

**Question for oral answer O-000011/2016
to the Commission**

Rule 128

Bernd Lange, Christofer Fjellner

on behalf of the Committee on International Trade

Subject: Sustainable development provisions of the EU-West Africa Economic Partnership Agreement

After over 10 years of talks, West African states and the EU have concluded negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). The final text of the EPA has been initialled by the parties and signed by the large majority of the West African states so far. If properly implemented, the EPA has the potential to increase trade and economic relations between the two parties, by ensuring significantly better market access for goods from West Africa than the GSP scheme. The EPA states its objectives as: contributing to sustained economic growth, poverty eradication, raising living standards and regional integration, amongst others. Correctly implementing and monitoring the functioning of a possible EPA will be crucial to achieving these aims.

The EU-West Africa EPA contains linkage clauses binding the parties to the agreement to international human rights, labour and environmental standards as set out in the Cotonou Agreement. The EPA provides for the creation of a joint consultative committee to oversee compliance with these commitments.

1. What specific measures will the Commission take to ensure that the EPA is implemented in a manner which respects human rights, including labour rights and environmental protection?
2. How will the Commission ensure that the joint consultative committee encompasses a broad participation of civil society, with equal involvement by academia, business and social partners, is adequately resourced with an accessible budget and can act effectively and autonomously?
3. Can the Commission commit to taking on board civil society reports, decisions and recommendations to address cases of infringement of commitments under the EPA?
4. Will the Commission consider a timeframe for delivering its sustainable development policy objectives?

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Forwarded: 28.1.2016

Deadline for reply: 4.2.2016