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Press release

NGO Report Exposes Data Discrepancies and Continued Illegal Rosewood Logging in Indonesia

Bogor, February 3, 2024 - A new report released today by Kaoem Telapak (KT) titled "Sonokeling in Peril: CITES Protection vs Indonesia's Illegal Rosewood Trade" reveals critical findings about the stark contrast between international protection measures and the grim reality of illegal logging and trade of Indonesian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*). Despite its listing in CITES Appendix II and classification as vulnerable by IUCN, the species continues to face exploitation pressure from illegal trade networks.

The report highlights significant discrepancies between Indonesia's reported sonokeling export data to CITES and import data recorded by importing countries. Between 2017 and 2023, importing countries reported receiving 975,191.04 m³ of sonokeling, while Indonesia reported exporting only 421,648.85 m³—a 56.76% difference. Indonesia's reports to CITES are also 38.67% lower than export data recorded in the national information system of timber legality and sustainability (SILK), which shows 683,225.25 m³ of sonokeling exported during the same period.

"This significant data discrepancy demands serious scrutiny to determine the underlying causes," said Abu Meridian, Campaign Leader at Kaoem Telapak. "These trade data gaps could indicate illegal sonokeling entering the global supply chain."

China's entire supply of sonokeling originates from Indonesia, imported as lumber or planks for furniture, flooring, and veneer production. SILK data indicates that Indonesia exported approximately 1 million m³ of sonokeling to China between 2014 and 2023, with fluctuating annual volumes.

In 2024, KT conducted field investigations in the Bima and Dompu regency on Sumbawa island, areas with significant sonokeling stands and a frequent target for illegal logging. KT uncovered suspected illegal logging and trade of sonokeling in the Toffo Rompu state forest area (RTK 65 BKPH Toffo Pajo Soromandi/Topaso), with volumes reaching an estimated 50 m³ per month.

Loggers cut sonokeling without permits or legal concessions, process it into lumber, and falsely claim it originates from community forests using SAKR (Community Timber Transport Document) to supply industries in Bima and Dompu. This tactic allows them to circumvent the required SKSHHK (Statement of Timber Forest Product Legality) for timber from state forests, effectively laundering illegal sonokeling into the legal supply chain. These industries then ship the lumber to Surabaya using Nota Angkutan (Transport Receipt).

The investigation also identified a major broker controlling the illegal rosewood trade between Sumbawa and Surabaya and uncovered suspected fraudulent transport document from a Sumbawa-based timber company used to supply SVLK-certified companies.

"The SVLK certification system, designed to ensure legal and sustainable timber sourcing, appears vulnerable to manipulation," said Abu. "Our findings raise serious concerns about the effectiveness of SVLK in preventing illegal wood from entering certified supply chains."

KT recommends an investigation into the illegal logging and associated timber trade network in Sumbawa using a "follow the money" approach to target key beneficiaries. KT also calls for strengthened oversight of SVLK certification and enforcement of sanctions for violations, as well as the full implementation of geolocation information to enhance timber traceability.

"Regarding international trade, the CITES Secretariat must establish standardized reporting units and ensure compliance by parties to CITES, as well as investigate significant trade data discrepancies. Indonesian CITES authorities must also improve the accuracy of CITES data on sonokeling stands, monitor the sonokeling trade, and establish national harvest quotas. The role and collaboration of all stakeholders are crucial to halting illegal logging and illicit trade of Indonesian rosewood and ensuring its sustainability," Meridian concluded.

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Editor's Notes:

- The report "Sonokeling in Peril: CITES Protection vs Illegal Trade in Indonesian Rosewood," can be downloaded at <https://kaoemtelapak.org/sonokeling-in-peril-cites-protection-versus-illicit-trade-of-indonesian-rosewood/>
- Kaoem Telapak (KT) is a member-based organization working towards equitable and sustainable natural resource management in Indonesia. Kaoem Telapak members have been campaigning against illegal logging since 1998 until today.
- Sonokeling is a luxury timber species included in the Chinese National Hongmu Standard and is distributed in Lampung Province, Banten, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, Bali, West and East Nusa Tenggara, Southeast Sulawesi and East and North Kalimantan.
- CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international treaty that regulates international trade in endangered species of wild plants and animals with the aim of supporting the conservation of their populations in natural habitats.
- The mechanism to control trade in endangered species used by CITES is through a list of species with different types of protection - known as CITES Appendices which consist of three categories: Appendix I, Appendix II, and Appendix III based on the level of threat. Appendix II lists species that are not threatened with extinction, but may become endangered if trade in them is not controlled.
- The circulation of rosewood must meet the timber legality requirements as stipulated in the Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation No. 8/2021 article 234 and Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation No.20/2022.

Contact Person:

Abu Meridian | Campaign Leader Kaoem Telapak | abu.meridian@kaoemtelapak.org
Patria | Campaigner Staff, Kaoem Telapak | patria.ananda@kaoemtelapak.org
Sarah M | Senior Communication Staff | sarah.megumi@kaoemtelapak.org