

PNG tells of experience with EU

by Len Garae

WHILE HE HAS NOT specifically named Vanuatu as the country he was referring to, a fisherman from Papua New Guinea has said, "You can say 'no' and the answer is 'no'. And we can sit and talk to the Europeans but they won't withdraw their position on the imminent European Partnership Trade Agreement with ACP

"They are not going to lower their standards for their people's sake because they have a huge population to worry about".

However though, the PNG representative said there is still an opportunity at the end



PNG fisherman has broken into EU market with exports of fish products

of the tunnel in the form of Aid for Trade. "I think the door is open for us to take this opportunity to start getting involved on how to have access to the fund that they have put out for us so let's go

back and do our awareness", he said.

The positive remarks were made by a fisherman from Papua New Guinea who was a member of the PNG Delegation at the Information Semi-

nar, which was held at The Sebel this week.

He said initially he was also a skeptic of the EU arrangement. But two years ago, his company set in motion the processes to prepare the necessary infrastructure, upgrade their facilities and standard and capacity building of their people in line with EU requirements to meet the accreditation recognized by Europeans.

"The hard part is not getting into Europe, the hard part is getting your infrastructure in place", he said. In addition he said the EU does not impose a standard on you as a processor. They are main-

ly setting standards to the competent authority and in PNG's case, it is to the National Fishing Authority.

Since his company has met the standard, they have not been denied any exports of fish products to the EU. His contribution in the discussions has proved that the PNG Government and all stakeholders have worked hand in hand within the time frame necessary to accomplish while other countries have not done so yet including Vanuatu.

PNG has broken ranks with other Pacific countries and was reported to be in the process of signing the trade agreement with EU shortly.

Bule's comments surprise EPA Representative

By Len Garae

THE HEAD OF UNIT, JACQUES WANENBURGER who is the Director General Trade of the European Commission in Brussels has said he was a bit surprised by our Trade Minister, James Bule's comments at the opening that Vanuatu would not sign the agreement when the date of negotiations expired at the end of December.

He said the Minister quoted a number of issues which he claimed were still outstanding. But he insisted the issues were discussed in Brussels and agreed to ten days earlier. "The issues have been settled", he said.

Wunenburger stressed, "If we want to ensure continuity of the trade preferences from the January 1, it has to be done now and it's not a joke. It is within these two days because otherwise it is too late. Already now we are at a critical point in time because we will put our proposals on member states to the Council of Ministers of the European Commission on December 10

Wunenburger said the purpose of the Information Seminar on the European Partnership Agreement was to inform stakeholders who were not part of the process; private companies, business men and civil societies to inform them about what would happen on January 1 in 2008.

Asked how he felt about the outcome of the



At left, Wunenburger... "surprised by Bule's comments" while Seminar Moderator Andrew Kausiama looks on

Seminar he answered in the following words, "I was impressed by the number of people who attended from different islands from the Region because according to the counting, there were more than one hundred people in the room (in The Sebel Hotel Conference Room).

"The people were active and asked a lot of constructive questions to the process. This was great because I think at the end of the day they left better informed than before. Whether they were convinced is up to them.

"My point of view is that there were a number of people who had not met before from different countries in the Region and the meeting also provided an opportunity for them to exchange views and their experiences and that was great.

"It is our expectation that now there will be a spillover effect in the countries when those people fly back to their countries. There will be reports and communications from their side to explain where we stand".

Vanuatu puts foot down on EPA

By Len Garae

"VANUATU WILL NOT BE committed to an European Union Economic Partnership Agreement until our economic interests are adequately addressed", Trade Minister James Bule reminded the DG Trade Seminar at The Sebel yesterday.

The Seminar was designed to inform and advise participants on the update of the negotiation currently taking place between the European Union and the Pacific ACP of which Vanuatu is a member.

The negotiation is in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement Article 37.1. Due to time constraints, the European Union and the Pacific ACP have agreed to first of all concentrate only on an Interim Agreement on Trade in Goods and to delay negotiations on Trade in Services to continue in the year 2008.



Bule speaks while EU Charge d'Affaires Nicolas Berlanga and colleagues listen

intention that Vanuatu will not be committed to signing any EU-PACP EPA until these outstanding issues are resolved.

"Of great importance to Vanuatu and as in other Pacific

Taxes, Customs Cooperation, Dispute Settlement, Substantially All Trade, PACP request for export of chilled and frozen fish, Treatment of Non-WTO members of the PACP

order for Vanuatu to commit to signing any form of Interim Economic Partnership Agreement.

But he said he is also mindful of the fact that Vanuatu is

Ministers Meeting in Port Vila in August 2007, and Forum Leaders Meeting in Tonga in October, Vanuatu is upholding its commitment as a member of the PACP in the EU-PACP EPA negotiations", he added.

The objectives of the EU-PACP EPA are; Promote Sustainable Development, Promote smooth and gradual integration into the global economy and contribute to poverty eradication, Enable PACP to play a full part in international trade, to manage the challenges of Globalization and to adapt to new conditions of international trade and Enhance the production, supply and trade capacity of the PACP and their capacity to attract investment.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is these objectives in my mind that I believe Vanuatu will need more time of negotiations before we can commit

Seminar at The Sebel Port Vila on 26 Novembre:

Trade Negotiators call on civil society to come forward

Trade negotiators are calling on private sector representatives, academics, media people or civil society organisations to step forward and air their views regarding the new trade rules at a seminar organised by the European Union (EU) and the Pacific region on 26 November in Port Vila (Vanuatu). Participants will get a unique chance to get an insight into the new trade agreement being set up by the two regions and scheduled to enter into force by 1 January 2008. The Economic Partnership Agreement represents a major overhaul of the Pacific trade relations with Europe. High ranking government officials from Vanuatu, civil society representatives and European Commission officials are among the key speakers together with representatives from the Pacific Forum Secretariat.

The seminar will gather together a wide range of participants from all across the Pacific to discuss with representatives from business, government and development agencies how these trade agreements can deliver development.

Economic Partnership Agreements are being negotiated between the EU and six regional groupings of African, Caribbean and Pacific nations. Their objective is to promote development and negotiations are currently ongoing.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PARTICIPATE? Please come to The Sebel - Port Vila on 26 November at 08.45 or call 22501 (European Commission Delegation to Vanuatu)

Temakon wants Vanuatu to sign Interim Agreement

By Len Garae

CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVE

Marilyn Temakon has gone against Vanuatu's position on the Interim European Partnership Agreement with Pacific Island Countries by telling the Information Seminar on the subject this week that Vanuatu has nothing to lose by signing the Agreement.

She was responding to the official position of Vanuatu as announced by the Minister of Trade James Bule that the Government would not sign without first making sure that the country's own trade interests are secured first.

But Temakon said the number of outstanding issues that the Minister has listed are internal and should be worked on from within but that it would be better to be part of the bridge building team than not.

She said Pacific Governments including Vanuatu are so bogged down in their own internal issues that they do not



Temakon says Vanuatu should sign EPA agreement

find time to look at the real issues that are affecting their people such as population explosion and unemployment.

"I say the Pacific Govern-

ments are very slow and do not put the interests of their peoples first.

"As for the Vanuatu Government representatives who are

present in this meeting, I wish to add that they should not hang on to other items on the agenda which in the long run are not important," she said.