

Resolution on a framework for an Economic Partnership Agreement between the EC and the East African Community Partner States

2009/2541(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 497 votes to 106 with 17 abstentions a resolution on the agreement establishing a framework for an Economic Partnership Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, on the one part, and the East African Community Partner States, on the other part. The resolution was tabled on behalf of the Committee on International Trade. It recalls that the EAC is the only region in which all members have joined the IEPA and offered identical liberalisation schedules, and it points out that these need to be assessed regularly and revised if they prove too burdensome to implement.

Parliament believes that the IEPA must contribute to revitalising trade between ACP countries and the EU, increased economic growth, regional integration, economic diversification and the reduction of poverty and the achievement of the MDGs. It therefore urges flexible implementation that fully takes account of the capacity constraints of EAC Partner States. 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. In achieving protection from negative consequences from opening the EAC Partner States' economies, support from the EU must be provided in order to bring real benefits through trade preferences, and building economic and social development. Members reaffirm their view that, if appropriately designed, EPAs represent an opportunity to revitalise ACP-EU trading relations, promote ACP economic diversification and regional integration and reduce poverty in the ACP countries. 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 calls for a regulatory framework to be put in place during the transition from an interim to a full EPA with regard to services, and steps to ensure, where possible, that universal service provisions are in place, including for essential public services. It also requests that any agreements between the EU and countries of the eastern and southern Africa region must not contradict each other or impede regional integration in this wider region.

Parliament goes on to call for the following:

- increased and adequate assistance to the authorities in ACP countries and to the private sector in order to facilitate the transition of their economies following the signing of the IEPA;
- clarification of the actual distribution of funds throughout the ACP region stemming from the pledged priority spending within the increased Aid for Trade budget;
- the relevant countries to provide clear and transparent information about the economic and political situation and development in these countries in order to improve cooperation with the Commission;
- both parties to adhere to their agreed commitment to conclude negotiations on competition and government procurement only when adequate capacity has been built;
- the EAC Partner States receive an equitable share of the commitment to increase the EU's collective trade-related assistance to EUR 2 billion (2 000 000 000) annually by 2010 (EUR 1 billion from the Community, EUR 1 billion from the Member States);
- an early determination and provision of the share of the Aid for Trade resources. These funds should be additional resources and not merely a repackaging of EDF funding, and they should

conform to EAC priorities. Their disbursement should be timely, predictable and in line with the execution schedules of national and regional strategic development plans. Parliament opposes any kind of conditionality linked to the EPAs in the matter of granting European aid and calls on the Commission to guarantee that access to the funds of the 10th EDF is kept separate from the results and pace of the negotiations;

- the Commission not to negotiate pharmaceutical-related TRIPS+ provisions affecting public health and access to medicines in the full EPA, to refrain from requesting adherence to or acceptance of the obligations of the Patent Cooperation Treaty and the Patent Law Treaty, to refrain from incorporating the terms of Directive 2004/48/EC on the enforcement of intellectual property rights, and not to introduce disciplines such as non-original database protection in the full EPA;
- the negotiators of any full EPA to account fully for the transparent management of natural resources and to outline the best practices necessary in order that the ACP countries make the maximum gains from such 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 consider requests made by the East African Community to renegotiate for the full EPA certain contentious issues in the Interim EPA that it wishes to amend or withdraw;
- the ACP countries to further the process of liberalisation and encourages the extension of such reforms beyond trade and goods and an increase in the liberalisation of trade and services;
- exports of mining and wood products should not disturb the fragility of an ecosystem that plays a key role for the African continent, and the EPA should provide for mechanisms to reward environmental services provided by the EAC Partner States;
- appropriate and transparent monitoring mechanisms – with a clear role and influence – to follow the impact of EPAs with increased ACP ownership and broad stakeholder consultation.

This resolution should be read in parallel with the EAC Agreement which is the subject of a separate assent procedure (see [AVC/2008/0169](#)).