General Community strategy for the forestry sector

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The European Parliament adopted the report by Mr David THOMAS (PSE, UK) on the EU forest strategy by 315 votes to 23 with 20 abstentions and rejected all the proposed amendments. The European Parliament called on the Commission to present a legislative proposal on a European forest strategy on the basis of Articles 43, 130S et 235 of the EC Treaty within two years. 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 European Parliament 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. In particular, it was called on to: - present proposals to combat erosion and desertification, conserve and protect the biological and economic value of the forest heritage and make full use of its role in maintaining rural balances; - ensure that Community directives on the protection of forests were applied; - present proposals with a view to adapting budgetary allocations to the actual requirements of the Member States' overall protection plans in the fight against forest fires. Suitable technical assistance also needed to be offered to forest owners in order to guarantee economically viable and sustainable management and encourage wood-based industries at European level. Finally, the European Commission was called on, 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.