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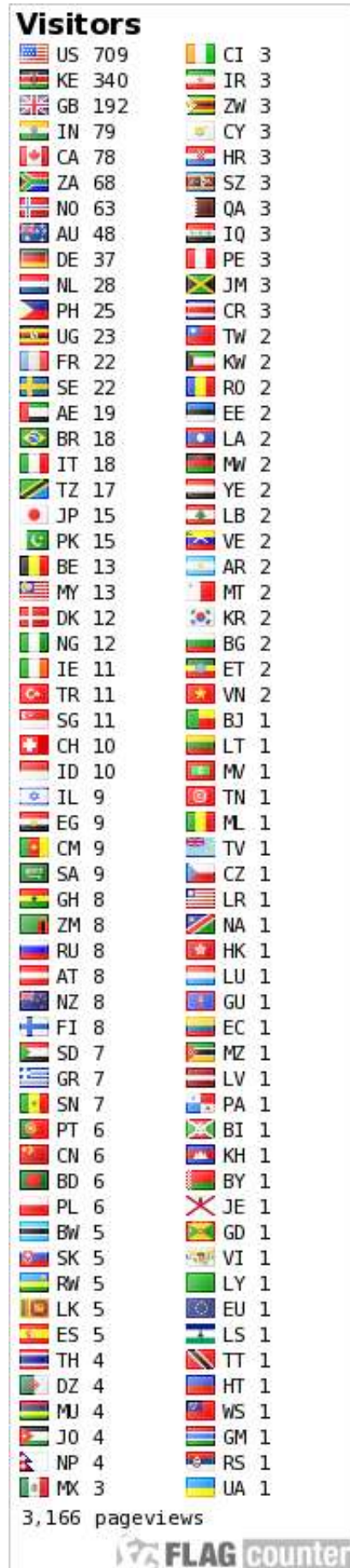
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[Still a way to go to rein in illegal loggers globally](#)

Posted by [africanpress](#) on July 20, 2010

GLOBAL: China, the timber baron



Photo: [CAR's Ministry Water & Forestry Resources](#)

JOHANNESBURG, - The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme is an initiative to prevent conflict diamonds from being traded; what if there was a similar initiative to put illegal logging out of business? Sam Lawson, the lead author of a new report produced by Chatham House, a UK-based think-tank, acknowledges it is an idea that should be pursued.

The [report](#) is the first detailed assessment of how five developing countries – Brazil, Indonesia, Cameroon, Malaysia and Ghana – have succeeded in more than

halving illegal logging.

But the authors noted with some alarm that in 2008 more than half the illegally sourced wood being imported by the five big consumer countries – the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands – arrived via third-party processing countries, mainly China. This is a huge rise from just 15 percent eight years earlier.

The need to get the global community to act cohesively on reining in illegal logging has grown more urgent. “It is increasingly important that processing-country governments take additional and more significant action,” the report warned.

Countries like the US amended legislation in October 2008, making it illegal to handle illegally harvested timber, and on 7 July 2010 the EU parliament approved similar legislation. At a recent meeting in Canada the G-8 group of industrialised countries called for stronger efforts to check illegal logging, saying it was “fuelling conflicts”. “The global community should try to build on these efforts in developing programmes to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) in developing countries,” said Lawson, an Associate Fellow of Chatham House.

The REDD strategy is part of the UN climate change negotiation process to help local communities conserve forests, which includes funding these efforts via government and market-based mechanisms like trading the

carbon stored by forests as credits to greenhouse gas-emitting industries.

“But my fear is that the REDD process might end up paying lip-service to the real issue,” Lawson said, with the money not reaching efforts to police and conserve the forests, or strengthening policy. The UN Development Programme pointed out in its 2007 annual report that most of the money for deforestation was channelled into planting trees.

Lawson said the other option was that countries such as Cameroon, which had signed voluntary partnership agreements with the European Union to prevent illegal wood from reaching member states, should build on this to cover harvesting, processing and exports for other countries it dealt with.

“While almost half of Cameroon’s logging concession area has now been subjected to some form of voluntary independent legality or sustainability verification in order to meet the concerns of European buyers, the remainder is largely geared towards exports to less sensitive markets, such as China,” the report pointed out.

China is the world’s top importer and exporter of illegal wood; it imports 20 million cubic metres of illegal timber every year – more than all five of the main consumer countries combined.

The good news is that some of the checks and balances are paying off in the last decade illegal logging dropped by 50 percent in Cameroon, between 50 and 75 percent in the Brazilian Amazon, and by 75 percent in Indonesia, preventing the degradation of up to 17 million hectares of forest – an area bigger than England and Wales combined.

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