

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**21<sup>ST</sup> MARCH - INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE FORESTS**

On the occasion of March 21st, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly as International Day of the Forests (1), the World Rainforest Movement (WRM) and more than 300 signatories call on the General Assembly and UN Institutions and Initiatives related to forest issues to use the new initiative to address the underlying drivers of deforestation.

The letter is motivated by the fact that in spite of several UN initiatives aimed at calling attention for forests at the international level, the process of deforestation -affecting especially tropical forests- continues and the proposed solutions have not slowed down tropical forest loss worldwide - on the contrary.

“The proposals discussed at UN-level, by the FAO, CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD and UNFF, to solve the forest crisis, for example REDD+ (2), are false solutions because they do not address the underlying drivers of deforestation and strengthen a false idea of sustainability. This is why deforestation has increased in many countries, rather than decreased”, declares Winnie Overbeek, International Coordinator of the WRM.

Continuous forest destruction affects directly the life and future of hundreds of millions of forest peoples, therefore urgent action is needed such as recognizing the rights of forest and forest-dependent communities over their communal territories, as well as defining forests by their true meaning for these peoples, excluding industrial tree monoculture plantations from the present definition that the FAO applies and that defines these monocultures as “forests”(3).

Furthermore, the large-scale land grabbing and destruction of tropical forests worldwide driven by transnational corporations (TNCs) that increasingly certify their activities as “sustainable”, needs to be urgently halted, as well as the increasing human rights violations their actions provoke, including intimidations, affecting those defending the tropical forests and the rights of forest-dependent communities against these threats. Besides, governments and the UN in the first place should support efforts to consume less forest destroying products instead of promoting initiatives that make consumers buying the certified products from large-scale operations and companies that continue to destroy forests.

The letter concludes affirming that “Above all, on this first International Day of Forests we call on the UN and its forest-related institutions to heed the lessons of past initiatives aimed at ending deforestation: Halting forest loss will remain an illusion until action is undertaken to eliminate the underlying causes that drive deforestation.”

*The full version of the letter is available (also in Spanish, French and Portuguese) at*  
[http://www.wrm.org.uy/forests/letter\\_Day\\_of\\_the\\_Forests.html](http://www.wrm.org.uy/forests/letter_Day_of_the_Forests.html)

*For further information:*

Winnie Overbeek +55 27 8821 9007

Teresa Perez (WRM Secretariat) +598 99 367 966

<http://www.wrm.org.uy>

**Notes:**

1.- <http://www.fao.org/forestry/36014-063ec88fa19cab1dfe473d7813290b32.pdf>

2.- Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, see <http://www.wrm.org.uy/subjects/REDD.html>

3.- <http://www.wrm.org.uy/forests.html>