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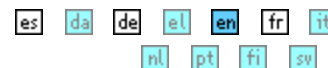
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UPDATED 15-04



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Africa, Caribbean, Pacific

EU-ACPs: EU and Caribbean launch negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement

Brussels, 15 April 2004

On 16 April the European Union will open negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and 16 Caribbean countries. Meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, the EU Commissioners for Trade and Development and their Caribbean colleagues will officially launch these negotiations aimed at promoting trade and development by concluding a region-to-region agreement. By opening up trade between both regions and setting up clear rules for trade, the EPA will also contribute to the economic integration of the Caribbean.

Before travelling to Jamaica, EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy said: "The EU has a long-standing relationship with the Caribbean. With the launch of these negotiations we are opening a new chapter between our regions. Tearing down barriers to trade among Caribbean countries is the necessary complement to the almost full access to the EU market already enjoyed by these countries. As a result, the region will come out stronger and EU-Caribbean relations will be boosted."

Poul Nielson, Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid said: "Stimulating investments and productivity improvements through regional integration and the creation of larger markets will inevitably strengthen Caribbean producers on international markets. More importantly, it will be an important catalyst in driving forward the region's long term development. This is why the EPAs are at the heart of our development agenda. I now am looking forward to strengthening this dimension of our long standing EU-Caribbean development co-operation".

The launch is hosted by the Government of Jamaica. Prime Minister Percival Patterson and the Commissioners will deliver keynote speeches at the opening ceremony on 16 April. This will be followed by a first negotiating session during which both Commissioners and their opposite numbers will "roadmap" the way ahead in a joint work programme and calendar for the negotiations. It has been agreed that negotiations will be concluded no later than by end 2007.

Background

The Caribbean is the fourth ACP region to open EPA negotiations with the EU. In October 2003, negotiations were launched in both West and Central Africa, while Eastern and Southern Africa followed in February 2004. Based on the Cotonou Agreement between 77 ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries and the EU, a first phase of EPA negotiations took place between 27 September 2002 and 2 October 2003. This resulted in a joint report between the EU and all ACP countries on horizontal issues in key areas such as market access, trade-related areas, services and the development dimension of EPAs.

The 15 Caribbean countries opening EPA negotiations with the EU are Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines,

Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago. With the exception of the Dominican Republic, these countries are members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which is currently implementing a Single Market and Economy. CARICOM and the Dominican Republic have concluded a free trade agreement and are cooperating within the Caribbean Forum of ACP States (CARIFORUM).

[EU-Caribbean Relations in Figures](#)



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