
[Vietnam invades Cambodian forests](#)

In previous issues of the Bulletin we informed on the expansion of tree monocultures and the pulp and paper industry in Vietnam, under a scheme not aimed at attending the needs of farmers, villagers, or even the country's economy in the long run (Bulletin 7, December 1997; Bulletin 15, September 1998). The unsustainability of Vietnamese forestry policy becomes evident once again: from July 1998 the Government is allowing imports of Cambodian timber, and even encouraging the re-export of both logs and sawn wood made out of Cambodian and Laotian timber.

Under the disguise of "regional cooperation" in the framework of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), Vietnamese loggers are illegally felling trees in Cambodia, especially in Ratanakiri province. It is presumed that large scale land exports will take place during the 1998/99 dry season. The minimum volume of Cambodian logs illegally felled and exported to Vietnam in 1997 and early 1998 has been estimated in 260,000 cubic metres.. The annual export of Vietnamese manufactured garden furniture to Europe reached in 1998 a minimum of US\$ 70 million. According to the law, exclusively imported wood can be used to this aim, and this raw material comes from the neighbour countries Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Malaysia and Indonesia.

"Since the July 1997 coup Vietnam, with the go ahead from Cambodian Prime Ministers Hun Sen, Ung Huot and Military Region 1, appears to regard eastern Cambodia as its own property and absolutely advocates the import of Cambodian logs", said Simon Taylor, spokesperson of Global Witness. Based on the World Bank suggested economic rent for Cambodian timber of US\$75 per m³, the loss to the national budget through illegal logging operations from January 1997 to February 1998 is US\$184.2 million. Cambodian forests had already suffered significant degradation during the Vietnam War, due to bombing and the use of defoliants. If deforestation in this country's forests continue at the present rate, by 2003 all of them would have disappeared.

Sources: Global Witness, Press Release, 14/12/1998; "Cambodia's future on the move", A Briefing Document by Global Witness, March 1998
The World Guide 1997/1998.