



STOP UNFAIR TRADE
DEALS BETWEEN EUROPE
AND ACP COUNTRIES

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Dear Prime Minister, José Sócrates

28 June 2007

In recent months the EU's negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the ACP countries have entered a critical phase and the European Commission (EC) has now made detailed proposals for EPA texts in all ACP regions. There is increasing pressure from the EC for a deal to be struck before the expiry of the WTO waiver in six months time. This pressure is exacerbated by the EC's threat to raise tariffs on ACP exports if a deal is not completed by the end of this year. As the EPA negotiations move towards their climax, we are deeply concerned to ensure that the livelihoods and future of millions of poor people are placed at the core of the negotiations, and that these priorities are not sacrificed in the interests of meeting the deadline.

The conclusions adopted in May of this year by, respectively the EU Council and the Joint ACP-EU Council, reiterated commitments to sustainable development and poverty eradication, but all the signs emanating from the negotiations suggest that these commitments are not being honoured in the negotiating room. Analysis of the EC's proposed texts shows they go far further than what is required for conformity with WTO rules, and are in many ways antithetical to development. This concern applies, for instance, to services and to the other trade-related issues that the European negotiators continue to push forward despite the right of ACP countries to choose whether or not to negotiate them. For example, on 25th May 2007, the Financial Times published an open letter from a group of world-renowned intellectual property experts to the European Commission, arguing that the EC's EPA proposals on intellectual property would 'retard rather than foster their [ACP countries'] social and economic improvement'.

Europe is also failing to put development at the heart of its market access requests. Although EU member states agree on the need to support regional integration among ACP countries, the negotiating position of the EC could result in the opposite. Europe has achieved regional

integration by protecting and promoting its regional market, and supporting producers in agriculture and industry to become competitive. Yet, it is exactly such measures that are being denied to the ACP regions. They are being asked to open their regional markets to the EU before their producers and regional markets have had the opportunity to mature.

As the deadline approaches there is immense pressure to conclude negotiations. Assurances from both sides that the EPAs “will be concluded in time” appear to ignore the great amount of work that still lies ahead. The issues on the table are complex, and given the impact they could have on the development of the world’s poorest countries they must be thoroughly analysed and debated. To date this has not happened: texts and commitments have not thoroughly been examined or discussed by impartial experts, at national government level nor by relevant stakeholders, including especially farmers’ organisations, trade unions and the business sector.

There are clear steps that EU countries could and should adopt to ensure that development is given the priority it requires:

- ❖ First, Prime Minister, we urge you to make use of your Presidency to champion a thorough assessment and democratic debate of the various texts on the table.
- ❖ Secondly, we reiterate that the EU should stop insisting on a reciprocal agreement on market access for goods as well as on the inclusion of new issues such as investment, competition policy and government procurement, or of WTO-plus provisions for services and intellectual property rights in any trade arrangement with ACP countries. We recall the EU Council's commitment of 15th May 2007 to “fully respect the right of all ACP States and regions to determine the best policies for their development.”
- ❖ Thirdly, in line with the request of ACP Ministers (their conclusions of 24th May 2007) EU member states should comply with their legal obligation and immediately make a formal commitment that higher tariffs will not be imposed and trade will not be disrupted if an EPA is not in place at the end of the year. They should, further, acknowledge that, as demonstrated by recent analysis, technically feasible solutions are available that conform to WTO rules. All that is needed is for EU member states to demonstrate the political will and leadership to do this.
- ❖ Finally, we urge you to ensure that, regardless of the outcome of the negotiations, EU member states make and follow through commitments on additional aid to address the supply side constraints of the ACP countries and to strengthen ACP local and regional markets. The provision of this aid must be grounded in the principles of the Paris declaration of country ownership and mutual accountability.

We welcome the priority given to development in the Portuguese Presidency’s agenda, and , particularly the focus on the relationship between the EU and Africa. With that in mind we call on your Presidency to ensure coherence between the EU’s expressed commitment to Africa’s development and the manner and content of the EPA negotiations. We are deeply concerned that on their current trajectory, the EPA negotiations risk jeopardising rather than fostering development and thereby undermining the development aspirations of the draft EU-Africa strategy.

We look forward to a Portuguese Presidency actively working for sustainable development and to further exchanges on these matters.

Yours sincerely,

Signed,

Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA), United Kingdom
Action medeor, Germany
Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Germany
Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN), Belgium
Afrika-Europa Netwerk, The Netherlands
Afrikagrupperna - Africa Groups, Sweden
AGEZ - Arbeitsgemeinschaft Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, Austria
Aktion Bundesschluss, Germany
ALBOAN, Basque Country, Spain
Associação Vida Abundante, Portugal
ATTAC Sweden, Sweden
BATEGINEZ, Basque Country, Spain
Both ENDS, The Netherlands
Brot für die Welt-Bread for the World, Germany
Brothers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (FIC), The Netherlands
Campagna l'Africa non è in vendita!, Italy
Campagna per la Riforma della Banca Mondiale, Italy
Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO), The Netherlands
Centre National de Coopération au Développement" (CNCD/11 11 11), Belgium
Centro Cristão Vida Abundante, Portugal
Christian Aid, Ireland
Christian Aid, United Kingdom
CICM, The Netherlands
CIDAC, Portugal
CMC Mensen met een Missie, The Netherlands
Coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement - 11.11.11, Belgium
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, The Netherlands
Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti-COSPE, Italy
Coordinadora de ONGD de Euskadi, Spain
Desafio Miqueias - Micah Challenge Portugal, Portugal
Diakonia, Sweden
Dutch GATS Platform, The Netherlands
EIRENE-Internationaler Christlicher Friedensdienst, Germany
Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst-Church Development Service(EED), Germany
Fair Italy, Italy
Fairfood, The Netherlands
Farm Crisis Network (FCN), United Kingdom
Federacion de Comités de Solidaridad con Africa Negra, Basque Country, Spain
Finnish NGDO platform to the EU (Kehys), Finland
Foundation for Gaia, United Kingdom

Grail Movement, The Netherlands
Grupo Mocambicano da Divida, Mozambique
Holy Ghost Fathers, The Netherlands
Igreja Evangélica em Lisboa, Portugal
Interchurch Organisation for Development Co-operation (ICCO), The Netherlands.
Italian Support Committee for the Farmers' Movement in Africa, Italy
Jovem +, Portugal
Jóvenes del Tercer Mundo - Hirugarren Munduko Gazteak, Basque Country, Spain
Kirchliche Arbeitsstelle Südliches Afrika KASA, Germany
Koordination Suedliches Afrika (KOSA), Germany
KWIA-Flemish Support Group for Indigenous Peoples, Belgium
ManiTese, Italy
Millenium Solidarity, Switzerland
Misiones Diocesanas Vascas, Basque Country, Spain
MS Danish Association for International Co-operation, Denmark
Netzwerk Afrika Deutschland (NAD), Germany
Oxfam International
Peuples Solidaires, France
Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD- Portuguese Platform of NGDO, Portugal
Prosalus, Spain
SERSO (Servicio de Solidaridad San Viator de Euskalherria), Spain
Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA), Finland
Sisters of Charity, The Netherlands
Solidaritätsdienst-international - Solidarity service-international (SODI), Germany
Tearfund, United Kingdom
Terra Nuova, Italy
Dutch GATS Platform, The Netherlands
Trade Justice Movement, United Kingdom
Tradewatch, Italy
Traidcraft Exchange, United Kingdom
Transnational Institute (TNI), The Netherlands
Trócaire, Ireland
Vredeseilanden, Belgium
Welthaus Bielefeld, Germany
Wemos Foundation, The Netherlands
World Development Movement (WDM), United Kingdom
World Economy, Ecology & Development (WEED), Germany
World Rural Forum, Spain