



Taiga Rescue Network



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INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS UNDERTAKEN TO TACKLE ILLEGAL FOREST ACTIVITY

NOVEMBER 2005

INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Illegal logging is a pervasive problem that is having a devastating impact on the world's forests, local and indigenous communities and the economies of consumer countries. Its effects are global and include rampant deforestation, desertification loss of biodiversity and climate change. Illegal logging also creates social conflict with indigenous and local populations and leads to violence, crimes and human rights abuses. The World Bank has estimated that illegal logging represents approximately costs timber producing countries between US\$10-15 billion per year¹ in lost revenue, which is about a tenth of the global timber trade². This is preventing valuable resources potentially being spent on essential public services such as building schools and hospitals.

Growing worldwide concern about illegal forestry activities has led to discussions on illegal and destructive logging in a number of different political fora. This has culminated in a number of agreements, decisions and measures being proposed to address this global scourge on the national, regional and international level.

1 G8, WORLD BANK & FLEG PROCESSES

At the international level, the G8's Action Programme on Forests, agreed in 1998, was the first major public commitment to place the elimination of illegal logging and trade high on the international political agenda. This initiative helped catalyse many subsequent activities in the area, including in 2000 the World Bank's "Forest Governance Programme" which emphasises the need for active partnerships between governments, civil society, private sector and donor organisations.

The G8 and World Bank programmes later led to the first Ministerial Conference on Forest law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG), which took place in Bali, Indonesia in September 2001. This resulted in the signing of a Ministerial Declaration and agreement of an Action Plan. Following on from the Asia FLEG a number of African countries initiated their own FLEG process, resulting in another Ministerial Declaration and an Indicative list of actions in 2003. In the same year the EU Commission adopted the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (EU FLEGT) Action Plan, which recognizes the EU's responsibility as major timber consumers to



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JOINT NGO STATEMENT

contribute to solutions. In May 2004 the Russian Government published its intention to launch a regional inter-governmental process for Europe and North Asia (ENA) on the issue in 2005 together with the World Bank.

More recently, in 2005 the UK government made illegal logging a priority area for its presidency of the G8, and the topic was discussed at the meeting of G8 environment and development ministers in Derby in March. This resulted in a Ministerial Declaration which committed countries to undertake a package of measures to fight illegal logging. These measures to promote the sustainable management of forests, such as support for regional initiatives, developing enforcement tools, control imports of illegal logged timber through voluntary bilateral agreements, were endorsed by G8 leaders at the G8 Summit in Scotland in July 2005.

2 WSSD

The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) final Plan of Implementation committed governments to "take immediate action on domestic forest law enforcement and illegal international trade in forest products". Included in this commitment was for the international community to "provide human and institutional capacity building related to the enforcement of national legislation in those areas".³

In addition to the formal outcomes, the Summit also saw the announcement of a wide range of informal (so-called 'Type 2') outcomes, or partnerships for implementation, bringing together governments, intergovernmental organisations and non-governmental actors such as businesses, NGOs and community groups. A number of these are relevant to illegal logging, in particular the Congo Basin Initiative and Asia Forest Partnership.

3 CBD

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) also identifies the measures that are needed to be developed and implemented in order to promote responsible forest management and to eliminate illegal logging and related trade. In 2002 at the 6th Conference of Parties- the CBD adopted a work programme on forests- which included agreement to promote forest law enforcement and address related trade through supporting the evaluation and reform of legislation, improve enforcement, strengthen governance, promote greater cooperation and assistance⁴. At the same meeting parties also committed themselves to achieving the



2010 biodiversity and target contained in the WSSD's Plan of Implementation, where countries agreed to significantly decrease the loss of by 2010. The fight against illegal logging will be an important contribution to achieving this goal. In 2004 at 7th Conference of the Parties, as well as agreeing to a work programme to set up a global network of protected areas by 2010, governments also agreed to "take further steps to curb the illegal exploitation and trade of resources" especially from existing protected areas and from biodiversity rich areas⁵.

4 CITES

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is currently only the worldwide legal agreement that can be used to control timber and wood products trade, in particular to halt the import of illegally sourced timber. Currently, amongst the 169 countries that are party to the Convention are all major timber-producing and consuming countries. Listing timber species on Appendix I, II and III has provided national governments with the legal basis to stop shipments of timber illegally exported from the country of origin- eg *Fromosia Pericopsis elata* (Appendix II), Big Leaf Mahogany *Swietenia macrophylla* and Ramin *Gonstylus spp* (Appendix II). However, only a small number of tree species affected by illegal logging and associated trade are listed on the CITES annexes and are therefore subject to trade regulations.

CONCLUSION

Aside from these international and regional initiatives a number of bilateral and national measures have been introduced to try to tackle illegal logging- such as Memorandum of Understandings between producer and consumer countries (eg. UK and Indonesia, Japan and Indonesia etc), as well as national log bans (Philippines) and public procurement policies. However, in the 7 years since G8 adopted an Action Programme on Forests overall rates of logging, including illegal logging, and forest destruction appear to have increased, especially in developing countries. The continued absence of effective trade legislation or procurement policies (such as in the UK) has meant that most G8 countries and China, as one of the fastest growing consumers, are still markets for illegally logged and unsustainable timber. Most of these countries also have economic and development policies that in fact encourage illegal or unsustainable logging.