Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) is an international, participatory process of formulation and implementation of policies and practices aiming to ensure sustainable forest management and fight against illegal logging and associated timber trade. This process has, since its start, evolved into a number of national, regional and global initiatives.
About FLEG Process

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The St. Petersburg’s 2005 Ministerial Conference was the major event within the FLEG process for the Europe and Northern Asia region. Its outcomes included the St. Petersburg Ministerial Declaration and the Indicative List of Actions. 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 donor agencies.

The ENPI FLEG Program - “Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in the European Neighbourhood Policy East Countries and Russia” has been implemented in response to growing problems of illegal forest activities in participating countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine). The Program is aimed at battling illegal logging, timber theft and smuggling, trade of illegal wood, unauthorized forest conversion, ambiguous forestry legislation, unclear tender arrangements and lack of enforcement of forest regulations resulting from corruption.

In order to mount an efficient response to such issues a 6 million euro European Commission grant was provided to the World Bank through a multi-donor trust fund. The Program’s implementing partners include the World Bank, IUCN (The International Union for Conservation of Nature) and WWF. The collective experience and networks of these partners will ensure that the public and private sectors, as well as civil society are consistently included in the Program’s activities. To learn more about the structure of the Program please see the website www.enpi-fleg.org

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. Three broad categories of stakeholder groups are targeted by the Program: government, civil society, and the private sector.

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.
Implementation in participating countries

Armenia

The active phase of the ENPI FLEG Program implementation activities in Armenia began in July 2009. At that time members of the Program Coordination Team (PCT) were appointed, finalizing the establishment of this mechanism for the country. Also, in close cooperation between all implementing organizations the Program strategy for Armenia was developed and efforts were taken to introduce and promote FLEG Program among key stakeholders.

In October 2009 an introductory meeting was organized with stakeholders. This meeting helped crystallize major forestry issues in the country as well as country specific priorities. As a result, the following specific items were included into the country’s workplan: development of a program to help integrate forest law and governance issues in the academic curricula of the Armenian State Agrarian University; assessment of two forest sanctuaries in the structure of “Hayantar” SNCO (the body responsible for forestry-related activities in Armenia); evaluation of the role of the private sector in the sustainable use of forest wood products; and, recommendations on responsible use of forests by private sector.

In November 2009, the Program Coordinator from the WB Washington office, Mr. Andrew Mitchell, visited Armenia and held meetings with PCT members and stakeholders in order to promote the Program and to encourage start up and implementation of activities. Also, in November a local consultant for the position of the ENPI/FLEG Country Program Coordinator was hired to ensure effective coordination, management and implementation of the IUCN’s component of the Program in Armenia. In concert with this the WB hired an international consultant responsible for development of a comprehensive communication strategy and action plan for the Program which will be used as a basis for launching respective communication, public awareness and advocacy campaigns at a later stage.

Also, this consultant has developed a general concept for conducting an analytical study on the social and economic impact of unsustainable forest practices and illegal logging on the rural population of Armenia. This study is aimed at assessing the current social and economic situation in forest dependent communities and the volume of wood lost to poor utilization and illegal logging. Assignment for the study includes an in-depth analysis of focus groups and collecting of information about existing knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding illegal logging. Another substantial component of the study will be intensive field work and interviews with target groups. Announcement on this study was posted on the website of the Program.

At the end of January 2009 an electronic press-release to promote the ENPI-FLEG Program in Armenia was released and circulated among regional networks of REC Caucasus and the CENN (the Caucasus Environmental NGO Network). The next public awareness steps will include preparation and release of the 1st FLEG National electronic Newsletter and a leaflet on the ENPI FLEG Program in Armenia.

Azerbaijan

In preparation of the Program strategy for Azerbaijan active discussions were held with a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including respective governmental institutions and non-governmental sector representatives. This helped evaluate and incorporate country specific priorities into the general FLEG objectives, e.g. prevention of practices of illegal pasture on forests through development and implementation of the effective pasture management systems and involving local communities.

Broader expert involvement in such a development process helped ensure that the strategy represents a comprehensive summary of issues put forward by different parties and includes adequate activities for addressing them.
In parallel, The Ministry of Ecology of Azerbaijan is now initiating the establishment of the Program Advisory Committee that will include representatives from the Ministries of Ecology, Agriculture, Economic Development and of the State Land Committee of Azerbaijan. This is being done to ensure efficient coordination of efforts among all stakeholders.

Belarus

Generally, it can be observed that the problem of illegal logging in Belarus is not as severe as in many other countries of this region. Over the last five years the number of forest-related offences has been steadily decreasing as a result of a number of official measures to combat illegal activities in the forest sector. Belarus’ Constitution determines that all forests are owned entirely by the state; the Ministry of Forestry of the Republic of Belarus is the primary designated government agency responsible for forest utilization, reproduction, conservation and protection.

As a result of active and comprehensive measures taken by the state, illegal logging in Belarus does not have a sizeable impact on forest utilization. More common though are cases of illegal timber sales spurred by improper valuation of logging sites and poor recording of harvested timber. This creates conditions for the emergence of unrecorded timber to a shadow market. Responding to this problem, the Ministry of Forestry together with other government authorities and non-governmental organizations are actively involved in developing continuous efforts aimed at preventing illegal timber trade.

Another important aspect that tells about Belarus’ steady headway towards internationally recognized standards in the forest sector is forest certification process which is one of the key integral criteria of forest sector performance. This is a voluntary process pursued by forest management companies and organizations wishing to obtain an internationally recognized proof of legality for their operations. The Ministry of Forestry of Belarus is planning to complete certification of forests under its management by 2011.

Following approval of the FLEG Program country workplan in December 2009, a range of core activities for Belarus have been identified and consolidated in 4 main areas: improvement of the FLEG regulatory framework and efficiency of its enforcement; improvement of the system of forest management, protection and utilization of forest products recording; integration of concrete FLEG processes in local forest management and utilization practices; improvement of information transparency of the FLEG processes.

Belarus PCT has established, and maintains, very constructive working relations and consultations with other program countries PCTs (Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) which enables efficient experience sharing and exchange of information. The Program Coordination Team has also built on a productive relationship which already existed between the World Bank mission and the Ministry of Forestry of Belarus; country FLEG focal point in Belarus is the Deputy Minister of Forestry Mr. Yushkevich. The latest PCT meeting took place at the beginning of February 2010 in Minsk where participants held extensive discussions on the Program implementation details.

The FLEG Program has also developed good contacts with the press-secretary of Belarus’ Ministry of Forestry and editor-in-chief of the Belarus magazine “Forestry and hunting” which will facilitate promotion of the Program’s image throughout the country and among stakeholders.
The FLEG Program implementation activities in the country have been focused on: raising forest law enforcement and governance awareness; increasing public participation in the decision making process; monitoring FLEG related issues carried out by national institutions; as well as regional collaboration and knowledge sharing. It is also planned to strengthen the capacity of local communities to utilize timber and non-timber forest products sustainably. Also, a public campaign to promote a more responsible purchasing approach toward forest products will be carried out, including campaigns promoting the wider usage of certified paper in Georgia.

Under the Program efforts have been taken to assess and evaluate FLEG awareness among different stakeholder groups. Other assessments will include analyses of the economic and social impact of inefficient forest practices on rural populations of Georgia; the study of current forest management practices; and also legal and institutional analyses of forest use regulations and procedures for identifying weaknesses that create an enabling environment for corruption.

Another important aspect of the Program implementation activities in Georgia is working with the private sector. This envisages providing up-to-date information on responsible wood purchasing policies to wood-processing companies, and the training of private forest inventory companies in more advanced and efficient wood assessment techniques. In parallel with this, there will be an evaluation of the national wood-tracking system, just recently introduced in Georgia, specifically as relates to this system’s observance by private companies as well as identifying ways to further improve it. The system helps ensure legality of a respective source of wood and wood products as well as traces movement of wood from the place of origin to its final destination.

For broader stakeholder involvement a public discussion on the draft sustainable forest management standards is planned. Regional workshops and capacity building activities will cover regional issues such as cross-border timber flow and voluntary forest certification. Under development also are indicators and methodology for assessment of illegal logging and forest crime, training modules for forest law enforcement as well as training in the assessment of illegal logging based on elaborated indicators and methodology.

The Program is supporting a range of specific forest management improvement efforts implemented with active support from governmental institutions, civil society and private sector. These are held at a country-wide level and complemented by strategically targeted regional actions. Related analytical work is covering illegal forestry activities and the government response to such crime.

The first stakeholders meeting in Tbilisi took place in late November 2009. The primary discussion focused on what type of forestry related efforts were needed to be taken by concerned state bodies and non-governmental organizations to ensure the efficient and continuous development of the forest sector. Resulting from this discussion was the formulation of a new activity for the country Program strategy: performing of legal and institutional analyses of forest use regulations and procedures in order to identify weaknesses which lead to corruption.

Also, in November a study on current practices in the forest management and their comparison with the internationally acknowledged standards was launched. Specific objectives of this study included identifying pilot areas from different regions of the country where it would be most relevant to assess existing forest management practices as well as preparation of recommendations for improving such practices throughout the country. As a result, based on criteria for the study four pilot areas have been identified in Eastern Georgia (Akhmeta and Tianeti) and Western Georgia (Baghdati-Vani and Sachkhere), and field work is planned to be launched there.

The public awareness consultant in Georgia visited one of the mountainous areas of the country, Akhmeta, to familiarize herself with legal logging practices employed by the largest Georgian forest management company “Georgian Wood and Industrial Development”. Several interviews were taken from representatives of the company and local forest rangers producing a clear picture of the legal forest management techniques and helping to identify best ways to ensure legality of logging practices. The interviews and outcomes will be available in the Georgia country newsletter.
To ensure better transparency and broader access to the information on the Program implementation activities in the country the Georgian version of the ENPI-FLEG website was launched: www.enpi-fleg.ge. This will consolidate all relevant information about Georgian forest and the Program in two languages – Georgian and English. In parallel with this, a draft communication/media concept was prepared to be used for launching national and regional media and awareness raising activities.

Recognizing the importance of involving various stakeholders to resolve issues within the forest sector in Georgia active efforts are being taken to maintain close cooperation with other donors and projects working in this area. So, the FLEG Program and the USAID funded project “Sustainable Forestry in Georgia: Sustainable Production, Sustainable Consumption” are co-funding a study “Current Forest Management Standards and Practices in Georgia”. It is also planned that the publication entitled “Forestry Practice Guidelines” will be produced through the joint efforts of these two stakeholders along with coordinated advocacy and lobbying for increased public awareness and integration of the recommendations developed into revisions of national forestry policies and legislation.

Also, the FLEG Program enlisted support of the German “Centrum fur Internationale Migration (CIM)” in Georgia which is co-financing activities of the ENPI-FLEG Country Communications Coordinator.

Future plans include a workshop on cross-border timber flow in the region with the purpose to identify existing problems in this sector, conduct trainings and competitions for journalists, provide capacity building for concerned official institutions as well as assess current needs for improved management of this process.

Moldova

Forestry problems and challenges have continuously remained a major focus of the Moldovan Government for the last two decades. Responding to the need for efficient management of forest resources based on adequate legislation the Government of Moldova has developed and approved a series of special policy and regulatory documents. On its part, the Moldovan Parliament introduced constructive amendments to the existing laws on prevention and combating illegal logging aiming to streamline the forest law enforcement and governance process in the country.

The FLEG National Action Plan development was launched in the country in 2008 through a participatory process involving the Forestry State Agency “Moldsilva”, international consulting companies, other government agencies, civil society, and the private sector. In 2008 and 2009 a number of workshops were conducted culminating in the formulation of the FLEG National Action Plan which was finalized by a specially created group of the Forestry Research and Management Institute (ICAS Moldova). As a parallel process, development of the Moldova FLEG country Program was undertaken, and in mid April 2009 this Program was officially agreed by the FLEG National Advisory Committee (NPAC).

The National Program Advisory Committee was created with the substantial support and input of the Governmental Agency “Moldsilva”, international consulting companies, other government agencies, civil society, and the private sector. In 2008 and 2009 the National Program Advisory Committee was created with the substantial support and input of the Governmental Agency “Moldsilva”. It includes representatives from key government institutions, the Moldovan Parliament, non-governmental organizations, Forestry Research and Management Institute (ICAS) of Moldova, local governance officials, and representatives from the European Commission. The first NPAC meeting is scheduled in the spring of 2010.

Within the FLEG Program coordination efforts a joint WB-IUCN National FLEG office in Moldova was opened in mid October 2009 and five local consultants have been hired, namely: a Public Awareness Consultant, two Research Consultants for Legislation, a Research Consultant Forest Cadastre, and an IT Consultant. Key tasks for their work include organizing and coordinating the implementation of the FLEG training and demonstrational activities, conducting a series of activities related to the identification of training needs for different groups of stakeholders, and launching pilot demonstrational activities.

Also, in December 2009 a one-year contract was awarded under the Program to the Public Association “Silva-Meleniu III” to conduct an analytical study of forest marketing in Moldova. Among the main outcomes of this study shall be a thorough analysis
of the real consumption of wood products in the country, extensive analysis of import-export trends as well as specific forecasting methods developed for wood domestic consumption in Moldova.

In the immediate plans there is an analytical study on illegal logging in Moldova and its impact on forest ecosystems and forest-dependent communities as well as a series of efforts under the comprehensive national informational campaign. The latter will see the publishing of a quarterly Forestry Bulletin, informational leaflets targeting key audiences, posting of country latest news onto a national webpage under the regional FLEG website, and conducting opinion polls on pressing forestry-related issues.

**Russian Federation**

The Russian Federation has been actively participating in the FLEG process since the middle of 2004, when at the IV Session of the UN Forum on Forests it initiated the Ministerial Conference on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in Europe and North Asia. The Conference took place in November 2005, in St.Petersburg, and has become a momentous event in the consolidation of efforts to improve law enforcement and governance in the forest sector in Europe and North Asia. Participants from 44 countries and representatives of the European Commission issued the St.Petersburg Declaration and the Indicative List of Actions. Thus, countries exporting timber and the key importers of this product came to an agreement to pool resources for combating illegal logging and reducing associated trade, safeguarding the rights of local populations, ensuring information transparency, and preventing corruption in the forest sector.

Ever since, FLEG issues have been on the agenda of various meetings and forums devoted to actions aimed at improving management practices in the country’s forest sector. Recently, in September-October 2009, at a series of seminars held under the project “Translating Declaration into Action: Maintaining Momentum of the St.Petersburg Declaration within the Context of Russia’s New Forest Code”, the ENPI FLEG Program was presented and concrete proposals on advancing the FLEG process in Russia were put forth. These proposals included closer cooperation with voluntary forest certification systems and enhancing the ENPI FLEG Program components involving analyzing and supporting small-sized businesses.

The World Bank, WWF and IUCN also initiated, as part of the Program activities, an extensive discussion of FLEG issues with federal and local self-government officials, the management of forest companies and representatives of environmental NGOs and businesses. Thus, in November 2009, ENPI FLEG consultants from IUCN visited Pskov Region and Primorsky Region (Russian Far East) where they met with district government officials and the staff of leading local environmental organizations. In Ternesky District, they meet with the management of Ternelies, the largest regional timber company.

During these meetings, all the participants confirmed the importance of ENPI FLEG actions to establish a constructive dialogue between local stakeholders with the aim of giving a coordinated response to illegal logging. At these events it was also noted that the Program assisted local small businesses by providing not only technical, but legal and methodological support as well. A seminar to discuss the ENPI FLEG Program activities was scheduled for the end of February in the Pskov Region.

A large body of analytical work is also being carried out under the Program. World Bank consultants reviewed and analyzed the forest legislation and standard acts regulating relations in the forest sector of the Russian Federation to assess corruption risks. The key findings of this work, published in the 2009 December issue of the North-Western Federal District Forest News, will be discussed at a broad range of international, national and regional events and will become the basis of recommendations for improving the forest legislation. Thus, the received results were actively discussed at a round table held in early February 2010, at the Arkhangelsk Region Forestry Department.

The World Bank is currently working on the analytical phase of developing guidelines for implementing a scope of measures to prevent illegal logging and associated trade and testing them on a regional level. In the first part of February 2010, World Bank consultants went on a mission to Khabarovsk and Krasnoyarsk regions where they met with the heads of regional government and forestry departments to familiarize them with the content, methods and planned results of this component of the Country Work Plan. Thus, the interest of government authorities in the results of the Program activities was confirmed and the provision of required regional and specialized information was agreed.
In late December 2009, FLEG Program consultants attended training in Moscow at which special emphasis was placed on designing specific approaches to Program implementation in the regions of the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation FLEG Program National Advisory Committee held its second meeting on January 25, 2010, in Moscow. Upon reviewing and evaluating the FLEG Program’s progress in Russia, the participants passed a resolution in which they corroborated the significance of the Program in ensuring the observance of legal management standards in the forest sector across the country. The resolution also outlines steps to further develop Program fulfillment and a set of public information and education activities. Special attention during this meeting was focused on the preparation by WWF, with support from the World Bank and IUCN, of the forthcoming International Workshop on the New Legislative Initiatives of the European Union to Combat Trade in Illegally Harvested Timber and Its Processing Products planned for March 2010 in Moscow. This event will be covered in detail in the next issue of this newsletter.

Ukraine

Despite the generally favourable official statistics in Ukraine on forestry issues the problems related to the use of forests, namely illegal logging and shadow forestry business have grown more acute in the country as of late. There were attempts by the government to adopt laws which would help resolve existing problems and difficulties, however they did not bring anticipated results as numerous violations and related crime still persisted.

In 2006-2008 the State Forestry Committee of Ukraine attempted a number of specific steps, including legislative initiatives and governmental resolutions, to implement tasks envisaged by the Indicative Action Plan. However, such steps made by a single governmental agency proved uncoordinated and not duly integrated into comprehensive efforts under the national forest policy.

Implementation of the FLEG Program in Ukraine is effected at two levels – national and regional. National actions include identifying, classification and assessment of law enforcement problems, analysis and improvement of forest and associated legislation, enhancing transparency and informational access to governmental bodies and improving their coordination activities with ecological NGOs and business. Regional efforts have practical application and are primarily aimed at preparation and approbation of modern methods and techniques for quality assessment and control over the movement of timber products as well as prevention, detection and response to legal violations.

First meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Program was held in the capital city of Kyiv in mid February 2009. Participants in the meeting included donor organizations, officials from the Ukrainian State Forestry Committee and other controlling bodies, members of non-governmental organizations who represent key country stakeholders in ensuring successful implementation of the Program. Further efforts under the Program and coordination of activities through the Advisory Committee were discussed at this meeting; also, the Deputy Head of the State Forestry Committee of Ukraine Mr. Victor Chervonyi was appointed Committee’s Chair.

A group of consultants to perform analysis on guaranteeing rights of local residents and small business for the legal use of forest resources in Ukraine was selected and hired. Open calls were announced for the following positions: research consultant on analytical study “The economic and social impact of inefficient and unsustainable forest practices and illegal logging in Ukraine”; consultant on assessment of existing problems in legal access to timber and other forest resources by local populations and small businesses. To strengthen the team of the Program two more specialists had been hired: Public Awareness Consultant for Ukraine and the International ENPI-FLEG Bulletin Editor Consultant. Also, one international expert was engaged to develop a proposal for improving the system on control of timber flow in Ukraine.

In mid November a working meeting was organized entitled “Ukrainian forest mirrored in mass media”. The meeting was aimed at ensuring effective cooperation between stakeholders and mass media under the ENPI-FLEG Program, as well as enhancing professionalism, reliability and efficiency of mass media publications and reports on forest related issues.
Recognizing Carpathian as the key forest region in Ukraine a seminar was organized in December for local forest rangers, representatives of local ecological inspections, law enforcement bodies, official authorities, businesses and NGOs. At this seminar initial results of the FLEG Program implementation in Ukraine were presented and broad discussions were held on the issues related to effective law enforcement in Carpathian region forests. Proposals on potential pilot projects had also been examined.

Presented in the course of this seminar were outcomes of the analysis of forestry legal regulation in Ukraine. Experts of the Centre for political-legal reforms, headed by Mr. Olexandr Banchuk, performed a comprehensive analysis of potential corruption risks in the Ukrainian forestry sector based on thorough examination of the Forestry Code of Ukraine, Guidelines on the State Forestry Committee and Guidelines on the State Forest Protection Agency. Resulting from this analysis was a conclusion that in order to reduce forest related corruption a number of significant revisions should be introduced into the Ukrainian forestry legislation along with institutional changes and enhancing the status of forestry officials.

Also, outcomes of another sociological study “Evaluation of law enforcement and management in Ukrainian forestry sector” were presented. This study was conducted by the “SOCIS” Centre executive director Mr. Olexandr Stegni. Among key conclusions of this study emphasized was the fact that social factors like unemployment, low personal income, especially in mountainous villages, had the greatest negative impact on existence of legal violations in the forestry sector in Ivano-Frankivsk oblast of Ukraine. Other negative factors identified by the study included: large number of unregistered sawmills in the region, well organized system of illegal procurement of stolen wood, insufficient financing for the official forest preservation efforts, low salaries in forestry sector and poor legislation mechanisms towards those who purchase stolen wood.

In order to more efficiently promote the Program and disseminate information on its implementation a media strategy is being developed by the World Bank consultant aimed at creating an enabling environment for the Program’s efforts in Ukraine.
About ENPI FLEG Program

The ENPI FLEG Program supports governments of participating countries, civil society and the private sector in the development of sound and sustainable forest management practices, including the prevention of illegal forestry activities. Participating countries include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. This Program is funded by the European Union.

www.enpi-fleg.org

Project Partners

World Bank

The World Bank is one of the world’s largest sources of funding for the developing world. Its primary focus is on helping the poorest people and the poorest countries. It uses its financial resources, its staff, and extensive experience to help developing countries reduce poverty, increase economic growth, and improve their quality of life.

www.worldbank.org

IUCN

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. IUCN works on biodiversity, climate change, energy, human livelihoods and greening the world economy by supporting scientific research, managing field projects all over the world, and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. IUCN is the world’s oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,000 government and NGO members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN’s work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

www.iucn.org

WWF

WWF is one of the world’s largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with almost 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF’s mission is to stop the degradation of the earth’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world’s biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

www.panda.org