

OPEN LETTER TO THE EUROPEAN TRADE COMMISSIONER

Dear Mr Peter Mandelson

We, the Civil Society Organisations in Namibia, welcome your visit to Southern Africa to meet with the Trade Ministers of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) configuration.

Some Member States of the configuration initialled an interim Economic Partnership Agreement (IEPA) in haste and under immense pressure at the end of 2007.

Namibia initialed the IEPA with an accompanying statement containing a condition that the initialing is contingent on the assurance that the unresolved issues encountered during 2007 be reopened for negotiation in 2008. This step came only after the President of the European Commission (EC), Mr Manuel Barroso, assured African governments during the December EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon that they would have the opportunity to effectively address the fundamentally flawed IEPAs.

In addition, we are deeply concerned about the negative effects of the IEPA on the regional integration process in Southern Africa and the mounting pressure on the integrity of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and its implications for future development.

We would like to reiterate the Declaration of African Trade Ministers in December 2007, the African Union (AU) Resolution and the statement by the Brussels-based African Group of Ambassadors in February 2008 to reopen the contentious issues in IEPAs for negotiation to align the EC's EPA-agenda with the AU-agenda for African economic integration.

Failure to review the contentious issues in the IEPA would be inconsistent with the binding provisions of the Cotonou Agreement regarding economic development, regional integration and poverty alleviation.

The time has come to listen to the voices from Southern Africa, and in this regard we call on you to stop the EC's EPA-agenda and to stop trying to re-colonize Africa!

Signed by:

National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW)

Komeho Namibia Development Agency

Women's Solidarity Namibia

Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI)

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

Namibia Rural Development Programme.

Children With Language Speech and Hearing Problems (CLaSH)

Ndatinda College

International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW), 04 March 2008