



Media Release 21 July 2010

Australian and Indonesian groups call for illegal timber ban

Social justice, environment and international development organisations have echoed an Indonesian call on the Australia Government to fulfil its 2007 election promise to ban imports of illegal timber.

Key civil society organisations in Indonesia, led by the country's peak environment group WALHI (Indonesian Environmental Forum) and including members of the Indonesian Coalition Against Forestry Mafia, have delivered a letter to the Australian Embassy in Jakarta asking PM Julia Gillard to stop allowing illegally logged timber into Australia.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has classified illegal logging as an organised crime and commissioned Indonesia's Anti-Mafia Taskforce to tackle the problem.

"The most effective way for Australia to help stamp out illegal logging in Indonesia is by banning the import and sale of timber products that cannot be independently certified as legally and sustainably sourced," said ACF executive director Don Henry. "Australia is lagging behind other OECD countries in acting on this issue," he said.

In May 2008, the US instituted a ban by amending the Lacey Act. And early this month the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly to ban illegal timber.

World Vision Australia CEO Rev Tim Costello said: "World Vision works with poor communities who are dependent on forest resources to get by. Forest degradation and illegal logging destroy livelihoods and food sources making it harder for poor families to survive," World Vision CEO Rev Tim Costello said.

"If the Australian Government banned illegal timber imports into the country, poor communities in our region would have a better chance at establishing decent livelihoods and Australian consumers could be sure they were buying sustainable products," Rev Costello said.

Dr Mark Zirnsak, spokesperson for the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania, said: "The Australian Government needs to take regulatory action to address illegal logging to send a clear signal that it is committed to the fight against corruption globally and that as a country we do not seek to profit from corruption through the lower prices it delivers to consumers."

Every year around \$452 million worth of illegal timber is imported into Australia.

Michael Kennedy of Humane Society International said: "With a federal election looming, the Government is running out of time to implement its 2007 election promise. A ban is urgently needed to help save rainforest species like the orangutan and curb deforestation, a major contributor to climate change."