



**FRANS TIMMERMANS**  
Executive Vice-President

Brussels, 15/12/2021

Dear Ms Hautala,

*I would like to thank you and the co-signatories for your letter expressing your concerns regarding the then forthcoming legislative proposal on deforestation, adopted by the European Commission on 17 November 2021<sup>1</sup>. Your vocal support throughout the past year has been instrumental in the process of drafting this legislation, which, once adopted, can be a game changer.*

*The legislative proposal put forward by the Commission aims to address the problem of deforestation and forest degradation caused by EU consumption. Its objective is to minimise the risk that commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation are placed on the EU market. The purpose of the legislation would be to promote sustainable and deforestation-free supply chains, reduce the incentives for illegal and exploitative practices in producing countries and inspire our partners to do the same. The proposal covers a series of commodities and derived products, including soy, beef, palm oil, wood, cocoa and coffee.*

*The proposal is the result of a broad public consultation (that marshalled a very strong public response), including with the European Parliament whose resolution of 22 October 2020 was carefully taken into account. The proposal also builds on EU experience on fighting illegal logging. In this regard, the proposed regulation would repeal and replace the EU Timber Regulation, as it would integrate and improve the existing system to control timber legality.*

*The Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Regulation, will, however, be maintained. To respect bilateral commitments, into which the EU has entered, and to preserve the progress achieved with partner countries, the proposal includes a provision declaring wood covered by a FLEGT license to have fulfilled the legality requirement. However, given that the proposed regulation covers not only legality but also sustainability, operators will still need to exercise due diligence to ensure that the timber they place on the EU market is deforestation-free. This means that there will be no 'green lane' access for FLEGT licensed timber.*

*./.*

---

<sup>1</sup> COM(2021) 706 final.

[https://ec.europa.eu/environment/publications/proposal-regulation-deforestation-free-products\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/publications/proposal-regulation-deforestation-free-products_en)

Ms Heidi Hautala, MEP  
European Parliament

E-mail: [heidi.hautala@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:heidi.hautala@europarl.europa.eu)

*As you rightly state, cooperation with third countries is essential in the fight against deforestation. This is reflected in a number of provisions in the proposal. Moreover, the demand-side measures of the proposed regulation should not be seen in isolation. This legislative proposal is part of a broader action plan to tackle deforestation and forest degradation first outlined in the 2019 Commission Communication on 'Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests'<sup>2</sup>.*

*In the new policy context, we aim to engage and work together with the EU partner countries covering areas such as protection, restoration and sustainable management of forests, deforestation, forest degradation and the transition to sustainable commodity production, consumption, processing and trade methods. This will be delivered through specific partnerships and cooperation programmes to further improve forest governance and management, understanding that one size does not fit all.*

*Bearing in mind the strong global support to halt deforestation, the regulation submitted to the co-legislators has been designed for global impact: the benchmarking system would assess countries in terms of deforestation linked to the production of the commodities covered in the scope. Acting as an openly available classification, it would create incentives for countries to curb deforestation regardless of the final destination of their production. We also expect to build on the EU's economic weight and set international standards.*

*The Commission is aware of the risk that producer countries will export their non-deforestation-free commodities to other markets. There is no EU proposal that can fully redress this. However, by addressing our own footprint and setting a new standard of 'deforestation-free', the EU aims to lead a global transition to sustainable agricultural supply chains.*

*To this end, we will also step up cooperation with large markets like the United States and China whose supply chains contribute significantly to global deforestation and forest degradation. We have good experience with the EU Timber Regulation, which inspired similar laws in countries like Japan, Korea, Australia and China. The US and the UK are already working on deforestation laws – and we would like those proposals to be up to the level of ambition that the EU is tabling.*

*I now look forward to work closely together with the European Parliament and the Council on the basis of our comprehensive proposal.*

*Yours sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Frans Timmermans', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Frans Timmermans

---

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/eu-communication-2019-stepping-eu-action-protect-and-restore-worlds-forests\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/eu-communication-2019-stepping-eu-action-protect-and-restore-worlds-forests_en)