

Ten urgent issues to protect the Amazon that Colombian civil society organizations propose ahead of COP16



The Listen to the Amazon Alliance (ELA) presents the "*Decalogue of Peace with Nature for the Amazon*", a roadmap to achieve **the necessary transformations** to prevent this vital region from reaching a point of no return.



We call on the negotiating parties, especially the governments of the Amazonian countries, to **recognize the essential role of indigenous peoples and governments, peasant, riverine and Afro-descendant communities in the conservation of the Amazon**, respecting their autonomy and guaranteeing their rights.



We urge the countries of the Amazon region to establish agreements to counteract the factors that lead the Amazon towards a **point of no return**, such as deforestation, inadequate land use in activities such as extensive cattle ranching, and illegal economies.



As part of civil society, we make an urgent call for the Amazon to be recognized as the preponderant place it has in the **climate discussion and the protection of biodiversity**.

The protection and care of the Amazon must be at the center of the negotiations that world leaders will hold at COP16 (Conference of the Parties) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which will be held in Cali, Colombia, between October 20 and November 1, 2024.

The Colombian Amazon, vital for the hydroclimatic balance of the country and the planet, as well as for sustaining the well-being of the entire population, faces serious risks due to forest loss related to changes in land use. According to the georeferenced information platform Mapbiomas, between 1985 and 2023, this region went from 42.3 million to 39.4 million hectares of natural forest, which represents a loss of almost 7% of its vegetation. What can be done to stop this trend?

The Alliance Listens to the Amazon (ELA), made up of eight civil society organizations from Colombia¹, presents the *"Decalogue of Peace with Nature for the Amazon"*, a series of recommendations addressed to the Colombian Government, the governments of the Amazonian states and society in general, with the aim of assuming political and ethical responsibility for the care of this region. to guarantee the well-being of its inhabitants, to advance in the construction of peace and to avoid the point of no return that would lead this territory to be transformed, gradually or abruptly, into a tropical savannah. COP16 represents a unique opportunity for Colombia to expand its commitment to the care of life in its multiple expressions, advance the commitments of the National Development Plan (2022-2026) and become a global actor that articulates the biodiversity and climate change agendas.

This decalogue is a call to the Colombian Government to guarantee an intercultural State that recognizes the contributions of indigenous peoples, peasant communities and Afro-descendants in the protection of the forest and its biodiversity; to end deforestation through ambitious and concrete strategies and targets; to achieve a participatory territorial planning that protects the rights of those who inhabit and manage this territory; and to close the gender gaps that affect Amazonian women.

¹The Listen to the Amazon Alliance is made up of the Gaia Amazonas Foundation, the Foundation for the Conservation and Sustainable Development (FCDS), the Interfaith Initiative for Tropical Forests (IRI-Colombia), WWF Colombia, the Etnollano Foundation, Asociación Ambiente & Sociedad, The Nature Conservancy Colombia and Justice.

It is also a call to citizens to understand the dependence of their well-being on the health of the Amazon, that the balance of the rainfall regime in other areas of the country, such as the Andean region, depends on it and to link up and support the demands of social movements, indigenous peoples and NGOs that work in the protection of the Amazon. In addition, it is a call to the countries of the Amazon region to establish cooperation agreements in the fight against transnational crime.

Colonization processes, which have led to the expansion of extensive cattle ranching, land grabbing, the installation of agro-industrial crops, and the construction of legal and illegal roads, are generating accelerated pressure and destruction in one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet. Added to these are legal and illegal extractive economies (mining, drug trafficking, wildlife trafficking, hydrocarbon extraction), which not only contribute to deforestation and forest degradation, but also profoundly affect the human rights of local communities, and collective well-being for the ecosystem services that depend on the Amazon (such as, for example, the satisfaction of water needs or the generation of electricity)

Consequently, the Alliance Listens to the Amazon (ELA), which was born more than two years ago in order to position the Amazon region on the national public agenda, in its "Decalogue of Peace with Nature for the Amazon" calls on the Amazonian states and society in general to:

1

Materialize an intercultural State that respects the knowledge systems, autonomy, forms of governance and biocultural and territorial rights of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. This includes formalizing the Indigenous Territorial Entities (ETI) according to Decree Law 632 of 2018 and enacting the Decree of the Indigenous Environmental Authority.

2

End deforestation and promote forest restoration by integrating local knowledge. This includes reporting in the reports of the IDEAM (Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies) the impact of deforestation drivers and approving the livestock traceability law to avoid the consumption of meat from deforested areas and national natural parks, among others.

3

Regulate the financial mechanisms that seek to mitigate climate change and conserve biological diversity, responding to the orders of the Constitutional Court that require regulating initiatives to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD+), and guarantee the free, prior and informed consent of the communities involved.

4

Achieve participatory planning and land use (in more than 47 million hectares that make up the Colombian Amazon), with an emphasis on water governance and land use. This presupposes adequate coordination with the authorities of the indigenous territories and their own management instruments (Life Plans).

5

Promote the creation of an environmental awareness that gives a place of preponderance to the Amazon within the climate crisis and biodiversity loss, strengthening a national environmental education policy focused on transforming social, economic and cultural practices that degrade nature.

6

Not

Close the gender gaps that affect women, incorporating a cross-cutting approach in programs aimed at the Amazon. Women are key in caring for biodiversity, but also the most affected by violence and climate change.

7

Guarantee citizen participation and oversight to monitor official strategies for biodiversity conservation and the fight against climate change. It is also key for the monitoring, incidence and dissemination in the reports of the Scientific Panel for the Amazon.

8

Combat transnational crime through regional cooperation agreements between Amazonian states. Strengthen coordination among the authorities of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) and activate the Center for International Police Cooperation of the Amazon (CICC-Amazonia).

9

Establish diplomatic cooperation agreements for the care of the Amazon biome and its people, in order to create monitoring systems and observatories with reliable, timely, and updated information, which allow the evaluation of pressures and threats to this biome in order to carry out preventive actions or to counteract them.

10

Follow up on the agreements of the summit of Amazonian presidents in Belém do Pará (2023), which seek to mobilize economic resources for the protection of the Amazon, strengthen the institutional capacities of the states of the region, cooperate on environmental crimes, and promote a sustainable economy. Accountability for progress is critical.



One of the essential points of the decalogue is to put an end to deforestation and promote forest restoration. To achieve this, it is essential to establish a legal system of traceability of the livestock chain that guarantees the environmental planning of the territory and avoids the consumption of meat from deforested areas. This also implies strengthening the national policy of environmental education (another of the key points of the decalogue), with the aim of making both consumers and producers aware of the impact of their practices and making the necessary transformations in favor of the common good and the conservation of the Earth.

Rodrigo Botero

Director of the Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development (FCDS)



The Amazon is not only a natural resource; it is a home, a cultural legacy and a pillar for the health of the planet. 42% of the territory is under the management of indigenous peoples, so by strengthening this alliance, and through the recommendations through this decalogue, we listen, contribute, learn and fight together for a sustainable future, where indigenous communities are the protagonists of their own development.

Claudia Vásquez

Director of The Nature Conservancy Colombia (TNC)



Protecting the Amazon is not only an environmental duty, but also a moral mandate to preserve creation and safeguard the future of generations to come. Our public authorities must take advantage of COP16 in order to strengthen commitments to end deforestation, for biodiversity, for the climate and for the people of Colombia.

Bishop Francisco Duque

Member of the Advisory Board of IRI Colombia

Dejusticia

Indigenous peoples in the Amazon protect the world's largest rainforest, but face threats from illegal economies, extractive projects, and the climate crisis. We must act now to close the gap between global climate commitments and the effective protection of this strategic ecosystem. By integrating the biocultural knowledge of indigenous people, Afro-descendants and peasants into the public agenda, as this decalogue proposes, the interdependence between cultural and biological diversity will be strengthened, improving political decision-making.

Paulo Ilich Bacca

Deputy Director of Dejusticia

Gaia Amazonas

The indigenous peoples of the Amazon, with their knowledge systems, have governed, administered, and managed the mega diversity and environmental values of this region for thousands of years. Today, deforestation and degradation, promoted in part by the imposition of colonial forms by the State, make it necessary for the National Government to comply with what was agreed in the Political Constitution of 1991, formalizing the Indigenous Territorial Entities in the departments of Amazonas, Guainía and Vaupés, where the cultural strength of the indigenous peoples still maintains the structure and ecological connectivity of the Amazon biome.

Camilo Guio

Director of the Gaia Amazonas Foundation



FUNDACIÓN ETNOLLANO

The Amazonian indigenous peoples today project their processes autonomously, as governments. They must do so by guaranteeing the well-being of their communities, built from their own, from their cultural vision and that of their territories. We must understand that the sustainability of forests is intimately linked to the well-being of the peoples who inhabit them. Our role as a majority society, as a State, as institutions and as individuals, is to contribute and participate in an open dialogue between cultures and different visions of the world that allows us to guarantee the conservation of the Amazon, the health of indigenous peoples, and the future of the planet.

Antonio Loboguerrero

Director of the Etnollano Foundation



ASOCIACIÓN
AMBIENTE Y SOCIEDAD

The Amazon is inhabited multiculturally. The contribution of each of the population groups that inhabit it is essential if we want it to recover part of the capacity lost in many years of plundering. To speak of participatory territorial planning, both in terms of climate change and biological diversity, is to recognize this multiplicity of subjects of rights and obligations. These populations can play a role as managers in the execution of resources and monitor compliance with the objectives of restoration, non-deforestation, containment of legal and illegal activities that cause the great impacts. At the same time, they establish internal rules in their land use plans to materialize the right to information, participation and environmental justice.

Margarita Flores Alonso

Director of the Environment and Society Association



The Living Planet Report 2024 reaffirms that pressures and impacts on the Amazon are increasingly critical, raising the risk of reaching a tipping point where environmental conditions become unsuitable for tropical forests. The consequences would be devastating for local communities and wildlife, with irreversible losses of biodiversity and cultural value. A change of this magnitude would also accelerate global climate change, as the Amazon would go from being a carbon sink to a source of emissions through fires and plant deaths. COP16 must raise the message of urgency for effective and fair conservation, which integrates the knowledge, experience and rights of peoples and communities as fundamental pillars.

Sandra Valenzuela
Executive Director WWF Colombia

Notes to the editor

To learn about some of the studies that have provided the data that support this decalogue, we invite you to visit:

Scientific Panel for the Amazon.

<https://www.laamazoniaquequeremos.org>

Mapbiomas Colombia Platform. <https://colombia.mapbiomas.org/>

Living Planet Report 2024 <https://livingplanet.panda.org/es-CO/>

Complementary documents prepared by the Listen to the Amazon Alliance:

Environment and Society Association, Dejusticia, Etnollano Foundation, Foundation

Gaia Amazonas, FCDS, Greenpeace, IRI Colombia, OPIAC, The Nature Conservancy Colombia and WWF (2023) *Memories of the Amazon Forum in the National Development Plan 2022-2026*.

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Alianza Escucha la Amazonía. (2024) Joint statement of the Listen to the Amazon alliance on the Deforestation-free livestock production chain bill. Gaia Amazonas Foundation.

<https://gaiaamazonas.org/noticias-y-comunicados/declaracion-conjunta-proyecto-law-livestock-free-deforestation/>