

June 20, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

We are individuals and organizations from across Latin America, Asia and Africa who are devoted to principles of human rights, environmental restoration, social justice, peace and human dignity, and we are writing to urge you to sign New York's historic TREES Act for tropical forest protection (Bill # A.9711/S.8898) into law. With this law, New York can exert significant economic leverage in support of the international movement to combat climate change, and help ensure the world's irreplaceable tropical forests can continue to play their crucial ecological role.

New York has long been a home of cultural diversity, economic opportunity, and policy that faces the future. In this, New York is an inspiration, and in fact, a literal home to countless of our brothers and sisters. Your cities have ties to every country in the world – and by signing this historic bill you will show that New Yorkers still today are living out the values for which you are known worldwide.

In our work, we have dedicated our lives to promoting environmental and social justice, and to halting the destruction of our lands, our forests, and in many cases, our lifeways — and we have been watching the progress of this and similar legislation around the world. In Europe, the EU Deforestation Regulation, which has taken a decade to become encoded in law, is the first law in the global North to recognize that what wealthy nations purchase for everyday consumption — coffee, lumber, palm oil, beef — wreaks devastation in our home territories, every day.

Last year we saw more than [9 million acres](#) of rainforest land burned, slashed and turned into industrial wasteland. Half of the world's forests are gone, and this devastation is a critical contributor to the climate emergency, a global existential threat that should unite us all in a struggle to change the way our societies consume goods and extract resources. At this moment, with our lifeways and our very lives at stake, we have no choice but to change the way we manage our relationship with our Pachamama, our Mother Earth. And we must ask you to do what you can to help.

As you have said yourself, New York is a magnet for people fleeing their homelands from the impacts of environmental destruction. The climate emergency, the deforestation crisis, the droughts and wildfires and crop failures and floods that are ravaging our nations and territories — all these are major factors in driving the waves of people leaving our villages, towns and cities for what they hope is a better life elsewhere. Our brothers and sisters from Honduras, from Haiti, from Congo, are fleeing their homes not only because of economic collapse and social unrest, but because the heat and the floods and the desertification of their lands is making their homes unlivable. Many of them aspire to reach physical safety and economic safety on your shores.

And, as you know too well, after great trial and tribulation, if they make it, they are ending up as refugees at Floyd Bennett Field, in Albany's West Hill neighborhood, on Buffalo's West Side, in the packed emergency shelters of Manhattan, on Brooklyn's inhospitable winter streets and in the crowded basements in Queens.

While the crisis of climate migration is among the great catastrophes that we face today, it is also an opportunity for the world to come together. To say it simply, Governor Hochul, our problems are your problems; your economy and our economy are part of a global system that requires global attention; the people in your cities and towns are the children and grandchildren and brothers and sisters of the people in ours.

We need solutions that are global in their vision — but that build on actions taken at the local level everywhere in the world.

Through the TREES Act, you and other New Yorkers can take actions that bring us hope. As you have your Adirondacks, your Niagara Falls, your Hudson River, we have our rainforests — natural wonders that help sustain life and cannot be replaced. The TREES Act is an acknowledgment that what is decided at the state capitol in Albany or in the ports of Manhattan makes ripples that affect us in Brazil, in West Africa, in Southeast Asia. Quite literally, governor Hochul, our rainforests are your Brooklyn Bridge, your High Line, your hamburger, the creamer in your coffee, the chocolate in your ice cream. It is not an exaggeration to say that these come to you at great cost to our families and communities. That need not be the case, and once you sign this bill, it no longer will be.

We applaud your Legislature for its vision in passing the TREES Act, not once, but twice. We understand that, like ripe fruit, any good law takes time to mature into something that will truly nourish our collective future. Like the kind of leadership we cherish, the TREES Act is at once humble and bold; it offers a relatively small and pragmatic change that, over time, will have a deep and indelible impact.

Governor Hochul, we are hopeful that you will see the opportunity before you, for New York and for the world, and will sign this bill into law.

In solidarity and respect,

Alfred Lahai Brownell, Green Advocates; 2019 Goldman Environmental Prize Winner (Liberia)

Marcel Gomes, Reporter Brasil; 2024 Goldman Environmental Prize Winner (Brazil)

Tarcísio Feitosa da Silva, Municipal Councilor for the Environment and Climate of the City of Rio de Janeiro; 2006 Goldman Environmental Prize Winner – Forests (Brazil)

Zenzi Suhadi, WALHI / Indonesian Forum on the Environment (Indonesia)

On behalf of the undersigned 154 civil society and Indigenous Peoples organizations from Latin America, Asia and Africa, across 28 countries and territories in tropical forest regions:

Regional

Andrew Miller, Advocacy Director

Amazon Watch (Amazon Region/US)

Peter Quaqua

Mano River Union Civil Society Natural Resources Rights and Governance Platform (West Africa)

Juliano Bueno De Araújo, Director

COESUS - Coalizão Não Fracking Brasil (Latin America)

Isaac Rojas
Chalani Rubesinghe, ISS Focal Point for Asia Pacific

Ilang-Ilang Quijano, Communications Officer

Bangladesh

Niger Sultana
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Brazil

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Rodrigo de Castro Amédée Peret
Jessica Siviero Vicente, Especialista em Justiça Climática
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Rodrigo Fernão da Costa Bertoli, Advogado
Pedro Ivo Batista, Presidente
Luciane Moessa, Diretora Executiva e Técnica
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Rafael Oliveira, Executive Director
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Katia Visentainer, Project and communication coordinator

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Rede Eclesial Panamazônica

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Maria Paula Fernandes, Diretora Executiva

Cambodia

Sophorn Poek

Friends of the Earth International
Friends of the Earth International, International Solidarity System (ISS) (Asia Pacific)

Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific

All Bangla Fisherman's Association (ABFMA)
Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association
Labour Resource Center (LRC)

5 Elementos

Ação Franciscana de Ecologia e Solidariedade - AFES
ActionAid

Amadjah

Articulação carioca por justiça socioambiental
Associação Alternativa Terrazul
Associação Soluções Inclusivas Sustentáveis (SIS)
Associação Viração Educomunicação
Brigada de Incêndio Florestal de Alter do Chão - Brigada de Alter
Comissão de Atingidos por Barragem de Vila Regência Augusta e Entre Rios - Linhares, State of Espírito Santo
Engajamundo Youth Association

FBOMS - Fórum Brasileiro de ONGs e Movimentos Sociais pelo Meio Ambiente
iCMBio

Instituto Democracia e Sustentabilidade
Kurytiba Metropole
Mater Natura - Instituto de Estudos Ambientais

Mighty Earth

National Committee in Defense of Territories against mining

Network for Social Justice and Human Rights

Observatório de Justiça e Conservação

Observatório do Clima (Brazilian Climate Observatory)

OPAN - Operação Amazônia Nativa – Amazon Region

REPAM-Brasil

Rede Vozes Negras pelo Clima - Linhares, State of Espírito Santo

Uma Gota no Oceano

Ponlok Khmer Organization, Preah Vihear Province

Cameroon

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Gilbert Kuepouo

Nchunu Justice Sama

ELONG Emmanuel

Colombia

Xiomara Chingate, Organizadora

Costa Rica

Silvia Rodriguez Cervante, PhD Development
Studies

Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Corneille SEMAKUBA

KAMBALE KATSUVA Josué, secrétaire
Général

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Christine LOBHO, Coordinatrice

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Paluku WANGUSU, President

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Olivier Bahemuke Ndoole, Secrétaire
Exécutif

Pascal MUKO

BANTU LUKAMBO, Directeur Général

Alternatives Durables pour le Développement (ADD)
Centre de Recherche et l'Education pour le Développement
(CREPD)

Foundation for Environment and Development
(FEDEV)

SYNAPARCAM

Real Talk: Colombia

Red de Coordinacion en Biodiversidad

ACRC, Association Communautaire pour le Relèvement
Communautaire,

Centre de Recherches sur l'Environnement, la Démocratie
et les Droits de l'homme : CREDDHO- DRC

Fédération des comités des pêcheurs individuels du Lac
Edouard : FECOPEILE - DRC

Fondation des amis de la nature (FAN)-DRC

Justice Plus

FORED, Forum des Engagés pour le Développement
Durable

FECOPELA, Fédération des Comités des Pêcheurs du Lac
Albert

AFM, Association des Filles-Mere

AEDIF, Association d'Entraide pour le Développement
Intégral de la Femme

FOPED, Forum pour la Paix, l'Environnement et le
Développement

RPDI, Rassemblement des Personnes handicapées pour le
Développement Intégral

FEJEC, Fédération des Jeunes Entrepreneurs du Congo

AEDIF, Association d'Entraide pour le Développement
Intégral de la Femme

Southern Africa Resources Watch

Justice verte a.s.b.l

Dynamique pour le Droit, la Démocratie et le
Développement Durable, en sigle D5

SJDDH "Synergie des Jeunes pour le Développement et les
Droits Humains"

Alerte Congolaise pour l'environnement et les Droits de
l'Homme (ACEDH)

COOPERATIVE DES PECHERIES DE VIRUNGA

INNOVATION POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT ET LA
PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT (IDPE)

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Cosmas MUNGAZI KAKOLA , Directeur
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Robert Kitumaini

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Ecuador

Donald Moncayo

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Basin Conservation Society (CBCS-Network)**

KILALO PRESS

FLAMBEAU DE L'EST

**GESTION DES RESSOURCES NATURELLES ET
ENVIRONNEMENT SAIN (GERNES)**

**GROUPE D'APPUIA LA TRACABILITE ET A LA
TRANSPARENCE DES RESSOURCES
NATURELLES (GATT-RN)**

AIDE ACTION POUR LA PAIX

**Solidarité pour la promotion sociale et la paix, SOPRO
PROGRAMME D'INTEGRATION ET
DEVELOPPEMENT DES PEUPLES PYGMEE (PIDP)
SYNERGIE DES JEUNES POUR LE
DEVELOPPEMENT ET LES DROITS HUMAINS
(SJDDH)**

**CENTRE D'EDUCATION POUR LA PROTECTION DE
L'ENVIRONNEMENT ET LE
DEVELOPPEMENT DURABLE (CEPD)
FORUM DES AMIS DE LA TERRE (FAT)**

**Forêt Communautaire pour le développement rural,
FOCODER**

DYNAMIQUE FEMME –MINES, DYFEM

**OBSERVATOIRE DE LA SOCIETE CIVILE POUR LES
MINERAIS DE PAIX,
OSCMP**

**DYNAMIQUE DES FEMMES JURISTE (DFJ)
Action d'aides aux survivants de la torture,
AAST**

**ACTION HUMANITAIRE POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT
DURABLE (AHDD)**

**Action pour le Développement, l'Education Civique et la
Défense des Droits humains (ADEC/DDH)**

**Action solidaire pour les jeunes et l'Environnement durable
(ASOJED)**

Actions de Solidarité (AS)

ACTIONS SANS FRONTIERE

**Solidarité pour la Réflexion et Appui au Développement
Communautaires (SORADEC)**

**Solidarité pour la Protection des Droits de l'Enfant
(SOPRODE)**

BUREAU D'ECOLOGISTES IMPACTS

ENVIRONNEMENTAUX (BEIE)

**REOCOPE, Réseau des Organisations pour la
Conservation et la Protection de l'Environnement**

Unión de Afectados Por Texaco. (UDAPT)

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CESTA / Friends of the Earth El Salvador

Center for Public Interest Law (CEPIL)

*Association Guinéenne pour la Promotion des Énergies
Renouvelables-AGUIPER*

*Centre d'Excellence du Droit de l'Environnement-CEDE
Centre du Commerce International pour le Développement
(CECIDE)*

ENDA Guiné-Bissau

*Amerindian Peoples Association
Upper Mazaruni District Council*

Basudha

Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies

Sidhwa Trust

Zinda Dilli

Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN)

FIAN Indonesia

Ketua Serikat Petani Kelapa Sawit

Satya Bumi

Sawit Watch

TREND ASIA

Trend Asia

TuK INDONESIA

WALHI/Friends of the Earth Indonesia

Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat

Serikat Petani Kelapa Sawit (SPKS)

WALHI Kepulauan Bangka Belitung

WALHI East Java Region

WALHI Jambi

Alliance for Rural Democracy

Green Advocates International

Natural Resources Women's Platform

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Revenlyn Development Initiative

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Alianza Global de Comunidades Territoriales

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Aminata Finda Massaquoi

Network Movement for Justice and Development

Women's Network Against Rural Plantations Injustice (WoNARPI)

Mambu Alpha Sannoh, Director

Friends of the Earth Sierra Leone

Uganda

Atuheire Brian

African Initiative On Food Security and Environment (AIFE)

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Green Media Foundation
Initiative For Green Planet Uganda (IGPU)

Weka Afri sustainable Biodiversity and Food Security
Foundation

Youth concern on Environment (YCED)-UGANDA
Youth for Green Communities (YGC)
YOUTH FOR NATURE CONSERVANCY-YNC

Washington Brazil Office (WBO)

Fundación ARAYARA