

# **EU/Cameroon Voluntary Partnership Agreement on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber and derived products to the EU (FLEGT): termination**

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**PURPOSE:** to terminate the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Cameroon on forest law enforcement governance and trade in timber and derived products to the Union.

**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:** the EU action plan on forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT) 1 was adopted in 2003. It aims to support global efforts in tackling the problem of illegal logging and its associated trade. A key aspect of the FLEGT action plan was the conclusion of voluntary partnership agreements (VPAs) between the European Union (EU) and timber-producing countries in order to establish a legal framework ensuring that all timber exported to the EU was legally produced or acquired.

The VPA between the EU and the Republic of Cameroon entered into force on 1 December 2011.

Despite the EU's attempt, the Republic of Cameroon has not been able to fulfil its obligations under the VPA, namely in relation to the establishment of the FLEGT licensing scheme aimed at verifying and attesting by means of a FLEGT license that timber and derived products exported to the European Union are legally produced or acquired.

The governance of the forest sector has worsened despite the existence of the VPA. The Republic of Cameroon's timber exports have also shifted to Asian markets, diluting the economic incentive of the VPA, and consequently the relevance of FLEGT licence.

Regulation (EU) No 2023/1115 on deforestation recognises ongoing bilateral commitments and invites the EU (Recital 81) to work, where relevant and agreed, with current VPA partners towards them reaching that (FLEGT licensing) stage. Given that the Republic of Cameroon has not fulfilled its obligations under the VPA, the Commission considers that the VPA no longer meets the 'relevance' requirement in Recital 81 of the EU Deforestation Regulation. Consequently, it appears that the termination of the VPA with the Republic of Cameroon is the most appropriate course of action to better contribute to the implementation of the EU Deforestation Regulation and to preserve the credibility and integrity of the VPA as an EU trade instrument.

The VPA was concluded on behalf of the European Union and following its conclusion by the Republic of Cameroon it entered into force on 1 December 2011. Under Article 27 of the VPA, it will remain in force for seven years and will be renewable by tacit agreement between the Parties for periods of the same length, unless one Party terminates it by notifying the other Party of its decision at least 12 months before the period in question expires. The VPA was tacitly renewed on 1 December 2018 and the current period expires on 30 November 2025.

CONTENT : the Commission proposes that the Council approve the **termination of the VPA** between the European Union and the Republic of Cameroon on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber and derived products to the European Union that entered into force on 1 December 2011.