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**LIMITE**

**DEVGEN 155  
RELEX 1319  
ACP 111  
SUSTDEV 111  
COAFR 370  
FORETS 241  
ENV 1031  
CLIMA 376**

**'I/A' ITEM NOTE**

|          |                                                                                                                                   |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| From:    | General Secretariat of the Council                                                                                                |
| To:      | Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council                                                                              |
| Subject: | Commission's intention to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on a Forest Partnership with Gabon<br>- Authorisation to sign an NBI |

1. On 28 June 2022, the Commission informed the Working Party on Development Cooperation and International Partnerships (CODEV-PI) of its intention to negotiate, on behalf of the EU, bilateral Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) on Forest Partnerships with Congo, Gabon, Guyana, Mongolia, Uganda and Zambia, with a view to their signing, on behalf of the EU, in November 2022, in the margins of COP27.
2. Given that forests are essential to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in light of the EU's responsibility, as a global player, to help protect and restore forests worldwide, the Commission developed a concept of Forest Partnerships aiming to reinforce the policy dialogue and cooperation on forests with partner countries in a holistic and integrated manner.

3. The Forest Partnerships are centred on commitments around sustainable forest management, decent and sustainable jobs, the reduction of deforestation, as well as investment and trade facilitation.
4. On 4 July 2022, the CODEV-PI Working Party discussed and expressed support to the approach proposed by the Commission, with the understanding that the Commission would inform the Working Party on the advancement of the negotiations with Congo, Gabon, Guyana, Mongolia, Uganda and Zambia, and would revert to the Council at the end of the negotiation process to seek the Council's authorisation for the signing of the MoUs on behalf of the EU.
5. On 26 September 2022 the Commission informed WP CODEV-PI that the MoUs had been finalised successfully with partners<sup>1</sup>, **except for the one with Gabon because of internal procedural delays and, afterwards, the political situation in the country**, and were adopted by the Commission on 23 September 2022. No objections were raised at working party level.

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6. In June 2024, the Commission resumed the process of negotiation with Gabon, which has resulted in a MoU on a Forest Partnership with Gabon<sup>2</sup> that reflects the latest EU policy developments, notably Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 on deforestation-free products.
7. On 21 October 2024, the Commission informed WP CODEV-PI about the successful outcome of the negotiations with Gabon and its intention to sign the MoU on the occasion of the visit of the President of Gabon to Brussels in November (precise date to be confirmed), subject to the authorisation of the Council. The MoU was amended to reflect remarks received from the Member States.
8. Against that background, the Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to suggest to the Council to authorise the Commission to sign the above-mentioned Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the EU.

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<sup>1</sup> ST 12872/22 INIT + ADD 1

<sup>2</sup> ST 14670/24 REV 1