

European Parliament resolution

Two resolutions on the development impact of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). One was tabled by the conservative grouping and passed (left). The alternative (right) was proposed by socialists and greens but was not adopted.

The European Parliament...

- 1 Urges the Council, the Commission and the governments of the EU Member States and ACP countries to do their utmost to re-establish an atmosphere of confidence and constructive dialogue in so far as it has been damaged in the course of negotiations and to recognise the ACP states as equal partners in the negotiation and implementation process;
- 2 Urges the Member States to respect their commitments to increase Official Development Assistance (ODA), even in this time of global financial crisis, which will enable an increase in Aid for Trade, and to establish accompanying measures in the form of regional Aid for Trade packages for the implementation of the EPAs contributing to the positive impact of the EPAs on development; stresses the fact that signing an EPA is not imposed as a precondition to receive Aid for Trade Funds;
- 3 Insists that EPAs are an instrument to development which should reflect both the national and regional interest and the needs of the ACP countries in order to reduce poverty, achieve the MDGs and respect fundamental human rights such as the right to food or the right to access basic public services;
- 4 Reminds the Council and the Commission that neither the conclusion nor the renunciation of an EPA should lead to a situation where an ACP country may find itself in a less favourable position than it was under the trade provisions of the Cotonou Agreement;
- 5 Urges the Commission and the ACP countries to make best use of the funding available for Aid for Trade in order to support the reform process in areas essential for economic development; to improve infrastructure where it is necessary, as the opportunities offered by the EPAs can only be fully taken advantage of if strong accompanying measures are introduced for the ACP countries; to compensate the net loss of customs revenue and encourage tax reform so that public investments in social sectors are not reduced; to invest in the production chain in order to diversify export production; to produce more higher added-value export goods; and to invest in training and support for small producers and exporters to meet EU sanitary

The European Parliament...

- 1 Urges the Council, the Commission and the governments of the EU Member States and ACP countries to do their utmost to re-establish an atmosphere of confidence and constructive dialogue and mutual respect insofar as it has been damaged in the course of negotiations and to recognise the ACP states as equal partners in the negotiation and implementation process;
- 2 Urges the Member States to respect their commitments to increase Official Development Aid (ODA), which will enable an increase in Aid for Trade, and to establish accompanying measures in the form of regional Aid for Trade packages for the implementation of the EPAs;
- 3 Reiterates that full EPAs have to include binding provisions for development cooperation in order to reach their ultimate goal which is economic growth, regional integration, economic diversification and reduction of poverty in ACP countries;
- 4 Insists that EPAs are an instrument to development which should reflect both the national and regional interest and the needs of the ACP countries in order to reduce poverty, achieve the MDGs and respect human rights;
- 5 Reminds the Council and the Commission that Europe has to assess and examine other WTO compatible alternatives and has the obligation to ensure that neither the conclusion nor the renunciation of an EPA should lead to a situation where an ACP country may find itself in a less favourable position than it was under the trade provisions of the Cotonou Agreement;
- 6 Urges the Commission and the ACP countries to make best use of the funding available for Aid for Trade in order to support the reform process in areas essential for economic development; to compensate the net loss of customs ; to invest in the production chain ; to produce more higher addedvalue export goods; and to invest in training and support for small producers and exporters as the opportunities offered by the EPAs can only be fully taken advantage of if strong accompanying measures are introduced for the ACP countries;
- 7 Reminds of the repeated requests by the European Parliament for the integration of the EDF in the EU budget; condemns the use of

and phytosanitary criteria;

- 6** Stresses that EPAs concluded with individual ACP countries, or with a group of countries not including all countries within one region, run the risk of undermining regional integration; calls upon the Commission to recalibrate its approach taking account of this risk, and ensure that concluding EPAs does not endanger regional integration;
 - 7** Stresses that the increases in ODA promised by the Member States should, as a priority, be used to redouble efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals in those ACP countries which are hardest hit by the consequences of the global financial and food crisis, which has threatened, and continues to threaten, the success achieved in attaining these goals;
 - 8** Also underlines that all agreements must respect the asymmetry in favour of the ACP countries regarding both the range of products targeted and the transition periods, and that the EPAs must provide firm guarantees of protection for those sectors which the ACP countries identify as sensitive;
 - 9** Stresses that support measures linked to the EPAs have to take into account the importance of regional integration and economic relations with other developing countries to the development of the ACP countries;
 - 10** Urges the Commission to give ACP negotiators sufficient time to evaluate the agreement and to make suggestions before adopting the relevant agreement, taking into consideration the WTO time schedules;
 - 11** Stresses that EPAs agreements should incorporate a revision clause for a revision 5 years after their signature, to which national parliaments, the European Parliament and civil society must be formally associated; stresses also that this period will enable a detailed evaluation of the impact of EPAs on the economies and regional integration of the ACP countries and appropriate reorientations to be carried out;
 - 12** Considers that any trade agreement between ACP and EU, affecting the livelihood of the population, should be the result of an open and public debate with full participation of ACP national parliaments;
 - 13** Urges the ACP governments to implement necessary reforms in order to realise good governance, in particular in the field of public administration, such as in public financial management, collection of customs duties, the tax revenue system, the fight against corruption and mismanagement;
- the EDF as a source of financing for the EPAs Regional Funds when additional financing had been expected; Opposes any kind of conditionality linked to the EPAs in the matter of granting European aid; Calls for an early determination and provision of an equitable share of the Aid for Trade resources and the guarantee that these funds represent additional resources and not repackaging of EDF funding and that they are conform to ACP priorities;
- 8** Stresses that support measures linked to the EPAs have to take into account the importance of regional integration and economic relations with other developing countries to the development of the ACP countries;
 - 9** Stresses that EPAs concluded with individual ACP countries, or with a group of countries not including all countries within one region, run the risk of undermining regional integration; calls upon the Commission to recalibrate its approach taking account of this risk, and ensure that concluding EPAs does not endanger regional integration;
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 - 11** Also underlines that all agreements must respect the asymmetry in favour of the ACP countries regarding both the range of products targeted and the transition periods, and that the EPAs must provide firm guarantees of protection for those sectors which the ACP countries identify as sensitive;
 - 12** Stresses that EC should not impose negotiations on the “Singapore issues” such as procurement, investment and on services as long as ACP counties are not willing to do so;
 - 13** Urges the reopening of negotiations on full and interim EPAs on contentious issues; Urges the Commission to give ACP negotiators sufficient time to evaluate the agreement and to make suggestions before adopting the relevant agreement;Stresses the importance of reflecting the concerns of ACP parliaments, local authorities and civil society in the framework of the negotiations, which should neither be concluded under pressure nor in haste;
 - 14** Underscores the need for stronger monitoring and evaluation provisions; Stresses that the final EPA agreements should include a revision clause and a global assessment impact, which should be carried out within 3 to 5 years after the signature of the agreement; Requests that the European and ACP Parliaments should be involved in any revision of the agreement;

- 14** Underscores the need for stronger monitoring and evaluation provisions in the EPAs which will determine the impact of the EPA on country and regional development and poverty reduction objectives, not merely EPA compliance levels;
- 15** Stresses that there is a need to increase transparency in the negotiations and their outcomes in order to allow for public scrutiny by policy makers, parliamentarians and civil society representatives;
- 16** Considers that the EDF Regional Strategy Papers and Regional Indicative Programmes should contain important, systematic and well-considered support for EPA implementation, taking into account the necessary reform process that would make the EPA a success;
- 17** Urges the Commission in partnership with the ACP countries to include development benchmarks in the EPA and interim EPAs to measure the socioeconomic impact of the EPAs on key sectors, to be determined according to the priorities and for intervals decided by each region;
- 18** Stresses that it is crucial that forests, biodiversity and indigenous people or forestdependent people are not put at risk; in this regard, stresses that ACP countries should be allowed to implement rules that limit the export of timber and other unprocessed raw materials and be allowed to use these laws in order to protect forests, wildlife and domestic industries;
- 19** Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States and of the ACP countries, the ACP-EU Council and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

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- 15** Urges the ACP governments to implement necessary reforms in order to realise good governance, in particular in the field of public administration,
- 16** Highlights the need for close parliamentary scrutiny during the negotiation and the implementation of EPAs by a Parliamentary Committee which should operate as part of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, to avoid a costly and complicated proliferation of meetings, taking advantage of the JPA's system of regional meetings, and to exploit the experience of the JPA and promote synergy between all the EPA regions; Stresses the desirability of this Committee's operating in a flexible manner, able to accommodate the expertise on both trade and development issues of the Members of the European Parliament involved in the examination of the EPA in committees;
- 17** Stresses the legitimate role of national parliaments in the negotiations, ratification and implementation of the EPAs and the crucial participation of non-state actors in the monitoring and evaluation of the agreements ; Calls on the European Commission and ACP countries to guarantee their involvement in the ongoing negotiation procedures; this requires a clear agenda for further negotiations, to be agreed by ACP countries and the EU and based on a participatory approach;
- 18** Calls for the European Parliament, while guarding a measure of flexibility, to take into account the opinions of the ACP parliaments on the outcome of the EPAs negotiations before giving its assent ;
- 19** Calls for the necessary integration of the outermost regions (such as the Caribbean) into their regional environment to be taken into account and the instruments of this integration to be provided: free movement of goods and persons (tourist visas to be readily available), tax and customs facilities and support for the establishment of interregional airlines; calls for every effort to be made so that the EPAs will, for the ACP as well as for the outermost regions, form part of a 'winwin' system;
- 20** Stresses that ACP countries should be allowed to implement rules that limit the export of timber and other unprocessed raw materials and be allowed to use these laws in order to protect forests, wildlife and domestic industries;
- 21** Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States and of the ACP countries, the ACP-EU Council and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.