General Community strategy for the forestry sector

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After long and difficult consultations to reconcile different points of view (mainly between the countries in the north and the countries in the south of the EU), the committee unanimously adopted the revised proposal for a resolution by Mr THOMAS (PSE, UK) on forest strategy. The rapporteur stressed that forests are one of the most important renewable resources in Europe, provided that they are well managed. This was why the EU forest strategy needed to reconcile commercial use with recognition of the diversity and multi-functionality of forests in order to guarantee their ecological, economic and social durability in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. The committee called on the European Commission to propose instruments and adequate means at Community, national and regional level to develop actions to protect, use, exploit and extend forest resources. The European Commission was called on to ensure that Community directives on the protection of forests were applied. As far as the fight against forest fires was concerned, budgetary allocations needed to be adapted to actual requirements and forest owners needed to be offered suitable technical assistance in order to guarantee economically viable and sustainable management and encourage wood-based industries at European level. Finally, the European Commission was called upon, inter alia, to: - set up a forest information and communication system (EFICS) in order to draw up an inventory of European forests by country and by region; - promote research into forest ecosystems; - adapt the use of forests and wood products to market requirements and, at the same time, highlight the value of forests in the fields of tourism, health and the water supply cycle; - present an efficient action plan to combat ecological and social dumping when wood is imported into the EU.