

East Asian Governments Failing on Illegal Logging as Greenpeace Launches Global Paradise Forests Campaign

Manila, International — Greenpeace today called on participant countries to the East Asia Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) to put words into action and take steps to seriously address the problem of illegal logging in the region.



Despite a strong declaration at the FLEG Ministerial in Bali on September 13, 2001, countries in the region have failed to implement any rigorous measures to stop the illegal trade of timber from the region.

The Bali declaration promised to “take immediate action to intensify national efforts, and strengthen bilateral, regional and multilateral collaboration to address violations of forest law and forest crime, in particular illegal logging, associated illegal trade and corruption, and their negative effects on the rule of law”.

Greenpeace forests campaigner Stephen Campbell expressed his disappointment in the process saying, “The Paradise Forests of the Asia Pacific are no better off than they were four and a half years ago. Logs that have been illegally harvested continue to find their way to countries like Japan and China where they are used domestically or processed and sold on to markets in the EU and the US.”

The Paradise Forests of Asia Pacific, which stretch from South East Asia, across the islands of Indonesia and on to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands in the Pacific, are among some of the most heavily logged areas on earth. Much of the large intact forest landscapes of these forests have already been logged. In Indonesia the figure is as high as 72% while in Papua New Guinea (PNG) it is 60% (1).

“At this rate of destruction, the Paradise Forests and the unique plants and animals that live there could be gone in ten years,” Mr Campbell said. “Governments must act now to protect these and other ancient forests before it is too late.”

Strong measures need to be adopted in not only producer countries (like PNG and Indonesia), but also consumer countries (like China, Japan and the EU). Consumer countries must recognise the demand from their markets for cheap timber and wood products is fuelling this environmental disaster, and respond appropriately with measures such as legislation which allows for the prosecution of individuals and companies involved in the illegal trade of timber and timber products.

“The FLEG process has the potential to make an important contribution in reducing the scourge of illegal logging,” Mr Campbell said. “Increased regional as well as international cooperation and resources are fundamental to ensuring the success of this process, and greater law enforcement, governance and transparency will be vital components of this effort.”

Greenpeace launched a global campaign this week to protect the earth’s ancient forests. In the Asia Pacific region Greenpeace is highlighting the problem of illegal logging by sending its ship, the Rainbow Warrior, on a ‘Forests crime patrol’ from PNG, through Indonesia and on to Japan to show that, despite commitments from governments, illegal logging continues.

At the same time Greenpeace volunteers from around the world are living and working alongside local landowners to showcase community forest solutions at the Global Forest Rescue Station at Lake Murray in Western Province, PNG. Greenpeace has ten years experience of working with forest communities in Melanesia with ecologically sound alternatives to logging.

Greenpeace is an independent, campaigning organisation, which uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and to force solutions essential to a green and peaceful future. It is committed to protecting the world's last ancient forests and the people and animals that depend upon them.

(1) World Resources Institute. 1997 'The Last Frontier Forests'

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