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Upscaling Forest Certification Important Towards a Haze-Free Future

“What we can see is that the certified companies have plans and procedures, active monitoring and suppression ongoing to limit the extent of fire and ultimately protect the forests,” said Sarah Price, Head of Projects & Development, PEFC International, at a workshop in Singapore discussing the contribution of sustainable forest management to a greener environment, held on 11 November.

With fires ongoing in Indonesia, the event explored how responsible forestry and forest certification can support progress towards a haze-free future, how stakeholders can be better engaged and involved, and how to best empower consumers to choose certified products. Co-organized by the Global Compact Network Singapore, PEFC International and the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC), the special Sharing and Networking seminar also welcomed speakers from the Singapore Environment Council (SEC) and regional paper distributor, Spicers.

PEFC, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, is the world's largest forest certification system.

“Everyone on this planet benefits from the services and products that forests provide,” commented Sarah Price during the keynote address. “Therefore we all have a responsibility to support, invest and encourage the responsible management of forests.”

Continuing on, Genevieve Chua, MD Spicers Asia commented, “we each have our own sphere of influence to leverage, but new forms of collaboration are required, as only through working together can we, as manufacturers, distributors, and consumers, help make a difference in tackling these tough global challenges like poverty alleviation, climate change, and deforestation.”

Christopher Ang, Executive Director of the Global Compact Network Singapore, who moderated the panel discussion, added: “It was great to hear panelists’ perspectives on the responsibilities of businesses to incorporate sustainability considerations into their operations, while building awareness of consumers. The role of forest certification and the ability to communicate products’ green credentials with on-product logos was agreed as a great step in the right direction. The UNGC is always happy to work with

organizations, such as PEFC, which provide tools for corporations to achieve their corporate social responsibility targets and help consumers to become better informed.”

The recent announcement of the review of the Singapore Green Label was one of several issues raised.

“Here in Singapore, the Green Label, administered by the Singapore Environment Council (SEC) is a seal of endorsement for environmentally-friendly claims,” explained Mr. Kavickumar Muruganathan, Head of Eco-certification, SEC. “We will continue to assess products that carry forest certification systems such as FSC and PEFC to ensure they meet the high standards of environmental sustainability. Similarly, in tune with current market demand, we have expanded into new product areas like palm oil.”

“PEFC’s approach to endorse national systems offers the best way to scale up sustainable forest management in the region, especially as it contributes to the cohesiveness of the ASEAN Economic Community,” said Ernie Koh, President of the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC). “But even before sourcing sustainable wood, the furniture sector needs to consider sustainability right from the design stage – only then can we also reduce consumption.”

“Forest certification is one of the most effective tools promoting sustainable forest management,” explained Ms. Chua. “Today’s seminar was a great opportunity to discuss the benefits of PEFC’s approach and share ideas on how we can work together to bring more sustainable products to marketplace.”

About PEFC International

PEFC, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, is a global alliance of the world’s leading national forest certification system. More than 260 million hectares of forests are certified to PEFC’s internationally recognized Sustainability Benchmarks, supplying more than 16,000 Chain of Custody certified companies with responsibly sourced timber and wood-based products. PEFC was founded by small- and family forest owners to demonstrate excellence in sustainable forest management. For more information, please visit www.pefc.org

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