



Enhancing Inclusiveness, Equity and Cooperation for Effective Forest Governance

Interview with Joan Carling, Executive Director of Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI), a non-profit global Indigenous Peoples organization that works to protect Indigenous Peoples' rights, and with Edith Paredes, Administrative Director of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO). ACTO is an intergovernmental organization formed by eight Amazonian countries.

Q: Ms Carling, as a representative of a global Indigenous Peoples organization, what are the top three challenges of forest governance that affect Indigenous Peoples?

Non-inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in forest governance and lack of legal recognition of our rights over our customary forest despite the valuable contributions Indigenous Peoples are making to forest conservation.

Lack of strong regulatory framework for corporations, and access to justice relating to deforestation – palm oil plantations, commercial mining, energy development – resulting in land-grabbing, environmental harms, and social inequity.

Corruption and lack of accountability of government bodies resulting in massive deforestation and violations of rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Q: What is needed from your point of view to overcome these challenges?

Recognizing and legally securing Indigenous Peoples' rights to customary forest, and ensuring meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples, women and small farmers in forest governance.

Strengthening regulatory frameworks against deforestation to hold corporations accountable and ensuring access to justice including strict penalties for environmental harm.

Ensuring government accountability and transparency in forest governance.

Global solidarity for effective global forest governance for the people and the planet – and not for carbon market and offsets.

Q: Ms. Paredes, from the point of view of an intergovernmental organization like ACTO that unites 8 Amazonian countries, what are the top three forest governance needs in your region?

Understanding forest governance as the integration of formal and informal rules, organizations, and processes where public and private stakeholders articulate their interests and make decisions, ACTO, as an intergovernmental cooperation organization, prioritizes the following:

Addressing technical disparities among its eight member countries through programs, projects, and initiatives that:

- (i) strengthen existing forestry institutions in each country
- (ii) enhance human resources through training programs, and
- (iii) provide support, including necessary equipment and infrastructure, to enable efficient execution of their functions and responsibilities.

Recognizing the Amazon region as a unified entity, ACTO aims to facilitate technical and political dialogues among its eight member countries. This initiative seeks to foster the formulation of public policies that advance the conservation and sustainable use of Amazon forests, thereby mitigating deforestation, degradation, and land-use changes.

Securing adequate financing is imperative for effective governance. As an intergovernmental organization, ACTO plays a crucial role in supporting member countries' efforts to secure economic resources essential for achieving their environmental governance objectives.

In essence, ACTO's strategic focus revolves around enhancing institutional capacity, promoting regional cooperation, and ensuring financial support to strengthen forest governance across the Amazon region.

Ms Paredes, what do you expect from regional forest governance in the future? What should be its priorities?

In the future, forest governance will increasingly emphasize the implementation of mechanisms, regulations, or legal instruments, which may not always be legally binding but

will be supported by advanced technology for effective regional monitoring. ACTO has already taken significant steps in this direction by establishing the Amazon Regional Observatory (ORA) in 2021. This initiative aims to furnish policymakers with accurate, timely, and reliable information crucial for informed decision-making.

In summary, future governance approaches are anticipated to rely heavily on technological advancements that facilitate cross-border cooperation measures rather than solely on legally binding agreements. The emphasis will be on leveraging innovative tools to enhance monitoring capabilities and promote regional collaborative efforts.

IUFRO2024 Congress sessions

Joan Carling and Edith Paredes were speakers at:

S4.6 Forest Governance in Regions – A Stakeholder Dialogue, Friday, June 28, 14:30-15:30, Room A8

ACTO contributed to:

The Amazon Regional Observatory (ARO) as a decision-making tool on forestry matters at the Amazon Region, Monday, June 24, 03:30 – 03:45 PM (CEST), Innovation Stage