



THE FORESTS DIALOGUE

News Release

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Business, Governments and Conservationists Hold Unprecedented Gathering to Combat Illegal Logging

Gathering in Hong Kong takes first steps to launch coordinated effort against illegal wood

HONG KONG - More than 120 forest products company representatives, government officials and conservationists gathered this week - for the first time ever - to coordinate actions to combat the illegal logging that is devastating many forests around the globe.

Major companies from Europe, North America, Africa and Asia participated, as did officials from the European Commission, China, the United States, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines and the World Bank. Joining the private sector and government leaders were social and forest conservation leaders from around the world.

Illegal logging and the trade of illegally harvested wood is destroying forests in many parts of the world and leading to the loss of biodiversity. This destruction deprives indigenous peoples and local communities of livelihoods and undermines confidence in the use of wood as a sustainable resource. Up to 30 percent of hardwood lumber and plywood traded globally could be of suspicious origin. As much as 17 percent of roundwood traded internationally could be illegally harvested.¹

"Forest products companies, manufacturers, governments, and consumers are all part of the wood supply chain," said Weiguang Lu, Chairman of Shanghai An Xin Flooring Company Ltd., one of the largest solid wood flooring companies in China. "We all must work together to eliminate illegal logging. Government policies alone cannot stop illegal logging. Businesses also must embrace responsible purchasing."

During the meeting, forest products companies and conservationists discussed cost-effective policies and tools to curb the flow of illegally-harvested wood into the global market. Government officials pledged to work together with businesses and conservationists to combat illegal logging.

"As a responsible nation, China would like to cooperate with other countries to eradicate illegal logging and illegal trade", said Su Ming, Deputy Director General, International Forestry Cooperation Center, State Forestry Administration, P. R. China.

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News Release

Dialogue on Illegal Logging

8-10 March 2005 - Hong Kong

Illegal logging is devastating the forests of Indonesia. Over half of the logging in Indonesia is illegal. "Combating illegal logging is a serious task that requires a clear agenda and continuous effort," said Transtoto Handadari, spokesman for the Indonesian Forestry Department. He stressed, "The Indonesian Ministry of Forestry is committed to stopping illegal logging but needs international assistance from all parties involved in sustainable forest management, including the wood trade, to work to save the tropical forests of Indonesia and promote the welfare of local communities."

The meeting, which took place from March 8-10, was convened by The Forests Dialogue, an international coalition of private landowners, forest products companies, conservationists, retailers, foreign assistance organizations, unions, and academia. "Illegally cut wood depresses the price of forest products on the global market by an average of seven to 16 percent and presents unfair competition to those companies that respect the law," said Cassie Phillips, Vice President of Sustainable Forestry at Weyerhaeuser Company and Co-chair of the dialogue. "This dialogue showcased a variety of practical tools to tackle illegal logging and support legitimate markets for forest products."

Gary Dunning, Executive Director of The Forests Dialogue, said, "The last three days yielded rich and inclusive discussion with an impressive group of leaders on this issue. We agreed that ending illegal logging was not only good for the Earth and local peoples but makes solid commercial sense as well."

Recommendations for further action and plans for partnership emerging from the meeting will be taken forward by the Steering Committee of The Forests Dialogue. All participants were urged to take action immediately and address the problem where they can.

"This meeting marks the end to talk and a shift to concerted action on a scale that will make a real difference to communities, companies and forests," stated The Nature Conservancy's Nigel Sizer, Co-chair of the dialogue.

Concrete actions arising from the discussions include the following:

- 1) A call for G8 Ministers meeting in Derby, England, March 17-18, to implement existing government commitments including increasing development assistance for poor countries to combat illegal logging and recognizing their responsibility as major consumer nations to reduce imports of illegally cut wood.
- 2) A delegation from The Forests Dialogue will visit Governments to stress the importance of coordinated action between China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Europe and North America to combat trade in illegal wood.
- 3) Strengthening and expanding three existing partnerships addressing illegal logging - Conservation International/American Forest & Paper Association Alliance, the Global Forest and Trade Network and the WBCSD/WWF Framework Agreement.
- 4) Encourage Governments to use existing laws more effectively to achieve exemplary prosecutions. These laws include those to combat money laundering, tax evasion, falsification of documents, and false claims. The laws apply in consumer and producer countries alike.

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The meeting was sponsored by The Nature Conservancy, WWF, the United States Agency for International Development, the Department for International Development (UK), International Paper Company, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the Swedish International Development Agency, the American Forest and Paper Association, APRIL, Yale University and the International Tropical Timber Organization.

¹ From AF&PA's commissioned study "Illegal Logging and Global Wood Markets: The Competitive impacts on the US Wood Products Industry". (November 2004)

For the above document, presentations and summaries from the meeting and background information on The Forests Dialogue go to <http://www.theforestsdialogue.org>