



AMAZONIA AGAINST THE CLOCK:

A REGIONAL ASSESSMENT ON WHERE
AND HOW TO PROTECT 80% BY 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Investigative research conducted by the Red Amazónica de Información Socioambiental Georreferenciada (RAISG) within the framework of the Initiative “Amazonia for Life: protect 80% by 2025” and coordinating organizations COICA and Stand.earth.



**AMAZONIA
FOR LIFE:
PROTECT
80% BY
2025**
AVERTING THE TIPPING POINT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Voting on IUCN Emergency Motion 129 in Marseille, France, September 10, 2021.

The Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), together with its national branch organizations in the 9 Amazon countries, representing more than 500 indigenous peoples, in collaboration with a coalition of allies¹, launched the “Amazonia for Life: Protect 80% by 2025” in September 2021, in the midst of the Covid 19 global pandemic. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Congress, in Marseille, France,

was the stage to present this global call to avoid the tipping point in the Amazon. The international community welcomed it with the votes of 32 countries and 541 non-governmental organizations in [Resolution 129](#)².

The ambition currently proposed in the global goals that are being negotiated in various forums do not respond to the current state of the Amazonian ecosystems and other

¹ Stand.earth (Co-Coordinator with COICA), AVAAZ, RAISG, Wild Heritage, and Amazon Watch.

² Avoid the point of no return in the Amazon protecting 80% by 2025.

The loss of Amazonian ecosystems impacts the planet and all forms of life and, in an inverse relationship, climate change affects the ways of life of indigenous peoples.

eight ecosystems³ where a changing climate could push them into a tipping point⁴. Furthermore, the time horizon (2030) under discussion, ignores the proximity of the region to an irreversible state where the current level of degradation and deforestation prevents restoration processes, accelerating its savannization.

The Amazon is home to 5 of the 17 megadiverse countries⁵, that is, a third of the countries

whose borders contain the greatest wealth of biodiversity in the world⁶. To qualify as a megadiverse country, a country must have at least 5,000 of the world's plant species as endemic (Mittermeier et al. 2003). In addition, it is the largest river basin in the world and contains 20% of the world's fresh water. It is the most biodiverse habitat in the world (UNEP 2012, 14 cited in UNEP-WCMC 2016).

The loss of Amazonian ecosystems impacts the planet and all forms of life and, in an inverse relationship, climate change affects the ways of life of indigenous peoples, their cultural and linguistic diversity, health and food security⁷, and threatens to make up to 1 million species extinct⁸. Expanding indigenous rights and territories is a global imperative that can mitigate the climate and biodiversity crisis as 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity is on Indigenous homelands⁹. The international and national climate and biodiversity frameworks have systematically omitted the role of indigenous peoples, the knowledge systems that build their worldview and their values¹⁰, preventing humanity from informing policy with ancient practices to combat climate change.

The lack of recognition of the self-governing structures of the indigenous and local communities in the territory is the fundamental cause of the conflict and violence in the Amazonia. Between 2015 and the first half of 2019, 232 indigenous community leaders

3 Boreal Forest Shift, West Antarctic ice sheet disintegration, West African monsoon shift, Permafrost loss, Greenland ice sheet disintegration, Boreal forest shift, Atlantic meridional overturning circulation breakdown, and Indian monsoon shift; in McSweeney, R. (Ed.). 2020.

4 The IPCC AR4 adopted for the first time a definition of a "tipping point", given the evolution of the concept in the IPCC, this report adopts the definition in the IPCC (2019) which defines the tipping point as when achieving "irreversibility - such as degradation of ecosystems that cannot be restored to their original baseline".

5 Madagascar, República Democrática del Congo, Sudáfrica, China, Filipinas, India, Indonesia, Malasia, Australia, Papúa Nueva Guinea, Brasil, Colombia, Ecuador, Estados Unidos, Mexico, Peru y Venezuela.

6 "The World's 17 Megadiverse Countries." World Atlas

7 IPCC 2022, TS.B.7.2.

8 IPBES 2019.

9 IPCC 2022, TS.B.1.6.

10 IPBES 2022, 3.



Burning seen in the middle of the forest area near the capital Porto Velho. **Photo:** Bruno Kelly/Amazonia Real.

were killed in the region due to disputes over land and natural resources (cited in CEPAL-FILAC 2020, 143). In 2020, this trend continued¹¹. In 2021, a third of all violations recorded in the Americas were against defenders of environmental, territorial, and indigenous peoples' rights¹². Currently, and given the alarming situation of violence in the region, the European Parliament¹³ has adopted a resolution in July 2022, condemning the human rights policies of the Brazilian president and denouncing the growing violence against human rights defenders, indigenous people, minorities and journalists in Brazil, including the murder of Dom Philips and Bruno Pereira.

In this context, a horizon of 2030 could be catastrophic for the largest continuous for-

est on the planet and for more than 500 distinct indigenous nationalities and groups that inhabit it, and for humanity. The impacts of climate change affect everyone, but some groups such as indigenous peoples, are more vulnerable¹⁴. The path for a just transition in the Amazon must be led by those who conserve it without receiving a penny from national budgets and who, through their knowledge of millennia, know its deepest secrets to keep it standing. It is essential that global and national policies recognize the role of indigenous peoples and territories in the preservation of the most sensitive ecosystems on the planet as protagonists of the solutions to the current climate crisis.

This research, developed since 2021 by the Amazonian Network of Georeferenced Socio-environmental Information (RAISG) with-

11 Front Line Defenders 2020.

12 Front Line Defenders 2021.

13 European Union 2022.

14 IPCC 2022, TS.B.3.5, TS.B.4.1, TS.B.4.3.

in the framework of the Initiative “Amazonia for Life: Protect 80% by 2025” with data from 1985 to 2020, yields a set of findings whose objective is to inform and guide global and national policy to achieve the protection of at least 80% of the Amazon by 2025. This report presents the main results based on updated information up to 2020 to provide a regional baseline that will allow transparent measurement of progress of this proposal. A detailed analysis at the national level will complement this analysis.

This report consists of six sections. The first presents a regional perspective with concise results of the current status of the Key Priority Areas in the Amazon, which have been defined by three criteria: according to the **Functionality and services of the ecosystems**, defined by the capacity of ecological processes to provide services that generate human well-being (De Groot 1992); for its

This report presents the main results based on updated information up to 2020 to provide a regional baseline that will allow transparent measurement of progress of this proposal.

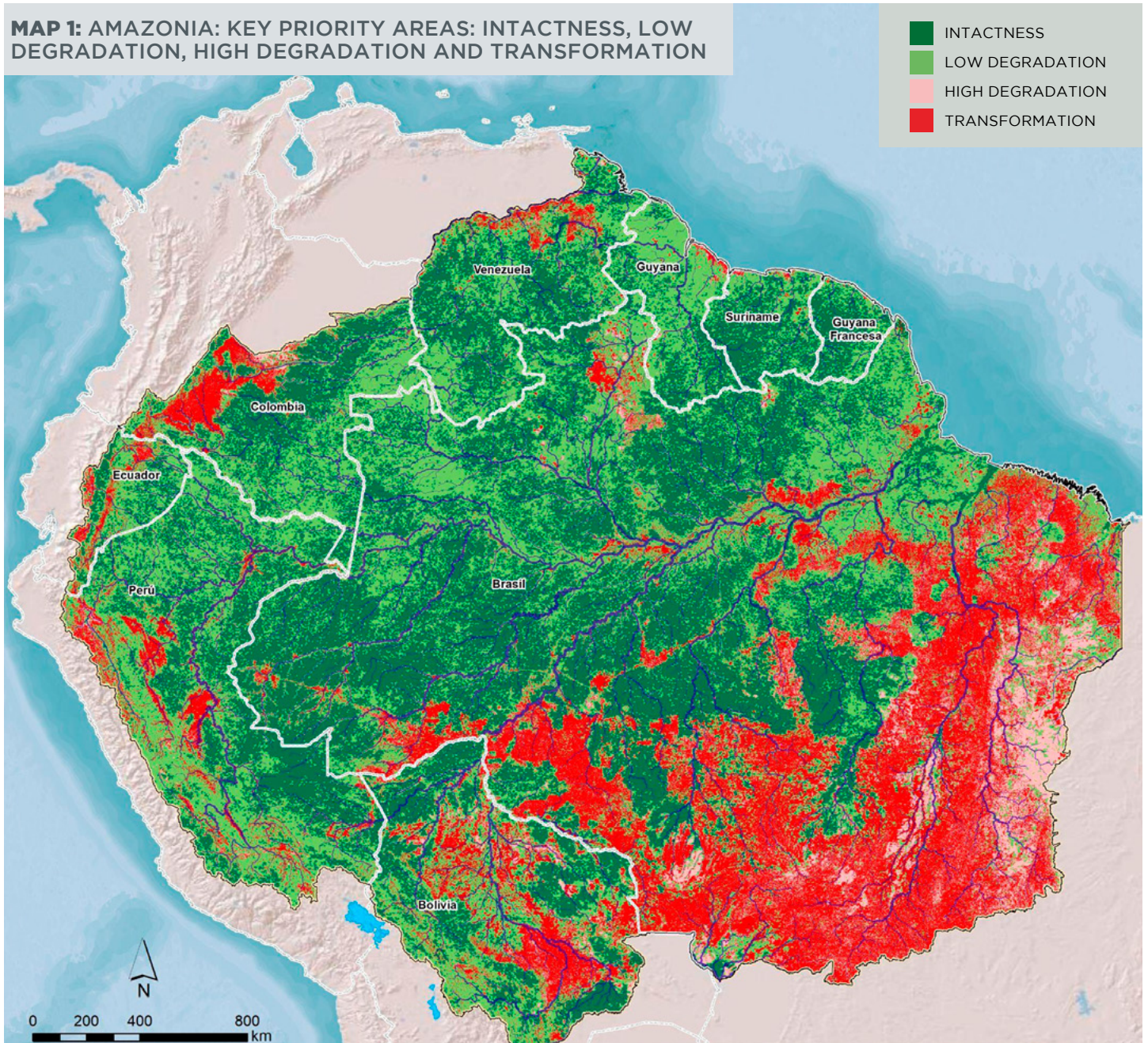
Ecological Representativeness, that is, areas that concentrate greater wealth of biodiversity of species, for its heterogeneity and ecosystemic singularity and, the third criterion is the **Symptoms and changes** of the ecosystems in terms of the transformation occurred by deforestation and the change of land use, adding the degradation measured according to carbon loss, deforestation and land use change between 1985 and 2020.

The second section presents key biodiversity data that needs to be considered in a year where the negotiations of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have resumed after the pandemic. In December 2022, the final text of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will be defined, which will guide the global and national policy of the international community for the next decade. Biodiversity, ecosystem integrity and indigenous knowledge systems are intrinsically linked and require comprehensive analysis.

The third section of the report is a comparison of the current territorial management regimes: protected areas, indigenous territories and what remains outside these areas that add up to 48% of the Amazon. The goal is to measure performance in each governance model and define priority actions and concrete solutions based on the report’s findings.

The last part presents the drivers of destruction that are present in the Amazonia: roads, hydroelectric plants, oil blocks, legal and illegal mining, and debt. The latter is understood as a systemic driver that promotes extractive activities throughout the region. The report closes with the call of the indigenous peoples that summarize the policy options described in the document.

KEY STATISTICS AND FACTS



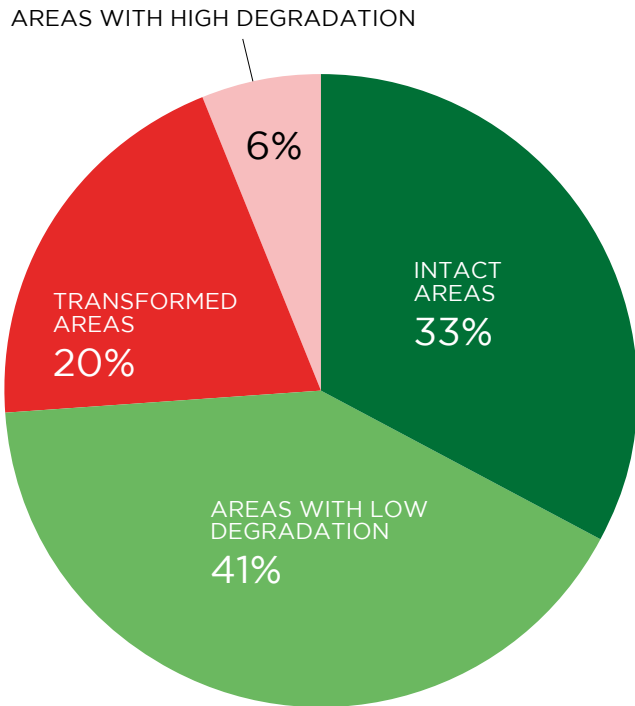
Source: Map 22, RAISG 2020 update based on MapBiomass Amazonia v.3.0 (Map forest cover and land use, Collection annual maps 1985-2020)
 Elaborated by RAISG

Our data shows that the protection of 80% of the Amazon is necessary and possible, but above all, urgent. If the current trend of deforestation continues, the Amazon as we know it today would not reach 2025. This report presents eleven compelling conclusions resulting from the comparison of the status of the Priority Areas by territorial management regimes: protected areas, indigenous

territories and undesignated areas. It also proposes a comparison by country.

- 1. The Amazonia is in the midst of a tipping point crisis as deforestation and high degradation combined have already reached 26% of the region.** The scientific work available so far establishes that the tipping point in the Amazon occurs once

GRAPHIC 1: KEY PRIORITY AREAS DISTRIBUTION BY THEIR CURRENT STATUS

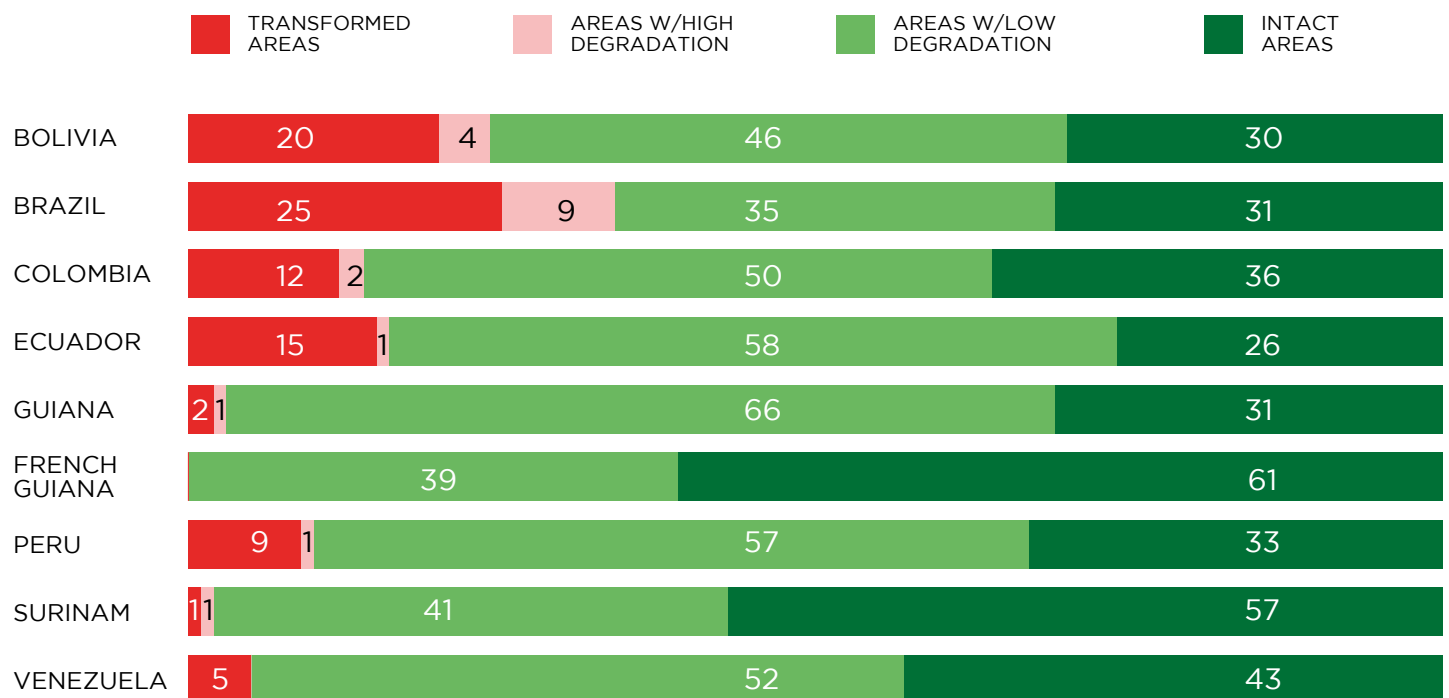


Source: Map 22, RAISG 2020 update based on MapBiomass Amazonia v.3.0 (Map land cover and use, Collection annual maps 1985-2020)
Elaborated by RAISG

combined deforestation and degradation cross the 20-25 percent threshold (Lovejoy and Nobre 2019). However, it is essential to emphasize that the authors were referring to the eastern, southern and central Amazon and not to the entire region described in this document, which covers **847 million hectares**. The information that we make available to the public in this study establishes that **the tipping point is not a future scenario but rather a stage already present in some areas of the region. Brazil and Bolivia concentrate 90% of all combined deforestation and degradation. As a result, savannization is already taking place in both countries.**

- 2. Preserving 80% of the Amazon by 2025 is still possible, 2030 presents a challenge given the current state of the region.** This

GRAPHIC 2: CURRENT STATE OF THE AMAZON BY COUNTRY (IN PERCENTAGE)



Source: RAISG ; Elaborated by authors

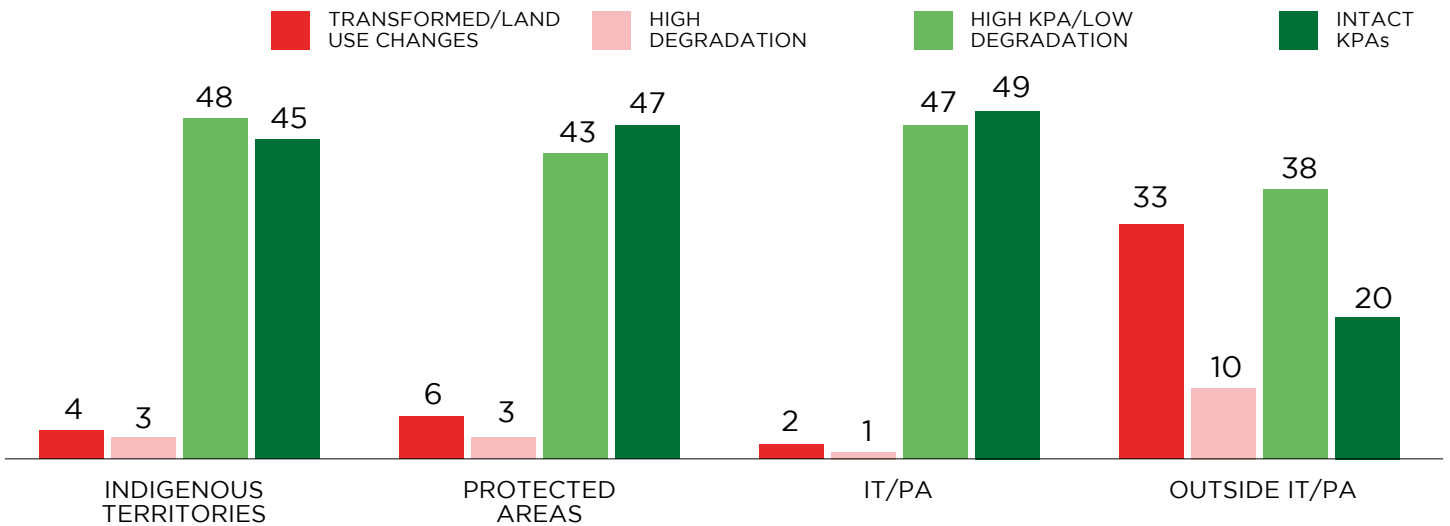
goal [80%] **requires urgent measures to safeguard the remaining 74% (629 million hectares) of the Amazon that are Intact Key Priority Areas¹⁵ (33%) and with Low Degradation (41%).** Likewise, the **restoration of 6%** (54 million hectares) of land with high degradation is vital to stop the current trend.

3. Indigenous peoples safeguard the remaining 80 percent of the world’s biodiversity¹⁶. The Amazonia is megadiversity: it is the habitat with the greatest biodiversity in the world¹⁷, hosting 5 of the 17 megadiverse countries¹⁸ on the

planet. Four¹⁹ of the 36 existing hotspots on the planet are located in the region. The preservation of these hotspots has been primarily thanks to the knowledge systems of the indigenous peoples who inhabit them. Around **137 living species are driven into extinction each day in the Amazonia** due to habitat loss (Müller in IPOL EU 2020, 13).

4. This report offers a comparison between existing territorial management regimes. **Protected Areas (PA) and Indigenous Territories (IT) are vital to protect the Amazonia. Between both regimes (PA and IT), about half (48%) of the Amazon**

GRAPH 3: CURRENT STATE OF THE AMAZONIA BY TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT REGIMES (IN PERCENTAGES)



Source: Maps RAISG, Maps FAN, and Ecociencia Maps; Elaborated by authors

15 We define Key Priority Areas to those areas with very high functionality, connectivity and representativeness of biodiversity (see Methodology)

16 Banco Mundial; IPCC 2022.

17 UNEP 2012, 14 citado en UNEP-WCMC 2016.

18 Madagascar, República Democrática del Congo, Sudáfrica, China, Filipinas, India, Indonesia, Malasia, Australia, Papúa Nueva Guinea, Brasil, Colombia, Ecuador, Estados Unidos, México, Perú y Venezuela.

19 Two in Brazil: Mata Atlântica and Cerrado, and two in the Andes: Tumbes-Chocó-Magdalena and the Tropical Andes.

is covered; however, the other half (52%) are undesignated areas that are in danger of disappearing and without which it is impossible to avert the tipping point. Most of the deforestation (86%) took place outside national PA and IT.

5. **255 million hectares of intact areas and Key Priority Areas with low degradation have not been titled to indigenous peoples or designated as protected areas and are at imminent risk.** The undesignated areas register the greatest transformation (33%) and high degradation (10%) being six times more the transformation registered in the PAs and more than eight times that of the IT.
6. **Indigenous Territories do not have budget allocations from their governments and yet, they have equal or higher levels of conservation than the protected areas** even when these overlap with the IT. This is mainly due to the worldview of more than 500 distinct indigenous peoples who have inhabited the Amazon for millennia.
7. **The overlapping of two regimes (IT and AP) does not result in substantially higher levels of ecosystem integrity.** On the contrary, **creating PA over IT can weaken indigenous governance models in the territory** and, consequently, **deteriorate the conservation of ecosystems but, in some cases, can even result in violence.** The Initiative's approach is a collaborative and inclusive governance model to achieve the design and implementation of sustainable alternatives such as those proposed by the Durban Accord in 2003 and more recently by IPBES (2022).



255 million hectares of intact areas and Key Priority Areas with low degradation have not been titled to indigenous peoples or designated as protected areas and are at imminent risk.

Photo: Alberto Blanco, Provita Venezuela.

8. There are around **100 million hectares of IT in dispute, or in the process of identification, or declared, that require immediate recognition** and titling to stop the degradation rates already present within the IT.
9. **Indigenous territories are not intended to join the conversation as an additional category or other conservation measures or mechanisms (OMEC).** IT pre-exist national states and responds to their own social, economic, cultural and political structure, while OMEC can be created and their management can be defined privately or publicly. Rec-

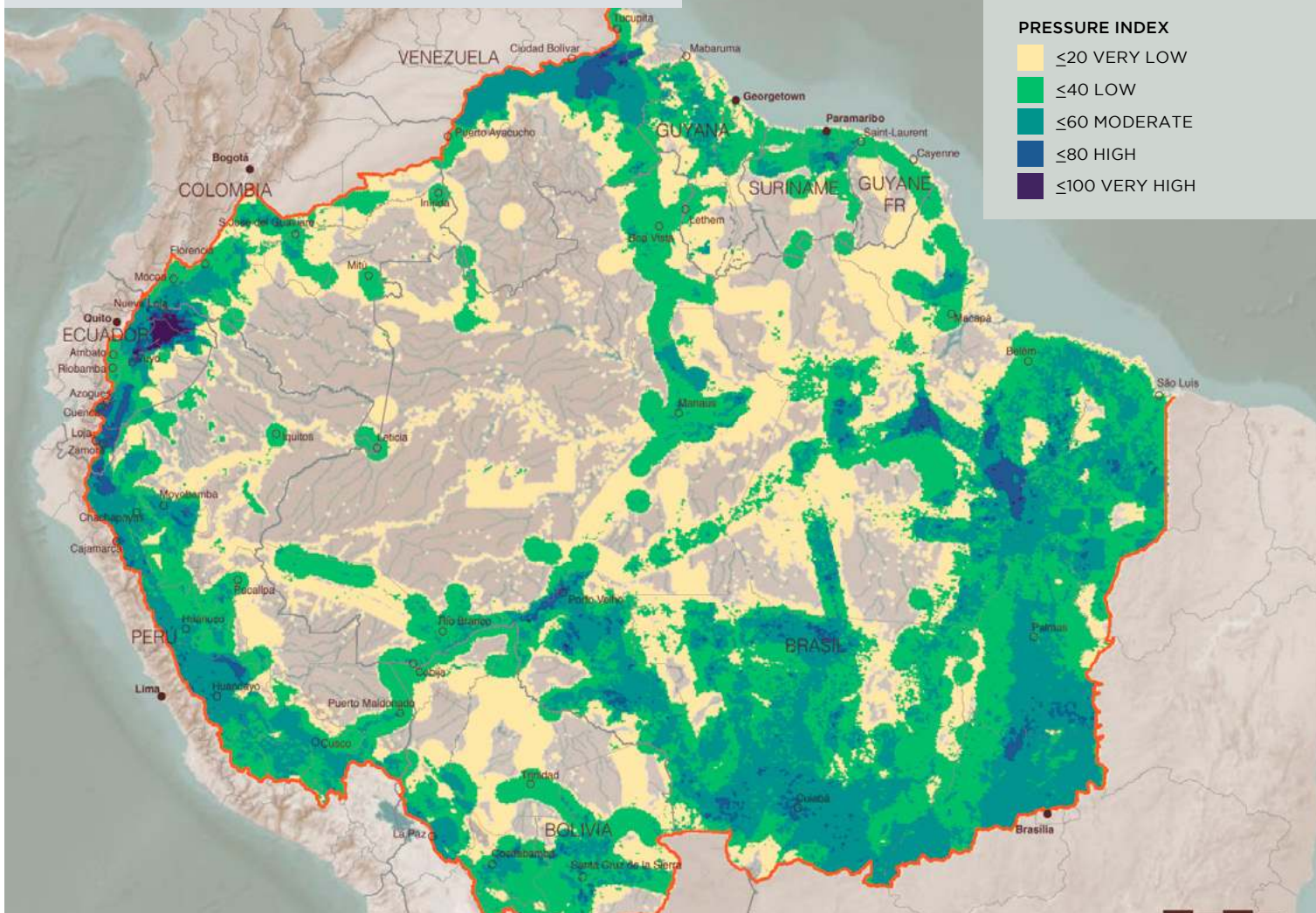
ognizing the cultural heritage on which the integrity of ecosystems is based is a differentiating factor to face the climate crisis that must be integrated into conservation policies.

10. 66% of the Amazon is subject to some type of fixed or permanent pressure. Where there is a strong state presence, there are threats and pressures recognized by States that represent “legal” drivers. Where the State presence is weak, “illegal” drivers are present. IT and PA are not exempt from this reality. Oil blocks, hydroelectric plants and

mines are planned throughout the Amazon. **Current legal frameworks create conditions for states to grant licenses in intact forests or ITs without the free, prior and informed consent of the populations that inhabit the region.**

11. The restorative capacity of the Amazonia is running out. An immediate transition is necessary. The industries that occupy the Amazon do not have the free, prior and informed consent of the populations that inhabit the region.

MAP 2: SYNTHESIS OF PRESSURES IN THE AMAZON



Source: prepared by GAIA for RAISG, 200.



66% of the Amazon is subject to some type of fixed or permanent pressure.

Iron mine. Photo: Javier Mesa, Provita.

- a. **The areas dedicated to agricultural activity have tripled since 1985. The sector is responsible for 84% of Amazonian deforestation.** Invasions as well as fires, are directly related to the expansion of the agricultural frontier. PAs and ITs were not exempt from the problem. **The expansion of the agricultural frontier grew within the PA 220% between 2001-2018 and in the IT it grew by 160% in this same time period²⁰.** In both cases, forest was replaced. **The cattle industry is the biggest driver of deforestation in the Amazonia. Deforestation caused by cattle ranching in the Amazon rainforest accounts for nearly 2% of global CO₂ emissions annually.**
- b. **Mining is present in all the countries of the Amazon, affecting 17% of the region. 9.3% of all mining activity is located in PA and an additional 9% in IT. 85% of the mining activity in IT occurs in already recognized IT.** Currently, half of the mining areas in AP and 68% of those present in TI are in the application phase, which means that they could be reversed. **Illegal mining that lacks registration is expanding throughout the basin.**
- c. **Oil blocks occupy 9.4% of the surface of the Amazonia (80 million hectares). 43% of the oil blocks are located in protected areas and indigenous territories. 89% of the crude oil exported from the Ama-**

zonía comes from Ecuador²¹ and its main destination is the US. More than half (52%) of the Ecuadorian Amazon is an oil block, 31% in Peru, 29% in Bolivia and 28% in Colombia.

- d. Currently, there are **eleven major road projects that are expected to enter the most remote Amazonia** in the near future and that represent a serious threat to the integrity of the intact forest.
- e. Of the 350 hydroelectric plants (CH) that operate in the basin, **483 are projected for future build-out, adding up to a total of 833 potential hydroelectric plants**. The construction of hydroelectric projects **alters the free flow of more than 1,100 tributaries** that make up the Amazon basin.
- f. **Debt:** Debt must be understood as a systemic problem that intertwines all the activities of the countries of the South and the North. Debt is one of the structural causes of the destruction of the Amazon and other vital ecosystems for humanity. Latin America is the most indebted emerging region on the planet. This result of the pandemic shock adds to five decades with at least 50 sovereign debt crises and sovereign debt restructurings²². According to

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data from ECLAC (2021), the gross debt of governments averages 78% of regional GDP. Total debt service alone represents 59% of its exports of goods and services. The measures that have been taken have been palliative and insufficient and the frameworks for action are on the way to obsolescence.

The current emphasis of existing frameworks to address debt and the Official Development Assistance (ODA) are the poorest nations. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 28 of the 33 countries are considered to be in the middle income category and, therefore, do not qualify for low-interest loans for which the poorest countries are eligible, nor are they eligible for ODA .

The proposal of the Initiative “Amazonia for life: protect 80% by 2025”

21 SRG 2021c.

22 Ian Clark, Thomas MacWright, Brian Pfeiffer, Dimitrios Lyratzakis y Amanda Parra Criste, “Sovereign debt restructurings in Latin America: A new chapter”, White & Case, 25 October 2021.

is a conditioned debt forgiveness. This innovative approach relies on debt as a mechanism to protect key priority areas in the Amazon rather than continue to fuel their destruction. As mentioned in point 9 of the [Indigenous Peoples Declaration](#), this proposal presents a unique opportunity for debtor and creditor nations, international financial institutions, and debt-holding private equity firms from Amazonian nations to actively join the call to avoid the tipping point by protecting 80% of the Amazon. The quid pro quo is summed up in forgiving the existing debt of the Amazonian countries to the extent that they implement commitments to end industrial extraction on the one hand and, on the other, promote protections in key priority areas, indigenous territories and protected areas

Global and national politics require innovative and immediate solutions. The indigenous peoples hold the ancient knowledge of the Amazonian ecosystems. **A first step is to recognize their territories and rights in innovative governance models for their territories and the protected areas as well. A second step is to recognize its management with national and international resources.** Finally, priority areas without a territorial management regime can consolidate a new co-management model where states create biocultural connectivity corridors that connect ecosystems and indigenous cultures and territories as an immediate protection measure. Amazonian leaders have identified 13 solutions to stop the tipping point in the Amazonia.

A CALL TO ACTION FROM THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The international community requires immediate action to strengthen these areas with funding. The approval of IUCN Resolution 129 in Marseille in September 2021 is a first step to achieve a **Global Pact to protect at least 80% of the Amazonia** that will require:

1. A **Pan-Amazon regional vision** that lands in a shared strategic plan built upon the strict guidelines of Free, Prior, Informed, Consent (FPIC). To reach the 80 percent by 2025 vision, each Amazon country must develop **National Amazon Biome Action Plans (NABAP)** to spell out their commitments for meeting the target. The process should be with the full participation of civil society, including Indigenous peoples who have been effective stewards of this biome for millennia.
2. **100 percent legal recognition and demarcation of Indigenous lands** and the allocation of **permanent financial resources** that allow their titling and expansion.
3. Implementation of **a governance model with political representation** and formal recognition of the role of indigenous peoples in reaching this goal at national and international levels.
4. **An immediate moratorium on deforestation** and industrial degradation of all primary forests.
5. **Forest policy and zoning** that enables the creation of intangible zones for areas that remain intact/roadless and other zones that are for industrial activities.

Photo: Amazon Watch/©Caroline Bennet

6. **Ecological restoration** for degraded lands.
7. **Creation of expanded indigenous or co-managed reserves** for unprotected indigenous that are not currently listed as TIs or ANP and other territories (OECM), with the **safeguards and responsibility** of the States to guarantee the protection of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACI).
8. **Halting key drivers of** current and future deforestation and industrial development pressures by suspending new licensing and financing for mining, oil, cattle ranching, large dams, logging, and other industrial activities.
9. **Conditioned debt forgiveness** in exchange for permanent moratoria on industrial extraction in key priority areas, indigenous territories and protected areas.
10. **The finance sector** commits to **ensure respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and an end to deforestation** throughout financed supply chains.
11. **Supply-chain transparency and accountability.**
12. The international community's immediate **adoption of policies and frameworks** that guarantee a permanent influx of resources to accomplish this target.
13. The international community facilitates the financial resources necessary to cover the costs of access to basic services for indigenous communities, consolidate their self-determination, and strengthen the comprehensive management of territories, sustainable livelihoods and use of ancestral knowledge.





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**COORDINADORA DE LAS ORGANIZACIONES
INDÍGENAS DE LA CUENCA AMAZÓNICA**

