



UK warned about scale of 'illegal' wood trade

BY PAUL PEACHEY

ALMOST ONE tenth of Britain's imports of timber, paper and pulp comes from forests being illegally destroyed by loggers, the World Wildlife Fund said in a report published yesterday.

The group claims the public sector buys almost one fifth of the illegal products despite it being government policy to buy only independently certified timber. Brazil and Indonesia, which supply about one third of the UK's tropical timber, are among the worst offenders for illegal logging and violating forest laws, the report says.

Although tropical timber represents only a small pro-

portion of the wood products imported every year, the wood is among the highest valued. The Department of International Development, which has championed moves against the illicit trade, was forced to admit last month that one of its offices had been refurbished using uncertified sapele wood.

Paul Toyne, the head of the WWF's forest programme, said: "The Government must face up to their responsibilities and be sure that the timber they are buying comes from forests that are well managed for people and wildlife."

The report, *The Timber*

Footprint of the G8 and China, said the G8 group of the world's wealthiest nations and China were importing 53 million cubic metres of illegal timber products every year, the equivalent of a forest the size of the Netherlands and Belgium. The World Bank estimates governments lose \$5bn every year because of illegal logging.

Britain is the only member of the G8 with a "green" policy on timber procurement. But a government spokeswoman said Britain was barred by European anti-discrimination legislation from buying only eco-friendly labelled wood.