

EC/Pacific States Interim Partnership Agreement: accession of Solomon Islands

2019/0099(NLE) - 04/06/2019 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to approve, on behalf of the European Union, Solomon Islands' accession to the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Union, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: on 12 June 2002, the Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States.

The Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part, which establishes a framework for an Economic Partnership Agreement, was signed in London on 30 July 2009. The Interim Partnership Agreement has been provisionally applied by Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Samoa since 20 December 2009, 28 July 2014 and 31 December 2018, respectively. The Agreement lays down the provisions regarding the accession of other Pacific Island States.

In accordance with the Agreement, Solomon Islands submitted to the Council on 4 June 2018 an application for membership and an offer of market access. The Commission examined Solomon Islands' offer and, after modifications, has found it acceptable. Accordingly, the Commission concluded negotiations with Solomon Islands on 23 October 2018.

CONTENT: the draft Council decision concerns the approval, on behalf of the Union, of Solomon Islands' accession to the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Union, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part, subject to the deposit of the Act of Accession by Solomon Islands.

The EPA is a development-oriented trade agreement, which offers asymmetric market access to Solomon Islands and allows it to shield sensitive sectors from liberalisation, while providing a large number of safeguards and a clause for infant industry protection. It further contains provisions on the rules of origin that facilitate Solomon Islands' exports into the EU.

Over the course of its implementation, the EPA will largely relieve EU exporters of industrial products to Solomon Islands from paying customs duties. Indeed, the EPA covers 90.3% of tariff lines, or 83% of the EU's export volume over 15 years.

The Agreement also contains provisions on sustainable development.

In accordance with the Agreement, the Union and Solomon Islands are to apply the Agreement on a provisional basis ten days after they have notified each other in writing that the necessary procedures have been completed.