

The Amazon Summit: Seeking a Sustainable Landscape Through Effective Cooperation

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The Amazon Summit, being held August 4-9 (Amazon Dialogues from 4-6 and Presidential Meeting from 8-9), represents a highly relevant space to mobilize the necessary actions to halt deforestation, prevent this ecosystem from reaching its tipping point and promote local sustainable economies.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The city of Belem, in Brazil, will host the **Amazon Summit on August 8 and 9**, and the **Amazon Dialogues** (open events led by civil society in partnership with the government) **from August 4 to 6**.
- The Summit will bring together **leaders from Pan-Amazonian countries, as well as from other countries seen as cooperation partners** to the region, such as France, Norway and Germany.
- The **Amazon Summit aims to renew the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACT)** and its related **Organization (ACTO)** intends to **articulate efforts, increase ambition, set priorities, allocate financial flows** (from both private and public sources) and **provide strategic guidelines** at the highest level of decision-making for immediate and future action to avoid the tipping point.
- The event is expected to **put the Latin American region, and especially Brazil, in the spotlight**, as it will be the first time in years that this kind of effort is convened. It will also kick off a triennial of other major international events led by **Brazil, with milestones such as the 2024 G20 presidency and the hosting of COP30 in 2025**.
- The **Pre-Amazon Summit**, which took place from July 6 to 8 in Leticia, Colombia witnessed:
 - The **Colombian and Brazilian** presidents coming together to send a **united signal of their leadership of and commitment to the conservation of the Amazon**.
 - The **Colombian President calling for** Amazon countries and partners in the Global North to commit to the **phasing out of oil and coal**.
 - The European Environmental Commissioner indicating that the **EU is open to the idea of a climate-debt swap for this ecosystem**.
- The Amazon biome has an **area of 7.4 million square kilometers, covering 8 South American countries, and is home to 47 million people**, including more than 2 million of which are indigenous from approximately 500 different groups, with around 200 distinct languages.

- The **Amazon economy is dominated primarily by imports and internal economic activities** ([agriculture and cattle ranching](#)), with local economies varying according to the country.
- The **Amazon population is surprisingly urbanized**. Of the 26 million people living within the Brazilian Amazon, 12 million are based in cities that are larger than 100 thousand inhabitants. However, the region faces [high levels of inequalities and urbanization challenges](#).
- The Amazon is a **critical ecosystem for climate change mitigation, adaptation and the protection of biodiversity, fresh water and ecosystem services**. It also **promotes bioeconomies that encourage regional and international cooperation**.
- Some of the **main risks facing the Amazon include**:
 - forest fires
 - biodiversity loss
 - environmental crimes
 - invasive species
 - lack of governance and law enforcement
 - structural violence
 - deforestation
 - energy and mining expansion
 - hydroelectric dams
 - pollution
 - poverty
 - [organized crime](#)

The Amazon Summit

Before the Summit

- From July 6th-8th a **Pre-Summit took place in Leticia, Colombia**, in which the Environmental Ministers of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Surinam, and Venezuela all [participated](#).
- **Discussions topics** included:
 - Environmental crimes and deforestation
 - Technological and participatory monitoring of deforestation
 - Regional cooperation
 - Bioeconomy, combating illegalities and environmental crimes
 - Public-private-communitarian agreements
 - Challenges of the Amazon urban centers
- The idea of **creating an agreement [to avoid the tipping point in the Amazon](#)**, in which the eight countries agree on actions and forceful strategies, was positioned.
- The **Colombian and Brazilian presidents [gathered](#) to discuss possible action lines for Amazon conservation and sustainable development**, highlighting the relevance of developed countries and their need to meet their climate finance pledges.
- On the sidelines, **President Gustavo Petro, from Colombia**, signed an op-ed [calling on the leaders from Amazon countries](#) and from partners in the Global North to commit to phasing out oil and coal.
 - Oil exploration, mining and logging are among the biggest drivers of deforestation in many countries of the basin and off-shore exploration is also a topic of concern (see Figure 1).

- As of **2020** it was estimated that **approximately 1.28 million sq km of the Amazon (>18%) was under mining concessions** and that the Brazilian Amazon is home to the world's largest iron ore project in the world.
- Virginijus Sinkevicius, European Environmental Commissioner, [mentioned](#) that the **EU is not against the idea of [climate-debt swaps](#) and will start analyzing the proposal.**
- The **EU announced the program [Amazonía+](#) for which they will contribute 20 million euros to strengthen the capacities of Amazon countries to mitigate CO2 and adapt to climate change.**
- [The countries agreed to strengthen ACTO](#), created in 1995, and its **Amazon Regional Observatory (ORA)**, which will serve to collect data from the eight member countries to monitor and prevent droughts, fires, rains, deforestation, water pollution and environmental crimes etc.. There was also talk of establishing a system for cross-border collaboration in crime detection, response coordination and intelligence work.
- **Brazil's President Lula da Silva [mentioned](#) during the high-level meeting that some key targets** should include zero illegal deforestation by 2030, food security, poverty reduction, opportunities for young people, fight against biopiracy and protection of genetic heritage, an Amazon international cooperation center (attention to address environmental crimes) related to mangroves, and an integrated air traffic center (to control organized crime).

Country	Oil & Gas Projects	Mining Projects
Bolivia	61	1
Brazil	30	52
Colombia	62	2
Ecuador	63	14
French Guyana	-	9
Guyana	1	15
Perú	15	20
Suriname	5	4
Venezuela	3	3

Figure 1 (based on 2020 data)

What will happen during the Summit

- Heads of states and high level representatives from Amazonian countries will meet **in Belém do Pará, Brazil from August 8 to 9 2023.**
- It will serve as a space and opportunity to **reaffirm the political will to agree on a joint action plan for the Amazon** by:
 - Increasing ambition
 - Setting priorities
 - [Allocating financial flows](#) (from both private and public sources) and, demanding a coordinated financial system
 - Providing strategic guidelines at the highest level of decision-making in order to avoid the tipping point for the Amazon and protect the Amazon region and its people
 - In addition, it will be an **opportunity for Brazil to reassert its leadership on Amazon conservation.**
- The [Amazon Dialogues](#), to be held before the Summit (between the 4 and 6 of August 2023), will be a place to gather a set of initiatives led by civil society organizations, social movements, academia, research centers and government agencies from Brazil and other Amazonian countries who are leading various initiatives to congregate, discuss and showcase their work.

- The Brazilian Government affirms that **social participation is a central element for the promotion of the sustainable and integrated development of the different Amazons** as it fosters social inclusion, responsibility, and climate justice.
- Finally, COP28 President, **Dr Sultan al Jaber**, was invited by President Lula to attend the Summit. He **is expected to attend from August 8 to 9**.

What we can expect out of the Summit

- A **final declaration (*Declaração de Belém*)**, built on the Leticia and Brasília rounds of negotiations (still to be shared), is expected to bring elements on collective action to:
 - Combat deforestation, illegal mining and other drives of biodiversity loss
 - Ensure the conservation of 80% of the territory
 - Protect indigenous peoples rights
 - Improve quality of life in the region
 - Create a cooperative approach to combat organized crime
- **Agreement to have a regional cooperation structure to implement the action plan for the Amazon region**, through the strengthening of ACTO.
- **Consolidation of the [Amazonian Regional Platform of Indigenous Peoples](#)** that:
 - Promotes the recognition of the contribution of Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge to resilience, adaptation and mitigation to climate change
 - Exchanges experiences and efforts of countries in the formulation of public policies that are inclusive of the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples
 - Encourages recommendations on the importance of regional articulation processes

After the Summit

- The **outcomes of the Amazon Summit are intended to be used during UNGA78 from September 12-30, as well as to be a roadmap for the region for COP28 in Dubai and build the arc to COP30 in Brazil**.
- It remains **unclear** whether and **what will be included in the declaration regarding the exploration of fossil fuels in the region**.

Key Asks

For Amazon Countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Surinam, and Venezuela)

- **Present a clear vision on the opportunities and challenges to cooperation**, including milestones, the structure for implementation and the amount of resources needed to avoid the tipping point and improve quality of life in the region.
- **Provide an inclusive and participative space**, not only in the Summit, but for civil society to actively engage in the implementation strategy.
- **Make clear the possibilities for the participation of non-state actors and subnational governments** in the cooperation mechanisms agreed to at the Summit.
- **Set an ambitious vision for the region** for the next big moments, especially COP28-COP30, and connect the dots about the role of the Amazon/forests in the COP28 outcomes including on the Global Stocktake, mitigation and adaptation and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

For regional leaders

- Promote **joint regional Amazon strategies, considering each country's different context, needs and priorities** and include indigenous peoples and local communities as principal actors in both the drafting and execution of the different national programmes.¹
- **Conserve 80% of the Amazon** by implementing effectively drafted and innovative policies, mainly focused on strengthening the territorial security of indigenous peoples and help facilitate connectivity between the landscapes and critical watersheds that serve as key strategies of conservation.
- **Increase regenerative livestock and agriculture, close agricultural borders and commit to strategies that avoid land conversion. Expand the bioeconomy and eliminate deforestation** related to supply chains for export commodities and domestic markets.
- **Halt illegal activities that harm Amazon conservation, such as gold production and the mining of other minerals, which have adverse effects**, such as deforestation, mercury contamination of rivers and soil erosion.
- **Enhance cooperation between countries** in regards to border control to fight transnational crimes which will help reduce deforestation and violence rates.
- **Promote the social bioeconomy** which would create local investment opportunities and encourage companies to develop sustainable development programs and projects for the region. **Some Amazonian countries already have national strategies for the promotion of bioeconomy** (e.g. [Brazil](#), [Colombia](#) and [Ecuador](#)).
- **Protect the human rights of the inhabitants of the Amazon** through cooperative policies that ensure food security, access to clean water, health and education, reduce poverty and protect leaders who defend nature.
- **Advance towards an agreement for a Just Transition in the Amazon** that from an inclusive approach ensures the transformation of energy production and use, ensuring fairness via equal distribution, full recognition of rights and labor contributions, equal participation in decision-making procedures, and equal capabilities in renewable energy outcomes.
 - It is essential that the **transition processes respect communities' rights** and offers a unique opportunity to simultaneously mitigate the climate crisis and reduce poverty and inequality.
- **Promote adaptation actions that have a [positive](#) impact on biodiversity**, such as ecosystem [restoration](#)² and maintenance, and develop [agroforestry](#) systems in transition areas that are between land-use plots as well as agroecology.
 - **Reforestation can lead to positive [outcomes](#), but it has faced challenges in the Amazon**, including scalability, the availability of native species and precaution from communities.
- **Agricultural supply chains must achieve zero associated deforestation and conversion** with regenerative cattle ranching and agriculture, while scaling-up bio-economies and halting deforestation.
- **Avoid [afforestation](#) actions that involve introducing trees in ecosystems where historically there have not been forests**, as well as reforestation with monocultures.

¹ For example: While Colombia's flagshipstar Amazon initiative, [Visión Amazonia](#), prioritizes agreements with territorial entities, farmer's associations, indigenous communities and other actors to reduce deforestation; Brazilian policies are mainly focused on actions to halt the illegality of deforestation and its side [effects](#), such as public land grabbing, illegal mining, logging, hunting and fishing in indigenous territories.

² Ecosystem restoration is the [cheapest and most rapidly implementable](#) alternative for climate mitigation.

For international cooperation

- Key players of the international cooperation for the protection of the Amazon **must significantly increase their financial and technical support** and ensure that investments, projects and decisions respond to the regional and local priorities and needs.
- To counteract the risks of international trade, countries should **foster sustainable agriculture** by reducing the expansion of the agricultural frontier, promoting healthy diets, reducing food waste and encouraging alternative protein consumption.
- **Remove financial incentives that detrimentally affect biodiversity**, such as harmful agricultural subsidies, both in the national and international arenas. Progressive measures for the exit of subsidies in developing countries should also be taken into account, considering differentiated conditions.
- Amazon countries must work together with consumer countries to **develop new legal frameworks to tackle deforestation in a cooperative way**. In particular, Amazon countries and communities need financial and technical support to co-create the necessary conditions to eliminate deforestation from supply chains while guaranteeing local wellbeing.
- **Consider Nature-based Solutions that ensure greater benefits for communities** when it comes to the sustainable use of natural resources, their territorial rights and traditional ways of life that are beyond carbon markets.
 - The Amazon has been targeted as a key ecosystem for carbon markets. However, due to **a lack of international and national regulation, this economic instrument keeps encountering issues related to legal ambiguity**, including [land disputes](#), [unequal deals](#) and payments with indigenous communities, [legal insecurity](#), [lack of participation](#), [communities' fracture](#) etc., which can generate more risks than incentives.

For MDBs and international financial actors

- **Join efforts to increase grant-based climate aid to Amazon countries.**
 - Although there is no specific figure for Amazon finance, **globally grants account for [only 6%](#) of climate finance**.
 - Virtually **all low-income countries are in the [upper range](#) of climate vulnerability (ND-GAIN)**. Most of these developing countries' sovereign debt levels are greater than 100% of their GDP. Consequently, these countries are spending [five times more](#) on repaying their debts than fighting climate change.
 - When the climate risks are large, as in the Amazon, implementation of adaptation or risk-mitigation activities could materially lower the [sovereign risk](#) (wherein a country defaults on its debt). This is where **adaptation investment can work in tandem with restructuring debt**.
- **Improve [access](#) to funding sources for biodiversity conservation actions**, and analyze the possibility to have a global binding platform that supports both agendas.

For Non-Party Stakeholders

- **Investors and companies can act to reverse deforestation rates**. The detrimental effects of deforestation are beyond those directly related to nature and people, making businesses and investors' portfolios more vulnerable to significant financial, regulatory, and reputational risks.

- **Many internationally renowned entities have been linked to deforestation** in the Amazon, including [McDonald's](#), [Cargill](#), the [French](#) and the international [financial system](#) etc.³
- To stop this, [companies and investors](#) should firmly commit to **transparency and transitional planning** that will allow monitoring to assess progress. Companies, investors, and civil society organizations can work in a collective fashion by **establishing common goals** in [jurisdictional or landscape approaches](#)⁴ to achieve ecological, social and economical targets.
- **Guarantee corporate information disclosure on biodiversity impacts and deforestation** in industries operating in the Amazon.

Additional Information

- Peruvian Amazon in numbers, available [here](#).
- Colombian Amazon in numbers, available [here](#).
- Data on deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon, [here](#).
- [Deforestation in Colombia's Amazon: Outlining the problem](#), Insight Crime, 1 September 2021.
- [A balancing act for Brazil's Amazonian States- An Economic Memorandum](#), World Bank, 11 May 2023.
- [Urban Legal Amazon Summary – Sociospatial Analyses of Climate Change](#), Iyaleta, 2022.
- [Public Security and Organized Crime in the Legal Amazon](#), Brazilian Forum on Public Security, 2023.
- [Social Progress Index in the Brazilian Amazon – IPS Amazônia 2023](#), Imazon, 2023.

³ An [article](#) in *The Washington Post* analyzes the role of the United States in buying beef coming from deforested lands in the Amazon, and [Vox](#) further explains the complexity of solving cattle-related deforestation.

⁴ These location-specific initiatives bring together various stakeholders to jointly pursue shared environmental, social, and economic objectives within a particular region.