
Peru: The complex issue of illegal logging in the sights of the government

The Ministry of Agriculture of Peru has recently stated that the illegal logging of timber, particularly of mahogany, operates like drug trafficking or smuggling, with an organised and powerful network threatening the process of forest planning that the Government has launched.

According to the ministry, the problem is rooted in the fact that a firm decision had never been taken to struggle against illegal logging and that controlling the marketing chain --the financial support to the activity-- had been overlooked.

In order to start addressing the issue, the ministry decided to set up a multi-sectoral commission --presided by the minister-- commissioned to design and implement a strategy to face the problem. This commission will also design strategies to withdraw illegal forest extractors from reserved zones, forestry concessions and non-contacted indigenous community territories, and propose measures for a legal reform to sanction illegal logging in addition to the actions necessary to control those who market this timber.

However, it is important to stress that all this is clearly insufficient to face an issue of the complexity of illegal logging. Its solution requires the preparation of a strategy covering a wide range of subjects --going far beyond simple legal control-- and among these, we would like to emphasise the following:

- recognition of the territorial rights of indigenous peoples (contacted or not, in protected areas or not)
- land tenure security (both in forest and non forest areas)
- monitoring of the timber industry and in particular the major companies in the sector, main beneficiaries and financers of illegal logging
- the revision of the policy for protected area demarcation, which should have the prior and informed consent of the communities living there (with the exception of non contacted communities) and respect for their right to be the main beneficiaries of forest resources
- macroeconomic and sectoral policies (industrial, energy, transport, etc.), promoting excessive extraction (either legal or illegal) or that generate conditions for unsustainable exploitation
- economic and social policies giving rise to conditions of poverty and social exclusion that make many people involve themselves in illegal timber logging.

The above does not exhaust the diversity of subjects that must necessarily be taken into consideration to address the issue. The government has taken a first step in the right direction by inviting the actors involved in the problem: extractors, indigenous peoples, companies, non-governmental organisations, and the State to take part in the recently established multi-sectoral commission. Over the coming months it will be seen whether this commission is able to address the issue in all its complexity, providing equitable solutions for those who inhabit the forest and depend

on it to be able to use it in such a way as to ensure both their basic needs and the conservation of the forest as a whole. We hope that this will be the outcome.

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