



PRESS RELEASE

NEW INITIATIVE KICKS OFF FORESTRY COMPENDIUM WORKSHOP

(For immediate release)

Vientiane, 24 July 2015: The Department of Forest Inspection and the Department of Forestry launched the new project on Forestry Legal Compendium related to the legal framework for forest land, management and the use of forest products in Lao PDR at the “Introduction Workshop on Forestry Legal Compendium” on 24 July 2015. The project has been supported by FAO, SUFORD and GIZ.

“Since the regulatory framework governing the forestry sector is diverse and is extensive in number, affected by different legislation on natural resources and trade sectors, the lack of clarity has been emerged on the applicable legislation, inconsistent or redundant of the provisions by subsequent additions, responsibilities of the competent authority, misinterpretation and misuse of legislations at provincial, district and village levels,” said Khamphout Phandanouvong, Director General of Department of Forest Inspection, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. “The Analysed Forestry Compendium thus is vital for the forestry sector in Lao PDR to contribute to better sustainable forest management and good governance, and subsequently to increase forest cover to 70% by 2020 as specified in the forestry strategy by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry”, Mr. Khamphout Phandanouvong added.

The Analysed Compendium is the process to compile all relevant provisions and provide a summary analysis on forestry legal framework, to include all legislation associated with forest land, management and the use of forest products, including forest conversion/concession areas, transportation, processing and trade in unprocessed or semi-processed forest products. The Analysed Compendium would highlight inconsistencies or overlaps in responsibilities, identify abrogation or repeals by more recent legislation, and clarify provisions to enable users to interpret, apply and enforce the legal framework in a uniform manner.

“Through the Analysed Compendium, a comprehensive review of the legal framework for the forestry sector in Lao PDR will be made available, which would be organized along the supply chain of timber and non-timber forest products - starting from forest land classification,



demarcation, inventory, quota approval, management and harvesting, transport, industrialisation, commerce and export,” said Mr. Heiko Woerner, senior international adviser to the German Development Cooperation project ‘*Support to the Lao EU-FLEGT Process*’ (ProFLEGT), implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). “With this information, definitions of legally-produced timber could be subsequently formed as part of an important component of Timber Legality Assurance Systems, which is a core part of the VPAs”, he added.

During the Introduction Workshop, Dr. Hilary Smith, an international consultant to FAO/GIZ, clearly outlined list of beneficiaries from the Analysed Compendium. The Thematic Expert Groups which are formed under the FLEGT/VPA process can develop a timber legality definition with principles, criteria, verifiers and related legal reference documents; policy makers could identify where inconsistencies, confusion, gaps or other areas for improvements in the delivery of agency roles and responsibilities; national, provincial, district and village forestry authorities would have more clarity on the scope of their mandate; private enterprises could gain better understanding and clarity regarding administrative procedures, apart from foreign investors in the Lao forestry sector who do not work in Lao language could also benefit from this exercise.

As part of the Action Plan on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) to combat illegal logging globally, the European Union (EU) is concluding Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPA) with timber producing countries, which sets out the commitments and actions to halt trade in illegal timber, with a license scheme to verify the legality of timber exported to the EU.

Laos has started to negotiate such an agreement with the EU, with assistance from the GIZ project *Support to the Lao EU-FLEGT process* (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, 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 reading on the European Timber Market and the EU Timber Regulation:

<http://www.cbi.eu/market-information/timber-products/eutr-guide>

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

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



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For more information on the German company STERN, please visit:

<http://www.stern-moebel.de/en/home-en.html>

For more information on the European Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Lao P.D.R.(ECCIL), please visit:

http://eccil.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=featured&Itemid=101