

European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1983-1984

7 March 1983

DOCUMENT 1-50/83

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

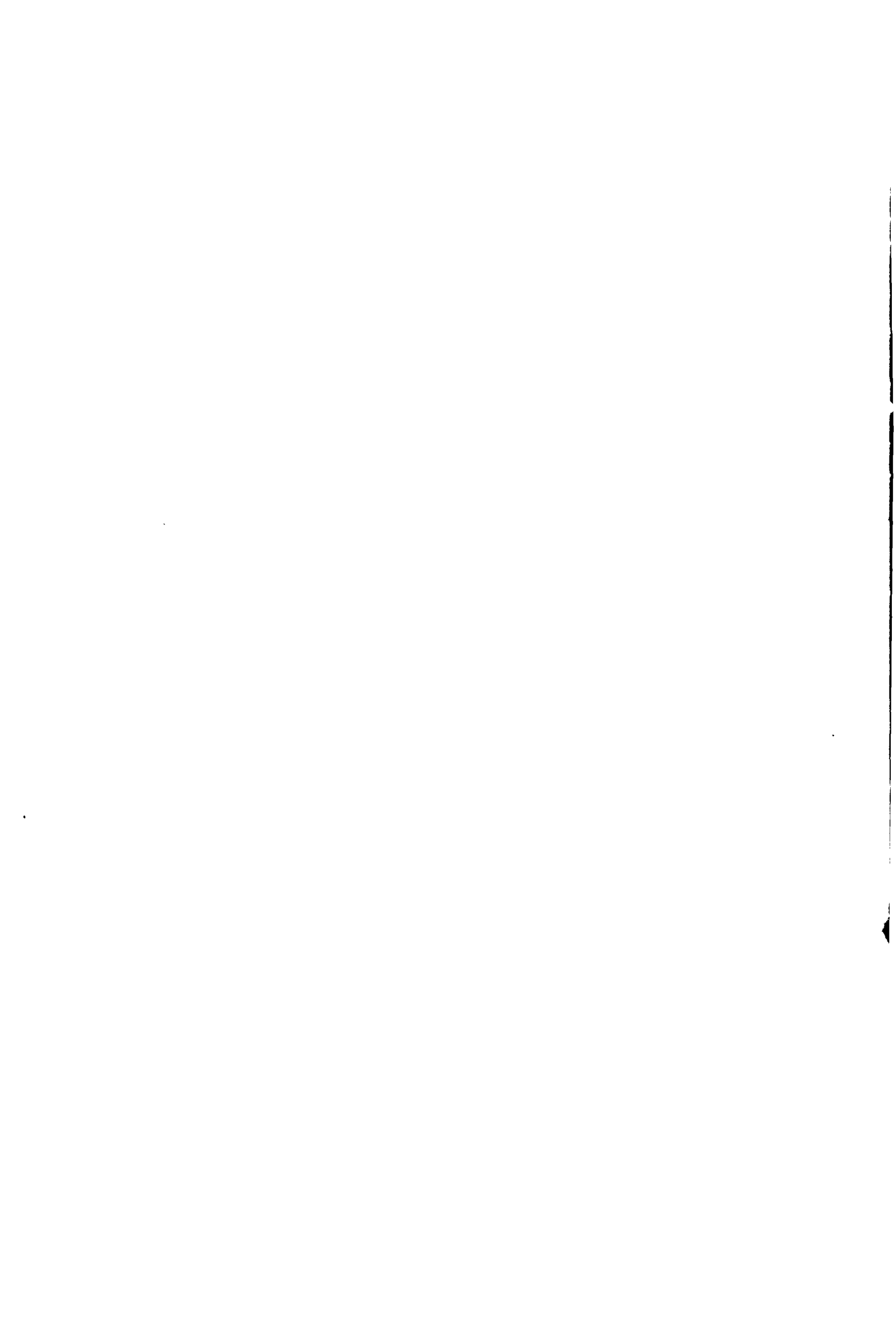
tabled by Mr MUNTINGH

on behalf of the Socialist Group

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on tropical rain forests

PE 83.893



The European Parliament,

- A. whereas tropical rain forests represent the oldest and richest ecosystems in the world,
- B. whereas of the original 1600 m hectares only about 800 m still remain,
- C. whereas these 800 m hectares of undisturbed forest are being destroyed at an estimated 6 - 20 m hectares a year, and whereas the pace of destruction is steadily increasing,
- D. whereas this means that within 40 years a large proportion of these highly complex ecosystems may have been severely impaired or wiped off the face of the earth,
- E. whereas disturbance of these ecosystems results, inter alia, in:
 - (a) increased erosion, disruption of the water cycle and degeneration of the soil,
 - (b) a major reduction in genetic resources,
 - (c) the disruption and disappearance of cultures and societies,
 - (d) a decline in timber and agricultural production,
 - (e) possible climatic changes on both a local and a world-wide scale,
- F. whereas tropical rain forests are important:
 - (a) as a source of timber,
 - (b) in regulating water drainage,
 - (c) in protecting the soil from erosion,
 - (d) in moderating the climate in surrounding areas,
 - (e) as a source of an enormous quantity of by-products such as rattan and medicines,
 - (f) as a source of new and economically important plants: cultivated varieties could be improved with the aid of wild varieties,
 - (g) as a source of genetic material,
 - (h) as a source of information on a variety of biological processes including evolution,
 - (i) as a source of revenue through the tourist industry,
 - (j) as the natural environment for many varieties of plants and animals which do not occur elsewhere,
 - (k) as the home of local tribal groups which often have unique cultures;

- G. whereas the tropical rain forests are exploited for and to a large extent by Western companies,
- H. whereas, although the Western world imports only 6% of the timber produced, the acreage of forest destroyed before and after logging amounts to far more than 6% of the area exploited, partly because migrants can enter the forest using the logging roads and clear it completely for short-term agricultural use and for the collection of firewood,
- I. whereas the Community is one of the largest timber importers in the world, and whereas timber occupies second place on the list of the Community's imports,
whereas also a major part of this timber comes from tropical rain forests,
- J. whereas 90% of rain forest grows on soil poor in chemicals and an estimated 70% of the nutrients in this soil are contained in the biomass, and whereas, using current farming methods, after 1 to 3 harvests the soil is completely exhausted and neither regeneration of vegetation nor any form of agriculture is possible any longer,
- K. whereas the consequences of erosion and disturbance of the climate and the water cycle are also fatal for agriculture on the remaining fertile soils (alluvial and rich in chemicals) in these countries,
- L. whereas with the disappearance of tropical rain forests hundreds of thousands - perhaps millions - of varieties of plants and animals will also vanish,
- M. whereas this constitutes an economic disaster as well as an ethically and aesthetically unjustifiable ecological loss,
- N. whereas it recognizes with shame that the countries of Western Europe, because of their colonial and recent past, also bear considerable responsibility for what is the greatest ecocide of all time,
- O. whereas the exploitation of tropical rain forests is regularly (if not actively) stimulated through Community subsidies and Community development programmes,

P. whereas it recognizes that behind the immediate causes of the destruction of tropical forests lie more fundamental problems such as a rapid increase in population, great inequality in land ownership, insufficient knowledge and money for sound agricultural use of the land and a lack of job opportunities,

Calls on the Commission to do all in its power to prevent the irrevocable loss of the tropical rain forests, and in so doing to consider the following measures with a view to:

- lifting the current Community barriers for processed tropical timber in order to stimulate timber processing in the exporting country;
- encouraging the tropical timber exporting countries to collect a 1% levy (or more) on the export value of tropical timber in order to focus attention on the importance of the ecological restoration of the land concerned and to make a long-term forest management policy economically viable;
- encouraging, in Treaties with the ACP countries, research into long-term forest use by the local population and into the background to deforestation;
- halting grants and projects which directly or indirectly encourage deforestation;
- stimulating reforestation projects and other ecological recovery programmes;
- encouraging the use of land planning procedures and the inclusion of ecological criteria in development projects (environmental impact statements);
- stimulating the development and use of alternative energy sources and energy-saving methods, both in the Community and in the tropics;
- encouraging the implementation of a European Forestry Policy;
- encouraging the short-term establishment of a UN code for multinationals with particular reference to timber producers;
- investigating the scope for, and where possible the introduction of, import restrictions on tropical hardwoods within the Community (levies, black list products);
- supporting international and local programmes for the protection of tropical rain forests;

- striving towards a new international order to eliminate illegitimate tenure arrangements;
- entering into consultations with the United States and Japan, to persuade these countries to adopt a similar policy;
- drawing attention to all measures taken by the Community to protect rain forests on a multilateral basis.