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WWF-Laos

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Media Release

Immediate Release

Sustainability: Environment, Economy and Livelihoods

Vientiane 17 August: With the funding from IKEA, WWF and NAFRI signed a MoU for phase III of the project Sustainable rattan production and harvesting. The signing was done by Mr Somphone Bouasavanh, WWF-Laos's Country Director and Mr. Sisavang Vonghachack, Deputy Director of NAFRI. The MoU is for 2012 to 2015 for Bolikhamxay and Sekong Provinces in order to ensure sustainable management of rattan forests, protect the environment and improve the livelihoods.

WWF, NAFRI, and the provincial and district counterparts have been implementing the rattan project since 2006 in Vientiane, Bolikhamxay and Sekong provinces.

"After the two first phases of developing best practices for the rattan supply chain and rattan forest management and establishing market links, we are now focusing on expanding the FSC certified areas and strengthening the sustainable rattan supply chain", said Somphone Bouasavanh, WWF-Laos's Country Director.

This three-year project will ensure sustainable management of 20,000 ha of rattan forest in two districts, Khamkeut and Bolikhan in Bolikhamxay Province and two districts, Lamam and Thateng in Sekong Provinces.

Bolikhamxay Province, where most of the activities take place, is very rich in term of commercial rattan species. 11 commercial rattan species, for example *Calamus solitarius*, *C. poilanei*, *C. gracilis* and *C. palustris* are today used in the project area in Bolikhamxay, explained Mr Bouasavanh.

By 2014 20,000 ha of sustainable managed rattan forests will be FSC certified and able to supply 200 tonnes of commercial rattan canes. The harvested rattan will be processed by local communities and exported by CoC certified manufacturers to the market in Europe.

"This creates jobs and generates income for local communities who mostly rely heavily on natural resources", added Ms Bouavanh Phachomphonh WWF-Laos's Rattan Project Manager.

This project will also increase the knowledge of the rattan density, ecology, and conservation amongst partners and communities, said Mr Bansa Thammavong, NAFRI's National Project Coordinator. It is to secure the support from national policy that promote the sustainable rattan management and production, added Mr Thammavong.

Through the project lifespan the team in Laos works in collaboration with WWF's rattan teams in Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia who also are funded by IKEA. The expected



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outputs are to keep the existing FSC rattan forests and to extend to other areas; to increase the annual income of communities with 10 per cent; to secure support from the national policy that will secure legality of the rattan supply chain and the incentive to invest in sustainable rattan harvest and production.

Note to editor:

- There are 600 rattan species in the world and there are 54 species in this region. Rattan, a climber from the palm family and a valuable Non-Timber Forest Product, is available in forests throughout the Greater Mekong region. Its stems are used for a variety of purposes, including food, shelter and making furniture. Village communities in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam rely heavily on the rattan trade, with sales accounting for up to 50 percent of cash income in some rural areas.
- More than 90 percent of rattan processed in the Greater Mekong originates from natural forest and is being depleted at an unsustainable rate. This overexploitation threatens an important source of income - for local people - that decreases incentives to protect forests from conversion and other unsustainable land uses.

www.panda.org/rattan

About WWF

WWF has a long history of engagement in the region, the organization helped establish conservation programmes in Thailand in the early 1980's and has been active in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam since 1990.

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