

Appeal for Effective Countermeasures against Illegal Logging!

~to take leadership as a responsible timber-purchasing country~

We Japanese NGOs and organizations concerned about illegal logging as a major cause of global deforestation and forest degradation and as a threat to sustainable forest management, welcome the progress in discussions on strengthening illegal logging countermeasures in Japan.

The forests of the world are disappearing at the rate of 13 million hectares per year,¹ not only causing loss of biodiversity but also exacerbating climate change and having a massive impact on indigenous peoples and local communities whose lives depend on the forests. While domestic measures in timber-producing countries and international support are important as measures to prevent illegal logging, which is a cause of deforestation and forest degradation, it is of particular importance to regulate the trade in illegally logged timber and timber products, etc., in consumer countries that consume large volumes of timber.

Japan introduced measures to ensure the legality of timber, timber products, and the like in government procurement, etc., under the Green Purchasing Law, as a countermeasure to illegal logging (2006). Subsequently, other major timber-consuming regions such as the USA, the European Union and Australia introduced legislation to prohibit trade in illegally logged timber also in the private sector: the U.S. 2008 Lacey Act Amendments, the EU Timber Regulation that came into effect in 2013, and the Illegal Logging Prohibition Act that came into effect in 2014, etc. The Japanese system is not enforceable and fails to eliminate illegally logged timber compared to the systems of the above countries because its scope is limited to government procurement, etc., and it lacks rigid verification as it relies on certificates of legality issued by counterpart governments, and for other reasons.

Mainstream political parties have recognized the need to strengthen Japan's countermeasures against illegal logging, and are conducting detailed deliberations in this regard. For instance, the Liberal Democratic Party has published an "Interim Report on Further Strengthening Countermeasures against Illegal Logging" and has established a "Working Team to Deliberate on a System of Countermeasures against Illegal Logging"; the Democratic Party of Japan has set up a "Forest and Forestry Policy Working Team"; and the Komeito has held study groups at the "Legislator's Roundtable on Promotion of Forestry" of its "Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Caucus."

We recommend three elements as indispensable to establishing an enforceable and highly effective system to eliminate illegally logged timber: (1) to set a clear definition of illegally-logged timber,

¹ United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (2010) "Global Forest Resources Assessment." The figure of 13 million hectares does not account for the increase in tree plantations, etc.

and to ban its trade, (2) to require businesses to conduct due diligence to minimize illegality risks so as to avoid dealing in illegally-logged timber, and (3) to introduce penalties for violations of trade regulations, etc.

If Japan, together with the USA, the EU, Australia and other industrially developed countries, shows a clear stance of zero tolerance toward illegal logging, it can contribute to globally eradicating illegal logging, which is said to exacerbate bribery and corruption and to fund international crime syndicates. It is earnestly hoped that Japan, as host country, will exhibit leadership as a “responsible timber-purchasing country” by declaring its commitment to strengthening its countermeasures against illegal logging at the 2016 G7 Ise-Shima Summit and by establishing a system to prevent trade in illegally logged timber in Japan and to contribute to sustainable forest management on a global level in preparation for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games and beyond.

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Friends of the Earth Japan, Global Environmental Forum, Japan Tropical Forest Action Network (JATAN), Greenpeace Japan, Human Rights Now (HRN), WWF Japan and Sarawak Campaign Committee (SCC) (in random order).



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