



Tony Juniper
Special Adviser to
[The Prince's Rainforests Project \(PRP\)](#)

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Read the interview with **Tony Juniper, Special Adviser to [The Prince's Rainforests Project \(PRP\)](#)** and one of England's best known environmentalists.



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London – Rome, FAO headquarters. What makes tropical forests the choice of a prince? Find out in this interview with **Tony Juniper, Special Adviser to [The Prince's Rainforests Project \(PRP\)](#)** - the Prince being the Prince of Wales and Tony Juniper one of England's best known environmentalists.

Q. The Prince of Wales is reported to have said, “Forests should not be made worth dead but alive”. What are the main activities of the PRP and, who are its main actors?

A. The Prince of Wales was most recently inspired to come back to the issue of tropical deforestation because of the challenge posed by Climate Change. The Prince has spent the last 30 years drawing attention to different ecological challenges, this one included, but **the urgency of the carbon dioxide emissions that faces all of humanity is the reason why the Prince's Rainforests Project was established** to find some way in which we could establish at the global level some mechanism to help slow down tropical deforestation which accounts for 1/5 of global emissions. So if we are to have a world in which we can stabilise temperature increase below 2 degrees, we must stop tropical deforestation. And that was the inspiration of the Prince of Wales in setting up this project. In terms of our activities, **we've been speaking to everybody, from the scientific community to the NGOs to the private sector to indigenous communities and to governments of course** and, seeking through that dialogue to come up with some way in which we could make forests worth more alive than dead. Because at the end this is an economic challenge, because countries do not clear tropical forests because they do not like tropical rainforests, they do it to facilitate economic growth and to develop rural areas and that's been the principal job that we've set up. We brought forward different proposals, setting out how we believe international cooperation could lead to the equation being changed, **from economic incentives to destroy the forests to creating economic incentives to keep the forests and in so doing, cutting down carbon dioxide emissions**, alongside a whole range of other benefits in terms of conserving biodiversity and promoting food security.

Q. The XIII WFC is going to host a Forum on Forests and Climate Change. In your opinion, what is the role played by forests in that respect and how is it possible to make the international community more aware of it?

A. For the last 10 years or so, the **dialogue about climate change has been dominated by different discussions around industrial emissions and emissions from fossil fuels** and so the international community quite rightly has been focused on energy efficiency and how we could move from a fossil based energy economy to one more based on renewable technologies and over the last 10 years or so, since Kyoto, there has been a neglected issue of land use change and deforestation as a major driver of Climate Change and the reason science tells us that we have every good reason to be very concerned about this set of emissions as **we cannot** at least arrive at a place where we are going to **have a good chance of stabilising temperature increase below 2 degrees without actually doing something quite dramatic to stabilise deforestation at the same time**, and it's vital now, that all sectors unite, because not only are tropical forests a major source of carbon dioxide emissions, they are also a major sink for the emissions coming from other sectors, including from the

transport sector and from the power generation sector. So we absolutely must find a way of stabilising deforestation and now I don't think it's going to be one single thing, of course not, but **what we do have to do in order to enable all the good things that have to happen is to change the economics of this**, because whichever way you look at it, the rainforests are being cleared for economic reasons and so, changing the economic incentives to change behaviour has to be on top of the list.

Q. One of the main aims of this Forum is to produce a recommendation of a technical nature, which will be later presented at the COP 15 in Copenhagen, in December. What do you think would be the two main messages it should include?

A. I think the two principal messages I would suggest need to be there is **the one that links stabilising deforestation to poverty alleviation** and I think countries have to be given the very strong and believable impression that, changing their deforestation patterns isn't going to be a trade off against meeting their poverty alleviation objectives. So **a communication of a technical level has to show how it's going to be possible to sustain levels of economic development at the same time as cutting deforestation rates**. In these two objectives in the past there's been a tendency to see them as choices, we have to find a way to making them part of the same programme: to cut poverty, to improve people's welfare, to improve standards and access to healthcare, to improve job security and all these things, economic growth in rural areas – at the same time as cutting deforestation. And that is an absolutely central message. I think **the other message that needs to come through is we need to find fair ways of doing this**. So the global community has to take the responsibility of a global climate change as an international community, but **I don't think it would be very good to give the impression that holding deforestation is an alternative to cutting industrial emissions**, so cutting emissions from the transport sector, for example. So I think if we could do this, **if we could give the correct impression that there isn't a choice between poverty alleviation and stopping deforestation** and also, we have to take action at all levels to cut industrialised emissions as well, **I think it would be a very positive contribution to the Copenhagen deliberations**.

Q. As you may know, having started as an ornithologist, there's a lot of twittering going on in the forests. Twitter is also one of those Web 2.0 technical tools used for communication as well as to help raise awareness... If forests were to twitter, what would they be twittering about?

A. I think **they'd be twittering about the changing relationships with people** that have taken place in the last few hundred years **since the industrial age**. If the forests could talk, they would reflect back and reminisce about the time when people lived in (relative) harmony with the ecosystem that sustained humankind. Of course, **many people and, indigenous peoples in particular, still live still with that relationship, connected with nature, understanding nature's cycles and their philosophy being informed by their fine ability with nature**. I think in the industrialised age, we've lost that connection. I think **that if forests could twitter on the internet, they'd be calling for us to reconnect with them in a mutually beneficial relationship whereby humankind can prosper and the forest can be kept intact**.

Tony Juniper is an independent sustainability and environment adviser, including as a special adviser with [The Prince of Wales' Rainforest Project](#) and Senior Associate with the Cambridge University Program for Sustainability Leadership. He speaks and writes on many aspects of sustainability, and contributes to the work of several advisory panels, including with the Science Museum and British Council. He is the editor-in-chief of National Geographic Green Magazine and writes a green column for the Sunday Times Home section. He is the author of several books, including the award winning Guide to the Parrots of the World (1998), Spix's Macaw (2002) and How Many Light Bulbs Does It Take To Change A Planet? (2007). **Tony Juniper** began his career as an ornithologist, working with Birdlife International. From 1990 he worked at Friends of the Earth. He was the organisation's executive director from 2003-2008 and also the Vice Chair of Friends of the Earth International from 2000-2008.