



President Jose Manuel Barroso
European Commission
Rue de la Loi, 200
Brussels 1049

Wednesday, 10 September 2008

Re : Postponement of the Commission's vote on the legislative proposal, 'Concerning the placing on the Community market of timber and timber products', scheduled for 10 September 2008.

Dear President Barroso,

We are writing to you to express our deep concern regarding the latest postponement of the decision by the College of Commissioners on the legislative proposal to close the EU market to illegally harvested timber, most recently scheduled for today. This is one of a long series of delays and postponements since the announcement made in the annual EC work programme in October 2007.

Acting on this legislation is an urgent necessity. Any further delay is likely to send a negative signal just a couple of months before the Climate Conference in Poznan where Forests and Climate will be at the top of the agenda. Similarly, we feel that further delay will also jeopardize EU leadership vis-a-vis other international initiatives tackling illegally harvested timber given, for example, the adoption by the US Congress of the amendment to the Lacey Act in May.

Almost one-fifth of wood imported into the European Union in 2006 came from illegal or suspected illegal sources. Illegal logging is also a problem within EU borders, in particular in countries like Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia. This flood of cheap illegal timber creates market distortions, undercuts prices and puts legitimate operators throughout Europe at a competitive disadvantage.

Illegal and destructive logging also reduces economic incentives for sustainable forest management worldwide, significantly exacerbates climate change, forest biodiversity loss and the impoverishment of and human rights abuses against hundreds of millions of forest dependent people.

We are convinced that stricter regulation of timber and timber products at an EU level will improve the environment, the economy and the livelihoods of people depending on forests.

This opinion is shared by some 90 companies and trade organisations, which have signed a joint statement and/or sent letters calling on the Commission to introduce legislation against illegal timber that creates clear EU rules for fair competition and sustainable markets.

The Council, the European Parliament and the French Presidency of the EU have also repeatedly asked the European Commission to put forward a legislative proposal tackling illegally harvested timber without delay. In an open letter, published in the European Voice on 10 July, a group of members of the European Parliament called upon the European Commission, to speed up the procedure so that a first reading takes place before the European Parliament elections in 2009.

We are gravely concerned that the EU's response towards the pressing problem of deforestation, illegal logging and related trade has been repeatedly delayed for no apparent reason. We believe that it is in the EU's interest to establish a level playing field and to support progressive companies rather than to tolerate bad practice by inaction.

In order to be able to give you our views on the proposed legislation, we would appreciate a meeting with you as soon as possible.

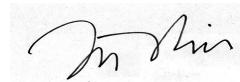
In the meantime, we strongly urge you to ensure that the College urgently adopts an effective proposal which closes the EU market to illegally harvested timber.

You will find attached again a copy of the briefing paper that we sent to your Cabinet on this topic in June.

In view of the public interest in this matter, we are making a copy of this letter available to the press.

Yours sincerely,

Jorgo Riss, Director, Greenpeace European Unit



Tony Long, Director, WWF EPO



Saskia Ozinga, Director, FERN



Magda Stoczkiewicz, Director, Friends of the Earth Europe



Patrick Alley, Director, Global Witness

