

Q&A

What is the New York Declaration?

The New York Declaration on Forests is a political declaration that grew out of dialogue among companies and governments, spurred by the Secretary-General's Climate Summit and fostered by the World Economic Forum. The associated voluntary Action Agenda is intended to serve as a guide to governments, companies, and organizations regarding the diverse set of actions that can achieve this transformational goal. It is not legally binding.

Who is behind the Declaration?

The initiative has been brought together by a number of countries and companies, with guidance from several NGOs and indigenous people's groups. It grew out of a dialogue at the World Economic Forum in January 2014, and was spurred by the Secretary-General's summit. UNDP has served as a coordinating body to organize the drafting of the Declaration and the endorsers of the Declaration.

Is it true that this is the first time in history that a critical mass of developed and developing country world leaders have partnered around a shared goal of ending global forest loss?

Yes. No previous commitment has been global in scope or had the audacious goal of a total end to deforestation, by a date certain. And no previous commitment has brought together major forest product consumer countries and forest commodity producer companies.

The Declaration is the result of a broad and unprecedented global political and business consensus. No one country could make it happen by itself – it is the result of a broad group of stakeholders coming together around an unprecedented goal.

How many organizations were required to meet the deforestation goals outlined in the Declaration?

The timeline to slow and end deforestation is one of the most ambitious ever put on paper. It will not be possible without new determination and will from political actors, companies and civil society. That new energy is exactly what the Declaration is intended to provide.

What does it mean for companies to endorse the Declaration?

Companies and countries that sign on to the declaration are committing to doing their part to cut deforestation in half by 2020, and end it by 2030. For companies that produce forest-intensive commodities, they are committing that those entire sectors should end deforestation no later than 2020. Many companies are moving much faster – but for some this new timeline is a radical leap in ambition, and that is a positive step forward.

The New York Declaration on Forests comes in the midst of a radical transformation of forest commodity sectors, driven by new policies, market demand from consumer goods companies and consumers, stronger land rights for indigenous peoples and committed advocacy by civil society. Over the past nine months alone, 60 percent of the world's highly carbon-intensive palm oil trade has gone deforestation-free.

This is a major signal, to the world and the market, that change is already here and more is coming – it cannot be read any other way.

Are there any specific commitments that will put the Declaration into effect?

There are several ambitious bilateral and trilateral specific commitments being announced as part of the Secretary-General's Summit that will represent significant new funding to keep forests standing. And the Declaration includes support for new economic incentives as part of next year's Paris climate talks. It's about keeping forests standing.