

## Africa

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# African summit calls for action on rainforests

By Thomas Hubert BBC News, Brazzaville

Representatives of 18 rainforest countries have met to strengthen co-operation between the three main forest regions in the world.



Deforestation is just one of the threats facing the world's rainforests

The heads of state and government ministers met in Brazzaville in the Republic of Congo.

They called for more international funding for forest conservation in the fight against climate change.

However, they failed to agree on a formal structure to co-ordinate forestry policies around the Equator.

All the pomp of African summits was on display to show the world that rainforest conservation is now a top diplomatic priority for the 35 South American, African and South-East Asian countries invited to take part in this week's summit in Brazzaville.

But only half of them - mostly African nations - sent high-level envoys to Friday's final meeting.



Many countries sent ministers instead of heads of state

Participants insisted that their forests provided international services such as carbon sequestration [removing carbon from the atmosphere] as well as opportunities to reduce poverty for the estimated 1.5 billion people who make a living from the forests.

One example discussed over the past week was food production from giant snails in the Cameroonian jungle.

According to [a report prepared by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation for the summit](#), deforestation has gone down by a quarter in the past 10 years but forests are still being depleted at an alarming rate.

Countries with rainforests agreed to hold regular ministerial meetings and co-ordinate their positions before a fresh round of international climate change and environment talks scheduled for December in South Africa and next year in Brazil.

They made it clear that they are not happy with the financial assistance received from developed nations so far, as expressed by Guyana's President Bharrat Jagdeo, who was appointed by the summit to act as roving ambassador for the three tropical forest basins.

"In the Copenhagen accord, \$10bn (\$6bn) was pledged per annum," he said.

"The developed world, in their interaction with us, is saying 'this money is being disbursed'. For us, we don't see any evidence of this disbursement. So where is this money going?"

Most countries from the Amazon and Borneo-Mekong basins did not attend the summit and others sent ministers instead of heads of state.

As a result, the signature of a draft pact circulated here to establish a permanent co-operation body for the world's three largest rainforest basins was postponed until next year.

However, NGO representatives and diplomats seemed pleased with the outcome of the meeting. One delegate said that he would have expected its message to be much more watered down.