

Resolution concerning tropical timber certification

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly of 4th June
1998 in Lucerne

Text of the resolution

1. The member municipalities of the Climate Alliance uphold their resolve to abstain in their purchasing from using tropical timber that has come from destructive exploitation or from primary forests. They recommend as well not to use timber from destructive exploitation or from primary forests of other areas. They call for an internationally recognized, verifiable and independent certification of timber from ecologically sound and socially equitable management that guarantees the protection of the rainforests and their biodiversity, and safeguards the interests of the people living in the forests, above all the interests of the indigenous peoples. The member municipalities of the Climate Alliance view the support of the indigenous peoples of the rainforests as a particular task. In order to safeguard the rights of these peoples, they call for a right of indigenous peoples to participate in and object to forest management projects and plans, and further call for the establishment of the instances of appeal necessary to safeguard these rights. They advocate giving the indigenous peoples the necessary legal support to exercise these rights, and support their demand for territorial rights.
2. They view the 10 Principles of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as an acceptable basis for certification. They advocate extending the FSC Principles to include a ban on industrial logging in primary forests and to include the involvement of indigenous and other forest-dependent peoples in decision-making processes.
3. The member municipalities of the Climate Alliance give priority to timber produced in their regions and aim at certifying their own forests.
4. The member municipalities of the Climate Alliance call upon the European Union and the national and regional governments to develop and implement agreements and instruments that permit an effective protection of the forests and that guarantee the rights of indigenous and other peoples living in and off the forests. In pursual of this goal, they call for creating the coherence in this respect of international agreements such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and international agreements on trade and investment.

Reasons

Every year, more than 100,000 km² of rainforest are destroyed, whereby commercial logging continues to be one of the main causes of forest degradation. Through joining the Climate Alliance, the member municipalities have committed themselves to abstain from tropical timbers in municipal purchasing. Through broad-based

awareness-raising work, many cities educate their citizens about the problems of rainforest destruction and the impacts of logging. This is a contribution towards mitigating the destruction of the tropical forests by industrial logging, and is linked to the call for ecologically sound and socially equitable forest management practices and to the support of the indigenous peoples in the rainforests. The member municipalities of the Climate Alliance thus uphold the principle of abstaining from tropical timber coming from destructive exploitation and illegal logging, and the principle of generally abstaining from timber from primary forests.

Since the foundation of the Climate Alliance, the debate on the certification of timber from ecologically sound and socially equitable forest management has moved forward. At the international level, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has been established, whose 10 Principles have become a widely accepted basis for certification.

Those Principles are:

1. Compliance with laws and FSC Principles
Forest management shall respect all applicable laws of the country in which they occur, and international treaties and agreements to which the country is a signatory, and comply with all FSC Principles and Criteria.
2. Tenure and use rights and responsibilities
Long-term tenure and use rights to the land and forest resources shall be clearly defined, documented and legally established.
3. Indigenous Peoples' rights
The legal customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use and manage their lands, territories and resources shall be recognized and respected.
4. Community relations and workers' rights
Forest management operations shall maintain or enhance the long-term social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities.
5. Benefits from the forest
Forest management operations shall encourage the efficient use of the forest's multiple products and services to ensure economic viability and a wide range of environmental and social benefits.
6. Environmental impact
Forest management shall conserve biological diversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes, and, by so doing, maintain the ecological functions and integrity of the forest.
7. Management plan
A management plan - appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operations - shall be written, implemented and kept up to date. The long term objectives of management, and the means of achieving them, shall be clearly stated.
8. Monitoring and assessment
Monitoring shall be conducted - appropriate to the scale and intensity of forest management - to assess the condition of the forest, yields of forest products, chain of custody, management activities and their social and environmental impacts.

9. Maintenance of natural forests

Primary forests, well-developed secondary forests and sites of major environmental, social or cultural significance shall be conserved. Such areas shall not be replaced by tree plantations or other land uses.

10. Plantations

Plantations shall be planned and managed in accordance with Principles and Criteria 1-9. While plantations can provide an array of social and economic benefits, and can contribute to satisfying the world's needs for forest products, they should complement the management of, reduce pressures on, and promote the restoration and conservation of natural forests.

Within the Climate Alliance, the Dutch municipalities have joined the FSC. However, the indigenous alliance partners criticize the lack of opportunities to gain participation and raise objections under the FSC system. The Climate Alliance supports the demand of the indigenous organizations that local communities should have rights to participation and objection, and is making efforts towards ensuring that such rights can actually be exercised by indigenous communities. One avenue in this direction is to expand the already existing legal assistance fund of the Climate Alliance.

Once these demands have been satisfied, the Climate Alliance considers an internationally recognized, controllable and independent certification such as is permitted under FSC criteria to be an acceptable basis.

In the international forest policy arena, there has been scarcely any progress in recent years. The recommendations of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (formerly: Intergovernmental Panel on Forests), which was created in 1995 by the third session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) during its review of the Forest Principles adopted at Rio in 1992, were acknowledged at the UN Special Assembly in 1997, but were not transformed into practical policies. The Climate Alliance calls upon the European Union and the individual national governments to develop agreements and instruments that guarantee an effective protection of the forests, and to enshrine these in national law.

Already existing international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) contain provisions that impact directly upon forest policy. Thus under the Kyoto Protocol to the FCCC, CO₂ sinks (forests) are included in the calculation of CO₂ reduction achievements. The Protocol further contains mechanisms for crediting CO₂ reductions achieved in third countries. The implementation of climate protection targets will thus have considerable impacts upon both international and national forest policies. The Climate Alliance therefore demands that the various international conventions are not treated in isolation from each other, but that rather a coherence of the instruments and implementation mechanisms is brought about. Forests need to be protected not only from the aspect of climate protection, but also from the aspect of biological diversity and as the basis of life for many people, above all for the indigenous peoples.