



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Development

2011/0127(NLE)

1.3.2012

OPINION

of the Committee on Development

for the Committee on International Trade

on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of a Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Central African Republic on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber and derived products to the European Union (FLEGT)
(14034/2011 – C7-0046/2012 – 2011/0127(NLE))

Rapporteur: Bart Staes

PA_Leg_Consent

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The Central African Republic (CAR) has 31% of its surface covered by tropical forests. Forestry activities are the country's main private sector employer, contributing 4% of GDP and 40% of the country's total export revenues. Under the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), the CAR intends to set up a national system to ensure legal compliance in timber production, covering all wood products destined for the EU as well as those sold on the domestic market and to non-EU markets.

However, some issues need still to be duly addressed. The VPA has excluded the domestic market, which involves countless axe and chainsaw loggers who often operate unsustainably, informally or illegally. In this context it is important to ensure that small forest enterprises serving the domestic market are professional, profitable and sustainable

The country also holds a large population and forest-dependent communities, considered to be the poorest populations still lacking secure access to traditional lands, resources and public services. Communities' groups like the Aka pygmies and the Mbororos have complained about the lack of a legal basis to hold land tenure on an equal foot with the State, which hampers a proper forest management. Moreover, civil society has a small margin of manoeuvre to help these communities due to the limited political space for civil society actions.

In addition to that, important pieces of legislation such as the Environmental Code, the Agropastoral Code, the draft project on the promotion and protection on local communities and the Code on Private and State-owned Land are only partially applied and they are not comprehensively monitored. These failures have led to uncontrolled timber poaching and brushfires. Both local communities and civil society have explicitly demanded the respect of the right to consultation enshrined in the ILO Convention No. 169, ratified by the country in 2010. The VPA will be a ground test for the effective application of indigenous rights.

The VPA should also advocate for policy coherence for development. The first area is between the current FLEGT, lead by the Forest Ministry, and the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) schemes, lead by the Environment Ministry, both taking place at the same time and with important links on forest policy missing. The second should concentrate on the scrutiny of the role of industrial logging, which the VPA has failed to fully analyse as a current or potential future cause of logging, despite there being three million hectares of active logging concessions already in existence.

Finally, the EU and the CRA should ensure transparency and reform in other extractive sectors (e.g. rubber, palm oil, mining and oil) which are to have potential impacts on the current FLEGT proposal.

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on International Trade, as the committee responsible, to propose that Parliament give its consent.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	29.2.2012
Result of final vote	+: 20 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Ricardo Cortés Lastra, Nirj Deva, Leonidas Donskis, Charles Goerens, Filip Kaczmarek, Franziska Keller, Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez, Maurice Ponga, Birgit Schnieber-Jastram, Eleni Theocharous, Patrice Tirolien, Gabriele Zimmer
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Isabella Lövin, Gesine Meissner, Cristian Dan Preda, Bart Staes, Patrizia Toia
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Joseph Cuschieri, Zita Gurmai, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu