

SUVA RESOLUTION

For a development-friendly comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

The ACP Parliamentary Assembly, meeting in Suva (Fiji) from 10 to 17 June 2015:

I. Preamble

- A. **Whereas** the ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement calls for economic and trade cooperation to support regional economic integration among ACP States to achieve poverty alleviation and foster the gradual integration of ACP States into the world economy;
- B. **Whereas** the Cotonou Partnership Agreement sets out the Parties' commitment to conclude new WTO-compatible trading arrangements, progressively removing barriers to trade between them, enhancing cooperation in all areas relevant to trade and development and improving market access;
- C. **Whereas** the Caribbean region concluded a comprehensive EPA in 2008, the other regions concluded Interim EPAs mainly to avoid market disruption that was posed by the expiry of non-reciprocal trade preferences under the Cotonou Partnership Agreement by 31 December 2007;
- D. **Whereas** other ACP regions that had not concluded full EPAs continued to negotiate comprehensive EPAs after 31 December 2007;
- E. **Whereas** the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC-EPA Group), and the East African Community (EAC) managed to complete their EPA negotiations in 2014, while the Pacific, the East and Southern African (ESA) and the Central African regions continue to negotiate their full EPAs;
- F. **Whereas** substantial negotiations for full EPAs have not taken place with Central Africa and the Pacific regions for long periods of time due to continuing differences between the two sides
- G. **Whereas** the European Commission and the Pacific Ministers at an informal meeting held in 2013 agreed on a Revised Joint Roadmap to conclude EPA negotiations by December 2014, and whereas no Ministerial Meeting has been convened to finalise negotiations, despite persistent requests for a Ministerial meeting by the Pacific region;
- H. **Whereas** the European Commission Trade Commissioner has written to the Pacific essentially proposing the suspension of negotiations for three years contrary to the PACP-EU Joint Roadmap that was agreed to in 2013;

- I. **Concerned** that the approach that has been taken by the Trade Commissioner could undermine regional integration and lead to fragmentation in the trade and development relationship between the Pacific region and the EU through the distinction created between interim EPA and non-EPA signatory Pacific States which, due to the many contentious provisions contained in the agreement, elect not to be a party to the interim EPA;
- J. **Taking account** of the Pacific States assertion that, in its current form, the interim-EPA is not suitable for most Pacific States due to the fact that as Smaller Island States they do not have the capacity to derive benefits from it;
- K. **Recognising** the contributory role of predictable and development friendly trade arrangements in poverty reduction in all ACP States and building of resilient economies for Least Developed Countries, Smaller Island States and Small Island Developing States which are often vulnerable to natural disasters;
- L. **Noting that** the regions of Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa and Pacific that have not yet concluded the comprehensive EPA have been negotiating in good faith but are concerned about the lack of flexibility from the European Commission on contentious issues;
- M. **Concerned by** the fact that there has been no formal Pacific - European Commission negotiation session at Ministerial level since 2007, and for Central Africa since 2011 while noting that the two regions are keen to finalise the negotiations for a development friendly comprehensive EPA;
- N. **Further concerned** that the European Commission negotiators are now conditioning market access to the EU to reciprocal access to Pacific fisheries resources in contravention of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, while at the same time demanding the Pacific region to change their fisheries conservation and management measures and adopt the European Commission's approach which has not been proved to have been successful in conserving fisheries resources elsewhere;
- O. **Taking account** of Pacific States view that the fisheries conservation and management systems adopted by the Pacific, in particular the Vessel Day Scheme, are respected by distant water fishing nations that are party to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, and should also be recognized by the European Commission;
- P. **Further noting** that the existing EU preferential market access arrangements such as the 'Everything But Arms' (EBA) for Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Generalised System of Preferences for developing countries and the interim EPA are not sufficient for most ACP States unless coupled with additional development assistance and in the Pacific, in addition flexible rules of origin, especially for fresh and frozen fillets under chapter 0304 and 0305 of the Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (HS);

RESOLVES TO:

1. **Call upon** the European Commission negotiators to show flexibility in the comprehensive EPA negotiations and facilitate the conclusion of development friendly EPAs with the remaining ACP regions or countries, particularly the Pacific region, taking into account their unique and special circumstances;
2. **Urge** the European Commission to recognise the unique developmental and economic challenges faced by the ACP region as a whole, and Pacific region in particular, due to the latter's inherent vulnerability to natural hazards, climate change as well as other issues arising from their geographical isolation;
3. **Request** the European Commission to recognize the need to accord special and differential treatment in the EPA process to ACP Least Developed Countries, Small and Vulnerable Economies and the Smaller Island States of the Pacific region; and
4. **Call upon** the European Commission Trade Commissioner to convene meetings with regions that are yet to conclude full EPAs, and in the case of the Pacific region, convene a Joint Pacific - European Commission Ministerial Meeting to address the remaining contentious issues and to work constructively in the true spirit of goodwill and partnership to conclude a development friendly comprehensive EPA by 31 December 2015.