

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

2023/0222(NLE) - 10/04/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 585 votes to 10, with 20 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement 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).

Parliament **gave its consent** to the conclusion of the Agreement.

Côte d'Ivoire has one of the highest deforestation rates in the world. According to the World Bank, as of 2020 only 8.9 % (2.8 million hectares) of Côte d'Ivoire land area was covered by forests, compared to 24.7% in 1990. The causes of this decline include extensive agriculture, cocoa trade, poorly controlled exploitation of forests to meet the demands for timber and wood energy and weak legal enforcement capacity of public authorities in forest governance.

The Commission entered into negotiations with the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire in 2013 and concluded the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) negotiations in October 2022.

The Agreement, *inter alia*:

- provides a legal framework to ensure that timber and timber products defined by the FLEGT authorisation and imported into the Union from Côte d'Ivoire have been legally produced and to promote trade in said timber and timber products and implement the principle of sustainability.
- establishes a licensing scheme that checks and confirms the legality of timber products exported to EU and non-EU countries, as well as timber sold domestically;
- establishes a mechanism for dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Côte d'Ivoire on the licensing scheme, via a joint implementation committee;
- provides a detailed description of the structures underpinning the timber legality assurance system of Côte d'Ivoire;
- sets out a framework for involving stakeholders, social safeguards, and accountability and transparency.

The VPA's successful implementation will depend on Côte d'Ivoire's sustained commitment and political will. EU assistance should be strengthened to support the VPA implementation as part of the programming review process of the EU bilateral programme for the period 2025- 2027.