

# Resolution on the implementation of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (IEPA) between the European Community and the Eastern and Southern Africa States, in the light of the current situation in Zimbabwe

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The European Parliament adopted 523 votes to 93 with 16 abstentions a resolution on the implementation of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (IEPA) between the European Community and the Eastern and Southern African States, in the light of the current situation in Zimbabwe.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, and ECR groups.

It highlights the provisional entry into force of the IEPA as an important step towards enhancing the partnership between the EU and the four African countries concerned, and notes that interim economic partnership agreements may be considered as a **first step in the process towards full EPAs**, thanks to the inclusion not only of rules on trade in goods but also of chapters on rules of origin and the protection of infant industry. Members underline the importance of continuing negotiations with a view to arriving at a full agreement aimed at encouraging increased open and fair trade, investment and regional integration, stressing also that the EU must promote fair trade between itself and developing countries this includes paying a fair price for resources and agricultural products from developing countries. They call on the Commission to **upgrade negotiations** with the seven remaining countries of the region and to adopt a development-friendly approach that is both in line with the strategic objectives and priorities of the region and its countries and in conformity with WTO rules.

**Zimbabwe:** Parliament **deplores the absence of a strong human rights clause** in the IEPA, and repeats its call for trade agreements concluded by the EU to include binding human rights clauses. It also regrets the **omission of a chapter on sustainable development and of a requirement to respect international labour and environmental standards**. It states that, although the current situation in Zimbabwe with regard to human rights and democracy has shown signs of improvement, there remain many challenges for future cooperation between the Union and Zimbabwe, notably the full implementation of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and an end to all forms of harassment and human rights abuses. Whilst considering the entry into force of the Human Rights Commission Act in Zimbabwe as a step forward as part of the agreed roadmap for credible elections, it expresses its concern about **continuing abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Zimbabwe**, which are undermining the commitments made by Zimbabwe's Government of National Unity in recent years, and in particular about recent incidents of harassment of human rights defenders, journalists and members of civil society in Zimbabwe. Members call on the Government of Zimbabwe to take all the necessary measures to ensure that no one is subjected to harassment or intimidation for addressing human rights issues. They emphasise that freedom of assembly, association and expression are essential components of democracy to which Zimbabwe fully committed itself under the GP, and draw attention to the **current consent procedure**, emphasising that the ratification of the IEPA with the European Union is a further opportunity to reiterate the need for full implementation of those commitments and obligations. Parliament **reaffirms its willingness to use all the tools at its disposal** should there be a significant deterioration in the human rights situation, including, inter alia, considering the use of the provisions set out in Article 65 of the Agreement (the 'non-execution' clause).

Under the circumstances, the suspension of EU development cooperation (under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement) should be maintained, but the EU remains committed in its support for the local population. Parliament supports the **targeted measures** the EU currently has in place, which are a response to the political and human rights situation in Zimbabwe, with annual decisions allowing the EU to keep senior figures in the Zimbabwean Government under constant review. These measures will not be affected by the IEPA.

The EU delegation in Harare is asked to continue to offer its assistance to Zimbabwe's Government of National Unity in order to improve the human rights situation with a view to peaceful and credible elections in line with the standards the EU would expect of any of its trading partners.

Parliament calls on the Zimbabwean Government to take the necessary steps, including restoration of the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights and, in particular, a peaceful and credible constitutional referendum and electoral preparations that meet recognised international standards, to enable the targeted measures to be suspended.

Lastly, it considers that Zimbabwe is showing **flagrant disregard** for international agreements and its own domestic laws by continuing to permit the sale of **illegal elephant ivory**, and it calls on the Zimbabwean Government to enforce the identification and prosecution of those implicated in the illegal export and trade of ivory and, furthermore, to work on increasing transparency in Zimbabwe's **extractive industries**, in order to ensure that wealth accrued from the legal exploitation of the country's natural resources is properly accounted for and benefits all Zimbabweans.