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Country statement

Uzbekistan

**- Forest Resources Assessment
for Sustainable Forest Management -**

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Forest Resources Assessment in the Republic of Uzbekistan

Forests are unevenly distributed within the country. According to the Main Forestry Department, natural vegetation currently covers 84.1% of desert and semidesert areas and 14.3% of the mountains. In the valleys and floodplain areas, which originally were densely forested, only 1.6 percent of the forests remain. Small sectors of riparian forests (*tugai*) are still located along large rivers. Until recently, relatively large areas were covered with forests, but, as a result of logging of the riparian forests their area has been severely decreased. Mountain forests are still quite widespread. Desert shrubs and other sandy soil vegetation are important for protecting sand from wind. The largest areas of steppe/desert shrublands are located in Bukhara Region and Karakalpakstan; smaller areas are also dispersed among Surkhandarya, Khorezm, and Syrdarya regions, and the Fergana valley.

The State Forestry Fund (SFF) includes the area covered by forest, uncovered by forest, wetlands, sands, pastures, gardens and vineyards, ploughed fields for agricultural crops, etc. In 1991 the State Forest Fund totaled 5467 thousand ha, including 1819 thousand ha covered by forests. However recently the forestry is given a big attention and as a result the SFF area increased in 1.8 times, and the area covered by forests in 1.6 times. At present the SFF totals 8775.4 thousand ha that is equal to 19.8% of the total area of the country. The area covered by forests is 2375.4 thousand ha. The forestation index is 5.3% that means 0.1 ha of forested area per capita.

The area covered by forests includes the artificially created forest 563.9 thousand ha, natural forests 1657.3 thousand ha, sparse forests 192.0 thousand ha, nurseries 720 ha, clearings 978.3 thousand ha, pastures 1900.0 thousand ha, sands 136.0 thousand ha and other lands 2500.0 thousand ha.

Forests in Uzbekistan have mainly nature protective functions. The total number of tree species growing in the country is 75. The main species in mountain forests is juniper (*Juniper seravschanica*, *J. semiglobosa*, *J. turkestanica*). The area occupied by juniper is equal to 204,000 ha. The juniper is characterised with very slow growth. Six-year juniper trees can reach only one meter of height. This is one of the reasons why they cannot be restored easily in the mountain areas of the country. Other areas of mountain forests have broad-leaved species: *Juglans* spp., *Ulmus* spp., *Acer* spp., *Acacia* spp., *Salix* spp., *Fraxinus* spp., *Betula* spp. Desert forests have thickets of saxaul (*Haloxylon* spp.) with other bushes. Riparian forests were in the past impassable *tugai* jungle of endemic poplars (*Populus diversifolia*, *P. alba*, *P. pyramidalis*, *P. nigra*, *P. bolleana*, *P. bachofenii*, *P. Uzbekistanica* and others and their hybrids) and various bushes. In riparian zone the forests consist mainly of plantations of the tree species introduced to Uzbekistan from other countries.

Forests in Uzbekistan are the public property and managed by the government. According to the law «About Forest» accepted by Oliy Majlis (Supreme Council) of the Republic of Uzbekistan on April, 15, 1999, the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers № 32 of 17.01.2001 «About the Organization of Activity of the Main Forestry Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan», the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of 30.03.2001 № 160 «Regulations of the Main Forestry Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan» and other normative documents the forestry sector is basically managed by the Main Forestry Department, and in sites of dislocation the jurisdictional enterprises organize the work with local authorities (provincial and regional khokimiyats).

The principal administrator of SFF is the Main Forestry Department, which has 8052.5 thousand ha (91.7 % of the total forest area) under its jurisdiction. The area covered by forest is 2221.2 thousand hectares or 93.5 % from the total forest areas of the republic. The remaining forest area was distributed as follows: 7.1 % under Tashkent Regional Khokimiyat, 1.0 % under State Committee on Nature Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan and 0.2 % under the agricultural enterprises and the organizations. The municipal gardens in cities, rest zones and parks are under the municipality management.

The total quantity of staff working in the forestry sector is about 8000 people, 673 of them in administrative bodies, 670 forest guards, 30 huntsmen and others.

According to the Law "About forest" the transfer of the lands of Forest Fund for short-term renting is possible. Now the issue about long-term renting of subsidiary agriculture, shops on manufacture of the consumer goods, nurseries, cultivation of medicinal and food herbs and creation of industrial plantations of nut-fruited trees and forest plantations is considered.

The protected nature territories include the reserves, national parks, zakaznikz (reserves with special functions). They are managed by the Main Forestry Department of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the State Committee on Nature Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

All forests of Uzbekistan have the protective and biodiversity conservation functions excluding small area of plantations designated for industrial purposes.

One of the sources of income in the forestry is subsidiary agroforestry, such as mowing, cattle-breeding, long-term and short term agricultural using, beekeeping, picking nuts, fruits and berries, medicinal and food plants, harvesting of reed, hunting and fishery.

During Soviet period in conditions of planned economy there was not need in wood removal in the country, as wood material was obtained from the other parts of Russian Federation. The forests in Uzbekistan are of great value due to their protection functions and any logging in the natural forests for industrial purposes are prohibited, excluding the production plantations. However due to sanitary cutting and thinning about 32 thousand cubic m of wood is annually removed, and the output of industrial timber is totaled 29 %. Industrial timber is used as construction material. More than 60 types of products for economic and household purpose are made from wood. Over 50 shops for consumer goods manufacture are working. Window and door blocks, beds "Suri", khan-tahta (low national tables) and other products from wood: wicker furniture, besoms from sorgo, various baskets and wicker products, shanks for spades, plates from reed and many other things are of great value with the inhabitants. Part of the wood is used as a wood-fuel.

But the basic part of need in wood products is provided with import of items from wood and semi-processed wood used for construction and furniture industry, as well as for pulp-and-paper industry. In 1994 the Government of the country issued the Decree about creation of production plantations to meet partly the need of the country in the industrial timber.

The latest inventory was carried out in 1988. Since that time the information about forest fund status is collected from the reporting of forestry enterprises. The data collected is entered into Registration Forms adopted in the forestry sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This registration system was entered during Soviet period and was obligatory for all the republics of the Soviet Union. Since 1991 just a few changes have been made in the inventory system.

The Forest Fund territory is not stable from year to year. The forests of Uzbekistan has mainly protective functions and are grown also for improvement of soil, and every year part

of the Forest Fund is allocated for growing of agricultural crops. Usually this is concerned to fertile lands uncovered by trees and bushes, suitable for cultivation.

The forestry sector of Uzbekistan is guided basically by the Law «About Forest» and other legislative regulations and decrees concerning to forestry. Taking into account the created situation, the need in review of the existing forest legislation, the development of the new national forest program which could provide the sustainable forest management in close cooperation with other branches. For reliable evaluation of the situation in forest sector it is necessary to carry out the forest inventory, and the real support for this could provide satellite pictures. However, the forest sector of Uzbekistan is on budgetary financing that complicates the purchase of required equipment and satellite pictures. Hence, for high-grade work the additional financing through joint projects or development of private sector in the forestry is necessary. The big problem is also in lack of qualified personnel in forest sector.

As it has already been mentioned above, the part of the Forest Fund is under other organizations. In connection with non-availability of uniform system of the reporting and the accounting of forests there are discrepancies or even full absence of any data concerning the forestry. All these problems can be solved only at full coordination and mutual cooperation of all stakeholders.