

Brazil, France launch \$1.1 bln program to protect Amazon rainforest

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An aerial view shows the Amazon rainforest at the Bom Futuro National Forest near Rio Pardo in Porto Velho, Rondonia State, Brazil, September 3, 2015. REUTERS/Nacho Doce/
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BELEM, March 26 (Reuters) - Brazil and France announced on Tuesday the launch of an investment program in the Brazilian and Guyanese Amazon rainforest involving 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion)

in private and public funds over the next four years, according to a joint statement.

The announcement was made during French President Emmanuel Macron's three-day visit to the South American country, where he landed on Tuesday in Belem, near the mouth of the Amazon, and was met by Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

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"Gathered in Belem, in the heart of the Amazon, we, Brazil and France, Amazonian countries, have decided to join forces to promote an international roadmap for protection of tropical forests," they said in a joint statement.

Their pledge to work together to stop deforestation in the Amazon by 2030 to contribute to slowing global warming comes two years before Brazil hosts the COP30 climate negotiations talks in Belem in 2025.

"The presidents expressed their commitment to the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of the world's tropical forests and agreed to work on an ambitious agenda, including ... developing innovative financial instruments, market mechanisms and payments for environmental services," the statement said.

Macron and Lula took a river boat to visit a sustainable development project for producing chocolate on an island near Belem, and met with Indigenous leaders.

At the event, Macron honored Indigenous leader and environmental campaigner Raoni Metuktire, also known as Chief Raoni of the Kayapo people, with the National Order of the Legion of Honor, France's highest order of merit, for his fight to protect the rainforest and Indigenous rights.

Despite past issues, relations between France and Brazil have recovered from a low point in 2019 when Macron led a wave of international pressure on then-President Jair Bolsonaro over fires raging in the Amazon. Bolsonaro accused Macron and other G7 countries of treating Brazil like "a colony".

"After a four-year eclipse and a virtual freeze in political relations between our two countries during Bolsonaro's presidency, we are in the process of relaunching the bilateral relationship and the strategic partnership with Brazil," a French presidential adviser said on Friday.