

Georgian Forest Sector and Recommendations for Sustainable Administration

Transfer project in the framework of the Klaus Toepfer Fellowship Programme

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Executive summary

The transfer project's objective was to carry out an analysis of the forest sector's management and to provide relevant recommendations for the field's sustainable administration. Such an analysis had a special importance, as the Georgian Forest sector after years of tumultuous reforms faces a new challenge of what doing next. Preliminary analysis pointed to some unsustainable practices in the field: most of forest territories that were transferred into private management lacked some of essential preconditions to be set prior to such transfer - there was no inventory carried out and the available human resources to implement monitoring were substantially limited. In addition to that the Georgian government's announced intention to involve reputable foreign timber processing companies never materialized.

Preparation of a transfer project involved an active collaboration with various stakeholders from the nongovernment sector as well as from the Government. The work bases on the earlier implemented work of various donors -- GIZ, World Bank and Austrian Development Agency.

The report provides a general overview of the Georgian forest sector and points out a number of questionable decisions of the previous government that are mainly associated with the ongoing change of the key decision makers in the field and absence of a strategy to be followed in the process of reforms. The objective of immediate maximization of the economic contribution from the forests at the expense of environmental sustainability caused concerns among the general public and international organizations. On some occasions some of the donors even withdrew from joint projects with the Ministry while in other cases -- the funding has been conditional.

In the Spring, 2013 the Georgian Ministry of Environment will take over the reigns of forest sector's administration from the Georgian Ministry of Energy. The new management already offered a new vision of the reforms that will be expected to be implemented during the following few years. An important precondition of success is a public participation in the decision making and involvement of interested stakeholders. The present report is expected to contribute to such debate and help the Georgian Ministry of Environment to formulate its policy in the area of forest administration by highlighting committed mistakes and offering new recommendations.