

Joint Statement from the Third Meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Consultative Committee

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 6 and 7 November 2017

1. The Third Meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Consultative Committee (CC) took place on 6 and 7 November 2017 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, co-chaired from the CARIFORUM side and from the EU side. According to the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the Cariforum States and the European Union, the task of the CC is to assist the Joint CARIFORUM-EU Council in promoting dialogue and cooperation between representatives of organisations of civil society. The agreement also recognises the role of the CC in monitoring the implementation of all economic, social and environmental aspects of the EPA and in strengthening dialogue between representatives of civil society.
2. In order to provide added value to EPA implementation, the CC acknowledged that its 3 main goals are: (1) to be a sounding board; (2) to provide technical support and advice; and (3) to raise awareness and disseminate information.
3. The CC appreciated that the Head of the EU Delegation to Trinidad and Tobago participated in the opening session. The CC strongly encourages and welcomes participation of officials from both Parties in future meetings.
4. Given the importance of services in the economies of Cariforum and EU countries, the CC welcomes the emphasis put on services by the Cariforum-EU Joint Council and Joint Parliamentary Assembly and therefore calls for the establishment of a multi-stakeholder Working Group on Services.
5. The CC highlighted the following issues related to trade in services:
 - a. The importance of better collection of statistics and disaggregated data by country and sector;
 - b. The need to work on data protection regulation so that adequacy can be further negotiated with relevant authorities;
 - c. The importance of advancing the work on mutual recognition of professional qualifications;
 - d. The importance of expanding the provisions for business visas.
6. The CC emphasised other key areas related to:
 - a. Youth development and entrepreneurship, insisting on the importance of access to finance and encouraging the development of business incubators;
 - b. Creating a more enabling environment for the further development of MSMEs, including microfinancing, in particular in sectors such as agriculture and fisheries;
 - c. Building resilience to the impact of climate change, insisting on the importance of climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and transition to renewable energies, as well as on the effects that this might have on productive capabilities;

- d. The need to ensure that social aspects, core labour standards and the decent work agenda are considered in the EPA implementation;
 - e. Partnerships on research and development, calling for the creation of an enabling environment by connecting CSOs, academia and governments including via public-private academic partnerships.
 7. The CC expressed concerns about the potential serious impact on trade between the two Parties due to the exiting of the United Kingdom from the EU. Therefore, the CC encourages the Parties to anticipate and mitigate any reduction of trade by diversifying trade activities into the EU27 market.
 8. Concerns were raised regarding the non-ratification of the agreement by some Cariforum and EU countries, as well as to the impact that non-ratification might have on certain sectors. Furthermore, the CC calls for clarification from the Parties on implications of the provisional implementation of the EPAs in both sides.
 9. The CC calls for an early adoption and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, and reiterates the need for the CC to be involved in the setting up of such a mechanism, as well as in the discussions on monitoring indicators.
 10. The CC considers that the monitoring and evaluation should include relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target indicators, as well as ILO core labour standards and decent work indicators.
 11. The CC calls for observer status at the Trade and Development Committee in order to facilitate access to relevant documents from other EPA bodies for the effective functioning of the its work. The CC for its part is willing to contribute to the transparency by publishing relevant documents on webpages, and would like in particular to draw the attention to initiatives led by the Caribbean social partners in this sense.
 12. The CC reiterates the importance of being in receipt of an adequate and transparent budget for its functioning and for the implementation of its work plan, which was finalised and adopted at the meeting, and is attached as an annex to this joint statement.
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