

ACP-EC COTONOU AGREEMENT

**AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND
PACIFIC GROUP OF STATES**

**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 29 July 2006

ACP/61/045/06

ACP-CE 2117/06

ACP-EC JOINT DOCUMENT

Subject : Joint ACP-EU Declaration on the Review of the Economic Partnership
Agreements (EPAs) negotiations

The ACP-EU Council of Ministers recalls article 37.4 of the Cotonou Agreement which states:
“The Parties will regularly review the progress of the preparations and negotiations and will, in 2006, carry out a formal and comprehensive review of the arrangements planned for all countries to ensure that no further time is needed for preparations or negotiations.”

On this basis, the Joint Committee of Ambassadors, as mandated by the Joint ACP-EU Council, agrees that the following course of action should be undertaken:

1. The review shall be undertaken jointly in each of the regional EPA negotiations. This process, which shall be formal, shall be initiated at the joint technical negotiating level and completed at the level of chief negotiators with the objective of agreeing a joint text.
2. The review shall be comprehensive to include the structure, process and substance of the negotiations and shall assess what progress has been achieved on both trade and development issues (including, *inter alia*, regional integration, flexible and asymmetric approaches to trade liberalisation, effective ACP access to EU markets and rules of origin, capacity building, regulatory issues, safeguard measures etc.).
3. In order to arrive at a coherent result on horizontal issues, the parties shall ensure that both ACP and EU Member States are kept informed regularly throughout the review process.

4. The parties to each regional EPA negotiation shall assess jointly the work plan of negotiations, in order to identify any necessary measures to support the timely completion of the negotiations before the January 1st 2008 deadline for entry into force of the new arrangements. Furthermore, the review shall identify any ratification procedures necessary to support the effective implementation of the EPAs in ACP regions.

5. The following issues, *inter alia*, shall constitute elements of all regional reviews:
 - 5.1. Assessment of the state of play of the negotiations, including outstanding issues and major obstacles (core objectives and principles; regional integration; trade in goods and services; trade-related aspects; institutional and legal issues and other relevant issues);
 - 5.2. Assessment of the development aspects, such as the development content of the above trade and trade related provisions;
 - 5.3. Assessment of the EPA negotiation work plans/road-maps up to the end of 2007;
 - 5.4. Assessment of the contribution of Regional Preparatory Task Forces, where they have been constituted, and of the link between EPA implementation and the support from the European Development Fund, EU Member States or other donors on a national or regional level;
 - 5.5. Assessment of measures necessary to support the timely completion of the negotiations (capacity to complete and to conclude the negotiations) as well as implementing the Agreement reached;
 - 5.6. Assessment of whether more time is needed to effectively conduct the negotiations;

- 5.7. Assessment of the coherence between ACP regional integration processes and EPA commitments;
- 5.8. Any other negotiation-related issue that either side may consider relevant to the successful completion of the negotiation.
6. The joint review shall be organised at regional level in the first instance. The results of each review, together with inputs from the all-ACP level, shall be finalised in 2006 and presented in a consolidated document to the ACP-EU Joint Ministerial Trade Committee. The ACP-EU Council of Ministers Meeting scheduled for the first half of 2007 will consider the report of the JMTC which may include recommendations and pave the way for the finalisation of the EPA negotiations at the end of 2007.
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