

## The low down on EPAs

### Issue 2: July-September 2005

#### Focus on the Caribbean

European and Caribbean negotiators met for a week of talks from 26-30 September. [more on this if I can find what they spoke about]

On his arrival in St Lucia Caribbean campaigners issued European Trade Commissioner Mandelson a tough challenge. In an open letter they stated

“Despite the continuing rhetoric about the ability of the EPAs to deliver the development imperatives, we do not believe that the European Commission is negotiating according to this priority.”

Questioning the EU’s motives the Caribbean groups said “you are attempting to maximize the benefits for the EU rather than constructing a genuine partnership.”

On the controversial Singapore Issues they reminded the Commissioner that “Caribbean governments, supported by the governments of other developing countries, rejected the negotiation of these issues during the last WTO ministerial conference in Cancun.”

They finished with a direct challenge “In the light of the above concerns, we urge you and the European member states to drastically revise the EU mandate for negotiating EPAs so that it supports development and poverty eradication in our countries and leads to a genuine EU-ACP partnership.”

On September 30, as Commissioner Mandelson met with whoever, campaigners marched....

This is part of “Operation Get Up Stand Up”. Focused on EPAs this campaign aims to:

- Let our small farmers, small producers and workers realize that they are not alone; that we understand their plight and recognize that the process will impact on each and every one of us.
- Ensure that the negotiators from both the EU and CARIFORUM remember that it is not about deal making but about the livelihoods of thousands of people
- Empower regional leaders to stand up to any bullying from the EU
- Remind negotiators there is “No back Door Here! Don’t bring the Singapore issues into the Caribbean.”

#### Stop EPA day activities

##### UK

To mark the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the launch of the EPA negotiations on 27<sup>th</sup> September, civil society groups in the UK issued a public challenge to European Trade Commissioner Mandelson in a ‘open letter’ published in The Guardian newspaper on 27 September.

The letter backed by ActionAid, Action for Southern Africa, Christian Aid, Tear Fund and Traidcraft urged the Commissioner to:

- **Guarantee aid** “We call on you to state on record that the level of EU aid to ACP countries will be unaffected whether they choose to sign an EPA with the EU or not.”
- **Request a new mandate** “Your current instructions for EPA negotiations are out of touch with what developing countries need to combat poverty. We call on you to request a new *development* mandate from EU member states that withdraws the

requirement that ACP countries open up their markets as part of a trade deal. We also urge you to scrap talks towards binding agreements on government procurement, investment and competition policy. Developing countries previously rejected these at world trade talks in 2003.”

- **Change WTO rules** “Current WTO rules on regional trade agreements are a barrier to pro-development deals. We want you to push for the reform of these rules at the WTO ministerial in Hong Kong, so that liberalisation requirements on developing countries are removed.”
- **Offer alternatives to EPAs** “We call on you to start work on possible alternatives to EPAs now so that ACP countries have a genuine choice of trade deal.”

## **Kenya**

On the same day in Kenya, EcoNews Africa held a workshop to launch a new report (see new resources below). In the press invitation to the event, Peter Aoga of EcoNews Africa warned: “Kenya aims at being an industrialized nation by 2020. For this to happen crucial sectors of the economy need to be revived and promoted. And attempts are underway. But they will all be nullified if Kenya signs an EPA with the European Union”.

Interviewed about the report Kenya trade minister, Dr Kituyi, reiterated his position on EPAs saying that the EU’s negotiating directive was “outdated, mercantilist and did not serve the interests of ACP countries and needed to be revised”

## **Sweden**

### **3. On the road to Hong Kong**

From the 16-19 of August, 2005, organisations of civil society from across Africa, comprising trade unions, farmers organisations, women’s organisations, faith-based organisations and non-governmental organisations, met in Accra under the umbrella of the Africa Trade Network to deliberate upon the challenges posed to African countries in the on-going negotiations at the WTO, particularly in the preparations for the December Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong.

On EPAs they issued the following challenge:

“The developed countries, particularly the US and EU, have resorted to bilateral and regional trade agreements with other developing countries to attain the objectives that they have not been able to attain in the WTO. In the context of the EPA negotiations, the European Union is attempting to impose the so-called Singapore issues on African countries, and to get these countries to grant market access to European goods and services far beyond the WTO requirements, and undermine Africa’s economies and their efforts at regional integration.

We endorse the position of the Africa Ministers of Trade in Cairo in relations to the EPA negotiations. In the context of the WTO negotiations, we support the demand for the amendment of Article XXIV of the GATT to remove the reciprocity requirements in trade agreements between developed and developing countries members, including between African countries and the EU.”

### **4. New WTO Chief Lamy tells it how it is**

Question: “Do you think that the proliferation of the regional and bilateral agreements threatens the WTO?”

Answer “This is an old debate puts academics and politicians in conflict. The theoreticians of international trade tell you that bilateral deals are a sin. Politicians tell you : “When I sign a bilateral agreement with a buddy, I get on TV. When I go to the WTO in a ministerial where I am the 148th around a table, I do not get on TV.”

(Rough translation)

## **5. New resources on EPAs**

"Trade Escapes" ActionAid launched a report focusing in depth at the different alternatives to free trade EPAs. The report calls on the EU to urently live up to its promise to provide ACP countries with viable alternatives. Visit [www.actionaid.org.uk/media/images/trade\\_escape.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org.uk/media/images/trade_escape.pdf)

"EPAs: Through the Lens of Kenya" published jointly by EcoNews Africa in Nairobi and Traidcraft in London assesses Kenya's past expereicne of trade liberalistio and its options in the current talks. The report shows how EPAs could compromise Kenya's economic development plans. Visit [www.traidcraft.co.uk/epareport](http://www.traidcraft.co.uk/epareport)

## **6. Events**

"Free trade as a means if poverty eradication: EPAs and political alternatives" an expert meeting and NGO strategy session will be held in Bonn on 20 and 21 October. Speakers are from across Africa and Europe. For more information contact [klaus.schilder@weed-online.org](mailto:klaus.schilder@weed-online.org)

ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly will be at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre from 19-24 November. For more information visit:

[http://www.euoparl.eu.int/intcoop/acp/10\\_01/default\\_en.htm](http://www.euoparl.eu.int/intcoop/acp/10_01/default_en.htm)