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From: Secretary-General of the European Commission,  
signed by Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, Director

date of receipt: 3 August 2016

To: Mr Jeppe TRANHOLM-MIKKELSEN, Secretary-General of the Council of  
the European Union

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Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT)  
Executive Summary

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Delegations will find attached document SWD(2016) 276.

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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Evaluation of the EU Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement  
Governance and Trade (FLEGT)**

**Executive Summary**

{SWD(2016) 275}

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Staff Working Document evaluates the performance of the EU Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) during the period 2003-2014.

The FLEGT Action Plan was proposed by the European Commission in May 2003<sup>1</sup> and endorsed by the Council<sup>2</sup> as a contribution to the international fight against illegal logging and associated trade. It sought to address the growing problem of illegal logging and its associated trade on the basis of cooperation between producers and consumers and a combination of demand- and supply-side measures in seven interrelated action areas: support to timber-producing countries, trade in timber, public procurement, private sector initiatives, safeguards for financing and investment, use of existing legislative instruments and conflict timber.

The evaluation finds that the Action Plan responded in an ambitious and innovative manner to the complexities of illegal logging and associated trade, and in view of the persistence of the problem it remains highly **relevant**. It suggests that its three pillars (law enforcement, governance and trade) were appropriate to tackle comprehensively the root causes of the problem. Nevertheless, the evaluation has highlighted changes in the EU and global context that may affect the relevance of the Action Plan, in particular the considerable change in patterns in the global timber trade and the increasing emphasis on climate change and deforestation linked to agricultural commodities.

The evaluation concludes that the Action Plan has been partially **effective** in that it has raised awareness of the problem of illegal logging at all levels and has contributed to improved forest governance globally and particularly in targeted countries and to reduced demand for illegal timber in the EU. The degree of effectiveness achieved in each of the action areas varies, reflecting priority given and level of investment by the various actors involved. In this respect, an important finding is that efforts have not been sufficiently adapted to the evolving international context nor tailored to the capacity of each timber-producing country.

Implementing the Action Plan has proved more complex and demanding than initially envisaged. Deficient planning and monitoring systems, inadequate coordination and insufficient human and financial resources have hampered **effectiveness** and **efficiency**.

FLEGT is recognised by EU and non-EU stakeholders from the civil society, the private sector and governments as **relatively cost-effective**. It has helped to 'raise the bar' internationally by improving forest governance, increasing the involvement of civil society, improving transparency and accountability, increasing income and creating conditions for fairer competition. Due to the complexity of collecting detailed information on FLEGT-related expenditure, the evaluation is largely based on overall estimates. Total expenditure on FLEGT over an 11-year period (2003-2014) is estimated at EUR 885 million. Most of the resources were allocated to supporting timber-producing countries. Expenditure in this action area is estimated at EUR 651 million, including EUR 277 million from the Member States and EUR 374 million from the Commission. Partner countries and stakeholders have also contributed financially to FLEGT. Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) often involve countries with widely different circumstances, so costs vary significantly and are contingent on the in-country baseline situation, political context and investment made.

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<sup>1</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament — Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) — Proposal for an EU Action Plan, COM (2003) 251.

<sup>2</sup> Council Conclusions Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) 268/2003, OJ C 268/1, 7.11.2003.

FLEGT is a good example of **policy coherence**. Its innovative design binds together, in a mutually supportive manner, development cooperation, environment and trade policies and actions within and outside the EU. It is in line with EU policies on sustainable development, environmental protection, climate change and promotion of fair trade.

The FLEGT Action Plan generates **EU added value** through EU market leverage, aid coordination and increased political weight, which could not be achieved at Member State level.

As regards **sustainability**, the Action Plan has already yielded lasting changes in producer countries including clarification of legal frameworks, policy reforms, governance, participatory processes and work on setting up verification schemes, while it is starting to influence the behaviour of EU importers and the dialogue among market players globally. However, governance challenges persist and more needs to be done to tackle illegal logging in many countries. Implementation of fully functional Timber Legality Assurance Systems in producing countries will require continued investment, to keep improving governance frameworks (institutions, laws, enforcement agencies, judiciary), to strengthen capacity in all stakeholder groups and to build or strengthen operational systems. High-level political commitment to FLEGT in the EU, and in partner countries, is an important factor in continuing to strengthen forest governance and tackle illegal logging. The EU's continued engagement with other countries e.g. China, Japan, Brazil, and international and regional institutions such as the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) also remains important.

The conclusions of the evaluation, and related exercises such as the evaluation of the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR)<sup>3</sup> and the European Court of Auditor's Special Report on FLEGT support to timber-producing countries,<sup>4</sup> will feed into reflection on how to address identified challenges and shortcomings and improve the performance of the Action Plan, taking into account the evolving global and EU context.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/eutr\\_report.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/eutr_report.htm)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=33292>