

Committee: Environment

Topic: The Question of deforestation

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Summary

This research report addresses the urgent global issue of deforestation. Deforestation is the process of clearing or removal of forests or trees from a particular area, often for agricultural, industrial, or infrastructural purposes. This phenomenon has significant ecological, environmental, and socioeconomic implications, including habitat loss, climate change, and disruption of indigenous communities. This report delves into the background, major stakeholders, timeline of events, relevant UN treaties, previous attempts, and possible solutions to combat deforestation.

Definition of Key Terms

Deforestation: The permanent removal of forests and trees from a specific area, leading to the transformation of forested lands into non-forest use.

Biodiversity: The variety of life forms, including species diversity, genetic diversity, and ecosystem diversity, in a specific region or on Earth as a whole.

Carbon Sequestration: The process by which trees and other vegetation absorb and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, playing a crucial role in mitigating climate change.

Indigenous Communities: Ethnic groups and societies that have historical ties and cultural identities linked to specific forested regions.

Background Information

Deforestation is a multifaceted global issue with far-reaching ecological, environmental, and socioeconomic consequences. The following facts and statistics provide a deeper understanding of the scale and impact of deforestation. Over the past few decades, the world has lost a substantial amount of

forested land. Between 1990 and 2020, the global forest area decreased from 4.1 billion hectares to 4.0 billion hectares, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Forests are home to approximately 80% of terrestrial biodiversity. As forests are cleared, countless species face the risk of extinction. It is estimated that deforestation contributes to the extinction of approximately 100 species daily. Deforestation is a significant driver of climate change. Forests act as carbon sinks, absorbing and storing carbon dioxide. When forests are cut down or burned, this stored carbon is released into the atmosphere. It is estimated that deforestation contributes to about 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The Amazon Rainforest, often referred to as the "lungs of the Earth," has been particularly affected. Brazil, home to a significant portion of the Amazon, experienced a surge in deforestation in recent years. In 2020 alone, Brazil lost over 1.11 million hectares of primary forest, a 9.5% increase from the previous year. Deforestation not only affects ecosystems but also disrupts the lives of indigenous communities that depend on forests for their livelihoods and cultural heritage. Indigenous people have been disproportionately affected by deforestation, often facing land displacement and loss of resources. Illegal logging is a major contributor to deforestation, accounting for a significant portion of timber extraction in many countries. It is estimated that illegal logging results in the loss of billions of dollars in revenue for affected nations annually. Aside from the Amazon, other critical deforestation hotspots include Indonesia, the Congo Basin, and regions in Southeast Asia. Palm oil production, soybean cultivation, and timber harvesting are among the key drivers in these areas. While deforestation is a grave concern, there have been efforts to counteract it. Reforestation and afforestation initiatives aim to restore and expand forested areas. For instance, in 2020, Pakistan launched the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Program, one of the largest afforestation projects globally.

Tools like Global Forest Watch provide real-time monitoring of deforestation activities. In 2020, this platform recorded a total loss of 42.2 million acres of primary tropical forest worldwide. Deforestation can have long-term economic repercussions. Ecosystem services provided by forests, such as clean water, climate regulation, and pollination, have an estimated global value of trillions of dollars annually.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Brazil: One of the world's largest contributors to deforestation, primarily due to logging and agricultural expansion in the Amazon Rainforest.

Indonesia: Extensive deforestation driven by palm oil production, paper, and timber industries.

United States: Involved in deforestation through urbanization, agriculture, and logging.

China: A major importer of timber and wood products, contributing to deforestation in exporting countries.

Timeline of Events

1972: The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, also known as the Stockholm Conference, highlighted concerns about deforestation.

1992: The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro led to the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), addressing deforestation as a contributor to climate change.

2007: The United Nations REDD+ program (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) was launched, aiming to incentivize forest conservation.

2015: The Paris Agreement set targets to reduce emissions, indirectly addressing deforestation by mitigating climate change.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

UNFCCC (1992): The UNFCCC recognized the importance of forests in mitigating climate change, indirectly addressing deforestation.

REDD+ (2007): The REDD+ program aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and to promote conservation and sustainable management of forests.

Possible Solutions

Previous efforts to combat deforestation have included international agreements, national legislation, and sustainable forestry initiatives. However, progress has often been slow due to challenges in enforcement, political will, and competing interests.

Sustainable Logging: Promote sustainable forestry practices that minimize environmental impact and promote reforestation.

Conservation Efforts: Establish and expand protected areas to conserve critical ecosystems.

Economic Incentives: Provide financial incentives for countries and communities to conserve forests, such as payments for ecosystem services.

Strengthen Legal Frameworks: Enforce stricter regulations against illegal logging and deforestation.

Promote Alternative Materials: Develop and promote alternative materials to reduce the demand for timber and wood products.

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