



PRESS RELEASE

LAOS PREPARES FOR SECOND NEGOTIATION WITH EU TO PROMOTE LEGAL TIMBER TRADE

(For immediate release)

Vientiane Capital, 2 August 2017: With making available a revised definition for legal timber, the Lao timber sector took a further step towards better accessing the EU market, where the import and sale of timber obtained through illegal logging is prohibited by law. The updated Timber Legality Definition was discussed at a Stakeholder-Workshop on 2 August 2017 including representatives from the Government of Laos, civil society organisations and the wood processing industry in preparation of the second negotiation with the EU on a FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA).

“A concrete definition of what legal timber is provides more clarity on the work towards sustainable forest management and good governance, subsequently resulting in an increase of forest cover to 70% as set in the forest strategy 2020”, explained Mr. Sousath Sayakoummane, Director General of Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. “Via the Lao-EU FLEGT process, and particularly through improved timber flow monitoring in the pilot provinces, we can also contribute to the overall objectives of the Prime Minister Order No. 15”, he added.

“Lao PDR is engaged in a VPA process with the EU which aims to combat illegal logging and associated trade,” said Mr. Tim Dawson, an expert at the EU FLEGT Facility – European Forest Institute. “The FLEGT VPA process contributes to strengthening governance in the forest sector which also improves the foundations for sustainable forest management. Once the FLEGT VPA is fully operational, like in Indonesia which commenced its FLEGT Licensing system in 2016, a country’s timber products will be in full compliance with the EU Timber Regulation which prohibits the placement of illegal timber on the EU market,” he added.

Initiated by the Government of the Lao PDR and supported by various national and international stakeholders, the Lao-EU FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade) process aims at promoting good forest governance and eliminating illegal logging activities in Laos. Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs), bilateral trade agreements between the EU and a timber-exporting country outside the EU, are central to this scheme. Among other things, VPAs address illegal logging and foster trade in legal timber products.



Under the VPA, Laos will then go on to develop and implement a so-called Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS), which will be tested in the pilot provinces Khammouane and Attapeu prior to upscaling throughout the country.

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).



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.

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.

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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