EU/Vietnam Voluntary Partnership Agreement: forest law enforcement, governance and trade

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PURPOSE: to conclude, on behalf of the Union, the voluntary partnership Agreement between the European Union and Vietnam on forest law enforcement, governance and trade.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: in May 2003, the Commission adopted a communication to the European Parliament and to the Council entitled 'Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT): Proposal for an EU Action Plan' which called for measures to address illegal logging by developing voluntary partnership Agreements with timber producing countries.

In 2005, the Council authorised the Commission to negotiate FLEGT partnership agreements with timber-producing countries. The Commission entered into negotiations with Vietnam in 2010.

In accordance with a Council Decision, the voluntary partnership Agreement between the EU and Vietnam on forest law enforcement, governance and trade was signed, subject to its conclusion at a later date.

It is now necessary to approve the Agreement on behalf of the European Union.

CONTENT: the present proposal calls on the Council to adopt the decision to approve, on behalf of the Union, the voluntary partnership Agreement between the European Union and Viet Nam on forest law enforcement, governance and trade.

In particular, the voluntary partnership Agreement between the EU and Vietnam:

- establishes the framework, institutions and systems for the timber legality assurance system for the FLEGT licensing scheme;
- sets out the framework for monitoring compliance and for independent evaluation of the system;
- includes a clear commitment by Vietnam to develop legislation to ensure that timber imported in Vietnam has been legally harvested in compliance with the applicable legislation in the country of harvest;
- strengthens forest governance and law enforcement and, by means of the FLEGT licensing scheme, will reassure the EU market that timber exported from Vietnam comes from legally harvested timber;
- establishes a mechanism for dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Vietnam on the FLEGT licensing scheme, via a joint implementation committee;
- establishes principles of stakeholder participation, social safeguards, accountability and transparency, and mechanisms for complaints on, monitoring of and reporting on implementation of the Agreement;
- makes provision for **import controls** at the EU's borders.