

Zambia joins Economic Partnership Agreement with EU - Brussels, 01 October 2008

The European Union and Zambia yesterday paved the way for Zambia to fully join the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and the Eastern and Southern African (ESA) region. Zambian and EU representatives initialled Zambia's final market access offer in the context of the interim EPA that had been initialled at the end of 2007. Representatives from the regional organisation Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) were also present at the initialling ceremony. The offer will now be integrated into the EU-ESA interim deal, a move which secures full access to the EU market for Zambian products.

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson welcomed the move: "This agreement improves access to European markets for Zambian exporters. It thus provides Zambia with new development tools, fosters its economic growth and increases its integration in the global economy." EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel also welcomed it: "It is a positive step towards regional integration and cooperation for Zambia and its neighbouring countries. In the coming months and years, I believe that the people of Zambia will benefit from this agreement in terms of stronger growth and exports, and more jobs."

When the interim EPA was initialled in 2007, Zambia initialled the text but did not conclude negotiations on a market access offer. As a result, the country was not included in the EPA market access regulation which keeps the EU market open to imports from African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries which have initialled full or interim EPAs.

Interim EPAs have been initialled with all ACP regions except the Caribbean, whose regional organisation CARIFORUM initialled a comprehensive EPA from the start. The EU and the Caribbean will sign this agreement on the 15 October. Initialled interim EPAs are to be signed later in 2008 or in early 2009. They mainly focus on trade in goods and development, while comprehensive EPAs will also cover issues such as intellectual property rights, public procurement, services, and investment.

Background

The ESA (Eastern and Southern Africa) EPA has been negotiated with the regional negotiator COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa). Countries now included in the interim EPA are: Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and ACP are foreseen by the 2000 Cotonou agreement, as a way to conclude World Trade Organisation (WTO) compliant agreements, while at the same time boosting development. They include EU funding and support, including for trade and customs infrastructure and capacity building.

All EPAs foresee asymmetric trade liberalisation, where the EU opens its markets completely, while ACP countries liberalise trade over lengthy transition periods with exceptions and additional safeguard provisions.