

WRITTEN QUESTION E-5008/06
by Margrietus van den Berg (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Closing Europe's borders to illegally felled timber

Unrestrained deforestation is continuing in the tropics at a rate of 13 million hectares a year, which is equivalent to about 26 million football pitches. Europe is one of the largest markets for what, in many instances, is illegally felled timber. Illegal logging is a problem that has not only a catastrophic impact on the environment, but also serious social consequences for local communities.

1. Is the Commission aware of how much illegally felled timber there is on Europe's markets and how much this represents an assault on quality of life and biodiversity in developing countries?
2. Does the Commission realise that the EU's current FLEGT measures are nowhere near sufficient to keep illegal timber out of the EU, given the voluntary nature of the measures and the system's shortcomings at present?
3. Everywhere, meat and fish from outside Europe is subject at all times to strict health requirements. Illegal drugs and illegal diamonds (blood diamonds) are rigorously combated at Europe's borders. That is precisely the approach which should be taken to illegally felled hardwood. If checks can be made on those products at all Europe's borders, why should the same inspection machinery not be used for timber, too?
4. Is the Commission prepared to introduce a blanket ban on imports into Europe of tropical timber not certified in accordance with an internationally recognised standard for ecologically, socially and economically responsible forest management?