

Talanoa Dialogue Inputs

The contribution of the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon to the global climate

Input from the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon- COICA

The Indigenous People of the Amazon Basin welcome the opportunity to submit inputs to the Talanoa Dialogue Mechanism (1/CP.21). We recommend to take into account the submissions of civil society, especially the inputs of the indigenous organization.

I. Where are we?

In the forests of the world, especially in tropical countries, there is huge deforestation each year. While it is important that Indigenous Territories were barriers to deforestation, it is concerning that a significant amount of the forest inside them are under significant pressures and threats.

Significant differences in the percentage of Amazonian gross deforestation exist between forests located inside Indigenous Territories (IT) and Protected Natural Areas (PNA) compared to forests located outside of them. Many recent reports and journal articles point towards this conclusion, but this is the first report to analyze the phenomenon from a regional or biome level (the Amazon basin countries) and length of time (15 years).

While it is important that Indigenous Territories were barriers to deforestation, it is concerning that a significant amount of the forest inside them are under significant pressures and threats. It is considered that there are pressures if there is already intervention in the territory and threats if there are projects that will be implemented in the future the Amazonian Basin level from 2000-2015, while forest in Indigenous Territories and Protected Natural Areas represents 52% of the Amazonian total, only 17% of deforestation occurred in their boundaries – a percentage significantly lower than the 83% of deforestation coming from the forests of areas outside of their delimitations.

The results reveal that 53% of the Basin's forest carbon is stored within Indigenous Territories and Protected Natural Areas and that 12% of the total Amazon carbon stocks, which are also inside IT and PNA, are under significant pressure and threat.

If that 12% biomass stored in IT and PNA was to be lost, it would equate to nearly 80 Gigatons of CO₂ emissions – more than twice the global emissions in 2015.

The pressures and threats to these areas consist of mining and fossil fuel concessions, roads which drive agriculture expansion, and fires recorded during the period, also, announced large infrastructure projects such as new roads. While these pressures and threats are not necessarily new, they are always there and represent significant higher probability of further deforestation and degradation to be realized.

Amazonian deforestation rates external and internal of Indigenous Territories demonstrated a trend downward from 2000-2015. The total amount of deforestation found inside Indigenous Territories fell from 9,195 km² during the 2000-05 period to 6,586 km² during the 2010-15 period – a reduction of 28.4%. However, the trend was not homogenous for all countries in the region. Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador all had trends that went downward while French Guyana and Venezuela shared an upward trend.

II. Where do we want to go?

The main goal to protect global climate, on behalf of the indigenous people of the Amazon, is to preserve the tropical rainforest of the Amazon, and its stored carbon.

Deforestation rates in tropical forests within indigenous territories are significantly lower compared to other areas. Thus, we must ensure the participation of Indigenous People at mitigation policies on international and national levels, ensure indigenous territory titles and access to climate protection mechanisms.

As there is an an important trend observed at Amazon Basin level was the increase in rates of deforestation loss in Indigenous Territories without legal recognition, we recommend further actions to legalize indigenous territories, and so improve the protection of those forests.

We need to prevent scenarios where indigenous peoples are not able any longer to protect the forests in and outside their legalized territories.

We want to ensure active participation of Indigenous People on international processes and decisions regarding climate finance, to improve livelihood of Indigenous people and ensure the conservation of the territories.

III. How do we get there?

For the goals we set, “where do we want to go”, we need UNFCCC and its parties to ensure rights of indigenous peoples at international and national level, especially already recognized territories and land use rights.

We also need UNFCCC and its parties to ensure participation of indigenous at negotiation processes at international and national level, and access to climate protection mechanisms.

We make a call to support incidence to spread the scientific facts on differences in deforestation/biomass loss in indigenous territories of the Amazon and areas outside indigenous protection, and to raise awareness on the role of indigenous people at forest protection not only in the Amazon but on the whole world.

We need parties of the UNFCCC to support the expansion of indigenous territories, as it is proven that deforestation and biomass loss is at its lowest in most of the countries, when a forest is protected by indigenous territories.

Literature:

A. Baccini¹, W. Walker, L. Carvalho, M. Farina¹, D. Sulla-Menashe, R.A. ‘Tropical forests are a net carbon source based on aboveground measurements of gain and loss’ Houghton¹, Science, 2017. <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/358/6360/230>