



## PRESS RELEASE

# LAO PDR PRESENTS ITS EFFORTS ON HOW TO PROGRESS UNDER FLEGT/VPA IN EFFECTIVELY REDUCING ILLEGAL LOGGING AT INTERNATIONAL CHATHAM HOUSE MEETING IN UK

(For immediate release)

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**The United Kingdom, 16-17 June 2016:** The representatives from the Government of Lao PDR, private sector and civil society organisation have highlighted the recent achievements towards improved forest governance in Laos, under the Lao EU-FLEGT process (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade), during the 26<sup>th</sup> *Illegal Logging Update and Stakeholder Consultation Meeting* between 16 and 17 June 2016 in London, a globally high profile forestry event addressing illegal logging and trade.

One of the concrete outputs that has been highlighted by the Department of Forestry during the Consultation Meeting is the Forestry Legality Compendium. “The Forestry Legality Compendium is a comprehensive review of the legal framework for the forestry sector in Laos along the supply chain of timber products - starting from forest land classification, demarcation, inventory, quota approval, management and harvesting, transport, processing and export”. “The Forestry Legality Compendium is the foundation for the first draft of the Timber Legality Definition for natural production forest that has been developed and – together with the scope of the VPA – shall be discussed during the first FLEGT/VPA negotiation, envisaged for the last quarter of 2016, between the Government of Lao PDR and the European Union”, commented further by the Department of Forestry.

Ms. Vansy Senyavong, Director of Maeying Houamjai Phathana/Women Participating in Development (MHP) and a representative of local Civil Society Organizations in the Lao FLEGT process, highlighted that “for the Lao EU-FLEGT process to be sustainable, the Lao CSO have the role to facilitate the involvement of the local communities and ensure that their voices and concerns will be heard and reflected in the timber legality definition”.

“Having a concrete definition on what is legal timber is crucial for Laos as it acts as an ‘entry ticket’ to generate and comply with new export opportunities in the ASEAN Economic Community and other export markets, such as Europe, the U.S., China, ASEAN, Australia, Japan and South Korea, requesting legally verified timber”, said Mr. Phoxai Inthaboualy, Deputy Director of



Research and Planning Division, Department of Import and Export, Ministry of Industry and Commerce. “Once legal timber is defined, the next milestone is to enhance the competitiveness of the Lao timber industry through the improvement of the sustainable supply of raw materials, increased qualification of staff and workers in the wood processing industry and access to market and product information for each individual company”, he added.

Recently, the new Prime Minister of Lao PDR has issued a new order (No. 15/PM) to strengthen the implementation of forest management, timber business, timber extraction, timber processing and timber trade to ensure strict compliance to the laws and regulations issued inviolably by the Government of Laos, to simultaneously prevent, oppose and resolve the negative phenomena within the forest sector in order to reduce and incrementally eliminate them.

Mr. Thongsavanh Soulinamat, the President of the Lao Wood Processing Industry Association particularly for Finished Wood Products, stressed during his presentation at the Consultation Meeting that “the new Prime Minister Order (No. 15/PM) on “Strengthening Strictness of Timber Harvest Management and Inspection, Timber Transport and Business” has recently been issued to further tighten the complete export ban for round wood and sawn timber issued in August 2015. According to this new order, only finished wood products may be exported and the export of all other wood products (round wood, sawn timber, semi-finished products etc.) is illegal”.

Held every year, the *Illegal Logging Update and Stakeholder Consultation Meeting* is one of the largest and most important forestry platforms in the world, which discusses a range of emerging issues central to the trade in illegal timber, including the interactions between FLEGT and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), controlling domestic timber markets, independent forest monitoring and tackling the illegal rosewood trade.

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. A VPA is an international trade agreement to reduce illegal wood harvesting and promote legal timber trade.

Laos has started to negotiate such an agreement with the EU, with assistance from the German Development Cooperation’s project ‘*Support to the Lao EU-FLEGT Process*’ (ProFLEGT), implemented by GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit).

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







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