

Dear Sir/Madame

The 27th September 2009 marks the 7th anniversary of the launch of EPA talks. Almost two years beyond the 2007 deadline, the negotiations that will define the future of EU-ACP trade relations are far from over. Only one region has concluded a full regional trade deal and more than half of the ACP countries have not agreed to any form of EPA, such is their degree of concern with these agreements.

Although EPAs were supposed to promote ACP countries' development and regional integration, the EU's approach to the negotiations has undermined these objectives. The interim arrangements imposed upon the ACP at the end of 2007 have not only failed to provide a basis for development friendly agreements, but have also set back regional integration.

While it promised to take a more flexible approach going forward, the Commission has instead continued to pressure regions into liberalising further and faster than is wanted or is appropriate to these economies. It has insisted that countries sign Interim EPAs, without first removing 'contentious issues', despite regular requests from ACP countries; and it has also persisted in pressuring countries to take on new obligations that go beyond WTO compatibility requirements.

The European approach to EPAs remains unacceptable and must be turned around.

We call upon you:

- ◆ not undermine the policy space of ACP to implement own development strategies and put in place measures to deal with the effects of the global economic, food and climate crises;
- ◆ fully respect ACP positions on services, intellectual property and Singapore Issues – and refrain from pressuring countries into agreement in these areas;
- ◆ to respond positively to proposals for flexible market access arrangements and any requests from ACP countries for alternative solutions;
- ◆ respond positively to ACP requests for renegotiation of contentious issues in interim EPAs. Revisions of Interim EPAs must not be conditional upon the agreement with new issues or a so-called 'full' EPAs, nor should ACP countries be pushed to sign interim EPA without resolving the contentious issues.