

European Commission and Pacific countries hold EPA negotiations in Brussels (17-26 September 2008)

European Commission and Pacific ACP (PACP) countries' representatives held a Joint Technical Working Group meeting in Brussels from 18th to 26th September. It was in practice the second round re-launching the comprehensive EPA negotiations since November 2007. PACP reiterated their position that they did not want to negotiate services, IPR and government procurement in the comprehensive EPA at this stage. The Commission maintained that services should be an integral part of the agreement and that we are open for a flexible, differentiated approach if some PACP wanted to make commitments in these areas. No consensus was found. Pacific Trade Ministers will meet mid October and take a position on this.

Issues addressed during the meetings included trade in goods (in particular infant industry, export taxes, Most Favoured Nation clause, customs co-operation and rules of origin), fisheries, dispute settlement and some trade-related areas such as environment, social aspects and competition. Progress has been made although some areas need further discussion. The Parties agreed to proceed on the basis of a jointly agreed text and to work with electronic communications. No date for next round has been set, it will be decided when sufficient progress has been achieved via e-mail exchanges.

PACP have not presented any Market Access offers at this round, even though they showed interest in the trade in goods, especially in the relaxed rules of origin for fisheries products.

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