



# MFCC - ITTO



**ITTO**  
INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL  
TIMBER ORGANIZATION

Newsletter - 4 (Mar 2024)



## Strengthening SFM Standards and Timber Legality Framework in Myanmar

### ABOUT MFCC

Myanmar Forest Certification Committee (MFCC) is the National Governing Body (NGB) of forest/timber certification schemes in Myanmar and a central part of the mandate is to carry out forest and timber certification and create an enabling environment for the sustainability of Myanmar forests. MFCC also aims to promote market access of Myanmar forest products in international trade. MFCC's activities cover the entire forest and forest products, and MFCC has been empowered to execute all processes of forest and timber related certification.

### MFCC'S VISION

"A sustainable country where forest resources are conserved and contribute towards global sustainability."

### MFCC'S MISSION

"To advocate the forest ecosystems and forest conservation through Sustainable Forest Management practices and timber legality certification in Myanmar and develop the international market through sustainable timber industry."

## ➤➤➤ PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING AT NAYPYITAW

The second session of the Project Steering Committee for "Strengthening SFM Standards and Timber Legality Framework in Myanmar" was held on March 31, 2023, in Nay Pyi Taw. Opening speeches were done by key figures such as the Director General of the Forest Department and MFCC-ITTO Project Manager Dr. Hwan Ok Ma and it was also productive discussions. Moreover, detailed presentations provided insights into MFCC-ITTO project progress which is adherence to ITTO guidelines.



## THE PROJECT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE (PTC) MEETING

The Project Technical Committee (PTC) for ITTO Project PP-A/56-342A was held on November 24th, 2023, in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, at the Thingaha Hotel. Opening remarks by the Director General of the Forest Department and Dr Hwan Ok Ma, ITTO representative initiated the session. Agenda items included a presentation of the Project Management Team, a review of the previous meeting's decisions and recommendations, and an in-depth analysis of the project's structure, progress, and financial aspects.

During the discussion, the project's overall objectives, progress report, remaining activities, and adherence to ITTO policy guidelines were covered. Recommendations were discussed to enhance project implementation, including budget considerations and potential modifications.



## ➤➤➤ MTLAS STANDARD VERSION 2 (2023)

Myanmar Timber Legality Assurance System v2.00 has been successfully reviewed, revised and approved by MFCC and is currently under process by the National Standard Council Myanmar to define it as Myanmar National Standard. The project management team developed the first draft of the MTLAS Audit Form/Checklist which is based on MTLAS Standard version 2.00. It is intended to be a reference material for Certification Bodies in the assessment process. MFCC conducted a participatory training of MTLAS v 2 and MFCS for CBs and discussed how to assess against MTLAS and MFCS audit forms.





## ➤➤➤ MTLAS V 2 & MFCS PILOT TESTING

Pilot Testing for MFCS/MTLAS mainly focused on the private plantation due to the unforeseeable situation and inaccessibility to natural forest area. MFCC intended to implement the pilot testing of MTLAS and MFCS in a private plantation. Natural Resources and Development Company (NRDC), among the private plantations, is interested in legality and SFM certification process to achieve certified timber and certified process. Moreover, the project management team defined the new location of testing of MTLAS version 2 and MFCS at NRDC plantation. The compliance audit had performed by ways of preliminary assessment, documents reviewing and verification against the MFCS and MTLAS.

MFCC project management team conducted, in collaboration with two certification bodies (United Forestry Services and Nature Watch Co.Ltd), pilot testing of MTLAS and MFCS at NRDC, private teak plantation in October 8, 2023. The audit team went to the plantation sites on 8th -9th October, 2023 and conducted the assessments of documentation, interview and field assessment for the NRDC private plantation areas which established in 2009 and plantation areas are 448.5 acres located at Aingdon Kun Reserved Forest, Kyauktaga township, Bago Division. The main challenge for assessing the private plantation under MFCS was the limitation of the accessibility of the whole plantation area.

Nature Watch Co.Ltd led the pilot testing of MTLAS and conducted preliminary assessment against MTLAS audit form of MTLAS standard version 2. Firstly, the team assessed MTLAS forest operation against principles (1,2,3). Its plantation is still thinning stage and cannot export to other countries. On October 27, the group continued to conduct MTLAS timber processing (Mill Operation) against principles (3,4,5,6) at Diamond Mercury Wood Products Ltd. This company made timber processing which are conducted by using raw materials from thinning process in NRDC plantation and still cannot export.



## ➤➤➤ DIGITALIZATION OF TIMBER TRACKING SYSTEM (DTTS)

The project management team is preparing to accomplish one of the DTTS indicators which mentioned “DTTS from source to manufacturing operational in at least 50% of project intervention locations- (including CF & Plantations)”. Moreover, the project management team conducted the implementation of pilot testing of the DTTS system in the same pilot area of MTLAS and MFCS, selected private plantation, NRDC.

The project management team conducted pilot testing for DTTS Part (1) - within the forest at Natural Resources and Development Company- NRDC, a private teak plantation. Digitalization of Timber Tracking System is a system that the timber was traced back along the supply chain from the stump (source of origin) to export. Location of the standing tree (latitude/Longitude) is important in “within the forest” stage. The location of the (100) Ac plot (5/2009) was tested and marked four corners of the plot by using GPS.

DTTS Real-time pilot testing was conducted at 1/1987 State-owned teak plantation, Shwetaungsae Unclassified Forest, Pyay Extraction Agency, Bago Region with the cooperation with MFCC, Forest Department and Myanma Timber Enterprise. It aimed for the demonstration of the strengthening of the timber harvesting in real time and to identify the source of origin by using DTTS process.



The MFCC secretariat team also had a productive meeting with the Department of Research and Innovation (DRI) to explore opportunities for collaboration, synergy, and capacity building between the two organizations. The aim of the meeting was to achieve international ISO accreditation for Certification Body and other project objectives and collaboration with the ASEAN Countries accreditation body.

For the development of the ISO accreditation to the MFCC notified-CBs, MFCC engaged the visit to Vietnam during the third week of September 2023 together with CBs and representatives of DRI. The study visit tour was made possible through the support of the Vietnam Forest Certification Office (VFCO) and substantial progress has been obtained. During the visit to Vietnam, important engagements were conducted, including a significant meeting with the Bureau of Accreditation (BoA) in Vietnam. This collaborative effort with BoA, MFCC CBs and DRI Myanmar resulted in the successful completion of the Accreditation Roadmap, a key milestone achieved in partnership with the Myanmar Department of Research and Innovation. The collaboration with VFCO and BoA Vietnam underscores the dedication to advancing sustainable forestry practices in Myanmar and obtaining international recognition (ISO Accreditation) for MFCC-notified Certification Bodies. This achievement not only solidifies our capacity building but also sets the stage for continued excellence in ISO accreditation for Forest Management Units (FMU) and Chain of Custody (CoC) in Myanmar.

### **And key highlights to the visit are:**

**PEFC CoC Initial Training:** The delegation participated in the training, focusing on PEFC standards, due diligence systems, CoC methods, and multi-site certification.

**Accreditation Consultation:** A meeting with BoA aimed at developing an Accreditation Roadmap for MFCC's Notified CBs, facilitating the accreditation process.

**Field Visit:** On September 22, 2023, the delegation visited Acacia plantations in Be Che District, gaining insights into sustainable forest management practices.

**Industry Interaction:** A visit to GFA Group, a CB group based in Germany, provided an opportunity to explore endorsement services in Hanoi on September 25, 2023.

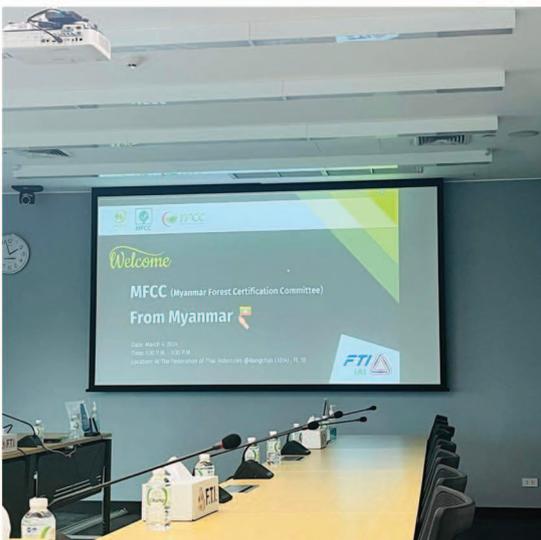




## STUDY TOUR AND VISIT TO ROYAL FOREST DEPARTMENT OF THAILAND AND THAILAND FOREST CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE

The Secretary of the Myanmar Forest Certification Committee and the Technical Officer of the MFCC-ITTO Project recently convened with the Director of the Forest Economic Office at the Royal Forest Department in Thailand. The purpose was to gain insights into Thailand's new legality assurance system and its current status.

Furthermore, discussions were held with the Federation of Thai Industries (F.T.I) and Thailand Forest Certification Council (TFCC), which is the National Governing Body (NGB) of Thailand. Topics included organizational structure, operational procedures, and achieving financial independence. The visit aimed to learn valuable insights and lessons from their experiences in overcoming challenges during the development and implementation of certification system.



Believing that the experience of a few neighbouring countries who are not only maintaining timber export but also emerging as fast-growing exporters, MFCC has been trying to study the developments in Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Among these three countries, MFCC and partners have visited Thailand and Viet Nam personally to see the insight. For Thailand, MFCC Secretary U Barber Cho and Technical Officer Moh Maung Zin visited the Royal Forest Department of Thailand and the Thai Forest Certification Council. For Viet Nam, there were two visits. In September 2023, the MFCC Secretary led the delegation comprising representatives from the Myanmar Accreditation Body ( Department of Research and Innovation, Ministry of Science and Technologies), two notified Certification Bodies and the Project Secretariat. The main purpose of this trip was to facilitate the engagement between the Myanmar Accreditation Body and the Bureau of Accreditation(Viet Nam) so that Myanmar CBs can apply for international accreditation through the joint assessment of two Accreditation Bodies of Myanmar and Viet Nam. Then, delegation members visited the PEFC group-certified plantation forests to meet the smallholders. This trip was very fruitful.

Second and most recent visit to Viet Nam is also one of the milestones since it is a policy-oriented engagement between the two countries. Myanmar Delegation was led by the Deputy Permanent Secretary and Deputy Director-General of the Forest Department and joined by the General Manager of MTE (extraction). The delegation met the Viet Nam Forest Certification Office and Department of Forest in Hanoi and also visited small-holders of private forest plantations and small-scale wood processing mills, and met the Forest Science Central Northern Vietnam to study the plantation-related matters covering policy and ground activities, etc. In Ho Chi Minh City, the delegation visited AA Corporation- one step tailor-made interior developer and Hiep Long Furniture Factory who had bought Myanmar Teak Logs from 2000 to 2014. In Hanoi, the delegation learnt the policy and plantation. In Ho Chi Minh, the delegation studied the efforts of private sector.





## **Myanmar Forest Certification Committee (MFCC)**

MFCC is set up to develop forest product standards to ensure the sustainable management of Myanmar's forest resources. MFCC serves as the National Governing Body of the Myanmar Timber Legality Assurance System (MTLAS) and the Myanmar Forest Certification Scheme (MFCS). The MFCC Secretariat, guided by the MFCC Chairman and Committee Members, carries out the day-to-day activities of the Committee.

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