

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone : 011-551 7700 Fax : 011-551 7844
Website: www.africa-union.org

EPA Negotiations Coordination Meeting

20-21 May 2010

Abuja, Nigeria

TI/TD/EPA/AM/01

Original: English

Aide-Memoire

A. Background

1. Negotiations for EPAs continued in all the negotiating regions throughout the year 2009. Nine African countries signed an interim EPA with the EU while negotiations for full EPAs are continuing. The agreements that were signed vary in substance and form and have resulted in different trading regimes that complicate the regional integration process in Africa. The signed agreements did not address the various contentious issues that were identified by the African Union Ministers of Trade and of Finance that was held in April 2008 in Addis Ababa. The interim agreements that have been signed have been notified to the WTO.

2. Some of countries that initialled the interim EPAs have not yet signed them. The East African Community (EAC) partner states are yet to sign the interim agreement due to outstanding issues that have not been resolved. On the other hand, the European Commission (EC) has stated that the failure to finalise the EPA process could result in the non-LDC's countries being put on the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) trade regime. Such a move will result in increased tariffs on the exports of Kenya, Ghana and Cameroon to the EU.

3. As the negotiations progress, major areas of divergence still exist in the following areas, market access coverage, transition periods, rules of origin, cumulation, legal commitments for development support, non-execution clause, MFN clause, export taxes, safeguards, scope and coverage of the chapter on trade in services, EU agriculture subsidies and the infant industry clause among others. The EC continues to maintain its position that development needs of the African countries involved in the EPA negotiations are addressed under the EDF.

4. For those countries that have signed the agreements, there is need for policy and institutional reforms to domesticate the agreements. Mechanisms will also need to be put in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the agreements.

5. The negotiating environment is changing. The negotiations for the Tripartite Free Trade Area involving COMESA, EAC and SADC started last year. The EAC Common Market Protocol was agreed last year and it is expected that starting in July 2010, there will be free movement of people, labour and services in the region. There have also been some developments on the EC side. A new European Commission took office early this year. The ratification and coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty has significant effects on EU institutions. The increased powers of the European Parliament have important political implications on trade negotiations with the EU. Under the new Treaty, the EU has an exclusive mandate on trade policy.

6. It is against this background that the AUC is organising a follow up coordination meeting for EPA negotiators and advisors. The last EPA negotiations coordination meeting was held in July 2009 in Gaborone, Botswana. The workshop will facilitate harmonisation of positions in common areas among the negotiating groups and explore ways to ensure that EPAs promote development and the economic integration agenda of Africa. The AUC was mandated to coordinate EPA negotiations, by the Heads of State and Government in the Maputo Declaration of 2003.

B. Objective

7. The main objectives of the workshop are the following:
 - a. Bringing together the chief advisors and negotiators to consult among themselves and facilitate the exchange of views and notes on the EPA negotiations.
 - b. Review the effect of new developments such as the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty on EPA negotiations.
 - c. Evaluating strategies for the way forward on the EPA negotiations
 - d. Strengthening co-ordination among the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and between them and the African Union Commission, on the EPA negotiations.

C. Participation

8. The coordination workshop will be attended by the chief negotiators from the five negotiating groups in Africa and representatives of the Regional Economic Communities. The regional representatives of the negotiating groups in Brussels will attend the coordination meeting. In addition, the Coordinator of the African Group in the WTO will attend the workshop.
9. Representatives of collaborating institutions: - UNCTAD, UNECA, ACP, ILEAP, ECDPM and South Centre are also invited to attend the workshop.

D. Documentation and working languages

10. The workshop shall be conducted in English and French languages only. Materials will be provided by the AUC, the speakers and collaborating institutions. Working documents for the workshop will be posted on the AU Website www.africa-union.org.

E. Venue and Financial Conditions

11. The coordination workshop will be held on 20-21 May 2010 in Abuja, Nigeria. The AUC will provide for each sponsored participant a return air ticket at the standard conditions of the AUC and daily subsistence allowance at the applicable rate of the AU for the duration of the workshop.

F. Workshop Format

12. The two day workshop will be divided into various sessions as detailed in the agenda annexed to this aide memoire. The workshop will be chaired by the Coordinator of the African Group in Brussels .During each session, participants will have the opportunity to exchange views and share experiences.

G. Contact Persons

13. For more information on the organisation of the workshop you are kindly requested to direct all your inquiries to Batanai Chikwene, batanaich@gmail.com and Inye Nathan Briggs, inyebriggs@yahoo.co.uk or fax to +251 115 510 467.