



19 March 2026

To: The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

The Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero

The Rt Hon Emma Reynolds
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Dear Rt Hon Ministers Yvette Cooper, Ed Miliband and Emma Reynolds,

Urgent need to protect forest funding in UK overseas development assistance

As UK NGOs working for the protection of tropical forests and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and other local communities, we are writing to ask you to protect the UK's world-leading support to forests from the cuts to the foreign aid budget.

We call on the government to ensure that funding for forests and climate are maintained within the aid budget and that multi-year funding commitments are provided so that the UK can deliver its critical and world-leading work in this field. Annual funding decisions are susceptible to change and undermine the ability of environmental and human rights organisations to plan and implement for long term impact.

While we understand the challenging decisions and trade-offs currently facing the government,

it is essential that the UK's support to forests and Indigenous Peoples and other local communities is maintained.

Deforestation-driven biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse are high-level threats to UK national security according to the government's own assessment, *Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security*. As the national security assessment makes clear, failing to tackle deforestation in UK supply chains undermines the national interest, fuelling the cost of living crisis, worsening geopolitical instability, accelerating nature loss and driving climate change, with consequences felt across the UK and beyond. This failure also directly drives well-documented human rights abuses, including land grabs, displacement and the disenfranchisement of forest peoples, despite the UK Government's stated priority to uphold Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Ending deforestation is essential to our nation's security. Four out of six ecosystems identified as significant for the UK's security are forests. Some of these are at risk of collapse as soon as 2030, according to the government report.

The fact that forests intersect with your three ministries and several other government departments underscores their unique and far-reaching importance to the UK, and humanity more broadly. Across countries with the largest rainforest cover, including Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Indonesia, UK support has enabled governments and local people to find solutions to illegal logging, such as securing tenure rights, creating jobs and building sustainable trade.

Labour's 2024 manifesto promises to deliver on the legacy of COP26 – a commitment that requires sustained, ambitious investment in forest governance and climate action. UK forest programmes are instrumental to this effort. These include Forest Governance, Markets and Climate (FGMC), which addresses local and global drivers of deforestation; Investment in Forests and Sustainable Land Use (IFSLU), which supports vibrant, climate-resilient forest economies; Amazon Catalyst for Forest Communities (AMCAT), which strengthens the forest governance and forest tenure security of Indigenous People and local communities across the Amazon Basin; and the Congo Basin Forest Action Programme (CBFA), which targets one of the world's poorest and most intact forest regions. These programmes must be protected to ensure they achieve their promise.

The national and global significance of championing forests and forest people's rights has never been greater. Forests are key to the UK's national security and trade.

The UK achieves impact on climate change mitigation, biodiversity protection and human rights promotion through its bilateral support to rainforest countries and direct funding of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. UK leadership – grounded in rights-based approaches and long-term partnerships – remains irreplaceable.

Yours sincerely,

Cool Earth
Earthsight
Environmental Investigation Agency
Fern
Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Global Witness
Global Canopy
Mighty Earth
Rainforest Foundation UK
World Wildlife Fund

Cc:

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

Mr Alex Sobel MP
Co-Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group on Global Deforestation

Ms Pippa Heylings MP
Co-Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group on Global Deforestation

Ms Maggie Charnley
Head of the International Forests Unit