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**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**ACP-EU debates Economic  
Partnership Agreements as deadline  
approaches**

*Directorate-General Information for*  
**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

# ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

## ACP-EU debates Economic Partnership Agreements as deadline approaches

The state of play in the negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)  
Debate (without resolution): 26.06.2007

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) debated the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). These agreements, which will renew EU-ACP relations, must be signed before the end of 2007, the date at which the derogation granted by the WTO ends. "I believe the political will is there for the agreements to be concluded in time and that there is a real added value in terms of development", said Louis **MICHEL**, European Commissioner with special responsibility for development and humanitarian aid, in his address to the JPA on Tuesday 26 June in Wiesbaden.

Louis Michel said: "The effects of the EPAs are already being felt. Our efforts, logically, are in line with the repeated requests of your Assembly. Our efforts are spread proportionately on both aid and trade. We are putting in place the trade agreements and also the infrastructure linked to trade and the necessary productive capacity needed for development."

### Market access

On market access, Louis Michel said: "The European Union stated that it was ready last month to accept long, or very long transition periods for the opening of ACP markets. The Union has presented the offer of opening its own markets in the most ambitious way and in a way that it has never formulated for any bilateral agreement."

Heidemarie **WIECZOERK-ZEUL**, Federal Minister for Development and Economic Cooperation and Development, assured the Joint Parliamentary Assembly that "we want to conclude the agreements in favour of development and respecting the deadline of 31 December 2007." She underlined that a "revision mechanism on the agreements would be foreseen to reassure the ACP countries."

Mohlabi Kenneth **TSEKOA**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations (Lesotho) and President-in-Office of the ACP Council recalled that one of the conditions of the negotiations of the EPAs was that "there was a development dimension to the agreements and that the EU should put in place the extra financial means for aid and trade."

Mrs **DEERPALSING** (Mauritius) said that the Economic Partnership Agreements should not make any ACP country worse off. However, she expressed concern for the countries working under the sugar protocol, especially given the Commission's threats to unilaterally denounce its provisions. She said this was "totally unacceptable." The EU's approach to a zero-zero negotiating structure on abolishing export subsidies on agricultural products for full market access was also unacceptable. Finally, she called for a "predictable EPA adjustment fund."

Mr **SEBETELA** (Botswana) said he was confused about the different statements coming from the Commission, Council and MEPs. He said that the Commission was "preparing ACP countries for the reality of EPAs. He called for ACP countries to be compensated for any fiscal loss resulting from the implementation of the EPAs. However, several pro-ACP MEPs

had talked of “aid for trade” which for him did not signify anything. This confused message meant that he did not know what to report to his national parliament.

Josep **BORRELL** (PES, ES) said that there had been a huge amount of documents produced by NGOs and others on the EPAs and this signified that there were several risks involved for ACP countries in the negotiations. From the point of view of the PES Group, the EPAs should be “a development instrument.” The EU should prepare a political response to the possibility that there is no agreement in time. Finally, Mr Borrell pointed out that hasty liberalisation does not encourage development. In this context, it was necessary, he said, to learn from the lessons of the past.

## **Address by Mrs Gertrude Mongella, President of the Pan-African Parliament**

Mrs Gertrude **MONGELLA** (Tanzania) President of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), in her address to the Assembly, stated that in view of the similarities that exist between the mandates of the two institutions, it is “our desire to inculcate formal relations between the PAP and the ACP-EU JPA.” It is, she said, heart-warming to note that the deliberations in this session focus, among others, on

- the qualified workers migration phenomenon and its impact on national development;
- poverty alleviation among small farmers in ACP countries;
- good governance, transparency and the need to account for the fruits of natural resource exploitation in ACP countries.

Continuing, Mrs Mongella stated that the PAP’s gratitude also goes to the German Government through its technical cooperation agency (GTZ), the British Government through its Department for International Development (DFID) to mention but a few.

Mrs Mongella stated that she “hereby give all our partners our firm and solemn commitment to use with the utmost strictness and transparency the funds they were kind enough to put at our disposal.”

Link to website of the ACP/EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp/60\\_13/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp/60_13/default_en.htm)

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