



## The Rainforest Summit

<b>Age group</b>	10-16
<b>Group size</b>	10-30
<b>Time</b>	90-120 minutes

### Overview

This activity explores the importance of rainforests through role play.

### Objectives

- To raise awareness of the importance of rainforests for the climate
- To consider different interests in rainforest protection and destruction

### Materials

- Fact files (appendix I)
- Role cards (appendix II)
- Thick paper and markers

### Preparation

- Copy and cut out the fact files and role cards (one for each group and an entire set for the chair)

### Step-by-step instructions

1. Explain that everyone will participate in a summit on the sustainability of the rainforest, taking place in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil. Different interests will be represented. The aim of the summit is to recommend to the government what should happen in a particular area of the Brazilian rainforest. Two big agricultural companies would like to buy 25,000 hectares of land each to produce soy and to farm cattle and many civil society organisations don't want them to do this.
2. Elect a chair (or two chairs) to host the summit. They are the Brazilian minister of the environment. They will be responsible to facilitate discussions and must take into account everyone's needs. Give the chair their role card and a list of all roles, so that they can prepare themselves.
3. Split into five groups and give each group a fact file (the chair will prepare their role during this time). The fact files inform them about one particular aspect of rainforests and are important to prepare for the following rainforest summit where everyone will be a delegate. Give enough time for each group to read their fact file.
4. Every group should summarise the two or three main points of their fact file to the rest of the group.
5. Distribute the role cards. Form pairs or groups of three if you have more participants than roles. In that case some or all organisations will have two or three representatives. Give everyone some minutes to read their cards and to discuss their roles with the delegates from the same organisation. They should also make name tags with their name and organisation on thick paper that they can put in front of them on the table.
6. Ask everyone to note down what their preferred outcome of the summit is.
7. The chair opens the summit. The facilitator should take the role of the chair's 'assistant', write the speaker's list and watch the time (if there are two chairs, they can divide these roles between them).

### Debriefing

Tell everyone that they are now themselves again and not in their roles anymore. They should jump around and shake off their invisible role suits.

- Are you satisfied with the results of the summit? Why (not)?
- How did you feel during the negotiations?
- Was it difficult to come to a result? Why is that?
- What were the different interests at stake? Which arguments did you find convincing?
- What can we as young people do to help protect the rainforest?



## Appendix 1: Fact Files

### 1. Getting to know the rainforest

There are around 625 million hectares of undisturbed rainforests; this is a bit less than 5% of the earth's land. The largest rainforest is in South America. About one third of the world's rainforests lies in Brazil. Other large rainforests can be found in Indonesia and the Congo Basin. All rainforests are situated around the equator.

Rainforests are one of the most complex ecosystems. They sustain as much as 50% of all species of plants and animals that live on earth. They are home to 350 different mammal species, such as jaguars, sloths, agoutis and many primates; 950 bird species such as macaws, humming birds and eagles; 4000 species of fish and 2.5 million species of insects. In a tropical rainforest, you can find more than 400 different tree species in a single hectare. A single bush in the Amazon may have more species of ants than the entire British Isles.

The diversity of species can be so extremely high in the rainforests because they are so close to the equator and receive a lot of sunlight which is transformed into energy and stored in plants. Because there are so many plants, there are also many animals who need the plants for food supply and for shelter.

### 2. Rainforests and the climate

Rainforests are very important in helping to regulate the climate.

Rainforests are often called the lungs of the planet for their role in producing oxygen, upon which all animals and humans depend for survival. Each year tropical forests produce 28 tonnes of oxygen per hectare and they help clean pollutants from the air. They are extremely important for absorbing carbon dioxide from the air, so that it cannot go into the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is a major greenhouse gas contributing to climate change. If there are fewer trees, less carbon dioxide can be stored and the greenhouse effect will become stronger.

The effect of deforestation of rainforests for the climate is widely accepted, and every year fewer hectares of rainforest are destroyed, but the number is still very high (around 13 million hectares per year between 2000 and 2010).

### 3. Rainforest products

These are some of the products that can be made from plants of the rainforest:

**Wood:** Teak, rosewood, mahogany, sandalwood

**Fibres:** Rattan, bamboo, jute, kapok, kenaf, raffia, ramie

**Fruits:** Avocado, banana, breadfruit, coconut, grapefruit, guava, jackfruit, lemon, lime, mango, orange, papaya, pineapple, tangerine

**Other foods:** Brazil nuts, cashews, figs, chocolate, okra, sugar cane, peanuts, peppers, sweet potatoes, manioc and annatto (used as a food colouring)

**Spices:** Pepper, cardamom, cayenne, chilli, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, mace, nutmeg, paprika, turmeric, vanilla

**Medicines:** 25% of all prescription drugs are based on plants found in tropical rainforests. Quinine from the cinchona tree is used to treat malaria and as an antiseptic, insect repellent and sun-cream. Hydrocortisone, used to treat arthritis and rheumatism, comes from the Mexican yam. Tubocurarine, used as an anaesthetic, comes from the curare plant. Relaxants and anti-leukaemia drugs are all based on rainforest plants. Rosewood, ylang-ylang and sandalwood are used in aromatherapy.

**Other products:** Wax palm is used in lipstick; the bark from some trees is used to make dye or perfumes; latex from trees is used to make chewing gum and golf balls.

### 4. The destruction of the rainforests

Rainforests around the world are being destroyed at a terrifying rate. 13 million hectares have been destroyed on average every year between 2000 and 2010. 20% of the Amazonian rainforest has already been destroyed.

It is estimated that one plant species per day is becoming extinct as a result of the destruction of rainforests. Each extinct species can cause the extinction of up to 30 dependent species of plants, insects or animals. Around 90 tribes of indigenous people living in the Amazonian rainforest have been driven to extinction in the past 100 years.

The causes of destruction:

- **Agriculture:** massive areas of land have been cleared to grow crops such as soya beans. The demand is rising massively also because of the use of soya beans for bio fuel and as an industrial oil.
- **Cattle ranching:** The biggest contributors to deforestation are cattle farms, accounting for more than 2/3 of annual forest clearing.
- **Logging** (cutting down trees to use the wood)



## 5. Rainforest workers

Many people depend on the collection of rainforest products to provide for their basic needs and as a source of income.

**Rubber tapping:** Rubber tappers collect latex from wild rubber trees. A line is cut into the tree each morning and the latex is collected in a pot left hanging from the tree.

**Brush and mat making:** Vines and palm leaves have strong fibres which are collected and woven to make strings, nets, baskets, hammocks and sleeping mats.

**Dye collecting:** Dyes are collected from trees and plants. They are used in cosmetics as well as for colouring clothes and woven baskets.

**Fishing:** More than 4,000 different species of fish live in the waterways of the Amazon rainforest. Many people who live in the forest still catch fish using spears, bows, harpoons, nets or traps. Large fishing-fleets have over-exploited fish stocks in the main rivers.

**Hunting:** The inhabitants of the forests have developed their own set of rules which are designed to ensure that animal numbers are kept at levels that don't threaten the survival of a species. However there is a growing demand for the meat of rainforest animals from markets and restaurants around the world.

## Appendix 2: Role Cards

### Brazilian Minister of Commerce

You take the environmental impact of deforestation seriously, but your main aim is to support Brazil's export economy. In your opinion economic growth comes first, only when people have jobs you have time for green politics. But you also stress that your government has already decreased deforestation in the last three years. The 25,000 hectares that each of the companies wants to buy are only 'peanuts' to you – you think this is not very big, as usually every year 13 million hectares are destroyed world-wide.

### The CEO of JBS Friboi

Your company is Brazil's largest meat producer and the world's biggest player in the beef industry. You decided to not buy cattle that come from places that have been illegally deforested and where slavery is still prevalent. You are very proud of this decision. You think that after this decision you have the right to buy more legally deforested land. Several thousand people work in your factories.

### The President of 'Forest People's Alliance'

This is a campaigning organisation created by people living in Amazonia. You help to make sure that the opinions of groups like the rubber tappers and Kayapo Indians are heard by the decision-makers. Your organisation wants to make sure that all new settlers are taught how to live in the rainforest without destroying it. Education projects help by making local people better informed about conservation of the forest. You want that you, together with other NGOs, get a stronger voice in rainforest politics.

### The Spokesperson of McDonalds

You have a growing demand for your products and are the main client of JBS Friboi. It is very important for you that the company can buy land for their cattle and you are willing to 'offset' the destruction of rainforest by re-planting in an area less appropriate for grazing cattle.

### A representative of a group of local manufacturers

Your members are small businesses that want to sell natural products with an eco-label to the West and also to a growing number of people in Brazil. One of your members is a chewing gum manufacturer who wants to develop a new gum taking its raw ingredients from the natural habitat. Another is an ecological cosmetics company who wants to increase the amount of ingredients it can take from the rainforest for its products, particularly for aromatherapy.



## A soy bean trader from Germany

You would like to buy and develop 25,000 hectares of rainforest for growing soya. The soya oil will be used as bio-fuel that is more and more popular. You think bio-fuel is much more environmentally friendly than fossil fuels, so needs to be promoted by the Brazilian government. You promise to create several hundred jobs with your new farm.

## A Kayapo Indian

Your livelihood depends on the rainforest. The forest sustains you with everything you need: shelter, freshwater, food, medicines, clothing.... When one area becomes infertile, you move on. You consider yourself to be part of the ecosystem. The problem is that there are fewer and fewer places where you can go. You just moved to the part that the soy bean trader wants to buy. The soy bean trader thinks you should move away, they asked to buy the land before you came there.

## The chair of the summit

You are the Brazilian minister of the environment and you are responsible for dealing with rainforest issues. The official aim of your ministry is to protect the environment, but in this summit you have to be impartial. Your government wants to find a balance between economic growth and environmental protection.

### The reason for the summit:

The soy bean trader and the meat producer have wanted to buy 25,000 hectares of land in the rainforest for a long time, but many social groups protested against it. This is why you decided to organise this summit, so that all groups can come together to discuss the matter. The final decision about if and how the part of the rainforest will be sold will be taken by the government; the summit should recommend a decision.

### Your aim:

It is your aim to reach a consensus on a common proposal to the government, no matter what it will look like. You would like the protests to stop, as they are very bad publicity for you.

Your tasks:

1. Explain the speaking rules to the delegates:
  - After you have opened the summit, make a round where everyone can briefly present themselves, say why they are here and what they would like to see as a result of the summit.
  - A discussion will follow: If they want to say something, they must raise their hand. You will have a 'speaker's list' where you note in which order they raised their hand.
  - There is a time limit for speaking. Each contribution cannot be longer than two minutes.
  - You need to come to a conclusion after 60 minutes.
  - If the delegates have questions or proposals that are not about content, but about the procedures of the summit, they have to raise both hands.
  - There will be a 5 minute break after 30 minutes where delegates can discuss possible solutions in smaller groups.
2. Moderate the discussion according to these rules. If there are two of you, of one of you should be the assistant – checking the time and writing the speaker's list (swap roles after 30 minutes). Otherwise the group leader can be your assistant.
3. Formulate the result of the summit: What is the summit's proposal to the government?

