



## **REPORT ON THE 3<sup>rd</sup> ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE EU AND FIVE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA COUNTRIES FOR THE DEEPENING OF THE CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTED ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

**24-27 November 2020**

The EU and the five Eastern and Southern African countries (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe) implementing the interim Economic Partnership Agreement met virtually via video-conference from 24 to 27 November to hold the third negotiating round for the deepening of this agreement, following the launch of the negotiations on 2 October 2019 in Mauritius.

All partners were well prepared and coordinated for this round that included seven issues, thus confirming once again their willingness and commitment to move forward in these negotiations despite the difficult situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the technical constraints of a virtual meeting.

The meeting was held in a positive and constructive atmosphere and allowed the partners to make progress on all the five issues already discussed in the first two rounds, namely customs and trade facilitation (C&TF), technical barriers to trade (TBT), sanitary and phytosanitary issues (SPS), rules of origin (ROO) and agriculture. Two new issues, i.e. trade and sustainable development (TSD) and trade in services, investment liberalisation and digital trade (S, IL&DT), were further discussed. For TSD, the discussions helped the parties to understand better the respective positions on divergent points. For S, IL&DT, no text-based discussions took place yet, but our partners had the opportunity to raise questions and clarifications on the EU's approach presented to them.

### **Customs and Trade Facilitation (C&TF)**

Discussions were constructive with further progress on outstanding issues. Five articles remain outstanding, including those related to Institutional Provisions and capacity building, which will need to be discussed in due course, in the framework of the relevant chapters. The Protocol on Customs Mutual Administrative Assistance, an EU proposal to review the current Protocol, was also discussed and considerable progress was made.

### **Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)**

Both parties exchanged views on their respective policies, notably on conformity assessment procedures. Further progress was made on some of the remaining articles,

## **REPORT ON THE 2<sup>nd</sup> ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE EU AND FIVE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA COUNTRIES FOR THE DEEPENING OF THE CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTED ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

notably on Technical Regulations and Conformity Assessment, where large parts are now agreed. Other issues discussed included remaining parts on transparency, marking and labelling as well as equivalence and private schemes. Cooperation and technical assistance will be discussed in the wider context of development cooperation.

### **Sanitary and Phytosanitary issues (SPS)**

Both parties had a very fruitful discussion on the SPS Chapter. Substantial progress has been made with agreement or near agreement on several articles notably on regionalisation, technical consultation, animal welfare and emergency measures. The Parties agreed to further work on remaining open articles, including on the issue of equivalence. The parties re-confirmed that the cooperation and technical assistance would be of utmost importance for full implementation of the ambitious SPS chapter they are working on.

### **Agriculture**

The discussions took place in a constructive atmosphere. On the basis of the joint working document, the parties discussed their own text proposals in detail and agreed on some articles of the joint working text. The discussion of the non-agreed parts of the text will continue at the next rounds.

### **Rules of Origin (ROO)**

The parties endorsed the joint negotiating text, which covers the concept of originating products and origin procedures. The Parties made further progress on a number of provisions and provided further clarifications on the origin procedures and the identified divergent positions.

### **Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD)**

Both parties had an exchange of views on the text proposals submitted prior to the third round of negotiations. Issues covered in the discussions included, among others, multilateral labour agreements, climate change, trade and responsible supply chain management, scientific and technical information, sustainable fisheries, review of sustainability impacts, and institutional provisions. In addition, the EU presented a new article on Gender and Equality. The discussions were very constructive and helped the parties to understand better the respective positions. Both sides noted a lot of convergence in the respective texts in many areas. The parties agreed to continue their discussions on a basis of a joint working text that the EU will propose.

### **Services, Investment Liberalisation and Digital Trade (S, IL&DT)**

The parties had a productive initial exchange on investment liberalisation, trade in services, and digital trade. No text-based discussions yet, but the EU gave a presentation of its approach highlighting the key features (e.g. integrated services/investment architecture) and objectives. The ESA side took note and raised issues of clarifications and comments. The sides agreed on the importance of S, IL&DT in this Agreement and reiterated their

**REPORT ON THE 2<sup>nd</sup> ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE EU AND FIVE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA COUNTRIES FOR THE DEEPENING OF THE CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTED ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

commitment to an ambitious outcome while taking into account the differing levels of development among the ESA states. Text-based discussions will start at the next round after the EU will have submitted to ESA5 its text proposal.