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**EIA Applauds Precedent-Setting Indictment for
International Timber Smuggling**

WASHINGTON, DC – International wood trader, Danny Chien, and his company, Shanghai-based Style Craft Furniture Co., Ltd., were indicted yesterday by a federal grand jury in New Jersey for smuggling baby cribs made of a wood called “ramin” into the United States.

The Environmental Investigation Agency, a Washington, DC-based non-profit has, for over seven years, been pursuing the illegal trade of ramin, an endangered tree species primarily harvested in Indonesia. EIA followed the ramin trade flows from Indonesia, through regional manufacturing centers in Singapore, China and Malaysia, to the consuming markets of the United States and Europe. In 2004, EIA found much of the ramin arriving in the U.S. in the form of baby cribs.

Ramin is one of the few species of timber with international controls on trade due to its listing on the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species, which was the basis for this legal action. The vast majority of timber has no such controls. Once most timber has been exported, even illegally sourced wood can be traded without any restrictions. Illegal logging and its associated trade have become major international environmental issues over the last decade, and the United States Congress is currently considering legislation to amend the Lacey Act, that would ban the import of illegally sourced timber and wood products into the United States. Bills have been introduced by Senator Wyden and Congressman Blumenauer in the Senate and House, respectively.

“EIA applauds the Department of Justice for bringing this precedent-setting case,” said EIA executive director, Alexander von Bismarck. “We have witnessed firsthand the destruction caused by the illegal timber trade to communities and wildlife in developing countries. Effective U.S. enforcement will be an extremely powerful tool in discouraging such criminal behavior around the world.”

“Illegal logging presents a major global threat to development, the climate and biodiversity. This kind of action by the DOJ, combined with new legislation to ban the import of all illegal wood, can have a major impact in reducing timber theft around the world,” von Bismarck concluded.

More information on EIA can be found at www.eia-global.org