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May 5, 2011

POTOMAC FORUM BRINGS TOGETHER EXPERTS TO ADDRESS ILLEGAL LOGGING

WASHINGTON, DC – Participants at an international forum on illegal logging heard how actions such as government regulations, market demand, and increased knowledge are helping to combat illegal logging – but that the issue demands further vigilance and effort.

The 4th Potomac Forum on Illegal Logging and Associated Trade, hosted by Forest Trends on May 4 with support from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative[®] Inc. (SFI[®]), the World Bank, and others, explored changes that are having a positive impact, including government regulations such as the Lacey Act in the United States and the European Union (EU) Timber Regulation, increased market demand for legal products, and growing expertise among conservation groups and the private sector. Participants discussed the growing recognition that legality is a shared responsibility of consumer, processor, and producer countries, and that third-party forest certification offers a valuable tool to address legality.

The one-day forum brought together more than 100 experts, many of them specialists in development and trade from U.S. and foreign government agencies, the forest industry and nongovernmental organizations. In addition to SFI Inc. and the World Bank, sponsors included the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), PROFOR, the U.S. Forest Service and Forest Legality Alliance. Illegal logging is a major international issue that can undermine good forest governance, leading to the loss of wildlife habitat and reducing the potential for forests to provide stable supplies of products and support local communities.

“This kind of gathering shows how we can reduce the social, environmental and economic damage caused by illegal logging if we work together to increase knowledge and look for practical solutions,” said Forest Trends President Michael Jenkins. “Market choices are having a direct impact, and this in turn helps to improve forest conservation and the livelihoods of people.” Forest Trends is an international non-profit organization that works to expand the value of forests to society by promoting sustainable forest management and conservation.

In his closing remarks to the Forum, World Bank Forests Adviser Gerhard Dieterle emphasized the importance of linking on-going forest governance work with the wider development agenda in developing countries, and praised the role of multistakeholder partnerships in promoting forest legality. The Bank has been a strong supporter of forest law enforcement and governance work in different regions over the last decade. “The work being done by the EU, as well as by the United States and partner country governments with the private sector and the civil society, is very complementary,” he said. He congratulated the EU and the Government of Indonesia for the successful conclusion of the VPA negotiations.

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SFI President and CEO Kathy Abusow said the Potomac Forum received funding through the SFI Conservation and Community Partnerships Grant Program because it is building capacity in promoting responsible procurement of forest products globally. “Forest certification can help meet demands for forest products from legal sources,” she said. “SFI chain of custody and fiber sourcing requirements address the reality of global markets, and make sure program participants perform risk assessments to avoid offshore fiber from controversial sources such as illegal harvesting operations.”

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About Forest Trends

Forest Trends (www.forest-trends.org), a Washington D.C.-based international non-profit organization, was created in 1999 by leaders from conservation organizations, forest products firms, research groups, multilateral development banks, private investment funds and philanthropic foundations. Its mission is to expand the value of forests to society; to promote sustainable forest management and conservation by creating and capturing market values for ecosystem services; to support innovative projects and companies that are developing these markets; and to enhance the livelihoods of local communities living in and around those forests.

About the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc.

SFI Inc. is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization, and is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally recognized Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program (www.sfiprogram.org). Across North America, more than 180 million acres are certified to the SFI forest management standard, making it the largest single forest standard in the world. SFI chain-of-custody certification tells buyers the percentage of fiber from certified forests, certified sourcing and/or post-consumer recycled content. The SFI program’s unique fiber sourcing requirements promote responsible forest management on all suppliers’ lands. SFI Inc. is governed by a three-chamber board of directors representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally.

About the World Bank

The World Bank (www.worldbank.org) is a vital source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries around the world. Its mission is to fight poverty with passion and professionalism for lasting results and to help people help themselves and their environment by providing resources, sharing knowledge, building capacity, and forging partnerships in the public and private sectors. Forest resources are crucial to this effort because of their contribution to the livelihoods of the poor, the potential they offer for sustainable economic development, and the essential global environmental services they provide.

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