



# Amazon Protection Plan

## *Policy Recommendations for U.S. Action for Amazon Forests*

We are a bipartisan mix of former U.S. cabinet officials and chief climate change negotiators. We have led U.S. climate diplomacy over four decades—from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to the 2015 Paris Agreement and beyond.

We congratulate President Biden and Vice President Harris on their election victory. We welcome their commitment to strengthening U.S. climate policy, rejoining the Paris Agreement and convening world leaders to accelerate global action to address the climate crisis, which they have rightly characterized as an existential threat to humanity. We also welcome their appointment of former Secretary John Kerry as Special Presidential Envoy for climate change. He is highly experienced and deeply committed to strengthening global climate action. We stand ready to work with the Biden administration and Congress to advance practical yet ambitious climate solutions that advance U.S. interests.

In this context, we endorse the Biden-Harris commitment to mobilize \$20 billion to protect the Amazon rainforest, which is disappearing at an alarming rate and is critical to the climate system, public health, human rights, and biodiversity for a variety of reasons:

- The Amazon holds more carbon than the world emits over many years; releasing that carbon into the atmosphere would trigger catastrophic climate consequences.
- Today, emissions from the Amazon deforestation are a major source of climate pollution, on par with those of major economies such as Japan or Germany.
- The Amazon regulates rainfall patterns across globally important agricultural regions, both throughout South America and in the United States.
- Deforestation in the Amazon risks triggering a new global pandemic since a majority of new infectious diseases emerge at the forest frontier where people and wildlife collide.
- Destruction of the Amazon threatens millions of indigenous peoples and other vulnerable forest-dependent local communities.
- The Amazon is the most biodiverse region on Earth.
- Tropical forest conservation enjoys broad support from the American public and American business, as well as bipartisan support in Congress, as discussed further below.

Protecting the Amazon will require new policies, skilled diplomacy, and great determination. We are confident the Biden-Harris administration understands that solutions must benefit the countries, communities, and forest-dependent people in the region by contributing to sustainable development. Ambitious actions are needed to advance local, American and global interests simultaneously, in a spirit of partnership. Drawing on our experience with climate policy and diplomacy, we recommend that the Biden-Harris administration consider adopting the following four-part plan to deliver on its Amazon pledge.

**1. Public & Private Funding.** While success will depend on coordinated global action, the United States will need to do its part to mobilize needed funding for the Amazon region. To achieve this, we recommend the new administration consider:

- Inviting CEOs of major U.S. companies to a White House summit to secure corporate commitments to collectively finance at least one billion tons of greenhouse gas emission reductions in the Amazon by 2025.
- Working with Congress to expand the Tropical Forest & Coral Reef Conservation Act to enable the administration to negotiate debt-for-climate swaps with our allies in the Amazon region. This effort should offer Amazon nations new types of debt relief and/or debt guarantees in exchange for ambitious climate and forest action, across a broad range of potential debt instruments.
- Persuading Congress to allocate to the Amazon (and other tropical forest protection, as appropriate) five percent of any new revenues generated from carbon fees and fuel surcharges, if and when adopted.
- Leveraging other U.S. bilateral and multilateral foreign assistance programs—from the Agency for International Development and the Millennium Challenge Account to U.S. export credit agencies and international financial institutions such as the World Bank—to support forest conservation, forest restoration and climate-friendly sustainable development in the Amazon region. The administration should consider directing Amazon assistance toward:
  - Implementing rural sustainable development strategies
  - Preventing and controlling forest fires
  - Intensifying agricultural production by family farms on previously deforested land
  - Providing forest-friendly economic development opportunities
  - Rewarding jurisdictions that reduce deforestation through results-based payments
  - Strengthening land tenure and the rights of indigenous peoples
  - Improving forest governance and combating forest crime
  - Partnering with allied donor governments and private philanthropy

We recommend the administration consider setting a goal that 25% of international climate finance from the United States should support forests and other natural climate solutions across the globe, particularly in the Amazon.

**2. Forest-Friendly Trade.** The administration should consider harmonizing U.S. trade policy and climate policy for the Amazon. U.S. imports should not fuel illegal deforestation, reward criminals or create an uneven playing field. Specifically, we recommend the administration consider:

- Working with Congress to expand the Lacey Act to prohibit the importation of agricultural commodities grown on illegally deforested land.
- Augmenting funding for and enforcement of the Lacey Act, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and other laws that deter forest crime abroad.
- Ensuring that future trade agreements strengthen tropical forest governance and rule of law, including by promoting local law enforcement and prohibiting the importation of products grown on illegally deforested land.

**3. Transparent and Clean Supply Chains.** The administration should strive to make sure that U.S. companies, investors, consumers and capital markets do not contribute to Amazon deforestation. We recommend the administration consider:

- Requiring consumer goods and agricultural companies to conduct due diligence and report on deforestation in their supply chains.
- Requiring U.S. companies and financial institutions to disclose, report and manage deforestation-related climate risk, building from the framework created by the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures.

**4. Robust Diplomacy.** The administration will need to strengthen international alliances to turn protecting the Amazon into a true global priority. We recommend it consider:

- Negotiating diplomatic agreements to incentivize the protection of forests under local laws and policy frameworks, including through results-based payment systems that are consistent with the Paris Agreement.
- Securing a global consensus that all countries should establish their own quantitative national targets for forest and land use emission reductions under the Paris Agreement. Those who are able should consider not only establishing such goals at home, but also setting quantitative goals for assisting other countries to finance their own forest and land use emission reductions.
- Building support for inclusion of high-quality forest carbon credits in international markets, to assist with the transition to full decarbonization of the global economy, without detracting from climate action in other economic areas.
- Strengthening safeguards for the Amazon and other forests in bilateral, regional and global development finance, including for U.S. foreign assistance and funding provided by multilateral development banks.
- Working with Europe, Japan, China and other major economies to align international efforts and thereby spread globally the policies outlined above.

Implementing this Amazon Protection Plan fully will require cooperation from Congress, of course. Fortunately, protecting the Amazon has been a bipartisan American foreign policy goal for decades. With support from both parties in Congress, President George H. W. Bush championed making forest conservation a global priority and negotiated global agreements on climate and biodiversity. President Clinton worked with Democrats and Republicans in Congress to create the first debt-for-nature swaps and fought to include forests in international climate agreements. President George W. Bush championed programs to fight illegal logging globally and helped convince Congress to prohibit the importation of illegally harvested timber and wood products. President Obama worked with Congress to more than double funding for international forest protection and sustainable landscapes while also securing full inclusion of forests in the Paris Agreement. President Trump issued an Executive Order committing his administration to the One Trillion Trees initiative, which sought to improve forest protection, management and restoration. With strong leadership from the administration, we hope Congress will continue to support this important agenda. If helpful, we will assist the Biden-Harris administration in rallying support for Amazon protection.

U.S. efforts to protect the Amazon should be carried out in partnership with our allies in South America and around the world. Many of the countries in the region understand that climate action will advance their own sustainable development and are likely to cooperate with the Biden administration to increase climate ambition. Given that the majority of the Amazon lies within Brazil, constructive engagement with that country will be vital. Brazil is an important U.S. ally, trading partner and regional power, and its people are deeply concerned about climate change and the future of the Amazon. U.S. diplomacy must always respect Brazil's legitimate interests. As President Biden and Vice President Harris have said, we

need to engage Brazil constructively in the spirit of friendship and with new economic incentives. At the same time, the administration should act decisively to reduce global demand for goods that drive illegal deforestation and damage the climate. It is legitimate and reasonable to take Brazil's performance on these priorities into account when considering U.S. policies relating to Brazil, including OECD membership, future military sales, new trade agreements and more. The administration can also engage constructively with Brazilian subnational governments, companies and civil society, in accordance with both U.S. and Brazilian law. Of course, as the administration focuses intensively on protecting the Amazon region, both in Brazil and other Amazonian countries, it also should seek to expand current U.S. support to other globally significant tropical forest regions, including Mesoamerica, Indonesia, and the rest of Southeast Asia and the Congo Basin. But the mission to save the Amazon is singularly urgent, and we applaud the administration's initial focus on this important priority.

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