

Subject: Effectiveness of package of sanctions against Burma

In 2008, the sanctions against Burma were stepped up in response to the on-going violations of human rights by the Burmese junta. Since then, imports of Burmese timber, for example, have been banned. In the meantime it has become apparent that trade in Burmese timber is continuing using such transit countries as Malaysia and Thailand. As a result, European businesses which have ceased to trade in Burmese teak are suffering from unfair competition.

1. Is the Commission aware of the research report 'Sanctioned but not Stopped' produced by the Milieudefensie organisation?
2. Does the Commission agree that the sanctions on the import of Burmese timber are currently failing to yield the desired effect?
3. Does the Commission agree that the sanctions package is only worthwhile if the Burmese junta genuinely derives less revenue from the timber trade with Europe?
4. Is the Commission also aware of the complaints by businesses which have ceased to trade in Burmese timber and are suffering economic damage because competitors are continuing to trade in it? Does the Commission agree that this is an unfair trading practice and is undesirable?
5. Is the Commission convinced of the continuing need to put the Burmese junta under pressure to respect human rights and initiate a credible democratisation process?
6. Will the Commission submit a proposal to the forthcoming European Council of 19/20 March to assess the package of sanctions against Burma and make the measures watertight, so that trade in Burmese timber via transit countries is also banned and made impossible in practice?
7. Will the Commission urge Member States to enforce the sanctions better by stepping up inspections of timber and timber products, particularly teak products from transit countries such as Malaysia, China and Thailand?