

30 August 2019

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release

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Dear Personal details removed for proactive  
release

I refer to your email of 3 August 2019 in which you request the following information

*"...I was wondering what MFAT is doing in relation to the massive destruction of the Brazilian rainforest. Is it MFAT's responsibility to speak out against on behalf of New Zealand? Is New Zealand doing anything about this?"*

I am advised that the New Zealand Embassy in Brasilia meets regularly with senior Brazilian Government officials to convey the importance of climate change issues to New Zealand and the importance of Brazil playing its part in the response to climate change, particularly in the context of the Paris Agreement. The New Zealand Prime Minister has expressed concern about the fires and their environmental impact, and the New Zealand Ambassador has conveyed these concerns directly to the Brazilian Government.

The New Zealand Government also engages in a range of international environmental fora that directly or indirectly address deforestation. Brazil is a member of many of these fora.

The New Zealand Government supports global efforts on sustainable forest management and combatting illegal logging. This is achieved through active engagement in international organisations such as the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO), the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and Forum on Forests, and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Expert Group in Illegal Logging and Associated Trade.

We also actively engage with any forestry discussions that occur amongst Parties to the United Nations climate change treaties (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement). In addition, Minister for Climate Change met the Brazilian Minister for the Environment, Edson Duarte, at the 24th Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Poland.

The New Zealand Government also supports the REDD+ programme in reducing deforestation in developing countries like Brazil. Each year, the Government provides technical expertise and support to the UN REDD+ programme in the review of participating developing countries submissions. The UN REDD+ programme provides the opportunity for

developing countries, like Brazil, to set deforestation baselines and be rewarded for reductions in deforestation.

Brazil and New Zealand are both Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The current set of global biodiversity targets, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, were agreed in the Convention on Biological Diversity. Target 5 states that, by 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero. Other targets address species loss and area protection. New Zealand continues to advocate for Parties to the Convention to work towards achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets before their expiry in 2020. New Zealand is also active in the negotiations for a new set of global biodiversity targets to replace the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Brazil and New Zealand were both active in the negotiations of a draft resolution on deforestation at the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly in March 2019.

Domestically, the New Zealand Government supports the New Zealand Imported Timber Trade Group, which works to supply sustainably-sourced imported timbers. The Ministry for Primary Industries also combats the importation of illegally logged timber through encouraging voluntary industry initiatives, policies to address illegal logging and a government policy for buying timber products.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details redacted) may be published on the Ministry's website.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the OIA to seek a review of this response by the Ombudsman.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Wendy Adams', written over a horizontal line.

Wendy Adams  
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade