



Cearthsight



1 May 2025

To: The Rt Hon David Lammy MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

The Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero

The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Dear Rt Hon Ministers Lammy, Miliband and Reed,

Urgent Need to Protect Forest Funding from UK Aid Cuts

As UK NGOs working for the protection of tropical forests and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and other local communities (IPLCs), we are writing to ask you to protect the UK's world-leading support to forests from the 0.2% Gross National Income (GNI) cut to the foreign aid budget.

We are highly concerned by all further reductions in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and believe this should be restored to 0.7% of GNI as soon as possible. However, while we understand the challenging decisions and trade-offs currently facing the government and the international development community, it is essential that the UK's support to forests and IPLCs is maintained, given that:

- Forests are home to over 1.6 billion people, including 300 million Indigenous People who have cared for them for generations, upholding diverse cultures, knowledge systems and ways of life deeply rooted in forest landscapes.
- Forests regulate global rainfall and the climate. Land use change, primarily deforestation, contributes 12 to 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

- Halting and reversing tropical deforestation could provide up to 24 to 30% of total potential climate change mitigation.
- Forests are home to 80% of the world's land-based species and harbour enormous genetic resources.
- The effective governance of forests offers numerous other benefits, including human rights protection, food security and economic development for some of the world's poorest populations, reduced migration and minimises risks of future zoonotic disease outbreaks.

The importance of forests and their vital functions is widely recognised by the UK population. For example, a recent poll by Global Witness and WWF-UK revealed that more than 70% of Brits support government action to prevent the sale of products linked to illegal deforestation overseas.

The fact that forests intersect with your three ministries and several other government departments underscores their unique and far-reaching importance to humanity. After years of underinvestment, the UK has reemerged as a global leader in combating deforestation and biodiversity loss, in government, civil society and scientific research.

Across countries with the largest rainforest cover, including Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Indonesia, UK support has enabled governments and local people to find solutions to illegal logging, such as securing tenure rights, creating jobs and building sustainable trade.

This positive role was demonstrated at COP26 in Glasgow, where the UK government led the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, securing commitments from over 100 nations to halt and reverse forest loss by 2030. Labour's 2024 manifesto promises to deliver on the legacy of COP26 – a commitment that requires sustained, ambitious investment in forest governance and climate action. UK forest programmes are instrumental to this effort. These include FGMC2, which addresses local and global drivers of deforestation; IFSLU, which supports vibrant, climate-resilient forest economies; AMCAT, which strengthens the forest governance and forest tenure security of IPLCs across the Amazon Basin; and the Congo Basin Forest Action Programme, which targets one of the world's poorest and intact forest regions. These programmes are only now coming on stream and must be protected to ensure they achieve their promise.

With climate change-induced fires, droughts and floods pushing many forests to their tipping points, the national and global significance of championing forests and forest people's rights has never been greater.

While there may be a temptation to rely on the private sector and other financing mechanisms, such as the Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF), to fill the funding gap, these are no substitutes for the UK's soft power, the unique bilateral support that HM Government and UK civil society can provide to rainforest countries and the impact that can be achieved through the direct funding of IPLCs. UK leadership – grounded in rights-based approaches and long-term partnerships – remains irreplaceable.

With COP30 on the horizon, the world is looking to the UK to keep the 1.5-degree target alive and support the most vulnerable to mitigate, adapt and build resilience to climate change – the world's forests and their people must be at the heart of this mission.

Yours sincerely,

Rainforest Foundation UK
Global Witness
Global Canopy
Earthsight
Forest Peoples Programme
Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Fern
Mighty Earth

Cc:

Sir Keir Starmer MP
Prime Minister

Rachel Reeves MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

Ms Anna Gelderd MP
Co-Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group on Global Deforestation

Ms Pippa Heylings MP
Co-Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group on Global Deforestation

Ms Maggie Charnley
Head of the International Forests Unit