

Listen to the voice of the forest!

Preserving the forests, our protective measure for a more responsible world.

Time stands still... And yet, whilst the rhythm of our day has slowed down, questions have emerged, our perspectives have been reversed, nature has been able to catch its breath. This freeze frame, without any possible rewinding, obliges us to hear this new strong signal which has been sent to us.

On an individual level, confinement has been a source of difficulty, anxiety, precarity or isolation for many of us. It was also a time of introspection and innovation: going back to basics, taking time for ourselves and those close to us, questioning our priorities and creating new habits. Many of us have turned this into a factory of ideas to work, have fun, learn and consume differently.

As for society as a whole, it is preparing for the beginnings of a new world. Now that progressive deconfinement takes its course, what choices will we make? Will we do as "before" or, on the contrary, will we be capable of listening to what the forests are telling us?

Forests protect us. Because we are abusing them, we are now suffering the consequences.

Forests are at the heart of the environmental, social and economic issues that will shape our future. 1.6 billion people depend directly on them for their livelihoods; they concentrate 80% of the Earth's biodiversity, are an essential factor in climate regulation, purify the water we drink and the air we breathe. They also carry emotional and cultural values and are a source of well-being. Forests are indispensable to life.

However, the ecological crisis is much deeper than we think... Studies have been conducted one after another and unfortunately come to the same result. They show the extent of the degradation suffered by nature. For example, according to a WWF study, nearly 60% of wild animals have disappeared since 1970¹. In total, 1 million species are threatened with extinction² and will disappear in the years to come if we continue in this impasse.

The impacts of human activities have direct repercussions on our daily lives. The United Nations Environment Agency has pointed this out: nearly 60% of infectious diseases are of animal origin; a figure that climbs to 75% if we take into account diseases such as Ebola, Zika, swine flu, bird flu and today... COVID-19. A scientific study by the EcoHealth Alliance, which has been reported by many media outlets, even specifies the link between deforestation, degradation of natural habitats and the emergence of infectious diseases³. Another, more recent study by the Foundation for Research on Biodiversity indicates that "There is a strong consensus in favour of a link between deforestation, in its various dimensions, and the multiplication of zoonoses"⁴.

It is as if, like Miyazaki's masterpiece "Princess Mononoké", we are suffering the consequences of the irrational exploitation of forests. It is now necessary to hear this cry addressed to us and to learn from it.

¹ WWF, Rapport Planète Vivante, 2018. [<https://www.wwf.fr/sites/default/files/doc-2018-12/29112018-LPR-Soyons-Ambitieux.pdf>]

² IPBES, Rapport d'évaluation globale sur la biodiversité et les services écosystémiques, 2019. [<https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>]

³ Alliance Ecohelth, 2017. <https://www.ecohealthalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/s41467-017-00923-8.pdf>

⁴ FRB, mai 2020, <https://www.fondationbiodiversite.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Mobilisation-FRB-Covid-19-15-05-2020-1.pdf>



We can do something for the forests, let us be their spokespersons.

Both individually and collectively, we can be ambassadors of the forests to respond to the risks they face and take concrete action.

In line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we must take a global approach: considering biodiversity and natural habitats, waterways, soils, workers' rights, and the rights and customs of indigenous peoples; promoting local development; enabling equitable dialogue between stakeholders, better procurement practices and developing shorter value chains are more than ever the challenges we must face.

Forests are so much a part of our landscape that they have become almost invisible. Yet we use them every day for housing, packaging, furniture, games, education and even clothing. Through our actions as consumers, we can act and play a decisive role in demanding products that are produced using more responsible practices.

Solutions exist. Among these solutions, the FSC label has been in place for 25 years thanks to the ongoing dialogue between NGOs, companies, trade unions and representatives of indigenous peoples in order to reduce the impact of our lifestyles on forests and preserve the fundamental services they provide.

While crises generate transformation and innovation, the one we are experiencing encourages us to listen to the voices of the forests and to defend them by making the right choices. Preserving forests is not only a protective measure, but also sows the seeds of a better future.

