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Joint press release: ASEAN, Indonesia and the EU

SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS SHARE PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING ILLEGAL LOGGING AND TIMBER TRADE

Jakarta, 6 December 2016 - Representatives of the EU, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and ASEAN member states have gathered in Jakarta to share progress under national and regional efforts to tackle illegal logging and associated trade. The 6-8 December meeting will open with remarks from:

- Vincent Guerend, EU Ambassador to Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam
- Francisco Fontan Pardo, EU Ambassador to ASEAN
- Tran Dong Phuong, Director of Sectoral Development Directorate, ASEAN Secretariat
- Putera Parthama, Director-General Sustainable Forest Management, Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF), Indonesia

The meeting will focus in part on national efforts to assure the legality of timber products, including through Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) with the EU, under the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan. Participants will present progress in VPA partner countries and share experiences to foster learning between countries.

Last month, Indonesia became the first country in the world to issue FLEGT licences to verified legal timber products it exports to the EU. It will share its experiences of developing a timber legality assurance system and VPA implementation structures, fostering multi-stakeholder participation and implementing FLEGT licensing procedures.

“Indonesia has met the EU’s high standards through a comprehensive participatory process involving all stakeholder groups,” says Putera Parthama of the MoEF. “While FLEGT licensing and access to the EU market are important outcomes of our VPA, our efforts also ensure our forests support sustainable development, improve livelihoods and help us to address climate change. The whole efforts from the supply side must be paired by equal efforts at the demand side. In other words, the EU market must totally close itself to non-legally-verified timber products, including wood products re-exported by third countries.”

Participants will also discuss the potential and readiness for ASEAN to have a regional mechanism for mutual recognition of timber legality, and to develop a common position on timber legality for trade. As ASEAN Member States are committed to combating illegal logging and the trade in illegally logged timber through improving forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG), Indonesia’s experience will provide important lessons for other ASEAN Member States in the negotiation and implementation of Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPAS), as well as in developing regional approaches to prevent trade in illegal timber products.



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Participants include government, industry and civil society representatives from ASEAN member states involved in FLEGT/VPA processes: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Representatives of the Chinese government will also attend.

“Indonesia and the EU have learned important lessons from the VPA process that are relevant to other countries negotiating or implementing VPAs,” Vincent Guerend, EU Ambassador to Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. “Indonesia is now issuing the world’s first FLEGT licences and enjoying enhanced access to the EU market. We hope Indonesia’s experiences inform and inspire other countries as they develop their timber legality assurance systems.”

Participants will also be informed on the Workplan for Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in ASEAN (2016-2025), which the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry adopted this year.

“The EU is working bilaterally with six ASEAN member economies on FLEGT,” says Francisco Fontan Pardo, EU Ambassador to ASEAN. “We welcome the important role ASEAN is playing in promoting regional cooperation to combat illegal logging and associated trade. We also congratulate ASEAN on the adoption of its new workplan on forest law enforcement and governance.”

Other topics under discussion include synergies between national timber legality approaches and forest certification; how to empower small and medium enterprises; the control of timber imports; and roles for civil society in timber legality assurance systems.

NOTE TO EDITORS

The ASEAN Secretariat, the Government of Indonesia and the EU FLEGT Facility are co-organising the Fifth Sub-Regional Training Workshop on Timber Legality Assurance, on 6-8 December 2016 at Hotel Santika Premiere Slipi, Jakarta, Indonesia.

In ASEAN, member states have committed themselves to develop national standards on timber legality, and the ASEAN Working Group on a Pan-ASEAN Timber Certification Initiative has become involved in related capacity building.

Within ASEAN, initiatives to address illegal logging and its associated trade include ASEAN Criteria and Indicators for Legality of Timber, Guidelines on Phased Approach for Forest Certification and Guidelines for Chain-of-Custody of Legal and Sustainable Timber. Momentum increased through bilateral actions between ASEAN Member States and the EU under the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action of 2003.



The EU FLEGT Action Plan is the EU's initiative against illegal logging. The Action Plan aims to reduce illegal logging by strengthening the sustainability and legality of forest management, improving forest governance and promoting trade in legally produced timber. FLEGT contributes to efforts to limit climate change, conserve biodiversity, protect rights and increase transparency.

The EU FLEGT Action Plan's demand-side measures include the EU Timber Regulation, which prohibits operators in the EU from placing illegal timber products on the EU market. The EU FLEGT Action Plan's supply-side measures include Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) with countries outside the EU, which commit to develop a robust timber legality assurance system and export to the EU only verified legal timber products accompanied by FLEGT licences.

This workshop is also made possible through the support of the GIZ Gap-CC (Jakarta), GIZ ProFLEGT (Laos) and the EU Delegation to Indonesia.

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