

**Question for oral answer O-0202/2010
to the Commission**

Rule 115

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Subject: FLEGT voluntary partnership agreements with Congo and Cameroon and other planned VPAs

Several countries that export tropical hardwood have started to sign voluntary partnership agreements (VPAs) with the EU under the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan. Through these agreements, the EU will provide support for forest governance reforms and capacity building, including the implementation of traceability and legality verification systems for timber and wood-based products. Parliament has to give its formal assent to two VPAs, with Cameroon and the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville).

All current and future VPAs should contribute to protecting intact forest landscapes, putting the forestry sector on an environmentally and socially sustainable course and implementing a much-needed reform process.

- What mechanism will be established to ensure that the VPAs are stringently and effectively enforced in a timely manner throughout the various stages of their implementation? Will the Commission produce, and present to Parliament, regular progress reports on implementation of the various provisions of all current and future agreements?
- How will the Commission ensure that civil society, local populations and indigenous peoples are able to contribute freely and confidently to the implementation and enforcement of the VPAs and have access to rights of appeal and complaint? Has the Commission carried out an independent evaluation of the current human rights situation and of protection of the right to freedom of speech in countries concerned by VPAs? If not, is the Commission committed to carrying out independent reliable assessments of human rights standards in any country concerned by VPAs?
- Given the fact that VPAs have direct financial impact on the EU budget and that more VPAs are expected to be signed in the coming years, what specific and additional funding do the Commission and the Member States intend to mobilise for financial, technical, and human resources to support the negotiation and implementation of these agreements?
- What new initiatives, in addition to VPAs, does the Commission envisage for combating large-scale deforestation and the degradation of natural forests, and for promoting their protection?

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