

## **COMMUNICATION**

**of the European Affairs Committee of the Federal Council  
of 2 May 2012**

**to the European Parliament and the Council  
pursuant to Article 23f (4) of the Austrian Constitution**

regarding

**COM (2012) 93 final**

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council on accounting rules and action plans on greenhouse gas emissions and removals resulting from activities relating to land use, land use change and forestry

The European Affairs Committee of the Federal Council deliberated on the above proposal in public session and arrived at the following conclusion:

Through the above proposal for a decision, the entire land use sector is to be formally included in the greenhouse gas policy of the Union for the period from 2013 to 2020. The legal basis for the proposal is Article 192, paragraph 2, TFEU. Greenhouse gases released (source) or removed (sink) through agricultural and forestry activities or land use changes are to be accounted for on a uniform basis throughout Europe.

As a matter of principle, the Committee welcomes proposals for climate-related measures by the European Union aimed at ensuring a harmonised approach and at preventing distortions of competition. The land use sector is of foremost importance in Austria, with enormous volumes of biomass reserves built up in recent years. From the Austrian point of view, it is particularly important to take account of the multi-functionality of services provided by rural regions and not to focus exclusively on short-term maximisation of carbon removals from the atmosphere.

It is essential to note that for Austria, as well as for other countries with high levels of wood production, it will be more difficult to achieve a higher per-capita consumption of wood than for other Member States. Moreover, drawing up annual inventories involves a considerable data capturing effort. In the preparation of additional action plans, allowance should be made for differences in the conditions of agriculture and forestry, and existing reporting obligations should be incorporated.

Although the legal basis chosen for the proposal is Article 192 paragraph 1, TFEU, there will be direct implications for forestry. Thus, a sector is being included in the scope of EU law, which is not within the sphere of competence of the European Union. Hence, measures relating directly or indirectly to forest management are only permitted insofar as they are absolutely necessary for the achievement of the objectives laid down in the Treaties.