EC/ACP agreement: partnership agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific States

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PURPOSE : to conclude a Partnership Agreement between the African Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Union. CONTENT : the new Agreement marks a fundamental reform of the relationship between the ACP States and the Community and its Member States, building on the acquis of the previous successive Lomé Conventions. The Agreement is to be concluded for a period of 20 years, with a possible revisions every 5 years, and a financial protocol for each 5 year period. Some components of the Agreement such as implementation procedures for financial support or sectoral policy guidelines will be reviewed and adapted, if necessary by the ACP-EC Council of Ministers, which as a rule will meet once a year. This new approach should allow for more flexibility and give the opportunity to adapt to the cooperation system to changing realities. With regard to the content of the new Agreement, it combines politics, trade and development. It is based on 5 independent pillars: 1) a comprehensive political dimension: the agreement contains provisions for an enhanced political dialogue between the parties. The respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law are essential elements of the partnership. A consultation procedure has been drawn up in cases of violation of these essential elements. In cases of special urgency appropriate measures may taken without prior consultation. It also contains a commitment to good governance as a fundamental element of the partnership and a consultation procedure in serious cases of corruption. 2) the promotion of participatory approaches: the agreement contains innovative provisions to promote participatory approaches with a view to ensuring the involvement of civil society and economic and social players by providing them with adequate information on the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, in particular within the ACP countries. 3) a strengthened focus on the objective of poverty reduction : poverty reduction is the central objective of the new partnership as formulated in the general provisions of the agreement and the provisions will guide development strategies. Cooperation strategies will reflect international commitments including conclusions of UN conferences, international development strategies, in particular the OECD DAC strategy. 4) the setting up of a new framework for economic and trade cooperation : the EU and the ACP States have agreed on a process to establish new trading arrangements that will pursue trade liberalisation between the parties and formulate provisions in trade-related matters. The negotiations on economic partnership agreements will start by September 2002 at the latest. The present regime will be maintained during the preparatory period (2000-2008 at the latest). 5) and a reform of financial cooperation : development finance cooperation will be implemented on the basis of and be consistent with the development objectives, strategies and priorities established by the ACP States, at both national and regional levels. The instruments have been regrouped and rationalised. Thetoality of EDF resources available will be channelled through two instruments - one envelope for providing grants and one for providing risk capital and loans to the private sector. Lastly, since this Agreement is a mixed Agreement it will also have to be ratified by the Member States according to their constitutional provisions. It should be noted that 6 countries have requested to become members of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement (Federal States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Palau, Nauru, Cook Islands and Niue). The European Parliament will be asked to give its assent to the conclusion of the Agreement.