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WWF-Australia

Tel: +61 2 8202 1274  
Fax: +61 2 9281 1060

Level 13  
235 Jones Street  
Sydney NSW 2007

aheck@wwf.org.au  
www.wwf.org.au  
GPO Box 528  
SYDNEY NSW 2001



## Media release

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### **The Australian Government should support forest industry best practice rather than undermine it**

In his address to the Australian Forest Growers Conference on Monday, the Federal Forestry Minister, Senator the Hon Eric Abetz, was critical of forest industry, non-government organisations and markets that support the internationally recognised forest certification scheme, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

The Federal Government should be encouraging the forest industry to adopt high standards rather than undermining their efforts, said Greg Bourne, Chief Executive Officer, WWF-Australia.

To date, nearly 79 million hectares of forest and plantation are FSC certified in 74 countries. FSC certification encompasses natural forests and plantations managed across community, private and public tenure. Over 35 countries have FSC certified public (or government managed) forests. FSC certified forests range in size from small community managed forests to forest areas exceeding three million hectares.

Between them, Australia and New Zealand have 1.2 million hectares of FSC certified plantation. ITC Limited is one of six FSC certificate holders in Australia.

“Over 35 countries have publicly managed forests that are FSC certified. So it is odd that the Australian Government would be critical of a forest certification scheme that public forest managers in other countries have adopted,” said Mr Bourne.

The vast majority of our end customers for both woodchip and sawn timber products demand FSC certified product, ITC Chief Executive Officer Vince Erasmus said. The attempts by some to undermine FSC is not a fair reflection of the number of companies in this sector, such as ITC, who view the achievement of FSC certification as a commercial imperative to maximise domestic and overseas end-market access for our sustainable forest products, added Mr Erasmus.

The creation of a national standard by the FSC is an admirable initiative and should be supported by the Federal Government, as FSC certification delivers significant commercial advantage to our industry, said Mr Erasmus.

ITC Limited and WWF agree with Senator Abetz that we all have a stake in making forest

certification work in Australia.

The Minister could assist in this regard by supporting Australian businesses who export FSC certified forest product, said Mr Bourne.

**For more information:**

Angela Heck, WWF-Australia Press Office, 02 8202 1268 or 0421 053 023

Andrew Rouse, Resource Conservation Manager, WWF-Australia, 03 9669 1301 or 0424 750 406

Simonne Ventouras, Senior Communications Officer, ITC Limited, 08 9483 0287 or 0429 920 257