

Washington, DC – The House today passed [H.Res.839](#), a resolution authored by Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore) that condemns the unchecked illegal logging and decimation of Madagascar's endemic species. Madagascar is home to almost 150,000 species of flora and fauna. The illegal extraction of these resources threatens biodiversity as well as legitimate logging operations in the U.S. – up to \$460 million lost in export opportunities every year.

After a coup in March, the new and weakened government of Andry Rajoelina issued sweeping decrees allowing the harvest and export of wood from protected forests and World Heritage Sites. The Obama administration has condemned the de facto government, and the Wildlife Conservation Society, the World Wild Life Fund (WWF), and Conservation International have denounced the wholesale exploitation of some of the world's most diverse forests and decimation of the local population's resources and livelihoods. These groups have strongly endorsed Blumenauer's resolution.

Today the House voted 409-5 to join the administration and environmental groups in speaking out against the devastation occurring in Madagascar:

"The House is sending a firm signal that the devastating and illegal destruction of Madagascar's natural resources will not be tolerated," **said Congressman Blumenauer.** "Illegal logging not only does irreparable harm to the environment, but it destroys livelihoods. In Oregon and across the United States, at a time when we are working to recover the economy, illegal timber imports undermine legitimate logging operations. While Madagascar's de facto government continues to use its endangered resources to boost its regime, Congress today joined the administration in calling for an immediate end to these practices."

Author of the Legal Timber Protection Act, Blumenauer is a global leader on the issue of illegal logging. The law, signed in May 2008, bans the import of illegally harvested timber and wood products and empowers regulators to keep illegally harvested timber out of the U.S.

John Calvelli, WCS Executive Vice President of Public Affairs, said, "The situation in Madagascar is nothing short of tragic -- not only for the people and wildlife of Madagascar, but for the entire planet. I applaud Congressman Blumenauer for his continued leadership in the United States Congress on the issue of illegal logging. This resolution will serve as a clear message to the current Malagasy government that the illegal harvesting of Madagascar's natural resources is unacceptable."

The loss of Madagascar's spectacular biodiversity would not only be a global tragedy, but it will further impoverish rural communities whose lives are inextricably tied to the health of their natural environments," said Lisa Steel, Deputy Director for Madagascar at World Wildlife Fund.

“While Madagascar is under the rule of a weakened government, it is essential that the international community work to stop the harvest and trade of illegal wood and other protected species, and we appreciate this important first step by Congressman Blumenauer.” The Resolution is co-sponsored by 49 bipartisan Members, including Congressman Donald Payne (D-NJ), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health on the Committee for Foreign Affairs, and Congressman Eni Faleomavaega (D-AS), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa and the Global Environment.

“Congressman Blumenauer continues to play a leadership role in the global problem of illegal logging and the responsibility of consumer nations like the US to support the fight against it, through policies like the Lacey Act and this resolution,” **said Alexander von Bismarck, Executive Director of the Environmental Investigation Agency, which conducted a mission to Madagascar in August 2009 to evaluate the illegal logging situation.**

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