



GREENPEACE

NO PVC OR WOOD FROM OLD-GROWTH FORESTS IN EU ECO-LABEL FOR FURNITURE

March 11, 2003, Brussels - The European Environmental Bureau (EEB), FERN¹ and Greenpeace warned today that the EU Eco-label scheme risks being undermined if environmentally harmful materials and production processes are accepted in the criteria for furniture, currently under discussion. An expert working group, meeting on 18 March 2003 in Brussels, will put the finishing touches to the proposed Eco-label criteria for furniture, which will be subsequently voted on by EU Eco-label government representatives.

The environmental NGOs are concerned that some governments, such as France², are supporting industry demands to weaken the Eco-label criteria in order to "improve their feasibility". This would include accepting ecologically harmful substances, including PVC, in the Eco-label for furniture.

On a separate issue, a worrying precedent was set in the recent review of the EU Eco-label for copy paper, where governments failed to exclude wood from old-growth forests and allowed weak forest certification schemes.³

"Consumers expect that the Eco-label identifies the greenest products they can buy with the highest level of credibility and accountability," said Melissa Shinn, EEB Eco-label co-ordinator. An EEB expert – representing environmental NGO interests - will be participating in the working group.

"Furniture marked with the Eco-label should be produced with respect for forests and forest peoples," said Bérénice Muraille of FERN. "Without high quality criteria, the Eco-label provides no incentive for the forestry industry to stop the unsustainable and illegal logging practices that threaten biodiversity and the communities that depend on forests for survival."

"The proposal to label furniture containing PVC as environmentally friendly is outrageous; it would cheat consumers, and the Eco-label would lose all its credibility" warned Jorgo Iwasaki-Riss of Greenpeace. "PVC is one of the most environmentally harmful plastics, and many producers have successfully phased it out from their products. There are numerous alternative materials to replace PVC, which is certainly not necessary for furniture. The industry is free to use it for now, but they should not be allowed to label it as environmentally friendly."

Greenpeace, FERN and EEB demand that the European Eco-label for furniture:

- excludes wood from old-growth forests and CITES⁴-listed tree species, and encourages use of wood certified by independent, third-party forest certification schemes;
- excludes any use of PVC.

Further information:

Melissa Shinn, EEB: +32 2 289 13 00

Jessica Wenban-Smith/ Bérénice Muraille, FERN: +32 2 733 0814/3653

Jorgo Iwasaki-Riss, Greenpeace European Unit, +32 2 274 19 07

¹ FERN (Forest and the European Resource Network) promotes the conservation and sustainable use of forests and respect for the rights of forest peoples in the policies and practices of the European Union. Web: www.fern.org.

² See http://www.eeb.org/activities/product_policy/main.htm – Eu Ecolabel documents

³ See Appendix 1 of *EEB position paper on EU ecolabel standards for copy paper* at <http://www.fern.org/pubs/ngostats/copypaper.pdf>.

⁴ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora