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Rich should help Amazon forests, summit says

Nine nations in the Amazon region have called on rich countries to provide poorer nations with the funds to preserve forests.



Greenpeace activists staged protests in Manaus during the summit

The nations, meeting in Manaus, Brazil, also discussed supporting a 40% reduction in global emissions by 2020.

The meeting comes shortly before the key global summit on climate change in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The Amazon nations agreed on broad principles rather than concrete steps, correspondents said.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva chaired the meeting of delegates from Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Venezuela and Surinam, with French President Nicolas Sarkozy representing French Guiana.

Slowing deforestation

Presidents Sarkozy and Lula said richer nations must increase their aid to help the poorer countries fight global warming.

"The poor need to be supported without any country giving up its sovereignty," President Lula said.

The BBC's Paulo Cabral reports from Manaus that for the past few days diplomats have been negotiating a common position to be presented by the Amazon countries and France at the conference in Copenhagen. The common statement agreed in Brazil establishes broad principles rather than fresh or concrete proposals, he adds.

He says most of the presidents invited did not come to Manaus, though diplomats say that the ministers and ambassadors sent in their place were in a position to close a deal.

Brazil proposed fighting deforestation in the Amazon basin with financial backing from wealthy nations.

"Let no gringo [foreigner] ask us to let an Amazonian starve to death under a tree," Mr Lula said in a speech ahead of the meeting.

"We want to preserve [the forests], but [other countries] have to pay for that preservation."

At the summit, the Brazilian government presented its efforts to reduce destruction in the Amazon as a key part of its strategy to combat climate change.

Earlier this month, Brazil's government said the rate of deforestation in the Amazon had dropped by 45% - and was the lowest on record since monitoring began 21 years ago.

It said that just over 7,000 sq km (2,700 square miles) had been destroyed between July 2008 and August 2009. Brazil is seeking an 80% reduction in the deforestation rate by 2020.

The environmental group Greenpeace has welcomed the latest drop but says there is still too much destruction in the rainforest.

Earlier this month, Brazil said it aimed to cut its carbon emissions by at least 36% below 1990 levels by 2020.

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President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva

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