AMAZONIA FOR LIFE:
PROTECT 80% BY 2025

POLICY FACT SHEET

Fact Sheet Summary

Amazonia is an awe-inspiring region that spans across nine countries, is home to millions of indigenous peoples from over 500 nationalities, and is vital for global weather regulation and climate stability and as a refuge for biodiversity. It is in the midst of a tipping point crisis and a new paradigm of action and immediate protections on a vast scale are critical.

In light of the successful approval of **IUCN Motion 129** in the last General Assembly of the IUCN during the World Conservation Congress in September 2021, the Initiative "Amazonia for Life: protect 80% by 2025" presents the Summary of an ongoing research that aims at developing a set of data that informs and guides global, national, regional, and local policy related to the region. Our findings demonstrate that the protection of 80% of the Amazonia is not only possible - and needed, but urgent. Our data presents several innovations of the current debate, which are described as follows:

Rainbow shines in the Ecuadorian Amazon. ©Amazon Watch/Caroline Bennett

1 The Amazonia for Life Initiative adopts **Amazonia as a more comprehensive concept** that includes all the ecosystems that are part of this megasystem (biome and associated drainage basins, headwaters, Amazonian ecosystems, and administrative regions) present in 9 countries.

2 Tipping point science tells us that if deforestation and high degradation combined cross the 20-25 percent threshold, scientists warn that the system will reach an irreversible tipping point that can result in the regressive death of the entire ecosystem. Given the breadth of the surface we studied, the **tipping point is not a future scenario but a current one.**

- As a result of different drivers (roads, oil, mining, agriculture, hydroelectric plants, and others), **deforestation and degradation combined have already reached 22% of the Amazonia**.
- The aftermath is that in **vast areas** there has already been **complete transformation** and other symptoms of unraveling such as climate alteration, fires and droughts, and others, are already taking place.

- Most of the deforestation (87.5%) took place outside Protected Areas (PAs) and Indigenous Territories (ITs).

3 Regardless of the existing degradation and deforestation rates, **most of the Amazonia still contains sites with very high functionality and ecological representativeness that reach 72% of the region aside of an additional 16% of areas that need restoration.** These areas are **Key Priority Areas (KPA) to preserve the Amazonia** and are composed of 31% **of undisturbed areas and 41% areas with low disturbance** and represent priorities for immediate protection is needed to preserve these KPAs.

4 The 31% of undisturbed areas of Key Priority Areas include 273 million hectares. Of these, **75% or 203 million hectares are primary forests and forests with low disturbance.** Currently, these forests don't have any level of protection and should be immediate priorities for recognized indiegenous territories, new protected areas and co-managed reserves.

5 **16% of the Amazonia needs to be restored** because of its high ecological and environmental value to create connectivity among Key Priority Areas.

Deforestation and degradation combined have already reached 22% of the Amazonia. The deforestation (87.5%) took place outside Protected Areas (PAs) and Indigenous Territories (ITs).

Drone Photos of Environmental Damage in Xingu Kayapo, Brazil ©Midia India

Fact Sheet

1. In light of the successful approval of Motion 129 in the last General Assembly of the IUCN during the World Conservation Congress in September 2021, the Initiative "Amazonia for Life: protect 80% by 2025" presents the Summary of an ongoing research that aims at developing a set of data that informs and guides the global, national, and local policy. Our findings demonstrate that the protection of 80% of the Amazonia is not only possible - and needed, but urgent. Our data presents a new vision of the current debate.

2. The first one is a methodological approach to what we define as Amazonia. The Initiative "Amazonia for Life: protect 80% by 2025" adopts RAISG's definition of Amazonia delimiting an area of analysis that includes the Amazon biome and associated drainage basins, headwaters, Amazonian ecosystems, and administrative regions present in nine countries. These criteria cover i) the limits of the Amazon biome in Colombia and Venezuela; ii) the limits of the Amazon basin in Ecuador, Perú and Bolivia; iii) the sum of the limits of the basins (Amazonas and Araguaia/Tocantins) and the limits of the administrative Legal Amazon in Brazil; iv) the whole continental territories of Guyana, French Guiana, and Suriname. The outcome is an area that covers 847[1] million hectares (8,470,209 km2) (RAISG 2021) of which protected areas (PAs) and indigenous territories (ITs) cover close to 50 percent (RAISG 2020). However, it doesn't mean that industrial extractivism is off-limits in these areas.

3. Given this more comprehensive geographical scope and using updated information, our assessment shows that the **tipping point** is not a futuristic scenario but rather **a current stage,** in which immediate action is needed. Science has established the tipping point is within a 20-25 percent threshold of deforestation and high forest degradation combined. The dataset produced by RAISG and analyzed in this document shows that **22% of the Amazonia is under high disturbance** which has been defined as the combination of forest degradation, fire recurrence, and deforestation. Therefore, **the region is immersed in a tipping point context or the loss of resilience capacity of the ecosystem.** We are not projecting a future scenario, we are witnessing an ongoing level of destruction in the region that has planetary implications. Therefore, **policy action is urgent at a local, national, regional and international level.**

4. **66% of the Amazonia is subject to some type of fixed or ongoing pressure** related to the presence of drivers (RAISG 2020, p.42) of deforestation and degradation including:

   a. **Road density:** Nearly **19% of the Amazonia is** a paved or unpaved **road** (RAISG 2020, p.21).
   b. **Hydroelectric plants (HP):** There are 350 hydroelectric power plants operating in the basin and 483 are planned, adding a total of **833 hydroelectric plants** (RAISG 2020, p. 24). The construction of hydroelectric projects **alters the free flowing of over 1,100 tributaries** that comprise the Amazon basin.
   c. **Oil Blocks: Oil blocks occupy 9.4% of the area of Amazonia and 43% of these oil blocks are within Indigenous Territories (IT-11%) and Protected Areas (PA).** Most

El 22% de la Amazonía se encuentra bajo un estado de perturbación avanzada.

1 847020911

of the blocks (369) are in the **Andean Amazon** (Bolivia, Colombia, Perú, Ecuador), home to numerous indigenous peoples, including some uncontacted or in voluntary isolation.

In the last 20 years, Peru alone recorded around 500 oil spills. In Ecuador, between 2015 and June 2021, there have been 899 oil spills. The spill that occurred in Ecuador in April 2020 due to the rupture of the oil pipeline is the largest in the last 15 years. This disaster, which occurred at the beginning of the pandemic, contaminated about 500 km of the Coca and Napo rivers. Spills threaten food security and access to water and lead to chronic diseases.

d. **Mining:** Mining, present in all the countries of Amazonia, affects 17% of the region. The surface of Protected Areas affected by mining concessions is 9.3%. Mining areas also overlap with 11.2% of Indgenous Territories (ITs), which affects mainly recognized ITs.

e. **Agriculture and Ranching:** Areas dedicated to agricultural activity grew 81% in the last two decades, this growth is responsible for 84% of Amazonian deforestation.

f. **Fires:** Since 2000, fires have affected an area equivalent to the entire territory of Bolivia.

5 **Most of the deforestation (87.5%) took place outside of protected areas** and **indigenous territories** (RAISG 2020).

6 All these drivers result in **symptoms** that reveal the depth of the transformation that is already occurring in the Amazonia.

a. **Climate alteration** has **already occurred** in parts of the region reaching temperatures of 1.5 °C celsius and above, higher than historic average. In Bolivia for example, rainfall has registered an annual decrease of -17%, reaching a maximum of -64% in August and September. Meanwhile, the average monthly temperature already registers rises of more than +2.1 °C which, in turn, cause more intense and prolonged droughts.

b. **Savannization** is already a reality in the **southeast** of the region, mainly in **Brazil and Bolivia**.

c. **Uncontrolled burning and droughts:** Are a driver and a symptom of deep changes and degradation in the rainforest. Deforestation and degradation facilitate burning of forest remnants, leading to a non-stop deforestation feedback loop.

d. **Urbanization:** The Amazonia is home to **48 million inhabitants** of cities, towns and rural settlements (RAISG 2020) many of whom live in precarious conditions which fosters informality and illegality.

e. **Violence:** Between 2015 and the first half of 2019, 232 leaders of Indigenous communities were assassinated in the region due to disputes over land and natural resources. In 2020,[1] this trend continued: "the three most targeted sectors of human rights defense in the Americas were: land, environmental, and Indigenous peoples' rights (40%)".[2] Last year, nearly two-thirds (62.2%) of the human rights defenders killed around the world took place in Amazon countries.[3]

> Since 2000, fires have affected an area equivalent to the entire territory of Bolivia.

1   FAO and FILAC, "Forest Governance by Indigenous and Tribal People. An Opportunity for Climate Action in Latin America and the Caribbean", (2021), http://www.fao.org/3/cb2930en/cb2930en.pdf

2   Front Line Defenders, "Front Line Defenders Global Analysis 2020", https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/fld_global_analysis_2020.pdf

3   Ibid.

Most of the Amazonia still contains sites with very high functionality and ecological representativeness fundamental for water security, food security and climate resilience.

An Indigenous man navigates his boat through the Ecuadorian Amazon. ©Amazon Watch
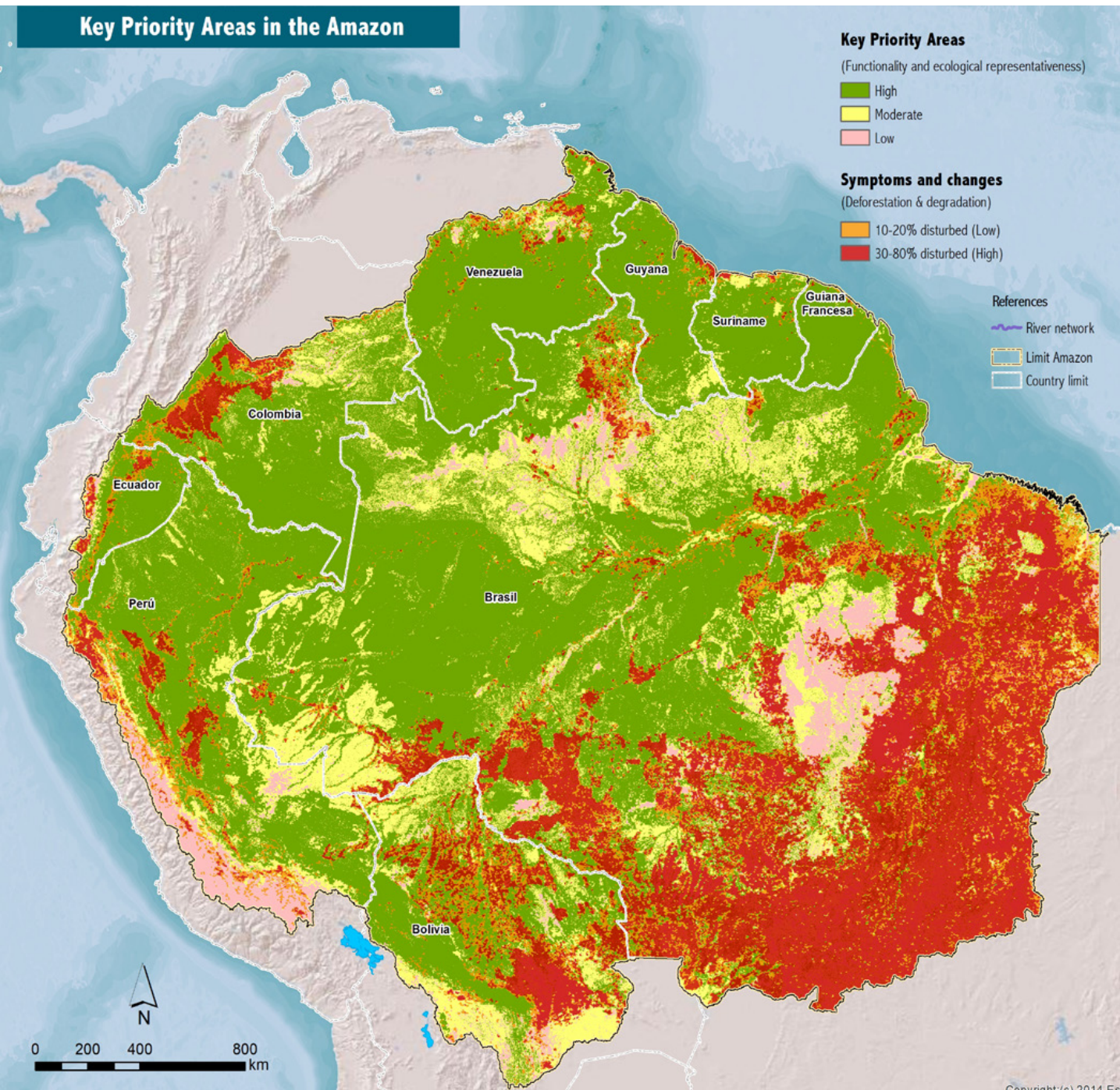
Opportunities

Despite the existing degradation and deforestation rates, most of the Amazonia still contains sites with very high functionality and ecological representativeness fundamental for water security, food security and climate resilience**.** These sites are critical **to stop the current trend.** There is a **set of opportunity areas for policy that can reverse the tipping point.**

In this section we present **Key Priority Areas (KPA)** and the **current status of forests** that result from implementing the following three criteria:

1 **Richness:** areas of high ecological importance defined by **Biodiversity representativeness** (amphibians, birds and mammals) and **Ecosystem functionality** that includes 3 functions: 1. Provisioning sources (forests, wetlands, and other non forest ecosystems), 2. Regulating functions as risk control of floods and carbon sequestration to stabilize climate, and 3. Supporting functions such as forest heterogeneity for greater resilience.

2 **Complexity:** as areas of high ecosystem heterogeneity that allow high levels of biodiversity Richness and,

3 **Singularity** that refers to ecosystems with restricted distribution.

Key Priority Areas in the Amazon

Key Priority Areas
(Functionality and ecological representativeness)
- High
- Moderate
- Low

Symptoms and changes
(Deforestation & degradation)
- 10-20% disturbed (Low)
- 30-80% disturbed (High)

References
- River network
- Limit Amazon
- Country limit

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Results

Key Priority Areas (KPA)

Well conserved areas (highly functional and with high ecological representativeness) **represent 72% of the Amazonia**. This percentage is composed of **31% of undisturbed areas and 41% areas with low disturbance**.

- **Undisturbed areas** represent the following percentages of Amazonia in each country: Bolivia (28%), Brazil (29%), Colombia (36%), Ecuador (26%), French Guiana (61%), Guyana (30%), Peru (31%), Suriname (57%), Venezuela (42%).

- **The 41% surface corresponding to low disturbance areas** represent the following percentages of the Amazonia in each country: Bolivia (46%), Brazil (35%), Colombia (53%), Ecuador (67%), French Guiana (39%), Guyana (65%), Peru (52%), Suriname (40%), Venezuela (53%).

- High degradation and deforestation happens mostly outside indigenous territories and protected areas. However, in the last few years **degradation** is taking place **in protected areas and indigenous territories** as well.

- **32% (273 million hectares) of the Key Priority Areas** don't have **any level of protection or indigenous land titling.** 75% of these areas are forests.

- **16% (133.4 million hectares) of the Amazon needs to be restored** because of its high ecological and environmental value to create connectivity among ecosystems.

Primary Forests

- **29% of the Amazonia (246.492.600 ha) is a primary forest** and represent an important size in each country's Amazonia: Bolivia (25%), Brazil (27%), Colombia (35%), Ecuador (22%), French Guiana (60%), Guyana (29%), Peru (29%), Suriname (55%), Venezuela (38%).

- **Forests with low disturbance** account for 30% of the total forests and represent the following portions in each country: Bolivia and Brazil (26% each), Colombia (46%), Ecuador (50%), French Guiana (37%), Guyana (55%), Peru (39%), Suriname (34%), Venezuela (40%).

- **Nearly a fourth (24%, close to 200 million hectares) of the primary forests and forests with low disturbance do not have any protection figure and therefore are at high risk of destruction and are in need of immediate protection.**

©Bruno Kelly/Amazonia Real. Terra Indigena Vale do Javari

Global Policy Priorities

Given the main results of this first analysis, there is a solutions pathway that can be adopted immediately and that has already been recognized by the **IUCN in Motion 129**:

1 To effectively respond to **an actual tipping point scenario**, it is **vital to declare the Amazonia as a global emergency** that allows for **immediate funding and action plans** by the international community. Amazon countries need a just transition to a development model based on respect of human, indigenous, and nature rights. **A conditioned debt forgiveness for the Amazonia conservation** will allow an ordered transformation of their economies.

2 **Ecosystem integrity: 72% of the Amazonia requires immediate protection and 16% needs restoration.** To protect primary forests and undisturbed Key Priority Areas, **it is essential to enact moratoria on industrial activities that are carried out in primary forests.**

3 While protected areas receive funding, **indigenous territories** with even higher levels of conservation in some cases **do not receive any type of funding**. **It is vital to implement the Durban Accord governance model** to immediately **recognize the role of indigenous territories in the protection of key ecosystems and incorporate a direct payment system for their stewardship**.

4 **To advance in a new direction, legally binding Free, Prior, Informed Consent is essential** in Amazon countries to redefine policy in indigenous territories and local communities in key ecosystems.

5 To avoid land grabbing and violence for land tenure, it is crucial to **delimit and provide legal title of over 200 million hectares of undesignated lands prioritizing all the ancestral land and territories** belonging to indigenous peoples and local communities while recognizing their local governance authorities. The governance model carried along by indigenous peoples for millennia has been the mechanism to preserve most of the forest.

6 **Restore at least half of the degraded forest areas in the Amazon Basin** by 2025. To achieve a 80%, it is key to restore 16% of the already degraded high value ecosystems to guarantee the functionality of the other 72%.

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The Amazonia Initiative for Life: Protect 80% by 2025 is an urgent call to action led by the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) and its network of national organizations:

AIDESEP, Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana/ The Inter-Ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest.

APA, Asociación de Pueblos Amerindios de Guayana/ Amerindian Peoples Association.

CIDOB orgánica, Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano/The Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia

COIAB, Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Amazonía Brasileña/Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon or COIAB

CONFENIAE, Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana/Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon

OPIAC, Organización Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana/National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon .

ORPIA, Organización Regional de Pueblos Indígenas del Amazonas (Venezuela)/Regional Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon.

OIS, Organizaciones Indígenas de Surinam/Indigenous Organizations of Suriname.

FOAG, Federación de Organizaciones Autóctonas de Guayana/ Francesa Federation of Indigenous Organizations of French Guiana.

In solidarity with the indigenous nations and peoples of the Amazon, the **Executive Committee** of the Initiative Amazonia for Life: protecting 80% by 2025 **is coordinated by COICA and Stand.earth**

The founding organizations include: AVAAZ, RAISG, Amazon Watch, One Earth, Artists for the Amazon, Wild Heritage, and Noo World.