

120 Forest Products Company Gather to Combat Illegal Logging

March 20, 2005

Geneva - 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.

The WBCSD's Sustainable Forestry Industry working group was a key organizer of this first international dialogue on illegal logging, which was convened by The Forests Dialogue (8-10 March 2005, Hong Kong).

Major companies from Europe, North America, Africa and Asia participated, including seven WBCSD member companies (Weyerhaeuser Company, International Paper, Stora Enso, Mondi, Nippon Paper, Oji Paper and SGS). 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.

"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.

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."

"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.

© World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD).

Content Provider: Sustain-Online