

September 11, 2017

**Thomas Bach**  
**President**  
**International Olympic Committee**  
**Château de Vidy**  
**1007 Lausanne Switzerland**

## **An Open Letter to the International Olympic Committee**

Dear Mr. Bach:

### **Re: Tokyo 2020 Olympics jeopardize Olympic commitment to sustainability**

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our grave concerns about the sustainability and accountability of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Mounting evidence that Tokyo 2020 is exploiting tropical forests and potentially fueling human rights violations is jeopardizing the Olympic commitment to sustainability and respect for human dignity. We urge the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Tokyo 2020 authorities to immediately disclose the timber supply chain associated with the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, including the origin and volume of all tropical wood used, and to halt further use of wood from tropical forests and other high risk sources.

Transparency is fundamental to the credibility of the Olympics, as articulated in the Olympic Agenda 2020. Given the high environmental and social risks associated with forest-related products, especially those sourced from tropical forest countries with weak forest governance, full supply chain transparency and enhanced due diligence measures are critical to ensure responsible sourcing.

Unfortunately, the Tokyo 2020 authorities have been secretive about the timber used for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and have failed to take sufficient action to mitigate the risk of using illegal and unsustainable tropical timber. The risks associated with timber sourcing were clearly articulated in the letter sent to the IOC on December 6 2016, signed by 44 NGOs.<sup>1</sup> The letter offered evidence of high risk timber from Malaysia being used in Tokyo construction projects and argued that the Tokyo 2020 Timber Sourcing Code<sup>2</sup> is ill-equipped to prevent the use of risky timber. Yet, not a single demand put forward in the letter has been met. In particular, the Tokyo 2020 Timber Sourcing Code remains fundamentally flawed: Tokyo 2020 authorities have been exploiting the Code's exemption of concrete formwork plywood from environmental, labor, and human rights criteria in order to use significant volumes of tropical wood for construction of the new National Stadium. Such plywood is only required to meet substandard legality standards, which have been the subject of consistent criticism both within Japan and internationally.<sup>3</sup> These standards are far below global best practice.

In April of this year, tropical plywood supplied by a Malaysian timber company called Shin Yang was discovered on the construction site of the new Tokyo Olympic Stadium.<sup>4</sup> Shin Yang has been previously implicated in systematic destruction of intact rainforests, illegal logging, and human rights violations in Sarawak, Malaysia.<sup>5</sup> Tokyo 2020 authorities not only confirmed the use of wood supplied by Shin Yang,<sup>6</sup> but are continuing to use wood sourced from this controversial supplier.<sup>7</sup> Tokyo 2020 authorities defended the use of Shin Yang wood by claiming that the particular sample found was PEFC-certified.<sup>8</sup> However, the majority of wood being used for the Stadium as concrete formwork is in fact uncertified and very likely to have originated from the rainforests of Malaysia or Indonesia, which supplies most concrete formwork plywood used in Japan.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, sourcing from this controversial supplier, with a clear record of tropical forest destruction and human rights violating logging practices is a contradiction of Olympic values and commitments.

Furthermore, there is substantial evidence that PEFC certification fails to assure legality and social and environmental responsibility, including protection for traditional and civil rights and areas of high conservation value. The PEFC-endorsed certification system in Malaysia known as the Malaysian Timber Certification System (MTCS) has been assessed as even weaker than PEFC on both standard and system strength.<sup>10</sup>

The Indigenous community of Long Jaik in Sarawak has been battling Shin Yang for many years to defend their right to land.<sup>11</sup> The community's headman, Matu Tugang, said in a recent statement, "[Shin Yang] destroy[s] everything in front of them before they extract logs. That is why our life in Long Jaik now is very difficult." Despite long-standing community opposition and adverse environmental impacts, the Shin Yang concession in which the Long Jaik community resides supplies at least two of Shin Yang's MTCS-certified plywood mills.<sup>12</sup>

In protest of these developments, on May 10th, over 140,000 signatures were delivered to Japanese Embassies demanding an immediate halt to the use of tropical wood for construction of the new Olympic facilities in Tokyo.<sup>13</sup> Neither the Japanese Government nor Tokyo 2020 authorities have responded to this petition. With no transparency and no established grievance procedure, there is little accountability.

Tokyo 2020 authorities are now deliberating the procurement standards for palm oil and pulp & paper, commodities that are significant drivers of tropical deforestation ("forest-risk commodities"). Putting robust social and environmental safeguards in place is critical to avoiding similar mistakes.

We therefore demand the following as a matter of urgency:

- 1) A halt to the use of tropical wood and wood from other high risk sources;

- 2) Immediate disclosure of the origin and volume of tropical wood used to construct all Tokyo 2020 Olympic facilities including the new Olympic Stadium and a full reporting of the measures taken to ensure timber legality and sustainability;
- 3) A requirement for full traceability and third party verification for the timber supply chain;
- 4) Revision of the Timber Sourcing Code, which includes closing the loophole for concrete formwork plywood and adopting robust legality standards that require due diligence as well as stronger social and environmental requirements that require protection of all high conservation value areas and high carbon stock forests as well as respect for Indigenous and local communities' legal and customary rights to land, forests, and natural resources, including verification of their Free, Prior and Informed Consent; and
- 5) Adoption of robust sourcing requirements for all other forest-risk commodities that assure no materials or products used by the Olympics are associated with rainforest destruction, illegal logging, or human rights violations.

We request a response to this letter as soon as possible and before October 2nd. If you may have any questions, please contact Hana Heineken at [hheineken@ran.org](mailto:hheineken@ran.org).

Sincerely,

1. Accelerated Rural Development Organisation (ARDO), Ghana - Pascal Benson Atiglah, Director
2. ARA, Germany - Wolfgang Kuhlmann, Director
3. Biodiversity Conservation Center, Russia - Alexey Zimenko, Director General
4. Biofuelwatch, UK/US - Almuth Ernsting, Co-Director
5. Bob Brown Foundation, Australia - Jenny Weber, Campaign Manager
6. The Borneo Project, US - Jettie Word, Executive Director
7. Bruno Manser Fund, Switzerland - Lukas Straumann, Executive Director
8. Center for International Environmental Law, US - Carroll Muffett, President & CEO
9. Center for Orang Asli Concerns (COAC), Malaysia - Colin Nicholas, Coordinator
10. Chlorine Free Products Association, US - Archie Beaton, Executive Director
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16. The Finnish Nature League (Luonto-Liitto), Finland - Leo Stranius, Executive Director
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23. Global Witness, UK - Patrick Alley, Director
24. Greenpeace International - Matthew Daggett, Global Campaign Leader, Forests

25. Human Rights Now, Japan - Kazuko Ito, Executive Director
26. Japan Tropical Forest Action Network, Japan - Akira Harada, President
27. Jikalahari (The Network for Riau's Forest), Indonesia - Woro Supartinah, Coordinator
28. Keruan, Malaysia - Komeok Joe, CEO
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43. Sarawak Dayak Iban Association (SADIA), Malaysia - Nicholas Mujah, Secretary General
44. SAVE Rivers, Malaysia - Peter Kallang, Chairman
45. Talents Search International, Ghana
46. The Wilderness Society, Australia - Lyndon Schneiders, National Campaigns Director
47. TuK INDONESIA - Rahmawati Retno Winarni, Executive Director

<sup>1</sup> [www.ran.org/civil\\_society\\_warns\\_olympic\\_committee](http://www.ran.org/civil_society_warns_olympic_committee)

<sup>2</sup> <https://tokyo2020.jp/en/games/sustainability/data/sus-wcode-timber-EN.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Mari Momii, *Trade in Illegal Timber: The Response in Japan*, A Chatham House Assessment, November 2014, [www.chathamhouse.org/publication/trade-illegal-timber-response-japan](http://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/trade-illegal-timber-response-japan)

<sup>4</sup> [www.ran.org/urgent\\_investigation\\_required\\_as\\_use\\_of\\_plywood\\_likely\\_linked\\_to\\_tropical\\_forest\\_destruction\\_and\\_human\\_rights\\_abuses\\_found\\_at\\_construction\\_site\\_of\\_new\\_tokyo\\_olympic\\_stadium](http://www.ran.org/urgent_investigation_required_as_use_of_plywood_likely_linked_to_tropical_forest_destruction_and_human_rights_abuses_found_at_construction_site_of_new_tokyo_olympic_stadium)

<sup>5</sup> Global Witness, *Japan's Links to Rainforest Destruction in Malaysia: Risks to a sustainable 2020 Tokyo Olympics*, December 2015, [www.globalwitness.org/en/reports/shinyang/](http://www.globalwitness.org/en/reports/shinyang/)

<sup>6</sup> [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-04-20/rainforest-wood-breaches-tokyo-green-olympic-vow-activists-say](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-04-20/rainforest-wood-breaches-tokyo-green-olympic-vow-activists-say)

<sup>7</sup> [www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/08/10/tokyo-olympic-stadium-to-use-certified-msian-wood/#j8BZikQ0VyxAk2JR.99](http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/08/10/tokyo-olympic-stadium-to-use-certified-msian-wood/#j8BZikQ0VyxAk2JR.99) and private communications.

<sup>8</sup> [www.jpnsport.go.jp/newstadium/Tabid/367/ItemID/220/Default.aspx](http://www.jpnsport.go.jp/newstadium/Tabid/367/ItemID/220/Default.aspx)

<sup>9</sup> Nearly all concrete formwork plywood used in Japan is made from tropical wood, despite the availability of more sustainable alternatives, including wood harvested from Japanese forests. See Note 5 above.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, WWF Forest Certification Assessment Tool (CAT), [http://www.panda.org/wwf\\_news/?246871/WWF-Forest-Certification-Assessment-Tool-CAT](http://www.panda.org/wwf_news/?246871/WWF-Forest-Certification-Assessment-Tool-CAT); and [www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/forests/solutions/alternatives-to-forest-destruction/Weaker-Certification-Schemes/](http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/forests/solutions/alternatives-to-forest-destruction/Weaker-Certification-Schemes/)

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<sup>12</sup> See [www.pefc.org/company-detail?id=287157](http://www.pefc.org/company-detail?id=287157) and [www.pefc.org/company-detail?id=282283](http://www.pefc.org/company-detail?id=282283) and Global Forestry Services, Chain of Custody Checklist & Assessment Report of Shin Yang Plywood (Bintulu) and Forescom Plywood, [www.gfsinc.biz/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Summary-Shin-Yang-Plywood-Bintulu-Nov-2016.pdf](http://www.gfsinc.biz/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Summary-Shin-Yang-Plywood-Bintulu-Nov-2016.pdf), [www.gfsinc.biz/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Summary-Forescom-Plywood-Bintulu-Nov-2016.pdf](http://www.gfsinc.biz/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Summary-Forescom-Plywood-Bintulu-Nov-2016.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [www.ran.org/tokyo\\_2020\\_olympics\\_scandal](http://www.ran.org/tokyo_2020_olympics_scandal)

September 11, 2017

**Kazumi Ohigashi**  
**President**  
**Japan Sports Council**

**Yoshiro Mori**  
**President**  
**Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games**

**Yuriko Koike**  
**Governor**  
**Tokyo Metropolitan Government**

## **An Open Letter to Tokyo 2020 Olympic Authorities**

Dear Mr. Ohigashi, Mr. Mori, and Governor Koike:

### **Re: Tokyo 2020 Olympics jeopardize Olympic commitment to sustainability**

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our grave concerns about the sustainability and accountability of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Mounting evidence that Tokyo 2020 is exploiting tropical forests and potentially fueling human rights violations is jeopardizing the Olympic commitment to sustainability and respect for human dignity. We urge the Tokyo 2020 authorities and International Olympic Committee (IOC) to immediately disclose the timber supply chain associated with the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, including the origin and volume of all tropical wood used, and to halt further use of wood from tropical forests and other high risk sources.

Transparency is fundamental to the credibility of the Olympics, as articulated in the Olympic Agenda 2020. Given the high environmental and social risks associated with forest-related products, especially those sourced from tropical forest countries with weak forest governance, full supply chain transparency and enhanced due diligence measures are critical to ensure responsible sourcing.

Unfortunately, your respective organizations have been secretive about the timber used for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and have failed to take sufficient action to mitigate the risk of using illegal and unsustainable tropical timber. The risks associated with timber sourcing were clearly articulated in the letter sent to the IOC on December 6 2016, signed by 44 NGOs.<sup>1</sup> The letter offered evidence of high risk timber from Malaysia being used in Tokyo construction projects and argued that the Tokyo 2020 Timber Sourcing Code<sup>2</sup> is ill-equipped to prevent the use of risky timber. Yet, not a single demand put forward in the letter has been met. In particular, the Tokyo

2020 Timber Sourcing Code remains fundamentally flawed: your organizations have been exploiting the Code's exemption of concrete formwork plywood from environmental, labor, and human rights criteria in order to use significant volumes of tropical wood for construction of the new National Stadium. Such plywood is only required to meet substandard legality standards, which have been the subject of consistent criticism both within Japan and internationally.<sup>3</sup> These standards are far below global best practice.

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deforestation (“forest-risk commodities”). Putting robust social and environmental safeguards in place is critical to avoiding similar mistakes.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/08/10/tokyo-olympic-stadium-to-use-certified-msian-wood/#j8BZikQ0VyxAk2JR.99](http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/08/10/tokyo-olympic-stadium-to-use-certified-msian-wood/#j8BZikQ0VyxAk2JR.99) and private communications.

<sup>8</sup> [www.jpnsport.go.jp/newstadium/Tabid/367/ItemID/220/Default.aspx](http://www.jpnsport.go.jp/newstadium/Tabid/367/ItemID/220/Default.aspx)

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*Ulu Belaga: Right To Land and Socio-Economic Development*, 2007, [www.suhakam.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Report-On-Penan-In-Ulu-Belaga.pdf](http://www.suhakam.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Report-On-Penan-In-Ulu-Belaga.pdf)

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