

The impact of economic partnership agreements on development

2005/2162(INI) - 10/04/2006

The Council adopted conclusions reconfirm its commitment to the ongoing negotiations with all six ACP regions and its support to allow the timely conclusion and entry into force by 1 January 2008 of the Cotonou Agreement, of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) as development instruments complementary to the overall development efforts in order to eradicate poverty and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Council is committed to an ambitious outcome of the EPA negotiations with a view to substantial improvements in regional integration and access for ACP products to EU markets. At the same time, the Council recalls its support for asymmetric and flexible EPA arrangements and the preferential market access for the ACP countries, in line with development needs and WTO requirements.

The Council confirms that to achieve the objectives of the EPAs, fostering regional integration of ACP countries as well as into the world economy, donor assistance should among others be directed to:

- assisting ACP countries to negotiate trade agreements tailored to their needs and capacities e.g. through impact assessment studies and other instruments;
- supporting ACP countries to become more active players in the framework of multilateral trade, and enhance South-South trade;
- helping the ACP countries to establish transparent and predictable rules to spur investment and growth and liberalise services that are key to their development interests;
- addressing agriculture and food security as key elements in the negotiations and supporting the development of regional agricultural markets based on an adequate market regulatory framework;
- providing financial support for building trade capacity and competitiveness and implementing supply side reforms linked to EPAs and WTO implementation;
- assisting ACP countries to comply with rules and standards and reduce non-tariff barriers to trade;
- supporting ACP countries facing adjustment needs arising from EPA implementation or regional and multilateral liberalisation efforts through adequately tailored instruments.

The Council therefore supports the Regional Preparatory Task Forces (RPTFs) as key structures to link the EPA negotiations with accompanying development assistance. Member States are invited, in coordination with the Commission and other donors, to supplement and support these EPA-related activities organised via the RPTFs with their own ongoing bilateral and multilateral development assistance.