



GREENPEACE



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Green groups draft EU legislation to outlaw illegal wood imports

Brussels, BELGIUM – Three environmental organisations launched today a draft EU Regulation to outlaw illegal wood imports in Europe and promote sustainable forest management worldwide. The call for legislation to achieve these goals is supported by a statement signed by 150 social and environmental organisations from around the world.

FERN, Greenpeace and WWF drew up the model legislation as a response to the European Commission's Action Plan to combat illegal logging and its related trade (FLEGT), whose first package of measures will be discussed by EU Agriculture Ministers on 21 December.

"Our draft Regulation is intended to press the EU to take swift action to stop the ongoing tragedy of forest destruction, which lays waste to vast areas of forest and destroys the livelihoods of millions who depend on them. The EU is clearly implicated in the trade," said Sébastien Risso of Greenpeace.

The NGO-drafted Regulation recognises illegal logging and its related trade as an environmental crime, and allows for sanctions in the event of abuse of documents certifying the wood's legality (eg, no import notification, false declaration, forged documents). It also proposes that sustainability criteria be developed in cooperation with timber-producing countries and progressively integrated into laws to reassure the consumer that timber is both legal and from a sustainably managed forest.

This builds on the Commission's current proposal, presented in July 2004, which aims to implement a credible chain of custody, to ensure the legality of timber imports from those countries which choose to sign partnership agreements with the EU. The Commission and Parliament have each recognised that illegal timber imports from countries without partnership agreements will remain a problem, as will crimes associated with the trade, but these concerns have not been addressed to date.

"The timber industry faces an uncertain future if it fails to address the problem of illegal logging and unsustainable wood imports. Europe needs to remove this wood from the market to ensure a level playing field for legal traders and the survival of the world's forests," said Beatrix Richards of WWF.

The statement signed by NGOs calls for civil society to be fully involved in the development of partnership agreements to propose solutions and promote responsible forest management. It also requests measures in the areas of customs cooperation, investment and public-purchasing policies.

FERN, WWF and Greenpeace emphasise that in addition to their draft Regulation, the EU will need to deal with the crimes associated with the illegal timber trade, such as bribery and money-laundering.

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Links

- The draft Regulation, commissioned from lawyers Van den Biesen Advocaten, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, is available at <http://eu.greenpeace.org/downloads/forests/RegulationNGO.pdf>
- FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) – Proposal for an EU Action Plan, 21/05/2003 : http://europa.eu.int/eurlex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0251en01.pdf
- Download the statement signed by 150 organisations at www.panda.org/epo

Notes to editors

- More than 1.2 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods, according to the World Bank's "Sustaining Forests" report: [http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/ardext.nsf/14ByDocName/ForestStrategyBooklet/\\$FILE/Forest+Strategy+Booklet.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/ardext.nsf/14ByDocName/ForestStrategyBooklet/$FILE/Forest+Strategy+Booklet.pdf)
- Fifty percent of tropical timber imports into the EU are estimated to come from illegal sources (European League Table of Imports of Illegal Timber, Friends of the Earth); and up to 25% of imports from North-West Russia ("Illegal logging in North-Western Russia and export of Russian forest products to Sweden", WWF, April 2003)
- The European Commission acknowledged in its Action Plan that: "For a variety of reasons, some important wood-producing countries may choose not to enter into FLEGT partnership agreements with the EU, despite the advantages outlined. The Commission will therefore review options for [...] further measures, including the feasibility of legislation to control imports of illegally harvested timber into the EU, and report back to the Council on this work during 2004". In January 2004, the European Parliament's Industry and Trade Committee requested that the Commission "draft legislation to prohibit the import and marketing of all illegally-sourced forest products, and that it report back by June 2004".
- For an example of the crimes associated with illegal logging, see Greenpeace crime file, "Danzer Group involved in bribery, illegal logging, dealings with blacklisted arms trafficker and suspected of forgery" (November 2004), at: http://www.greenpeace.org/multimedia/download/1/658507/0/Danzer_Crime_File_-_November_2004-1.pdf