

José Manuel Barroso  
President of the European commission  
1049 Brussels, Belgium

Brussels, 5 March 2008

Dear Sir.

Re: civil society concerns about the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)

We are writing to convey our deep concerns about the interim Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), which a number of African countries initialled at the end of 2007 under immense pressure and in haste. The deals were initialled primarily to avoid trade disruption and on the understanding that they were merely temporary instruments, the content of which would be revisited.

These interim arrangements have a number of fundamental flaws that threaten to seriously undermine the development and regional integration for African countries, as defined in the Cotonou Agreement, and to which Europe has firmly committed its support.

These proposed agreements require an unprecedented level of economic opening which is far higher than required by the WTO and prohibit African countries from using trade policies to foster value-addition and economic diversification, which are formal objectives of Cotonou. Moreover, the safeguards in the interim EPAs fail to provide adequate protection for agriculture. In addition, African countries are prohibited from giving more preferential treatment to third countries, undermining the objective of enhancing South-South trade. In return, Europe makes no binding commitments on the priority areas for African governments, such as improving rules of origin, addressing trade distorting agricultural subsidies, or increasing development assistance.

As a result of the contradiction between the contents of the interim EPAs and the development aspirations of African governments, more than half of the African countries have not initialled agreements, despite enormous pressures. Those who have initialled deals have done so with serious concerns about their implications for development.

Given the above, in their December declaration, African Trade Ministers “stressed the need for revisiting the provisions which might be incompatible with their development goals and inconsistent with the binding provisions of the Cotonou Agreement”. They welcomed the assurances you gave at the Lisbon Summit that the contentious clauses would be opened up for re-negotiation. Their statement was re-

affirmed by African Heads of State in the African Union Assembly Declaration of February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

We are therefore concerned that “in-action” could worsen the already tense relationship between Europe and Africa. We strongly urge you to honour your commitment and ensure that African governments have the opportunity to effectively address the fundamentally flawed interim EPAs. In addition, we urge you to respect the strong reservations from those countries that did not initial, by ensuring that real alternatives are negotiated.

Yours sincerely.

Signed by:

ACORD – Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development  
ActionAid International  
Action for Southern Africa, UK  
Africa-Europe Faith & Justice Network (AEFJN)  
Africa Contact, Denmark  
AGEZ – Austrian NGDO Platform  
Alternative Information and Development Centre, South Africa  
ATTAC France  
ATTAC Denmark  
Both ENDS , Netherlands  
Brot fuer die Welt (Bread for the World), Germany  
CBM (Christian Blind Mission), Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy, United Kingdom  
Centre for Development Initiatives, Uganda  
Centre National de Coopération au Développement-11 11 11, Belgium  
Christian Aid, UK  
Church Development Service (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst), Germany  
Civil Society Trade Network, Zambia  
Coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement -11.11.11, Belgium  
Coalition nigérienne contre les APE, Niger  
Comhlamh, Ireland  
Coordinadora de ONGD de Euskadi, Spain  
Coordinating Assembly of Non Governmental Organisations, Swaziland  
Congress of South African Trade Unions - COSATU, South Africa  
Conseil National des ONG pour Développement du DRC, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Council of Swaziland Churches  
CRBM, Italy  
Das Hunger Projekt, Germany  
Desafio Miqueias - Micah Challenge, Portugal  
Development for Peace Education, Lesotho  
Diakonia, Sweden  
Econews Africa, Kenya  
Economic Justice Network, South Africa  
Enda Tiers Monde, Senegal  
FAIR, Italy  
Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme  
Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission ( FELM), Finland  
Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung, Germany

Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland  
Friends of the Earth, Ireland  
Foundation for Socio-Economic Justice (FSEJ), Swaziland  
Germanwatch, Germany  
Gresea, Belgium  
ICCO, The Netherlands  
Institute of Global Responsibility, Poland  
Kenya Human Rights Commission, Kenya  
Kepa, Finland  
Kirchliche Arbeitsstelle Suedliches Afrika, Germany  
KOSA Koordination Südliches Afrika, Germany  
Labour Resource and Research Institute, Namibia  
Mani Tese, Italy  
Mwengo, Zimbabwe  
MS Danish Association for International Co-operation  
National Union of Namibian Workers  
Netzwerk Afrika Deutschland, Germany  
Oxfam international  
PELUM Association, East & Southern Africa  
RODADDHD (Réseau nigérien des ONG de Développement et Associations de  
Défense des Droits de l'Homme et de la Démocratie), Niger  
SADC Council of NGOs, SADC region  
SEATINI, Uganda  
Skillshare Southern Africa  
Solidarité, France  
Solsoc, Belgium  
Tearfund, UK  
Terra Nuova, Italy  
Terre des hommes, Germany  
Third World Network Africa, Ghana  
Traidcraft, UK  
Trade Watch, Italy  
Transnational Institute, the Netherlands  
Trócaire, Ireland  
Vredeseilanden, Belgium  
Wallie Roux, formerly of MEATCO, Namibia  
War on Want, UK  
Welthaus Bielefeld, Germany  
World Development Movement, UK  
World Rural Forum, Spain

Please reply to our letter via Marc Maes, Trade Policy Officer of 11.11.11 (Flemish North-South Movement), Vlasfabriekstraat 11, B-1060 Brussels, [marc.maes@11.be](mailto:marc.maes@11.be), Tel: +32 2 536 11 36; fax +32 2 536 19 06.