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Ministry of Industry and Commerce



PRESS RELEASE

FLEGT SUPPORTS FOREST GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENTS IN FOREST CONVERSION AREAS

(For immediate release)

Vientiane Capital, 17 March 2017: Guided by the Prime Minister Order No. 15 on Enhancing Strictness on the Management and Inspection of Timber Exploitation, Timber Movements and Timber Businesses, the Department of Forestry is now further strengthening forest governance with an emphasis on timber from forest land converted due to infrastructure projects, mining, plantations and road construction. At a multi-stakeholder workshop, held on 17 March 2017, the legality standard for wood from conversion areas has been discussed, as part of the initiative led by the Government of Lao PDR and other stakeholders involved in the Lao-EU FLEGT Process (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade).

“By reviewing laws and regulatory instruments for conversion areas to remove inconsistencies and clarifying roles and responsibilities across different ministries involved, the legality of timber from converted forest areas will be better understood and the movement of such timber will be better monitored and traced,” said Mr. Bounpone Sengthong, Deputy Director General of the Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. “The thorough legal timber definition will surely enhance understanding among relevant ministries, civil society and private sector, including project investors and developers, especially when it comes to law enforcement practices”, he added.

Once the legal definition of timber has been developed, through multi-stakeholder platforms and discussions with the EU, a field test of the legality definition will be conducted. The test will allow for an additional review of the definition to ensure applicability in the field.

During the workshop, participants also had a chance to discuss the future revision of specific MAF regulations on supply chain control and the preparation for the Joint Expert Meeting and the first Face-to-Face negotiation between Lao PDR and the EU to be organised from 24th to 28th April 2017 in Vientiane under the framework of Lao-EU FLEGT process.



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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.flegtmmedia.org/>



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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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