

October 2000

Journal on rainforests,
indigenous rights and timber trade

TONG TANA

Bruno-Manser-Fonds



*your donation
very needed!*



Huge trees are becoming scarce in Borneo. In the background an acacia magnum-plantation used for pulp and paper.

Sustainable logging in virgin forests? A fairy tale!

bm – Today primeval forest and jungle can only be found in not yet opened up regions difficult to reach, which still exist in the Tropics but also in Canada and Russia. Even though existing secondary forests in sustainable management could satisfy world timber requirements, 95% of tropical wood sold worldwide still results from destructive logging in the last rainforests. Unfortunately only such forests contain the big, thick trunks which guarantee high profits. Even European companies are directly participating in this massacre in countries such as the Cameroon, Congo and Brazil. Some avoid unnecessary damage, therefore receiving an «eco-label» certifying sustainability which misinforms consumers. Any child could refute this calculation:

A company has received a logging licence for a certain area. Trees hundreds, sometimes even thousands of years old, 1 to 2 m thick, grow in these forests. It takes the company about 20 years to cut down all commercially interesting trees (over 60 cm diameter), after which the company just moves on to new hunting grounds.

How much time will it take till a thousand year old, thick tree towers there once again? Even if we started planting right now?

Never!

Companies exploiting the rainforests reduce on a very, very long term basis all those superlatives which make a rainforest into a rainforest: greatest timber volume per hectare, oldest and thickest trees, highest forest roof, volume of fruit drop, greatest diversity of species... but worst of all they destroy the life 'capital' of the indigenous people of the forests who have and could live from just the 'interest' for centuries. If the endless palavers about sustainable development don't soon produce concise and courageous deeds,

the wonders of Creation will only survive in ghettos and the human being will have exiled himself from Creation. We thank you very much for your support.
Bruno Manser and his team

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Support the Penan – send the enclosed letter to the addressee. Thank you!

Penan interrupt road blockade in order to plant rice

jk – Over a hundred semi-settled Penan from the Apoh and Tutoh region of the Baram river in Sarawak erected a **road blockade at Long Kevok at the beginning of August 2000** in protest against the companies **Rimbunan Hijau, Shin Yang and Rawood** which are cutting timber on their territory.

The chiefs of the villages resorted to a blockade after talks with the companies remained unsuccessful and all their written protests were ignored. The Penan accuse the three companies of having felled trees in their forest without previous consultation, of destroying their fruit gardens and burial grounds and of not paying compensation money.

The local organisation **Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM – Friends of the Earth Malaysia)** feared that the companies were recruiting criminal gangs, as they had done so recently, in order to intimidate the indigenous people. They asked the government to refrain from sending in police forces as long as the Penan's objections have not been treated correctly.

SAM requests the government to change its forest management policies and to finally acknowledge and protect the indigenous peoples' land rights. SAM demands that the indigenous peoples' right to control and manage their own resources finally be conceded to them.

The blockade, which was also reported by Malaysian television, was temporarily interrupted on August 27 because work in the fields was due. But as the talks with the managers of the timber companies yielded no results, a **new blockade can be expected towards the end of September** as soon as the rice is planted. In addition, over 50 Penan have erected a **blockade at the Linau river** near Long Tanyit, Belaga, on August 28, with the aim of stopping a timber company. (This blockade was still in operation when this issue went to press.)

The Penan's struggle to survive against the destruction of their forest and of their cultural identity has made the headlines because of mass protests in the eighties and nineties. Over 700 Penan have been arrested, abused and jailed. Their situation is, however, so desperate that they see no other alternative but to defend themselves against the ruthless exploitation with peaceful blockades.

In spite of the great amount of sympathy and support which the Penan enjoy worldwide, the government of Sarawak has refused even to react to their demands and requests until the present day. *SAM/ various Malaysian media reports*

«Not development, but theft, the testimony of Penan communities in Sarawak»

jk – Finally it has arrived – **the report about what the Penan in Sarawak think of timber felling and what they gain from it.** It is the result of an investigation which was carried out in 1995 and 1999 in more than 15 Penan communities.

The reports about the Penan are contradictory. The government of Sarawak claims that there are no problems, that the Penan are being taken care of and that many projects have been realised for them. Environmental and human rights organisations on the other hand report that the Penan have to suffer under sanctions, violence and arrests, that their land rights are being disregarded, that their culture is being destroyed and that all efforts to clarify, to negotiate or to report serious incidents are simply being ignored.



The Long Kevok-barricade stops a convey of timber.

It seemed appropriate to send in a team to investigate the situation in the upper reaches of the Baram river. The report shows what the timber industry really brings to the Penan instead of development, how the police react to the blockades, and that the state's educational and health services have not improved, etc.

Four cases are also presented whose court case is still pending, two of them concerning a declaration of presumed murder (death through the employment of tear gas) and a rape of a female minor.

The report, **«Not development but theft – The testimony of Penan communities in Sarawak»**, can be downloaded as a pdf-file (743 K, 65 pages) from **www.rengah.c2o.org**

IDEAL Time Sdn Bhd (Institute for Development and Alternative Lifestyle)

Talk in the forest

Excerpt of a talk held 1999 in the forest of Sarawak

BMF: There was lots of smoke in the last years...

Laki Suti: The forest in Kalimantan has burned down! There was so much smoke here, it was as dark as the night!

BMF: Were you afraid?

Laki Suti: We were full of fear. There was so much smoke here, that we could not look for food. The smell was bad and the smoke filled our eyes with tears. Many of us were afraid the smoke would stay forever. You could no longer see the sun...

BMF: Such catastrophes also influence other regions. Droughts, storms and floods are occurring more and more and many people all over the world are scared that things will only get worse when your forest is gone...

Laki Suti: That is right! When the rain falls directly onto the cleared, destroyed areas and does not fall, as it should, first on the leaves of the trees, to stay in the trees before it slowly reaches the ground, then the streams and rivers become muddy and there will be floods. We know how important it is to defend the forest. The forest is our life. The streams which are still clear: we need them. But they will only be saved if Taib Mahmud gives them protected status, if the government helps us Penan, then they will be saved. When the Chief Minister Taib Mahmud signs, then we will have our life. The fish, the wild boars and the stags, the fruit and the sago palm, they give us life! We don't want any money, we only want our land and our forest!

BMF: Has money been offered to you?

Libai: The two company managers Sin and Tsu picked us up at our hut at the mouth of the Rayah. They told us there would be a meeting and my brother and all the relatives and the children followed us to the big bridge, but the two managers only wanted to take my husband and me along. They took us in their car to the crossing behind Long Sulung. There they told us: «You two, now listen to us: we want to work here. If you agree we will give you 2'000 Malaysian dollars – but just for the two of you, don't tell anybody else!» My husband Abu answered: «We? Why should we take your money? Our forest gives us much more!» Then those two said: «Wait! We will give you 5'000 dollars...», but Abu declined. But when the two managers even offered us 50'000 dollars to be able to work in our forest, then Abu hit the ground: «I say: No! Now, if you want to give us 50'000 dollars wait here a moment; I will go get



You could just as well eat us up, me, my child and my children's children!

Along and all our other relatives from the forest and from the villages and then you will give us 50'000 dollars every month! Each and every one of us! But even were you to give us two million dollars, it would still be a bad deal for us. The forest gives us food, but your money disappears very fast. We cannot live when the land has been destroyed. You could just as well eat us up, me, my child and my children's children!»

Abu: Yes, that is how it was. There have been chiefs who have accepted such proposals, but their hearts were not correct. The heart of the people is different. Therefore my wife and I said to the managers Sin and Tsu: «Think once: You are here only for a short time. You have fine houses, but my house is like a pigsty, a chicken-run! You will only stay here for a short time and then you will get out of here. But I must live till the end of my days on this destroyed land! If I am sick, then that is not because I hunt the stag and the wild boar and all the animals in the forest! I am sick because I have been imprisoned by you, because I was in prison!

Already then I myself blocked the roads and I will still not permit you to work in our forest. We have not asked you to come here and we do not want anything from you! But you do not understand because you have no brains and no ears!»

BMF: We are trying to make you known to the world, how you defend your forest and we hope that the Malaysian government will then protect your land...

Laki Suti: Yes, when the Japanese and all those countries whose names I do not know stop buying wood, then the companies will stop their work in the areas of Baram, Tutoh and Limbang. But as long as they can sell the wood for a good price they will keep on working. They will only stop when nobody buys wood that comes from here. But even if that were to happen we would still have problems here in Baram. We have heard that they want to establish oil palm- and paper wood-plantations. We have also heard that the Penan, who do not own identity cards can just be shot down so that they can plant their oil palms and their acacias...

Taib Mahmud does not understand what is happening to us who live here in the areas of the headwaters.



Development according to Taib Mahmud: erosion pollutes water, reduces the stock of fish, rendering the Sago-processing impossible, staple of the Penan.

The companies want to bribe us or to force us to leave and the government does not help us. The Chief Minister Taib Mahmud and his whole government live in the town. They do not think about the regions of the headwaters. They live down in the valley and send their logging companies and their slaves to destroy our land here in the regions of the headwaters. Just look how they bulldoze our land, look at their customs! They kill the people of the headwaters, but the people in the government just sit in their offices!

Uian: The government of Taib Mahmud does not understand how to order our lives. Taib Mahmud does not understand what is happening to us who live here in the areas of the headwaters. Or does he not want to understand? People from far away want to help us, but Taib Mahmud, who is so great in our country, does not know how to care for us? I am Uian, the son of Ngang, and I here and now speak to Taib Mahmud: our voice should not mean nothing to you; support us! Many people know you, but we do not know you because, up till now, you have not shown us any clear custom and you have not helped us of the areas of the headwaters. Even Laki Penan's (Bruno Manser; editor's note) dental help: why does this help not reach us? We ask you to please accept this help. Only then when help comes will we get to know you!

Initiatives taken by Natives

Our land, our culture, our heritage

jk – On 24th July the Director of the Malaysian WWF asked the present **Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad**, questions dealing with environmental concerns and sustainable development. He received the following answer: «**We should not be fanatical like this Swiss man** who insists that the Penans should lead a short life and enjoy shooting monkeys and having that for their food rather than live a better life if they are educated, because he likes to preserve the natural way of the tribes. I wonder what will happen to the Swiss people if they had remained in the caves and suddenly some civilised people say: let's keep the Swiss in their caves so that they will remain in their natural state. I don't think the Swiss would appreciate that.»

The Star, July 2000

It could be that Dr M himself even believes in this point of view, after all, there is no other in official Malaysia. Be that as it may, there happens to be a second, suppressed and officially non-existent Malaysia. This other Malaysia, for example the people of the Penan in the Sarawak region, calls in despair to Bruno Manser and the whole international community asking for help in concerns regarding official Malaysia and to save them from extinction. This clear message from the Penan and other indigenous people is not only ignored by official Malaysia but also denied, even though the international community has been receiving this crystal clear SOS now for decades.

For over 20 years the government of Sarawak has been denying these indigenous people their rights and ignoring their pleas, registered protests and lodged complaints through the responsible authorities. Is this the 'education to a better life' the government and it's acting Chief Minister, Taib Mahmud, offer the indigenous people for their development? **Not only cellulose and palm oil tree plantations are emerging from of such barren conditions, but resistance as well:**

On 28th April the chiefs of 10 Penan settlements from the Apoh/Tutoh and the Akah/Patah regions sent a **letter to the Forest Department protesting against said department's teams** working on their land without their having been either notified or informed in advance. They demanded an immediate stop be put to such endeavours which are directly connected to the government's aims to declare the areas as «Forest Reserves». The Penan complain that each and every of their lodged complaints against this plan, since it's official notification in 1998, has been ignored by the government as well as all their asserted land-rights. SAM/www.malaysiakini.com

(When an area or region has been declared as a «Forest Reserve» or «Protected Forest» the indigenous people lose all their rights and the government has a free hand to distribute logging and plantation licenses. Ac-



«Our land, our culture, our heritage» say the Dayak peoples of Borneo

ording to studies undertaken by the Malaysian NGO Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) such licenses have already been distributed for all such areas in Sarawak, *Edit.*)

From 20th – 22nd June 2000 the yearly UNESCO World Heritage Conference took place in the Mulu National Park,

during which Malaysia applied for the Mulu National Park to be entered into the World Heritage list. Parallel to this internationally frequented conference the local organisation **Borneo Resources Institute (BRIMAS)**, stationed in Miri, organised a workshop in which 30 of the Penan and the Berawan participated who either live in or near the National Park. Together they formulated a declaration to the participants and delegates of the UNESCO conference stating once again the long-standing conflict between the Dayak population and the government of Sarawak and that would the Mulu National Park be given status as World Heritage this would further restrict their rights as indigenous people of the region. They demanded the government of Sarawak respect their rights and asked the international community for their support.

BRIMAS, IDEAL

On 3rd July, after a long and difficult journey the Chiefs Along Segak, Melai Belulok, Sayak Magut, Seng Megut and Selai Segak of two nomadic groups conveyed an urgent appeal to the Chief Minister of Sarawak.

According to Along Segak, one of the Chiefs of the nomadic Penans in Ulu Limbang: «We want to be treated like any other human beings or citizens of this great country. We deserve to live in dignity and not to be simply treaded on. We need empathy not mere sympathy...

We heard that the government allocates areas even for animals. But why not allocate and protect areas for human beings like us. We also want to survive. We are all God's creation. **I don't think God created the forest only for logging companies depriving other people of its resources.** Our people were born in the forest, brought up and survived in the forest, die and are buried in the forest. It's our home. It's our provider. We sincerely appeal to the good sense of the government to grant our request.» *SAM/The Star, July 2000*

Petition of nomadic Penan of the Ulu Limbang and Ulu Magoh-areas

Along Segak and friends
Ba' Ureu,
Ulu Limbang,
Limbang

sent by express-mail on July 3, 2000

Datuk Patinggi Haji Taib Mahmud
Chief Minister of Sarawak
Wisma Pelita, Petra Jaya
Kuching, Sarawak/Malaysia)

Sir,

Re: Appeal to stop logging in Sungai Ureu and Ulu Madiit of Ulu Limbang and Ulu Magoh of Tutoh, Baram.
On behalf of the Penans who live in Sungai Ureu, Ulu Limbang and Ulu Magoh, Tutoh, we respectfully appeal to you to take action as quickly as possible to stop logging activities in the areas mentioned.
We make this appeal based on the following reasons:

1. All of us who inhabit the Sungai Ureu, Ulu Limbang and Ulu Magoh, Tutoh areas are still leading a nomadic way of life. Our survival depends entirely on the forest and its resources.
2. The forest areas surrounding our present areas of occupation have already been logged and we have observed with our own eyes the destructive impact in the areas involved.
3. Only Sungai Ureu and Sungai Batu remain as areas that are still suitable which contain the forest resources that we require.
4. Governmental reasoning that we Penans should change our way of life so that we would no longer be dependent on the forests and its resources is not logical. We acknowledge that we cannot escape the tides of change. As a result, we greatly need assistance and protection from the government. The most urgent assistance that we need or our request that should be given top priority is the allocation of forest areas of sufficient size to sustain our daily subsistence whilst we try to adapt to and learn the way of life that is proclaimed as superior (to ours).
5. The forest areas that we request to be protected or to be specially set aside and reserved for us are areas that have sustained us for generations in accordance to our customs, culture and traditions. As such, we have (established and) acquired native customary rights to the above mentioned areas. The government should recognise and respect our customary rights and take appropriate action to protect our rights thereto.
6. In accordance with the Sarawak Forest Ordinance, native peoples (pribumi) have the right to request that forest areas be set aside as communal reserve forests and the authorities concerned are bound to evaluate such a request. Until this point, we have not been informed as to why our earlier requests or applications made since the 1980s have not been approved or been processed. We sincerely appeal to you (and the government) to show empathy and consideration for our situation and to approve our request.

For your information, we have struggled to come down from Ulu Limbang and Ulu Magoh to convey this appeal (to the government) as we are desperate (for action). If the logging is allowed to continue, we will have to realize that the rights and lives of us Penans have not been adequately protected by the relevant authorities although it is their governmental responsibility. Once again, we appeal to you for protection.

Yours sincerely,

Along Segak, Seng Megut, Melai Belulok, Selai Segak, Sayak Magut

c.c.

1. YB Dato' Abang Johari, Chairman of the Committee for Penan Affairs
2. Director of Forestry, Forestry Department Sarawak
3. Resident, Limbang Division
4. District Officer, Limbang





The fruits of Meranti and other commercialized trees of the Dipterocarpacea-family are main food resource for wildboars.

News

Illegal logging and smuggling on Borneo

jrd – **Sarawak's forest department announced forceful measures would be undertaken against illegal logging** and added that the value of confiscated wood from the beginning of 1999 till April 2000 reached 4.5 million Ringgit (approx. 2 million SFr.) Most affected was the region of Bintulu (which includes the Similajau National Park!). But most of the illegal timber doesn't come from Sarawak, but from Kalimantan, Indonesia. Quite a few Sarawak citizens were arrested by the Indonesian police in June this year smuggling timber from West-Kalimantan, and heavy machinery was confiscated. Already in May Suripito, the Indonesian General Secretary of the Forest and Plantation Ministry, claimed that the Malaysian army was protecting timber smugglers. The Malaysian Minister of Defence, Najib Tun Razak, of course denies the Indonesian accusations that his army could be involved in timber smuggling! *Various Malaysian media reports*

jk – **The Minister of Environment and Health, James Wong, owner of the timber giant Limbang Trading, is worried about the fast decline of the stag and wild boar stock** in Sarawak. As a reason he states the opening of the interior by logging roads. To set an end to the poaching he declared 53 loggers Honorary Wildlife Rangers. These should serve as the «eyes and ears of the government» to protect the flora and fauna inside their licensed area. As during the first three months this year over 20'000 m3 illegally logged tim-

ber was confiscated – compared to the 30'000 m3 during the whole year of 1999 – he definitely made the 'billy-goat the gardener' (as one says in German) and entrusted the loggers with the additional task of reporting illegal logging operations...

Sarawak Tribune, June 2000

Of course, once the whole forest is felled there is no longer any need for forest wardens and wildlife rangers. The Ministry of Natural Resources no longer thought the Environmental Impact Assessment-reports, which are demanded by law, necessary for the 2000 km2 paper wood plantation planned in the Bintulu district on Penan land. Because the area has already been cleared of forest one could save oneself the trouble of such studies on environmental effects. There non-indigenous, genetically engineered species of trees are being planted for export of paper and cellulose. *Borneo Post, May 2000*

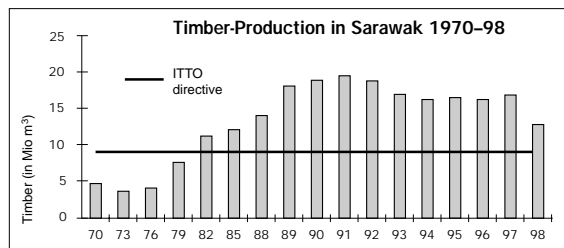
Dr Judson, a member of Taib Mahmud's governing party, complained to Parliament about the **ongoing fight over land rights** in his constituency Ba'Kelalan. Settling the former nomadic Penan in 12 villages has not solved the conflict. The reasons are to be found in the government's policy of only recognising claims dealing with cultivated land. As the Penan lived as nomads in the forest all their claims are being rejected. *Sarawak Tribune, May 2000*

Not only the Penan experience this continuous conflict with the government. **The Iban are also being put under more and more pressure. Middle of April** members of 8 Iban long houses destroyed train tracks the companies **Alwayield Sdn** and **Novelpac Sdn** had used to transport timber extracted without legal permission on Iban territory to clear land for an oil palm plantation. The Iban felt compelled to such drastic measures after a holy altar to the Spirits had been destroyed and nobody, neither the police nor the accused companies reacted to their complaint. **Beginning of July**, in the Mujong region, the Iban blocked a logging road with three barricades and stopped all trucks carrying timber from their forest. **Beginning of August** members of 3 Iban long houses confiscated the bulldozers of a palm oil company working without permission on their land. **Middle of September** the court hearings of the Iban of 6 long houses will be held. They have filed complaints against the police and the paramilitary Police-Field-Force for incorrect arrests, arbitrary criminal prosecutions and unjustified imprisonment. In **November and December** the court case against the 19 Iban imprisoned over the past year will take place. They have been accused of participation in the murder of 4 plantation workers.

Sarawak Tribune, July 2000/New Straits Times, May 2000/BRIMAS: www1.50megs.com/brimas

More trade – but without human rights and environment issues

jk – The Sarawak organization **IDEAL Time Sdn. Bhd. (Institute for Development and Alternative Lifestyle)** is calling for a review of the annual logging quota of 9.2 million cubic metres set by the ITTO in 1990, since the volume of timber felled exceeds this limit by 60-70% each year and the area of forest on which the ITTO regulation was based has since been massively reduced. www.rengah.c2o.org



The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) was created in 1983 with the objective of ensuring that by the year 2000 only tropical timber produced using socially and environmentally acceptable methods would be traded. From 2000, access to international markets is to be barred to tropical timber that does not meet these requirements. On May 4, the Sarawak Forest Department stated that the **requirements of the ITTO would be met before 2015**. As evidence of Sarawak's efforts to achieve sustainable forest management, the Department cited reforestation with fast-growing trees, the establishment of a wildlife reserve, and the use of helicopters during harvesting. However, the «reforestation» involves plantations of trees used for paper production (non-indigenous *Acacia-magnum*), the protected area was financed by Switzerland and Japan, and helicopters have not been used for over a year for reasons of cost. On 13 July, the same department reported how bad the situation really is for the natural forest in Sarawak. **The Director of the Forest Department assumes that the entire primary forest will have been cleared in 10 to 20 years' time**, and that Sarawak will then be dependent on tree plantations and imports. He said that reforestation with indigenous species such as **meranti** and **kapur** was extremely difficult, as no seed was available and these trees only bore fruit every 3 to 5 years (according to Bruno Manser's observations every 6 to 7 years only). For this reason, and because the high velocity of forest destruction in Malaysia and surroundings is generally well-known, the **Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species (CITES)** – signed by most of the ITTO member countries – intends to **enlist ramin and merbau as species which are endangered or might become extinct** and therefore to restrict the trade with these timber species.

Alerted by this intention, the president of the **Malaysian Timber Organisation (MTO)** urged its members to help the Malaysian representatives at CITES meetings to be careful that Malaysian timber will not be listed as endangered. On timber certification, he said, environmental movements in European countries had forced many buyers of Malaysian timber to demand for certification though there was not much evidence that the end users wanted it. «Whoever wants timber certification, it is obvious that nobody wants to pay more for certified timber. This is sending wrong signals to our producers», he said.

New Straits Times, May 2000/The Star, July 2000



Thousands of felled trees - but just one single kapur-trunk (*Dipterocarpaceae-family*) could be found after hours of search in the giant timber camp near Tanjung Redeb, Kalimantan, Indonesia. April 2000

At a conference of the **World Trade Organisation (WTO)**, **Sabah**, the second Malaysian state on Borneo, also called for more time to implement the ITTO regulations. According to one minister, no major problems would arise as a result of non-compliance with ITTO requirements, as Sabah has been practically clear-felled, but nevertheless it was necessary to prevent discrimination against their products on the grounds that they do not meet ecological and social standards.

For this reason, Malaysia intends to prevent labour-related and environmental aspects from being taken into consideration in the regulation of international trade within the WTO. In May, the Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Choo Ting said that ecological and social sustainability had nothing to do with trade.

New Straits Times, May 2000/Bernama Newsagency, July 2000

Rainforest study watered down by WWF and EU

jrd – The environmental organization **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)**, together with the **European Commission**, suppressed an explosive report on the destruction of tropical forests by multinational timber companies for almost 3 years. The subject of the study was the booming investments by Asian timber companies in Africa, the Caribbean rim, and the South Pacific rim. These are mainly Malaysian timber companies that require new supplies as almost all the forests in Sabah and two thirds of those in Sarawak have been destroyed.

The study, carried out by the WWF and the Washington-based **World Resources Institute (WRI)**, demonstrates that as a result of recent trends overlogging is increasing, the rights of indigenous peoples are being violated, and corruption is rife. The new investments are concentrated in countries which have weak environmental and social legislation and poor monitoring capacity but extensive areas of forest.

The authors, Nigel Sizer and Dominiek Plouvier, were so disturbed by their findings that they recommended

Rimbunan Hijau, one of the biggest and most irresponsible logging company in the world, celebrating its 25th anniversary in May 2000. Marked on the world map the concessions of the multinational company.



a moratorium on all new investment in logging in 11 of the countries studied, including Cameroon, Gabon, Surinam, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

They said this should last until bribery scandals had been investigated and environmental standards had been enforced. If effective action was not taken soon, they concluded, much of the remaining virgin primary forests in the Caribbean rim, Central Africa and Pacific rim would be lost within 5 to 10 years due to unsustainable logging operations. The report names companies that had frequently gained illegal access to rainforest areas by means of bribery and intimidation. It also provides a detailed breakdown of the countries where over-



Also the WTK company operates internationally and causes problems around the world.

logging occurs and the companies responsible. More than a hundred firms are specifically named, including the Malaysian companies **Rimbunan Hijau and WTK**. The report also accuses the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund of forcing countries to exploit their forests for cash so that they can pay off their debts to Western countries. The original report also calls for the exploitation of non-timber forest products and calls on countries where timber companies are based (such as Germany, France, Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea) to enact legislation making it possible to punish companies that engage in bribery abroad. An initial version of the report, marked «highly confidential», was completed in 1997. Instead of immediately taking appropriate action in response to the alarming findings, the study's sponsor, the European Commission (EC), asked for the names of the companies accused to be deleted. The EC and WWF withheld this explosive report because, on their own admission, they were afraid of legal action by Asian companies and governments that according to the report were involved in corrupt practices. Sizer maintains that the information in the original version was correct and that the EC made a mistake in asking for the names to be removed. In the summer of 1999, the EC approved the publication of a sanitized version, but this was then blocked by the WWF. According to a report in the British Guardian, the organization had been afraid that some of the **countries criticized (e.g. Malaysia) would close down local WWF offices.** In addition, the WWF seems to be dependent on co-operation with certain timber companies in order to ensure that the principles of the Forest Stewardship Council (of which it is a key sponsor) are also successfully implemented in tropical regions. A change in this strategy, which would have been almost inevitable after publication of this report, would presumably have been difficult to explain to its donors.

An even more watered-down version of the report was finally published in June 2000. The crucial difference between this and the original version is the removal of names of companies. The initial version was **highly critical of the Malaysian company Rimbunan Hijau**, and in particular its activities in Cameroon and Papua New Guinea. *Main source: Rettet den Regenwald e.V. (www.regenwald.org)*

More human rights and environment issues – but no action?

jk – In the light of the facts, the **State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (seco)**, the body responsible for Switzerland's **ITTO membership**, was well advised to have its tropical timber policy reviewed by an expert committee. On the basis of this report, a new strategy is to be elaborated by the end of the year. And this is to be welcomed, as seco's attitude to date («Increased international trade promotes the conservation of forests»; «Fuelwood requirements are responsible for the disappearance of tropical rainforests») encouraged overexploitation of the last natural forests worldwide. Switzerland continues to import unsustainably produced timber without any restrictions. Moreover, seco does not merely look on, but – by rejecting mandatory labelling according to type and origin – actively prevents improvements, even though as far back as 1994 81% of the respondents in a representative survey favoured such a measure. In a survey published in 1999, conducted by the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape (SAEFL), no less than **93% of respondents were in favour of a general ban on imports of tropical timber produced in unsustainable manner** and 75% said they would be willing to pay more for Swiss than for imported wood. In contrast to seco, SAEFL has recognized that rainforests are not protected by increased international trade, but that «increased use of domestically produced timber contributes to the conservation of forests currently not managed sustainably» (SAEFL, Progressive resource policy).

When binding agreements – whether established within the framework of the ITTO, the UN, CITES or national legislation – can be breached with impunity, when domestic political insight is contradicted by foreign policy and the will of the people is disregarded, the earnest pursuit of socially and ecologically sustainable development is revealed to be so much **hot air**. If seco wishes to maintain its credibility among the society which gave it its mandate, economic and trade-related measures must now be taken. **For example, a moratorium on imports of timber from Malaysia, Cameroon, Gabon, Surinam and Papua New Guinea.**

Motion on «Mandatory labelling for timber and timber products» clears the first hurdle

jrd – On 15th June 2000, despite the opposition of **Economic Affairs Minister Pascal Couchepin**, the National Council decided by 72 votes to 57 to refer motion 99.3542, tabled by **Christoph Eymann (Liberal Party, BS)**, to the Federal Council, thereby expressing its support for **transparency in the international timber trade**. For many years, environmental and consumer groups (not least the BMFI) have been calling for the introduction of mandatory labelling for timber and timber products, since consumers – whose awareness has been raised – can only make their purchases in an environmentally and socially acceptable way if details of the country of origin and type of wood are given.

Labelling makes it possible to avoid timber produced by overlogging, e.g. from Malaysia, and opt for wood from sustainably managed forests, e.g. from Switzerland.

A motion to the same effect must now also be tabled by a member of the Council of States. If this is then passed on, the Federal Council will finally have to draft a bill providing for the mandatory labelling of timber and timber products. We hope that the Council of States, which supported our cause in 1993 (Simmen motion), will quickly decide in favour of the planet's last intact forests!

Communes give thumbs down to unsustainably produced timber

jk – Following decisions by Brittnau AG, Villmergen AG, Cernier NE, La Tour-de-Peilz VD, Aigle VD and Bachenbülach ZH, a total of 278 communes and towns (population: 2.8 Mio = 1/3 of Swiss population) are now avoiding the use of unsustainably produced timber within public authorities. Following a decision by the canton of St. Gallen, 7 cantons are currently also avoiding timber from those sources.

When the big trees are felled, the rest is sold off cheap as pulp and paper or wooden panels on the international market. Ship at Samarinda, Kalimantan/Indonesia loaded with small diameter trunks; March 2000



