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### Laos Prepares for Second Negotiation with EU to Promote Legal Timber Trade

FLEGT stakeholders met on 2nd August in Vientiane to discuss progress of the Timber Legality Definition (TLD) at the August Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting in preparation for the second face-to-face negotiation session with the European Union scheduled for late November. Mr. Sousath Sayakoummane, Director General of the Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry chaired the TWG and lead the conversation that included representatives from multiple ministries, civil society, academia, support organizations, and the private sector.

This latest TWG meeting was focused on reviewing progress on the timber legality standards that had been further developed over the preceding months by the respective Thematic Expert Groups (TEG). The last face-to-face negotiation session in April provided the TEGs with questions and comments from the EU negotiation team about the standards for the groups to review and consider.

Members of each TEG presented the latest updated versions of the standards for timber from plantations, converted forest areas, and production forests as well as the standards for timber processing and trade and labor obligations for timber industry businesses. Following each presentation, participants in the meeting asked questions, expressed opinions on the recent changes, and made suggestions for future revisions.

Also participating were representatives of the EU Delegation to Lao PDR and the European Forest Institute (EFI), who shared their views and reiterated some questions from the April negotiations. The EFI representative reminded the group that the EU was seeking information on the moratorium on timber harvesting in production forests, including the expected time-line for ending the moratorium and what the expected levels of timber harvesting and trade may be afterwards.

The TWG workshop included engaging discussion on the conversion timber standard, which stakeholders agreed will be one of the more challenging – and important – topics to address. Participants debated the relevance and importance of Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA) and of the Environment and Social Management and Monitoring Plan (ESMMP), and to what degree the ESIA and ESMMP for the underlying project would demonstrate the legality of timber harvested from the converted forest area. With input from academics, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and foreign experts, the group discussed numerous points of view and ultimately agreed to continue the conversation at upcoming TEG meetings.

Participants also received information on remote sensing technologies such as satellites and drones for monitoring deforestation and illegal logging. At the end of the workshop, Mr. Sousath Souyakhoummane stated that each TEG would need to continue their efforts to develop the TLD standards and respond to issues raised by stakeholders, especially from EFI and EU, prior to the November negotiations.

**Check out [FLEGTlaos.com](http://FLEGTlaos.com)**  
Presentations of TWG workshop on 2 August 2017 can be downloaded here: [Lao](#) / [English](#)

## FAO FLEGT Networking Meeting

The FAO FLEGT Networking Meeting was held on 28 July 2017 to announce the official launch of two new projects to be supported by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), to strengthen the roles of civil society and the private sector in improving Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade.

Meeting documents can be downloaded [here](#) (English).

The new call for proposals for VPA countries, including specific guidelines for Laos, was announced: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/eu-fao-flegt-programme/available-assistance/2017-vpa-call-for-proposals/en/>. Concept notes will need to be submitted before **15 September 2017**.

## Remote Sensing to Curb Illegal Logging of Conversion Areas

Forest conversion, meaning the clearing of natural forests for the development of agriculture and infrastructure projects such as hydropower dams, road building, and mining operations, constitutes the main source of timber in Lao PDR, and will continue to do so for another five to ten years. These projects, however, are often used as an excuse for large-scale logging that otherwise would not be permitted under Lao law. In order to successfully conclude Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) negotiations with the EU, the Lao forest sector needs to implement a clear process and means for ensuring the legality of conversion area timber and demonstrating that surrounding areas are not being illegally harvested. This process should entail the collection of inventory data regarding species and volumes, the demarcation of reservoir area as well as the monitoring of harvesting to be secured by a chain-of-custody (COC). Furthermore, post-harvest assessments are necessary to verify compliance with the Environmental and Social Management and Monitoring Plan (ESMMP) to prove that the adjacent forestland was not impacted.

As discussed during the Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting on the timber legality definition (TLD) for timber from conversion areas, the application of remote sensing tools for inventory and monitoring purposes is indispensable for future supply chain control and verification processes. In Laos, a number of satellite and drone services is available for wide-ranging detection as well as detailed assessments. These services vary in terms of resolution, processing, flight and revisit time, (data) costs, training and software, and can be selected based on Laos' needs. In regard to the Lao-EU FLEGT process, these systems can provide high-resolution, near real-time data in form of forest cover change maps and deforestation alerts on user-friendly platforms to identify illegal logging and deforestation hotspots, also in support of REDD+. If the information so obtained is used to enforce policies, i.e. by ensuring that demarcation lines of conversion areas are not exceeded, remote surveillance technology can enhance transparency and add to the overall monitoring system.



Satellite image reveals illegal logging (purple outlined polygons) outside official boundary of limestone quarry concession (red line).

Source: WWF, 2015. Assessment of Scope of Illegal Logging in Laos and Associated Trans-Boundary Timber Trade

## European Commission Conference on Illegal Logging and Deforestation

The European Commission brought together more than 250 representatives around the world from government, timber processing sector, civil society and international organisations to discuss the future work on tackling deforestation and illegal logging.

Three representatives from Lao PDR also attended the conference on 21-23 June 2017 in Brussels and contributed to the discussions on the future development of a multi-year work plan for the implementation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan, as well as on opportunities to step up EU action on deforestation and forest degradation. Lao participants were:  
+ Ms. Nilapha Vorachith, Department of Forest Inspection, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry;  
+ Ms. Souphayvanh Thiengchanhxay, Buarapha Company; and  
+ Mr. Khambone Phasouk, Wildlife Conservation Association)

You can now download the presentations from the conference on the official website [here](#).

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