



global witness

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Environmental groups call on French shipping company Delmas to cancel shipment of precious wood from Madagascar

Global Witness and the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) today called on French shipping company Delmas to cancel a shipment to China of hundreds of tons of rosewood from the port of Vohémar, in northeastern Madagascar. The Delmas operated vessel Kiara – listed in the Lloyds Register under IMO Ship No.9403384 - arrived in Vohemar on 11 March and is currently being loaded with containers filled with rosewood. The campaign groups, who have photos of the Kiara and the containers in the port, accuse the company, a division of French container shipping group CMA-CGM, of facilitating the destruction of Madagascar's last remaining forests caused by the vast illegal cutting of rosewood trees.

Global Witness and EIA have written an [open letter to Delmas' CEO](#), Jean-François Mahe, urging him to all suspend all shipments, including the one which is about to leave. Since June of 2009, Global Witness, EIA, and other organizations have repeatedly advised Delmas of the situation and urged the company not to ship illegal wood from Madagascar⁽¹⁾.

Political turmoil in early 2009 triggered an invasion of Madagascar's national parks by thousands of illegal loggers. A report by Global Witness and EIA in November 2009 estimated that the trade in illegal rosewood and ebony was worth up to \$460,000 per day⁽²⁾. Audits of Malagasy financial institutions show that only a small part of these illicit profits remain in Madagascar.

Most of the wood that is exported comes from Masoala National Park, a World Heritage Site, and other protected areas in the northeast. Although almost all harvest and export of precious woods has been banned in Madagascar since 2006, local and national officials have been known to issue illegitimate export permits in violation of the country's laws.

"Madagascar's cash-strapped transitional government lacks both the political will and the resources to effectively control the trade in illegal wood," said Reiner Tegmeyer of Global Witness. "If companies like Delmas collude with illegal loggers, the forests of Madagascar will be irrevocably damaged, causing huge damage to endangered species and dramatically affecting people's livelihoods."

Timber shipped by Delmas usually ends up in China, the largest market for illegal Malagasy wood, but U.S. and European consumers have also been known to purchase it. If the wood finds its way to U.S. shores, company officials could face criminal and civil sanctions. The U.S. Lacey Act, as amended in 2008, prohibits trade in illegally sourced wood and its products. In November 2009, the American guitar maker Gibson was raided by U.S. authorities, reportedly targeting illegally imported rosewood from Madagascar.

"Recent U.S. enforcement actions show that companies involved in the trafficking of illegal timber can no longer act with impunity," said Andrea Johnson, Director of Forest Campaigns at EIA. "We urge Delmas to adopt and implement policies to avoid shipping illegal products, beginning with timber taken from Madagascar's national parks."

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Additional information: Global Witness investigates and campaigns to end natural resource-related conflict and corruption, and associated environmental and human rights abuses. EIA investigates and lead campaigns against environmental crimes around the world. It has decades of experience investigating illegal logging and the international trade in threatened wildlife.

Notes:

⁽¹⁾ At least three times recently (in June, September and November) Delmas was reported to have shipped timber of dubious legality from Madagascar. Global Witness and EIA wrote to Delmas on all three occasions, asking them not to transport the timber. Only the first letter was answered by Delmas pointing out that that Delmas has “a very strict commitment to ethical and environmentally sound business practices” and would “never load containers which have not got all green lights from local authorities”. The warning by the groups that the Malagasy authorities declared the timber illegal was not acted upon.

⁽²⁾ See our report, [Field investigation into illegal logging in Madagascar](#), November 2009.

Global Witness investigates and campaigns to prevent natural resource-related conflict and corruption and associated environmental and human rights abuses.