Recommendations for the negotiation of economic partnership agreements with ACP regions and countries

2002/2097(INI) - 26/09/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Yasmine BOUDJENAH (EUL/NGL, France) regarding the negotiation of partnership countries with the ACP countries. (Please refer to the document dated 03/09/02.) Parliament pointed to the huge differences that exist between the EU and ACP countries. Before liberalisation and a system of trade reciprocity are introduced, trade obstacles (non-tariff barriers, subsidies for EU products) and structural obstacles (product processing deficit, technological backwardness, weakness of local market) should be gradually lifted since they have been major factors preventing the ACP countries from taking full advantage of the non-reciprocal facilities which currently exist. In order to be able to export finished products to the EU, temporary selective protection measures are essential. The purposes of closer cooperation between the EU and ACP in the WTO are as follows: -a flexible interpretation of the principle of "special and differential treatment" which will enable the EU's system of non-reciprocal trade facilities for the ACP to be extended beyond 2008, so as to enable those countries to develop; -consolidation of the commodity protocols and extension to other products that are important to ACP development; -reconsideration of the TRIPs Agreement to facilitate technology transfer, to relax conditions for granting manufacturing patents to protect public health, and to protect biodiversity. With regard to the negotiation process, Parliament was concerned to ensure that the structure and organisation should be decided upon by both parties free from any pressure. The right of least-developed countries to non-reciprocal trade preferences must be respected. The political cohesion of the ACP group should be preserved, and there is a need for flexibility in the Commission's approach to the negotiations in order to accommodate the different levels of development of the ACP countries. A uniform approach would be counterproductive.