

Statement: Impacts of illegal logging on the environment and societies in the Pacific Islands

Distinguished Excellencies,

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today.

Current logging practices in the Pacific Islands lead to soil erosion, which increases sediment in coastal areas, and waterways resulting in poor water quality. The exploitation of natural resources in many countries damages the environment in such magnitude that it threatens life and health of local communities. Vulnerable communities in the region are suffering on a daily basis of an unclean, unhealthy and hazardous environment due to constant flooding, erosion, silting, pollution, and deforestation. Further, trafficking is closely linked to logging activities, with such abuses often occurring at logging camps. There have been several allegations of sexual violence related to the presence of logging companies and their foreign workers. Commercial sexual exploitation of children is a serious and substantial problem in some of the affected areas. There is still a lack of awareness regarding commercial and sexual exploitation among the communities and a lack of monitoring of these camp sites by labor and environmental authorities in the region. Facilitating these circumstances is the fact that in Europe, only between 25-32% of tropical timber imports are sustainably sourced, according to the IDH report from 2019. Crimes against the environment are accompanied by and are leading to numerous other crimes, often effecting the most underprivileged members of society. Dominicans for Justice and Peace sees the role of civil society actors in urgently pressuring their governments, be it in producing or receiving countries, to take responsibility for environmental and the human rights implications of the production of such goods before they enter the market.

NGOs can play a distinctive role in informing the international community on the serious human rights and environmental impacts of unsustainable tropical wood. Making civil society heard at the United Nations can have the power to initiate long-term changes in the affected countries.