

# PM Boris Johnson's address to the COP26 Forests & Land-use event: 2 November 2021

Thank you Sir David Attenborough for such a compelling call to action, if I may say a giant redwood of environmental campaigner, and welcome to the first ever COP World Leaders session on forests and land use.

Something I hope will become a permanent fixture of future summits – because climate change and biodiversity are two sides of the same coin.

We cannot deal with the devastating loss of habitats and species without tackling climate change, and we cannot deal with climate change without protecting our natural environment, and respecting the rights of indigenous people who are its stewards.

So it is central to the ambition of the UK's COP Presidency that we act now, and end the role of humanity as nature's conqueror, and instead become nature's custodian.

And there is no more urgent task in fulfilling this mission than to stop the devastating loss of our forests.

These great teeming ecosystems – these pillared cathedrals of nature – are the lungs of our planet, and their destruction, together with agriculture and other land use change, accounts for almost a quarter of all global emissions.

So if we want to keep that Paris goal of 1.5 degrees in sight and support communities in the front line of climate change we must protect and restore the world's forests.

And I believe we can do it.

Many in this room have already made bold commitments, including President Widodo, who has introduced a moratorium on forest and peatland exploitation in Indonesia, and President Duque, who has taken fantastic strides in safeguarding the Colombian Amazon, as well as the leaders of the countries of the Congo Basin who are working to protect their precious forests.

And with today's Glasgow Leaders Declaration, 105 countries responsible for over 85 per cent of the world's forest estate have now made a landmark commitment to work together to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030. Not just halt, but reverse.

That means more leaders than ever before have now signed up to protect our forests, from countries in the north and the south, with temperate forests and tropical, and including nations like China, Russia, Brazil with some of the largest forest estates in the world.

And what is most significant about this Declaration is not just the range of countries coming together, but also that we are working in partnership with the private sector, with philanthropists, and with indigenous people and local communities to address the economic drivers of deforestation.

And there is an interesting parallel here with our wider efforts on reducing emissions.

For years we made pledges about reducing the use of coal, but what really matters is the rapid development of clean technologies, with private sector investment – and this transformation into unparalleled economic opportunity for growth and job creation.

And so today, we are taking similar steps to make forest conservation not just right for our planet, but right for our economies too.

We know that 80 per cent of tropical deforestation is driven by the global trade in agricultural commodities.

So the UK and Indonesia have brought together countries that produce and consume these goods to agree a roadmap for sustainable trade that can grow our economies whilst reducing pressures on our forests.

And I'm delighted this has now been signed by 28 countries accounting for around three-quarters of global trade in these commodities.

As a result, cocoa farmers in West Africa should receive a better, fairer price for their products in return for protecting their forests.

International trade standards should reward producers who shift their production to more sustainable methods.

And assisted by new technology, supply chains can become ever more transparent, so as consumers we can enjoy guilt free chocolate – I suppose that's carbon not calorie guilt free – safe in the knowledge we have not contributed to deforestation.

But to unlock the true opportunity of a sustainable food and land use system – worth £4.5 trillion a year by the end of the decade – we also want to mobilise global finance on an unprecedented scale.

In the last decade roughly 40 times more finance flowed into unsustainable land-use practices, than into forest protection and conservation, while agriculture, forests and other land use receives just two per cent of available climate finance.

So as we sign this declaration today, let's also galvanise a radical shift in public and private finance.

Let's channel funds towards securing the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and shift trillions towards supporting sustainable jobs.

So that protecting our forests is not only the right course of action to

tackle climate change but also the right path to a better and more prosperous future for us all.

Like the advance of Birnam Wood at the end of Shakespeare's great Scottish tragedy, let's work together to not just protect the forest but to ensure that forests return.