



PRESS RELEASE

LAOS MAKES FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR FIRST FACE-TO-FACE FLEGT VPA NEGOTIATION WITH EU

(For immediate release)

Vientiane Capital, 15 December 2016: The FLEGT Technical Working Group, at its meeting on 15 December 2016, finalized key parts of the draft timber legality definition, to be submitted to the European Union by end of 2016, under the recent initiative led by the Government of Lao PDR and other stakeholders involved in the Lao-EU FLEGT Process (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade). The submission is crucial preparation for the first face-to-face negotiation between the Government of Lao PDR and the EU on the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), scheduled for late February 2017.

“The proper definition of legal timber is very crucial towards improving sustainable forest management and good governance in Lao PDR, as it helps to enhance understanding among relevant government staff and private sector in the forestry and timber industry, especially when it comes to forest inspection practices”, said Mr. Khamphout Phandanouvong, Director General of the Department of Forest Inspection (DOFI), and the Head of the National Support and Development Committee for the Lao-EU FLEGT process. “The Timber Legality Definition allows us to identify gaps and redress and improve areas of legislation and regulation that are difficult to implement, impractical or confusing”, he added.

Once the legal definition of timber has been developed, through multi-stakeholder platform and discussion with the EU, a field test of the legality definition is conducted. The test allows an additional review of the definition to ensure applicability in the field.

During the workshop, participants also had a chance to discuss the scope of the FLEGT VPA negotiation regarding product, market destination and timber sources. A presentation of the supply chain control and verification procedures will show the importance in the FLEGT VPA process. The first drafts of Timber Legality Definition on wood processing and trading, and conversion areas were also discussed during the workshop.



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 process 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 will 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.

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 and Commerce, and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, as well as other Government agencies, civil society organisations, academia and timber processing industry.

During the initial stage of the Lao EU-FLEGT process, three pilot provinces have been selected, which are Sayaboury, Khammouane and Attapeu. In this regard, WWF is working with the Department of Forest Inspection (DoFI) to implement its FLEGT project in support of the Lao-EU FLEGT process in the two pilot provinces (Khammoane and Attapeu provinces). WWF takes a solutions-oriented, integrated and local to global approach that seeks synergies with relevant stakeholders to influence drivers of deforestation and degradation.

For further information on Lao-EU FLEGT Process: <http://flegtlaos.com/>

For further information on EU-FLEGT Action Plan: <http://www.flegt.org/>

For further information for journalists reporting on efforts to combat illegal logging through the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan: <http://www.flegtmedia.org/>



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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