Resolution on addressing the challenges of deforestation and forest degradation to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss

2009/2575(RSP) - 23/04/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 21 April 2009,the European Parliament adopted by 407 votes to 5 with 12 abstentions a resolution tabled by the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on addressing the challenges of deforestation and forest degradation to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss. Parliament notes that deforestation accounts for some 20 % of global greenhouse gas emissions, is a major driver of biodiversity loss and constitutes a serious threat to development and, in particular, to the livelihoods of the poor. It occurs at the alarming rate of 13 million hectares per year, primarily in tropical forests, but also to a certain extent in Europe, especially Central and Eastern Europe.

Parliament stresses the need for more coherence between forest conservation and sustainable management policies and other EU internal and external policies. It calls for a quantified evaluation of the impact on forests of EU policies such as energy (especially biofuels), agriculture, sustainable production and consumption, procurement, trade and development cooperation.

Members call on the Commission to present:

- proposals for stringent Community sustainability requirements for all timber and timber products sourced from forests;
- a comprehensive study assessing the impact of EU production, consumption and trade in both food and non-food commodities on deforestation and forest degradation. The study should evaluate any negative contribution by different industry sectors and make recommendations for further policy, in order to reduce such impacts.

Parliament points out that problems relating to water conditions must be dealt with carefully in the context of the forest economy, and points to the vital need for joint development of forest and water resources and harmonisation of the relevant EU policies, with a view to restoring and improving the water retention capacity of ecosystems.

It welcomes green public procurement (GPP) policies and the promotion of instruments such as eco-labelling and forest certification schemes, and calls for the swift adoption of GPP policies for wood products across the EU. Member States should base their public procurement policy on high sustainability standards and accordingly to set realistic targets in relation to such standards.

Parliament considers that significant financial support must be provided to developing countries to halt gross tropical deforestation by 2020 at the latest, and that demonstration of commitment to this will be decisive in the international negotiations for a comprehensive global post-2012 climate agreement. It recognises that mobilising sufficient funding under a global climate deal will be absolutely crucial for halving and eventually halting global deforestation. It supports the Commission's proposal to create a Global Forest Carbon Mechanism (GFCM) within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, based on a permanent financing scheme. Member States must back up their commitment to halting global deforestation by earmarking a significant part of the auctioning revenues from the EU emissions trading scheme for reducing deforestation and by focusing the negotiations on funding sources as outlined by the Commission (COM/2009/0039). Member States are

asked to support the Commission's proposal to embrace the funding proposal made by Norway and to allocate part of future revenues from auctioning of Assigned Amount Units to the GFCM.

The resolution emphasises the need to respect the rights of local forest people including indigenous peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent to the use of forests customarily used by them. It is essential that local communities are involved in a comprehensive way at all stages when measures for reduced emissions from forest degradation and deforestation are being planned and implemented.

Lastly, Parliament calls on the Commission to develop action plans and pilot projects and to show commitment in its own forestry policy to stopping not only deforestation but also forest degradation (including in the EU) by establishing proper monitoring systems in order to obtain appropriate data on soil and biomass in forests.