

**Report**  
**On conducting of the National Workshop**  
**(Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 21 – 23 October 2014)**

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**Introduction**

Republic of Uzbekistan is landlocked country located in Central Asia. It is bordered to Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The area of the country is 44,410.3 thousand hectares, where over 29 million people are living. Uzbekistan is most populated country in the Central Asian region. The country is divided into twelve provinces (oblast) and Karakalpak Autonomous Republic, while capital city of Tashkent has a special status. In 2013 the GDP of Uzbekistan was USD \$112.6 billion and GDP per capita was USD 3800. Construction, services and agriculture are the most important sectors of the Uzbek economy.

According to the studies conducted by the British Legatum Institute in 2013, Uzbekistan was rated as 57<sup>th</sup> country in terms of its level of well-being among 142 states. That rating is formed based on the eight indices such as economy, entrepreneurship environment, public administration, education, healthcare, human, personal freedom, and social benefits.

**Forestry in Uzbekistan**

The Republic of Uzbekistan is a forest-poor country - up to 80% of the total lands are occupied by steps and deserts. Nevertheless, Uzbek forests are of the greatest importance and contribute to the development of Uzbekistan. A particular importance of forests includes combating desertification and natural disasters prevention (e.g. mudflows, floods, droughts, etc.), and improving the environmental situation. Uzbekistan's transition to market economy substantively impacted on the Uzbek forestry sector. However, its legislation, human resources and financial policies do not adequately address to the present challenges that results in reduced efficiency of forestry's contribution into the national economy and peoples' welfare.

The state forest stock lands occupy 8.7 million hectares, as of 01.01.08, that is 19.6% of the total lands of Uzbekistan. Of this area only 3.2 million hectare is covered by forest, corresponding to 7.2% of the country area. The state forest stock under the responsibility of the Main Administration of Forestry (MAF) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources is about 8.2 million hectares, and forest covered area is 2.8 million hectares. Of the forest stock lands managed by MAF million 7.2 ha is located in the desert zone, million 0,9 hectare in mountain zone 175.5 thousand hectare in valley zone, and 106.7 thousands hectare in the flood plains (tugai forests).

MAF was established in 2000 on the basis of the former State Committee for Forestry. Currently MAF is a subdivision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources. It coordinates

activities implemented by 70 forestry enterprises, 6 specialized forest enterprises, 6 national natural reserves, 5 hunting enterprises, and 1 national park. Moreover, MAF supervises the Republican Scientific and Production Center of Landscape-Gardening and Forestry, Department of Reserves, National Parks and Hunting Enterprises, Survey and Production Center for Non Wood Forest Products ‘Shifobakhsh’, Republican Production Forest Seeds Center, Republican Training and Production Center on Upgrading Skills, Design and Exploration Forest Regulation State-running Enterprise ‘Uzgirolesproject’.

The main objectives of MAF include planning and implementation of all kinds of activities related to forest protection, conservation, afforestation and forestation, utilization of the available lands and resources of the state forest stock, and also establishment of new protective forest plantings withstanding the desertification and degradation. MAF is responsible for development and implementation of forestry development strategy aimed at improving the forestry legislation, development and implementation of regulatory and technical standards applied to forestry and hunting enterprises.

In Uzbekistan, forests, as in other countries of Central Asia, are mainly of protective importance, and play significant role in combating desertification, erosion and land degradation. Due to limited forest resources available in the country and importance of their non-timber benefits, and in particular their protective and environmental functions, commercial utilization of timber resources is not applicable in Uzbekistan. However, forests substantially impact on other sectors of national economy, including agricultures, livestock, and water resources conservation as well as life and welfare of local people living nearby the forests. Illegal felling for firewood and uncontrolled grazing further degradation of forests. Drying of Aral Sea substantively contributes into continuous progress in desertification that negatively affects the environment.

The major bottleneck for forestry sector development is limited funding provided from the national budget for development and implementation of the corresponding forestry programs. Deficient part of the budget funds is covered by different commercial activities implemented by forestry enterprises, such as growing and sell of planting stock, timber and non-timber forest products.

In spite of low percentage of forestlands, state forest stock lands after all provide various opportunities and benefits for local population. Strengthening the role of local communities through provision of greater access to natural resources and efficient participation in the process of forestry planning and management can help in gradual rehabilitation of degraded forests. Participation of local communities will allow making afforestation and forestation more sustainable and less costly process. However, actually participation of local stakeholders in planning and management processes is implemented at very low paces.

Poor institutional capacities for inventory, monitoring and evaluation of forest resources is the reason for lack of reliable information about the state forest stock resources that is a barrier for planning and implementation of all kinds of activities in forestry sector.

### **Summary of workshop discussions (general remarks from the workshop, including most important topics raised by the participants)**

In total, 26 people attended the 3-day workshop but 21 participants only (those who actively participated in all sessions) were awarded the corresponding certificates (see, **Annex I**). Representatives of such organizations as various departments of forest sector, State Committee for Nature Protection, NGOs, scientific and research institutions, international funds and development projects have participated in the workshop. They were introduced with overall information about the implemented project, including its goal, objectives and implementation

course, and activities planned for implementation in Uzbekistan were presented. At the same time, key focus was on arrangements required for conducting workshops in selected provinces.

Unfortunately, representatives of such key government agencies as the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, and Ministry of Energy did not attend the workshop. Probably, this can be explained by low awareness of decision-makers about green economy in general and potential inputs of forestry into greening the national economy in particular. Moreover, it shall be mentioned that almost all participants were eager to know in details the green economy development concept. Additionally, the workshop's participants have expressed a wish to familiarize with sustainable forestry development approach as well as potential options for sustainable wood-based energy supply of rural population applied in other countries which climate is similar to the Central Asia region. During the discussion the sustainable production of forest products, it was proposed to concentrate more on practical examples of doable and affordable energy efficient solutions applicable for low-income rural communities.

Overall, issues discussed during the workshop, methodology of its conducting, informal atmosphere and interactive communication as well as participatory approaches applied for searching possible solutions were positively accepted and appreciated by the participants.

### **Few selected examples of the exercises written from the brown sheets**

#### **(including the last exercise – gap analysis)**

During the workshop's session, its participants have familiarized with a set of participatory approached and methodologies (over ten) that can be successfully applied for sorting out various issues related to forest sector.

Resulted from the final discussion, are the below listed methodologies were recognized as the most interesting and efficient ones:

1. Stakeholder mapping that is extremely useful tool used for identification of interested stakeholders, their hierarchical order and interrelation and interconnections. This methodology can be applied for activities to be implemented at national level;
2. Analysis of property rights, benefits and responsibilities is an effective approach used for identification of actual status of property rights, rights of users and responsibilities of local communities using forest resources. Therefore, interrelations between above mentioned criteria allowing identification of incentives for sustainable forest management. This approach can be efficient for conducting consultations at local level;
3. SWOT-analysis is the strategic planning approach applied for assessment of impacts and facts that in this particular case influence the forestry. This universal approach can be used for both the rapid assessment of forest sector and long-term forestry development strategy. At the same time, there is no need for specialized knowledge and/or professional background, and therefore SWOT analysis can be successfully used for both national workshops and local level workshops targeted at local communities.

The final practical exercise of the workshop was analysis of gaps between the present status of forestry in Uzbekistan and green economy principles (i.e. Gap Analysis). During the gap analysis, participants divided for three groups have identified the major gaps (lack of the national forestry development programme, weak institutional frameworks, outdated forestry legislation, inadequate status of the Main Administration of Forestry (MAF), shortage of funds, need of the

comprehensive forest inventory, poor technical facilities of forestry enterprises, low capacity human resources, insufficient and inefficient cooperation with local population), and key stakeholders (MAF, forestry regional subdivisions, State Committee for Nature Protection, environmental NGOs, local communities, educational institutions, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy) as well as the corresponding participatory approaches can be applied to sort out the above listed issues and problems.

**Challenges (how was the workshop methodology received in the country concept, what are the biggest challenges in the forest sector in the country)**

Challenges related to the methodology applied for conducting the workshop:

- Skepticism of some participants for the issues discussed, and in particular this relates to potential options on how to achieve sustainable wood energy use by rural population with taking into consideration the category and status of forest resources in Uzbekistan;
- The key objective of workshop was presentation of participatory approaches can be used for sorting out national forestry challenges and identification of corresponding gaps related to green economy principles. However, quite often participants have had a long and detailed discussions focused on the global forestry-related challenges that was not a primary goal of the workshop.
- During development of draft forestry strategy, best practices of those countries (Canada, Finland and Scotland) that have succeeded in forestry strategy development in terms of its contributions into national economy. However, some participants considered that those countries can't serve as a good example for Uzbekistan (considering the percentage of available forest covered lands).

Challenges relevant to national forest sector are as follows:

- Lack of any national programme on forestry development, weak institutional frameworks, outdated forestry legislation that are in general hamper modernization and impede utilization of potential capacities of forest sector, and resulted in lack of the required attention from decision-makers;
- Inadequate status of the main Administration on Forestry (MAF) as one of subdivision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources that resulted in limiting self-sufficiency and flexibility of decision-making process;
- Lack of funds, need of conducting the comprehensive forest inventory, insufficient technical base of forest enterprises, and low capacities of human resources are in general reasons for weakening forest sector and decreasing its role in national economy;
- Insufficient and inefficient cooperation and coordination between MAF's subdivisions and local population that is resulted from lack of workable incentives that can enable involvement of local communities into the relevant joint activities as well as poor awareness of both actors about potential benefits if efficiency of such cooperation is increased.

**Conclusions and recommendations, follow-up plans in the local workshops**

The participatory approaches have been presented and considered, and analytical exercises aimed at covering gaps existing between forestry and green economy principles have been executed. The majority of participants have highly appreciated the presentations, and therefore

skepticism and apathy of participants observed at the initial stage of workshop were replaced by enthusiasm and active participation. Active participation of trainees, and their skills and knowledge of forestry have resulted in successful workshop. It is very likely that many of its participants will successfully apply the approaches learned, and thus contribute to improving efficiency of forest management process.

The participants have also emphasized the importance and priority of the discussed issues that are related to potential contributions by forest sector into greening the national economy process. In this regard, participants have expressed a wish to consider an opportunity for implementation of next phase of project to develop an action plan aimed at transition of Uzbekistan's forestry to green economy development path.

It is obvious that next practical steps required for materialization of the proposed above, can be considered and discussed during conducting the forthcoming regional workshops. Currently, four one-day workshops are planned to be conducted jointly with MAF in Nukus, Bukhara, Saarkand and Fergana correspondingly. The targeted audience was forestry professionals, NGOs, farmers, representatives of educational institutions such as schools and lyceums, and local administration servants. Issues to be discussed during the workshop include brief information about green economy concept, potential inputs can be provided by forestry into greening the national economy, promotion of potential options available in forest sector to generate wood-based energy. It would be extremely important to hear opinions of local people on their vision of possible solutions related to the latter. MAF will take an active participation in arrangements required for conducting those regional workshops, including providing venues in regional forestry subdivision premises, informing participants about the exact date and venue, etc. Moreover, one or two MAF professionals trained within the national workshop will participate in those regional workshops. Actually, a Working Group is established under supervision of project national consultant, and development of training materials required for the workshops are underway.

**Annex I.** List the Workshop participants

No.	Name	Organization/Position	Contacts
1.	Muratbay Ganiev CER	Republican Forestry Training Center/Director	+998951774331, muratles@mail.ru
2.	Alexander Grigoryans CER	State Committee for Nature Protection/Director	+998901843392, a.grigor51@mail.ru
3.	Olimjon Kakhkharov CER	Main Department of Forestry (MDF)/Chief Inspector	+998901258058, olim-ok@yandex.ru
4.	Rustam Murzakhanov CER	Michael Succow Foundation (NGO)/Expert	+998903546963, naraspashku@gmail.com
5.	Jakhongir Talipov CER	Michael Succow Foundation (NGO)/Expert	+998909996661, tolipovjj@mail.ru
6.	Sergey Zagrebin CER	Zoological society of Uzbekistan (NGO) /Expert	+998909510523, zagrebin66@mail.ru
7.	Galina Reshetnikova CER	Reforestation and Afforestation Unit of the MDF/Senior Expert	+998712734386, rabochaya31@yandex.ru
8.	Yevgeniy Botman CER	Republican Forestry Research Center/Expert	+9989090889916, darhanbek@yandex.ru
9.	Darya Glushenko CER	Republican Forestry Research Center/Expert	+998901745385, darya-glushenko@mail.ru
10	Grigoriy Samoylov CER	GIZ Project FLERMONECA/Expert	grigory.samoylov@giz.de
11	Shakhzoda Alikhanova	International Foundation of saving the Aral Sea/Expert	+998946465590
12	Khurshid Norov CER	Consulting Company “Audit Service”/ Expert	+998903502478, norov40@gmail.com
13	Pulat Salikhov CER	UNDP Project “Low Emission Development Strategy”/Expert	pulatboy@mail.ru
14	Bakhriddin Muradov CER	State Enterprise “Suvsoz” /Expert	+998933888989, m.bakhriddin@rambler.ru
15	Shakhnoza Rakhimova CER	Republican Forestry Training Center/Methodist	+998951906785
16	Abduvokhid Zakhadullaev	Department of Reserves, National Natural Parks and Hunting	+998903220095, miyon2001uz@mail.ru

	<b>CER</b>	Economies/Expert	
17	Avaz Sultonov <b>CER</b>	Republican Institute “Uzqiproumonloyiha” on the development of forestry management plans/Chief Engineer	+998903722560 or +998712730059
18	Obid Davronov <b>CER</b>	Republican Institute “Uzqiproumonloyiha” on the development of forestry management plans/Expert	+998942160202, obiddavronov@mail.ru
19	Anvar Qadyrov <b>CER</b>	Private Sector/Entrepreneur	+998903154057, ekoland2008@yandex.ru
20	Oygul Ibadullaeva <b>CER</b>	Republican Forestry Training Center/Deputy Director	+998935732215
21	Anvar Teshaev	Private sector/Entrepreneur	anvar777@inbox.ru
22	Natalya Agaltseva	Central Asian Multi-Country Programme on Climate Risk Management: Project “Climate Risk Management in Uzbekistan”/Manager	natalya.agaltseva@undp.org
23	Elena Ablyakimova	Publishing company “Chinor ENK”/Editor	chinor-enk@rambler.ru
24	Natalya Shivaldova	NGO “Ecomaktab”/Director	n.shivaldova@sarkor.uz
25	Jamshid Aknazarov <b>CER</b>	Consulting Company “Oasis FES” /Expert	+998933762160, jam55d@gmail.com
26	Alisher Shukurov <b>CER</b>	FAO/Uzbekistan	alisher.shukurov@fao.org
27	Paola Deda	UNECE/FAO/Head of Timber Section	paola.deda@unece.org
28	Elina Warsta	UNECE/FAO/Expert of Timber Section	elina.warsta@unece.org
29	Said Inogamov	UNECE/FAO Timber Section/Project Regional Consultant	said.inogamov@gmail.com

Note. **CER** - The Workshop participant has awarded by the UNECE/FAO Certificate.