World Bank is one of the largest financial institutions in the world aiming at helping countries and people worldwide. The Bank’s mission is to aid developing countries and their inhabitants to achieve development, reduce poverty, promote economic growth and ensure a sustainable environment. www.worldbank.org

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the world’s oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 110 government and 80 NGO members and almost 10000 volunteer experts in more than 180 countries. IUCN’s mission is to help the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. www.iucn.org

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is the world’s largest independent conservation organization with over 5 million supporters worldwide, working in more than 90 countries. WWF’s mission is to stop environmental degradation, conserve the world’s biological diversity, and ensure that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable. www.panda.org

Do you know?

- When being in the forest you are getting free from the anger, stress and aggression, it picks-you-up and you feel joy and happiness. The forest apparently appears as a kind of stress-preventive tool…

- According to the Finnish Forest Research Institute walking in the forest strengthens your immune system and increase a number of the active cells which prevent an emergence of the cancer disease.

- Currently the 30% of the Earth coverage are forestlands which represent 38×106 km².

- A historical importance of the forests was first time revealed by Julius Cesar. He mentioned that the forests could not be conquered because of the various mythic creatures inhabited the forest area. Primarily because of the forestlands Germany was named by the Rome army Germania Libera – Free Germany.

- Forest fires were intensified. During the summer 2010 the forest fires occupied territories of Evlakh, Khizi, Qabala, Astara, Lankaran, Shabran, Quba, Khachmaz, Ismailli and Goy-Gol regions. According to the preliminary calculations about 32 hectares of the forestlands have suffered due to the forest fires.

- Azerbaijan does not have a possibility to provide a full-scale control on its occupied territories. This could result in a total extermination of the forestlands which are located on the 20% of the territory which is currently under occupation.

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"Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance" in Azerbaijan (FLEG)

http://www.enpi-fleg.org
http://www.enpi-fleg.az
About the FLEG Process

Poor governance of forest resources combines with weak rule of law to undermine sustainable economic growth, societal equity, and environmental conservation. The effects of unsustainable forest management and illegal forest activities include: significant loss of revenue to governments, the private sector and rural communities (especially forest-dependent communities); degradation of the environment and forest ecosystems; loss of biodiversity; and the loss of carbon stocks, further exacerbating climate change.

Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) is an international, participatory process of formulation and implementation of policies and practices aiming to ensure the sustainable forest management and to combat the threats posed to forests by illegal logging, trade, poaching and corruption and associated timber trade. This process has, since its start, evolved into a number of national, regional and global initiatives.

The St. Petersburg's 2005 Ministerial Conference was the major event within the FLEG process for the Europe and Northern Asia region. The Declaration was signed by 44 governments from the region and the European Commission. As a result, each signatory state has developed a National Action Plan (NAP) and performed annual evaluations of the progress on its implementation.

The Indicative List of Actions urged countries to identify local strategies of development and implementation of NAPs actions. Such actions shall reflect priorities of national requests for assistance from international financial institutions and other international organizations and bilateral donors.

About the ENPI/FLEG Program

The ENPI-FLEG - "Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in the European Neighborhood Policy East Countries and Russia" Program has been initiated in response to the growing problem of illegal forest activities in the participating countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and Russia). This Program is funded by the European Union. The Program is aimed at rooting illegal logging, timber theft and smuggling, trade of illegal wood, unauthorized forest conversion, ambiguous forestry legislation and unclear tender arrangements.

In the course of the Program's implementation it is planned to:
- identify policy legal, institutional and economic obstacles to improving forest governance (including control of illegal logging);
- develop innovative approaches to overcoming these obstacles;
- enhance the capacity of key stakeholders to implement forest governance reforms, and disseminate respective lessons learned at national, regional and global levels. The initiative is comprised of processes which address the complex and politically-sensitive issues related to illegal logging at national and regional levels, and is implemented in cooperation with the major stakeholders:
  - governments (Ministries, departments, parliaments, judiciary authorities, local authorities, customs);
  - civil society (NGOs, community organizations);
  - private sector (business);

The main purpose of the Program is to contribute to ensuring that improved forest governance arrangements are in place in forest sectors and closely linked sectors through effective implementation of the FLEG Ministerial Declaration (St. Petersburg Declaration 2005), involving governments, civil society and the private sector. The Program’s specific objective is to contribute to legal and sustainable forest management and utilization practices and improved local livelihoods in the six ENPI East countries plus Russia. However, even well designed initiatives will fail short unless there is political commitment and cooperation at the highest levels. Improving forest law enforcement and governance will require collaboration across sectors and stronger stakeholder involvement.

In Azerbaijan the ENPI-FLEG Program started in 2010 and it is implemented by the World Bank, IUCN and WWF. To learn more about the structure of the Program please see the website www.enpi-fleg.org and www.enpi-fleg.az.

Current situation and problems in the forest sector of the Azerbaijani Republic

Azerbaijan is a country with the modest forest cover. Only 11% of the country territory is forestslands. Allocation of the forests is non uniform – almost 85% spread in the mountainous regions and 15% in the plains. All forestslands of the country are state property and have water safeguarding and soil protection functions. Hence, these territories are in the first group which means that forestslands usage is limited and industry cutting is forbidden.

Collapse of the USSR was characterized by the protracted economic crisis and the shortage of the heat and fuel materials. It impacted significantly the everyday life of the rural population. Former kolkhoz forests which locate close to the rural settlements became a source of the fuel wood. It resulted in an extensive degradation of the forestslands which exaggerated further by the profit forest felling by the local population. The negative situation formed in the forest sector forced the Azerbaijani Republic to reconsider its scheme of management of the forests’ resources.

From 1996 a majority of the forests was given the state status. New “National Program on restoration and expansion of the forests in the Azerbaijani Republic” accepted in 2003 covered the period from 2003 till 2008 and contributed partially to resolution of the problems in the forest sector.

Economic problems of the transition period, military conflict, problems of the refugees and IDPs engendered and fostered illegal loggings for firewood and commercial harvesting of the charcoal. In this context, an occupation of the part of the country’s territory where 261 thousand hectares are the lands of the state forest foundation has to be mentioned as one of the critical problems of Azerbaijan. Due to the impossibility of the full-scale control and management of these territories a large-scale acts of the illegal logging together with the significant burning of the forestlands have taken place. The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan in cooperation with the various international organizations conducts regularly the monitoring of the lands of the state forest foundation in the occupied territories.

Among the pressing problems for the natural restoration of the forest resources is a nomadic cattle-breeding which exceeds in several times allowable loads on pastures and over-pasture of cattle by the local population and farmers. This problem has the most negative impact on the country forestlands which results in serious consequences and diminishes the governmental efforts on forests restoration.