Submission to COP 30 Presidency Roadmap on Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030

Halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 is critical to achieving the Paris Agreement, protecting biodiversity, and securing resilient livelihoods. Forests are central to climate stability, water systems and food security, and current rates of loss show that incremental approaches are not enough. Transformative, inclusive and locally led solutions are urgently needed to address the root drivers of deforestation while supporting equitable climate-resilient development for current and future generations.

This submission draws on the experience of SouthSouthNorth (SSN) and Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA), including their work through programmes such as the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) and Green Accountability Platform. Across the global South, our experience shows that lasting forest outcomes depend on recognising local communities and Indigenous Peoples as rights-holders and key actors in forest governance, restoration and sustainable use. The submission below offers practical insights from our work on accelerating progress toward 2030 goals while advancing climate justice and resilience, surfacing insights on the threats and barriers, drivers of positive change and key enablers forest protection and restoration efforts which can inform the COP 30 Presidency Roadmap for Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030.

Threats to forest integrity, which can undermine forests' contribution to the adaptation and mitigation of climate change, include:

- **Economic poverty and food insecurity**, which may drive local people and/or in-migrants to an area to extract timber and non-timber forest products unsustainably. This is the case for low-income communities seeking food on the forested slopes of Mount Elgon, Uganda, including in the protected reserve area (Walimbwa, 2023).
- **Unequal power relations and structural exclusion** of the most forest-dependent and climate-vulnerable people from decision-making over forest resources, as in the de facto exclusion of Indigenous women's voices from Community Forest User Groups in rural Nepal, despite laws intended to achieve gender equality (Dupar and Lama, 2025). This can lead to domination of local decision-making by socioeconomic groups and politically powerful individuals who stand to benefit from heavily extractive activities (ibid).

Further barriers to solutions may include:

- **Lack of experience or exposure to ecologically restorative farming or agroforestry techniques which benefit forests**, as in the case of Honduran farmers who practiced an unsustainable form of slash-and-burn management in local forests until they were introduced to more regenerative methods

such as Inga valley farming, which is now being widely perpetuated via farmer-to-farmer demonstration (Hands, 2023).

- **Lack of knowledge or capacity to bring climate-compatible and ecologically- sustainable goods and services to market, which can manifest in different ways**. Rural Nepalese women producers have impressive Indigenous and local knowledge of how to harvest non-timber forest products sustainably and convert them to practical, useful homewares, but they initially lacked commercial knowhow to convert their ideas into viable, self-sustaining businesses, or to market the products. Communities in coastal Kenya initially did not recognise the immense carbon values of their mangrove forests and adjacent seagrass beds, which could be converted into carbon credits to generate revenues for local development (Wanjiru, 2023).
- **A lack of accountability and transparency of financing decisions, project design and implementation** can result in equitable outcomes, and the channeling of finance away from vulnerable communities. In Brazil, consultations with the National Council of Extractivist Populations and the Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of Juruá, organised by Instituto Fronteiras through the Green Accountability Platform , revealed that these communities had not been consulted on the government's plan to sell carbon credits through the LEAF programme (a global public-private partnership aimed at mobilising climate finance). Being excluded from the decision to shift from donation-based finance to market based mechanisms risked communities' abilities to generate their own carbon credits on the lands where they live, raising further concerns about double-counting of emission reductions. Enabling citizens to participate in and influence decisions on how climate finance is spent, monitored and governed, can ensure that climate finance systems are not only more effective but also more equitable (Chevallier, 2025).

Drivers of positive change to protect standing high integrity forest and restore degraded forest lands may include, in addition to the climate change adaptation and mitigation benefits attendant in doing so:

- A drive to consolidate a more ecologically sustainable basis for **local livelihoods and economic development**, for example baobab-based value chains in Mozambique through Micaia foundation who are supporting women-led enterprises to avoid deforestation for selling of wood and charcoal.
- A desire to **reduce disaster risk**, by planting trees to stabilise slopes, retain soils and reduce flooding, landslide and/or erosion and land degradation risk (e.g. Walimbwa, 2023).
- A motivation to improve overall **quality of life and liveability** of a local area, which may have adaptation dimensions (such as increasing shade cover and reducing glare) but may also have **aesthetic, recreational and mental wellbeing** values associated with improved forest health and biodiversity, as documented in the story 'Community Work Supporting Mental Well-being in Meru County' (Chege, 2023).
- An imperative to **enhance the 'regulating' ecosystem services** provided by intact forests, such as the water quantity and quality regulation provided to downstream water users in a river basin, as demonstrated by the extensive catchment restoration activities of the Andean Water Funds (Hildahl et al., 2025).
- An intent to **strengthen forest conservation by revitalising Indigenous practices around sacred forests**. For example, in Benin, the NGO Survie de la Mère et de l'Enfant (SURVIE ONG) has embedded systems to regulate access and reinforce social norms around sacred forest conservation, with the intention to create locally legitimate governance structures for protecting biodiversity while supporting community resilience (Ayimasse et al. 2026).

- **An intentional focus on human rights** for forest protection and restoration through the inclusion of human-rights based approaches facilitated by multi-actor dialogue processes to understand diverse perspectives, rights and responsibilities of different actors in forest governance.

Enablers of forest protection and restoration efforts can accelerate progress toward greater forest ecosystem integrity and contribute to adaptation and mitigation goals (along with Global Biodiversity Framework targets); they include:

- **Addressing the economic and poverty drivers of forest degradation through support for ecologically-sound and socially-inclusive enterprise development.** Support needs are locally-contextualised and locally-specific: in the case of the rural Nepali women entrepreneurs (above), business management and marketing training was required. In the case of the Kenyan coastal communities, support to link local organisations to scientists and carbon marketers was required.
- **Co-production and trust-building** between local and institutional actors, for example in Benin, SURVIE ONG facilitated processes that bring together communities, local authorities and technical actors have helped bridge gaps between traditional governance systems and formal institutions related to forest governance. These platforms enable shared understanding of forest pressures and support more coordinated, locally legitimate responses (Ayimasse et al. 2025).
- **Capitalising on the significant motivation for intergenerational alliances to pass down Indigenous and local forest knowledge, integrate diverse knowledge, engage youth and to apply new technologies for forest monitoring and protection.** CDKN's work has documented considerable energy and enthusiasm for intergenerational knowledge alliances. Examples include where younger people seek out ecological stewardship knowledge from elders; and elders encourage young people to facilitate the uptake of new tracking and data tools (such as mobile apps and interactive mapping and visualisation tools) for forest monitoring that can inform sustainable management. This is the case for important forests on Mount Marsabit in Kenya, where Nature and People as One, a youth-led NGO, support the user of mobile apps to monitor ecological condition including biodiversity, and organise a 'Conservation Cup' football tournament that spurs young people to plant native tree species based on local knowledge (NaPO and CDKN, 2026). Another youth-led organisation, supported by CDKN, Voice of Nature in Cameroon engaged children in climate justice workshops, strengthening their capacities to document local climate impacts in forested landscapes using mobile devices. This hands-on approach built technical skills and a sense of ownership over local climate solutions, empowering children to become advocates for their communities. The Field Schools programme implemented by FORASAN Piura Water Fund in Peru is another example of youth engagement and intergenerational learning which combined classroom learning with field visits, reforestation, and collaborative mural creation focused on climate change, forest ecosystem protection, and GESI principles. These activities strengthened environmental awareness, intergenerational learning, and inclusive leadership among youth in Peru.
- **Fostering long-term cooperation among local government authorities, line departments (e.g. forest offices) of national government and local community organisations** for the sustainable management, protection, restoration and monitoring of forest integrity. Such intentional, long-term partnerships – ideally secured by Memoranda of Agreement (as in the case of Mount Elgon: Walimbwa, 2023) and/or formalised in local by-laws and in policies (Dupar and

Lama, 2025) – can form the foundation for collective understanding of forest resources, threats and pressures, and opportunities for positive action. From 2024-2025 in Saint-Louis and in Mbour , Senegal, renewed social compacts between CSOs, communities and local authorities were establishment formalising partnerships for joint implementation and monitoring of the National Strategy for the Management of Mangrove Ecosystems, 2023-2027 (Stratégie Nationale de Gestion des Mangroves, SNGM). This work was led by Enda EcoPoP through the Green Accountability Platform, who also established a Community of Practice on Green and Blue Solutions for Wetland Management (COPINA). In collaboration with the Directorate of Community Marine Protected Areas, COPINA unites 150 state and non-state institutions from 15 African countries to link scientific and local knowledge on climate finance, wetland governance and restoration (Chevallier, 2025).

- **Addressing gender-based and other forms of social justice at multiple governance scales:** this is a question of recognising and enforcing local people's valid access and use rights to forests, and may often involve negotiation among parties to clarify rights, where they have been obfuscated over time – as in the case of rural Nepal where women's historic rights had to be clarified and reasserted (Dupar and Lama, 2025). Not only is this fair, but it is important for effectiveness of forest protection and restoration efforts. There can be a useful role for intermediary organisations, such as non-governmental and action research organisations, in strengthening the capacities of local actors to undertake vulnerability and risk assessments from a gender and social inclusion (GESI) perspective, and to support in planning and implementing GESI-responsive actions. Internalising this GESI capability is fundamental to the effectiveness and sustainability forest management institutions. Adequate funding of Gender Action Plans for forest nations is much needed, and should be a priority for international support.
- **Strengthening the accountability and transparency of financing mechanisms for the protection of forests** can ensure that Indigenous Peoples and local communities are consulted, benefit-sharing mechanisms are fair and transparent, and climate finance contributes to forest conservation and local well-being. In Brazil, Instituto Fronteiras strengthened the accountability, transparency and community participation in Acre's jurisdictional and private REDD+ initiatives by developing a multilingual online REDD+ Observatory, which maps over 20 voluntary and two jurisdictional REDD+ projects, with indicators for assessing prior consultation, land tenure regularization and safeguards. They also published formal recommendations calling for Free Prior and Informed Consent to be embedded in implementation of the LEAF programme, and co-authored a letter calling for investigations into REDD+ financing in Juruá, prompting a formal inquiry into the state's use of REDD+ funds by the State Public Prosecutor's Office (Chevallier, 2025).
- **Leveraging platforms that synthesise diverse evidence for equitable and sustainable governance of forests across sectors and global convening platforms** such as the key findings of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Nexus and Assessment which SSN contributed to which highlights several forest-related response options for enhancing more systemic, nexus-wide and cross sectoral approaches to forest management, along with a Roadmap for Nexus Action, as well as recommendations for working across Rio Conventions for enhanced forest protection and restoration using an Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) lens as outlined in a Friends of Ecosystem Based Adaptation (FEBA) brief co-developed through a CDKN co-led FEBA working group (Goodwin et al. 2024).

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