



PRESS RELEASE

LAO TIMBER TRADE PROMOTED THROUGH IMPROVED WOOD PRODUCT STANDARD

(For immediate release)

Vientiane, 12 December 2014: In order to promote the trade of Lao timber products, the product standards for wood processing industry is under revision for improvement as highlighted during the recent conference on “The Improvement of Prime Minister Agreement: No. 1415/MoIC on Timber Product Standards and Knowledge Enhancement on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)”, held on 12 December 2014 by the Department of Industry and Handicraft, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, at Vientiane Plaza Hotel. This improved product standard is crucial for the implementation of legal timber trade as part of the negotiation of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) under FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade)

The conference brought together 50 key participants from the Department of Industry and Handicraft, Department of Forest Inspection, Department of Forestry, Department of Import-Export, Furniture Association, National Timber Processing Association, and other private sectors and relevant agencies to share their knowledge and expertise, as part of the Lao Government’s vision to ensure the limited timber resources are being used effectively and efficiently, while the environment is being protected.

Speaking at the meeting, Mr. Manohack Rasachack, Director General of the Department of Industry and Handicrafts, said product standard can help private sectors from the timber processing industry to create added value, generate more jobs for the local and revenue for the state, while producing finished goods efficiently and reducing semi-finished good exports and raw timber.

“Product standards for timber processing industry are a good instrument and mechanism for government agencies to promote the sustainable management of timber processing factories” said Mr. Heiko Woerner, senior international adviser of the GIZ project *Support to the Lao EU-FLEGT process* (ProFLEGT). “The revision of this product standard contains elements of a chain of custody (CoC). This will allow the companies in the future not only to improve their production management but will also help to ease the trading among the neighbouring countries, including the EU markets, while allowing the government agencies to verify the legality of timber sources, which is also part of the FLEGT initiative that the Lao Government is engaging with currently”, he added.

Lao PDR is one of the countries that has started to negotiate a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPAs), a trade agreement with the European Union, with assistance from the ProFLEGT.



ProFLEGT is a joint initiative of the Lao Government and the German Development Cooperation. It is working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (through the FLEGT Standing Office under the supervision of the Department of Forest Inspection, DOFI), Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, as well as other Government agencies, civil society organisations, academia and timber processing industry.



NOTES FOR EDITORS

In 2003 the EU published a Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) action plan to help combat illegal logging in countries from which it imported timber. A key element of the FLEGT Action Plan is a voluntary scheme to ensure that only legally harvested timber is imported into the EU from countries agreeing to take part in this scheme. The internal EU legal framework for this scheme is a Regulation adopted in December 2005, and a 2008 Implementing Regulation, allowing for the control of the entry of timber to the EU from countries entering into bilateral FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) with the EU.

A key element of a FLEGT VPA is the development and implementation of a timber legality assurance system (TLAS) which comprises a national timber legality definition, a system of supply chain controls, procedures for timber legality and supply chain verification, a FLEGT licensing scheme; and independent auditing of the entire system.

Once agreed, the VPAs include commitments and action from both parties to halt trade in illegal timber, notably with a license scheme to verify the legality of timber exported to the EU. The agreements also promote better enforcement of forest law and promote an inclusive approach involving civil society and the private sector.

For further information on ASEAN Forest Policy:

<http://www.asean.org/>

For further information on the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade initiative:

http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/9interventionareas/environment/forest/forestry_intro_en.cfm

www.euflegt.efi.int

For further information on understanding timber flows and control in Lao PDR:

<http://www.euflegt.efi.int/publications/-/document/25520>

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