



PRESS RELEASE

ACCESS TO DATA AND INFORMATION IS THE KEY TO THE SUCCESSFUL OF TIMBER TRADE AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDONESIA - EUROPEAN UNION

Bogor, September 30, 2013. The first Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) in Asia officially signed by the representatives of European Union (EU) and the Government of Indonesia in Brussels, Belgium. Independent Forestry Monitoring Network (known as JPIK) views the timber trade agreement can only be successful with credible and accountable of Timber Legality Verification System (SVLK) implementation.

Both Indonesia and the EU still need to ratify the agreement before the VPA can be implemented. Once VPA is fully implemented, Indonesia will only allow licensed timber to be exported under the SVLK (also known as Timber Legality Assurance System -TLAS) and the authority in the destination country in the EU will prevent illegal timber from Indonesia entering EU market.

VPA is the main part of the EU's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiative to develop a system that aims to stop the illegal timber trade to EU and resolve the governance issue in forestry sector.

For the last 3 years JPIK has been monitoring SVLK implementation in Indonesia including the companies that already get SVLK certificates, the performance of Independent Auditor (known as LP&VI) and also the performance of National Accreditation Body (KAN). The result of monitoring provides basis to submit complaint to LP&VI and also to KAN. JPIK is also actively involved in the revision of SVLK system and reporting the findings of non-compliant companies to the Government of Indonesia (Ministry of Forestry).

Abu Meridian, National Coordinator of JPIK appreciates the signing of VPA between Indonesia and the EU," Both sides show to prevent illegal timber trade and this creates pressure to the timber mafia and rogue companies," he said. "But we also have to remember that all stakeholders have to ensure the SVLK is implemented with credibility and accountability because SVLK is a central part of the agreement between Indonesia and the EU as the Timber Legality Assurance System," he said.

The ratification process of the VPA needs to be monitored so all substantial agreement in VPA is included in the ratification, including the access to data and information.



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“Data and information are crucial part in monitoring activity because we don’t want to submit a complaint without any strong evidences”, said Zainuri Hasyim, JPIK’s Riau Focal Point.

The independent monitoring have to struggle to get enough information needed for monitoring process of Sustainable Forests Management (PHPL), Timber Legality Verification (VLK) for concessions and Timber Legality Verification (VLK) for timber industries The efforts doesn’t always succeed and the response from LP&VI also other stakeholders like the government and the companies are not proper and satisfying enough.

The difficulties in in accessing data and information for independent monitoring lack of understanding of forestry enthusiasts, communities who live around the concession and other related stakeholders are serious challenges in strengthening the implementation of SVLK. This condition needs to be addressed and have to be the concerns of both Indonesia and the EU who already agreed on FLEGT framework. If this is not resolved then it will give negative impacts to the commitment and efforts on improving forest governance in Indonesia.

“The Government of Indonesia must have a strong political will to ensure the credibility of SVLK. Access to data and information for independent investigators, good complaint mechanisms, raw material traceability mechanism and law enforcement of corruption practices in regards to permits mechanism are some of the things that need to be ensured in SVLK implementation in Indonesia,” said Abu Meridian.

Interview is available based on request:

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EDITOR’S NOTE:

- Timber Legality Assurance System (Indo-TLAS) is a requirement to fulfill legality of timber/products that is developed based on the multi-stakeholders agreement. It includes standards, criteria, indicators, verifier, verification methods and assessment norms.



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- Performance Assessment System of Sustainable Forests Management (PHPL) is a process of assessing PHPL performance and Timber Legality Verification to the holders of timber concession permit. It includes standards, criteria, indicators, verifier, verification methods and assessment norms.
- Indonesia's Independent Forestry Monitoring Network (JPIK) was set up on September 23, 2010 by 29 non-governmental organizations (NGO) and NGOs network from Aceh to Papua. Establishment of JPIK as a commitment to actively contribute in improving good governance in the forestry sector and also to ensure the credibility and accountability of Performance Assessment System for Sustainable Forests Management (PK-PHPL) and Timber Legality Verification (VLK). It is as stated-but not limited to-policy of the Minister of Forestry P38/2009 jo P68/2011 and its derivatives.
- Until the end of September 2013, JPIK's members include 64 organisations and 318 individuals. JPIK has a formal role in monitoring the implementation of the Indo-TLAS or SVLK, from the accreditation process, assessment/verification on businesses to the export process. Some of monitoring results already submitted as advices for auditors and/or complaint to ensure the credibility of SVLK.
- Five VPA signed officially in Africa: Ghana, Cameroon, Republic of Kongo, Central African Republic and Liberia.
- Efforts of European Union under the FLEGT is part of a global initiative to resolve the illegal logging and trading. For the last 3 years, there are two new policies that significantly change the behavior of consumer countries: 1) the Lacey Act by United States of America in 2008, which prohibits the trade on plant products from illegal sources, including timber products; and b) European Union Timber Regulation which agreed on 2010 and implemented since March 3, 2013 which prohibits the trading on illegal timber in the EU. A similar policy recently initiated by the Government of Australia and followed by New Zealand. Japan and China have examined further actions on illegal timber trade and are watching the Indo-TLAS and negotiating the export license with the European Union under the VPA.