

# EC/Ghana stepping stone Economic Partnership Agreement

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The Committee on International Trade adopted the report by Christofer FJELLNER (EPP, SE) on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the stepping stone Economic Partnership Agreement between Ghana, of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament should **give its consent** to the conclusion of the Agreement.

The committee recalled that with the signature of the EU-West Africa Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) taking additional time, Ghana (and subsequently Côte d'Ivoire) has decided to proceed with ratification of its Stepping Stone Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union, concluded back in 2007.

The deal ensures a contractual safety net, warranting a duty-free access to the EU market until the regional agreement comes into a fruition. The IEPA matches market access opportunities with provisions addressing technical barriers to trade and helping Ghanaian exporters meet Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) requirements.

No less important is the co-operation aimed at strengthening capacity in fiscal reforms, improving business climate, competitiveness, trade facilitation and customs co-operation.

Therefore, Parliament is called upon to give consent to this interim agreement which would open doors to its provisional application in order to allow Ghanaian exporters to preserve the duty-free preferences on the European market.