



MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 24th April, 2008

International Dialogue on Timber Trade, Forest Law Compliance & Governance

Hanoi, 24th April, 2008 – Delegates from all over the world will meet today to discuss issues surrounding timber trade, forest law compliance and governance. The dialogue will be held as part of Asia Pacific Forestry Week, currently being staged in Hanoi.

Forests in Asia account for over half a billion hectares, around one percent of which is being cleared per year (FAO, 2006). Recent concerns about forests to climate change have added to already intense debate around forest law enforcement, industrial wood demand and other complex dynamics that impact on logging, both legal and illegal.

“The future of Asia’s forests is no longer just the concern of scientists and NGOs fighting for the survival of these vital ecosystems and their charismatic fauna,” said David Cassells, Director of The Nature Conservancy’s Asia Pacific Forest Programme and the Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade (RAFT) initiative. “Forest management and use effects the lives of millions of people. It is big business and forests are high on the agenda for mainstream economic policy in a carbon constrained world.

“Many of the decisions that affect forests take place far away from the forests and the millions of people who depend most directly on them,” added Mr Cassells. “Historically, the decisions taken in boardrooms and government offices have led to over exploitation, forest loss and degradation.

“The policies and incentives that guide the actions of the private sector must be re-aligned so that business becomes part of the solution, not an ongoing source of the problem. Businessmen, foresters, NGOs and communities must talk and work together to secure a sustainable future for Asia’s forests. This is why an event like this one is so important.”

The dialogue will provide a platform for participants to advance policy solutions, industry incentives and practical on-the-ground initiatives. Issues to be addressed will include trends affecting regional and international timber trade, sustainability and legality standards, and timber procurement policies.

“Many people think we could halt deforestation if we just stopped illegal logging,” said Frances Seymour, Director General, the Center for International Forestry Research. “But there are a number of complex factors that drive forest law, many of which originate outside of the forestry sector, and we have to be careful that law enforcement efforts do not harm the millions of people who rely on forests for their livelihoods,” added Ms Seymour.



“Solving the problems will require cooperation across national boundaries and the involvement of a large number of stakeholders. Dialogues such as this one can help build a consensus among these many actors about what needs to be done.”

So, sustainable management of forest resources is not just an environmental issue, but a social, political and economic one too. And sustainable management of forests in Asia is not just the responsibility of countries in Asia, but for developed countries whose seemingly insatiable demand for timber products often drives illegal logging.

“This demand impacts heavily on the economies of developing countries and the livelihoods of their rural communities,” said Hugh Speechly, from the Department for International Development’s (DfID) Forest Governance and Trade Programme.

“Timber-producing nations lose more than \$US15 billion a year due to uncollected royalties, and trade in illegally procured timber is estimated to depress world prices by up to 16%, making it difficult for legal operators to compete.

“The UK’s Forest Governance and Trade Programme is confronting this problem by harnessing market leverage in timber consuming countries to encourage governance reform in producing countries. We see this dialogue as an important part of these efforts,” added Mr Speechly.

The Dialogue will be introduced by Dr. Boen Purnama, Secretary General, Ministry of Forestry of Indonesia, and will be moderated by Mr. Rico Hizon, BBC Asia Business and Finance Correspondent.

A selection of presentations will be followed by an open forum. A media conference will also be held during a half hour interval (10:00 – 10:30am), providing local and international media with the opportunity to question a diverse panel.

The event will be hosted by the Asia Forest Partnership (AFP), a multi-stakeholder alliance to facilitate and promote discussion, information exchange, and collaborative action for the sustainable management of forests in the Asia-Pacific region. AFP was launched in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

It has been organised by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), the Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Ministry of Forestry of Indonesia (MoF).

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Co-Hosts:

CIFOR

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) was established in 1993 in response to global concerns about the social, environmental, and economic consequences of forest loss and degradation. CIFOR is dedicated to developing policies and technologies for sustainable use and management of forests, and for enhancing the well-being of people who rely on tropical forests for their livelihoods. CIFOR is one of the 15 centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). CIFOR has its headquarters in Bogor, Indonesia, and works in over 30 other countries around the world.

IGES

The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) is a research institute established in 1998 by the Japanese Government to conduct pragmatic and innovative policy research to support sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. IGES collaborates with a broad range of stakeholders, including national governments, local authorities, businesses, non-governmental organizations, experts, and the general community, to carry out strategic research and to disseminate the results around the world.

TNC

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a leading conservation organization working all over the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. TNC has had a significant impact since its founding in 1951, protecting more than 117 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of rivers worldwide, operating more than 100 marine conservation projects globally, and enlisting more than 1 million members. TNC works in 50 states in the USA and more than 30 countries worldwide, addressing threats to conservation involving climate change, fire, fresh water, forests, invasive species, and marine ecosystems.

DFID

The Department for International Development (DfID) is leading the British government's fight against world poverty by supporting long-term programmes to help tackle its underlying causes. DFID also responds to emergencies, both natural and man-made, and works in partnership with governments, civil society, the private sector and others. It also works with multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, United Nations agencies, and the European Commission. DFID works directly in over 150 countries worldwide. Its headquarters are in London and East Kilbride, Scotland.

MoF Indonesia

The Ministry of Forestry of Indonesia's primary objective is to ensure that forest resources will continue to provide sustainable yield and benefits, while protecting the environment and the livelihoods of forest-dwelling communities. The long-term strategy of MoF includes combating illegal logging, implementing sustainable forest management (SFM), and enhancing forest rehabilitation and stabilization. In turn, this will increase the prosperity and quality of life of its people.