

# Research Report

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## General Assembly

### The Situation in Amazonian Regions, Regarding the Loss of Culturally Significant Land

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<b>Forum</b>	General Assembly 3
<b>Issue:</b>	The situation in Amazonian regions, regarding the loss of culturally significant land
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## Definition of Key Terms

### Amazonian region

Although, no universal definition of the borders has been made, the main line is all parts of the tropical rainforest situated in South America. These regions include Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela. The area taken by the Amazonian regions is over 5 million square kilometres.

### Introduction

The situation in the Amazonian regions has been mediatized since the 1980's where phenomenal amounts of tropical rainforest had been burned down or deforested. For 30 years, after many campaigns and attempts to protect the rainforest, the problem still persists. Although some solutions have worked out fine, companies still divert through the rules made and make profit out of the rainforest by continuing the deforestation making it possible for incredible climate changes if the Amazonian region is lost. Scientifically, this is because trees absorb the carbon dioxide in the air, so the rainforest "cleans" the air by absorbing the carbon emissions to transform it in their respiration process into oxygen. Carbon dioxide is a factor of global warming. By 2005, around 850,000 square kilometres of forest was cut or burned down. This amount is equal to 17 percent of the original total area of the tropical rainforest. The quantity of deforestation in the past few years has globally decreased but is still diminishing the forest's size. Another positive feature is the fact that 20% of the Amazonian region that has already been cut down is currently regrowing (September 2009). One of the plans which would significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the rate of deforestation is Brazil's plan to reduce the cutting of the rainforest by over 70% in 2018.



## General Overview

In the countries of the Amazonian regions, Brazil has shown itself most willing to reduce the deforestation. Brazil is also the Amazonian country with the most rainforest, covering 60% of the rainforest's total area. In the 1990's, Brazil had an average deforestation rate of around 16,000 square kilometres per year. In the early 2000's, the rate had increased to roughly 20,000 square kilometres per year and since 2005 it has reduced to an average 13,000 a year. As said in the introduction, Brazil hopes to take the amount down to 3,000-4,000 square kilometres of deforestation per year. Between 2005 and 2007, the deforestation had slowed down by about 60%, a vast reduction, but in 2008, following the economic crisis and the increased price of certain agricultural products, Brazilian farmers decided to burn down more forest for their crops and animals.

Although Brazil is not the only country affected, the other countries have not shown themselves as motivated as Brazil and are less present in the media since Brazil covers more than half of the Amazonian regions and are pointed at by countries all over the world. That is why the situation in the seven other Amazonian countries are not getting much better while in Brazil they're working on it. However, countries like Peru and Colombia protect land for the Indian tribes in the tropical rainforest and prevent corporations interfering while Brazil does not. Pointing out Brazil only saves part of the rainforest; other countries might neglect the rainforest and continue exploiting it for economic purposes. As a matter of the fact, most countries rely on the rainforest to improve their economy. Because all countries in the Amazonian regions are LEDC's (Less Economically Developed Countries) it is vital for them to use the rainforest as they do not have many sources of income apart from timber, agriculture and mining. That is why Brazil can implement rules to reduce the deforestation of the rainforest, because being a Newly Industrialised Country (NIC)NEDC (Newly economically developed country), Brazil have other sources of income than just timber and agriculture.

Other parties are present in the saving of the rainforest. Those parties are NGO's (Non-Governmental Organisations) like the WWF (World Wildlife Fund), Greenpeace and Survival International who contribute to stop or slow down countries in their process of deforestation. Survival International for example, in Peru, warned the oil company Perenco to discontinue their project in Peru of drilling oil as it would violate international law. Survival International is a NGO which protects indigenous peoples. In the case of the drill, Survival International believes two uncontacted tribes could be annihilated after the



creation of the drill. Peru is one of the countries which exploit the rainforest in a non-environmental friendly way, allowing oil and gas exploration and drilling. The WWF have made an approach to the problem in a different manner by engaging local communities with governments so that solutions can be found for both economic development and environmental conservation. The WWF made a few projects, one being to defend the deforestation by creating collaboration between the governments and some federal and state protected areas.

## **The Cause and Effects of Deforestation**

The cause of deforestation comes from all kinds of people and corporations. First of all, poverty leads to the destruction as poor inhabitants will cut down the rainforest for their food and family. They generally follow the destruction by using destructive farming methods which lead to unfertile lands and less area in the rainforest. This may seem only small scale, but with all the people doing it, the rainforest loses area. Other causes are the multinationals which see great potential in the farms and ranches thus they sponsor them. This leads to destruction as the farming is not completed in environmentally friendly conditions. Also, oil companies which look for natural resources often destroy the rainforest with big machines used for clearing it. Otherwise they burn down the trees before bringing in the machines. Both the trampling and the burning down lead to unfertile soil thus it makes it impossible for crops, animals and trees to live in those areas.

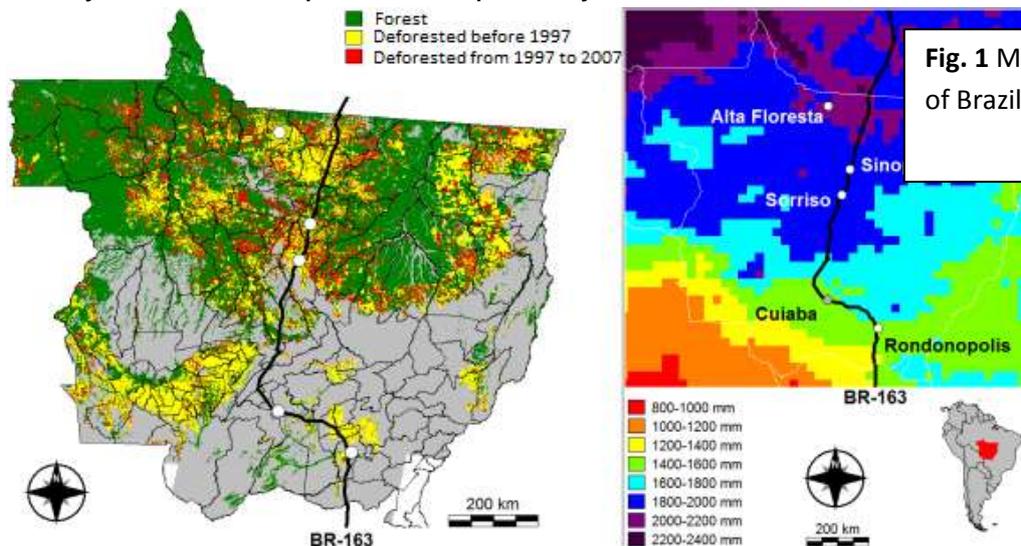
The WWF believe that at the current rates of deforestation, 55% could be gone by 2030. This would not only be disastrous for the region, but it would also be for the world's climate. The biodiversity would hugely decrease and the "lungs" of the world wouldn't function as well as they used to. Not only is that bad in the sense that CO2 emissions would not begin to decrease, but the fact is CO2 emissions could in fact increase in the years to come..

## **The Case of Mato Grosso**

Mato Grosso is a Brazilian region which has already been heavily deforested. Subsequently, it is prone to desertification. The desertification is due to the repeated burning of the trees. The burning follows up with a diminishment of the soil's nutrients. It is possible that even without further deforestation the northern part of the area would have a severe climate change, shifting to a climate more common to regions where savannah is found. Considering the area is not protected, the whole region could undergo the climate change. The trees had been burned down to make room for agriculture and ranching, but



the fact that the soil lost nutrients during the process will permit only short term farming. The nutrients are essential for plants and trees to grow as they can barely ensure their process of photosynthesis.



**Fig. 1** Map of desforestation in parts of Brazil (see link in bibliography)

## Major Parties Involved

Different NGO's and organisations have put forward the country's problems and have brought it to the UN, which has attracted attention. As such, the states involved with the protection of the amazon rainforest are advised to take action.

### United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)

The UNEP is a branch of the United Nations (UN) which provides leadership and encourages work between people and nations to care for the environment by educating and giving permission to states and peoples to improve their life while keeping a steady and secure environment for the generations that follow. They contribute to the issue of the Amazon rainforest by making constant reports in cooperation with the eight countries. They are there to set the rules and the warnings as they are an official branch of the UN.

### World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

The WWF is an NGO which protects the wildlife and creates protected regions for natural habitats. The WWF has been on the case of the Amazon for over 40 years. Some of their projects are, as said before, the one to protect an immense part of the forest in collaboration with Brazil. Another plan is to educate the governments and corporations on the problems imposed upon the environment and to advise and then obtain a forest certification in ideal conditions. The WWF also works with the local people that live off timber and

fisheries and provide them with information on how to live using the Amazon while keeping it in good condition.

### **Survival International**

Survival International is an NGO which protects the human rights of indigenous peoples. In the Amazon, many tribes exist and Survival International does everything in their power to conserve their existence and the way they live. To avoid communities disappearing, Survival International brings the problem to the UNEP so that all negative effects in the Amazon are stopped. An example would be when an oil company doing gas exploration shows no interest in the indigenous peoples of that area. Their contribution to the forest is massive as tribes know how to deal with the forest and it prevents corporations using deforestation to gain land.

### **Greenpeace**

Greenpeace claims to be the “largest independent direct-action environmental organization in the world” and their goal is to create an environmentally friendly world for the generations to come. They protect all kinds of habitats, animals and life forms. They also try to prevent human catastrophes such as toxic waste, bombing and global warming. They show their protection of the forest by making manifestations and raising public awareness in very radical ways so that corporations or people are obliged to leave the area or give the original plan up.

### **Previous attempts to resolve the issue**

In the past, the UN, NGO's and the media raised public awareness about the problems in the Amazon tropical rainforest of losing considerable amounts of forest each year. They have also created certificates to be able to use certain parts of the forest. Unfortunately, these often favoured the people living off timber and were sometimes misused by corporations that would go further than the delimitations indicated. The WWF has created protected zones where many species were found and protected while Survival International created protected zones to save indigenous peoples. While many measures have been taken, more are yet to come as the plan in progress by Brazil to reduce the deforestation rate. Educating people and companies has not always been a great success, because following the advice given takes time. The farmers especially are not motivated because they do not feel personally affected by the climate change and feel it should be the responsibility of others.



## Possible solutions

For local people and populations living in the forests, instead of making money off timber, rubber tapping can be done. This does not affect the forest nor does it affect the trees and makes it possible for the people to generate income. The same can be done for palm fruits, palm hearts, fruits, nuts and medicinal plants. Although for the palm hearts you need to cut the tree down, the palm trees have a relatively short growth time. Ecotourism is another possible solution, though it would take time as tourists are not convinced of the safety inside the Amazon rainforest and tourism in the forest is not ecological yet.

For corporations that use the rainforest, taxes and fines could be setup for misuse of the certificates given out or heavy damage to the rainforest. Another solution would be the one to forbid burning down trees as it damages the soil and its nutrients which would therefore make the soil unfertile over time. High taxes could be imposed on the income of the corporations as some companies would not mind paying the taxes if it meant they could continue to misuse the rainforest. They realise it would take time to become environmentally friendly.

## Appendices

The following link is a report of the UNEP in partnership with the eight countries having rainforest with many facts and figures:

<http://www.unep.org/pdf/GEOAMAZONIA.pdf>

These websites are news websites on environmental problems not in collaboration with any corporation. The information must therefore be checked for authenticity. They will provide up-to-date news and facts and figures:

<http://news.mongabay.com/> (search for "Amazon" in the search tool)

<http://www.amazonrainforestnews.com/>

The websites of the UNEP or other relevant NGO's are also useful:

<http://www.unep.org/>

<http://www.greenpeace.org/>

<http://www.worldwildlife.org/>

<http://www.survivalinternational.org/>



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