

Letter to the OECD: Insist that Brazil meet the OECD's high standards for environmental protection, climate, and Indigenous rights.

When considering Brazil for membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the organization's member states and staff should insist that Brazil carry out meaningful, measurable, and immediate change in its treatment of the environment, climate, and Indigenous Peoples. Achieving broad and sustained improvements in these areas should be an essential condition for Brazilian accession to the OECD. This is consistent with the OECD's requirement that applicants demonstrate a ["shared vision" of democracy and human rights while meeting country-specific "Core Principles" including environment, biodiversity, and climate.](#)

When evaluating the adequacy of Brazilian environmental and social performance, the OECD should conduct careful, independent due diligence of Brazil's record. An OECD analysis of where Brazil is currently falling short of applicable standards or failing to do its part to achieve global goals would help establish a baseline against which future progress should be measured. Member States must insist that Brazil meet the organization's high standards for environmental protection and social justice prior to granting Brazil membership in the OECD.

Joining the OECD has long been a goal of the Brazilian government and its people, and this process is now at a critical moment. In June, the OECD prepared an official ["Roadmap"](#) outlining the process OECD will follow to consider Brazil's accession, and detailing the "Core Principles" that Brazil must meet. The roadmap makes clear that the OECD rightly expects Brazil to meet environment, biodiversity, and climate policy principles, [including reversing and halting deforestation](#) as agreed during the UNFCCC COP26 in Glasgow, in November 2021. Further, the Roadmap refers not only to environmental protections but to "respecting and enforcing the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities" and "rigorously investigating" violence and intimidation against environmental defenders. The inclusion of these criteria reflects a crucial understanding that Brazil cannot protect the Amazon rainforest without protecting the people on the front lines of efforts to save it.

Our groups believe – and data show – that Brazil under the Bolsonaro regime does not currently meet the OECD's environmental, climate, and human rights criteria. Yet, this month, Brazil is expected to submit its "Initial Memorandum" – the official document where the country will likely argue that its policies and practices conform with the OECD requirements. OECD technical committees will then review the Memorandum against the Roadmap's criteria and determine the next steps for accession. How OECD member countries and committees respond will have real-world consequences for climate change, the Amazon region, and Indigenous Peoples, among other key global issues.

The OECD's Environmental Policy Committee should thoroughly examine the rise of deforestation rates and degradation in the Amazon region – particularly it approaches dangerous ecological tipping points. Approximately [40% of current deforestation in the Amazon biome occurs on public lands](#). Of public lands demarcated as Indigenous territories and conservation units, deforestation increased [153% and 63%](#), respectively, in the last 3 years (2019-2021). Such deforestation is largely due to the dismantling of the federal agencies responsible for enforcing environmental laws and protecting Indigenous rights.

Federal and state governments have [failed to protect publicly-owned forests](#); their continued inaction now renders these undesignated lands more vulnerable to land-grabbing and deforestation.

The OECD's Committee on Agriculture should pay attention to the drivers of deforestation and illegal land-clearing for crops and grazing. Such land-clearing (usually illegal) is often visible through fires. In August, the number of [Amazon fires hit a nearly 15-year high](#), according to data from the federal program that monitors fires in the biome. With over 3,000 fires detected, this is almost three times what was seen on the "Day of Fire" in 2019. The OECD should consider the country's poor forest governance as a major flaw, which contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and negatively affects the overall business environment in the country.

In addition to increasing levels of deforestation, violent crimes and human rights abuses have increased under the Bolsonaro administration. These frequently include acts of violence and intimidation against environmental defenders. In 2020 and 2021, 182 and 176 Indigenous people were murdered in Brazil respectively. Last year saw the [highest number of violent crimes](#) committed against Indigenous Peoples since 2013. The OECD's Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee must recognize the current situation within Brazil and ensure that the review of the "Initial Memorandum" recognizes the changes that must occur within the country to achieve the OECD's roadmap.

We, the signatories of this letter, urge you to thoroughly examine Brazil's current record. Please carefully evaluate Brazil's climate and environmental policies, processes, and track records. Insist upon strong due diligence that includes third-party assessments, independent reviews, and fact-finding missions. Consult civil society, Indigenous Peoples, and forest defenders whose lives have been put at risk.

While we hope Brazil will be able to join the OECD in future years, the process should not be rushed. The OECD must contend with high levels of deforestation and degradation, Indigenous rights abuses, and forest crimes that have worsened during the Bolsonaro administration. We urge the OECD to mandate that to gain membership, Brazil will have to complete meaningful policy reforms in these areas – and demonstrable progress on the ground -- as a precondition to joining the OECD.



A Drop in The Ocean	Conectas Direitos Humanos	Society for Threatened Peoples
Advocates For Community Alternatives	Environmental Defense Fund	Greenpeace Med (Israel)
Both ENDS	Environmental Investigation Agency	Hivos
Business and Human Rights Resource Centre	Foreign Policy for America	IBANQROO
Center for American Progress	Forest Trends	Inga Foundation USA
Climate Advisers	Global Witness	International Federation for Human Rights
Justiça Global	Oyu Tolgoi Watch	International Rivers
Lady Lawyer Foundation	Public Eye	Swedwatch
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns	Polski Instytut Praw Człowieka i Biznesu	Talanoa Institute
Movimento Nacional de Direitos Humanos - MNDH Brasil	ProDESC	The Jus Semper Global Alliance
Movimento Tapajós Vivo	Reseau International Des Citoyens Pour L'environnement	Uma Gota No Oceano
National Wildlife Federation	River without Boundaries Coalition - Mongolia	Washington Brazil Office
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)	Save My Future (SAMFU) Foundation	Wild Heritage
OECD Watch		Wildlife Conservation Society
		World Animal Protection
		WWF-Brasil