

# Illegal trade – Welcome Address

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- Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, dear guests from all parts of this world.
- Let me welcome you here, at the EESC – the institution, which presents a platform to reconcile different views and to focus on suggesting plausible solutions of discussed issues.
- This Committee consists of three equal bodies, groups of employers, employees and various interest groups (consumer organizations, NGOs)
- The aim of our activities is to provide a view of civil society on many issues that are dealt with in the EU in the most balanced way.

- European employers and employees want to produce high-quality products that do not make worse the loss of biodiversity, environmental pollution, exploitation of workers or provide funding for local warlords.
- Consumers are asking more and more for goods that have also have a proven ethical record.
- At the same time, European businesses are often exposed to strong competition from other parts of the world. It is important, in order to have a level playing field that all market players are living up to high standards

- the EESC has already been active on this issue in the field of timber and timber products. Last year, we largely expressed our support for the Commission's *Proposal for a Regulation laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market*
- We are happy to see that the Parliament and the Council seem to have found an agreement on this important regulation, and that it will be swiftly adopted (It's expected for October - here the whole legislative process, incl. our opinion: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/FindByProcnum.do?lang=en&procnum=COD/2008/0198>)

- In addition, we discuss the opinion on access to secondary raw materials that are collected in the EU and, unfortunately, they disappear in the third countries, everything paid by the EU tax payers.
- Illegal traders are always very inventive and we are always a step behind them – quite natural
- That's why we should act very fast and also in a well organized manner!
- The Committee will be listening very carefully to what the experts here present will have to say on these topics and feed it into our future