



Plenary sitting

A9-0053/2021

24.3.2021

RECOMMENDATION

on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Honduras on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products to the European Union
(12543/2020 – C9-0084/2021 – 2020/0157(NLE))

Committee on International Trade

Rapporteur: Karin Karlsbro

Symbols for procedures

- * Consultation procedure
- *** Consent procedure
- ***I Ordinary legislative procedure (first reading)
- ***II Ordinary legislative procedure (second reading)
- ***III Ordinary legislative procedure (third reading)

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the draft act.)

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DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Honduras on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products to the European Union (12543/2020– C9-0084/2021 – 2020/0157(NLE))

(Consent)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the draft Council decision (12543/2020),
 - having regard to the draft Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Honduras on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products to the European Union (10365/2020),
 - having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 207(3), first subparagraph and Article 207(4), first subparagraph and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a)(v) and Article 218(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C9-0084/2021),
 - having regard to its non-legislative resolution of ...¹ on the draft decision,
 - having regard to Rule 105(1) and (4), and Rule 114(7) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Development,
 - having regard to the recommendation of the Committee on International Trade (A9-0053/2021),
1. Gives its consent to the conclusion of the agreement;
 2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the Republic of Honduras.

¹ Texts adopted of that date, P9_TA(0000)0000.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The EU published its Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan in 2003. It aims to combat illegal logging in the world. By entering Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) with timber producing third countries, the EU opens for imports of legally sourced timber and timber products to enter the Single Market. These agreements are binding trade agreements. They also contribute to better regulation and governance of the forest sector in the exporting country.

Honduras is the first country in Latin America to start and to conclude negotiations on a Voluntary Partnership Agreement with the EU. The negotiations started in 2013 and were concluded in 2018, and Honduras is the first VPA partner ever to have indigenous people as a separate interest group at the negotiation table. The first important step has now been taken, to conclude the negotiations of the VPA. Once the agreement is ratified and enters into force, the subsequent implementation phase will be crucial. A timber legality assurance system (TLAS) needs to be in place, with effective supply chain controls, and mechanisms for verifying compliance, as well as be subject to independent audits. Only then will it be possible to start issuing FLEGT licences. These licences then allow products to enter the Single Market as they fulfil the criteria of the Union's Timber Regulation.

While currently only a small part of Honduras' timber and timber product exports go to the EU, this agreement aims to increase that share but also to open export avenues for Honduras to other markets that set legally sourced conditions on timber imports. For the EU, the agreement is in line with its objectives to encourage sustainable forest management, to address deforestation and forest degradation, and to promote sustainable development, as it has committed to in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the Paris Agreement, and the Convention of Biological Diversity Aichi targets, as well as the UN Strategic Plan for forests 2017-2030.

Almost half of the land area in Honduras is covered by forests and there is still a large number of unclassified trees and species. Half of the forest area consists of rain forests. Since 2015, the loss of Honduras' forests is at 12.5%, caused by climate change, forest fires, deforestation and illegal logging. The importance of the forest sector in the Honduran economy has decreased over a long period, due to stricter requirements on the legality of timber in Honduras' export markets, and to forest destruction. A successful implementation of this VPA should positively contribute to strengthening the forest sector in Honduras and lead to increased exports of legally sourced timber, resulting in a stronger economy and jobs.

Honduras is marked by high levels of poverty, violence, and corruption. The rapporteur believes that any initiative that can bring civil society, private sector, indigenous groups and the government together to find solutions for a sustainable forest sector, like the negotiations resulting in this VPA, needs full support and encouragement. The European Parliament needs therefore to give its consent to this important agreement. The EU furthermore needs to carefully monitor and offer capacity support to ensure its effective implementation. This is an opportunity for a win-win agreement, but it is also a responsibility to act where we can, on working for common goals and together fighting shared challenges.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT

for the Committee on International Trade

on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Honduras on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products to the European Union (COM(2020)0340 – C9 – 2020/0157(NLE))

Rapporteur for opinion: Hildegard Bentele

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The Commission entered into negotiations with Honduras in 2013 and concluded the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) negotiations in June 2018.

Nearly half of Honduras' land area is covered by forests. However, the country has lost about 12.5% of its forest area since 2015 as a result of pest infestation, forest fires, land use change and illegal logging. Forests used to make an important contribution to the Honduran economy, but its share in the economy, in particular exports, has decreased due to international markets becoming more demanding on legality and governance. The VPA has therefore a role to play in helping the forest sector regaining the prominence it once had, and providing rural jobs and generating income for Hondurans.

Despite the modesty of the volume of timber traded between Honduras and the EU, Honduras has seriously engaged in the VPA negotiations as the process has also been perceived as a tool to improve the overall governance of the forestry sector and to fight against illegal logging. Representatives of the government, civil society, the private sector and indigenous peoples have actively participated in negotiations. The Honduras VPA is the only one in the world in which indigenous peoples have had their own seat at the negotiation table, allowing them to promote issues such as land tenure and rights, and Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

The VPA process in Honduras is providing opportunities to make legal compliance and law enforcement much clearer, as well as to identify overlaps, gaps and contradictions in the current legal framework. Land conflicts are a major source of human rights abuses in Honduras and the VPA, by bringing together a wide range of stakeholders could also play a role in this regard. It should be recognised that Honduras suffers from major governance challenges such as corruption, violence, impunity and weak public institutions. If well implemented, the VPA has the potential to contribute to secure a broader culture of accountability in the country.

If the VPA offers great potential, its success will depend on its effective implementation. Sustained political backing in Honduras will be needed given the complexity of setting up the timber legality assurance system and the need to commit important human and financial means to ensure its implementation. EU assistance should continue to be provided to support the VPA

implementation as part of the next programming period of the EU bilateral programmes in Honduras for the period 2021- 2027.

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on International Trade, as the committee responsible, to recommend approval of the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Honduras on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products to the European Union.

PROCEDURE – COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Title	Decision on the conclusion of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Honduras on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products to the European Union
References	2020/0157(NLE)
Committee responsible	INTA
Rapporteur Date appointed	Hildegard Bentele 23.11.2020
Date adopted	27.1.2021
Result of final vote	+: 23 –: 1 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Hildegard Bentele, Dominique Bilde, Udo Bullmann, Catherine Chabaud, Antoni Comín i Oliveres, Ryszard Czarnecki, Gianna Gancia, Charles Goerens, Mónica Silvana González, Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, György Hölvényi, Rasa Juknevičienė, Beata Kempa, Erik Marquardt, Norbert Neuser, Janina Ochojska, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Michèle Rivasi, Christian Sagartz, Marc Tarabella, Tomas Tobé, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, Bernhard Zimniok
Substitutes present for the final vote	Patrizia Toia

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

23	+
ECR	Ryszard Czarnecki, Beata Kempa
ID	Gianna Gancia
NI	Antoni Comín i Oliveres
PPE	Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Hildegard Bentele, György Hölvényi, Rasa Juknevičienė, Janina Ochojska, Christian Sagartz, Tomas Tobé
RENEW	Catherine Chabaud, Charles Goerens, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Chrysoula Zacharopoulou
S&D	Udo Bullmann, Mónica Silvana González, Norbert Neuser, Marc Tarabella, Patrizia Toia
VERTS/ALE	Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, Erik Marquardt, Michèle Rivasi

1	-
ID	Bernhard Zimniok

2	0
ID	Dominique Bilde
The Left	Miguel Urbán Crespo

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

PROCEDURE – COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Title	Decision on the conclusion of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Honduras on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products to the European Union						
References	12543/2020 – C9-0084/2021 – 2020/0157(NLE)						
Date of consultation / request for consent	24.2.2021						
Committee responsible Date announced in plenary	INTA 8.3.2021						
Committees asked for opinions Date announced in plenary	DEVE 8.3.2021						
Rapporteurs Date appointed	Karin Karlsbro 10.9.2020						
Discussed in committee	27.1.2021						
Date adopted	18.3.2021						
Result of final vote	<table> <tr> <td>+: </td><td>40</td></tr> <tr> <td>–: </td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>0: </td><td>2</td></tr> </table>	+:	40	–:	1	0:	2
+:	40						
–:	1						
0:	2						
Members present for the final vote	Barry Andrews, Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Tiziana Beghin, Geert Bourgeois, Saskia Bricmont, Udo Bullmann, Daniel Caspary, Miroslav Číž, Arnaud Danjean, Paolo De Castro, Emmanouil Fragkos, Raphaël Glucksmann, Markéta Gregorová, Roman Haider, Christophe Hansen, Heidi Hautala, Danuta Maria Hübner, Karin Karlsbro, Maximilian Krah, Danilo Oscar Lancini, Bernd Lange, Margarida Marques, Gabriel Mato, Sara Matthieu, Emmanuel Maurel, Carles Puigdemont i Casamajó, Samira Rafaela, Inma Rodríguez-Piñero, Massimiliano Salini, Helmut Scholz, Liesje Schreinemacher, Sven Simon, Dominik Tarczyński, Mihai Tudose, Kathleen Van Brempt, Marie-Pierre Vedrenne, Jörgen Warborn, Iuliu Winkler, Jan Zahradil						
Substitutes present for the final vote	Marco Campomenosi, Jérémy Decerle, Jean-Lin Lacapelle, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez						
Date tabled	24.3.2021						

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

40	+
ECR	Geert Bourgeois, Emmanouil Fragkos, Dominik Tarczyński, Jan Zahradil
ID	Marco Campomenosi, Roman Haider, Jean-Lin Lacapelle, Danilo Oscar Lancini
NI	Tiziana Beghin, Carles Puigdemont i Casamajó
PPE	Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Daniel Caspary, Arnaud Danjean, Christophe Hansen, Danuta Maria Hübner, Gabriel Mato, Massimiliano Salini, Sven Simon, Jörgen Warborn, Iuliu Winkler, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez
Renew	Barry Andrews, Jérémy Decerle, Karin Karlsbro, Samira Rafaela, Liesje Schreinemacher, Marie-Pierre Vedrenne
S&D	Udo Bullmann, Miroslav Číž, Paolo De Castro, Raphaël Glucksmann, Bernd Lange, Margarida Marques, Inma Rodríguez-Piñero, Mihai Tudose, Kathleen Van Brempt
Verts/ALE	Saskia Bricmont, Markéta Gregorová, Heidi Hautala, Sara Matthieu

1	-
ID	Maximilian Krah

2	0
The Left	Emmanuel Maurel, Helmut Scholz

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention