

Brussels, 16. 05. 2008
A(08)1199 - D(08)

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Dear Dr Lucas,
Dear Ms Hall,
Dear Mr Csibi,
Dear Mr Schmidt,
Dear Ms Attwooll,

Thank you for your letter of 4 April 2008 in which you express your support for a strong legislative approach to prevent the placing of illegal timber and timber products on the EU market. I would like to reassure you that your concerns and views have been taken into account. My services are currently working to develop a legislative proposal that will carry clear and binding obligations for operators and will rely on rigorous enforcement mechanisms.

I understand your questions about option 5 given that it was not put forward in the public consultation. However, the conclusion drawn following the consultation process was that we needed an approach that could capitalize on the positive elements of the options initially put forward while avoiding the drawbacks that were later identified.

Option 4B would require systematic checks to verify compliance. Such checks would entail significant regulatory costs and complex and cumbersome institutional arrangements. Experience has shown that Member States are reluctant to endorse such mechanisms unless there are direct threats to the population at large (such as food safety).

The approach taken under Option 5 is that the operators are considered best placed to establish a workable system. The system-control approach is a more proportionate approach where the focus is put on the identification of the risks and the controls necessary to minimize them rather than obtaining a single documentary proof of legality.

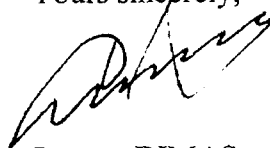
Dr. Caroline Lucas
Mrs Fiona Hall
Mr Magor Imre Csibi
Mr Fritjhof Schmidt
Mrs Elspeth Attwooll

European Parliament
Rue Wiertz
B - 1047 Brussels

I agree that traceability is one of the key principles and it will be necessary to ensure that the compliance mechanism is as strong as possible. These are issues that my services are working on. A further priority will be to close possible loopholes left by the FLEGT VPAs framework and boost its credibility. Under option 5 FLEGT licences would be considered to provide sufficient assurance in terms of the legality of the timber products covered and that would incentivise engagement in the FLEGT VPA process.

I remain determined to put forward a proposal that will address the problem of illegal logging without impeding legitimate timber trade. I am encouraged by the commitment shown by the European Parliament and I count on your continued support on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stavros Dimas', written in a cursive style.

Stavros DIMAS