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Countdown for Survival: Global groups make an urgent call to end deforestation and conserve the world's forests during UN Climate Talks

Bonn, Germany - A coalition of youth, environmental groups, NGOs, Indigenous Peoples' organizations and women's groups delivered a plea to negotiators asking them to ensure a strong climate deal and warning them that they will put our survival at risk if they do not act immediately to halt deforestation and the industrial logging of the world's primary forests (forest degradation). [See note 1]

"Survival is not negotiable. The climate deal signed in Copenhagen needs to ensure the survival of all countries and people. The immediate protection of the world's forests is no longer just an option, it is essential to ensure a safe climate for us and our kids," stated youth spokesperson Gemma Tillack.

The coalition asks delegates to ensure that any climate deal:

- Immediately ends deforestation, industrial scale logging in primary forests and the conversion of forests to monoculture tree crops, plantations
- Protects the world's biodiverse forests including primary forests in developed countries (e.g. Australia, Canada and Russia) and tropical forests in developing countries
- Respects the rights of women, Indigenous peoples and local communities and allow them to lead healthy and sustainable lives whilst stopping deforestation and industrial logging of primary forests in their country
- Does not allow developed countries to use forest protection and the avoiding deforestation and industrial scale logging of primary forests in other countries as an offset mechanism for their own emissions.

"The forest is our life, without the forests we would not exist. Avoiding deforestation and stopping industrial logging will allow Indigenous peoples to live and will secure our future," said Adolphine Muley, of the Union pour l'Emancipation de la Femme Autochtone in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"We need to ensure that climate change mitigation plans do not drive the establishment of monoculture tree plantations. The rapid ongoing direct and indirect replacement of forests by plantations is a significant cause of social and environmental harm and contributes significantly to climate change," said Diego Cardona from Friends of the Earth Colombia and the Global Forest Coalition.

"The definition of forests in the climate change negotiations includes monoculture tree plantations thus allowing their promotion disguised as forests in market-based mechanisms that could be used in REDD. All countries need to accept and adopt a forest definition in the climate deal that clearly distinguishes forests from monoculture tree plantations," said Raquel Nunez from the World Rainforest Movement.

"A commitment to protect biodiversity and halt deforestation in primary forests would send a positive signal to the global community that we are on the right path towards avoiding a climate disaster," said Joao Talocchi from Greenpeace Brazil.

"Developed countries like Australia, Canada and Russia need to stop undermining the climate negotiations. They should stop industrial logging and wood chipping of their biodiverse forests, permanently protect their own carbon reservoirs and start accounting for their emissions from forestry activities. Only then can they ask developing countries to protect their forests," said Claire Spoors from Global Witness.

Ms. Tillack concluded saying, "We need to act now to secure a safe climate and peak our emissions by 2015. Every day of delay results in the release of huge amounts of dangerous carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. We can not wait to take these first steps to ensuring our survival."

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Notes:

[1] The coalition of youth, environmental groups, NGOs, Indigenous peoples' Organizations, women's groups who have signed this survival plea include: International Youth caucus in Bonn; Ecosystems Climate Alliance; Global Forest Coalition; The Wilderness Society; World Rainforest Movement; Global Witness; Greenpeace; Rainforest Action Network; Wetlands International; Rainforest Foundation Norway; Rainforest Foundation UK; FERN; Friends of the Earth Sobrevivencia / FoE-Paraguay; Indigenous Environmental Network; Global Justice Ecology Project; CORE India; Life gender, Environment and Diversity Germany Sustainable Population Australia; Tanzania Forest Conservation Group; the Tanzania Community Forest Conservation Network MJUMITA; Stop GE Tree Campaign; RAVA Institute Indonesia; SWBC Nepal; Timberwatch Coalition South Africa; Pacific Indigenous Peoples Environment Coalition; Friends of the Siberian Forests Russia; Focus on the Global South; Women's Environment Network Australia; Biofuelwatch Women Environmental Programme Nigeria; Just Environment; COECO-CEIBA; Friends of the Earth Costa Rica; WALHI-Friends of the Earth-Indonesia; Down to Earth; Carbon Trade Watch; Women's Environment and Development Organization; Watch Indonesia; Asociacion ANDES Peru; Ecologistas en Accion Spain; Sustainable Energy and Economy Network; North East Peoples Alliance on Trade, Finance and Development India; WISE Inc. Philippines; GenderCC; FASE Solidarity and Education Brazil; Global Exchange; Kingdom Narintarakul Thai Working group for Climate Justice; Union pour l'Emancipation de la Femme Autochtone