

## **Fighting Wildlife Crime by Fighting Illegal Timber Trade**

### **Rapid Response to Illegal Timber Trade – Global Assessment Under Way**

The theme of this year's World Environment Day (WED), celebrated on 5 June 2016, is: *"The Illegal Trade in Wildlife"*. As timber and timber products fall into this very category, this is bringing a hot topic of forestry into the limelight: illegal timber logging. While there is plenty of scientific literature on this subject, a systematic assessment and synthesis has so far been lacking. Now the Global Forest Expert Panels (GFEP), an initiative in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) under the coordination of IUFRO, is tackling this task in a Rapid Response Assessment on Illegal Timber Trade.



Governments, communities, businesses and individuals around the world celebrate World Environment Day in order to engage public society and raise awareness on environmental issues. The need for greater action on the issue of illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products was recognized very recently also at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) that took place from 23-27 May in Nairobi, Kenya.

During UNEA-2, a total of 24 resolutions were formally adopted. IUFRO welcomes especially the adoption of the resolution UNEP/EA.2/L15/Rev.1 on *"Illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products"*. At UNEA-2 on 25 May 2016, the UN also launched the #Wildforlife campaign against illegal trade in wildlife. By giving their name and face to one of the 8 selected species for this campaign, internationally recognized personalities show their zero-tolerance for the illegal wildlife trade and celebrate the species under threat. Among these 8 threatened species in the UN campaign (including tiger, elephant, sea turtle, pangolin etc.) is also one tree, the rosewood tree. However, the illegal trade in wildlife is not limited to the trafficking of endangered animal species or the rosewood tree only, but also refers to wildlife products such as timber and timber products in general.

The scale of illegal timber trade is significant. According to some estimates, illegal timber trade accounts globally for up to 100 billion USD annually, almost half of the total estimated value of illegal wildlife trade. In major tropical countries, illegal timber trade could be responsible for up to 90% of deforestation, threatening both the national economies and the livelihoods of forest communities. Environmental NGOs have been raising public awareness of the problem over years, and numerous governmental initiatives have been established in order to tackle this issue. However, only limited progress has been made to date in reducing illegal logging and timber trade.

Against this background, IUFRO as the lead agency and coordinator of the Global Forest Expert Panels (GFEP) initiative in the CPF was recently mandated to establish a GFEP Rapid Response Assessment on Illegal Timber Trade. While there are many scientific publications on the topic, the information has not yet been systematically assessed and synthesized, a gap which the Rapid Response aims to fill with a view to informing more effective political decisions regarding illegal logging and trade of timber.

Back-to-back with the UNEA-2 in Nairobi, IUFRO held a Scoping Meeting of the GFEP Rapid Response on Illegal Timber Trade. The meeting was kindly hosted by UNEP just a few days before the start of the UNEA-2. The meeting gathered more than 25 experts, including leading scientists on the topic, representatives from indigenous peoples and from expert institutions such as the World Bank, UNDP/UN-REDD, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), UNFF, Transparency International, the EU FLEGT Facility, INTERPOL, GRID-Arendal, the FAO FLEGT Programme, UNEP and IUFRO. Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, and Mr. Alexander Buck, Executive Director of IUFRO, opened the meeting expressing the great need and expectations for the GFEP Rapid Response.

As a result of the Scoping Meeting, scientists serving as the Lead Authors of the assessment will synthesize and analyze existing scientific information regarding the various concepts of illegal logging/illegal timber trade, economics of illegal trade, impacts and drivers of illegal logging and associated timber trade, governance framework and response options, as well as implementation aspects including law enforcement and monitoring.

This “*Global Forest Expert Panel (GFEP) Rapid Response on Illegal Timber Trade*” will result in a state-of-knowledge report and associated policy brief that will both be formally launched at CBD COP-13 in December 2016 in Cancun, Mexico.

The initiated GFEP Rapid Response assessment on Illegal Timber Trade and resulting report have the potential to also make significant contribution to the next session of the UN Environment Assembly, UNEA-3 taking place in 2017.

More information about the GFEP Rapid Response assessment on Illegal Timber Trade:  
<http://www.iufro.org/science/gfep/illegal-timber-trade-rapid-response/>

More information on the World Environment Day 2016:  
<http://www.wed2016.com/>



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