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) - 10/04/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 521 votes to 11, with 78 abstentions, a resolution on the proposal for a 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 welcomed the conclusion of negotiations on the VPA between the EU and Côte d’Ivoire and called for its swift ratification by both sides so it can enter into force in 2024. It recognised 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. FLEGT licensing can only begin once Côte d’Ivoire has demonstrated the readiness of its timber legality assurance system. Therefore, Parliament called for the introduction of measures that can support the reduction of burdensome administrative processes. It urged both partners to identify digital methods for simplifying the process, for instance, paperless solutions such as e-certificates.

The resolution underlined that 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 Commission is called on 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 resolution 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.

The Commission is asked to regularly report to Parliament on the implementation of the agreement, including on the work of the Joint Implementation Committee.

Lastly, Parliament called on the Member States to fully comply with and implement the EU Timber Regulation and to align with the requirements of the EU Deforestation Regulation.