

coverage, step by step establishing the eco-environmental equilibrium, creating many jobs for, and stabilizing the life of, ethnic minority people in mountainous provinces as well as remote and deep-lying areas.

However, recently, the situation of forest destruction and wild animal hunting has spread widely over the country, particularly in primitive forests, special-use forests and headwater-protection forests. Forest destroyers have arrogantly devastated forests, hunting precious and rare wild animals and destroying the national forest resources; many shops illegally trade in forest products and forest specialties, abetting forest destroyers and earning illicit profits.

The above-stated situation is attributed to the following:

- Branches and administrations from communal, district to provincial level have failed to strictly abide by the Prime Minister's Decision No. 245/1998/QĐ-TTg of December 21, 1998 on performing the responsibility of State management over forests and forestry land; failed to well organize the inspection and prevention work; when forest destruction occurs, the local administrations fail to promptly mobilize forces to suppress forest destroyers, in some regions, they even ignore and leave forest owners and forest rangers alone in the fight against forest destroyers.

- State-run forestry farms, which are assigned to act as forest owners, have failed to fulfill their responsibilities or even colluded with baddies to illegally exploit timber as well as rare and precious forest products. Some have, for their own interests, exploited timber not according to plans. In some localities, the migration of people to and from has been loosely controlled, thus leading to the situation of serious forest destruction by free migrants.

- The forest ranger force has not yet been consolidated, thus failing to perform its assigned functions and to regularly inspect and advise administrations of various levels in directing, propagating and organizing the coordination among

DIRECTIVE No. 12/2003/CT-TTg OF MAY 16, 2003 ON ENHANCING URGENT MEASURES TO PROTECT AND DEVELOP FORESTS

Over the past years, the Prime Minister has adopted many undertakings and measures on socio-economic development in mountainous areas as well as on forest protection and development. Annually, the Government has concentrated efforts on implementing many important programs aiming to socially and economically develop mountainous areas and to attract all people to participate in forest protection and development, thus raising the forest

forest-protecting forces; the forest ranger force has been poorly equipped, thus being unable to fulfill their tasks and suppress the forest destroyers, failing to create a force strong enough to effectively protect forest resources; in some areas, forest rangers have turn a blind eye to arrogant forest destroyers, some degenerate forest ranger officials have tolerated or even colluded with baddies in illegally exploiting timber as well as rare and precious forest products.

In order to rectify and remedy these shortcomings and weaknesses and restore order and discipline in the work of forest protection and management, the Prime Minister instructs the ministries, branches and provincial/municipal People's Committees to promptly perform the following tasks:

1. The presidents of the provincial/municipal People's Committees shall assume the prime responsibility and coordinate with the concerned ministries and branches in directing and organizing the coordination among units of the army, police, border-guard and forest ranger forces in the localities, militia force, forestry farms' security force and forest owners in order to immediately do the following jobs:

a) To organize the mopping up against forest destroyers in natural forests, jungles and forests overlapping many provinces, to detect and handle those who deliberately refuse to abide by legislation on forest protection and development, abet forest destroyers in devastating forests and living environment of communities and the society.

It is necessary to mobilize strong forces, to take synchronous and resolute measures of propagation and mobilization while mopping up and annihilating gangs of forest destroyers who arrogantly resist people being on official duty.

To strictly handle organizations and individuals that violate the State's regulations on forest protection and development, those who cover up forest destroyers, permit the illegal forest exploitation as well as the change of use purposes of forestry land not according to their own competence and in contravention of law; to administratively sanction and force them to

compensate for forest damage they have caused, and to examine their penal liability, if their violations are serious.

b) To inspect and force all free migrants out of primitive forests, special-use forests and headwater protective forests; to concentrate and relocate these persons in the planned resettlement areas and allot land for them to earn their livelihood. For those who refuse to settle down in above-stated planned areas, to coordinate with their home provinces in repatriating them for re-settlement there.

c) To direct the strict performance of the State management responsibility over forests and forestry land by various levels as prescribed in the Prime Minister's Decision No. 245/1998/QD-TTg of December 21, 1998; to directly manage and take responsibility before the Prime Minister for the national forest resources under their management.

To support communal- and district-level administrations in detecting and preventing in time cases of encroaching upon forests for illegal exploitation of timber as well as rare and precious forest products, and prevent forest fires and destruction.

The grassroots administrations shall have to be accountable to their immediate superiors for the national forest resources in their respective localities. In cases where forest destructions still occur in their localities, the presidents of the People's Committees of provinces or centrally-run cities and local leaders shall be disciplined.

d) To direct and speed up the land allotment as well as the assignment and contracting of forests to peasant households; to materialize the entitlement mechanisms prescribed in the Prime Minister's Decision No. 178/2001/QD-TTg of November 12, 2001 on rights and interests and obligations of households and individuals, that are assigned, leased or contracted forests or forestry land and Decision No. 187/1999/QD-TTg of September 16, 1999 on renewing the organization and management mechanism of forestry farms.

e) In provinces where Ho Chi Minh highway and/or other roads run through their natural forests, forest ranger stations and mobile ranger teams must be organized immediately so as to strictly protect forest resources in these areas.

f) To direct the gathering of all forest timber illegally exploited and timely handle them according to law provisions, not to leave them unhandled for a long time, thus causing damage and loss to the State's properties. To inspect, handle and revoke business licenses of shops illegally trading in and/or processing timber as well as special-dish restaurants with dishes prepared from rare and precious wild animals.

g) The provinces and centrally-run cities to set up Steering Boards headed by the presidents of the provincial/municipal People's Committees in order to organize the coordination among forest ranger, army and police forces so as to efficiently implement this Directive.

2. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development shall assume the prime responsibility and coordinate with the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Public Security and the provincial/municipal People's Committees in directing the performance of the following tasks:

a) To work out plans and organize the coordination among various forces in inspecting, hunting for and mopping up, forest destroyers in key areas in the Central Highlands and Central Vietnam provinces, and at the same time to guide the People's Committees of the remaining provinces to determine key areas in each province, annihilate forest destroyers and at any costs stop the forest destruction in 2003.

b) To coordinate with the Ministry of the Interior and concerned agencies in studying plans on renewing and strengthening the forest ranger system from the central to grassroots level, enhancing the assignment of forest ranger officials to grassroots so as to make forest ranger force actually the core of grassroots administrations in forest protection and

development. To provide forest ranger force with means and facilities and work out regulations to guide and manage the use of weapons so as to help forest ranger force well perform their assigned tasks.

c) To assume the prime responsibility and coordinate with the concerned ministries and branches in urging and inspecting the implementation of contents prescribed in Section 1 of this Directive. Annually, to organize preliminary reviews and report implementation results to the Prime Minister.

d) From 2003 on, to minimize the norms of timber exploitation from natural forests, mainly in service of the production of handicraft and fine-art articles for export as well as natural disaster prevention and combat. To encourage the import of timber and the use of timber-substituting raw materials with a view to saving timber in production and consumption.

3. The Ministry of Public Security shall have to direct the police force in provinces and cities to coordinate with and support the local forest ranger forces in the work of forest protection and annihilation of forest destroyers.

4. The Ministry of Defense shall direct military zones, corps, local military commands and border guard to organize field operations in order to coordinate with local forest ranger and police force in annihilating forest destroyers; to direct army units to well organize the management and protection of their assigned forest areas, especially forests in defense-economic zones and forests lying along the borderline.

5. The Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Ministry of Finance shall ensure funding for branches and localities to organize the implementation of this Directive.

6. The Ministers of Agriculture and Rural Development; Planning and Investment; Finance; Defense; Public Security; Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs; as well as Natural Resources and Environment shall, according to their respective

functions, work out plans and direct the provincial/
municipal People's Committees to implement this
Directive.

Prime Minister
PHAN VAN KHAÍ