

SUBMISSION TO THE GARNAUT REVIEW

AUSTRALIA SHOULD JOIN AN INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF GLOBAL DEFORESTATION DURING THE PERIOD 2008 - 2012

Introduction

This paper discusses the problem of global deforestation, a problem which is responsible for 20% of global emissions.

Australia should substantially build on its Global Initiative on Forests and Climate to address the problem of global deforestation.

We should build on our existing leadership in this area and join in a focused alliance with other like-minded countries and organisations to offer practical and immediate support to rainforest countries to reduce deforestation during the critical period 2008 – 2012.

Kyoto's failure to protect the world's forests

It is most unfortunate that the Kyoto Protocol actually **excluded** protection for forests. Kyoto negotiations focused on establishing a model for limiting fossil fuel/industrial emissions. Due to the complex political agendas of international governments and NGOs during negotiations, protection for forests was deliberately left out of the Kyoto Protocol. (Refer to footnotes ^{1 2 3 4 5} for different perspectives on the exclusion of forests).

In their paper "Time to ditch Kyoto", Gwyn Prins and Steve Rayner argue that Kyoto "simply failed to accommodate the complexity of the climate change issue".⁶ ***I suggest the exclusion of forests was an example of this failure. Forests were vulnerable when they were left out of the Kyoto Protocol.***

Indeed, it appears the dire problem of rampant deforestation has been exacerbated by Kyoto's failure to provide protection for forests. As a result, rainforest destruction is rampant in countries such as Indonesia and Brazil. For example, due to clearance for logging and oil palm plantations, Indonesia's forests are being destroyed at a staggering rate, amounting to almost two million hectares per year.⁷ Indonesia is now the world's third worst greenhouse gas emitter due to deforestation, peatland degradation and forest fires.⁸

Now the European Union is trying to meet its Kyoto obligations by decreasing its emissions by using "green" biofuels including palm oil. Perversely, Indonesia's emissions are **increasing** due to rampant destruction of rainforests to accommodate oil palm plantations. And of course, as a "developing country", Indonesia doesn't have an emissions target under Kyoto.

It is horrifying to think of the millions of hectares of rainforest and biodiversity that have been lost over the past years, with no mechanism in the Kyoto Protocol, "the only game in town", to protect them. ***How much more rainforest will be lost over the next four years until 2012?***

¹ Gurney, K.R. "Targeting deforestation rates in climate change policy: a "Preservation Pathway" approach", *Carbon Balance and Management* 2008, 3:2

² Laurance, W.F. "A New Initiative to Use Carbon Trading for Tropical Forest Conservation", *Biotropica* 39(1): 20–24 2007

³ Fearnside, P.M. "Environmentalists split over Kyoto and Amazonian deforestation", *Environmental Conservation* 28 (4): 295-299 2001

⁴ Fearnside, P.M. "Saving tropical forests as a global warming countermeasure: an issue that divides the environmental movement", *Ecological Economics* 39 167–184 2001

⁵ Sinks in the Kyoto Protocol: A Dirty Deal for Forests, Forest Peoples and the Climate:

<http://www.fern.org/pubs/briefs/sinks2.pdf>

⁶ Prins, G.; Rayner, S. "Time to ditch Kyoto", *Nature* 449, 25 October 2007

⁷ Forest Resources Assessment 2005, FAO

⁸ Forest Destruction, climate change and palm oil expansion in Indonesia:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/usa/forest-destruction-climate-ch.pdf>

In 2005, the Coalition for Rainforest Nations tabled a proposal to include forests in the Kyoto Protocol.⁹ Three years later, this proposal is still being discussed. At the UN climate change meeting in Bali last December, delegates agreed to include forest protection mechanisms in future discussions about a new post-2012 climate change agreement.

In a recent article in *Nature*, Jeff Tollefson reports that “although the Bali declarations endorse the idea of including forest protection in the next climate agreement, they say nothing about which avenue to take – an issue that is now being hotly debated.”¹⁰

While this “hot debate” continues, what will happen to forests in the intervening period between 2008 – 2012?

Action is needed NOW to save the world's forests

This problem needs to be addressed urgently. For example, according to the report *The Last Stand of the Orangutan*, 98% of Indonesian rainforest may be destroyed by 2022. ***The report argues that “it is likely that many protected areas will already be severely degraded in three to five years, that is by 2012”.***¹¹

Two more recent reports *How the Palm Oil Industry is Cooking the Climate*¹², and *Deforestation, Forest Degradation, Biodiversity Loss and CO₂ Emissions in Riau, Sumatra, Indonesia*¹³ also provide more background on deforestation in Indonesia.

On a global scale, the *Stern Review* notes:

The scale of the problem is daunting. Without prompt action, emissions from deforestation between 2008 and 2012 are expected to total 40Gt CO₂, which alone will raise atmospheric levels of CO₂ by ~2ppm, greater than the cumulative total of aviation emissions from the invention of the flying machine until at least 2025.

*Taking action to protect forests is therefore too important to wait until the next commitment period. This means that pilot schemes outside the Kyoto Protocol are necessary. **These need not be limited in scope – the more ambitious the reductions, the greater the benefit.***¹⁴ (My emphasis).

The UN COP 13 (Bali) decision re “Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries: approaches to stimulate action”, encourages “Parties” to take immediate action to protect forests.¹⁵ This decision encourages Parties to take action **outside** the Kyoto Protocol.

The interim report of the Garnaut Review suggests that between now and 2012 there is a “window of opportunity to adopt a variety of unilateral, regional and multilateral initiatives to help instil greater ambition into a post-Kyoto international framework”. The report states that Australia can promote agreements with developing countries, such as our APEC neighbours Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, to reduce emissions.¹⁶

⁹ <http://www.rainforestcoalition.org/eng/>

¹⁰ Tollefson, J. “Save the trees” *Nature* 452, 6 March 2008

¹¹ The Last Stand of the Orangutan. State of Emergency: Illegal Logging, Fire and Palm Oil in Indonesia's National Parks, Feb 2007, p.6 http://www.unep-wcmc.org/resources/PDFs/LastStand/orangutanreport_1to11.pdf

¹² How the Palm Oil Industry is Cooking the Climate, Greenpeace, 8 Nov. 2007

<http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/international/press/reports/cooking-the-climate-full.pdf>

¹³ Deforestation, Forest Degradation, Biodiversity Loss and CO₂ Emissions in Riau, Sumatra, Indonesia, WWF, Feb. 2008 http://assets.panda.org/downloads/riau_co2_report_wwf_id_27feb08_en_lr.pdf

¹⁴ Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change, p. 547 http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9/5/Chapter_25_Reversing_Emissions_from_Land_Use_Change.pdf

¹⁵ UN COP 13 (Bali) decision <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2007/cop13/eng/06a01.pdf#page=8>

¹⁶ Interim Report of the Garnaut Climate Change Review, p. 44

[http://www.garnautreview.org.au/CA25734E0016A131/WebObj/GarnautClimateChangeReviewInterimReport-Feb08/\\$File/Garnaut%20Climate%20Change%20Review%20Interim%20Report%20-%20Feb%2008.pdf](http://www.garnautreview.org.au/CA25734E0016A131/WebObj/GarnautClimateChangeReviewInterimReport-Feb08/$File/Garnaut%20Climate%20Change%20Review%20Interim%20Report%20-%20Feb%2008.pdf)

Last year Australia led the world in taking action to address global deforestation **outside** the Kyoto Protocol. The ground-breaking launch of the Global Initiative on Forests and Climate; the High Level Meeting on Forests and Climate; the contribution to the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility; funding to improve systems for monitoring forests; funding for the management of forest and peat land fires; and the Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership all served to raise the profile of the deforestation problem before the UN climate change meeting in Bali.

This year the new Australian government built on Australia's leadership in this area with the announcement of the partnership with the Clinton Climate Initiative, and the Forest Carbon Partnership between Papua New Guinea and Australia.

While I applaud the new government recognising the problem of deforestation, I am concerned about how much **practical action to preserve rainforests in our region will be undertaken in the next four years**, particularly whilst time is spent on establishing what could be a controversial emissions trading scheme. **I particularly recommend that substantially increased funding and resources should be "put on the ground" to assist countries such as Indonesia and Papua New Guinea protect their forests during this crucial period.**

Political will and leadership is needed to address the problem of global deforestation

During his recent trip to Papua New Guinea, Kevin Rudd said:

No global challenge is more important. No challenge demands more creative and cooperative responses than climate change.¹⁷

In his recent speech to the Gleneagles Dialogue in Japan, Tony Blair announced: "**We have reached the critical moment of decision on climate change.**" He argued that we face a vast challenge: "what is needed is so great that the purpose of any global action is not to ameliorate or to make better our carbon dependence, it is to transform the nature of economies and societies in terms of carbon consumption and emissions."

Mr Blair highlighted that **tackling the problem of deforestation was "a special category for action" in this challenge.**

Mr Blair concluded his speech by saying: "*The time has come. The call to action is loud and clear. It is urgent. We know what we have to do... The rest is political will and leadership. And now we have to show it.*"¹⁸

Recognising the problem of global rainforest destruction, in October 2007, Prince Charles launched The Prince's Rainforest Project. Prince Charles stated:

The central issue in this whole debate is how we put a true value on standing rainforests to the world community - we simply have to find ways of putting a price on them which makes them more valuable alive than dead.¹⁹

During the UN climate change meeting in Bali, Norway's Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, announced that his country was prepared to increase its support to prevent deforestation in developing countries to **more than US\$500 million a year.**²⁰ **Mr Stoltenberg urged other countries to join his country in these efforts.**

¹⁷ Address to the State Dinner, Port Moresby: http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0120.cfm

¹⁸ Tony Blair's speech to the Gleneagles Dialogue in Japan: <http://tonyblairoffice.org/2008/03/tony-blair-launches-climate-ch.html>

¹⁹ Prince Charles speech to WWF dinner, including announcement of launch of his Prince's Rainforest Project: http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/speechesandarticles/a_speech_by_hrh_the_prince_of_wales_for_the_wwf_dinner_to_la_363851406.html

²⁰ Norwegian Prime Minister's speech at the Bali conference: http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/smk/Statsministerens-kontor/Statsminister_Jens_Stoltenberg/Taler-og-artikler/2007-4/Tale-til-FNs-klimakonferanse-pa-Bali.html?id=493899

Norway's Minister of the Environment and International Development, Erik Solheim, said that "***an initiative in this area in the next few years can bring about substantial cuts in greenhouse gas emissions while the world is seeking to put in place a new, more comprehensive agreement on climate change.***"²¹

In late December 2007, Prince Charles offered to join with Norway to discuss ways to cooperate in projects to save forests around the world. Mr Stoltenberg said Norway was willing to work with all who want to put systems and regulations in place to halt deforestation.²²

Australia should join an international alliance to address the problem of global deforestation for the critical period 2008-2012

Support for this important initiative to address the problem of global deforestation should be bipartisan. The Liberals have suggested a "Global Rainforest Recovery Plan" for the period 2008 – 2012, so they are obviously supportive of action in this regard.²³ Surely the Australian Greens would also support urgent action to save threatened rainforests?

With its Global Initiative on Forests and Climate, Australia has been a leader in addressing the problem of deforestation. ***Australia should continue to build on its leadership in this area. Our prime minister, Kevin Rudd, should join other world leaders, such as Jens Stoltenberg and Prince Charles and others, and establish a formal alliance to cooperate and develop an urgent strategic plan to address global deforestation between 2008 – 2012.***

This international alliance should also consider the economic drivers of deforestation, in particular the complex problems which arise from over-consumption in the developed world and the growing population in the developing world.

Details of the post-2012 climate change agreement are due to be finalised at Copenhagen in 2009. It would be an excellent demonstration of political will and leadership if an alliance of world leaders could table a progress report on their efforts to reduce global deforestation at the Copenhagen meeting. Such a demonstration could "***help instil greater ambition into a post-Kyoto international framework***".

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Note: I have made similar submissions to the recent Progressive Governance Summit (UK) <http://progov.pm.gov.uk/discuss/climate-change/>; and the 2020 Summit under the topic area "Sustainability and Climate Change"

I have been lobbying both the Australian government and opposition parties on the issue of deforestation in SE Asia since early 2007, commencing with a submission on the *Bringing down the axe on illegal logging discussion paper* in January 2007.

My correspondence with the current governing Labor Party commenced with a letter dated 14 March 2007, with subsequent letters dated 14 September 2007, 29 November 2007, 9 January 2008, 21 January 2008 and 24 March 2008. (This correspondence has been forwarded to Mr Kevin Rudd and Senator Penny Wong).

²¹ Boosting support for efforts to combat deforestation: http://www.norway.org/policy/environment/avskoging_eng.htm

²² Prince Charles to work with Norway to save forests:
<http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/46206/story.htm>

²³ A positive agenda for Bali: http://www.liberal.org.au/info/news/detail/20071212_APositiveAgendaforBali.php