

11-7-1997

## G-7 Countries Agree to Fund Rain-Forest Project in Brazil

LADB Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur>

---

### Recommended Citation

LADB Staff. "G-7 Countries Agree to Fund Rain-Forest Project in Brazil." (1997). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur/12432>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiSur by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [amywinter@unm.edu](mailto:amywinter@unm.edu).

## **G-7 Countries Agree to Fund Rain-Forest Project in Brazil**

by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Brazil

Published: 1997-11-07

On Oct. 27-30, representatives of the Group of Seven (G-7) most industrialized nations and several European Union (EU) countries met in Manaus, Brazil, to evaluate their efforts to protect the rain forest. At this fourth annual evaluation meeting, participating countries pledged US\$72 million for a transition phase of the ambitious Pilot Program (G7-PP), administered by the World Bank, which is designed to protect Brazil's rain forests and bring sustainable development to its vast Amazon region. In 1990, amid global concern about deforestation in the world's largest remaining tropical rain forest, the G-7 agreed to finance preservation of the Amazon and the smaller Atlantic Forest along Brazil's coastline (see NotiSur, 10/18/96).

The G7-PP has distributed US\$181.3 million of a total of US\$250 million pledged, funding more than 100 projects such as the demarcation of Indian reserves, the protection of fishing communities from large-scale competitors, the measurement of forest damage, and the promotion of environmentally friendly methods for tapping rain-forest resources. The transition phase will link the six-year-old pilot program and a Phase Two program. "When we speak of the future, that means completing and consolidating current projects and thinking about Phase Two of the G7-PP," said Brazilian Environment Minister Gustavo Krause.

In his remarks opening the meeting, Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso expressed his "very great concern" about protecting the country's vast rain forests. But Cardoso also defended his government's plan to build a network of roads, riverways, and energy projects in the Amazon. "To really develop the Amazon without damaging the environment, we must integrate it with the rest of the country and the rest of the world," Cardoso said.

At the meeting, Brazilian officials said that the amount pledged for the transition phase was inadequate, but they expressed confidence that G-7 members would pledge additional funds at the next meeting scheduled for June 1998 in Paris. "Although we didn't get the US\$80 to US\$90 million we wanted to complete the financing of several projects, the US\$72 million that was pledged is an excellent result," said Jose Seixas Lourenco, Amazon coordination secretary for the Environment Ministry.

### ***Plans call for "development corridors"***

Environmentalists fear the new projects may increase destruction of the ecologically rich area, but they said the most important outcome of the meeting was a proposal to establish "corridors" in the gigantic Amazon basin. According to the World Bank, proposed infrastructure projects would correspond to "development corridors," where the "objective is to increase and geographically concentrate economic activity." Such corridors would be counterbalanced by "conservation corridors," where biodiversity would be protected.

For areas between the corridors, the bank's Rain Forest Unit suggests promoting economic activity that preserves as much of the forest as possible rather than clearing land for agriculture. G7-PP managers are resigned to the inevitable large-scale infrastructure projects in the rain forest, including paving a road from Manaus to Venezuela and river-widening projects to boost soybean exports. "It seems important that the realities of the Amazon region and its political weight and significance must be taken into account if effective conservation of at least a good part of the Amazon is to be achieved," said a World Bank's Rain Forest Unit memo. Fires continue to burn the Amazon Even as the G-7 delegates met, fires continued to burn large tracts of the Amazon, creating increasing health hazards in the area's cities.

The special report in the newspaper O Estado de Sao Paulo in late October said doctors are seeing increasing numbers of Manaus's 1.1 million residents with respiratory ailments (see NotiSur, 10/17/97). The smoke began affecting Manaus in mid-September. The forest fires producing the choking smoke have been aggravated by the effects of El Nino, the periodic warming of waters in the eastern Pacific that has caused the region's most severe drought in 25 years. A cold layer of air in the atmosphere produced by El Nino is impeding air circulation below and keeping the smoke from dispersing.

In addition, this year the fires have spread into virgin forest, where deep roots usually keep trees so moist they rarely burn. As the rain forest burns, greenhouse gases spew into the atmosphere. The gases mostly carbon dioxide and methane stay in the air for years, and many scientists believe they trap the sun's heat and add to global warming. But experts disagree on just how much is released, and a leading ecologist questions the Brazilian government figures. According to the government, Brazil produces less than 2% of the world's greenhouse gases. However, Eduardo Martins, president of the Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e Recursos Naturais (IBAMA), says in reality "it's at least 6%."

By comparison, the US is responsible for around 26% mostly from car exhausts and other fuel emissions. Philip Fearnside, a US scientist at the National Institute for Amazon Research in Manaus for more than 20 years, agrees that emissions are much higher. He says the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais (INPE), the government agency that monitors burning and deforestation, is only counting a third of the emissions.

One major problem is the government policy of encouraging farmers to burn their land for pasture. Local farmer Idalino Cordeiro de Sousa explained that he must clear the trees on the plot he received from the Instituto Nacional de Colonizacao y Reforma Agraria (INCRA) to obtain credit. "What else are we going to do?" he says. "INCRA only gives loans for planting, and we can only plant if we cut," said Cordeiro de Sousa. INCRA says it may change that policy. The government says small farmers account for 40% of Amazon deforestation, and the law allows settlers to cut and burn up to eight acres without authorization from IBAMA.

### *Government creates new reserve*

In a related development, the Amazonas state government has created a new reserve, the largest contiguous block of protected rain forest. The Amana Sustainable Development Reserve is the third of a network of protected areas in the Central Amazon Basin that together comprise over 57,000

sq km of unbroken habitat an area larger than Costa Rica. "The creation of the Amana Reserve is one of the most important measures taken in the Brazilian Amazon in the past decade," said Dr. Jose Marcio Ayres, senior conservation zoologist with the New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society. "It establishes a new vision in conservation in the region, where rain-forest corridors will protect not only species but entire evolutionary and ecological processes. It also preserves the unique biodiversity of the Amazon's black and white river systems. In addition, this solidifies the formation of the Central Amazonian Corridor that will protect Amazonian flooded and dryland forests." (Sources: Spanish news service EFE, 10/24/97; Deutsche Press Agentur, 10/20/97, 10/30/97; Environmental News Service, 10/28/97, 10/30/97; Reuter, 10/25/97, 10/31/97; Associated Press, 10/28/97, 10/31/97, 11/03/97)

-- End --