



STOP UNFAIR TRADE
DEALS BETWEEN EUROPE
AND ACP COUNTRIES

www.epa2007.org

5 December 2007

Dear Minister,

On the eve of a summit that will celebrate the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership and of a General Affairs and External Relations Council that will take important decisions about EU-ACP trade relations we would like, once again, to express our grave concerns about the EU's approach to the EPA negotiations.

We appreciate, that after having ignored the warnings that emerged from the 2006 regional EPA reviews, the EU finally decided to no longer push for comprehensive EPAs this year. However we very much regret the decision to pursue sub-regional goods agreements instead, despite a steadily increasing volume of concerns expressed not only by civil society, trade unions, farmers' and employers' organisations and research institutions, but also by international institutions like UNECA, UNCTAD, the IMF, the World Bank, and foundations like the German Marshall Fund

We note that these agreements are being negotiated and signed in haste, simply to comply with a deadline, and that they fail to address key concerns regarding rules of origins, safeguards, coverage and sequencing of market opening, flanking measures, cooperation schemes and their financing, fiscal reform, etc.. We recall the ACP Ministers' concerns expressed at their meeting in Brussels on 9 November 2007 *"[...] that negotiations should not be conducted in a manner that continues to exert pressure on ACP regions in a take-it-or-leave-it manner"*, as well as their *"dissatisfaction"* at the *"[un]willingness on the part of the EC to explore such options as GSP plus or enhanced GSP measures – as temporary measures to WTO compatibility."* We also note that the Commission, far from seeking to ensure maximum flexibility, seems to be going for maximum compliance by increasing coverage and reducing transition periods for tariff elimination.

We fear that these sub-regional agreements will not meet the objectives of sustainable development and regional integration and that built-in accession clauses will in no way suffice to put together again the sub-regional divisions that are now being created. The terms and conditions of the interim agreements, since they have been negotiated in great haste, should be publicly scrutinized and renegotiated in the eventual agreements to ensure they are coherent with ACP designed and owned development strategies..

We fully support the position of the ACP regions that do not wish to follow this sub-regional, market access-only approach and have asked for more time to negotiate agreements that are in their development interests.

We urge you to revisit the EU's EPA approach and to assure full compliance with art 37, 6 of the Cotonou Agreement by offering equivalent market access to the regions and countries that are not in a position to sign an agreement by the end of this year. We also stress that the Cotonou Agreement does not oblige the ACP countries to negotiate either new generation issues such as investment, government procurement or intellectual property rights or the liberalisation of services and that the pursued interim agreements should not introduce binding obligations in these regards.

We remain convinced that the best approach to respecting the Cotonou partnership and its objectives is to provide non-reciprocal alternatives like an improved GSP plus and to, at the least, allow for more time to continue the quest for agreements that serve regional integration and sustainable development, without setting any artificial new deadlines.

Please reply to our letter via the Trade Justice Movement, c/o Fairtrade Foundation, Suite 204, 16 Baldwin's Gardens, London, UK, EC1N 7RJ.

Looking forward to your support.

Yours sincerely,

Signed

ABLA - Associação de Beneficência Luso-Alemã, Portugal
ABE - Associação de Beneficência Evangélica, Portugal
ACJ - Ajuda Cristã à Juventude, Portugal
ACRA – Associazione di Cooperazione Rurale in Africa e America latina, Italy
Action Aid, UK
ACTSA- Action for Southern Africa, UK
Africa-Europe Faith & Justice Network (AEFJN)
AFRIKA-EUROPA NETWERK, The Netherlands
Afrikagrupperna – Africa Groups of Sweden
AGEZ - Arbeitsgemeinschaft Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, Austria
Aliança Evangélica Portuguesa, Portugal
Antena AEFJN Portugal, Portugal
A Rocha - Associação Cristã de Estudo e Defesa do Ambiente, Portugal
Associação Novo Renascer, Portugal
Associação Roda Inteira, Portugal
Attac Germany
Attac, Hungary
Attac Vlaanderen, Belgium
Beati i costruttori di pace, Italy
Both ENDS, The Netherlands
Brot für die Welt - Bread for the World, Germany
Campaign to Reform the World Bank, Italy
Centro Cristão Vida Abundante, Portugal
Centro internazionale crocevia, Italy
Christian Aid, UK
Christian Aid, Ireland
Church of Sweden
CIDAC, Portugal

CNCD 11 11 1, Belgium
Coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement -11.11.11, Belgium
Comhlámh, Ireland
Cordaid, The Netherlands
Desafio Miqueias - Micah Challenge, Portugal
Desafio Jovem - Teen Challenge, Portugal
EED, Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst - Church Development Service, Germany
FAIR, Italy
Fairfood, The Netherlands
Fairtrade Foundation, UK
FinnChurchAid, Finland
Forum Syd, Sweden
Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Friends of the Earth Europe, Portugal
Fundação Evangelização e Culturas, Portugal
Fundação Gonçalo da Silveira, Portugal
GRESEA, Belgium,
ICCO, Interchurch Organisation for Development Co-ordination, The Netherlands
Igreja Evangélica em Lisboa, Portugal
International Grail Movement, The Netherlands.
Italian Support Group for Farmers' Movements in Africa, Italy
Jovem +, Associação de Juventude Cristã, Portugal
Kepa, Service Centre for Development Cooperation, Finland
Kosa, Koordination Suedliches Afrika, Germany
Kehys, Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU, Finland
Leigos para o Desenvolvimento, Portugal
Liação Vida Abundante, Portugal
Mani Tese, Italy
MS, Danish Association for International Co-operation, Denmark
NAD, Netzwerk Afrika Deutschland, Germany
Oikos - Cooperação e Desenvolvimento, Portugal
Oxfam International
Peuples Solidaires, France
QCEA, Quaker Council for European Affairs
Solidariedade Imigrante, Portugal
SOMO - Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations, The Netherlands
SOS Faim – Agir avec le Sud, Belgium
Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
Tearfund, UK
Terra Nuova, Italy
Terre des hommes, Germany
Traidcraft, UK
Trócaire, Ireland
Vredeseilanden, Belgium
War on Want, UK
WEED, World Economy, Ecology & Development, Germany
World Rural Forum, Spain
X minus Y Solidarity Fund, The Netherlands