**Follow up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Co-operative Republic of Guyana on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products to the European Union**

1. **Rapporteur:** Karin KARLSBRO (Renew / SE)
2. **Reference numbers:** 2022/0142M (NLE) / A9-0018/2023 / P9\_TA(2023)0035
3. **Date of adoption of the resolution:** 14 February 2023
4. **Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on International Trade (INTA)
5. **Brief analysis/assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

This European Parliament resolution strongly supports the conclusion of negotiations on the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between the EU and Guyana. It stresses the VPA’s importance in ensuring that only legally logged timber will be imported in the EU as well as the significance for the promotion of sustainable forest management practices, forest governance, law enforcement, and human rights among others. It further welcomes the high stakeholder participation and the adoption of a joint implementation framework. The resolution highlights the opportunity to boost job creation in the forestry sector and welcomes the shared goals and priorities between sectors on sustainable forest management and trade cooperation

The resolution also calls for Guyana and the EU to pursue their efforts and to ensure that logistical and technical support be provided to the VPA process in the future. It asks that the Commission report regularly to the European Parliament on the implementation of the agreement.

1. **Response to the requests in the resolution and overview of the action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

The Commission welcomes the European Parliament support to the VPA Guyana and the attention it pays to critical elements of the VPA implementation. These elements are well-covered in the VPA text as well as in the Joint implementation framework that has been set up to guide the Parties and stakeholders towards achieving the VPA objectives, including Forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT) licensing.

In line with **paragraph 4,** the VPA includes a detailed framework to guide the provision of technical and financial support to implementation and attainment of objectives, including FLEGT licensing. Article 15 (‘Supporting measures’) and Annex VII (‘Supporting measures and financing mechanisms’) lay down the areas where such support needs to be provided as well as the potential funding sources. A Joint VPA Implementation Framework has been developed to guide implementation activities while, a donors coordination group chaired by the EU Delegation and Guyana has been set up to ensure maximum efficiency and impact. Support for institutional strengthening and stakeholder capacity-building was already programmed and currently is implemented while, additional support is foreseen for critical VPA elements e.g. development of the timber legality assurance system and governance enhancements.

Regarding **paragraph 10** (gender analysis), the VPA includes gender references across different provisions to ensure not only impactful inclusion in the implementation but also precaution for and, mitigation of any potential adverse effects (Articles 17 and 18). The Joint VPA implementation framework has been developed with this objective in mind and includes specific activities in this regard, such as capacity-building of women employment and rights. EU support in this context, is guided by gender-oriented objectives.

In line with **paragraph 11**, the Commission is updating the Parliament on progress with regards to all VPAs in the context of the VPA group set up by the INTA Committee. Furthermore, EU and Guyana have agreed to discuss the impact of the EU deforestation Regulation on the VPA with the view to understanding better the opportunities and challenges for all actors, State and non-State. A working group has already been set up under the auspices of the Joint Monitoring and Review Committee to guide these discussions and agree on the most appropriate way forward.

The regional dimension of illegal logging and associated trade (**paragraph 12)** is well incorporated in the VPA in view of its scope that includes also non-EU exports as well as imported timber. In the context of the Joint Implementation Framework activities are foreseen to ensure the credibility of the system vis-à-vis all exports as well as imports of timber from the neighborhood. The Joint Monitoring and Review Committee that is responsible for monitoring and evaluating implementation progress will be paying particular attention to this issue and further guide the missions of the independent audit.

A successful implementation of the EU-Guyana VPA and fulfillment of its objectives, including FLEGT licensing would represent a best practice for the region and may inform positively the objective-, and policy-setting of neighborhood countries on forest matters, including in the follow-up of the upcoming EU-CELAC (Community of Latin American & Caribbean States) Summit.