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## Brazil: Amazon deforestation takes on new force

This month, provisional measure No.422 was adopted as law by the Brazilian parliament, providing for an increase in the area of the Amazon that may be granted for rural use with no need to call for bids. The limit, previously set at 500 hectares, has been increased to 1,500 hectares, allowing deforestation of up to 20 percent of the area granted.

The voting had the strong opposition of the former minister of the Environment, Senator Marina Silva, who accused the Government of legalizing the illegal appropriation of Amazon lands. "This measure will mean a land privatization process," she declared, forecasting serious detriment to the Plan for Combating Amazon Deforestation.

This news appeared at the same time as the revelations of a new US study published in the journal "PNAS" denounced in the Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper on 1/7/2008. The study shows that between 2000 and 2005, Brazil headed the list regarding area of deforestation and speed of devastation, although it had managed to reduce by 59 percent deforestation rates (dropping from 27,429 km<sup>2</sup> between August 2003 and July 2004, to 11,224 km<sup>2</sup> at the time of the latest measurement taken between August 2006 and July 2007). However everything seems to indicate that this will now be reverted.

According to data from the National Space Research Institute – INPE – (Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Espaciales), the Brazilian Amazon lost 1,096 square kilometres during May and more than half of this deforestation took place in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul (646 km<sup>2</sup>), where historically great pressure on the forest from soybean plantations and cattle-raising has been denounced.

Furthermore, although the expansion of sugar-cane to produce ethanol does not involve Amazon land, it exerts indirect pressure insofar as it is located in neighbouring areas making them more expensive and shoving other plantations and cattle-raising towards the Amazon, contributing to its penetration with the building of highways and facilities.

Additionally, deforestation also has a direct impact on global warming from the release of carbon dioxide, altering the evaporation-transpiration process regulating climate behaviour.

Repeating our opinion in this respect, there is no doubt that forests are disappearing, not because the people and their governments are ignorant or because of the lack of appropriate management plans. Forests are disappearing because a series of interconnected national and international policies are preparing the ground for this to happen. Therefore it is at this level that solutions must be found.

Article based on information from: "Brasil é líder total em desmatamento, mostra novo estudo", Instituto Humanista Unisinos, Internet, 1-7-08, <http://www.biodiversidadla.org/content/view/full/42192> ; "Deforestación amazónica superó los 1.000 km<sup>2</sup>", Newspaper "El Universal C.A.," (Venezuela) [http://www.eluniversal.com/2008/07/15/ten\\_ava\\_deforestacion-amazon\\_15A1799685.shtml](http://www.eluniversal.com/2008/07/15/ten_ava_deforestacion-amazon_15A1799685.shtml)

