



**Cutting Ties Between Business and Deforestation**  
**Oslo, 14 October 2015**  
**Statement by**  
**Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary**  
**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Ladies and gentlemen,

What can be said after spending five hours discussing deforestation? Let me say, from my perspective, I want to add three thoughts at three different levels of the system: the global level, the international link to the national level, and then the individual level. Let me start with the global, because that's my day job, the one where I spend most of my day hours, and then my night hours.

From the global perspective, why is it important for us to push on really eradicating deforestation?

It is important for two reasons. One: because of emissions. But, I want to pose to you that there is another perhaps even more critical reason from the global perspective, and that is the following.

The Paris Agreement that we will come to in six and a half weeks has as its fundamental goal to be able to point the global economy onto a path that is going to re-establish the ecological balance which we used to have, but we've lost, between emission and absorption. That means, over the next few decades, we have to be able – and scientists say by 2050, so let's call it over the next fifty years – to bring down emissions mostly in the energy sector, energy and transport, to a level where the unavoidable emissions will be able to be captured and absorbed by the natural absorptive capacity of the planet.

That balance is currently, certainly not there. And if we want to address climate change in a timely fashion over the next fifteen to twenty years, we have to have a huge push at restoring that ecological balance. So eradicating deforestation not only helps on one side of the equation, which is to bring down emissions, it also helps on the other side of the equation. That side of the equation is often overlooked, not considered and is fundamentally important.

The forested areas – the degraded lands that have to be restored – those are the areas that absorb emissions. If we don't have healthy forested lands, we will not have that absorption capacity and then the pressure on emissions is just beyond any technical solution. So for that reason, because of that equation, it is fundamental to eradicate deforestation around the world from a global perspective.

Let me now move to the national perspective, which is where REDD+ comes in. You can understand the developing countries that have had this kind of industry and this kind of income for so many years will find it extremely difficult to do anything different unless the demand that comes from them is a very, very clear demand for sustainably produced forest products. I've already heard from some of you that that is exactly what you are doing through your supply chains, to demand that kind of agricultural product.

Sending the message that the kind of product, a product produced that does not harm forests, is what you want helps developing countries understand that it is worth their efforts. And although Mato Grosso [in Brazil] is improving sustainability while other countries are struggling to do the same, then perhaps now it is in the interests of those other countries also to move to sustainably produced products because that is where the demand is.

If they get the message that there's two demands, if they get contradictory messages that there's one deforested product demand and that there is another demand that has eradicated deforestation, they don't have any incentive to use the financial and policy instruments that have been developed within the Climate Change Convention for them act. So from a national policy perspective, your signals are fundamental to actually level the playing field among countries so that they are not competing against each other to see who is going to do the most damage.

Finally to my third point, the individual level. It is my sense that those under thirty have no tolerance, no patience, for what we have put on the market over the past fifteen years. There is a completely different demand that is coming from individuals, from customers, from consumers, those who will soon be building their houses, those who will soon be purchasing your products. They just have no patience for this.

Please explain to anybody under thirty why that product is causing deforestation. As we've just heard, it's a no-brainer. Those under thirty will not take the kind of arguments, excuses, whatever you want to call it, that our generation used to cause the damage that we did.

So whether it's because you are very close to your customer, those currently under thirty and moving into their forties and fifties and becoming your most aggressive customers and clients, whether it is because you're interested in levelling the playing field among countries, or whether it is that, in addition to all of that, you also understand that there is some global responsibility here, a global responsibility of re-establishing the ecological balance – I think we have three very, very powerful motives that fortunately are actually very much interlinked and coincidental. And whether you think that your influence is at the individual level, at the national policy level or at the global level, we are all headed in the same direction, or we should be.

I just arrived in Norway yesterday. The reputation of Norway and of the Nordic countries is that you have the courage to be leaders. Norway and its Nordic peers are recognised for their leadership, precisely on this issue as well as on others. And that is not leadership that you want to give up.

That is leadership you need to augment. You need to go out there and be incredibly courageous and say, “This is it! No more targets, we are going to eradicate and we are going to take the lead and we are going to pull everybody else with us.”

Why? Because of the timing. We could say, “Well, we will deal with this problem over the next twenty to thirty to forty years”. I'm sorry. We just don't have that time.

We have fifteen years to change this around. And in order to get to global emission peaking and to bring emissions down we need to change practices now, because the emissions effect of whatever practices we put in place now will need at least fifteen to twenty years to take effect.

So it's about now. The change that we need over the next fifteen years requires a policy and practice change today. We cannot wait fifteen to twenty years. There is an urgency here.

There is a fundamental global responsibility and there is a market truth about where demand is going to come and hence profitability. If that is not a clear argument, I don't know what is. So my final two questions to you are, ‘If it's not the Nordic countries, then who?’ and, ‘If it's not now, then when?’

Thank you.

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