EU/Côte d’Ivoire Voluntary Partnership Agreement: forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber and timber products to the EU (FLEGT)

2023/0222R(NLE) - 20/03/2024 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on International Trade adopted the interim report by Karin KARLSBRO (Renew, SE) on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between the European Union and the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber and timber products to the European Union (FLEGT).

The committee recommended that the European Parliament give its **consent** to the conclusion of the Agreement.

Members welcomed the conclusion of negotiations on the VPA between the EU and Côte d’Ivoire and called for its **swift ratification** by both sides. They underlined that the full implementation of the VPA will be a long-term process which will require the adoption of a whole set of legislation and adequate administrative capacity and expertise for its implementation and enforcement. The success of the FLEGT also depends on tackling fraud, organised crime and corruption throughout the timber supply chain. In this regard, the Government of Côte d’Ivoire is urged to work to stop widespread corruption and address other factors fuelling illegal logging and forest degradation, with particular regard to customs, in cooperation with other authorities, which will play a pivotal role in the implementation and enforcement of the VPA.

The report called on the Commission to **increase the funding allocation** to the Forest Partnership with Côte d’Ivoire as part of the programming review process for the EU bilateral programme for 2025-2027 in order to assist in the VPA’s implementation.

Moreover, Members called for strengthening the **role and participation of the private sector** in the VPA’ s implementation and to assist operators, in particular SMEs, in building capacity to ensure better clarity, understanding and compliance with the requirements of the VPA.

The committee recognised that the VPA with Côte d’Ivoire, as well as those with other countries, proves that trade agreements can work, **without the threat to impose sanctions**, by the inclusion of **different means of control and cooperation**.

Lastly, the Commission is asked to regularly report to Parliament on the implementation of the agreement, including on the work of the Joint Implementation Committee. The EU Member States should fully comply with and implement the EU Timber Regulation and to align with the requirements of the EU Deforestation Regulation.