



**CARIBBEAN
REGIONAL NEGOTIATING MACHINERY**

RNM PRESS RELEASES ARE AVAILABLE ON THE RNM WEBSITE AT www.crnmm.org

Kingston, JAMAICA, April 17, 2004

STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

Launch of Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations between the Caribbean Forum of ACP States (CARIFORUM) and the European Union

Check Against Delivery

CONTACT: NAND C. BARDOUILLE
Tel: (246) 430-1678
nand.bardouille@crnm.org

**Statement by the Director-General of the
Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery
(RNM), Ambassador Dr. Richard Bernal, on the
Launch of CARIFORUM-EU EPA Negotiations**

CARIFORUM EPA Launch a Watershed

1. The launch of negotiations for the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the Caribbean Forum of ACP States (CARIFORUM) and the European Union (EU) mark a watershed in relations between two of the longest continuously operating integration movements.
2. This new phase in our relations is a renewal of partnership, in what has been an enduring model of North-South cooperation.

.../2

AMBASSADOR RICHARD BERNAL: DIRECTOR-GENERAL
Citibank Building, 5th Floor, 63 Knutsford Boulevard, Kingston 5
Jamaica, Tel: (876) 754-7989 Fax: (876) 754-7988 Email: rmmjam@n5.com

STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

Launch of EPA negotiations between CARIFORUM and the EU

2

Consolidating an Enduring Partnership

3. Africa Caribbean Pacific (ACP)-EU relations are based on the three-pronged pillars of aid, trade and political co-operation.
4. The Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA), signed in Cotonou, Benin, in June 2000, builds on twenty-five years of ACP-EU cooperation under four successive Lomé Conventions. The CPA establishes a comprehensive framework for ACP-EU relations.
5. The EPA is a major instrument of economic development, through trade and development assistance.
6. Key guiding principles of a CARIFORUM-EU EPA are that it: support and build upon the regional integration process, promote development objectives, and incorporate elements of special and differential treatment.

Some Broad Objectives of the CARIFORUM EPA

7. A CARIFORUM EPA must contribute to the sustainable development of small Caribbean states.
8. It is incumbent that it foster the structural transformation and adjustment of Caribbean economies. The EPA must do so in a manner and at a pace that is conducive to economic and social development, and in a way that enhances Caribbean states' role in the international community.

Mediating the Caribbean's Encounter with Globalization

9. Complex changes are underway in the global economy. The intention is that the EPA will contribute significantly to mediating the region's encounter with globalization.

.../3

STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

Launch of EPA negotiations between CARIFORUM and the EU

3

An Appropriate Structure for Negotiations

10. The successful negotiation of a CARIFORUM EPA will depend critically on the negotiating architecture put into place.
11. I am pleased with the consensus that has emerged amongst CARIFORUM Member States regarding the negotiating structures for EPA negotiations. Negotiations for a CARIFORUM–EU EPA will take place at *three tiers*; namely, Ministerial, Principal Negotiator and subject-specific negotiators. At the technical level, negotiations will be conducted by members of the *EPA College of Negotiators*. It will be tasked with spearheading the region's negotiating efforts.
12. At the Ministerial-level Special Meeting of COTED, April 15, Member States approved the College.
13. The region's Senior Officials and Trade Ministers must be credited for their commitment to and foresight in putting into place the most appropriate model for coordinating and providing technical oversight of very complex and multi-faceted issues to be negotiated.

EPA Negotiations Plan/Schedule

14. The plan/schedule for EPA negotiations has also been agreed to by Senior Officials and Trade Ministers.
15. The indicative schedule of negotiations encompass four phases that will guide interchange between the two sides, from the period April 2004 to December 2007. The phases are:- i) *Initial Phase*: Establishing the Priorities of EPA Negotiations (April 2004 to September 2004); ii) *Second Phase*: Convergence on strategic approach to CARIFORUM regional integration (September 2004 to September 2005); iii) *Third Phase*: Structuring and consolidating of EPA negotiations (September 2005 to December 2006); and, iv) *Final Phase*: Finalisation (January 2007 to December 2007).

.../4

STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

Launch of EPA negotiations between CARIFORUM and the EU

4

Interface with the EU

16. The First Joint EPA Ministerial Negotiating Meeting was convened immediately following the formal CARIFORUM EPA launch commencement proceedings.
17. In the hour-long session the CARIFORUM Ministerial team was led by Dame Billie Miller. The EU team was headed by Commissioner Lamy. The two sides used the opportunity to exchange information, and review the negotiating architecture and schedule of negotiations.

(END)

###