

FOREST CONSERVATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION

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FOREST CONSERVATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

Thursday, May 12, 2022

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:12 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Gregory Meeks (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman MEEKS. The Committee on Foreign Affairs will come to order. And without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess of the Committee at any point, and all Members will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous materials, and questions for the record, subject to the length, limitation, and the rules.

To insert something into the record, please have your staff email the previously mentioned address, or contact full committee staff.

And as a reminder, for Members participating remotely, please keep your video function on at all times, even when you're not recognized by the Chair.

And Members are responsible for muting and unmuting themselves. Consistent with House rules, staff will only mute Members as appropriate, when they are not under recognition, to eliminate background noise.

I see that we have a quorum. And I now recognize myself for opening remarks.

Exactly 1 year ago today, this Committee held a hearing on the threat of climate change to our planet, it's ecosystems and our livelihoods. And with Special Envoy John Kerry as our guest, we were able to examine the United States' role in rallying global support ahead of COP26 in Glasgow.

In Glasgow the United States was able to keep ambition high across a broad spectrum of challenge related to climate change. As a result, the world was able to move the ball forward on several critical issues, including mitigation, adaptation, and finance.

And I want to thank our witnesses and members of civil society for being here today, and for their work surrounding the event as well.

A year seems like a long time ago, and global politics have changed. And an unjustified war of aggression by a nuclear power has upended the postwar settlement, and rekindled threats that were thought left in the last century.

In 2021, we saw the global economy rebound. And it rebound rapidly and unevenly, along with CO2 emissions. And according to the International Energy Agency, coal accounted for over 40 percent of the overall growth in global CO2 emissions in 2021, compounded by the high natural gas prices.

However, the planet does not care for geopolitics or prices. On the contrary, our oceans, and forest, and tundra, are being reshaped and destroyed at a frightening pace.

As stewards of this earth, it is our duty to take action before the damage we're inflicting becomes irreversible. Further generations should not be forced to inherit a global crisis of our own making.

So, today we are taking the time to examine the role of force in the fight against climate change and its worst effects. We're also going to discuss proposed solutions to slow down deforestation, stop illegal logging, and incentivize the protection of existing primary forests.

Forests are essential to the good health of our planet, and by extension, our very survival. They are carbon six, holding more carbon than is produced annually by humans.

They're a home. Home to more than three quarters of the world's life on land, representing delicate biodiversity. They are living spaces for humanity. Over one billion people around the world rely on forests for shelter and livelihoods, including 60 million indigenous people.

When these cathedrals for nature are under threat, or burned, or turned into agricultural land, these livelihoods are under threat. Biodiversity is under threat, and that carbon is released into the atmosphere.

However, when we protect forests, they represent a solution to combating, even reversing climate change. And this was the goal of the UK government leading in Glasgow, a commitment to end deforestation by 2030.

Even China has signed onto the pledge. So, the United States has a role to play in this ambitious endeavor. Indeed, the difficulty is in the follow through. The devil is always in the details.

Missing from earlier attempts to halt the drivers of deforestation were important factors, including indigenous voices who are directly impacted by deforestation. The solutions are not one size fits all. Sometimes simply allowing and enabling those with the most experience, and those with the most to lose, will help, and indeed lead the process.

I'll stop there. And I'll turn to Mr. McCaul for his opening remarks.

Mr. MCCAUL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank Majority Leader Hoyer for being here today, and talking about your AMAZON21 Bill, and the Natural Resources Ranking Member Westernman, for joining us to discuss your work to address deforestation.

As the Ranking Member of this Committee, I've had the opportunity to travel to Africa and Latin America, and I've seen the importance of conservation and preserving our environmental environment first hand.

This Committee has an important role to play in conserving the environment, and that includes forests, marine sanctuaries, and endangered species around the world.

Since my early days of serving in Congress, I've been a member of the International Conservation Caucus, one of the largest and most bipartisan caucuses in Congress.

Conservation is a logical solution in addressing climate change. It's been championed by Republicans for over a century, all the way back to Teddy Roosevelt.

He understood that we must protect our environment in sustainability, and manage our natural resources before it's too late. And I've been proud to have advanced bipartisan conservation efforts here in Congress.

I've supported Congressman Chabot's Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Reauthorization Act, and former Chairman Royce's legislation supporting a conservation area in southern Africa, the DELTA Act.

I'm also the original cosponsor of Ranking Member Westerman's Trillion Trees Act. The United States has, and will continue to play an important role in preventing deforestation.

And Mr. Chairman, I think we both have the same goal here. In the last 5 years alone, over \$2 billion has been provided by Congress to protect critical landscapes, and empower communities to manage their own resources.

But, there are other tools on the table aside from traditional foreign aid. For instance, engaging in debt for nature swaps and debt buyback programs, the United States is helping preserve land across the globe.

The U.S. Development Finance Corporation has an important role to play as well. To engage the private sector and advance new innovations.

Unfortunately, these efforts are under kept by the maligned activities of the People's Republic of China. China accounts for nearly a third of the global emissions.

In fact, the PRC's emissions grew four times more than what the U.S. reduced. Today, China emits more than the entire developed world.

CCP General Xi Jinping has said China only intends to become carbon neutral by 2060, a full decade after other major economies.

We cannot wait decades hoping the CCP will be a reliable partner in addressing climate change. And we must also not be afraid to call them out on this.

Their search for rosewood, an endangered hardwood used in traditional Chinese furniture has devastated the forests of Madagascar and the Mekong region. We also must stop illegal logging.

We must decrease demand while increasing U.S. options on the global market for lumber, agriculture, energy, and critical minerals. This will decrease global emissions as the U.S. does it more efficiently and cleaner.

America's a world leader in reducing carbon emissions, reducing emissions more than the next seven countries combined. And by 2030, over 90 percent of global emissions will come from outside the United States.

I would have to say that America's climate policy should be based on America's resources, innovation, and our ability to compete to reduce global emissions.

As I said, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Leader, we all have the same goal here. I'm intrigued by the idea of the rain forest. I've often said they are the lines of the world. And whatever we can do to

help preserve the lines of the world, our children will be better, and their children will be better off.

And so with that, I yield back.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Keating. We'll now hear from the Chair and the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee that has oversight on climate and the environment.

We'll start with Chairman Keating, we now recognize for 1 minute.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank the Leader, and Congressman Westerman, for being here today.

There are many issues that the clock has already ticked on. And our environment is in a short period of time to deal with these.

This is an important bill, because it takes the organization and the power of the State to take action, and to prioritize, and have some oversight over, you know, where the projects that are working, that will work, that will save ourselves, will take place.

I just want to make one note of the deforestation issue that occurs in many areas, because it's going to be affected directly by our Ukraine war.

Forty percent of the fertilizer in this world comes from Belarus and Russia. There's an enormous crisis right now on fertilizer. This is going to expand.

And I'm afraid that the slash and burn type tactics that, or practices that are used for fertilizing for these countries, it's only going to expand. And it will expand in the worst places possible.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would say, this is the time that's even crisis on crisis that's occurring with this. And this is why I support this bill and would love to see it move forward expeditiously.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MEEKS. I now recognize Representative Steve Chabot for 1 minute.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this hearing today. I want to thank Mr. Hoyer and Mr. Westerman for being here.

And thank the Ranking Member for his kind remarks about the legislation which we have cosponsored in the House, along with Mr. Sherman, my Democratic colleague, and Mr. Portman and Chair Brown over in the Senate.

We've been pushing this for a long time, it's the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Reauthorization Act. It passed this Committee in a bipartisan basis this past year. And I'd like to focus my attention during the course of the hearing on that to some degree.

We do also have, as I'm sure the Chair knows, we've got the Conference Committee. So, some of us are going to have to go over on that. And so we maybe in and out of here. And I know many of the members are participating virtually today.

But, thank you for holding this hearing. We'd love to get that legislation across the finish line and get it passed into law if at all possible.

I yield back.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chabot. And today we have two panels with very distinguished witnesses.

And of course on our first panel, we'll start with the very distinguished Majority Leader of the House, Steny Hoyer, from the great State of Maryland, who has been a long time leader in international climate space, and more importantly, a driving force behind efforts in this Congress to combat deforestation.

And this is highlighted by his work on AMAZON21, which we will discuss very shortly. And I want to thank him for taking time from his schedule to be before our Committee today.

And I also welcome the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Bruce Westerman, from the great State of Arkansas.

Ranking Member Westerman's work on Natural Resources Committee underscores the connection between domestic and international policy in this space. And we also appreciate you being here, Mr. Ranking Member.

I now recognize the Majority Leader for his remarks.

STATEMENT OF HON. STENY HOYER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MARYLAND, AND MAJORITY LEADER, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for having this hearing, but, more importantly, thank you for your statement and your commitment to the objectives that we, as Mr. McCaul said, all share. Mr. Chabot has said that as well.

And I want to thank Mr. Keating for his leadership on this.

Mr. Cicilline, thank you for being here and your work, and Ms. Manning, for being here.

Let me start, Mr. Chairman, with the fact that this bill has a very simple proposition. And that proposition is, if we need to buy fertilizer, and we need to buy oil, and we need to buy coal, or we need to buy some other source, we expect to have that taken out of the land or the mine and given to us, and we, in turn, pay for it.

The problem we have with the forest is the farmer who lives next door to the rainforest and who may want another 10 acres to farm, so he or she can support their family, their incentive is to take that rainforest out of the ground. The problem is the resource that we get from that rainforest is oxygen, which allows us to live. And we do not want him or her, or the government, to take it out of the ground.

So, in a system that is incentivized by being able to support one's self, and therefore, get money in return for their product, we take the oxygen, but we do not pay for it. So, this is not charity. This is not foreign aid. This is you have something of value that you give us to us every day by having those trees in the ground, and we want you to keep them in the ground. So, the challenge is, how do we incentivize? How do we make that farmer able to support himself and his family or, frankly, that government be able to support itself, as opposed to selling it for wood, housing, whatever?

And that is what this bill seeks to do. So, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for holding this hearing and allowing me to speak on an issue that has been close to my heart for a very long time. I started talking about this 20 years ago, and I am upset with myself that I did not pursue it more vigorously.

Protecting the rainforest, and by extension, the health of our planet. Absorbing vast quantities of greenhouse gases, natural carbon sinks—such as rainforests, mangroves, peatlands, wetlands—serve, as Mr. McCaul said, the Earth’s lungs. Without lungs, we die.

Their well-being is inextricably linked, therefore, to that of humanity. In recent decades, however, deforestation has destroyed swaths, millions of acres, of these critical lands—worsening our climate crisis while simultaneously removing one of our greatest natural tools to address it.

It is because of deforestation that Brazil and Indonesia are among the world’s top 10 emitters of carbon. Indeed, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world’s leading climate scientific authority, has found that destruction of natural carbon sinks accounts for as much as a quarter of the world’s total greenhouse gas emissions—rivaling or perhaps exceeding China.

We need to take immediate and decisive action to protect these ecosystems. Our global effort to combat the climate crisis depends upon it. The future of the planet depends on it. The survival and success of humanity, ultimately, depends on it.

At the COP26 conference, to which the chairman referred, in Glasgow last year, President Biden joined the leaders of 100 other nations in an historic pledge to end deforestation by the end of the decade.

Those of us who live in the so-called industrialized world use what is in the non-industrialized world—Brazil, of course, is both—we use their product. We do not see it and we do not pay for it. That is what this bill is about—incentivizing monetarily the retaining of these forests which we so badly need.

AMAZON21—by the way, AMAZON is a wonderful acronym that I can hardly ever remember—but, just for your interest’s sake, it says America Mitigating and Achieving Zero Emissions Originating from Nature. How is that for a tongue twister? But AMAZON itself is pretty easy to remember.

AMAZON21 would help fulfill America’s commitment to that global pledge—not just America, but these hundred other nations—commitment to that global pledge by establishing a trust fund which will enable the State Department to forge agreements with developing nations that will protect and restore their carbon sinks.

In the past, the United States has been limited in its ability to enter into these bilateral agreements because of the short-term nature of funding through the annual appropriations process. Solving that longstanding issue, however, requires making long-lasting commitments.

The trust fund created under my legislation—and “my legislation,” so many hundreds of people have worked on this legislation; I just happen to have my name at the front of it; I am proud of that, but I am so proud of the work they have done—would authorize the financing of conservation or restoration of nature-based climate projects abroad that protect carbon sinks far into the future.

Similarly, AMAZON21 emphasizes transparency and results-based funding model to ensure our partners make good on their promise to halt deforestation. We are not going to pay money without making sure that, in fact, we are getting what we are paying

for. Nations that enter into agreements with us through this legislation must agree to rigorous external monitoring, reporting, and verification of their progress. We know what satellites can do. You cannot hide from them.

Improvements in satellite imagery capabilities have already made it impossible for partners to hide any violation. It is simple. If countries do not meet the terms of this agreement, of the agreement they have, they won't receive funding.

In a sense, Mr. Chairman, this is about paying producers for a resource from which we already benefit, as I have said. That resource is the clean air we breathe. These payments are an investment in the continued availability of clean air and sustainable planet for us, for our children, and for generations of Americans to come.

Moreover, the trust fund is designed to accept gifts from foundations, individuals, private companies, and other developed nations—this is a team project; this is not a U.S. project—to help maximize the impact of America's public investment. It is through these types of private-public partnerships that we can truly begin to tackle the deforestation crisis affecting our planet.

AMAZON21 will also help developing nations participate in carbon markets, an important tool to leverage resources from the private sector to fund conservation work—getting credits. These agreements would allow us to shore up our relationships with developing nations that may otherwise fall under the influence, frankly, of authoritarian regimes seeking to exploit their resources instead of protecting them.

It would also create a new technical assistance program in USAID to help them build their capacity to develop nature-based reforestation projects and scale them up, which I think Mr. Westerman's bill certainly would be helped by.

Mr. Chairman, helping these nations protect their rainforests serves our national security interest and the attainment of our climate goals, to which both of you referred. Members of this committee know full well the long game that autocratic countries are playing in the developing world with initiatives like China's Belt and Road.

We need to think creatively about how the United States can further our national security objectives while also tackling global challenges like deforestation in the process. With AMAZON21, America can firmly reestablish itself as a global leader when it comes to addressing the climate crisis.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member McCaul, each and every person has a stake in this legislation's success. Whether you live in Bogota, Colombia; Brandywine, Maryland, in my district; Austin, Texas, in your district, we all depend on the clean air that Earth's rainforests and other carbon sinks help to protect.

The climate crisis affects us all, and particularly, the most vulnerable and those with the fewest resources, as the committee will hear shortly. Programs like AMAZON21 are the most impactful and cost-effective options, in my view, available to us today to address the climate change.

This model has already proven to work by nations like Norway and the United Kingdom, who have similar programs, and others

that will set up similar trust funds and authorities. For a sense of scale, if fully funded, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member McCaul, these programs in this bill would eliminate as many as 180 million metric tons of carbon emissions each year—an amount equal to the total CO₂ produced by cars in the United States over a 2-year period.

That is why I was proud to introduce AMAZON21 in the House last November and why I am glad to have this opportunity to speak about it with the committee today.

And I want to thank Mr. Westerman. I do not know Mr. Westerman very well. We are a big body and we have not worked on things together. But I am so enthusiastic and appreciative of his participation with his bill, this bill, and other efforts that will join together. Mr. Chabot mentioned the legislation that he has. If we join these together, we are going to make a real impact for generations yet to come.

I want to thank Mr. Sanjayan of the Conservation International for working closely with me on this bill over the past few years. You are going to hear from him in a little bit.

I also want to thank Hindou Ibrahim for sharing her insights with the committee today and the perspective of indigenous peoples and others most vulnerable to the climate crisis.

I also want to thank Chairman Meeks again for holding today's hearing and for cosponsoring this legislation with me, as well as Chairman Keating for shepherding AMAZON21 through the Europe, Eurasia, Energy, and Environment Subcommittee.

I also want to thank all of you who are in attendance at the hearing today.

I think this will have a major impact, Mr. Chairman. You and I have talked about this. I very much appreciate, as I said, your opening statement, which heightens the responsibility that we have. And I want to thank you for being tolerant with your time as well.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hoyer follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader, for your leadership. And as you said, and as the ranking member said, this is something that we could all agree and focus on it. That is why, with you, I am happy to have Representative Westerman join us.

And, Mr. Westerman, you are now recognized for your comments.

STATEMENT OF HON. BRUCE WESTERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS, AND RANKING MEMBER, HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. WESTERMAN. Thank you, Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, and to the members of the committee. It is an honor to be here with Leader Shoyer, or Hoyer, to talk about—I have kind of combined “Steny” and “Hoyer” at one time to talk about something that we should all be able to agree on.

And I am really excited about the topic of this hearing, and I am more excited from the fact that this is the Foreign Affairs Com-

mittee addressing this, because I think it is recognition by Congress that carbon in the atmosphere and solving that puzzle is not something we can solve alone.

The atmosphere is a global entity. It does not have borders. And we cannot solve the carbon emissions into the atmosphere in the United States. It has to be a global effort to solve global carbon.

And just to get some facts out on the table—and I will also tell you, when I was studying forestry at Yale's Graduate School, if I had known I was going to 1 day be the only forester in Congress, I might have taken more classes and studied a little harder.

[Laughter.]

But this is a topic that I am passionate about, and it is a topic we should all be passionate about. Because before the Industrial Revolution, there were 280 parts per million of carbon in the atmosphere. Today, there is 419 parts per million of carbon in the atmosphere. Without some carbon in the atmosphere to create a little bit of a greenhouse effect, we would freeze to death. Too much carbon in the atmosphere, we generate too much heat. So, there is a delicate balance there.

We talked about the Trillion Trees Act. We talked about how Teddy Roosevelt said trees or forests are the lungs of the Earth. They breathe in carbon dioxide and they breathe out oxygen.

If we think about that in a little more detail, trees are by far the largest scale, they are the most pragmatic, proactive solution that we have to atmosphere carbon. You hear all this talk about carbon capture and sequestration. Trees have been doing that since there has been trees on the planet. They pull the carbon dioxide out of the air. The photosynthesis in the internal parts of the leaf, they take that carbon and they make hydrocarbon tanks that are stored in the wood, and they give H₂O and oxygen back out into the atmosphere. We know that science.

But trees also offer a phenomenal benefit, in that wood is the ultimate carbon battery. And we talk about battery technologies. If you want to talk about something that stores carbon, it is wood. The wood in this table at one time was atmosphere carbon. Fifty percent of this wood by weight is carbon. And as long as this table is here, that carbon will be sequestered.

That is why we have to look at the big picture here. We have to look at not only how we keep forests healthy and vibrant, but how do we use them—and that is what real conservation is—how do we use them to make a difference?

I want to tell you the story of Arkansas, and this is a story that is really across the South. Last year, the State of Arkansas grew 44 million tons of wood. The State also harvested 24 million tons of trees. Those trees got converted into wood. They are going into homes and they are storing carbon.

There is 20 million more tons of wood in the State of Arkansas today than there was this time last year because the forests were managed healthier. And we can use our trees. We can grow them faster and grow more. We can protect special areas, and we can create building products that are very sustainable.

That is why a company called Walmart in my home State is building their new corporate headquarters out of mass timber. Their new corporate headquarter building will contain 17 million

pounds of carbon when it is completed. It will be built with trees that were sustainably grown in reforested areas in Arkansas, creating local jobs and economic growth.

That is the great story we have about forestry and trees, is that we can have a healthy environment and we can have a vibrant economy all at the same time. The impetus behind the Trillion Trees Act was a study that said that, if we planted a trillion trees across the planet, we could capture two-thirds of the carbon emitted by man since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. That is 205 gigatons of carbon that a trillion trees would sequester.

And for any other tree nerds out there, we have about 3 trillion trees on the planet today. Scientists estimate that at one time there were 7 trillion trees. So, we have got a lot of headroom as far as we could go in creating more forests.

Another fact that people do not realize is that, since 1850, we have emitted over 200 gigatons of carbon through deforestation by forest fires. And we are not immune from that here in the United States. Last year, we burned 7 million acres of forests. The year before, it was 10 million acres—putting millions of tons of carbon into the atmosphere that was sequestered in the trees.

And there is another side of that story. When you burn a tree, you are releasing carbon dioxide. When you char the tree and leave it on the ground and the bugs eat it, you are releasing methane, CH₄, which is a worst greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. There is nothing we can do to help air, water, and wildlife habitat more than having healthy forests.

And, Leader Hoyer, I would love to work with you on this. And I thank you would find, though, a willing group in the Republican Party who could work on real forest reform on bills like the Trillion Trees Act.

The bottom line is we have to take care of the forests we have, and there is hope. And I can tell you an example of that.

A lot of people do not realize that, last year, in the last 2 years, we lost 20 percent of the most iconic trees on the planet—the giant sequoias that grow only in a few groves in California. Forest fires destroyed 20 percent, 19 percent of those trees in 2 years. These are some of the most fire-resilient species on the planet.

So, you had the intersection of two bad things. You had mismanagement of the forest and a warming, drying climate that intersected, and it is the perfect storm to destroy a tree that should never be destroyed by fire. These trees are over 3,000 years old. Up until the 21st century, those groves in California averaged 31 fires per century. We created the Forest Service and started putting them out. In the last century, they averaged three fires. Now, Nature is correcting that.

And I was out there last week, a bipartisan trip. We are going to have a bipartisan bill on saving the sequoias. Whole groves of sequoia trees, nothing but charred remains on the side of the hill—that should never happen. We should be ashamed that we let this happen.

We cannot be exporting bad forest management policies to the rest of the world. We know how to do it right. We need to work together to get our house in order here and to export that technology and that help to other parts of the world. Because, as you

mentioned, there is no place like the Amazon that has as many trees and as much opportunity to sequester and store carbon and give us clean oxygen to breathe.

But we cannot have a policy that says do not ever touch the forest, because that is a management policy, or put the fires out. That is what we did in the United States, and we are paying a terrible price for that right now.

So, I would really embrace the opportunity to work together; to follow the scientific research that we have; to work on policy that actually does good things; that is going to, at the end of the day, mean there are more trees growing on the planet, more carbon being sequestered, and more oxygen being released.

One last fact. Transportation worldwide makes up about a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions. Buildings make up close to half of it. We have been focusing way too much on transportation, when we could focus on sustainable buildings, which wood could play a very important part of that, if we truly wanted to address the global carbon issue.

Again, I have a friend that said that, when it comes to the environment, trees are the answer; now what is your question? And we need to follow that because the science backs that up.

Again, thank you for having the hearing. Thank you for—I kind of took advantage of the Leader using more time and used a little bit more myself. So, thank you, Leader Hoyer.

Chairman MEEKS. It is called “the magic minute.”

[Laughter.]

Mr. WESTERMAN. Yes. Very much so.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Westerman follows:]



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Westerman
 House Committee on Foreign Affairs
 Hearing on “Forest Conservation in the Fight Against Climate Change”
 May 12, 2022

Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss “forest conservation in the fight against climate change.” As the only licensed forester in Congress, I’m thrilled that forests are finally getting the recognition they deserve as the best solution we have to addressing climate change. As of May 2021, there were 419 parts per million of carbon in the atmosphere. There’s a common saying I’m fond of, which is: “Trees are the answer. Now what’s your question?” As the lungs of the Earth, trees are not just our solution to addressing climate concerns, but creating new wildlife habitat, clean air and water, new jobs, and abundant outdoor recreation opportunities.

That’s why I re-introduced the Trillion Trees Act last year, with over 100 bipartisan cosponsors. The global One Trillion Trees Initiative, spearheaded by the World Economic Forum, aims to grow, restore and conserve one trillion new trees across the globe. Research shows that this would sequester 205 gigatons of carbon, which is equivalent to roughly two-thirds of the carbon emitted since the beginning of the industrial revolution. This is also the exact same amount of carbon emitted as a result of global deforestation over the entire 1850-2019 period.

The Trillion Trees Act makes us a leader in this global initiative by enhancing our existing international forestry programs to include carbon sequestration and creating an International Forest Foundation. We don’t need to spend billions of dollars to solve this problem. We need to lead by example and utilize existing programs to bolster forest conservation efforts at home and abroad.

Forest conservation internationally is not just about preventing deforestation. It’s about promoting the healthy cycle of forest management, which also includes proper reforestation and utilization of wood products. Encouraging countries to lock up their forests and throw away the key is not true conservation, it’s preservation. I’d like to ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a recent Washington Post article entitled “Massive Wildfires Helped Fuel Global Forest Losses in 2021.” According to this article, fires accounted for more than one-third of our tree cover losses last year, which is record breaking.

Forest conservation and forest fires are not just an international issue. How can the United States be a leader in global forest conservation when we are burning up millions of acres of our own forest land year after year? Last year, over 7 million acres burned in catastrophic wildfires. The year before that, we lost a record shattering 10 million acres. Along with turning these forests into burnt-out moonscapes, these fires released approximately 130 million metric tons of carbon into the atmosphere over the course of a few months, which is equivalent to driving over 28 million cars on the road for an entire year.

That's why the Trillion Trees Act doesn't just promote reforestation, but also promotes proper forest management and the utilization of forest products so that we can get our wildfire crisis under control. This will also allow us to become less dependent on hostile foreign nations like Russia and Belarus, who we imported more than half-a-billion dollars-worth of wood products from last year. If we produce these products in the United States, not only will that create new jobs and economic opportunities, but will also make sure that these products are being produced under actual environmental standards.

I'll end where I started: trees are the answer to all of our questions. There's a bipartisan opportunity to not only enhance our nation's forests, but forests around the globe. And the Trillion Trees Act is the first step.

Thank you, I yield back.

Chairman MEEKS. I want to thank both of you for your very passionate and eloquent testimony. And it really is an absolute honor and a privilege to have both of you here at our committee. Again, thank you for taking the time.

And I will now excuse you, gentlemen.

We will now turn to panel two.

And as Mr. Chabot had said earlier, many of us will have to leave to go to the Conference Committee, and I believe Mr. Connolly will take over.

I think, Mr. Connolly, I will give you the honor of introducing our guests.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Sorry for that delay. We had some niceties of exchange here.

So our second panel we have two witnesses, Dr. Sanjayan—am I pronouncing that, Dr. Sanjayan, correctly? All right.

Dr. Sanjayan is a conservation scientist and CEO of Conservation International, a global nonprofit dedicated to securing the critical benefits that nature provides to humanity. He co-led the launch of Conservation International's award-winning "Nature is Speaking" brand campaign, and he oversaw a successful \$1.1 billion capital-raising operation.

His scientific work has been published in peer-reviewed journals Science, Nature, and Conservation Biology. He's hosted and co-hosted a range of documentaries for outlets including PBS, BBC, and Discovery Channel.

Ms. Hindou Ibrahim is an environmental activist and a member of Chad's—no. She's online. Sorry. And a—pastoralist M'Bororo people. She began advocating for indigenous rights and environmental protection at age 16 and founded the Association for the Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad—AFPAT.

She also serves as the U.N. Sustainable Development Goal advocate. She's vice chair of the Global Forest Coalition, Conservation International board member and Earthshot Prize council member.

Ms. Romina Bandura is an economic and senior fellow with the Project of Prosperity and Development and the Project on U.S. Leadership at the—in development at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Her current research focuses on the future of work in developing countries and the United States economic engagement in the developing world. She previously worked as a senior consultant at the Economist Intelligence Unit and an economist at the International Labor Organization.

Without objection, all the witnesses' prepared—full prepared testimony will be part of the full record and I'll now recognize the witnesses for a 5-minute summary of their testimony, beginning with you, Dr. Sanjayan.

Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF DR. M. SANJAYAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER, CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL**

Dr. SANJAYAN. Good morning Chairman, Ranking Member, members the committee, Representative Connolly.

My name is Dr. M. Sanjayan. I'm the CEO of Conservation International, a nonprofit supporting conservation in over 50 countries.

My vice chairman, Mr. Harrison Ford, and board member, Mr. Idris Elba, regret not being here today to support this testimony because of work.

Thank you for inviting me to share my perspective on the forest conservation and fight against climate change, and how AMAZON21 can transform our efforts.

Conservation International's mission is to protect nature that is most important to people, and everything we do is aimed at ensuring that people and nature thrive together. Since 1987, we have brought together businesses, governments, and communities to protect and restore nature, and everywhere we work our model helps communities create self-sustaining conservation-based economies.

The AMAZON21 Act would substantially strengthen these efforts. At its core, this legislation incentivizes developing nations to protect and restore nature.

It rewards action that maintains the health of some of our most critical, most iconic ecosystems, while unlocking financial opportunities for local communities and landowners that commit to conservation.

This bill is good for wildlife. It's good for ecosystems. It's good for the climate. But it's also in equal measure good for local communities and indigenous peoples, good for economies and security, not only food security and climate security but also national security.

In short, it's good for us. The science on this is clear. Nature is the building block required for a stable future for all of humanity. And, yet, nature is under assault virtually everywhere with little to no investment to reverse or halt this trend.

Today, only 3 percent of all available global climate finance is dedicated to protecting nature. There is a massive gap between what we need and what we have, and yet the demand for private sector nature-based investments and opportunities is sky high.

It's, clearly, there. Right now, there are literally billions of dollars in private capital for nature-based investments sidelined by uncertainty and sidelined by risk.

In just the last two or 3 years, for example, we have seen private sector interest in carbon markets soaring and it could easily exceed \$50 billion before the end of this decade.

Through carbon markets, companies and individuals can invest in the protection of nature, thus shortening the time line to achieve our climate goals. By enabling private-public partnerships, this bill would allow new investments to reach places where policy and markets do not.

We're not tilling new soil here. In 1984, Congress established the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to work with both the public and private sectors to protect nature, and since then, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has become the largest private conservation grant maker in the United States.

The AMAZON21 Act brings this concept of public-private partnerships to a global stage. More than half the world's GDP already depends, in some ways, on the benefits provided by nature.

The loss of these benefits would be catastrophic and would amount to a loss of \$2.7 trillion dollars. As always, the poorest countries, the neediest rural communities, would be the hardest

hit, accelerating resource depletion, famines, climate-fueled migration—a recipe as, we all know, for global instability.

AMAZON21 would dramatically and cost effectively stave off these effects. In the places where I have spent my formative years—South Asia, West and East Africa, California, and Montana—I have seen firsthand how climate change has made life harder for everyone and virtually impossible for some.

This legislation would help secure the nature that people need to survive and it would maintain our country’s global leadership and rich conservation legacy. In the United States, our most beloved landscapes and iconic wildlife remain today because of our long history of bipartisan conservation.

The entire team and board of directors at Conservation International thank Majority Leader Hoyer for his leadership in crafting AMAZON21, and this committee and all of you for holding this important hearing.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Sanjayan follows:]



**Written Statement of M. Sanjayan, Ph.D.,
Chief Executive Officer, Conservation International**

**House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on
Forest Conservation in the Fight Against Climate Change**

Thursday, May 12, 2022

My name is Dr. M. Sanjayan and I am the CEO of Conservation International, a conservation nonprofit working in dozens of countries around the world to protect nature. Thank you for inviting me to testify to stress the importance of conservation and share my perspective on HR 5830, also known as the “AMAZON21” Act.

About Conservation International

Conservation International’s mission is to help people and nature thrive together. Everything we do is aimed at fulfilling that purpose. Since 1987, we have worked to protect critical ecosystems by engaging businesses and governments to account for their impacts and reliance on nature. We also promote the creation of self-sustaining, conservation-based economies.

The AMAZON21 Act

The AMAZON21 Act would substantially strengthen conservation efforts around the world. At its core, the legislation incentivizes developing nations that invest in maintaining the health of some of our most critical ecosystems to protect and restore nature. Additionally, the legislation creates a technical assistance program through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to help developing countries and landowners access carbon markets, creating important economic opportunities for rural landowners and Indigenous peoples, among others, who commit to protecting nature.

The bill has the opportunity to create lasting impacts, by helping to preserve critical ecosystems and important natural carbon sinks, and protect wildlife. This in turn helps provide food, climate and national security for developing countries.

Furthermore, the AMAZON21 Act heralds a shift in how conservation is done at a crucial and decisive moment where swift action is needed to protect nature to slow the spread of deforestation, the mass extinctions of wildlife and to stabilize our climate.

Protecting Nature

The global and unequivocal scientific consensus is that the burning of fossil fuels is warming the planet. We must emit fewer greenhouse gases to stabilize our climate. However, even if the world stopped using fossil fuels completely, we would still fail to avert a worst-case scenario if we did not also reverse the destruction of ecosystems, such as forests that absorb and store carbon. To put that into perspective, if deforestation was a country, it would be the third largest emitter after China and the United States.¹ If we continue to lose the carbon stored in our planet’s forests at this pace, it would be absolutely devastating for the entire planet.

¹ If Tropical Deforestation were a Country, it Would Rank Third in CO₂e Emissions: <https://bit.ly/3QWpUT1>

Luckily, there is a solution at hand — we must prioritize protecting nature. A landmark 2017 study² found that protecting and restoring nature can deliver more than one-third of the net emissions reductions that we need to make by 2030.

The benefits of doing this are not confined to the climate:

- Nature is an essential part of our daily lives. It provides the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe. Forests, in particular, are powerhouses of the water cycle, holding and filtering water and providing flood control for adjacent communities. Pollinators are also critical to maintaining global food supply, helping produce \$170 billion in crops per year.³
- For 1.2 billion people in the tropics, the conservation of nature is a matter of survival every single day.⁴ As climate change and wildlife extinctions continue to accelerate, people who derive basic needs from natural sources are disproportionately affected. Even small changes to their environment can have an enormous impact on their lives and livelihoods — cutting off access to food and clean water, building materials or their incomes.
- Our planet is home to species as varied and unique as the landscapes they depend on for survival. Protected lands and waters like national parks and national wildlife refuges are vital to the survival of imperiled wildlife. In fact, mammal diversity within protected areas is an incredible 66 percent greater than in non-protected areas.⁵

Investing in Nature

Nature conservation, like all things, requires investment. These investments can take many different forms. For example:

- A company supporting Indigenous peoples by paying for the restoration of tropical rainforests in South America.
- A nonprofit that partners to support local communities to conserve mangrove forests along shorelines in Southeast Asia.
- A government that establishes and funds a new protected area around peatlands and marshes, which contain extraordinarily massive stores of carbon. If these areas are destroyed, that carbon is released into the atmosphere and is gone, essentially “irrecoverable” in our lifetimes.⁶

² Natural climate solutions: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1710465114>

³ Nearly 40% decline in honey bee population last winter 'unsustainable,' experts say: <https://abcn.ws/3veiqVr>

⁴ Nature-dependent people: Mapping human direct use of nature for basic needs across the tropics:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378021001473>

⁵ Global camera trap synthesis highlights the importance of protected areas in maintaining mammal diversity:

<https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/conl.12865>

⁶ Irrecoverable carbon: <https://www.conservation.org/projects/irrecoverable-carbon>

However, in order to be able to make these investments, you need financing. Currently, only 3 percent of all available global climate finance is aimed at protecting nature.⁷ There is also a massive finance gap — if the world is to meet its targets for protecting wildlife and land, while also curbing climate change, it needs to close a finance gap of more than \$4 trillion by 2050, according to a United Nations report⁸ released last year. Current investments in nature-based solutions amount to \$133 billion, most of which, the report found, comes from *public* sources.

Billions of dollars in available private capital for nature-based investments are sidelined by uncertainty and risk. Yet, we know demand is there. Over the last few years, the voluntary carbon market has surged. Experts estimate that the market for carbon credits could exceed \$50 billion before 2030.⁹ Companies, shareholders and consumers are incredibly motivated to take part in this growing market, which enables them to reduce their carbon footprint by investing in the protection of nature. Public-private partnerships, like the International Terrestrial Carbon Sequestration Fund established under the AMAZON21 Act, would ensure that these investments reach places they would not ordinarily.

These returns will be felt far and wide. More than half of the world's GDP already depends in some way on life-sustaining services, such as pollination, freshwater provision, flood control, food security, and building supplies, provided by nature.¹⁰ A collapse of these services would cost more than 2 percent of GDP globally, approximately \$2.7 trillion, each year by 2030, and the poorest countries would be hit the hardest.¹¹ A future of resource scarcity, famines and climate refugees would await, creating a recipe for conflict and national security risks. A 2019 analysis¹² found that such effects have influenced as much as 20 percent of violent armed conflict over the past century, and that if we stay on our present course, the risk of such violence will increase fivefold.

Investing in Nature through the AMAZON21 Act

The AMAZON21 Act would help dramatically stave off these effects. I have seen firsthand that conservation can be a stabilizing factor in nations where climate change has stressed economic, social and political systems, particularly in those countries where nature provides food and livelihoods for a significant portion of its citizens.

Natural climate solutions are beneficial because they exist today, and because we can easily implement and scale them almost immediately. This is critical, because if we continue on our

⁷ Nature Based Solutions Essential For Climate Mitigation:

<https://blog.nationalgeographic.org/2020/12/11/nature-based-solutions-essential-for-climate-mitigation/>

⁸ State of Finance for Nature: <https://www.unep.org/resources/state-finance-nature>

⁹ Voluntary carbon markets: how they work, how they're priced and who's involved:

<https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/blogs/energy-transition/061021-voluntary-carbon-markets-pricing-participants-trading-corsia-credits>

¹⁰ Half of world's GDP moderately or highly dependent on nature, says new report:

<https://www.pwc.com/th/en/press-room/press-release/2020/press-release-28-02-20-en.html>

¹¹ The Economic Case for Nature: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/35882/A-Global-Earth-Economy-Model-to-Assess-Development-Policy-Pathways.pdf>

¹² Climate as a risk factor for armed conflict: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-019-1300-6.epdf>

current path, the dangers of climate change will only become dramatically worse. For the sake of our economies, our homes and our loved ones, we must quickly change course.

Amid the growing climate and biodiversity crises, the timing of this hearing is critical, and there could not be a more compelling case for urgent action. I firmly believe that the AMAZON21 Act would help us do that, by moving forward with necessary urgency.

This legislation represents a critical next step in the rich and storied conservation legacy of this country. In the United States, our cherished landscapes and beloved wildlife exist because of our long and distinguished history of committed and bipartisan conservationism. For the better part of a century, legislation like the Farm Bill has been a part of this tradition — incentivizing landowners that protect the health of ecosystems and provide adequate habitat for imperiled wildlife. We also appreciate the efforts of Members of this Committee and Congress to advance legislation that supports conservation efforts, including the FOREST Act.

The AMAZON21 Act takes that kind of legacy to a new, global scale — bolstering efforts in developing countries to make verifiable progress in protecting nature. Further, the technical assistance provided by USAID will play a critical role in teaching developing countries and landowners how to attract investment into conservation projects in their countries and navigate complex carbon markets.

This is commonsense, pragmatic legislation designed to properly balance socioeconomic realities alongside the crucial need to conserve ecosystems and the critical services they provide. It would open new opportunities to make targeted and purposeful investments that will bolster climate resilience, protect livelihoods and food security without destroying nature's life-support systems in a way that is inclusive and pro-business — combining the efforts of private, nonprofit and multinational entities, as well as individuals, to achieve a broader, more impactful reach.

Thank you for your leadership in holding this important hearing. Conservation International looks forward to working together to continue to develop policies that can help to accelerate action that protects nature for the benefit of all people.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you. You had 5 seconds to go. Thank you very much.

Before I call on Ms. Ibrahim, I do want to acknowledge from the chair our distinguished majority leader and his leadership on this issue, and, Mr. Hoyer, thank you so much for being here and for showing us the way.

Steny Hoyer has always been a leader in this area and has been an inspiration and a model for so many of us here in Congress. So thank you. Your leadership is going to make a big difference.

Ms. Ibrahim, you are now recognized for your 5 minutes of testimony. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF HINDOU OUMAROU IBRAHIM, PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATION FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND PEOPLES OF CHAD (AFPAT)

Ms. IBRAHIM. Thank you, Chair. My name is Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim. I am the president of the Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad.

I want to thank Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul and the members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee for the opportunity to discuss the importance of the U.S. leadership in nature conservation and investing in natural climate solutions.

I am pleased to share my perspective as an indigenous person on these critical needs for investments in conservation worldwide, including through the AMAZON21 Act, thanks to Congressman Hoyer for his leadership on climate and his advocacy for indigenous peoples.

I am joining you today from Abidjan, where I am speaking at a convention to combat decertification, a crisis exacerbated by climate change and contributing to the mass extinction of biodiversity as well as trapping the whole continent in poverty.

I speak to you today as a conservationist and as a community leader who implement a concrete project and help my community. I was born in a M'Bororo pastoralist community. For centuries we have been practicing the seasonal herding of livestock to fresh grazing ground in the Sahel region, following the rhythm of the season.

We protect our environment because our survival depends on it. Living in harmony with nature is a common principle shared by all indigenous communities in Africa, in the Amazon, in the Arctic, the Pacific Islands and everywhere.

Although today we represent 5 percent of the global population, indigenous peoples effectively manage more than a quarter of the land and we help to protect 80 percent of the planet biodiversity and help the Earth's ecosystem, which are vital to the Earth's ability to absorb and store CO₂.

Tropical forests in the Congo, Amazon Basin serve as the lungs of our planet, yet, are under increasing climate pressure from extreme deforestation caused by the agro industry.

This week, a diverse group of Amazon Brazilians' indigenous organizations signed a letter urging Congress to support AMAZON21, ensuring transparency and strength for financing in partnership with indigenous peoples.

Land where indigenous peoples have forests rights, including government protection of those rights, have better conservation practices and lower incidence of deforestation and carbon emission than surrounding areas.

Today, we all are facing the consequences of the climate change in America and everywhere on the corner of the world. We need you as leadership to partner with indigenous peoples and local communities to stop illegal logging, mining, poaching, and trafficking driven by criminal networks. Investing in nature as a solution can help countries tackling multiple challenges like food and water security, human health, and climate change.

In closing, Mr. President, indigenous peoples can help to design these solutions through our traditional knowledge to help fighting drought and climate change. To implement this investment in nature, we need economic and technical support in recognition of our rights.

Policy like AMAZON21 are crucial for enabling developing countries and indigenous communities to sustain ecosystem, secure livelihoods, and mitigate climate change.

There is no pathway to a safe climate which does not involve a natural climate solution. Investment like those called for in AMAZON21 are essential for sustainable futures.

I would like to thank Patrick Riley from U.S. delegation at the convention in the embassy of U.S. in Abidjan for kindly hosting me today, and the Chairman Meeks and your team, I guess, that you already visited here, and the staff at the embassy is sending you really great regards.

Thank you so much again, Chair, for the opportunity.
[The prepared statement of Ms. Ibrahim follows:]

Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad
Avenue Charles de Gaulle, N'Djamena, Chad

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Forest Conservation in the Fight Against Climate Change

**Testimony before
House Foreign Affairs Committee**

May 12, 2022

HINDOU OUMAROU IBRAHIM
Founder & President
Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad

My name is Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim. I am the founder and President of the Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad (AFPAT).

I want to thank Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, and the Members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee for the opportunity to discuss the importance of U.S. leadership in nature conservation and investing in natural climate solutions. I am joining you today from the Ivory Coast in Africa, where I am speaking at a convention to combat desertification. This climate driven crisis continues to accelerate the mass extinction of biodiversity and is trapping a whole continent in poverty.

This is relevant for today's discussion because it is places like this where U.S. leadership in conservation is most needed. I welcome the chance to share my perspective, as an Indigenous person, on the critical need for investments in conservation worldwide including through the AMAZON21 Act.

I speak to you today as a conservationist, and as a community leader who implements concrete projects to help my people.

I was born in an indigenous community named M'bororo, a nomadic pastoralist community whose livelihood depended on its cows to produce milk and meat. For centuries we have been practicing the seasonal herding of livestock to fresh grazing grounds in the Sahel region following the rhythm of the season.

Living in harmony with nature is a common principle shared by all indigenous communities worldwide: in Africa, in the Amazon, in the Arctic, in the Pacific Islands, and everywhere around the globe.

Although today they make up only 5 percent of the global population, indigenous peoples effectively manage more than a quarter of all land on Earth, sustaining many of its healthiest ecosystems, which are vital to the earth's ability to absorb and store CO₂. We contribute to protect about 80 percent of global biodiversity.

As our communities rely on their natural environment, our way of life and culture are built around sustainably managing and sharing nature's resources. We protect our territories because our survival depends on it. Nature is our marketplace; it is where we find food, raw material for construction, and plants for traditional medicine.

Therefore, lands where indigenous peoples have forest rights, including government protection of those rights, have better conservation practices, lower instances of deforestation and lower carbon emissions than surrounding areas.

It is for instance demonstrated that our milk production is zero carbon, as our practices contribute to storing higher levels of carbon than our cattle's emissions. Also, forests managed in partnership with Indigenous peoples are critical for global climate

mitigation, as they contain at least 24% of the total carbon stored above-ground in tropical forests.¹

Today we all are facing the consequences of climate change in America and in every corner of the planet.

Tropical forests, from the Congo to the Amazon basin, are known as the lungs of the planet. They increasingly face extreme fires and pressure from agri-food industries, which endanger the ecosystems that provide indigenous peoples and the world with critical resources.

We need U.S. leadership to partner with indigenous peoples and local communities to stop illegal logging, mining, poaching, and wildlife trafficking driven by criminal networks. This in turn will support local development and ecosystem protection.

Investing in nature as a solution can help countries achieve the sustainable development goals by tackling multiple challenges at the same time, like food and water security, human health, and climate change.

Climate and biodiversity experts have demonstrated that about one third of the cost-effective carbon emissions reductions can come from stopping deforestation, better land management and restoring degraded lands.

Indigenous peoples are well placed to help to design these solutions. We can use our traditional knowledge to identify crops and varieties that are resistant to drought to improve food security. We can protect mangroves that prevent sea level raise and contribute to store carbon.

To implement this agenda of action and investment in nature, we need economic and technical support, as well as full recognition and respect of our rights mentioned in the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. These investments are crucial for enabling developing countries and indigenous communities to sustain plant and wildlife species, secure livelihoods, and mitigate climate change.

There simply is no pathway to a safe climate and biodiversity protection which does not involve significant investments and upscaling of natural climate solutions. Investments like those called for in the AMAZON21 Act are essential for a sustainable future. I am happy to answer any questions.

¹ Frechette, A.; Reytar, K.; Saini, S.; Walker, W. Toward a Global Baseline of Carbon Storage in Collective Lands: An updated analysis of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' contributions to climate change mitigation. Washington, DC: RRI.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Testimony on the AMAZON21 Act*Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer, May 12, 2022*

“Thank you, Chairman Meeks and Ranking Member McCaul for holding this hearing and allowing me to speak on an issue that has been close to my heart for a very long time: protecting rainforests, and by extension, the health of our planet.

“Absorbing vast quantities of greenhouse gases, natural carbon sinks – such as rainforests, mangroves, peatlands, and wetlands – serve as the Earth’s lungs. Their well-being is inextricably linked to that of humanity. In recent decades, however, deforestation has destroyed swaths of these critical lands, worsening our climate crisis while simultaneously removing one of our greatest natural tools to address it. It is because of deforestation that Brazil and Indonesia are among the world’s top ten largest emitters. Indeed, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – the world’s leading climate scientific authority - has found that destruction of natural carbon sinks accounts for as much as a quarter of the world’s total greenhouse gas emissions.

“We need to take immediate and decisive action to protect these ecosystems. Our global effort to combat the climate crisis depends on it. The future of our planet depends on it. The survival and success of humanity depend on it.

“At the COP-26 conference in Glasgow last year, President Biden joined the leaders of 100 other nations in a historic pledge to end deforestation by the end of this decade. Now, that number is 141 nations that have made this promise. AMAZON21 would help fulfill America’s commitment to that global pledge by establishing a trust fund, which will enable the State Department to forge agreements with developing nations that will protect and restore their carbon sinks.

“In the past, the United States has been limited in its ability to enter into these bilateral agreements because of the short-term nature of funding through the annual appropriations process. Solving this long-standing issue, however, requires making long-lasting commitments. The trust fund created under my legislation would authorize the financing of conservation or restoration of nature-based climate projects abroad that protect carbon sinks far into the future. Similarly, AMAZON21 emphasizes transparency and a results-based funding model to ensure our partners make good on their promises to halt deforestation.

“Nations that enter into agreements with us through this legislation must agree to rigorous external monitoring, reporting, and verification of their progress. Improvements in satellite imagery capabilities have already made it impossible for partners to hide any violations. It’s simple: if countries don’t meet the terms of the agreement, they won’t receive funding.

“In a sense, Mr. Chairman, this is about paying producers for a resource from which we already benefit. That resource is the clean air we breathe. Far from being foreign aid, these payments would be an investment in the continued availability of clean air and a sustainable planet for us, for our children, and for generations of Americans to come.

“Moreover, the trust fund is designed to accept gifts from foundations, individuals, private companies, or other developed nations to help maximize the impact of America’s public investment. It is through these types of public-private partnerships that we can truly begin to tackle the deforestation crisis affecting our planet. AMAZON21 will also help developing nations participate in carbon markets, an important tool to leverage resources from the private sector to fund conservation work. It would also create a new technical assistance program at USAID to help them build their capacity to develop nature-based reforestation projects and scale them up.

“Mr. Chairman, helping these nations protect their rainforests serves our national security interest as well. These agreements would allow us to shore up our relationships with developing nations that may otherwise fall under the influence of authoritarian regimes seeking to exploit their resources instead of protect them. Members of this Committee know full well the long game that autocratic countries are playing in the developing world with initiatives like China’s ‘Belt and Road.’ We need to think creatively about how the United States can further our national security objectives while also tackling global challenges like deforestation in the process. With AMAZON21, America can firmly re-establish itself as the global leader when it comes to addressing the climate crisis.

“Mr. Chairman, each and every person has a stake in this legislation’s success. Whether you live in Bogota, Colombia, or Brandywine, Maryland – or even Austin, Texas – we all depend on the clean air that Earth’s rainforests and other carbon sinks provide. The climate crisis affects us all – and particularly the most vulnerable and those with the fewest resources, as the committee will hear shortly.

“Programs like AMAZON21 are the most impactful and cost-effective options available to us today to address climate change. This model has already been proven to work by nations like Norway, the United Kingdom, and others that have set up similar trust funds and authorities. For a sense of scale, if fully funded, these programs in my bill would eliminate as many as 180 million metric tons of carbon emissions each year – an amount equal to the total CO₂ produced by cars in the United States in two years. That’s why I was proud to introduce AMAZON21 in the House last November, and it’s why I’m glad to have this opportunity to speak about it with the Committee today.

“I want to thank Dr. M. Sanjayan of Conservation International for working closely with me on this bill over the past two years. I want to thank Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim for sharing her insights with the Committee today and the perspective of indigenous peoples and others most vulnerable to the climate crisis.

“I also want to thank Chairman Meeks again for holding today’s hearing and for cosponsoring this legislation, as well as Chairman Keating for shepherding AMAZON21 through the Europe, Eurasia, Energy, and Environment Subcommittee. I am also appreciative of Ranking Member McCaul’s continued interest in this issue as well as his input as we’ve moved forward.

“Nature has the power to heal our planet if we allow it to do so. I hope the Committee will endorse this historic commitment to protecting our planet’s carbon sinks and approve the AMAZON21 Act for consideration soon by the whole House. Thank you.”

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you so much. And, again, great timing.

Ms. Bandura, you're now recognized for your 5 minutes of testimony. Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF ROMINA BANDURA, SENIOR FELLOW,
PROJECT ON PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT, CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

Ms. BANDURA. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Meeks and Ranking Member McCaul, Representative Connolly, and members of the committee. It's really an honor to be here today and I welcome this important hearing.

I'm a development professional. I'm not a conservation scientist or a climate scientist. So my remarks today will focus on the economic security and governance drivers of deforestation, particularly with regards to the Amazon, the largest rainforest in the world.

At CSIS, we did a report on this with country case studies. So I'll give you some copies later. But just to provide a little bit of context of the magnitude of the challenge.

The Amazon is about the size of the continental United States. It spans eight countries and has a population of about 35 million people.

The first point I want to make is that deforestation in the Amazon is a complex issue that is linked to structural challenges in these countries. It is not solely an environmental problem.

Deforestation is a symptom of economic and governance vulnerabilities, including high levels of poverty, lack of economic opportunities. There's overall weak presence—State presence. Property rights are not well defined. There's land tenure issues, weak enforcement of laws. There are great laws in the books. Unfortunately, you know, State capacity is not there. And also inadequate infrastructure planning.

We need to include these issues at the table. Otherwise, we'll, literally, not be seeing the forest for the trees.

The second point I want to raise is that national and subnational governments of the Amazon are primarily responsible for preserving the environment and achieving sustainable development.

These are middle income countries, sovereign nations, and own the rainforest. So the United States and the international community need to be mindful on how they engage in the region.

My third point is that the United States can and should play a constructive role in the Amazon Basin in partnership with governance—governments, local stakeholders, and other donors, supporting not only environmental preservation but good governance, economic growth, and security.

What are some ways to support the Amazon countries? First, the U.S. Government needs to take a more holistic approach in its programming on deforestation, linking assistance on environmental issues to governance, economic development, and security issues.

This requires coordination among our U.S. bilateral agencies and programs focused on improving the capacity of local governments.

Second, when implementing the AMAZON21 bill or any U.S. programs, there should be buy-in from national and subnational governments. Sometimes these different levels of governments do not talk to each other, and national plans and policies can become dis-

connected or at odds with some national plans, which leads to poor project choices and wasted resources.

There has to be agreement and coordination among the different levels of government, especially with new actors investing in the region, for example, China, and private investors.

These governance and coordination issues are important and should figure in our programming. Otherwise, what the United States will provide with one hand others will take with the other.

Third, we need to work with other donors and actors in the region so that there is less fragmentation among programs and there's greater impact in conserving forests.

As an example, Norway has, and I think it was mentioned before, has set up an Amazon fund already. There are many NGO's and indigenous communities on the ground with ample knowledge on forest conservation and we also need to tap into private companies to create sustainable economic opportunities.

And fourth, the United States can continue providing training and technological solutions to better survey the forest and professionalize the law enforcement agencies on the ground.

Advanced technology can be used to supply—for supply trace—supply chain traceability and can improve local governments' ability to enforce laws and address deforestation.

Finally, I brought an example of what, you know, United States can do. This is acai, which is a super berry that is grown in the Amazon.

It can be grown very sustainably and it's OPIC, now DFC funded an American entrepreneur for a processing plant and this is sold—you can go to Giant or if you want the supersized volume you can go to Costco and they are selling acai there.

So this is just one example of, you know, sustainable development.

So, to conclude, we are currently at a crossroads in responding to deforestation in the Amazon and this requires a multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approach.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today. Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bandura follows:]



Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Committee

***“Forest Conservation
in the Fight Against Climate Change.”***

A Testimony by:

Romina Bandura

Senior Fellow, Project on Prosperity and Development,
Project on U.S. Leadership in Development, CSIS

May 12, 2022

2172 Rayburn House Office Building

Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, distinguished members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, good morning. I am honored to share my views with you and the Committee this morning on the importance of investing in natural climate solutions as part of global adaptation and mitigation efforts, and how the United States can support policies to advance these efforts. I would like to note that CSIS does not take policy positions, so the views represented in my testimony are my own and not those of my employer.

I welcome this important hearing aimed at helping to preserve our forests and support countries in meeting their Paris commitments. I am development professional, not a conservation scientist, so my testimony today will focus on the economic, security and governance drivers of deforestation, particularly with regards to the Amazon basin, the largest rainforest in the world.

My remarks are largely based on the findings of a recent Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report, connecting non-environmental issues with the shrinking of the Amazon ecosystem.¹

Beyond the Environment: Governance, Security and Economic Development in the Amazon Basin

Data by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations shows that five countries (Russia, Brazil, Canada, the United States and China) hold more than 50 percent of the world's forest cover.² The Amazon basin is a vast territory – approximately the size of the continental United States – and extends to eight countries: Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela. Brazil contains 60 percent of the Amazon rainforest while Peru and Colombia cover 13 and 10 percent, respectively.³

The Amazon is home to the world's greatest biodiversity, 20 percent of the world's freshwater resources, and serves as the "air conditioner of the Earth," storing carbon and regulating rainfall and climate patterns both in South America and the world.⁴ What is less well known about the Amazon is that beyond its rich environmental endowment, there are significant economic resources that can be sustainably developed, and there are people inhabiting this region that need jobs, healthcare and education. The Amazon holds natural waterways and fisheries, mineral deposits (i.e. gold, copper and nickel), oil and gas, forestry products and medicinal plants. It is also home to between 30 and 35 million people, most of whom live in urban areas (i.e. regional capitals

¹ Bandura, Romina, and Shannon McKeown. "Sustainable Infrastructure in the Amazon." Sustainable Infrastructure in the Amazon | Center for Strategic and International Studies. Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 26, 2020. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/sustainable-infrastructure-amazon>.

² "The State of the World's Forests 2020." www.fao.org. Accessed May 10, 2022. <https://www.fao.org/state-of-forests/en/>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ El Ghali Fikri, Henry Koster, and Wijnand de Wit, *Healthy Rivers, Healthy People: Addressing the Mercury Crisis in the Amazon*, prepared by Dahlberg Advisors (Gland, Switzerland: WWF, 2018), <https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-11/WWF%20-%20Healthy%20Rivers%20Healthy%20People.pdf>.

and medium-sized cities).⁵ There are also about 1.6 million indigenous people from 400 tribes. Yet the Amazon often lags behind other regions in socioeconomic development.⁶

However, a host of environmental, economic, governance, and security challenges are threatening the Amazon's future. Since the 1970s, the Amazon Basin has been battered by significant loss of biodiversity and forest cover as well as increasing water contamination.⁷ Approximately 17 percent of the forest cover has been lost.⁸ The main activities that have contributed to deforestation vary among countries and include both *legal economic* ventures such as commercial cattle ranching, soy production, and infrastructure development and *illegal activities* such as land-grabbing, illegal gold mining, and coca cultivation and cocaine production.

Recently, unprecedented levels of deforestation have propelled the Amazon Basin dangerously close to what some scientists describe as its "tipping point"—the level of deforestation after which the rainforest will be incapable of producing enough rain to sustain itself, resulting in its degradation into a savannah.⁹ A drier Amazon would release billions of tons of carbon into the atmosphere, exacerbate global warming and be detrimental to climate change, and disrupt weather patterns in South America and abroad.

Beyond the environmental impacts, deforestation also has significant social repercussions.¹⁰ Every year, hundreds of early deaths occur in the Amazon from the pollution generated by fires, mercury contamination in water stemming from gold mining, and other causes. Moreover, deforestation undermines the livelihoods of communities, as many rely on the forest and waterways for their revenue. Illegal activities that contribute to deforestation also affect basic human security and create conflicts with local and indigenous communities.

Deforestation in the Amazon Basin has negative environmental and social implications, for the region and the world.¹¹ However, deforestation is a complex issue that is linked with structural challenges in countries of the region. The degradation in the Amazon is not solely an environmental problem: it is a symptom of economic and governance vulnerabilities, including high levels of poverty, human insecurity, weak governance, and inadequate infrastructure planning. Yet these problems figure less prominently in the discourse on the Amazon: if these issues are not included in the discussion, we will literally not be seeing "the forest for the trees."¹²

⁵ Daniel F. Runde, opinion contributor. "US Needs to Play Constructive Role in Development of the Amazon." The Hill. The Hill, November 16, 2020. <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/526121-us-needs-to-play-constructive-role-in-development-of-the-amazon/>.

⁶ Bandura, Romina, and Shannon McKeown. "Sustainable Infrastructure in the Amazon."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Why Is the Amazon Rain Forest Disappearing?" Time. Time. Accessed May 10, 2022. <https://time.com/amazon-rainforest-disappearing/>.

⁹ Harvey, Chelsea. "Amazon Rain Forest Nears Dangerous 'Tipping Point'." Scientific American. Scientific American, March 8, 2022. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/amazon-rain-forest-nears-dangerous-tipping-point/>.

¹⁰ Bandura, Romina, and Shannon McKeown. "Sustainable Infrastructure in the Amazon."

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Lerner, Betsy. In The Forest for the Trees. London: Macmillan, 2016.

Current Challenges in the Amazon Basin

Amazon countries have structural challenges that enable the drivers of deforestation to thrive. The underlying causes of deforestation can be traced to three main interrelated factors.

First, the communities that live in the Amazon region are some of the poorest in Latin America and experience a set of unique socioeconomic problems, including a *lack of meaningful economic opportunities*, informality in the job market, disputes over resources like land, and insufficient basic public services such as health and education, water and sanitation, and security.¹³ Powerful groups exploit the lack of genuine economic opportunities in parts of the Amazon region to compel people to engage in activities that are informal (such as subsistence agriculture) and others that are illegal in nature (such as logging or, in the extreme, producing illegal drugs such as cocaine) as a means to survive.

Second, there is *weak governance and “state presence”* in the region, with implications for law enforcement and resource management.¹⁴ In many instances, the process of land titling and registration at the subnational level is not well defined, which leads to land grabs and clashes with local communities and indigenous people. Inadequate governance creates opportunities for settlers to invade public lands, leading to further deforestation. Regional and local governments in the Amazon often lack the technical capacity, personnel, and budgetary resources to effectively address the problems of illegal activity and provide adequate land governance, law enforcement, and public services. Moreover, environmental licenses are not properly administered and areas that are delimited for indigenous tribes and natural parks are not safeguarded. Bribes and corruption also play a role in the performance of officials. Corruption across sectors and levels of government wastes valuable public resources and creates a general culture of impunity for different actors to exploit.

Third, poorly planned and executed infrastructure projects can exacerbate deforestation and create more social conflict. “Mega” infrastructure projects—mainly roads and hydropower—have primarily been pushed forward in the Amazon without a careful analysis of strategic prioritization, the best engineering designs, or viable alternatives and have ignored the potential externalities of these endeavors and their harm or benefit to the full range of stakeholders.¹⁵

New investors are taking advantage of economic opportunities in the region. China has replaced the United States as Peru’s top trading partner and in 2019 Peru joined the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with investments focused particularly on mining.¹⁶ Recent mining investments underscore the challenge of implementing strong social and environmental standards. Similarly, China has also become the top trading partner and infrastructure investor for Brazil. China’s interests in Brazil center on food security (soy and beef) and natural resources. It is also investing in agriculture, logistics, energy and infrastructure projects (including in the Amazon). With new project plans, particularly those originating from China, it is imperative that these new investors

¹³ Bandura, Romina, and Shannon McKeown. “Sustainable Infrastructure in the Amazon.”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ “Peru (per) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners.” OEC. Accessed May 10, 2022.
<https://oec.world/en/profile/country/per>.

also respect world class “quality infrastructure” standards, meaning, the projects follow high economic, governance, social and environmental standards.¹⁷

Opportunities in the Amazon Basin

Despite these shortcomings, countries have the ability to balance environmental, security, and economic concerns in the Amazon. Due to the efforts of governments, private companies, and nonprofit organizations, more than 80 percent of the forest is still intact and the region has the potential to produce goods and services more sustainably based on a “standing forest economy.”¹⁸ In the course of the last 20 years, some of the Amazon Basin countries have made significant progress in instituting a series of legal frameworks, policies, and institutions for protecting the rainforest.

Similarly, robust international “quality infrastructure” (or sustainable infrastructure) frameworks and standards have been developed, offering important tools to improve infrastructure planning in the Amazon Basin.¹⁹ These frameworks focus on governance aspects such as strengthening institutional capacity (including planning and procurement processes) as well as including environmental and social impacts (such as consulting with communities and promoting job creation, capacity building, and transfer of expertise and know-how to local communities).

At the same time, citizens in these countries themselves are concerned about the Amazon’s future and are increasingly willing to support conservation efforts. Increased global attention from media, donors, investors, and consumers puts more pressure to shift the regional development paradigm from one based on resource exploitation to one that is more sustainable in the long term.

The U.S. Role: Sustainable Development in the Amazon Basin

Within this complex situation, the U.S. can and should play a constructive role in the Amazon Basin, supporting countries with environmental conservation and economic development. Beyond environmental programs, the U.S. can assist in three interrelated areas: governance, economic growth and security.

First, the U.S. government needs to take a more holistic approach to the issue of deforestation, linking the financial and technical assistance that various U.S. bilateral agencies provide on governance, economic development and security to the environmental challenge. As I just laid out in this testimony, deforestation is not merely an environmental problem and requires coordination among our bilateral agencies – a multidisciplinary and multistakeholder approach.

¹⁷ Motoko Aizawa, “Sustainable Development through Quality Infrastructure: Emerging Focus on Quality over Quantity,” *Journal of Mega Infrastructure and Sustainable Development*, January 17, 2020, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/24724718.2019.1706922?journalCode=rjmi20>.

¹⁸ “New Campaign to Protect 80% of the Amazonia by 2025,” One Earth. Accessed May 10, 2022.

<https://www.oneearth.org/new-campaign-to-protect-80-of-the-amazonia-by-2025/#:~:text=Ensuring%20the%20integrity%20of%20the,of%20its%20forests%20remain%20intact>.

¹⁹ Motoko Aizawa, “Sustainable Development through Quality Infrastructure: Emerging Focus on Quality over Quantity,” *Journal of Mega Infrastructure and Sustainable Development*, January 17, 2020, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/24724718.2019.1706922?journalCode=rjmi20>.

Working through the State Department and bilateral aid agencies (i.e., USAID, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation) and multilateral development banks (i.e., the World Bank, and the IDB), the U.S. can help countries tackle some of these governance and institutional weaknesses, particularly at the subnational level where local governments need additional human resources, technical training, and budgetary and financial tools. For example, supporting better land titling, concessions management, budgeting, security, and public service provisions. Efforts to eliminate corruption should be incorporated across U.S.-funded development programs.

Second, on the Amazon 21 bill, it would be important to incorporate language on where the program will be implemented, that is, what will be the country selection process.²⁰ There also should be “buy-in” *both* from national and subnational governments when implementing the program. Sometimes different levels of government do not talk to each other: national government plans and policies are disconnected from or at odds with subnational plans, which leads to poor project choices and wasted resources, ultimately affecting the sustainability of the region. If countries are going to implement forest-conservation and terrestrial carbon-sequestration projects, there has to be agreement and coordination among the different levels of government.

Moreover, new investors and donors in the region (for example China and private companies) have to be brought into forest conservation, otherwise what the U.S. will provide with one hand, others will take with the other. At the same time, the proposed “International Terrestrial Carbon Sequestration Fund” could become a “matching fund” and catalyze monies from other actors, like the private sector, philanthropies and donors.²¹ In that way, the fund will generate more resources and in turn ensure ownership, accountability and greater impact in conserving forests.

Third, U.S. private sector investments can also play a part in developing green supply chains and providing livelihoods for people in the region. More concerted efforts are needed to bring in the private sector in order to create value supply chains that can keep the forest alive and provide economic alternatives to people including jobs in the bioeconomy, eco-tourism and adding value to timber and non-timber forestry products, and commodities like coffee, cacao, nuts, and superfruits, such as açai. Açai is becoming increasingly popular in the U.S., and already generates more than \$1 billion per year to the Amazon economy. Unlike more extractive industries, açai production also supports environmental preservation and provides socioeconomic benefits for local communities. Since 2000, Natura, Brazil’s largest cosmetics company, has operated in the Amazon while also contributing to the economic, social, and environmental development of the region.²² In food and beverages, Coca-Cola’s Manaus factory sources half of its guaraná berry inputs from family farms, and also invests in initiatives to provide potable water to the population.²³

²⁰ “Hoyer Announces AMAZON21 Legislation, Delivering President Biden’s COP26 Pledge of \$9 Billion to Combat Deforestation.” Congressman Steny Hoyer, November 3, 2021. <https://hoyer.house.gov/content/hoyer-announces-amazon21-legislation-delivering-president-biden-s-cop26-pledge-9-billion>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Kempson Cabral, “Empresas e o desenvolvimento sustentável na Amazônia,” Conselho Empresarial Brasileiro para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável, August 29, 2019, <https://cebds.org/empresas-desenvolvimento-sustentavel-amazonia/#.Xrg7hi-z1N0>.

²³ Bandura, Romina, and Shannon McKeown. “Sustainable Infrastructure in the Amazon.”

Fourth, on security and law enforcement, the U.S. should continue providing military training and technological know how to better surveil the forest and its economic activities. Professionalizing law enforcement agencies and using advanced technology for supply chain traceability programs can improve local government's ability to enforce laws and address deforestation. Developing renewable energy and mobile technology in remote areas could also help local communities be part of the solution.

Conclusion

Action is necessary now to ensure that the Amazon Basin is preserved, economic opportunities are generated, and social conflicts are avoided. The potential regional and global effects could be dire if action is not taken to prevent further deforestation. Given the current situation, we are currently at a crossroads in responding to deforestation in the Amazon.

There is no magic wand that will solve all of the Amazon's current challenges: the region requires a multisector and multistakeholder approach. These countries are sovereign nations and own the Amazon rainforest, so the United States and international community need to be mindful on how they engage in the region.²⁴ National governments are primarily responsible for preserving the environment and achieving sustainable development, and the U.S. can support these endeavors.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today. Thank you for your time.

²⁴ Runde, 2020.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Ms. Bandura, and thank you for bringing the product. That makes everything even more real. Thank you.

We're not going to go into questioning by members and the chair is happy to recognize his friend and the great chair of the Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, the Environment and Cyber, the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Keating.

Mr. Keating?

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And as someone that was at COP26 myself, I do recognize the urgency. You know, this is—we're not dealing with this in a current sense.

We should have been dealing with this decades and decades ago, and I do realize the importance of involving the indigenous community in the decisionmaking, not just informationally but in the decisionmaking that is going forward.

But I want to touch, briefly, because I think there's a moment of urgencies that is going to be underscored very shortly. Leader Hoyer mentioned the security issues that are attendant to deforestation, and deforestation poses grave global and domestic security risks as well.

The U.S. military and intelligence officials have repeatedly warned that deforestation and climate change lead to food and water shortages, ecological degradation, extreme weather patterns, conditions that enable mass population displacement, terrorist activity and other forms of violence and conflicts between nations. Terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, and ISIS are known to exploit food insecurity to further their ambitions.

And we're now in another crisis because of what I mentioned briefly before, the war in Ukraine. This fall, the world will see, I think, the devastating impacts, something that will far eclipse even the tragic casualties we're seeing on the battlefield with the people that are going to be starving in this world, particularly people in North Africa.

We will also see certain countries like Ethiopia that have been part of a managed program, agricultural and preservation in these issues, that will be in a better position to survive it.

So my point is this, that moving forward with this bill now is not only timely, it's urgent, and I think it's a perfect complement to the idea of managing our environment for our benefit.

As we deal with these issues, the U.S. has to be in a leadership role. It's great that the U.K. and Norway and other countries are, but we have found time and time again, on these major issues the U.S. must lead.

So this legislation is a terrific opportunity to lead in that front, and I wanted to talk—ask you the question how working with these other management techniques that is so necessary—I mean, we have seen before as fertilizer is scarce, there'll be more agricultural initiatives, where they're deforesting areas, using that ash to fertilize, which is only good for a year or two. Then they move forward and deforest a whole other area.

So we have to manage these things. This piece of legislation, AMAZON21, going forward, would complement so many other initiatives around the world.

So could you comment on the potential for this moving forward to really complement and to push forward so many other management techniques that we need to go with this for other countries.

And as you mentioned, something else I saw at COP26 enormous potential of private investment that exists. So I really think this is critical legislation that couldn't come at a more important time.

So if you could comment on how this would increase that kind of partnership and among countries and on the private side as well?

Dr. SANJAYAN. Thank you, Representative Keating.

I think you're completely right. The world is really looking for American leadership on this issue. Part of that is because American companies are looking for a signal—a signal around security to invest in nature.

The one thing I know for sure is the nature tomorrow will be more valuable than it is today and that is an absolute truism, and the signals that we give here with AMAZON21 will enable companies to invest in nature and invest in carbon with more certainty in these countries that are rich in carbon and poor in other resources.

I can also tell you that you're absolutely right that—you know, in all my life—I mean, my father worked in the timber industry at the very sort of—when I was a child in West Africa. I've never seen a country that has deforested itself emerge as a stable successful democracy in any easy way.

So what we are setting up here is a foundational building block that will have ripple effects into the economies of these countries, into preventing loss of water, loss of habitat, livelihoods.

Deforestation is difficult. People do it when they're really forced to do it, and all we're trying to do with this act is give them that incentive and opportunity to protect and restore forests at scale like they're doing in Kenya, like they're doing in Ethiopia, like they're doing in Colombia and there's several countries—Costa Rica is great, another great example—and thus help that move toward a more sustainable economy and a more stable democracy.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Sanjayan, and the gentleman's time has expired. But I do want to give an opportunity, Mr. Keating, for the other two witnesses to respond, if you desire.

Ms. Bandura?

Ms. BANDURA. Yes, I agree and the issue of food security is going—

Mr. CONNOLLY. If you could just bring that closer to you.

Ms. BANDURA. Sorry.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you.

Ms. BANDURA. The issue of food security is also an important aspect in the Amazon because if we continue at this pace, you know, the water—the rainfall patterns will change and will affect, you know, agriculture, not only in that region but in South America and other parts of the world.

So it's an important issue. In terms of insecurity, in the Amazon, there are also powerful groups—illegal groups—that affects the security of people on the ground and the indigenous communities as well.

So my point on security is that also we need presence of, you know, law enforcement and we need good governance because many of the subnational levels of government do not have the capability to really, you know, monitor and enforce the law. So they also need our help. So that's all I'm going to say.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you.

Ms. Ibrahim, any comments?

Ms. IBRAHIM. Yes, thank you very much for the questions.

That's completely right. What is happening in my region in Sahel and also in all the subregions of the Congo Basin communities are fighting just to get access to the natural resources, and that creates a big conflict between them where they kill each other.

And it is also the harm of all the terrorist groups who take opportunities because people has become more poor and then they come over the land and we really live in this area. So having these financed can help the community to settle.

It's taught them to move from one community to another one like being internal migrant or international migrant because it can help them to create a life and livelihood and restore the environment.

And investment—of course, having the private sector is very important. But we need the leadership of a country like U.S. We need public funding who can come to the communities and who can give talks to the young peoples.

You know, in my communities we live that every day. We know that the younger generation are always going to look for their futures outside and they do not have any other choice because they did not went to school—to go to the offices. They just depend from the rainfall and when there is no forest—forest products, there is not enough rain to do the agriculture. Either they have to migrate or they have to join the terrorist groups. These kinds of initiatives can help them to

Mr. CONNOLLY. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Perry, for his 5 minutes of questioning. Welcome.

Mr. PERRY. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I'm going to probably spend most of my time on a statement here more than a question and some probably unwelcome and unpleasant realities.

We're probably going to hear over and over again today about the threat of deforestation and I think it's real how it's critical to the environment to protect the forest and I agree with that.

But, apparently, the Washington elite news or, correction, elites' answer appears to be throwing billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars into the wind in corrupt foreign places in an effort to make themselves feel better. I do not know if we're going to do anything that's better.

Unfortunately, time after time, anti-fossil fuel activist types use the weight of the government to pick winners and losers without any consideration or little consideration of the unintended and unwanted consequences of their actions.

The American people are told by the global elites that they must stop using fossil fuels or significantly curb their consumption.

Yet, the environmentalists conveniently leave out the ecological devastation that will result from the pursuit of the so-called clean

energy alternatives. Just because it's not happening in your town or maybe in your country does not mean it's not happening somewhere and that you're supporting it.

For example, the Congo Basin is home to the second largest rainforest in the world and 60 percent of this forest lies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The DRC is also the world's leading source of mined cobalt, which is a critical mineral necessary for lithium ion batteries used in EVs, or electric vehicles, and battery storage projects, supplying approximately 70 percent—70 percent of the world's mined cobalt all coming from one place.

As a result, the Chinese, with the assistance of the president's son, Hunter, are employing child labor to strip the country of its cobalt reserves with little—probably no concern about the safety of the children since they do the mining, the environmental impacts of the process, or what trees or forests need to be mowed down to effectively mine the area and move the product to the green end user in the West.

It's not very green there. It's not green in the DRC. It's no coincidence that in 2017 the DRC saw more forest loss than any other country outside of Brazil. I do not see anybody crying for a reduction in the mining in the Congo for this at the same time.

And this driver of rapid deforestation is only going to grow in intensity as the misguided push away from fossil fuels before its time should be continues.

According to the International Agency—correction, Energy Agency's report on the role of critical minerals in clean energy transitions—and so this is the International Energy Agency.

This isn't Congressman Perry telling you this. By 2040, cobalt demand could be anything from six to 30 times higher than today's level—we already talked about how much comes from the DRC—while this massive increase in the extraction of cobalt to feed the net-zero lie threatens the rainforest in the Congo Basin while enriching the Chinese and the First Family.

It is by no means the only massive spike in extractive activities expected as a result of this misguided net-zero push. Again, quoting the EIA—correction, IEA's report on the role of critical minerals, solarvoltaic plants, PV plants, wind farms, and electric vehicles generally require more minerals to build than their fossil-fuel based counterparts.

A typical electric car requires six times the mineral inputs of a conventional car and an onshore wind plant requires nine times more mineral resources than a gas-fired plant.

Since 2010, the average amount of minerals needed for a new unit of power generation capacity has increased by 50 percent as the share of renewables in new investment has risen. We do not talk about that at all.

By 2040—not that far away—the IEA expects lithium demands to increase by 4,200 percent, graphite demand to increase by 2,500 percent, nickel demand to increase by 1,900 percent, and as they're called rare earth mineral demand—they're not rare, they're critical. They're not rare—to increase by 700 percent.

All of these minerals have come to—correction, have come from somewhere and due to the keep it in the ground mentality of the

Biden Administration it'll come from overseas where you cannot see it, where they disregard the environment, and that's the norm.

This notable destruction of forests, natural habitats, et cetera, does not include the massive displacement that will come as a result of land use requirements to site wind and solar farms, which itself require massive amounts of deforestation.

Added together, it's pretty clear the term clean energy transition is nothing more than a Soviet style propaganda and completely untrue but serves the party's aims.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'd yield.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Levin, for his 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. LEVIN. Thanks so much, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank Chair Meeks for convening this important hearing on deforestation and forest conservation, which, I think, proves how seriously our committee is taking, or most of us are taking, the climate change threat and the danger it poses to our whole world.

I want to use my first question to position the role of forests and climate change within a broader debate about how we engage with the rest of the world.

As the witness testimonies have identified, only by recognizing that forest conservation is deeply intertwined with U.S. foreign trade and economic policies can we begin to roll back the tremendous harm done to this planet by, for example, the devastation of the Brazilian Amazon and Cerrado and the Indonesian tropics.

Yet, too often, our collective stated commitment to putting people and the planet in the center of foreign policy is, in fact, trumped by other geopolitical or economic interests.

Ms. Ibrahim, can you share your experience that may illustrate the importance of engaging with local groups, civil society organizations, and indigenous communities in developing U.S. climate change policy and how might the laudable goal of reducing carbon emissions through terrestrial carbon sequestration be undermined if local populations aren't properly brought in to such an undertaking?

Ms. IBRAHIM. Thank you very much, Congressman Andy Levin.

So involving indigenous communities and local communities is the best way to protect our remaining forests and to restore what we lost already. So why I'm saying that? We cannot plant the trees in the offices and we cannot also have the trees growing over a night.

So it is a process, and that's why for indigenous peoples, the local communities, the forest is a way of living. It is the law that you are giving to these kind of trees.

It is not only like one kind of trees that we have to replant or protect. It is the ecosystem and this diversity that we wanted to have, the forest where we can have the insects, the birds, the animals who can cope and live in harmony with the peoples, but how we can do work in those communities.

So the U.S. policies need to engage with the indigenous peoples, local communities, from the design of those policies because, at the end, we are the ones who are going to implement it.

So if we design it, we know exactly which kind of land rights that we want to have in which place, how we can avoid the conflict

over the land and over the access to the natural resources, how long time we can have profit from these forests that are giving us food, medicine, and also shelters, and how we can use these forests to be sustained for the next generations.

So that's why we have our indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge over centuries who know how to manage and how to use it.

So we can put those traditional knowledge with the lock that we have on the science, technology, all together can be combined to help those policies move forwards.

Mr. LEVIN. Wonderful.

Ms. IBRAHIM. I think so.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you.

Ms. IBRAHIM. We need to have it across all the regions. Thank you, sir.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you. Yes, I appreciate that very much. It's fantastic. I want to ask another question of Dr. Sanjayan.

In your testimony, you make a compelling case for investing in nature conservation and for the considerable returns that could be generated in terms of preventing more instability and sources of conflict in the future.

What are the barriers the private sector is facing in actually making these investments and what role can Congress play in unlocking them?

Dr. SANJAYAN. Thank you, Congressman. The biggest barrier that I see right now is the barrier of supply. So we know the forests are there. We know communities are eager to engage. But the policies and the financial frameworks are not necessarily available for them to participate in the market.

This is where USAID and other institutions can significantly help countries, communities, States, provinces, develop the tools and technologies from a policy perspective, a science perspective, and also a financial perspective to actually engage the market at scale.

I think that is, literally, the No. 1 stumbling block and that's where U.S. leadership and the signal that it would create would instantly allow that flow to happen where the private sector can invest in forest conservation for the benefit of people and nature and, ultimately, our climate as well.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you so much.

Mr. Chairman, my time is about to expire. I have several more questions but I can keep going. But I'm happy to submit them and hope the witnesses might answer them in writing if that's better.

Mr. CONNOLLY. We appreciate that. Thank you so much for being with us today, Mr. Levin.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you.

Mr. CONNOLLY. The chair now recognizes the distinguished gentlelady from North Carolina, Ms. Manning, for her 5 minutes of questioning. Welcome.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you, Mr. Connolly, and thank you, Chairman Meeks, for holding this very important hearing, and I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here to share your expertise with us today.

Ms. Bandura, we have seen growing concerns about the risks of triggering biosphere tipping points across a range of ecosystems around the world and the potential domino effects.

Could you explain more about this concept and what you see as being the tipping point for forests like the Amazon experiencing deforestation and droughts?

Ms. BANDURA. Well, there are—sorry. As I mentioned, I'm not a climate scientist. But, basically, if we continue, you know, deforesting at the rate that we are there's going to be a—become a point where the—you know, the rainforest will not be able to function as a carbon sink and will emit more carbon into the atmosphere, and this also will change, you know, the rainfall patterns of the region.

So I am not sure—you know, I cannot really address other rainforests or, you know, what are the—maybe Sanjayan can—he is a conservationist. But this will have also impacts in, you know, our economic activities. So it's not just about, you know, environmental activity so but economic impacts.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you. Dr. Sanjayan, do you—would you like to add something?

Dr. SANJAYAN. Sure, very briefly. So it turns out that the Amazon, like, major rainforests generate their own rainfall and what that means it's a self-sustaining system, kind of like a glass bottle and you have a—like an aquarium, and as you get beyond a certain tipping point, its ability to regenerate and create that rainfall is fundamentally altered.

That's something we have only recently learned. And two scientists, Dr. Tom Lovejoy, who recently passed away and a big champion for the Amazon, really made the public aware of this tipping point. And the other is Dr. Johan Rockstrom from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Science, who really established these ideas of the planetary tipping point.

Now, if you ask me for a number, I would say it's probably around 20 to 25 percent. Once we destroy about 20 to 25 percent of a large rainforest like the Amazon, its ability to regenerate itself becomes difficult.

If you live in Montana then you know once a forest disappears and it's a grassland, to put it back into a forest it's very, very difficult, if not nearly impossible.

Ms. MANNING. So I assume that what we're talking about is if we do not act—this adds a sense of urgency to our actions in this regard because if we hit that tipping point we cannot fix the problem that's been solved—that's been created.

Dr. SANJAYAN. That's absolutely right.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you. Like my colleagues, I have deep concerns about climate change, about deforestation, for exactly the reasons that you have just described here—about the impact on climate change, the impact that climate change is having, rather, on the availability of food production, clean water, in a variety of countries that can least afford the stresses on their populations and one result, as we have discussed, is migration away from those areas that put stresses on other countries.

So I am supportive of the all of the above measures that we can take to address climate change, including the prevention of further

deforestation, and AMAZON21, certainly, appears to be an important step, even perhaps a leap, in the right direction and this is something of huge importance.

But I would like to ask about how we prevent abuse, misdirection, corruption, by either the governments or the intended recipients of the funding that could come through AMAZON21.

And you're shaking your head, Ms. Bandura, so perhaps I'm in your area and you'd like to comment on this.

Ms. BANDURA. Yes, and this is an important issue, and as I referred at the beginning, you know, this is not only about, you know, environmental programming but governance and really fostering capacity for local governments and groups to really look at how the—you know, the money and we have to really look at how the money is being spent.

A lot of the deforestation that is happening, as I mentioned at the beginning, there are very good laws to preserve areas and there are indigenous groups that, you know, live in these preserved areas.

But there are other groups that are coming in and there's—you know, there's no good law enforcement mechanism to really prevent these encroachments.

The other issue is land tenure. There's, you know, corruption in there as well. So who gets the access—accessing the land in the rain forest. And, of course, you know, a lot of the people that are living in these regions also have not meaningful economic opportunities and are sometimes exploited by powerful groups that, obviously, are, you know, flourishing on corrupt activities and illegal activities.

So I do not think it's only a role for USAID but it's working also with local law enforcement agencies and, you know, agencies such as Interpol. Because it's not just about, you know, the trees. There are a lot of other components happening in the rain forest, and I'll stop at that.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you. My time has expired. I would love to pursue this further, but I yield back.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Ms. Manning.

The chair now recognizes the distinguished representative from Nevada, Ms. Titus, for her 5 minutes of questioning. Welcome.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask Dr. Sanjayan about the Mekong Delta, changing locations here for a little bit. The Mekong Delta—and these are some pretty impressive statistics—spans over 200 million acres. That's, roughly, the size of Texas and Arkansas combined.

It spans China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, and that the heart of the Delta runs over 3,000 miles from Tibet to the South China Sea. It accounts for up to 25 percent of fresh water for people in the area and it's second only to the Amazon in biodiversity, home for about 1,200 unique freshwater species.

But there's been research at the University of Nevada and at Utah State on deforestation in Cambodia and how rapidly that is accelerating. I wonder if you could talk about the impact of that de-

forestation on the Mekong and how that's impacting the whole area.

Did you lose me? I cannot see myself. Am I still there?

Mr. CONNOLLY. I think your frozen colleague is asking what about—I mean, both Mr. Perry and Ms. Titus have asked us about other threats in the Mekong Delta in the case of Ms. Titus and the Democratic Republic of Congo because of the exploitation of cobalt, among other purposes.

So maybe, Dr. Sanjayan, we might begin with you in terms of what about the—start with Mekong Delta but these other major rainforest areas that provide so much in terms of flora, fauna, drinking water, and serve as important sinks—carbon sinks—for the planet? Shouldn't we be worried about those, too?

Dr. SANJAYAN. Absolutely. So it's a great question, and I just want to point out one thing that the—this bill has full transparency built into it in terms of ensuring that the funding gets to the right people in the right way.

It involves participation of indigenous and local communities, not just in the full design of projects, and it has strong transparency requirements.

Now, the Mekong Delta is a place that Conservation International has worked in for two decades, and I can tell you that it's extraordinarily carbon rich. It truly is one of these irreplaceable carbon sinks, if you will.

But the threats to it are many and deforestation is one threat. The other threat is, of course, water, and the third one, I would say, would be overfishing. Tonle Sap, for example, is—you know, produces more fish than all of the United States freshwater fisheries combined.

So this bill works on one major part. It, clearly is not there to deal with every threat out there. However, a major reason for water instability in the Mekong Delta is because of deforestation and Cambodia, interestingly, is a country poised to really open up its carbon markets as a way of protecting forests.

They need those investments and, you know, we are in the process of designing projects in Cambodia with very specific forest conservation targets in mind.

So in terms of a place that's important for carbon, important for people, but also will benefit from this bill, Cambodia and the Mekong Delta would, clearly, be so-called in its cross hairs.

Thank you.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I think possibly Ms. Titus might followup your last point with yes, but often countries'—political leadership in countries, local and otherwise, are faced with, yes, long term it's in our economic interest to protect this as a resource but short term I got to get—you know, my fishing villages need to make a living.

And so I make short term decisions at long-term costs. That's the tradeoff, especially in poorer countries, and that's a dilemma that faces us all.

And I think, Ms. Bandura, you touched on that. I mean, lots of factors in the Amazon but part of it is endemic poverty that drives people to seek a source of revenue that can be sustainable, from their point of view, even if it's at the cost of the environment.

Dr. SANJAYAN. I mean, the one thing I would mention is that this bill would allow financial flows to happen very quickly and that's partly because the private sector is eager for mechanisms like this in order to participate.

So the lag time between, you know, developing a project and funding actually flowing in these projects would be, you know, in my estimation, like, 18 months.

So that is a reasonable timeframe. It's not many, many years later before benefits start flowing. So I think it is a good mechanism to deal with this issue that you raised, which is people do need to eat and desperate people are put into desperate situations where this deforestation becomes their last means of survival, and we could stop that fast with an act like this.

Ms. BANDURA. Yes, and that's where also, you know, private sector innovation and know-how comes into play because, as I mentioned at the beginning, a lot of the, you know, jobs that are happening in the—you know, in the Amazon are either informal in nature or, you know, with very little pay, little protections, hazardous.

Think about a mining in Peru—gold mining in Peru. That releases mercury in the water, and so we need to really bring in our—I mean, and that's where United States has the—you know, the biggest and most innovative private sector.

You know, it allowed this to happen and so that's, you know, one tool that we—you know, we should leverage to really provide economic opportunities. We cannot ignore—we cannot deny economic opportunities to people. That would not be fair or truthful, you know, on our end. So—

Mr. CONNOLLY. So let me followup on that with you, Ms. Bandura. Let's just put it this way. The current leadership in the Brazilian government, led by President Bolsonaro, has not really developed a reputation for being passionate about protecting the Amazon and, in fact, arguably, even downright hostile to efforts to protect the Amazon and resentful of international concern expressed about the need to protect the Amazon.

Your observations about the current Brazilian government and how do we kind of change attitudes there so that got a supportive receptive government that sees it as in its interest to try to protect this resource and avoid that tipping point we were talking about?

Ms. BANDURA. Yes, I mean, so—

Mr. CONNOLLY. And if you could bring that closer. Thank you.

Ms. BANDURA. So—I'm sorry about that.

As I mentioned, you know, these are sovereign nations and we cannot, you know, really force, you know, leaders to change their minds.

But we have some tools and there—I believe, like, Colombia is a very good example of what can be done in the Amazon, and if, you know, Colombia would be—is a partner of the United States and can also be, you know, leading in the Amazon, there are initiatives such as the Leticia Pact

That was an initiative that was signed by Bolsonaro. It needs to be operationalized. And, you know, we have carrots and sticks. So if we are going to say we're going to implement this trust fund, pro-

vided that, you know, these conditions are met, that's—you know, that's both a carrot and a stick.

So it's very—it's hard to, you know, persuade but, you know, we have some tools to do that and, you know, we'll see. But, you know, we cannot just force countries to adopt things.

And, you know, pressure from, you know, the civil society and others, private sector, investors in Brazil and outside can also be one way, and OECD accession.

Brazil wants to become part of the OECD. So that's also a tool that, you know, we can use to bring them to more, you know, sustainable standards.

Dr. SANJAYAN. I'd just add, Representative Connolly, that, you know, Ms. Bandura's report that she has here shows that a large number of Brazilians really do support strong environmental posturing. Most Brazilians are pro the Amazon. They want the Amazon to survive. But there is special interests that win out and that's what's happening now.

There are two ways to work in Brazil even today. One is that indigenous peoples in Brazil, in particular, have large territorial access—stewardship, guardianship access, legislative access to land—and in indigenous lands we have found great allies in conservation and it's a significant part of the Amazon.

And the second is that Governors, so one level below the Federal system—Governors are very willing within the Brazilian system to move legislation forward and protect nature within their own State jurisdictions.

Mr. CONNOLLY. You know, you both implicitly, I think, raise a question not easily resolved about how far does sovereign control go over what is a global resource.

So is it my absolute right as a sovereign nation if something is entirely within my sovereign territory to destroy it, even if it has planetary consequences, and that's an unanswerable question at this time.

But looking toward the future, it seems to me that one of our challenges is going to be to create global structures—international structures—that do protect assets that go beyond my sovereign territory without, you know, compromising or surrendering sovereign control.

But on the other hand, there are some—you know, you do not get to destroy the planet because you decide economically I want to exploit this unique resource that affects everybody, not just me, and how do we address that, you know, from an intellectual point of view.

Do you want to address that, Ms. Bandura?

Ms. BANDURA. Well, I do not know if I can solve that issue but—

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thought you had a solution.

[Laughter.]

Ms. BANDURA. It's a complex, you know, challenge. But yes, you know, you're right. These are, you know, global commons but there are other actors involved. So, you know, China was mentioned as well.

There's a lot of deforestation happening—illegal deforestation—in Russia because of China. So how do we deal with, you know,

that problem. There is also the issue that Representative Perry mentioned about mining, and so the climate transition has to take into account our mining resources.

And so I—we need to also engage the private sector and the supply chains. That's one way that we could also motivate, you know, countries not to deforest or change, you know, the way that they source materials and how we sell the materials.

If the private sector is involved in the supply chain sourcing that would be also one way.

Dr. SANJAYAN. Congressman, you know, if you go to New York City and go to Central Park and think about how expensive that real estate must be right there, and you see all these buildings built up right to the edge of Central Park, imagine someone trying to grab a bit of Central Park and putting up a skyscraper.

Imagine the hue and cry that you would get in New York and around the world and, certainly, around this country, and the reason you'll get that is not because it's not valuable. It's simply because there is a constituent that will fight for that, because it is in the enlightened self-interest of every New Yorker to have Central Park protected.

What AMAZON21 tries to do is to create that enlightened self-interest among indigenous communities, local communities, and governments to realize that what they have today is going to be worth more tomorrow and protecting it is not only in the interest of the planet but it's an all of—in their self-interest as well, and it provides a financial mechanism to incentivize and sustain it over the long run, particularly through carbon markets.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I agree, and I think that's been the failure in the past to, you know, find formulas that create economic incentives to protect, to proactively cherish and enhance the resource at hand as opposed to, you know, economic exploitation.

But it's a bit of a—well, it is a very difficult choice when you're talking about serious poverty and you cannot ask people to starve to death or forego economic opportunity for some greater good that they cannot see or experience, and so there have to be economic incentives built in and that's what this legislation does.

Apparently, my time is up. Seeing and hearing no further members, I want to thank our panelists so much for an enlightening and stimulating conversation. We have got a lot of work to do but we're delighted that we have a piece of legislation we can act on and we begin somewhere, and this is our somewhere.

So thank you so much for being with us today, and this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:50 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Gregory W. Meeks (D-NY), Chair

May 11, 2022

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building. Pursuant to H. Res. 8, Members who wish to participate remotely may do so via Cisco WebEx. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>:

DATE: Thursday, May 12, 2022
TIME: 10:00 a.m., EDT
LOCATION: 2172 Rayburn House Office Building
SUBJECT: Forest Conservation in the Fight Against Climate Change
WITNESS: Panel I:

Congressman Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Congressman Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives

Panel II:

M. Sanjayan, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
Conservation International

Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim
President
Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad (AFPAT)

Ms. Romina Bandura
Senior Fellow
Project on Prosperity and Development
Center for Strategic and International Studies

*NOTE: Witnesses may be added.

By Direction of the Chair

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/223-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day Thursday Date 05/12/2022 Room 2172 & Cisco Webex

Starting Time 10:11am Ending Time 11:50am

Recesses 0 (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Gregory W. Meeks
Rep. Gerald Connolly

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Stenographic Record ☒

Televised ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

Forest Conservation in the Fight Against Climate Change

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See attached.

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

None.

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

SFR - Connolly, Meeks

QFR - Omar

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 11:50am


Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

FULL COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Gregory W. Meeks, NY
X	Brad Sherman, CA
	Albio Sires, NJ
X	Gerald E. Connolly, VA
	Theodore E. Deutch, FL
X	Karen Bass, CA
X	William Keating, MA
X	David Cicilline, RI
	Ami Bera, CA
	Joaquin Castro, TX
	Dina Titus, NV
X	Ted Lieu, CA
	Susan Wild, PA
	Dean Phillips, MN
X	Ilhan Omar, MN
	Colin Allred, TX
X	Andy Levin, MI
	Abigail Spanberger, VA
X	Chrissy Houlahan, PA
	Tom Malinowski, NJ
X	Andy Kim, NJ
	Sara Jacobs, CA
X	Kathy Manning, NC
X	Jim Costa, CA
	Juan Vargas, CA
	Vicente Gonzalez, TX
X	Brad Schneider, IL

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Michael T. McCaul, TX
	Christopher H. Smith, NJ
X	Steve Chabot, OH
	Joe Wilson, SC
X	Scott Perry, PA
	Darrell Issa, CA
	Adam Kinzinger, IL
	Lee Zeldin, NY
	Ann Wagner, MO
X	Brian J. Mast, FL
	Brian K. Fitzpatrick, PA
	Ken Buck, CO
	Tim Burchett, TN
	Mark Green, TN
	Andy Barr, KY
X	Greg Steube, FL
X	Dan Meuser, PA
X	Claudia Tenney, NY
	August Pfluger, TX
	Nicole Malliotakis, NY
	Peter Meijer, MI
	Ronny Jackson, TX
	Young Kim, CA
	Maria Elvira Salazar, FL

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD FROM CHAIRMAN MEEKS

**Statement for the Record from Chairman Gregory W. Meeks
“Forest Conservation in the Fight Against Climate Change”
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Thursday, May 12, 2022**

Statement for the Record on Behalf of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID):

The United States Agency for International Development appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the record on HR 5830, the America Mitigating and Achieving Zero-emissions Originating from Nature for the 21st Century (AMAZON21) Act.

In April 2022, the scientific community again delivered an urgent call to action for our planet. The report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the mitigation of climate change is ominous, but it makes clear that limiting global warming and avoiding the worst case scenarios of the climate crisis remains possible if we rapidly reduce global emissions this decade. Critically, the IPCC shows that we already have all the options we need—in every sector—to cut global emissions in half by 2030. One of the most important—and cost effective—of those tools is reducing emissions from deforestation and unsustainable land use.

The evidence is clear. We will not reach Paris Agreement targets without urgent actions that conserve, restore, and manage forests, land, and ecosystems to avoid and reduce emissions and sequester carbon. Deforestation and land degradation generates nearly one quarter of the world’s emissions. Importantly, improving the conservation and management of nature is the only proven, cost-effective method for removing carbon from the air at scale. The majority of Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement submitted by tropical countries will rely, in part, on natural climate solutions to meet their mitigation targets.

USAID has a long history and deep expertise in this space, with forest conservation programs in approximately 45 countries. USAID’s natural climate solutions programs work to reduce, avoid, and sequester greenhouse gas emissions by conserving and restoring, and better managing forests, wetlands, and other carbon-dense ecosystems. USAID’s biodiversity conservation programs work to address the key threats and drivers of biodiversity loss, such as conservation crime including illegal logging, overharvesting of natural resources, and the conversion of natural forest habitats to other land uses.

As part of our new Climate Strategy, USAID recently announced an ambitious target to support the conservation, restoration, or management of 100 million hectares of critical landscapes—an area more than twice the size of California—by 2030. This target will be achieved through a series of new and forthcoming programs in critical geographies including the Amazon, Congo Basin, and Southeast Asia and other critical ecosystems. Through these programs, USAID, in collaboration with the Department of State, is playing a leading role in engaging the interagency in support of the President’s Plan to Conserve Global Forests: Critical Carbon Sinks and the Executive Order to Strengthen America’s Forests, Boost Wildfire Resilience, and Combat Global Deforestation. These programs will contribute substantially to USAID’s overall target of supporting partner countries to prevent six billion metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions by 2030.

HR 5830 - America Mitigating and Achieving Zero-emissions Originating from Nature for the 21st Century (AMAZON21)

USAID supports bold action by Congress to address global deforestation that includes language to strengthen considerations of environmental and social safeguards, empower Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and clarify the rights of legitimate landowners and use rights' holders.

USAID supports the intent of HR 5830 and its emphasis on reducing emissions and increasing carbon sequestration from forests and other terrestrial and coastal ecosystems as an essential strategy to helping countries meet their Nationally Determined Contributions. Section 3 of the Act, International Technical Assistance for Carbon Market Development and Participation, aligns with USAID's new 2022-2030 Climate Strategy.

With regard to the section on international technical assistance for carbon market development and participation, Congress could clarify whether payments will be made for verified emissions reductions only after the fact. It will be challenging for many countries to rapidly increase the supply of eligible projects, which require thoughtful and well-informed design and implementation as well as critical long-term reforms to the enabling environment, such as improving laws and governance, building institutional capacity, making information accessible, and advancing equity. USAID encourages the participation of non-profits and private businesses in development project implementation, which is critical to ensuring that projects have sufficient funding to achieve results.

With regard to the International Carbon Sequestration Program created by the Act, Congress should ensure that this aligns with, but does not duplicate, other existing US Government programs to reduce emissions from and leverage private capital for investment in sustainable land use. For example, USAID has forest conservation and management programs in 45 countries to increase public and private finance for natural climate solutions, provide economic benefits to local communities, and create incentives for investment; support the implementation of policies related to natural climate solutions and sustainable natural resources management; and, work with countries to build transparent systems on land use and its environmental, social, and economic impacts to improve decision-making and track progress. The vast majority of these investments focus on tropical forests.

USAID will continue to provide technical assistance to help countries reduce emissions.

The United States Agency for International Development welcomes the opportunity to further discuss with the Committee USAID policies and programs aimed at ending deforestation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD FROM REPRESENTATIVE CONNOLLY

Statement for the Record from Representative Gerald E. Connolly “Forest Conservation in the Fight Against Climate Change” House Committee on Foreign Affairs Thursday, May 12, 2022

Across our country and around the globe, communities face an environmental crisis from climate change due to sea level rise, increased extreme weather incidents, and growing public health consequences. In 2015, the Paris Climate Accords identified 1.5 degrees Celsius as the global warming threshold that would avoid the more catastrophic effects of the climate crisis. Planet Earth has already warmed by 1.1 degrees Celsius, and, without halting deforestation, experts say there will remain no viable pathway to stay below the 1.5 degrees Celsius warming goal. Forest conservation is an essential element in the fight against climate change, and the costs of doing nothing are existential. We have no choice but to act now.

Last year at the COP26 Summit in Glasgow, 141 world leaders, including the United States, issued a forceful declaration to stop and reverse deforestation by 2030. Since then, unfortunately, we have failed to see these commitments bear fruit. A new World Meteorological Organization report has found that deforestation in 2021 did not improve and was equivalent to levels in 2018 and 2019. Additionally, another report published by the World Resources Institute found that the 9.3 million acres of primary old-growth forest that were lost in 2021 resulted in 2.5 billion metric tons of emissions of carbon dioxide, the equivalent of about two and a half times as much as is emitted by passenger cars and light trucks in the United States each year.¹ Last year, farming, logging (much of which is done illegally), and wildfires led to the destruction of more than 11.1 million hectares of trees, an area the size of my home state of Virginia.²

The level of deforestation in 2021 can be characterized as nothing short of a cataclysm and we must work with our allies and partners in the world, especially in the Western Hemisphere, to reverse course and start to value forests as human and animal habitats and for the important carbon capture benefits they provide. There is one country responsible for almost one half of all primary forest deforestation: Brazil. The devastation that has been permitted to occur in the Amazon is catastrophic for our climate goals, Indigenous peoples, global biodiversity, and our planet. With reports signaling Brazil’s Amazon deforestation hit records in April, records that were set in January and February, we are clearly not on the right path with Brazil and must change course.

Climate change is already here. Reversing deforestation is key to slowing global warming. 19 out of the 20 warmest years on record have occurred since 2000, with 2016 and 2020 tied as the warmest. Reports this week indicated there is a 50/50 chance that the planet will temporarily pass the 1.5C warming threshold in the next 5 years.³ While sadly some still debate the existence of man-made climate change, the science is irrefutable. Luckily, we no longer have a climate denying, bleach-injecting President, and President Biden has reinvigorated the United States’ leading role in combatting climate change.

¹ Henry Fountain, “Deforestation Remains High, Despite International Pledges,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2022

² Benji Jones, “Where forests disappeared last year, in one chart,” *Vox*, April 28, 2022

³ Hannah Ryan, “There’s a 50:50 chance the planet will pass the 1.5C warming threshold in the next 5 years,” *CNN*, May 10, 2022

On day one of his administration, President Biden returned the United States to the Paris Climate Agreement. Absent U.S. leadership, we allow bad actors to accelerate deforestation at home and abroad, and this Congress must not turn a blind eye to those illicit actors. Counteracting deforestation is a bold goal, but feasible with steadfast congressional action.

The AMAZON21 Act (H.R. 5830), authored by my friend Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, directs the U.S. Department of State and USAID to develop programs to support developing countries' forest conservation-related activities. The FOREST Act (H.R. 5508) cracks down on illegal deforestation by restricting commodities produced on illegally deforested land from entering the US. In addition, it provides funding to help foreign governments combat illegal deforestation.

85 percent of greenhouse gas emissions are outside U.S. borders and this presents a real challenge for U.S. leadership. Along with President Biden's pledge of \$9 billion toward global deforestation efforts, legislation like the AMAZON21 Act and the FOREST Act will be key to establishing our leadership role in combatting the climate crisis.

Democrats have long agreed that we need bold action on climate but have continued to face obstruction. Meeting our new commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement will require Congress to pass meaningful legislation like the Build Back Better Act to reinvest in sustainable infrastructure, protect our lands and carbon sinks, create millions of family-sustaining, union jobs, and get us to a carbon free energy supply by 2035.

As co-chair of the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (SEEC), I have been leading the call for a long-term extension of clean energy tax credits, a clean electricity standard, investments in clean energy research and development, and investments in home and commercial efficiency through the Weatherization Assistance Program. SEEC has also fought for support for the U.S. offshore wind energy industry, and we applaud the Biden administration's plan to catalyze this nascent industry.

In 2021, carbon emissions rose more than 6 percent over 2020 emissions, but in just eight years from now we are supposed to be meeting our Paris goals. It is long past time that we kick into a higher gear. We have a small window of opportunity to implement legislative solutions to combat climate change and establish American dominance in clean energy technology. We have an even smaller window to halt and reverse deforestation and face this global, existential threat.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**Questions for the Record from Representative Ilhan Omar
“Forest Conservation in the Fight Against Climate Change”
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Thursday, May 12, 2022**

Question:

Violation of Indigenous Rights: It is no secret that massive corporate greed is driving deforestation around the world. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), since 1990 corporations and industries have converted 420 million hectares of forested land for agricultural expansion, livestock ranching, logging for timber, mining, and urbanization among other extractive uses. The world’s Indigenous populations suffer some of the worst impacts of forest destruction, with deforestation displacing entire Indigenous communities.

Ms. Ibrahim, can you speak to violations Indigenous peoples rights to their lands, territories, and resources have suffered due to deforestation?

Answer:

Ms. Ibrahim: Nature managed by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) is under increasing pressure from resource extraction, commodity production, mining, and transport and energy infrastructure.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) global assessment found that while nature is generally declining less rapidly in IPLC lands than on other lands, it is declining there as well. The negative impacts of these violations include continued loss of subsistence and traditional livelihoods, loss of economic development opportunities, and deteriorating health and well-being. This unrelenting pressure hurts not only IPLCs but the broader global community by impeding traditional management practices, the sharing of indigenous and local knowledge, and preventing IPLCs from effectively managing and protecting their land and natural resources to the detriment of our planet.^[1]

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities are also experiencing an increased level of violence and harassment as they seek to defend their lands and environments in the face of these threats.^[2] In instances where defenders were attacked for protecting ecosystems, the NGO Global Witness reported in 2020 that 70% were working to defend the world’s forests from deforestation and industrial development.

In Brazil and Peru, nearly three quarters of recorded attacks took place in the Amazon region of each country. Almost 30% of the attacks were reportedly linked to resource exploitation (logging, mining, and large-scale agribusiness), and hydroelectric dams and other infrastructure. Of these, logging was the sector linked to the most murders, accounting for 23 cases. Mexico saw a large rise in logging- and deforestation-related killings, with 9 in 2020. And even if it is not documented with the same accuracy, we see the same trend in land grabbing in various regions including Africa.

To prevent these phenomena and enforce indigenous peoples’ rights, key elements include full respect of free, prior informed consent, but also the inclusion in domestic legislation of the recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights, including collective land rights, but also the adoption

by development finance institutions of safeguards and guidelines related to indigenous peoples' rights.

Citations

1. IPCC (2019) Summary for Policymakers of the Special Report on Climate Change and Land.
2. Global Witness (2018). At What Cost? Irresponsible business and the murder of land and environmental defenders in 2017. London: Global Witness. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en-gb/campaigns/environmental-activists/at-what-cost>

Question:

Corporate Deforestation Exacerbating Hunger Crisis: Out of all the industries that drive global deforestation, studies show that 82% of forest loss is associated with agricultural activities with large-scale agricultural corporations in the driver's seat. In order to meet the needs of the growing populations in wealthy countries, industrial agriculture companies have pushed out and exploited many small farms to gain vast control of land and agricultural markets around the world. Corporate sponsored deforestation has had a devastating impact not only on our environment but also on human mortality. Today a handful of powerful global agribusiness giants, control the production, processing, and trade of beef, poultry, pork, grains, and other commodities. These practices destroy the biodiversity and fertility of the land, robbing local communities from feeding themselves thus further exacerbating the worldwide hunger crisis.

Mr. Sanjayan, can you speak to the widespread problems caused in nearby communities, due to the degradation of soil and generation of waste poisoning the surrounding air, water, and land?

Answer:

Dr. Sanjayan: Deforestation, soil degradation, climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, infectious disease: All of these problems are interlinked.

For example, large-scale clearing of forests to make way for agriculture can unleash a cascade of effects:

- No longer locked into place by trees, soil erodes and is carried away in runoff, fouling wetlands, rivers and coastal estuaries, harming ecosystem health and food security for local communities.
- Carbon locked up in trees and soils is emitted into the atmosphere — and carbon pollution caused by deforestation is the second-leading cause of climate change.
- Deprived of their habitats, wildlife that live in these forests must move elsewhere. Those that cannot will die.
- Species that are able to survive deforestation, such as bats and rats, are more likely to spread pathogens that can infect humans, leading to outbreaks of disease such as COVID-19.
- Meanwhile, large-scale unsustainable agriculture slowly but surely reduces soil quality and fertility. Once crop yields fall, the farming frontier must expand to new areas, leaving

behind degraded and desiccated lands that in most cases can never revert back to forest without intensive human intervention.

An estimated 10 billion people will walk the Earth by 2050, with humanity needing to grow food on land that is increasingly tapped out. Humanity will have to protect forests without jeopardizing food security, while better managing agricultural lands to render them carbon sinks instead of carbon sources. This is possible through a multitude of methods and tools, including:

- Where possible, large-scale forest restoration, including simply letting forests regenerate on their own, will be critical.
- Technological tools such as [Trends.Earth](#) — a free, open-source online platform — can help countries evaluate the status of their soil and prevent land degradation.
- Improved management of agricultural lands can not only ensure food security but also achieve massive carbon emissions reductions worldwide.
- Policy initiatives such as the AMAZON21 Act, which is a major leap in U.S. policy, recognize the value in conservation, not just for its mitigating and preventive effects on climate change, but for benefits to local communities on the agro-forest frontier.

