

EU and Vietnam sign an agreement for better enforcement of forest law, governance and trade

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On 19 October 2018, a **voluntary partnership agreement** (VPA) between the European Union and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on **forest law enforcement, governance and trade** (FLEGT) was signed in Brussels in the margins of the EU-ASEM summit.

The aim of the agreement is to stop illegal logging and, through the FLEGT licensing scheme, to guarantee that timber imported into the EU from Vietnam is legally harvested. This is the second VPA that the EU has concluded with an Asian country after Indonesia and is particularly significant given the importance of Vietnam in the global timber market, being one of the main hubs for processing and re-export of timber.

This agreement is an important milestone in our relations with Vietnam and in our fight against illegal logging and deforestation. Our commitment to the environment is not only a slogan, but a reality.

Sebastian Kurz, federal chancellor of the Republic of Austria and president of the Council

The agreement establishes a **Timber Legality Assurance system** to monitor the timber supply chain and a **FLEGT licensing scheme** to ensure that only timber coming from legal logging can be exported to the EU market. The agreement also establishes a mechanism for dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Vietnam on the FLEGT licensing scheme, via a **Joint Implementation Committee**. Finally it establishes principles of stakeholder participation, social safeguards, accountability and transparency.

The VPA was signed by Sebastian **Kurz**, federal chancellor of the Republic of Austria, and Federica **Mogherini**, EU high representative for foreign affairs and security, on behalf of the **EU** and Nguyen Xuan **Cuong**, Minister for Agricultural and Rural Development of **Vietnam**.

Background and next steps

The **Action Plan on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)** endorsed by the Council in 2003 proposes a set of measures, including support for timber-producing countries, multilateral collaboration to tackle trade in illegal timber, support for private-sector initiatives, and measures to discourage investment in activities that encourage illegal logging. The cornerstone of the Action Plan is the establishment of **FLEGT partnerships** between the EU and timber-producing countries, aimed at stopping illegal logging.

In 2005 the Council adopted Regulation (EC) No 2173/2005 on the establishment of a FLEGT licensing scheme for imports of timber into the European Community, a mechanism that enables verification of the legality of timber imported into the EU under the FLEGT partnerships.

Negotiations for this agreement started in 2010.

The VPA will enter into force after being ratified by both the EU and Vietnam and will be binding upon the parties.

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