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*Committee on Development  
The Chair*

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29.1.2024

Mr Bernd Lange  
Chair  
Committee on International Trade  
BRUSSELS

Subject: Opinion on the Interim report on the conclusion of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products to the European Union (FLEGT) (2023/0222R(NLE))

Dear Chair,

Under the procedure referred to above, the Committee on Development has been asked to submit an opinion to your committee. At its meeting of 25 October 2023, the committee decided to send the opinion in the form of a letter.

The Committee on Development considered the matter at its meeting of 7 December 2023. At that meeting<sup>1</sup>, it decided to call on the Committee on International Trade, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution.

Yours sincerely,

Tomas Tobé

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<sup>1</sup> The following were present for the final vote: Pierrette Herzberger Fofana (1st Vice-Chair), Mercedes Bresso (2nd Vice-Chair), Stéphane Bijoux (3rd Vice-Chair), Erik Marquardt (4th Vice-Chair), Barry Andrews, Hildegard Bentele, Udo Bullmann, Catherine Chabaud, Christophe Clergeau, Marie Dauchy, Jarosław Duda, Charles Goerens, Mónica Silvana González, György Hölvényi, Aušra Maldeikienė, Caroline Roose, Eleni Stavrou, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Bernhard Zimniok, Carlos Zorrinho

## SUGGESTIONS

1. Strongly supports the conclusion of the negotiations on the Voluntary Partnership Agreement ('the Agreement') between the EU and the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, which will ensure that only legally logged timber is imported into the EU, promote sustainable logging and trade in timber, support private-sector initiatives to these ends and promote the strengthening of the enforcement of forest law and governance;
2. Stresses the high deforestation rates in Côte d'Ivoire, which are related to cocoa production in particular, and the poor control of illegal logging and trade in timber; acknowledges Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to ensuring that timber is harvested according to national law and to continuing its regulatory reforms to complement and strengthen the legal framework, as well as its adoption of a framework to monitor compliance and carry out independent evaluations of the system;
3. Recalls that sustainable and inclusive forest management and governance are essential for achieving the objectives set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement;
4. Underlines the need to involve stakeholders in the Agreement's implementation in line with the principle of non-discrimination, under which stakeholders both within and outside the forestry sector should be involved, while also ensuring that the gender factor is taken into account;
5. Calls on the Commission to increase the funding allocation to the Forest Partnership with Côte d'Ivoire as part of the programming review process for the EU bilateral programme for 2025-2027 in order to assist the Agreement's implementation, and to complement this with the necessary technical support to facilitate Côte d'Ivoire's efforts and political commitment and attain the objectives of both parties to the Agreement; further calls on the Commission to report periodically on the progress made on the FLEGT action plan.

## **ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS FROM WHOM THE RAPPOREUR FOR THE OPINION HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The rapporteur declares under his exclusive responsibility that he did not receive input from any entity or person to be mentioned in this Annex pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure.