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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Gianluca Susta, Thierry Cornillet and Danutė Budreikaitė

on behalf of the ALDE Group

on Economic Partnership Agreements

European Parliament resolution on Economic Partnership Agreements

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 (the Cotonou Agreement),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 23 October 2007 on Economic Partnership Agreements (COM(2007)0635),
 - having regard to the Conclusions of the General Affairs and External Relations (GAER) Council of 19 November 2007 with regard to Economic Partnership Agreements,
 - having regard to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly resolution adopted on 20 November 2007 in Kigali on the review of negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs),
 - having regard to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), in particular Article XXIV thereof,
 - having regard to the policy statement of 9 November 2007 by the Ministers of the ACP States on EPAs,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on this matter, and in particular its resolution of 23 May 2007 on Economic Partnership Agreements,
 - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Article 36(1) of the Cotonou Agreement sets out the parties' agreement to conclude new WTO-compatible trading arrangements, progressively removing barriers to trade between them and enhancing cooperation in all areas relevant to trade and development,
- B. whereas the waiver exempting this agreement from WTO law will expire at the end of 2007,
- C. whereas several ACP States are very reluctant to conclude EPA agreements and have declared that they have been put under pressure by the European Commission to sign an EPA, while others insist on the importance to their economy of EU market access,
- D. whereas establishing regional markets represents a key instrument for successfully implementing EPAs,

- E. whereas negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements, to replace the Cotonou Agreement, are not progressing at the same pace in the six regions and are not likely to be completed in any event before the end of 2007,
 - F. whereas in October 2007 the European Commission made an offer to the ACP States for an interim agreement, as a first phase of EPAs covering trade in goods and all areas that can be already agreed on, such as rules of origin, to be implemented as from 31 December 2007,
 - G. recalling that, according to the Cape Town Declaration, the main objective of the EPA negotiations is to strengthen the economies of ACP States,
 - H. underlining the fact that the Cape Town Declaration called for negotiations to be structured in an open and transparent way, taking into account the differences in resources and level of development between the two negotiating sides,
 - I. recalling that the objective of ACP-EU economic and trade cooperation is to promote development and to foster the gradual integration of ACP States into the world economy,
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- 1. Reiterates its belief that EPAs must be instruments of development in order to promote sustainable development, regional integration and reduction of poverty in the ACP States and to foster the gradual integration of the ACP States into the world economy;
 - 2. Notes the slow pace of the negotiations, as a result of which, most probably, no full agreements will be signed with any of the ACP regional groups by 31 December 2007, which could generate uncertainty in trade relations between EU and ACP countries;
 - 3. Notes the recent decision by the Commission on the need to adopt a two-step approach in order to avoid trade disruption for some ACP States and to continue negotiations beyond 31 December 2007 on comprehensive development-friendly EPAs;
 - 4. Takes note of the proposal made by the Commission on 23 October 2007 and the decision of the GAERC Council of 17 November 2007 to conclude, in the first phase of negotiations, interim agreements limited to trade in goods;
 - 5. Takes note of the conclusion of the interim Framework Agreement between the European Community and the East African Community Partner States, concluded in Kampala on 27 November 2007, guaranteeing duty-free and quota-free access for those states' goods to the EU market;
 - 6. Calls for the threshold for accession of LDCs to interim agreements to be adequately lowered to match their level of development;
 - 7. Emphasises that establishing a genuine regional market represents an essential basis for successfully implementing EPAs and that regional integration is essential for the

social and economic development of the ACP States; emphasises that therefore agreements must help to keep regions united;

8. Calls on both parties to shoulder their responsibility to continue negotiations on the other issues as soon as possible; stresses that a long-term agreement can only be reached if all parties concerned feel committed to it;
9. Reaffirms that EPAs should be fully WTO-compatible; reaffirms that, since the vast majority of ACP LDCs have fragile economies, the degree of compatibility should be brought into line with their level of development and economic constraints (such as those affecting island and land-locked countries, etc); urges flexibility therefore in the coverage of sensitive products, length of transition periods and exclusions;
10. Urges that account be taken of the specific interests of the outermost regions and overseas countries and territories in the EPA negotiations on the basis of Article 299(2) and (3) of the EC Treaty;
11. Recognises that it is important for the ACP States to commit themselves to the economic partnership process and to promote the reforms needed to bring social and economic structures into line with the agreements; urges ACP governments to implement good governance rules; urges the Commission to adhere to the principles of full asymmetry and flexibility;
12. Stresses that the Commission's offer on rules of origin marks a relaxation of current provisions; believes that the necessary flexibility should be built into the agreement, taking into account the differences in level of industrial development between the EU and the ACP States as well as among ACP States;
13. Calls on the Commission to be flexible on areas relating to services, competition, intellectual property and government procurement, as some ACP regions are reluctant to address these issues;
14. Recalls the commitments by the Council and the Commission not to negotiate pharmaceutical-related TRIPS-plus provisions affecting public health and access to medicines, such as data exclusivity, patent extensions and limitation of grounds of compulsory licences;
15. Calls on the Commission to carry out a systematic analysis, during the negotiations and following their conclusion, of the social impact of EPAs on the groups most at risk;
16. Stresses that trade rules must be accompanied by an increase in support for trade-related assistance, particularly in support of regional trade and in accordance with EU import regulations and standards, and that interim agreements must include specific provisions for EPA-related aid for trade in addition to EDF funding; calls for concrete commitments to be made prior to the conclusion of EPA negotiations, addressing trade-related assistance and adjustment costs associated with EPAs, in full accordance with the EU aid-for-trade strategy;

17. Welcomes the proposal under discussion for the establishment of EPA regional funds, which will facilitate challenging of EU donor resources and provide financial assistance for revenue diversification initiatives;
18. Considers that the conclusion of a new generation of free-trade agreements with other developing countries should not lead to an erosion of the trade preferences that ACP countries currently enjoy;
19. Requests the Commission and the Council to consult the European Parliament on the conclusion of EPA interim agreements pursuant to Article 300(3), second paragraph, of the Treaty establishing the European Community;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the ACP-EU Council and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.