



Attention: Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra & his team

Dear Wopke Hoekstra, dear EU Climate Commissioner,

In the run-up to COP 28 in Dubai (UAE), we, the undersigned environmental organisations from Europe, Africa, Asia and North America, are sending you an urgent message to express our concerns about the global renewable energy target [proposed](#) by President Von der Leyen. While accelerating the deployment of renewables is crucial, it is essential to exclude the energy from burning forest biomass from this target.

As the EU's Renewable Energy Directive (RED) has shown, setting renewables targets without sufficient safeguards and exclusions simply leads to an over-reliance on bioenergy at the expense of forests, biodiversity and the forest carbon sink. About 41% of the EU's renewable energy inputs come from burning woody biomass, about half of which is sourced directly from forests. More than half the wood logged in the EU is burned for energy, a proportion that has [increased](#) since market incentives for woody biomass were introduced in EU law, and overlogging has led to degradation and even the complete loss of the land carbon sink in several EU member states.

Intact forest ecosystems play a critical role in climate mitigation and adaptation, and this role will only grow in importance in the coming decades. Yet the EU's demand for wood pellets for electricity and heating is driving forest degradation both in the EU and overseas, with significant imports of wood pellets from natural forests in Romania, Poland, Scandinavia, the Baltic States, Canada and the United States.

Countries such as Japan and South Korea want to transition their energy systems away from fossil fuels. But the Japanese government, among others, is encouraging others in south-east Asia to look to biomass as a fuel that can replace coal. This could lead to untold damage to tropical forests in the region.

The use of forest biomass needs to be phased out as the global energy system transitions to renewables. Many scientific reports from the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the European Academies' Science Advisory Council (EASAC), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have addressed these points in the last few years. [A recent article](#) by Hansen et al highlights the urgency of immediately reducing the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere. Yet as [modelling shows](#), net emissions from burning forest wood generally exceed those from fossil fuels for several decades, and bioenergy "carbon neutrality" may never foreseeably occur.

The European Union plays a critical role in championing forest conservation for biodiversity, air quality and climate mitigation. Recent and upcoming EU legislation such as the Biodiversity Strategy, the Forest Strategy, the Regulation on a monitoring framework for resilient European forests, and the Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products emphasise the EU's commitments to, and recognition of, the need to protect and restore more forests. It

is essential that the EU recognises how continuing to log forests for fuel is undermining these existential and science-based commitments.

We thus urge you, and the European Union, to champion a global renewable energy target that **excludes energy from forest biomass** at the forthcoming COP28 summit and to promote policies that put forests, biodiversity, air quality and climate first. We would like to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss this issue.

Good luck at your first COP.

We are looking forward to hearing your response.

Abibi Nsroma Foundation (ANF) - Ghana

Association Workshop for All Beings - Poland

BankTrack - Netherlands

BirdLife Europe and Central Asia

Coastal Plain Conservation Group - USA

Comité Schone Lucht - Netherlands

Dogwood Alliance - USA

Fern - EU & UK

Forest Initiatives and Communities - Ukraine

Forum Ökologie & Papier - Germany

Friends of the Earth Japan - Japan

Global Justice Ecology Project - USA

Green Impact - Italy

Leefmilieu - Netherlands

Luontoliitto (The Finnish Nature Association) - Finland

Milieudefensie - Netherlands

Mobilisation for the Environment - Netherlands

My sme les - *Slovakia*

Natural Resources Defense Council - *USA*

NOAH - Friends of the Earth Denmark - *Denmark*

Partnership for Policy Integrity - *USA*

Pro REGENWALD - *Germany*

Protect the Forest - *Sweden*

ROBIN WOOD - *Germany*

Wild Europe - *EU & UK*