

Brussels, **21 FEB. 2005**
KG/cs/ D(05) 1320

Dear Ms Riesco,

Thank you for sending me the resolution prepared at the recent meeting of the EC Forest Platform.

I welcome the EC Forest Platform initiative, as it is important to bring the European Commission closer to local civil society in developing countries, and so make the Commission more accessible to our developing country stakeholders.

There are clearly physical and non-physical barriers which serve to make it difficult for local civil society organisations to engage with the Commission, such as the sheer size of our organisation and the complexity of decision-making procedures in Brussels. Of this we are aware, and so we have been working hard to make the Commission more accessible to local civil society groups. FERN, with its deep knowledge of the European Institutions and its close links to developing country NGOs, can also help to bridge this gap. I would therefore like to wish you every success with this important initiative. I would also encourage you to build close links with the EC delegations in the countries where the EC Forest Platform initiative is active.

Turning to the declaration, I agree with the general principles you espouse. We are committed to ensuring transparency and access to information on EC co-operation activities, and we are committed to involving and consulting with civil society in relation to all aspects of our programmes of co-operation.

Regarding the specific points you raise on the EU Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), I can assure you that every effort will be made to ensure that the views of civil society organisations are taken into account during the negotiation of the FLEGT partnership agreements. That said, I would ask you to be realistic in what FLEGT partnership agreements can be expected to achieve, and not attempt to overburden them.

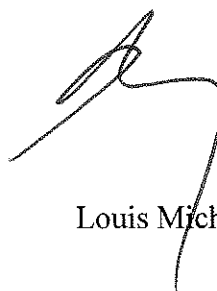
Iola Leal Riesco
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OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE :

The Commission believes that some form of independent monitoring will be essential to guarantee the credibility and effectiveness of the FLEGT licensing scheme. The terms of this monitoring will have to be negotiated with partner governments and so we cannot be overly prescriptive about the final shape it will take. Whatever form it takes, a degree of impartiality and independence will be essential..

Once again, thank you for your good work and hard effort with the EC Forest Platform. I wish you every success with the future of this work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Louis Michel', written in a cursive style. The signature starts with a large, sweeping initial 'L' and ends with a long, thin tail that curves downwards and to the right.

Louis Michel