

Members of the European Parliament
European Parliament
Strasbourg

Brussels, 3 April 2017

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

We, the undersigned organisations, call on you to **vote in favour** of the *own initiative report on Palm Oil and Deforestation of Rainforests* in the plenary next Tuesday on 4 April.

We particularly welcome the call for an EU Action Plan on Deforestation and Forest Degradation. As a major consumer and a hub of international finance, we agree that the EU has a special responsibility and that it should take immediate regulatory action to remove deforestation from the EU's supply chains and to stop banks and other financial institutions funding deforestation.

As rightly pointed out by the report, world leaders have recognised the role of forests to mitigate climate change in the Paris Agreement and, in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, they have pledged to end deforestation globally by 2020. Yet forests and peatlands are still being destroyed at an alarming rate, driven mainly by agricultural expansion and global consumer demand, including for palm oil.

The experience of recent years has shown that industry self-regulation and voluntary measures and policies alone will not stop deforestation, peatland conversion and the exploitation of people. In particular, the report highlights the fact that major certification schemes such as RSPO, ISPO and MSPO have weak standards and levels of enforcement. The reality today is that many companies who are trading in palm oil are unable to prove beyond doubt that the palm oil in their supply chain is not linked to forest and peatland destruction, or environmental degradation, or that it has been produced in full respect of fundamental human rights and adequate social standards

As acknowledged by the report, solutions, however, do exist to produce agri-commodities, like palm oil, in a responsible way, as shown for example through the development of the High-Carbon Stock approach, or through the standards developed by the Palm Oil Innovation Group. But the problem is that the pace of uptake and progress overall is too slow and does not match the urgency of the environmental crisis that we are facing.

A call on the Commission and the Member States to take forceful actions, alongside the industry and producing countries, to bring an end to deforestation, prevent peatland conversion, and promote sustainable development would be a powerful message and a step in the right direction.

In addition, the EU should provide higher support to developing countries for implementing environmentally and socially responsible production practices, and for securing the rights and livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities.

The suggestion of having binding commitments in sustainable development chapters of the EU trade and development cooperation agreements with a view to preventing deforestation is also a welcome one, as well as including an anti-deforestation guarantee in trade agreements with producing countries.

Last but not least, in order to conform to its international commitments on climate change and sustainable development, it is imperative that the EU stops supporting the use of land-based biofuels that compete with food, don't help the climate and put our ecosystems at risk. In this regard, we particularly welcome the call expressed by MEPs in the ENVI committee for a phase-out of biofuels based on vegetable oils as soon as possible and no later than 2020.

We acknowledge the extensive work by the rapporteur, the political groups and various parliamentary committees in trying to reflect the situation as it stands today, and in proposing solutions.

Yours sincerely,

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ROBIN WOOD



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