



What will it take for the Ukrainian Forestry Agency to finally be reformed?

Prime Minister's actions so far do not address the root causes of illegal logging

Monday July 6th, 2020

We the undersigned are a group of national and international NGOs that are deeply disappointed by the lack of political will to implement profound and systemic changes in the forestry sector, despite the obvious facts.

This means that almost every product made of Ukrainian wood both on the domestic market of Ukraine and on world markets could potentially be related to corruption abuses, destruction of nature, violation of environmental rights of citizens, and be fuelling the activities of organized criminal groups.

Corruption, poor forest management and environmental degradation in forest ecosystems are the consequences of a lack of systemic reforms in the industry.

Recent floods and longstanding, rampant deforestation have devastated the Carpathians. Many of the same regions [most affected by the floods](#) are also ones with high levels of illegal logging.

We welcome the Prime Minister's [recent pledge](#) to crackdown on illegal logging in Ukraine. We also note the recent decision to replace the head of the State Agency of Forest Resources of Ukraine.

However, to tackle the problem of illegal deforestation in the country, these actions must go much beyond staff changes and audits. Below are some of the most urgent changes that must be made.

We draw the following conclusions based on the analytical reports:

-<https://bit.ly/2Zg4mHO> - EU Technical Assistance and Information Exchange "Taiex" report on reform of the Ukrainian forestry sector, 2018;

-<https://bit.ly/2YJl2Zi> - 2018 report "Complicit in Corruption" by UK-based NGO Earthsight;

-<https://bit.ly/31wrepd> - 2020 report "Flatpacked Forests" by Earthsight;

-<https://bit.ly/31vSlel> - Analytical Report of the World Bank, FLEG II

We require:

From the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the President of Ukraine, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources - to initiate a deep and systematic reform of forestry, namely:

- Firstly and most urgently, to take steps immediately to **reorganize the State Forest Agency, by separating the controlling and economic functions, as previously called for by national and international NGOs as well as the EU.** Effective governance assumes avoiding conflicts of interest. Therefore, separation of SAFR functions, which now combines managerial, regulatory, economic, and supervisory powers, is mandatory.
- Ensure the formation of a quality forest policy, based on the support and preservation of environmental, social and economic values of all forests of Ukraine in the short and long term based on the wide public consultation process.
- Recognize the problem of illegal sanitary logging and illegal logging carried out by forest users themselves and start tackling it. Separating control and economic functions of SAFR will be the main way to tackle this “legal illegal” logging.
- Ensure the activities of state forest enterprises according to the OECD principles for the management of state enterprises.
- Complete the reform of State Environmental Inspectorate.

More detailed asks have been presented earlier by Ukrainian NGOs, and are available [at this link](#) [In Ukrainian].

This is a vital opportunity to reform forestry governance in Ukraine for the better, by tackling the underlying issues that have infected forestry activities for a number of years. It must not be wasted. The specific steps above must be acted on urgently to preserve the valuable natural heritage of Ukraine and to ensure forestry operates in a sustainable manner with a thought for future generations.

The undersigned groups stand ready to help in any way we can as the Prime Minister’s government takes steps to rectify the mistakes of the past.

Respectfully,

Environment-People-Law: www.epl.org.ua

Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group: www.uncg.org.ua

National Interests Advocacy Network ANTS: www.ants.org.ua

Forest Initiatives and Communities: <https://forestinitiativesc.wixsite.com/forestcom>

Ecoclub, Rivne: www.ecoclubrivne.org

Free Svydovets: www.freesvydovets.org

Earthsight, London, United Kingdom: www.earthsight.org.uk

Bruno Manser Fonds, Switzerland: www.bmf.ch

Contacts:

- Petro Testov, Environment-People-Law: office@epl.org.ua
- Yehor Hrynyk, Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group: uncg.ua@gmail.com
- Ostap Yednak, ANTS: ostapyednak@gmail.com
- Dmytro Karabchuk, Forest Initiatives and Communities: forest.initiatives.com@gmail.com
- Andriy Martynyuk, Ecoclub, Rivne, Ukraine: martynyuk@ecoclubrivne.org
- Iris del Sol, Free Svydovets: free.svydovets@gmail.com
- Sam Lawson, Director, Earthsight: info@earthsight.org.uk
- Lukas Straumann, Executive Director, Bruno Manser Fonds: lukas.straumann@bmf.ch