized, physically occupy 237 million hectares in the Amazon basin.

There is [abundant proof](#) that the livelihoods of the Indigenous, and the practices that they developed through their cultures and management of the land, have led their territories to be the most effective at keeping the Amazon conserved. Such conservation practices have an outsize contribution to tackling climate change, halting biodiversity loss, and promoting sustainable development.

Yet, a historically racist and discriminatory approach that has persisted to this day has led governments to long ignore Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, a perception that continues to overshadow their excellent track record in territorial management. In particular, cases of successful governance models within Indigenous communities, achieved without external funding, show their capacity to find balance between economic sustainability, environmental respect, and social development.

To truly acknowledge and empower Indigenous leadership, governments must commit to protecting the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, fostering respect for the territories they've inhabited for centuries. **Avaaz emphasizes the urgent need for the full recognition of Indigenous lands and territories, ensuring legal security for Indigenous Peoples' land rights.** Putting a stop to degrading activities on undesignated lands, coupled with official recognition, will bolster global efforts to limit temperature rise.

Additionally, IPs and LCs manage significant carbon stores yet often face exclusion from climate finance initiatives. Governments, philanthropies, private entities, and financial partners must pledge support for Indigenous Peoples' initiatives and their active participation in carbon markets, aligned with human rights principles.

When the rights of Indigenous peoples are protected, their culture thrives and nature thrives. It is crucial to disseminate their successful stories beyond regional borders.



Pillar 3: Financing should target the drivers of deforestation

For decades, financing the protection of the Amazon basin, and especially tropical forests, has been an issue of controversy on which politicians still cannot agree on where this financing should come from, how it should be spent on, and how these two elements contribute to meeting the objective of preserving the region, for the good of humanity.

The initiatives of both governments and private actors, for example, REDD+, carbon markets, or reforestation focus their goals on [paying for the result obtained](#), but the intermediate costs are usually very high and unethical, disrespecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, such as their right to Free, Prior and Informed Consultation on processes.

One example is the model recently promoted by [President Lula in Brazil focuses on rewarding countries for the “eco-system services”](#) that tropical forests provide, for example by not being cut down. While it sounds like a good idea to be rewarded for standing forests, several scientific groups have warned that this [“avoided deforestation” model exaggerates the expected rates of future deforestation](#) when comparing scenarios on how a forest would evolve if there were no poli-

cies in place to avoid deforestation. The risk is that the funds are simply taken as a rent, and that in the meantime, the country begins to dismantle its environmental regulation, as happened with the Bolsonaro government.

What other options do we have? The drivers of deforestation are multiple but they are all rooted in issues of poverty and development, in issues pertaining to land rights, in how certain economic sectors operate nationally (agriculture, timber), and how these sectors are connected to and influenced by international trade. On all of these issues, governments can act through regulations and economic incentives.

Instead of overfocusing on the “result”, we need to urgently act on these drivers, and to [develop a stronger international cooperation](#) so that the international financing to stop deforestation is geared towards supporting sustainable development strategies that would benefit both local populations and the international community.

In this sense, it is essential to recognize that Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities have been the first to demonstrate how tropical forests can be conserved, and therefore it is crucial to respect their rights and recognize how their knowledge contributes to regulating the planet's climate.

About Avaaz

Avaaz - meaning “voice” in several European, Middle Eastern and Asian languages—launched in 2007 with a simple democratic mission: organize citizens of all nations to close the gap between the world we have and the world most people everywhere want. Currently, Avaaz has a membership of almost 70 million people from all countries and territories.

Avaaz empowers millions of people from all walks of life to take action on pressing global, regional and national issues, from corruption and poverty to conflict and the environment. Our model of internet organising allows thousands of individual efforts, however small, to be rapidly combined into a collective force.

For more information and tips in real time on COP28, join Avaaz's WhatsApp channel to receive updates from our experts: <https://bit.ly/AvaazUpdatesCOP28>.

You can check our policy paper for COP28 here: <https://avaaz.org/AvoidAmazonCollapseCOP28>

For more information and interviews: media@avaaz.org

Luciana Weyne: +1 (571) 621-2896, luciana@avaaz.org



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