

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2021

Remarks on Forests and Land Use at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, United Kingdom

November 2, 2021

Good morning, everyone. It's an honor to be with you. My fellow leaders, I'm honored to represent the United States in this important discussion.

Conserving our forests and other critical ecosystems is indispensable, an indispensable piece of keeping our climate goals within reach as well as many other key priorities that we have together: ensuring clean water, maintaining biodiversity, supporting rural and Indigenous communities, and reducing the risk of the spread of disease.

Our forests are also nature's carbon capture, cycling CO₂ out of our atmosphere. And I want to recognize the Presidents of the [Democratic]* Republic of the Congo and Gabon, who are here today, for their considerable commitment to conserve—to conserve their forests.

If we all work together to make sure these precious resources are conserved in Africa and around the world, forests have the potential to reduce carbon globally by more than one-third—by more than one-third.

So we need to approach this issue with the same seriousness of purpose as decarbonizing our economies. That's what we're doing in the United States. We've already exceeded the 2020 Bonn Challenge goal of more than 20 million hectares of forest land under restoration thus far.

During my first week in office, I issued an Executive order that set the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of all U.S. lands and waters by the year 2030. We have put a—in place protections for the Tongass Forest in Alaska, the world's largest intact temperate rainforest.

And today I'm announcing a new plan to conserve global forests, which will bring together the full range of U.S. Government tools—diplomatic, financial, and policy—to halt forest loss, restore critical carbon sinks, and improve land management.

Through this plan, the United States will help the world deliver on our shared goal of halting natural forest loss and restoring at least an additional 200 million hectares of forests and other ecosystems by the year 2030. This is a plan that is the first of its kind, taking a whole-of-Government approach and working, in our case, with Congress to deploy up to \$9 billion in U.S. funding through 2030 to conserve and restore our forests and mobilize billions more from our partners.

As part of this, we're going to work to ensure markets recognize the true economic value of natural carbon sinks and motivate governments, landowners, and stakeholders to prioritize conservation. We'll work to align the private sector investment flows in our climate and conservation goals, including reducing the drivers of deforestation, creating sustainable supply chains, pursuing more sustainable commodity sourcing.

At every step, we'll work in partnership with the people most impacted by deforestation and most experienced in sustainable land management—local communities, Indigenous people, local governments, civil societies—to make sure our approaches are effective and focused on the needs of vulnerable populations.

* White House correction.

Preserving forests and other ecosystems can and should play an important role in meeting our ambitious climate goals as part of the net-zero emissions strategy we all have. And the United States is going to lead by our example at home and support other forested nations and developing countries in setting and achieving ambitious action to conserve and restore these carbon sinks.

I'm confident we can do this. All we need to do is summon the will to do what we know is right and we know is necessary and we know is within our capacity. So, as simple as it sounds, I think it is this simple. Let's get to work. We can do this. And it will have a generational impact.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. at the Scottish Event Campus. In his remarks, he referred to President Felix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon. He also referred to Executive Order 14008. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : U.N. Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, United Kingdom :: Forest and land use.

Locations: Glasgow, United Kingdom.

Names: Ondimba, Ali Bongo; Tshisekedi, Felix.

Subjects: Congo, Democratic Republic of the : President; Environment : Carbon emissions, reduction efforts; Environment : Climate change; Environment : Conservation :: International promotion efforts; Environment : Conservation :: Promotion efforts; Environment : United Nations Climate Change Conference; Gabon : President; United Kingdom : President Biden's visit; United Nations : Framework Convention on Climate Change.

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