



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2025)0119

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 (Resolution)

European Parliament non-legislative resolution of 17 June 2025 on 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 European Union (FLEGT) (05673/2025 - C10-0012/2025 - 2024/0245M(NLE))

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 European Union (FLEGT) (05673/2025),
- having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 207(4), first subparagraph, and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C10-0012/2025),
- 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)¹,

- 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 Community²,
- 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 market³ (EU Timber Regulation),
- 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 995/2010⁴ (EU Deforestation Regulation),
- 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 Deal⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 September 2020 on the EU's role in protecting and restoring the world's forests⁶,
- 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 deforestation⁷,
- having regard to the Paris Agreement and to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework on halting and reversing nature loss,
- having regard to the Partnership Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Members of

¹ OJ L 92, 6.4.2011, p. 4, ELI:
http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2011/201/oj.

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

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

⁴ OJ L 150, 9.6.2023, p. 206, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/1115/oj>.

⁵ OJ C 270, 7.7.2021, p. 2.

⁶ OJ C 385, 22.9.2021, p. 10.

⁷ OJ C 404, 6.10.2021, p. 175.

the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, of the other part¹,

- having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals,
 - having regard to the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forest and Land Use,
 - having regard to its legislative resolution of 17 June 2025² on the draft Council decision,
 - having regard to Rule 107(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Development,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on International Trade (A10-0094/2025),
- 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 EU 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 and forest conversion, enabled by poor forest governance and driven by trade, are major contributors 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 during this period;
- C. whereas nearly half of the total exports from Cameroon are directed to European markets, with timber as the third most important product after oil and cocoa; whereas all three of these sectors generally contribute to deforestation, and the growth of their production is part of Cameroon's national development strategy for 2020-2030;
- D. whereas all shipments of timber and timber products from Cameroon destined for the EU market should comply with the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) requiring operators to perform due diligence

¹ OJ L, 2023/2862, 28.12.2023, ELI:
http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_international/2023/2862/oj.

² Texts adopted, P10_TA(2025)0118.

checks to ensure the timber products they place on the EU market are legal; whereas since 2015, Cameroon has been developing a timber legality assurance system (TLAS), as required by the VPA; whereas to date, Cameroon has not fully established the TLAS and thereby cannot qualify for a FLEGT licence; whereas the TLAS is based on a legality definition, supply chain controls, verification of compliance, FLEGT licensing and an independent audit; whereas this legality verification system is not yet operational;

- E. 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, including indigenous and local communities and civil society organisations;
- F. whereas the FLEGT licensing scheme, which forms an integral part of the VPA, was expected to be in place within five years of the reform of the legal framework; whereas this licensing scheme is not yet in place, implying that the VPA between the EU and Cameroon is not operational to date; whereas the EU FLEGT VPA programme, coordinated by the French Development Agency, was not implemented in Cameroon as planned for the years 2021-2025;
- G. whereas the forest reform, launched in 2008 with the aim of revising the 1994 forest code, was finalised in July 2024 with the publication of the new Forest Code; whereas illegal logging is 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 not operational, due to corruption and insufficient resources, so enforcement and governance remain weak, making it possible for illegal and unsustainable logging operations to continue;
- H. 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;
- I. 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;
- J. whereas timber exports have shifted to Asian markets, particularly China and Vietnam diluting the economic incentive of the VPA, and consequently the relevance of the FLEGT licence; whereas Vietnam has become the second largest market for Cameroonian timber (after China), while Cameroon has become the largest supplier of tropical logs to Vietnam (accounting for 25 % of the logs imported between

2016 and 2019, in value); whereas a large part of timber trade flows concerns illegal logging, which deprives the Government of Cameroon of revenue and local communities of shared benefits; whereas the United States and the EU supported discussions between Cameroon and Vietnam to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding with the aim of improving the transparency of the timber trade between both countries; whereas transparency and traceability in timber trade flows are essential for the credibility of legality assurance schemes; whereas, in this context, the EU should continue encouraging partner countries to strengthen import controls and ensure that timber sourced from them complies with legal requirements under national and VPA frameworks;

- K. whereas the Cameroon-EU VPA entered into force in 2011; whereas, despite the initial positive impacts on legal reform, multi-stakeholder participation, access to information and transparency, the VPA process was stalled in 2018; whereas the parties agreed in 2023 to undertake a joint VPA review, with the resulting report presenting four options for next steps, one of which was termination of the VPA by consensus; whereas this report was not made public until after the Commission notified the Council of the decision to terminate; whereas the Commission made the unilateral call to end the partnership;
- L. whereas key exports from Central Africa to the EU include timber, cocoa and tropical fruits; whereas the EU and the Republic of Cameroon signed a provisional Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in 2009, which remains in force as an interim arrangement while negotiations on a full regional EPA for Central Africa are ongoing; whereas future EU-Cameroon cooperation should aim to align trade policy instruments with sustainability goals, particularly under the EU Deforestation Regulation, in order to promote consistency, mutual benefit and predictability for operators on both sides;
- M. 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;
- N. whereas the continuation of the VPA could affect the credibility of the EU as a global champion of forest protection, sustainable and multifunctional agroforestry, soil and landscape protection, biodiversity, local rural economy and human rights standards and the integrity of VPAs as EU trade instruments; whereas the unilateral termination of the agreement could also tarnish the reputation of the EU as a reliable forestry actor and defender;

- O. whereas in its communication of 7 November 2024 on a strategic framework for international cooperation engagement, the Commission suggests that forest partnerships could build on or even replace VPAs; whereas, despite the challenges, VPAs have proven to be a key instrument in laying the groundwork for improved forest governance; whereas VPAs are legally binding agreements that can be complemented by forest partnerships; whereas there is a lack of information regarding the impacts of existing forest partnerships on the improvement of governance; whereas the Commission has not informed Parliament of the criteria underpinning its engagement in forest partnerships; whereas this failure to involve Parliament prior to developing partnerships with third countries has already occurred in the past; underscores the need for the EU to remain firmly committed to other existing VPAs;
- P. whereas a move away from the VPA model towards more extractive agreements such as raw materials partnerships or non-binding memoranda of understanding will undermine the EU's credibility when it comes to the protection of biodiversity and the fight against deforestation;
- Q. whereas civil society in Cameroon is increasingly confronted with hostility and a shrinking space; whereas a circular published on 13 August 2024 obliges NGOs active in the forest sector to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife;
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 communities and countries, especially on the more vulnerable parts of society and groups such as indigenous communities;
 2. Highlights that the environmental damage caused by deforestation will have hugely negative social and economic consequences for communities engaged in forestry;
 3. Recalls that the Samoa Agreement¹ between the EU and its Member States, and the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States reaffirms that the parties must promote a multi-stakeholder approach, enabling the active engagement of a wide variety of actors in partnership dialogue and cooperation processes, including parliaments, local authorities, civil society and the private sector, that inclusive partnership dialogue and action tailored to the

¹ Partnership Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, of the other part (OJ L, 2023/2862, 28.12.2023, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2023/2862/oj).

specificities of the parties are the main tools to achieve these objectives, and that there is a need for a high level of environmental protection, while committing to halting deforestation and forest degradation as a means of protecting ecosystems as well as vulnerable communities and indigenous people, preserving biodiversity and mitigating climate change;

4. 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, the Paris Agreement and the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework on halting and reversing nature loss;
5. Recalls that in the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forest and Land Use, the EU and Cameroon reaffirmed their commitment to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030;
6. Recalls Team Europe's efforts in promoting political stability and economic development through sustainable and resilient territorial development in response to climate change;
7. Underlines that the Global Gateway strategy should support Cameroon in promoting sustainable, inclusive and green development throughout its territory;
8. Recalls that trade is an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction that helps to promote sustainable development; believes that VPAs provide an important legal framework for both the EU and its partner countries, but that this requires effective multi-stakeholder dialogue and good cooperation with and commitment from the countries concerned; recalls that in its early stages, the EU-Cameroon VPA resulted in concrete improvements, including on stakeholder participation and access to information, but that unfortunately this progress has stalled over the past 10 years; 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 forest degradation not only by illegal logging, but also by other key drivers of deforestation, such as forest conversion for agricultural use and mining;
9. Highlights the fact that addressing the root causes of deforestation, such as weak governance, ineffective law enforcement, insecure land tenures, lack of access to finance, shrinking civic space and corruption, requires the EU and its partner countries to carry out joint assessments based on the meaningful engagement of relevant stakeholders, such as indigenous people and local communities, with a view to overcoming regulatory implementation hurdles regarding transparency and traceability;

10. Stresses that a robust and credible 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;
11. Underlines the importance of including civil society and local authorities in decision-making processes, of benefit-sharing with local communities and of reinforcing security and accountability;
12. Regrets the need to end the legally binding VPA with Cameroon; agrees with the Commission that, in the light of the VPA's shortcomings, this is the best policy option for the time being and stresses the need for the Commission to keep engaging with the Government of Cameroon on forestry; expresses concern about the impact of the termination of the VPA on diplomatic and economic relations between Cameroon and the EU and on the EU's capacity to build meaningful future partnerships with the country; points out the potential negative impact on civic space, as the VPA facilitated dialogue between the Government of Cameroon and civil society; calls on the Commission to assess the impact of this decision on European businesses operating in or sourcing from Cameroon and to explore support mechanisms to preserve responsible trade channels and to ensure the sustainable management of natural resources;
13. Underlines that the EU remains a committed partner of Cameroon in fostering economic growth and comprehensive human development; calls on the Commission and the European External Action Service to engage in dialogue with the authorities of Cameroon to explore possibilities for constructive cooperation based on areas of mutual interest, combat illegal logging, support forest conservation and boost economic cooperation and trade;
14. Notes with concern that Cameroon ranks 140th out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index; 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, labour and indigenous people's rights, notably by respecting the principle of free, prior and informed consent in all circumstances when sourcing goods and products for the EU market; calls, in this context, on local authorities to extend special protections to children and indigenous communities; emphasises the importance of ensuring that civil society actors are given the necessary space and possibilities to engage with governmental actors;
15. Highlights the fact that joint consultations with local authorities in Cameroon should be strengthened to drive positive change and reinforce and boost the credibility of local governance;

16. Stresses that countries all over the world that either have or aim to have regulated import markets for legal timber would benefit from cooperating with 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 would promote long-term legal security for businesses and consumers;
17. Recognises the shortcomings of the current forestry zoning system; acknowledges that forest management plans, intended to ensure sustainability, have largely failed due to corruption and weak governance; calls for renewed cooperation between the EU and its partner countries in order to develop new practices and governance mechanisms to address these challenges;
18. Calls on the Commission to explore alternatives in close dialogue with Cameroon 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; emphasises the importance of conducting a thorough diagnostic and independent evaluation of forest governance and trade trends in Cameroon, building on existing assessments, prior to entering into negotiations on a forest partnership; underlines that in order to be effective, any potential future partnerships would have to be developed through an open, transparent, inclusive, deliberative and non-discriminatory process with meaningful participation from civil society, trade unions and local and international NGOs, the private sector including microenterprises and other small and medium-sized enterprises, local authorities, local and indigenous communities, and farmers; stresses that ending impunity in the forest sector is a cornerstone of this process, which requires the protection of environmental defenders as well as an effective system to tackle human rights violations; calls for the EU to continue supporting and engaging in dialogue with Cameroon in order to tackle the challenges arising from deforestation in a spirit of equal partnership, and to promote sustainable and inclusive development throughout its territory including by establishing the robust and transformative timber traceability systems that are necessary to comply with the expanding requirements of consumer market regulations worldwide, whether under the EU Deforestation Regulation or other foreign legislation;
19. Stresses the importance of the parliamentary oversight and monitoring of the VPA by Parliament's Committee on International Trade; underlines the need for the meaningful and timely involvement of Parliament with regard to the assessment of the implementation of existing VPAs, as well as the negotiation, signing and implementation of any future forest partnerships; stresses the need to also include consultations with civil society organisations, the private sector and particularly indigenous communities,

environmental and human rights defenders and trade unions; asks the Commission to regularly report to Parliament on the implementation of the VPAs and forest partnerships, including on the work of the joint implementation committees and on the strategies to be pursued in the coming years; highlights the need for an in-depth diagnostic and independent assessment of forest governance in Cameroon and for the relevant experiences and lessons learnt from the VPA process to be integrated into any future forest partnership;

20. Underlines that despite the unprecedented unilateral 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 the EU should remain fully committed to existing VPAs and that new VPAs with additional partners should be promoted, as they play a crucial role in facilitating transparent and accountable forest management, addressing the root causes of illegal logging, combating climate change, strengthening local people's land tenure rights and providing a tool for civil society and forest communities to be involved in decision-making processes;
21. Calls on the Commission to ensure coherence between the EU's trade and sustainability frameworks when engaging with Cameroon and the broader central African region; encourages the Commission to ensure that the requirements and objectives of the EU Deforestation Regulation and related legislation are adequately taken into account in the context of the ongoing negotiations on a full regional economic partnership agreement; underlines the importance of providing technical assistance and regulatory guidance to partner countries to help align trade practices with environmental standards, particularly in sectors such as timber, cocoa and tropical agriculture;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Cameroon and all relevant stakeholders in the Voluntary Partnership Agreement process.