Resolution on FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements

2010/3015(RSP) - 19/01/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 17 January 2011 on the basis of Oral Question O-0202/2010, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements.

The resolution had been tabled by the ALDE, Greens/ALE, S&D, ECR, GUE/NGL, and EPP groups.

Welcoming the Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) with Cameroon and the Congo, Parliament underlines the shared responsibility of both the EU and countries supplying tropical wood products to the EU market for eradicating illegal logging, and for related trade and strengthening efforts for the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources globally. It recalls that VPAs are motivated by the idea of jointly stopping the trade in illegally harvested timber and products made from such timber and contributing to efforts to stop deforestation and forest degradation, related carbon emissions and biodiversity loss globally. Members note the **inherent tension within VPAs**, in that, while encouraging the trade in timber products from countries with large areas of natural forests, the EU could undermine its objectives of combating climate change, support for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, reduction of poverty and stopping deforestation worldwide. It calls on the Commission to ensure that the EU policy is coherent and that actions supported by the VPAs will make an effective contribution to the international commitments of all parties to a VPA. Members urge the Commission and the Council to detail which additional initiatives to the VPAs are envisaged in order to combat deforestation.

Members also recall that whilst the forests are the sovereign possessions of the state where they are located, the **forest environment is a common heritage of humankind**. They invite partner governments in Africa and third countries to develop land-use and resource management plans that will protect forests with the ultimate aim of maintaining global biodiversity and ecosystem functions, protecting the climate system, and safeguarding the rights of indigenous peoples, and to identify where and how much support would be needed from foreign partners and international organisations to move those objectives forward. Against this background, the Commission is asked to pay the utmost attention to ensuring that VPAs do not encourage the expansion of industrial logging activities into intact forest landscapes, and to work with the governments of Cameroon and the Congo and all governments signing up to VPAs in the future to eliminate the negative effects, both direct and indirect, of commercial logging on wildlife.

Monitoring and enforcement: Parliament underlines the essential role of independent national civil society organisations and of independent external observers in monitoring proper implementation of agreements by all parties involved, including via a commitment to national stakeholder involvement in the joint committees to be set up to oversee the implementation process. It asks the Commission to establish a mechanism to ensure that the VPAs are enforced effectively through the different stages of the implementation phase, guaranteeing the reinforcement of the capacities of local stakeholders and the direct involvement of local communities and indigenous populations during the implementation phase, in order to ensure wider acceptance of the reforms that will be implemented upstream of the VPAs as well as full verification of imports into the EU. Members ask both parties to a VPA to ensure that civil society, local populations and indigenous peoples are able to contribute to the implementation and enforcement of the VPAs, stating that the Joint Agreement Implementation Committee should provide these organisations with a right of complaint and then a right of appeal if unsuccessful.

Parliament asks the Commission to:

- present, within six months of the entry into force of any VPA, a report on the measures undertaken to ensure that the dialogue between the stakeholders and civil society, including the local and indigenous population, is maintained during the implementation phase;

- ensure it has a good understanding of the current human rights situation in any potential VPA partner country and not to engage with any country where there is no legal framework in place to protect basic human and social rights;

- present to the Parliament, on a regular basis, a progress report on the implementation of the various provisions of all current and future VPAs;

- specify which funds will be used to support the negotiation and implementation of these agreements;

- **report to Parliament on progress in negotiating and implementing current and future VPAs** and to keep Parliament informed about the work of the Joint Agreement Implementation Committee, the mission and audit reports of the agreement's independent auditor, the reports assessing the implementation of the agreement – including the studies of its social, economic and environmental impact - and listings of names of companies to whom concessions are granted.