

1 December 2008

70% deforestation cuts for Brazil



Rainforest destruction in Brazil

Brazil's disappearing rainforests have long been of concern

Brazil has announced a plan to reduce deforestation rates in the Amazon region by 70% over the next ten years.

The plan follows a call for international funding to prevent further loss of the Amazon rainforest.

This year, the rate of Amazon deforestation increased after falling for the past four years.

The announcement comes as the UN's latest round of climate talks begin.

Tasso Azevedo, head of the Brazilian government's forestry service said "We can now adopt targets because we now have the instruments to implement them."

He was referring to a new Amazon fund, where foreign nations are being encouraged by Brazil to contribute financially to the conservation of the vast Amazon region.

Last month, Norway announced its intention to support the fund, saying it will give \$130m (euros 103m; £88m) next year, the first instalment of a \$1bn, (euros 700m; £670m) to be given over the next seven years, however Norway will only make each year's donation on the condition that there has been a reduction in deforestation during the previous year.

The 70% figure comes from averaging levels of deforestation in the 10 years up to 2005, the plan aims to see a reduction in deforestation of nearly 6,000 sq km per year or about half the current annual rate of deforestation.

A crackdown on illegal settlements and increased policing in the Amazon region came earlier this year, following an estimated 3.8% increase in deforestation compared with the previous year.

Burning of the forests has contributed to increases in global atmospheric carbon dioxide levels, but Brazil's environment minister Carlos Minc said the initiative showed the country is committed to reducing global emissions.

"Just in terms of avoided deforestation in the Amazon, the plan foresees a reduction of 4.8 billion tons of carbon dioxide that won't be emitted up to 2018 - which is more than the reduction efforts fixed by all the rich countries," he said.