

**EC-SADC EPA Ministerial Meeting, 4 March 2008 (Gaborone)**  
**JOINT DECLARATION**

1. Trade Ministers from the SADC EPA States, and the European Trade Commissioner met in Gaborone on 4 March 2008 to take stock of the progress of Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations, including notably the initialling of an Interim EPA at the end of 2007 between five SADC EPA Member States and the EC. The meeting served to provide political impetus and guidance for the remaining steps in the negotiation process, notably the conclusion of a full EPA by 31 December 2008.

2. The SADC EPA delegation was led by the Coordinator of the SADC EPA Group Hon. Daniel Neo Moroka, Minister of Trade and Industry from Botswana; and included Hon. Joaquim D C David, Minister of Industry from Angola; Hon. Popane Lebesa, Minister of Trade and Industry, Cooperatives and Marketing from Lesotho; Hon. Immanuel Ngatjizeko, Minister of Trade and Industry from Namibia; Hon. Mandisi Mpahlwa, Minister of Trade and Industry from South Africa; Hon. Rob Davies Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry from South Africa; and the Executive Secretary of SADC, Tomáz Augusto Salomão. Hon. Antonio Fernando Minister of Trade and Industry of Mozambique was represented by the Ms Cerina Banu Mussa, the Director of International Relations. Hon. Moses Dlamini the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Swaziland was represented by Newman Ntshangase Director of Trade. The EU delegation was led by the European Commissioner for Trade, the Rt Hon. Mr Peter Mandelson.

3. Both sides agreed that the Interim EPA initialled by the EC, on the one side, and Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Mozambique and Swaziland on the other side, is a stepping stone towards a comprehensive agreement. The main objective of the EPA must be to consolidate the regional integration process and to foster growth and development in the region, as well as to establish a new and WTO-compliant legal basis for governing bi-regional trade relations. The full EPA must build on these objectives and consolidate even further the regional and development dimension of the Economic Partnership Agreement. The Trade Ministers and the Trade Commissioner also recognised that Namibia and South Africa raised a number of concerns on the Interim Agreement which may negatively impact on regional integration, development aspects and policy space.

4. As provided in Title IV of the Interim EPA, inclusion of substantive provisions on trade in services and investment is an essential component of the full EPA to be concluded by 31 December 2008. The agreement reached with Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique in these areas will help to address supply side constraints in those countries and foster sustainable development by establishing a predictable and enforceable regulatory framework.

5. Both sides hope that other SADC EPA members which have not yet decided to join this bi-regional agreement will do so. This will ensure greater coherence between the SACU and SADC regional integration processes and help to streamline EU trade

relations with countries in Southern Africa, with a view to achieving, in the future, a harmonised trade regime. In this regard, while making the Interim EPA fully operational, we commit, in the process of negotiating the full EPA, to examine the concerns to be identified by the SADC EPA region.

6. Angola underlined the importance for them to remain part of the EPA process with the intention of acceding to the full EPA once this agreement is concluded.

7. Both sides believe that the extension of the negotiating time frame until the end of 2008 for the conclusion of a comprehensive EPA will facilitate reaching a mutually satisfactory and successful outcome. Both sides are ready to continue negotiations on all issues in 2008, leaving the door open for all countries to join the agreement.

8. Both sides acknowledge the importance of commencing implementation of the Interim EPA as rapidly as possible. As foreseen in the Agreement, the SADC EPA States should work with a view to applying this agreement from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008 at the latest.

9. The WTO notification is a crucial step to foster transparency and inform other WTO members. To this end, both sides agreed to work on an information exercise, prior to notification. This will be organised via a joint information event in Geneva and a joint Declaration in the Council for Trade in Goods.

10. Both sides agreed on a roadmap of meetings for 2008