



Conference: Guardians of the forests?

10 years of EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade

European Parliament Brussels, Tuesday 9 October 2012

Why this meeting

Deforestation and illegal logging, particularly in rain forest regions, threatens large scale biodiversity loss and serious adverse impacts on the global climate. Illegal logging also causes serious financial hardship both to local people and to the economies of timber exporting countries: the World Bank estimates at least 10 per cent of the world timber trade is illegal, resulting in a loss of US\$15bn to developing countries each year. Funds raised from illegal logging have also been used to fuel national and regional conflicts – in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Cambodia.

For more than 10 years Brussels has been working on a comprehensive plan to tackle the problem. This international seminar looks at achievements and challenges to date by celebrating ten years of 'FLEGT' and looking ahead. The EU Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (or FLEGT) aims to improve forest governance in exporting countries and, at the same time, assure EU consumers on the legality of timber imports.

Central to the workings of FLEGT is what's called the Voluntary Partnership Agreement or VPA – a legally binding trade agreement negotiated between the EU on behalf of its Member States and the governments of the timber exporting countries. Forestry issues in many timber exporting countries have tended to be dealt with in a top down fashion, with governments – often allied with timber industry interests – making decisions and implementing policies. Groups concerned about the forest environment or the many hundreds of thousands of people whose lives are dependent on the forest have usually been excluded from such policy making discussions.

To make real progress on illegal logging and key issues of forest governance it's now recognised by both the EU and many governments in timber exporting countries that other groups have to be involved – not only the timber industry but, most importantly, civil society groups and NGOs, forest dependent communities and indigenous peoples'. FERN, a Europe based NGO, has worked to ensure a broad scale involvement in the FLEGT VPA negotiating process. A recent report shows that negotiations which have taken place in six timber exporting countries – Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Congo Brazzaville (or the Republic of Congo), Ghana, Liberia and Malaysia, have lead to strengthening forest governance in these countries.

The organisers find that FLEGT VPA discussions have radically altered the negotiating and policy making landscape. For the first time local groups in most of the countries concerned have a say in decisions which vitally affect the environment and their livelihoods and future. Never before has there been such an inclusive process.

This seminar will bring together MEPs, Commission Officials, and civil society representatives from twelve VPA countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Honduras, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Malaysia, Republic of Congo and Vietnam), representatives from the EU Timber Trade Federation trade sector, and international NGOs. It will look at challenges and achievements to date from the FLEGT VPA process from the different perspectives.



Agenda

10 years of FLEGT: Achievements and (upcoming) challenges

Venue European Parliament – Room 5E2,

Tuesday 9th October 2012

- 13.15** Welcoming participants
- 13.30** Welcome by chair Yannick **Jadot**, MEP
- 13.40** Introduction by Fiona **Hall**, MEP
- 13.50** The key achievements of FLEGT, perspective from the Commission: Key note speech by Commissioner Andris **Piebalgs** (DG Development)
- 14.00** Presentation of findings on FLEGT VPA impacts by Fred **Pearce**
- 14.20** Questions and answers
- 14.30** The key achievements of FLEGT, perspective from CSO in VPA countries. Key note speech by Silas **Siakor** (SDI Liberia) and Roch **Euloge Nzobo** (OCDH RoC). Questions and Answers
- 15.20** The key achievements of FLEGT, perspective from the industry. Key note speech by Andre **de Boer**, Secretary General of the European Timber Trade Federation.
- 15.30** Panel Discussion with representatives of European and African CSO, European Commission officials and the timber trade.
- 16.30** Closing by day chair Yannick Jadot, summarising achievement
- 16.40** Drinks (with press gathering for interviews)
- 17.30** End

For more information and relevant documents, visit www.fern.org/forestguardians