



Introduction of new EU Commissioner for Trade, **Baroness Catherine Ashton**,
to the ACP Committee of Ambassadors on 4 December 2008



ACP and LDCs Sugar Exporters Statement to Trade Commissioner
Delivered by **H.E. Mr Patrick I. Gomes**, Ambassador of Guyana, Chairman of
the ACP Consultative Group on Sugar

Sugar remains a very vital product to ACP and LDCs economies. In many instances, sugar is the largest contributor to GDP, accounts for a significant share of foreign exchange earnings and contributes significantly to employment and rural livelihoods and food security. Moreover, the sugar cane industry continues to provide stable level of earnings that enable net-food importing countries to finance their imports. This is critical in view of the recent food crisis. The role of sugar has been accentuated in the context of the contemporary global financial crisis.

In this regard, we would like to bring to the Commissioner's attention a speech by Mr Karl-Friedrich Falkenberg's at the 10th ACP Special Ministerial Conference on Sugar held in Nadi, Fiji on 1st May 2007, when he said, "The ACP will continue to have preferential access over all others. We have offered nothing to Latin American countries in the Mercosur negotiations; instead we have said to them that we reserve sugar for the ACPs. This is a very strong political commitment of the EU and in the process contributed to the conclusion of Interim and Full EPAs. We want to preserve access for ACP sugar, and that goes for the bilateral and multilateral negotiations."

Further, we would also wish to remind the Commission of Article 39 of the Cotonou Agreement concerning cooperation in the international fora.

The ACP and LDCs sugar exporters request confirmation from the European Commission that sugar, in all its forms, will be designated as a Sensitive Product and that it will remain on the list of products of long-standing preferences in the agriculture negotiations of the WTO Doha Round.

As such, any tariff reduction and any expansion of tariff-quotas on an MFN basis should be carried out over a period no less than 10 years. If the proposal of the Commission results in further concession, it will simply negate the commercial benefits we had expected under EPAs. Otherwise, it will become a reverse special and differential given by the ACP to the EC.

The ACP and LDCs sugar exporters would see no benefit in joining a consensus in the WTO Doha Round which would result in the liberalization of the sugar market of Europe and the rest of the developed countries in an overly ambitious manner.

We, therefore, call on the EU to live up to its responsibility and commitment vis à vis the ACP Group and LDCs and to vehemently oppose any move to re-open the sugar issue at the WTO. In making this call, we firmly trust that the Commissioner will provide us with necessary re-assurances and that she will instruct the EU Agriculture negotiators in Geneva accordingly.

We look forward to continued dialogue on these matters with the EU within the framework established with a view to arriving at mutually acceptable outcomes.