Resolution on the Interim Partnership Agreement between the EC and the Pacific States

2009/2543(RSP) - 25/03/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 23 March 2009, the European Parliament adopted by 529 votes to 116 with 19 abstentions a resolution on the Interim Partnership Agreement between the Pacific States, on the one part, and the European Community, on the other part. The resolution was tabled on behalf of the Committee on International Trade.

Parliament noted that of the 14+1 (East Timor) ACP Pacific States to date only Papua New Guinea and the Fiji Islands have initialled the IEPA. It stresses that such agreements cannot be regarded as satisfactory unless they achieve three objectives: offering the ACP countries support for sustainable development, promoting their participation in world trade and strengthening the regionalisation process. Members emphasise that, in order to achieve protection from potential negative consequences in opening the Pacific States' economies, support from the EU must be provided to bring real benefits though trade preferences, and build economic and social development. They encourage the parties to take every measure to be able to finalise a comprehensive EPA between the ACP countries and the EU before the end of 2009 as planned.

Parliament emphasises that the signing of the IEPA is a necessary step towards sustainable growth in this region as a whole, and underlines the importance of the continual negotiations towards a comprehensive agreement encouraging increased trade, investment and regional integration.

It calls for the following:

- the Commission not to put pressure on Pacific States to accept liberalisation commitments in services and the so-called 'Singapore issues';
- the ACP countries to further the process of liberalisation, to extend such reforms beyond trade and goods and to increase the liberalisation of trade and services;
- a strong regulatory framework to be put in place in the event of negotiations on services to ensure that there is universal service provision and that essential public services are kept outside the negotiating framework;
- the EU to provide increased assistance to the authorities in the ACP countries and to the private sector to facilitate the transition of the economies following the signing of the IEPA;
- the relevant countries to provide transparent information about the economic and political situation in these countries in order to improve cooperation with the Commission;
- the negotiators of any comprehensive EPA to account fully for the transparent management of natural resources;
- further lowering of tariffs between developing countries and regional groups, which today account for 15 to 25 % of the trade value, to further promote south - south trade, economic growth and regional integration;
- the Commission to do its utmost to restart the negotiations on the DDA and ensure that trade liberalisation agreements continue to promote development in poor countries;
- on the chapter on trade defence with, both parties should avoid unnecessary use of bilateral safeguards and the Commission should accept, with a view to concluding a comprehensive EPA, a revision of the safeguards contained in the interim EPA in order to guarantee appropriate, transparent and quick utilisation provided that the criteria for their application are met;

- the Commission to offer maximum flexibility in the continued negotiations, and to consider requests made by the Pacific States to renegotiate for the full EPA certain contentious issues in the Interim EPA that it wishes to amend or withdraw;
- the implementation of the IEPA and negotiations for a full EPA must pay due regard to the integration processes in the Pacific region;
- both parties to adhere to their agreed commitment to conclude negotiations on competition and government procurement only when adequate capacity has been built;
- an early determination and provision of the share of the Aid for Trade resources. These funds should be additional resources and not be merely repackaging of funding under the European Development Fund. They should conform to the priorities of Papua New Guinea and Fiji Islands;
- the Commission should not negotiate pharmaceutical-related TRIPS-plus provisions affecting public health and access to medicines in the full EPA.

Lastly, Parliament stresses that the full EPA agreement should include a revision clause and a global assessment impact, in order to determine the socio-economic impact of the agreement. The European Parliament and the Pacific States' Parliaments should be involved in any revision of the agreement.

This resolution should be read in parallel with the Interim Partnership Agreement which is the subject of a separate assent procedure (see AVC/2008/0250).