



Wednesday, 26 November 2008

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Economic Partnership Agreements**

State of play

*Directorate-General for Communication*  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

# ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Debate: 26.11.2008

## Economic Partnership Agreements: timing and assent

**On 26 November the Assembly debated the EU's economic partnership agreements with third countries and specifically those with the Pacific region. The key issues were the rate at which "interim" versions of these agreements are being signed, and whether the European Parliament should give its assent to their taking effect.**

Of the Pacific region's 15 counties (including East Timor), only two have signed provisional agreements, prompted by the erosion of trade preferences: Fiji (on sugar) and Papua (on tuna).

### **PNG and Fiji**

Outlining what he would like to see in the final agreement for Papua New Guinea and Fiji, European Parliament rapporteur for the EPA with the Pacific Glyn Ford (PES, UK) listed: progress on allowing export taxes for development purposes, adequate protection for infant industries, intellectual property protection not just for western technical artefacts but also for traditional knowledge, opening up public procurement to an extent consistent with Pacific states' needs, and for services, recognising the need for work visas for the EU.

If the Commission cannot accept this basis for further negotiation, said Mr Ford, then he would recommend voting "no" to the interim agreement.

"It is in the interest of ACP countries to conclude these agreements as speedily as possible, so as to put themselves on an equal footing with the trading world" said Jürgen Schröder (EPP-ED, DE). "We should not impose unrealistic time frames, but neither must assume we have endless time", he added, pointing out that if European countries had not been so prompt to join the Euro, the global economic crisis would have been worse.

### **CARIFORUM**

"The European Parliament must give its formal agreement (assent) to the CARIFORUM EPA for it to have legal effect" pointed out Cariforum EPA rapporteur David Martin (PES, UK), adding that "we shall only give our assent if we believe the EPA serves development goals".

"We will therefore require, before we vote next March, assurances that:

- the foreseen review clause is genuine and properly financed. If we find that EPAs are failing to tackle poverty, it must allow for the comprehensive renegotiation of the agreement,
- most favored Nation principle will be eliminated,
- adequate "aid for trade" is provided, and
- additional funds are made available under the 10th EDF to assist with adjustment policies.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp/60\\_16/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp/60_16/default_en.htm)

Link to website of the ACP/EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly

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