



**INTA/10/01685(XXX)**

14.1.2025

## **DRAFT INTERIM REPORT**

on the proposal for a Council decision on the termination of 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  
(COM(2024)0446 – C10-XXXX/2025 – INTA/10/01685(XXX))

Committee on International Trade

Rapporteur: Karin Karlsbro

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

**on the proposal for a Council decision on the termination of 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 (COM(2024)0446 – C10-XXXX/2025 – INTA/10/01685(XXX))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission proposal of 2 October 2024 for a Council decision on the termination of 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 (COM(2024)0446),
- having regard to the draft Council decision on the termination of 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 (C10-XXXX/2025),
- having regard to 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 European Union (FLEGT)<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 2173/2005 of 20 December 2005 on the establishment of a FLEGT licensing scheme for imports of timber into the European Community<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal (COM(2019)0640),
- having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 September 2020 on the EU’s role in protecting and restoring the world’s forests<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 22 October 2020 with recommendations to the Commission on an EU legal framework to halt and reverse EU-driven global deforestation<sup>6</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 92, 6.4.2011, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 347, 30.12.2005, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2005/2173/oj>.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 295, 12.11.2010, p. 23, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2010/995/oj>.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 270, 7.7.2021, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> OJ C 385, 22.9.2021, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> OJ C 404, 6.10.2021, p. 175.

- having regard to the Paris Agreement and to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework on halting and reversing nature loss,
  - having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals,
  - having regard to Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2023 on the making available on the Union market and the export from the Union of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation and repealing Regulation (EU) No 995/2010<sup>7</sup> (EU Deforestation Regulation),
  - having regard to its position of [XXXX]<sup>8</sup> on the draft Council decision,
  - having regard to Rule 107(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Development,
  - having regard to the interim report of the Committee on International Trade (A10-0000/2025),
- A. whereas the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between the European Union and the Republic of Cameroon on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber and derived products to the Union (FLEGT) entered into force on 1 December 2011 and is one of the first agreements of this kind to be concluded; whereas the VPA’s objective is to provide a framework of legislation, systems, controls and verification procedures to ensure that all timber exports from Cameroon into the European market have been acquired, harvested, transported and exported legally;
- B. whereas Cameroon has over 18 million hectares of forest, which accounts for approximately 40 % of its national territory; whereas Cameroon is Africa’s largest exporter of tropical hardwoods to the EU; whereas illegal logging, enabled by poor forest governance and driven by trade, is a major contributor to deforestation in Cameroon; whereas 900 000 hectares of forest cover were lost between 2011 and 2022, representing 5 % of the country’s forest cover over this period;
- C. whereas all shipments of timber and timber products from Cameroon destined for the EU market should comply with a timber legality assurance system (TLAS) and thereby qualify for a FLEGT licence; whereas the TLAS is based on a legality definition, supply chain controls, verification of compliance, FLEGT licencing and an independent audit; whereas this legality verification system is not yet operational;
- D. whereas the purpose and expected benefits of FLEGT VPAs go beyond the facilitation of trade in legal timber, as they are also designed to bring about systemic changes in forest governance, law enforcement, transparency and the inclusion of various stakeholders in the political decision-making process;
- E. whereas the FLEGT licencing scheme, which forms an integral part of the VPA, was

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<sup>7</sup> OJ L 150, 9.6.2023, p. 206, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/1115/oj>.

<sup>8</sup> Texts adopted, P10\_TA(2025)0000.

expected to be in place within five years of the reform of the legal framework; whereas this licencing scheme is not yet in place, implying that the VPA between the EU and Cameroon is not operational to date;

- F. whereas the reform of the legal framework has not been completed, and logging is still conducted partly on the basis of small logging titles (*ventes de coupe*) that do not require management plans and are more difficult to control compared to the oversight of large-scale concessions; whereas the national control systems are also not operational, so enforcement and governance remain weak, making it possible for illegal and unsustainable logging operations to continue;
  - G. whereas the development of the legality verification module in the traceability system is still pending, and the little progress made so far has not been independently audited, which would help build its credibility;
  - H. whereas Cameroon has not been able to meet its VPA obligations over the last 10 years and the governance of the forest sector has worsened despite the existence of the VPA;
  - I. whereas timber exports have shifted to Asian markets, diluting the economic incentive of the VPA, and consequently the relevance of the FLEGT licence; whereas Viet Nam has become the second largest market for Cameroonian timber (after China), while Cameroon has become the largest supplier of tropical logs to Viet Nam (accounting for 25 % of the logs imported between 2016 and 2019, in value);
  - J. whereas the VPA is tacitly renewed every seven years, unless one party terminates it by notifying the other party of its decision at least 12 months before the expiry of the current seven-year period; whereas each party may terminate the VPA at any time by notifying the other party; whereas the VPA is terminated 12 months following that notification;
  - K. whereas the continuation of the VPA could affect the credibility of the EU as a global champion of forest protection and biodiversity matters and the integrity of the VPAs as EU trade instruments;
1. Highlights that deforestation and forest degradation are key environmental challenges and are among the main drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss, while also having major negative social and economic impacts on producing countries, especially on the more vulnerable parts of society;
  2. Recalls that the Samoa Agreement reaffirms the need for a high level of environmental protection and commits to halting deforestation and forest degradation as a means of protecting ecosystems, preserving biodiversity and mitigating climate change;
  3. Recalls that sustainable and inclusive forest management and governance are essential for achieving the objectives set out in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement;
  4. Believes that VPAs provide an important legal framework for both the EU and its partner countries, but that this requires good cooperation with and commitment from the countries concerned; deplores the lack of progress in the implementation of the VPA

with Cameroon, especially with regard to the enforcement, transparency and traceability of commitments, and is highly concerned about the ongoing deforestation and illegal logging in the country;

5. Stresses that a TLAS offers forest businesses greater legal certainty, simplified controls and more transparent processes, discouraging informal payments and corruption while increasing revenues for both communities and the state;
6. Regrets the need to end the VPA with Cameroon; agrees with the Commission that, in the light of its shortcomings, this is the best policy option for the time being;
7. Urges the Government of Cameroon to work towards stopping widespread corruption and to address other factors fuelling illegal logging and forest degradation, with particular regard to customs, in cooperation with other authorities; stresses the importance of protecting human rights, in particular the rights of workers, when sourcing goods and products for the EU market; calls, in this context, on local authorities to extend special protection to children;
8. Stresses that countries all over the world that either have or aim to have regulated import markets for legal timber would benefit from cooperating and, where possible, endorsing each other's rules and systems, such as the EU's FLEGT and VPAs; emphasises that international standards would be more effective and promote long-term legal security for businesses and consumers;
9. Calls on the Commission to explore alternatives to ensure the legality of timber and timber products originating from Cameroon and to properly address the problem of illegal timber logging; considers that a Forest Partnership as outlined in the EU Deforestation Regulation could be a possible option for cooperation between the EU and Cameroon; underlines that in order to be effective, any potential future partnerships would have to be developed through an inclusive, deliberative and non-discriminatory process that includes civil society, the private sector including microenterprises and other small and medium-sized enterprises, local communities and farmers;
10. Stresses the importance of the parliamentary oversight and monitoring of the VPA by Parliament's International Trade Committee; underlines the need for the involvement of Parliament with regard to any future Forest Partnerships; asks the Commission to regularly report to Parliament on the implementation of the VPAs, including on the work of the joint implementation committees;
11. Underlines that despite the termination of the VPA with Cameroon, VPAs continue to provide an important legal framework for both the EU and its partner countries, which has been made possible through good cooperation with and commitment from the countries concerned; stresses that new VPAs with additional partners should be promoted;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Cameroon.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Voluntary Partnership Agreement (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 (FLEGT) entered into force on 1 December 2011 and is one of the first agreements of this kind that was concluded. The rapporteur regrets that Cameroon has not been able to honour its VPA obligations over the last 10 years and the governance of the forest sector has worsened despite the existence of the agreement. While the rapporteur believes that FLEGT VPAs provide an important legal framework for both the EU and its partner countries, they can only work properly when both sides are willing to cooperate and to adhere to their commitments. In the present case the rapporteur believes that the best alternative is to terminate the agreement.

## **ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

Pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur declares that she received input from the following entities or persons in the preparation of the draft report, prior to the adoption thereof in committee:

<b>Entity and/or person</b>
Indra Van Gisbergen - FERN

The list above is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur.

Where natural persons are identified in the list by their name, by their function or by both, the [rapporteur declares / rapporteurs declare] that [he/she has / they have] submitted to the natural persons concerned the European Parliament's Data Protection Notice No 484 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/data-protect/index.do>), which sets out the conditions applicable to the processing of their personal data and the rights linked to that processing.