

### **Item 4.3 Matters Related to Institutional Arrangements.**

#### Statement by the Dominican Republic.

Institutional arrangements for the regional coordination of EPA implementation have to be addressed at two levels. And a decision by an explicit consensus of all CARIFORUM representatives is required.

The first level is political in nature and Ministerial in stature. It is the present CARIFORUM Council of Ministers Responsible for External Trade Negotiations, which is the only intergovernmental decision-making body for all CARIFORUM countries.

The second level should undertake the servicing needs of the CARIFORUM Council as well as the requests of Member States to undertake their EPA commitments at the national level. It should thus be an institution of the highest technical capacity.

#### 1. Intergovernmental.

With respect to EPA implementation, the CARIFORUM Council of Ministers Responsible for External Trade Negotiations would have to carry out, *inter alia*, the following functions:

- a) To serve as counterpart to the European Union in the Joint Ministerial Council;
- b) To appoint CARIFORUM's representatives to the Joint CARIFORUM-EC Council and other joint EPA bodies;
- c) To designate the institution which shall serve as the CARIFORUM coordinator for EPA implementation (CARIFORUM-EC EPA, Art. 284);
- d) To appoint a committee of experts (Art. 189), arbitrators (Art. 207) and a mediator (Art. 205);
- e) To provide instructions to representatives to the Joint EPA bodies; and
- f) To address and resolve intra-CARIFORUM issues.

#### 2. Institutional support.

The region needs a specific counterpart to the EC (DG-Trade) with respect to EPA implementation, capable of articulating the interests of all the CARIFORUM States, with a high level of competence and with a detailed knowledge of the EPA.

Art. 234, in particular, requires identification of an institution which shall serve as the CARIFORUM coordinator for EPA implementation.

The institution should also serve as the depository of all information generated in the region with respect to its trade relationship with Europe, in the new conditions of reciprocity.

It should be entirely member-driven, in close touch with the private sector and capable of signing and receiving disbursements from international donors by virtue of existing or future contribution agreements.

Preliminarily, four alternative options can be identified for this institution:

- a) The CARICOM Secretariat. It is already the counterpart to the EC (DG-Development) for implementing the Regional Indicative Program (RIP), although concerns exist with respect to the 14% level of performance in implementing the 9<sup>th</sup> EDF.

It is also responsible for overseeing implementation of CARICOM Treaty arrangements.

Because it represents CARICOM States in the implementation of the CARICOM-DR FTA, it cannot represent the DR in other trade contexts requiring CARIFORUM-wide coordination.

It would require hiring new staff specialized on the EPA in order to address implementation issues and concerns not only at the regional level but also at the national level.

While customarily it has assumed the implementation of trade agreements on behalf of the region in the past, the custom of implementation is relevant for CARICOM trade obligations, not for CARIFORUM-wide trade obligations.

It is located in Guyana, with a unit to service the CARICOM Single-Market and Economy (CSME) in Barbados.

- b) A new CARIFORUM EPA Implementation Authority, which would have to be created.

It would have to recruit appropriate staff, which would not have necessarily the detailed knowledge of the EPA.

This option would require inevitably new financial disbursements from Member States.

If created, it could be established in Barbados to achieve synergies with CRNM.

- c) The Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM). It is the only existing CARIFORUM-wide institution with a mandate for trade negotiations.

It has in-house detailed knowledge of the EPA, having serviced expert meetings, Technical Working Groups, meetings of the EPA College of Negotiators and Technical Negotiating Groups during the negotiating process.

If CRNM were to serve as the CARIFORUM coordinator for EPA implementation, its role would be facilitated by having already knowledgeable staff with relevant experience for CARIFORUM-wide implementation and for assisting implementation efforts by Member States at the national level.

In addition, a decision by the Heads has been taken to provide CRNM with juridical personality.

It is located in Barbados and Jamaica.

- d) The Caribbean Export Development Agency. Also a CARIFORUM-wide intergovernmental organization, with a mandate for promoting and developing exports and investment of CARIFORUM Member States.

It enjoys juridical personality and autonomy, as well as the privileges and immunities of an international organization.

Each CARIFORUM Member State has one representative in its Management Board.

The highest body of CEDA is the CARIFORUM Council of Ministers, which is solely responsible for any changes to its mandate.

It has fulfilled all requirements and is eligible already to receive European funds through a Contribution Agreement and has a 12-year experience in managing EDF-funded projects.

Its main venue is located in Barbados and it has a sub-regional office in the Dominican Republic.

If CEDA were to become CARIFORUM's regional EPA coordinator, it would also have to recruit appropriate staff, which would not have necessarily the detailed knowledge of the EPA.

This option would also require inevitably new financial disbursements from Member States.

Since it is established already in Barbados, in the same building where CRNM is located, the conditions for achieving synergies are already present.