

Forests of Hope



**Avoiding tropical deforestation
and combating climate change**

The international community has so far failed to save the world's tropical forests. As things now stand, few tropical forests will survive to the end of the 21st century. Tropical deforestation is one of the most acute ecological tragedies of our modern age, yet it continues at a frightening rate, driven by global demand for timber, paper and land for crops and biofuels. As forests are destroyed, their values as stores of biological diversity, providers of livelihoods and ecosystem services to local and global communities, and stabilisers of the global climate, are lost.

Tropical deforestation has serious impacts on the world's climate. Globally, deforestation and forest degradation account for 15–20% of all human-induced carbon emissions, and a large proportion of this takes place in the tropics. This is therefore one of the major causes of global warming. These emissions are greater than those of all cars, trucks, planes, ships and trains worldwide.

Climate change leads to biodiversity loss over and above that caused directly by habitat destruction. One global study estimates that 15–37% of species could be committed to extinction by 2050 as a consequence of climate change.

To prevent irreversible damage to ecosystems, with devastating consequences for people and biodiversity, it is essential to restrict global warming to less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels. If current rates of deforestation are not slowed, this is impossible.

However, it is not too late to turn the tide.

Threatened biodiversity is not lost and can be saved, and degraded forests can be restored. Conserved or restored forests can continue to provide the services that local communities and society world-wide need.

