

EC/Côte d'Ivoire stepping stone Economic Partnership Agreement

2008/0136(NLE) - 10/07/2008 - Preparatory document

PURPOSE: to conclude the **stepping stone** Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the **Côte d'Ivoire**, of the other part.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

BACKGROUND: the **stepping stone EPA** has been negotiated with Côte d'Ivoire in order to avoid disrupting trade between this country and the Community on the expiry on 31 December 2007 of the trade provisions set out in Annex V of the Cotonou Agreement and the WTO waiver that covered them, and pending the completion of a comprehensive EPA with the whole West African region.

Following the initialling of this Agreement respectively on 7 December 2007, Côte d'Ivoire was added to the list of countries benefiting from an EPA trade regime established by [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1528/2007](#), adopted on 20 December 2007. This Regulation provided for an advance application of the EPA trade regime.

The negotiation of a full EPA with the whole West African region continues, consistently with the negotiating directives for EPAs with the ACP States adopted by Council on 12 June 2002. The countries of this region are:

- Benin,
- Burkina Faso,
- Ivory Coast,
- Guinea Bissau,
- Mali,
- Niger,
- Senegal,
- Togo,
- Cape Verde,
- Gambia,
- Ghana,
- Guinea,
- Liberia,
- Nigeria,
- Sierra Leone,
- Mauritania.

CONTENT: the stepping stone EPA, which the Commission request the Council to conclude on behalf of the Community, after assent by the European Parliament, contains provisions on:

- Trade in Goods,
- Customs and Trade Facilitation,
- Technical Barriers to Trade,
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

There are also **Development Cooperation provisions** setting out priority areas of action for the implementation of the EPA. Each individual substantive chapter of the Agreement includes specific areas

of cooperation and a Development Cooperation declaration establishes the link with the EU Aid for Trade strategy and recalls the Commission's and Member States' intention to contribute to a regional development fund.

The Agreement also foresees the continuation of negotiations at regional level on investment, services and trade related issues and provides that the full regional EPA will supersede it once concluded.

Provisional application: pending the entry into force of the stepping stone EPA, the stepping stone EPA foresees the provisional application of the Agreement (see COM(2008)0438).

Lastly, the European Parliament will be called upon to give its assent to the conclusion of the stepping stone EPA.