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### *OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF FOREST GOVERNANCE IN UKRAINE*

During the period of independence, the status of the Central Forestry Authority has been gradually declining. This usually occurred during regular optimization of the central executive authorities to improve the efficiency of public administration. Changes in the executive branch have led to the weakening of vertical linkages in public forest governance. The State Forest Resources Agency continues to serve as the central executive authority, but has ceased to be the center of decision-making on forest governance.

Unlike the status, objectives and goals of the central forestry authority identified in a number of regulations on its operations, they remain virtually unchanged. For example, according to the tasks assigned to it, the State Forest Resources Agency shall coordinate forest protection activities of other permanent forest users and forest owners. There are no formal obstacles for the State Forest Resources Agency to play the role of the public governance authority managing all forests of the state.

Given the political intentions of further forest sector reform to maintain the status of the central executive authority, the State Forest Resources Agency should bring to the political leadership the arguments to preserve its role and importance of exercising the powers which are conferred upon the Agency.

In conditions of loss of confidence by the sector's employees in the reform process as a whole and in the political leadership of the sector as its leader in particular, it is advisable to carry out a functional survey of functions of the State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine as the central executive authority.

Forest governance assessment performed in this study revealed a considerable number of operational challenges and problems. Addressing these challenges requires mostly non-political decisions and appropriate regulatory responses, and ensuring operational control. Unlike functional survey, the assessment allows to consider governance tasks not only at the level of the central executive authority and its territorial divisions but also among all participants in the forest sector.

For the purpose of operational assessment of forest governance, the study used a comprehensive set of criteria proposed by the World Bank Agriculture and Rural Development Department (2009). Additionally, to identify and assess the role of forest governance stakeholders, the net-map diagrams of their relations were prepared. These net-map diagrams clearly show the areas of

concern and governance actors. As a political economy tool, a set of criteria covers the whole list of forest governance problems, and together with the net-map analysis makes it possible to clearly identify the areas of public administration that need to be changed.

Managerial decision-makers can use the survey results to determine a range of primary tasks of forest governance.