

It is supported by amongst others the PEFC, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, the world's largest forest certification organization and the certification system of choice for small- and family forest owners.
I invite all of you - as individuals or as representative of civil society, business, or governments, to support the Rio Forest Certification Declaration with your signature.
The Rio Forest Certification Declaration will be presented with all signatures at the 2012 Rio Earth Summit.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

The Rio Forest Certification Declaration picks up on ideas that have previously emerged in other documents, including the 1992 Rio Declaration, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Agenda 21, the UN Charter, and the Forest Principles, to establish a framework that all stakeholders should be able to support.
The Rio Forest Certification Declaration can offer to society:
- a common set of principles is needed, a set of principles that provides guidance to all of us about what is needed to better promote forest certification and its continuous growth to advance sustainable forest management.
- It recognizes in its preamble that «The challenge of safeguarding the environmental, social and economic benefits that the world's forests provide is critical for life on Earth. It requires a world in which people manage forests sustainably, a world that recognizes the integral and interdependent nature of our planet, a world that acknowledges and values the significance of rural communities, indigenous peoples, and families that depend on forests for their livelihoods» and states ten principles as a common framework to maximize the benefits that forest certification can offer to society.

RIO FOREST CERTIFICATION DECLARATION

The Rio Forest Certification Declaration, launched in 2010 in Rio, is based on the idea that a common set of principles is needed, a set of principles that provides guidance to all of us about what is needed to better promote forest certification and its continuous growth to advance sustainable forest management.
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Over time, forest certification has become one of the most important tools for global society to promote sustainable forest management. Yet the movement has stalled: Only nine percent of the world's forests are certified, and the United Nations have warned that the once-rapid growth of forest-certification efforts has stagnated during the past years.
The challenges facing the world's forests, and the inability of governments to act, resulted in the birth of the idea of forest certification. This voluntary mechanism provided forest owners with a framework to implement the spirit of the Forest Principles, with guidance of how to manage forests sustainably, and with the opportunity to demonstrate and validate their responsibility practices through independent certification.
Much like forests, ideas sometimes take a long time to grow. Over time, they become more complex and diverse and eventually reach maturity.
The sustainable management of the world's forests is one of these ideas.

ABOUT

RIO FOREST CERTIFICATION DECLARATION

ACT NOW TO SAVE THE FORESTS

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RIO+20
we care about our forests

The fifth document, the Forest Principles, is the least known one, yet with its preamble stating that «Forests are essential to economic development and the maintenance of all forms of life», its relevance to the overall concept of sustainable development appears self-evident. Governments,

THE BIRTH OF FOREST CERTIFICATION

The Summit resulted in a total of five documents that have fundamentally influenced the way our global society views sustainable development.
The overarching document, the Rio Declaration, defines the rights of people to development, and their responsibilities to safeguard the common environment.
The Agenda 21 has become a blueprint for action by all types of organizations and initiatives globally, nationally, and locally. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have become legally binding documents.

THE SUMMIT'S OUTCOMES

The message coming out of the Rio Earth Summit – that nothing less than a transformation of our attitudes and behaviour would bring about the necessary changes – was heard by millions around the world.
The message reflected the complexity of the problems facing us, and governments recognized the need to redirect international and national plans and policies to ensure that all economic decisions fully took into account environmental and social impacts.

SPREADING THE WORD

The idea of sustainable forest management is based on the concept of 'sustainable development' and rests on three integrated and equally important pillars: environmental soundness, social justice, and economic viability.
We know now that missing out or not paying sufficient attention to any one of these crucial elements will seriously undermine the chances of success of achieving sustainability in forest management just as in development.
The concept of 'sustainable development' and the interrelationship of its three pillars was originally popularized in the 1987 Brundtland report, yet it was at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 where the idea finally took hold.

THE IDEA OF 'SUSTAINABILITY'

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PRINCIPLE 1

HUMAN BEINGS ARE AT THE CENTRE OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

Public and private policies designed to promote sustainable forest management can only succeed if they enhance the quality of life of people who live in and/or depend upon forests. Application: Forest certification systems and all stakeholders must act to protect and promote forest-dependent populations, local communities, smallholder forest owners, workers, family foresters, women, youth and children, and indigenous peoples all of whom are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with the forests on which they depend.

PRINCIPLE 2

RECOGNIZE AND RESPECT NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND STANDARDS

In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Rio Forest Principles, and the principles of international law, all states have both the sovereign right and obligation to develop their own sustainable forest management objectives. States must act to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause environmental, social, or economic damage to areas and people beyond the limits of their national jurisdiction or violate international protocols and conventions. Application: Forest certification systems, forest stakeholders, especially Major Groups and OECD countries, must respect each nation's chosen path to promote sustainable development, the Millennium Development Goals, and sustainably managed forests in their actions, policies and guidelines.

PRINCIPLE 3

PROTECT THE COMPLEXITY OF FOREST ECOSYSTEMS, FOREST-DEPENDENT ECONOMIES, AND RURAL CULTURE BY ADOPTING INTEGRATED FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS AND POLICIES

In order to promote sustainable forest management, forest certification standards, national forest policy, and private and public procurement guidelines must meet the needs of present and future generations by promoting economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just outcomes based on the national and/or local context. Application: Forest certification standards, public policy and procurement guidelines must integrate competing demands in order to meet the needs of all stakeholders to deliver balanced socially, economically and environmentally sustainable solutions.

PRINCIPLE 4

CONTRIBUTE TO POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH EMPOWERMENT OF THE POOR

Peace, social justice, global economic equity, and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible. Poverty reduction is an indispensable requirement for sustainable forest management; it is an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it. The linkage between deforestation and poverty is strong, compelling, and in need of specific attention. Measures diminishing forest resources to increase agricultural resources to contribute to food security must directly contribute to the sustainable livelihoods of those affected. Application: Forest certification systems, Major Groups and governments may contribute to mitigate deforestation and promote afforestation within their boundaries and jurisdictions and seek to safeguard forest resources. Standards and policies must promote the efficient use of forest resources, good forest management, and provide for increased wealth retention in rural communities through partnerships with smallholders, community-owned forests, and indigenous peoples' organizations, in addition to maximizing formal employment opportunities.

PRINCIPLE 5

OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE STAKEHOLDER PROCESSES ARE ESSENTIAL

Sustainable forest management is best achieved through the empowerment of all stakeholders in open and accessible processes. Special outreach must occur for those groups lacking a tradition of involvement or lacking the resources required. Application: Forest certification governance systems, private and public procurement entities, and standards development processes must seek to ensure the involvement of Major Groups and governments in a multi-stakeholder, consensus-driven process, respecting the right to self-identification and self-determination while avoiding governance systems and decision-making processes designed to restrict the voice or participation of any stakeholder.

PRINCIPLE 6

TRANSPARENCY, INCLUSIVENESS, AND COLLABORATION ARE FUNDAMENTAL PREREQUISITES FOR GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

Expanding sustainable forest management to all of the world's forest requires cooperative and transparent processes among all stakeholders and governments. Promoting division, competition, and exclusivity among and between different approaches to sustainable forest management wastes limited resources, encroaches on stakeholder-driven processes, diverts attention from areas where deforestation and unsustainable forest management are still common practices, and fails to expand the total volume of global well-managed forest area. Application: Certification schemes, procurement guidelines, and those seeking to protect forests must promote standards, policies, and practices, which are inclusive and recognize the superiority of all types of sustainably managed forests and certification systems as a tool to promote sustainable development.

PRINCIPLE 7

UTILIZE THE BENEFITS OF RENEWABLE AND CLIMATE-SMART FOREST-BASED PRODUCTS

Sustainable forest management must adapt to complex societal challenges such as climate change, population growth and increasing resource shortages caused by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, especially those that are high-carbon emitting. Recognizing the unique attributes of forest products from sustainably managed forests both in terms of carbon sequestration, other ecosystem services, and development values is critical for public and private policy makers, including climate policy negotiators. Application: Forest certification systems, governments, and procurement entities must recognize and use all tools available to support forests to adapt and thrive with these challenges including adaptive silvicultural practices, promotion of recycled and forest-based products for their unique attributes in terms of carbon sequestration, other ecosystem services, and development values.

PRINCIPLE 8

RELY ON SCIENCE, LOCAL EXPERIENCE, AND TRADITIONAL FOREST-RELATED KNOWLEDGE TO ADVANCE SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

Sustainable forest management will be most successful when it is based on scientific, local experience and traditional forest knowledge, as well as international protocols and processes. Improving scientific understanding through exchanges of scientific, local and traditional forest-related and technological knowledge, and the development, adaptation, diffusion and transfer of technologies, is critical to the delivery of a balanced approach to sustainable forest management. Indigenous peoples have a vital role in sustainable forest management because of their knowledge and traditional practices. Application: Forest certification systems, governments and procurement entities must develop standards based on the best available science, local and traditional knowledge and be structured such that developing countries, communities and small forest landowners have a clear path to meet the forest management standards. These approaches must be independently verifiable, using guidelines and requirements in compliance with internationally respected organizations such as ISO. Conflicts of interests between governmental procurement entities, standard-setting bodies, certification organizations, accreditation bodies, and auditors must be handled accordingly in order to provide legitimacy to the process.

PRINCIPLE 9

USE A PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH TO PREVENT IRREVERSIBLE DAMAGE

In order to best safeguard forest resources, precautionary approaches must be widely applied by all stakeholders where there are imminent threats of serious or irreversible damage. Application: Forest certification systems, governments, and procurement entities must strive for continuous improvement while remaining aware of the consequences of their programmes and standards for all stakeholders.

PRINCIPLE 10

PROMOTING GLOBAL ACCEPTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT THROUGH VOLUNTARY PROGRAMMES AND EDUCATION IS THE FASTEST PATH TO HEALTHY FORESTS AND VIBRANT RURAL COMMUNITIES

Achieving sustainable forest management is a major challenge in many parts of the world. Voluntary forest certification and private and public procurement policies are important tools to protect forests and forest-dependent populations. Application: Forest certification systems, Major Groups and governments have an obligation to make available and use, for the advancement of sustainable forest management, their respective areas of expertise, influence and power. Policies, standards and tactics that negatively affect forest-dependent people, deny markets to sustainably managed forests, and create development obstacles, lead to inefficiencies in the allocation of resources, and are a barrier to advancing sustainable forest management globally and locally.

SIGN THE DECLARATION AT WWW.RIOFORESTCERTIFICATIONDECLARATION.ORG / WWW.RFCD.ORG