



Update on Guyana's
Engagement on EU
FLEGT
February 11, 2013

Guyana and the European Union have commenced formal dialogue on an EU FLEGT VPA. The first formal negotiations were held in December 2012 at which key timelines were agreed to, that would guide the process moving forward. In announcing its decision, Guyana expressed that it is aware of the benefits of EU FLEGT such as stimulating markets, enabling Guyana's exporters to retain markets, and expanding reporting requirements and existing systems in the chain of custody management.

The commencement of formal dialogue with the EU, was preceded by a series of stakeholder engagement exercises and consultations that helped Guyana to take the decision to enter into formal negotiations.



National Toshao Council Chairman addresses various stakeholder groups at National Preparatory Workshop on FLEGT

The Government of Guyana, FAO, EU and local stakeholder groups were

instrumental in supporting this process of sharing information, conducting initial analyses and contemplating potential impacts and benefits of a FLEGT VPA for Guyana. As part of the initial stakeholder engagement exercises, there is a broader understanding amongst Guyanese stakeholders on the major issues that needs to be addressed during the negotiation process. As recent as January to March 2012, the most updated efforts to inform the decision to enter into formal dialogue with the EU, which was supported by the FAO ACP EU FLEGT Programme, involved the engagement of 136 stakeholder groups across communities, civil society, private sector, non government bodies and Government bodies.

In a joint statement issued by the Government of Guyana and the EU in June 2012, the parties agreed to commence formal negotiations by end of 2012, with the objective of concluding negotiations on a VPA by September 2015, according to an agreed roadmap which was developed jointly. The parties expressed that the agreement should have clear objectives of adding value to forest governance, forest industry development and sustainability of the forestry sector. Additionally, the statement expressed the assurance that the extractive industry within Guyana will not be limited by any interventions made under the VPA and should also make considerations for the national context and efforts undertaken to date.

So far, a number of steps have been taken, including the establishment of a VPA Secretariat in Guyana which is located within the Guyana Forestry Commission, the formation of a multi stakeholder steering body for the VPA negotiation and implementation efforts,

and the development of a Guyana Roadmap for EU FLEGT Negotiations. In September 2012, through a multi stakeholder process, Guyana collaborated with international expertise from Ghana, to develop a Guyana EU FLEGT Roadmap to guide the negotiations process in Guyana. This effort had the participation of various stakeholder representatives from the private sector, civil society, NGOs, Government and other groups, in shaping the Roadmap which contains both activities that Guyana will itself undertake in the process, as well as those aspects that will be jointly undertaken by Guyana and EU.

Like the process of arriving at a decision, the process of negotiations on the VPA as well, has included a strong stakeholder participation element. As part of the management structure developed to oversee the VPA negotiations in Guyana, several meetings of the steering body called the National Technical Working Group (NTWG) have already been held, as well as meetings of the sub committees under this Steering Body. Additionally, specific stakeholder constituency meetings were also executed so far with plans to continue with these sessions throughout the process. To date, statutory meetings of the NTWG have been held, 10 meetings of separate key stakeholder constituency groups mainly targeting indigenous Groups and NGO, and private sector, and 6 meetings across the four sub committees of the NTWG.

In early February, the NTWG and the EU held its first joint technical meeting at which both parties started work on the discussing the various aspects of the VPA with an aim to commencing drafting of key sections. These will

inform the discussions at the next scheduled discussion negotiation, planned for July 2013.

Among the priority technical activities being discussed in preparation for the July negotiations are the legality assurance system for Guyana, as well as integrated aspects of the definition of forest legality and the wood tracking system. So far, based on initial assessments conducted as well as existing programmes being implemented in Guyana, including but not limited to Independent Forest Monitoring, VLO certification at company level, and the development of a framework for legality assurance, the NTWG has expressed confidence that Guyana's existing systems for forest management and legality, including its log tracking and chain of custody management systems in place since 2001, are robust enough to serve as a solid foundation for the VPA.

As the formal effective date of the EUTR approach in early March 2013, Guyana has expressed plans to expand its communication efforts to local and international stakeholders, to share details on the efforts made so far in the EU FLEGT VPA process, as well as details on existing system on which the FLEGT VPA will build that, in its views, will fulfil the requirement of the EUTR through Guyana's current system of forest legality.

Source: Guyana Forestry Commission, Feb 2013