

PRESS RELEASE

4th GUYANA-EU NEGOTIATION SESSION ON A FLEGT VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (VPA)

GEORGETOWN GUYANA, March 10th, 2016

The fourth negotiation session between the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the European Union on the FLEGT-VPA was held on Thursday 10 March, 2016 in Georgetown, Guyana.

The VPA is a key element of the EU's Forest Law and Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan, and a VPA with the European Union would facilitate increased market access for Guyana's timber into the lucrative EU market.

The Cooperative Republic of Guyana formally entered into the negotiation process with the European Union for a VPA, in December 2012. The FLEGT VPA process also provides an opportunity for Guyana to further strengthen and mainstream its consultation and engagement process to enhance forest governance, improve legal compliance and build in-country capacity for community engagement in forest policy development and implementation.

At this session, the Cooperative Republic Guyana provided an update on the progress of the development of the VPA, highlighting key concepts and strategic considerations in the further development of the Agreement. The parties stressed that the VPA represented a general commitment to communication, transparency, and consultation, and emphasised that these are key pillars of a robust agreement.

The two parties recognized that the VPA is framed by the existing legislation governing different aspects of timber legality, including forest use. While the focus of the VPA remains on forest-operations related legislation, Guyana and the EU acknowledged that this agreement represents an opportunity for addressing broader governance issues, including those related to land titling and land use.

Both parties expressed satisfaction on growing integration and linkages of REDD+ and FLEGT in Guyana and also encouraged the promotion of synergies with the broader forest policies and other major initiatives in the forest sector such as EITI (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) so that they are mutually supportive.

They also welcomed the consideration of the linkages between private certification and the VPA.

It was agreed that the next negotiation session would be held in Brussels in July 2016.

Guyana was represented at this session by the National Technical Working Group (NTWG) - a multi-stakeholder group comprising representatives of the private sector, indigenous bodies and Government Agencies selected through a participatory process, including an observer from the Guyanese civil society.

All documents from the negotiations will be available of the Guyana Forestry Commission website.