



EU and West African EPA negotiators meet in Dakar (Senegal), 16-20 February 2009

The European Commission and West African negotiators met in Dakar (Senegal) on 16-20 February 2009 for an EPA negotiation round at technical and senior official level. The negotiations took place in a very positive and constructive spirit. West Africa tabled for the first time a draft regional market access offer (to be considered in the broader framework of regional integration within ECOWAS), and also proposals on services, competition, cooperation for the implementation of the EPA, dispute settlement, general exceptions, institutional arrangements, EPA final provisions and other EPA-related issues. The important EPA development plan (PAPED) was also discussed at Dakar and further refined. The shared objective of the Parties is to reach a comprehensive regional Agreement by June 2009, as requested by West African Heads of States.

In particular, as far as trade in goods is concerned, progress was made on issues such as Trade Defence Instruments, Sanitary and Phytosanitary rules, Technical Barriers to Trade, Trade Facilitation and export taxes. Both parties engaged in addressing possible solutions on rules of origin before the next negotiation round, to be held in Brussels in late April or early May 2009.

BACKGROUND

EU-West Africa bilateral trade corresponds to import-export of goods worth €15 billion per year (both ways, 2006). The EU mainly exports industrial goods (80% of its exports), including industrial machines (22%) and vehicles (19%). West Africa's main exports to the EU are oil from Nigeria (50% of West African exports) and tropical agricultural products (cocoa, bananas, pineapples, and wood) mostly from Côte d'Ivoire (which signed a "stepping stone" or interim, goods-only EPA on 26 November 2008) and Ghana (which initialled a "stepping stone" EPA at the end of 2007). West Africa includes 16 countries, mostly Least Developed Countries (LDCs), all but Mauritania members of the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS).

For further information, please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/regions/acp/regneg_en.htm

