



Draft Concept Note

DENR/FAO/ITTO Regional Workshop

Improving Forest Law Compliance and Governance in Southeast Asia

Manila, Philippines, 11-13 September 2007

I. Background and rationale

Weak forest law compliance and enforcement contribute to severe forest degradation and deforestation. Resulting environmental damage is considerable, including loss of habitat and biodiversity, soil degradation and disturbance of forest ecosystem services. Forest degradation also adversely affects rural populations, particularly the poorest forest-dependent communities. Governments lose tax revenue through illegal forestry activities, estimated by the World Bank at US\$ 10 to 15 billion per year globally.

Illegal activities in the forest sector are a major problem in many Southeast Asian countries, including, among others, illegal logging, timber smuggling and trade of illegally sourced timber. In some countries of the region, illegal logging is estimated to account for a majority of harvested timber (World Bank, 2006).

In order to address this problem, the governments of East Asian countries issued a Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan in 2001, committing themselves to improve forest governance and combat illegal logging and associated trade. In 2002 the Asia Forest Partnership was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg to promote sustainable forest management, *inter alia*, by supporting efforts to control illegal logging. These efforts include harmonization of initiatives to combat illegal logging, supporting cooperation among customs and other relevant agencies, developing minimum standards of legality, timber tracking, verification and chain-of-custody systems.

Since those earlier initiatives, many countries in the region have undertaken measures to improve forest law compliance and governance. For example, Malaysia and Indonesia are negotiating voluntary partnership agreements with the European Union in the context of its FLEGT action plan. Several bilateral measures to deal with the problem have also

been undertaken, including a ban by Malaysia on imports of Indonesian logs and rough-sawn squares. While progress has been made in some countries, overall, much still needs to be done to achieve good governance and compliance with the law in the forest sector.

The regional workshop intends to contribute to improving forest law compliance and governance in the region by taking stock of the relative successes and failures of past and current regional and national initiatives, identifying obstacles and recommending concrete steps to move forward.

II. Objective and outcomes

The objective of the regional workshop is to promote multi-stakeholder dialogue and the exchange of views among countries in Southeast Asia on the challenges related to improving forest law compliance and governance, and to agree on tangible and deliverable actions to enhance progress on the ground.

Expected outcomes of the workshop are:

- exchange of experiences and perspectives on the relative successes of past and ongoing initiatives to improve forest law compliance and governance in the countries of Southeast Asia;
- promotion of dialogue among different stakeholders, i.e. forestry authorities, civil society organizations and the private sector;
- identification of major obstacles to enhanced progress in rationalizing the policy and legal framework, building institutional capacity and improving data and knowledge for improved forest law compliance and governance from the perspective of different stakeholders; and
- recommendations for concrete actions to be taken in these three areas and roles of the different stakeholders in their implementation.

III. Participants

From each of the countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam) representatives of the following stakeholder groups will be invited:

- national forestry authorities responsible for forestry regulation and control;
- representatives of programmes, projects and initiatives to improve forest law compliance and governance
- members of civil society organizations active in combating illegal activities in forestry
- representatives from the forest industry/and or wood products traders

In addition, relevant regional and international organizations and development partners will also attend.

IV. Workshop dates and venue

The workshop will take place on 11 – 13 September 2007, in Manila, Philippines.

V. Organization

The workshop will be convened under the auspices of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines (DENR) with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), and in collaboration with other related initiatives in the region.

VI. Workshop methodology

Through a background paper prepared by an independent expert, a panel discussion and presentations by stakeholder groups, the workshop will take stock of the relative successes of past and current initiatives to address the challenges posed by widespread illegal logging and trade of forest products in the region.

In working groups, representatives of different stakeholder groups will identify from their perspectives the main obstacles preventing countries from making faster and more visible progress on improving forest law compliance and governance.

After a discussion of these perspectives by the plenary, three working groups will develop recommendations for concrete actions to be taken to:

- rationalize the policy and legal framework;
- build institutional capacity; and
- improve data and knowledge.

Each of these working groups will be composed of different stakeholders in order to promote consensus and to identify their respective roles and responsibilities in the process. The joint FAO/ITTO publication “*Best Practices for Improving Law Compliance in the Forest Sector*” will serve as a reference for the discussions.

The main outcomes of the workshop will be summarized in a final statement.

References

FAO and ITTO. 2005. *Best practices for improving law compliance in the forest sector*. FAO Forestry Paper 145, Rome.

World Bank. 2006. *Strengthening forest law enforcement and governance*. Report No. 36638-GLB, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.