



1st EU – Thailand Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) Negotiation

Bangkok, 30 June 2017

Thailand and the European Union (EU) held the first negotiations on a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT). The agreement, when concluded, will help improve forest governance, address illegal logging and promote trade in verified legal timber products to the EU and other markets.

The 1stEU-Thailand VPA negotiations took place in Bangkok during 29-30 June 2017. The Thai side was represented by Mr. WIJARN SIMACHAYA, lead VPA negotiator and Permanent Secretary of the Thai Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. The EU side was represented by Mr. Jorge RODRIGUEZ ROMERO, Deputy Head of Unit, European Commission Directorate General for Environment.

It was the first time negotiators had formally met face-to-face. This week's negotiations focused on technical issues on 8 distinct themes:

1. Legislative Developments – addressing Thailand's other legislative developments beyond strict, forest-related issues
2. Linkages, consultation and new systems – ensuring that FLEGT is mutually supporting of other national and international initiatives
3. Legality Definition – conducting a comprehensive field test of the draft Legality Definition in 73 locations throughout Thailand
4. Product Scope – mutual sharing of data to aid Thailand in refining its draft Product Scope
5. Verification Mechanisms – involving multiple stakeholders in designing proportionate and balanced verification mechanisms
6. Import Verification – developing a risk-based due diligence system to assess potential legality issues with imports of timber and timber products
7. Timber Legality Assurance System – designing a system that builds upon the Legality Definition and supply chain control systems
8. Roadmap – agreeing to a roadmap of joint activities until the 2nd round of negotiations foreseen to be held in 2018

Thailand emphasized that VPA will enhance trading relationship between Thailand and EU, as well as strengthen the sustainable forest management in Thailand. Thailand, therefore, would develop a system to document and verify the legality of timber products it exports to the EU, and make other commitments on transparency and independent monitoring.

Now Thailand joins a coalition of countries that are using trade to fight illegal logging and improve forest governance. By starting VPA negotiations with the EU, Thailand demonstrates its commitment to sustainable forest management and the global forest agenda.

The design of the timber legality assurance system and other VPA commitments will be determined through national deliberations among stakeholders from the government, private sector and civil society. The multi-stakeholder process has already made good progress towards defining legality and field-testing the definition to assess its practicality and robustness.

The EU and Thailand recognise that the process of negotiating and implementing the VPA will be a long-term undertaking for both parties. The negotiators also discussed the next steps in the national processes and agreed on a roadmap until the next negotiation session which will take place in 2018.

A Voluntary Partnership Agreement or VPA is a key component of the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan, which aims to combat illegal logging and ensure that forests contribute to sustainable development and efforts to address climate change.

Fifteen countries are now negotiating or implementing VPAs with the EU.



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