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### **VIET NAM AND THE EUROPEAN UNION CONCLUDE THE SECOND NEGOTIATION FOR A BILATERAL FOREST LAW ENFORCEMENT, GOVERNANCE AND TRADE VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

**Hanoi, 25/11/2011** – The European Union (EU) and Viet Nam announced to start formal negotiations for a Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) on 18 August 2010. The aim of this Agreement is to ensure the legality of timber and timber products entering EU market, at the same time it could help in maintaining and expanding the export of timber and timber products of Vietnamese enterprises which will be subject to changing EU market requirements as of March 2013.

Following the first round of negotiation on VPA on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010 in Hanoi, the second round took place on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 in Hanoi. The Viet Nam's negotiating delegation led by Dr. Ha Cong Tuan, Deputy Director General, Directorate of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), is composed of representatives from MARD, Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT), Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Viet Nam Timber and Forest Products Association. The European Union (EU)'s delegation headed by Dr. Hugo Maria Schally, Head of Unit, Directorate General for Environment of the European Commission, consists of representatives of the European Commission, the EU Delegation to Viet Nam and European Forest Institute experts.

During the negotiations, the two parties have discussed on the structure, main content and details on the timber legality definition and agreed on the further work needed. Viet Nam and the EU also discussed the main points and principles on the product list to be included in the Agreement and the tracking and monitoring system to ensure the legality of timber and timber products. Both sides discussed and agreed the updates on the VPA negotiation roadmap, which foresees the third round of negotiations in the middle of 2012.

#### **Background**

In 2003 the EU adopted its Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) to address the problem of illegal logging and related trade. On 20 October 2010, the European Parliament and European Commission issued the Regulation 995/2010 that stipulates the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the EU market. It will be fully applied as of 3 March 2013.

At the core of the Action Plan are Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) with timber-exporting countries that wish to eliminate illegal timber from their trade with the EU. The idea of these bilateral agreements is to allow for the identification of legal timber from the countries concerned through the issuing of FLEGT licences and to only allow such timber into the EU when accompanied by a FLEGT licence. These agreements will mean that all the products covered by the Agreement can be considered to have been legally harvested, processed and traded.

The EU has so far concluded FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements with five African countries, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ghana, Liberia and Republic of Congo, and one Asian country, Indonesia; and is negotiating with a number of other countries, including Malaysia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon. Presently, Viet Nam is a major supplier of wood furniture worldwide and the EU is the second largest market for Vietnamese timber products.

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