

G8 Environment and Development Ministers Meeting

CONSULTATION PAPER ON ILLEGAL LOGGING

The UK, which holds the presidency of the G8 during 2005, has taken the opportunity to make illegal logging a topic for discussion at the meeting of G8 environment and development ministers on 17–18 March. This is the first time the two groups of ministers have met together under the G8, and will allow international interest in illegal logging to be capitalised upon.

The UK government wants to make sure that those individuals and organisations with an interest in illegal logging can contribute their views on what the priority topics for discussion on 'illegal logging' should be. Details are still to be finalised but there is likely to be an outreach event during the ministerial meeting.

The G8 Action Programme on Forests 1998–2002

Illegal logging has been considered by the G8 before. In May 1998, G8 foreign ministers, meeting in London, launched their Action Programme on Forests, which featured illegal logging as one of five areas for action. Observing that 'illegal logging robs national and sub-national governments, forest owners and local communities of significant revenues and benefits, damages forest ecosystems, distorts timber markets and forest resource assessments and acts as a disincentive to sustainable forest management', G8 governments agreed to undertake a range of actions, including to:

- Encourage the sharing of information and assessments on the nature and extent of international trade in illegally harvested timber as a basis for developing practical and effective countermeasures;
- Identify and assist in implementing measures to improve economic information and market transparency regarding the international timber trade, including through the International Forum on Forests [since replaced by the UN Forum on Forests] and International Tropical Timber Organisation;
- Identify and assess the effectiveness of their internal measures to control illegal logging and international trade in illegally harvested timber and identify areas needing improvement;
- Take measures to implement their obligations under international agreements aimed at combating bribery and corruption in international business transactions as they pertain to trade in timber;
- Work with interested partner countries and through international organisations including the International Tropical Timber Organisation to develop their own capacity to assess the nature and extent of illegal logging and trade in illegally harvested timber and their capacity to develop and implement countermeasures.

The final report listed a series of achievements, including the East Asia FLEG Ministerial Conference in 2001, and support for specific producer countries, for example through better law enforcement, institutional and legislative reforms, regulation of industry and independent monitoring and verification techniques. Measures taken in consumer countries included

encouraging labelling and certification, together with changes to government procurement policies, the beginnings of the EU's FLEGT Action Plan and support for ITTO activities.

'Perhaps the greatest success of the G8 in this respect' concluded the report, 'is putting the issue of illegal logging on the international agenda. As a result, considerable political and public attention has been focused on the environmental degradation and income lost to poor people and their governments, as well as the tendency of illegal logging to provoke and sustain conflict.'

'Despite widespread interest in and agreement on the need to combat illegal logging, maintaining the momentum already achieved is paramount if such efforts are to succeed. The best way to preserve and build that political and popular support is to deliver tangible results, showing that G8-supported measures to curb illegal logging are effective. Demonstrating such results will require producer and consumer countries to follow through on their commitments, as well as requiring clear progress on agreements between major exporting and importing countries.'

The G8 in 2005: priorities for action

The UK government would appreciate it if you and your organisation could feed in your ideas on priorities for action for the G8.

What do you think the meeting of the G8 environment and development ministers in March could realistically conclude on illegal logging?

While preparing your response, it is important to remember that the G8 itself possesses no permanent secretariat or capacity for institutional follow-up. Topics can of course be returned to at future G8 meetings, but the group is reliant on individual G8 governments to undertake actions to fulfil the commitments they enter into. Nevertheless, as the last few years have demonstrated, G8 commitments can help to catalyse and encourage action that may not otherwise have taken place.

Your response

Chatham House (the Royal Institute of International Affairs) is conducting the consultation. The responses we receive will be analysed and passed on to DEFRA and DFID, enabling the ministerial meeting in March to be informed by an awareness of stakeholders' views.

As we have a relatively short time available for this analysis, please limit your responses to no more than 750 words maximum, and try and concentrate only on the really key priorities (preferably no more than three). Please also include your name, organisation, country and email address. A summary analysis of the responses will be posted on the www.illegal-logging.info website as soon as possible after the deadline.

The deadline for your response is Wednesday 16 February – please send to Duncan Brack at dbrack@chathamhouse.org.uk.