Forest policy: implementation of the European Union's forestry strategy

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The Council took note of a Presidency progress report on the FLEGT Agreement on trade in timber. The Belgian delegation voiced its concern at illegal logging and the associated unlawful trading. It thanked the Luxembourg Presidency for its efforts in preparing a negotiating brief and hoped that significant progress would be made on this matter during the forthcoming United Kingdom Presidency, so that the first partnership agreements could be implemented. Finally, the Belgian delegation pointed to the need to supplement those agreements by means of mandatory legislation on illegal timber trading in the Community.

Commissioner Fischer-Boel hoped that the negotiating directives would be completed during the forthcoming United Kingdom Presidency. She stressed that EUR 3 million had been spent to assist dialogue on forestry governance and the Community had spent a further EUR 15 million on technical assistance. She reminded the Council that the informal negotiations currently in progress with several non-member countries (Ghana, Cameroon, Malaysia, etc.) should result in negotiating directives in due course.