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Russia Warns China It Could Ban Timber Exports Over Illegal Logging

By Reuters

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Artyom Korotayev / TASS

Russia could ban timber exports to China unless Beijing takes action to help mitigate the effects of illegal logging, a Russian government minister said in an interview published Thursday.

Russian authorities this month attributed some of the vast wildfires that have engulfed portions of Siberia in recent weeks to arsonists trying to conceal illegal logging activity.

Related article: Russia Says Siberian Wildfires Started on Purpose by Illegal Loggers

Dmitry Kobylkin, Russia's minister of natural resources and environment, used an interview with the daily Vedomosti newspaper published Thursday to complain about what he said was China's unsatisfactory attitude towards the problem.

"They come, buy up the (illegal) timber and leave us to clear up the debris," Kobylkin said of Chinese loggers.

"China must clearly understand that if they don't take part in resolving this issue, then we will have no other option but to completely ban timber exports."

Kobylkin added that he wanted China to help Russia plant saplings on the Russian side of their shared border to compensate for the damage caused by illegal logging in order to restore the area for "our children and grandchildren."

Russia exported 17.4 million tons of timber in the first half of 2019, according to data from the Federal Customs Service.

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