



global witness

**For immediate release: 8 July 2010**

## **Global Witness welcomes new EU law banning illegal timber**

The European Parliament has introduced new legislation banning the trade of illegally sourced timber and timber products in EU member states. Campaign group Global Witness warmly welcomed the reform as an important step towards cracking down on illegal logging around the world.

“For more than 15 years, Global Witness has been working to stop illegal logging and the associated suffering of millions of people who live in and from forests. We have advised the British Government, the European Commission and the European Parliament on legislation to curb illegal logging on the demand side. We are therefore pleased to see this new law that means timber traders will bear legal responsibility for the products they source,” said Reiner Tegtmeier, investigator at Global Witness.

Following yesterday’s vote in the European Parliament, any person or company who wants to import timber or timber products into a EU member state will now be obliged to exercise “due diligence” . This means gathering information about the sources of the timber and providing evidence that it was produced in respect of the laws in the producer country. Importers and traders will also need to assess the risk of illegal wood products entering their supply chains and introduce mitigation measures. To ensure traceability, each operator along the supply chain within the European market will need to declare from whom they bought timber and to whom they sold it.

The new law follows the US Lacey Act which was amended in 2008 after campaigning by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA). That law makes it a criminal offence in the US to import and trade illegally produced timber. The EU law is not as stringent as this but is a first step towards stopping illegal logging by making timber traders responsible for proving the legality of their goods.

“We hope the EU will go further and toughen the legislation so that companies and individuals importing illegal timber no longer enjoy impunity. The current reform is a good first step but to be fully effective it needs sharper teeth,” said Tegtmeier.

Recently, Global Witness and EIA carried out investigations of the illegal production of precious wood in Madagascar. The organisations are about to finalise a report into the network of traffickers, traders and customers of Malagasy timber. There is currently an official US legal investigation underway into the purchasing practices of US company Gibson Guitars, who are alleged to have purchased illegal ebony from Madagascar. This may prove a test-case for the revised Lacey Act.

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Notes

1. Global Witness' work on conflict timber was responsible for shutting down the timber industries that funded the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and Charles Taylor's despotic regime in Liberia. Our work also led to the closure of the Chinese/Burmese border to timber traffic in 2006.
2. The World Bank estimates illegal logging causes developing countries annual losses of up to US\$15 billion.
3. Currently, at least 20% of timber and timber products reaching the EU market is estimated to come from illegal sources (source: European Parliament)
4. The joint Global Witness and EIA report on Madagascar can be downloaded from:  
[www.globalwitness.org/media\\_library\\_detail.php/887/en/field\\_investigation\\_into\\_illegal\\_logging\\_in\\_madaga](http://www.globalwitness.org/media_library_detail.php/887/en/field_investigation_into_illegal_logging_in_madaga)