

CARIFORUM-EC Economic Partnership Agreement
Special Meeting of CARIFORUM Head of Governments and EC
Commissioners for Trade and for Development

Montego Bay, Jamaica, 4-5 October 2007

Communiqué

Heads of State and Government of CARIFORUM States and the EC Commissioners for Trade and for Development met to review the negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the CARIFORUM States and the European Community and its Member States, narrow gaps and provide political impetus and guidance in order to bring the negotiation to a successful and timely conclusion.

They reaffirmed that the guiding objectives of the EPA negotiation are the promotion of economic development that is socially and environmentally sustainable; the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty; and the smooth and gradual integration of CARIFORUM States into the world economy. In this endeavour they reiterated that regional integration which builds upon, strengthens and supports CARIFORUM regional processes constitute a key element of their Partnership. They also stressed the crucial role that substantial support and development assistance from the EU will play in ensuring the attainment of the EPA's objectives.

The meeting welcomed the priority given to development throughout the Agreement and the identification of detailed areas of technical assistance, capacity and institution building and regulatory reform within the specific chapters of the EPA, as well as the ongoing work to design quantified support programmes and projects aimed at the proper and timely implementation of the Agreement. The meeting recognised the adjustment challenges that the implementation of the Agreement pose in particular to smaller economies among the CARIFORUM States and reiterated their commitment to address them. The EC Commissioners stressed the significant increase in the EDF allocations to be devoted in large measure to carry out the programmes that are being designed. Further, they emphasised that there will be additional resources which should emanate from the EU Aid for Trade Strategy. CARIFORUM Heads noted these assurances, as further set out in a Memorandum from the Commission, and the meeting confirmed the commitment on both sides to work to ensure that the Caribbean Region receives its fair share of the resources. CARIFORUM Heads also noted the importance they attach to the timely delivery of such resources.

Both sides underscored the importance of addressing the special needs of Haiti.

In reviewing the progress achieved since the Ministerial meeting in Brussels in November 2006 CARIFORUM and the EC emphasised that despite the considerable hurdles and the important issues still to be finalized the overall objective of concluding the negotiations in time for the EPA to take effect on 1 January 2008 remains attainable.

Negotiations on market access for goods remain the most challenging for the finalization of the negotiations. In this regard, they reaffirmed the important principles of flexibility within the parameters of existing WTO rules, asymmetry and phased liberalisation. They provided the necessary guidance to their negotiators to be able to expeditiously conclude the negotiations.

In the vital areas of services and investment, they emphasised for both sides to make offers that are WTO-compatible and confer on CARIFORUM meaningful access.

With respect to the critical commodities of and sugar and bananas, they reiterated the importance of production and export to the economic and social wellbeing of CARIFORUM States. CARIFORUM urged that appropriate market arrangements be maintained. In order to facilitate the continued adjustment and transformation of the banana industry, CARIFORUM highlighted the need for developmental assistance highlighting the special vulnerability of Windward Island banana producers. While expressing dismay at the EC denunciation of the Sugar Protocol, CARIFORUM tabled proposals on securing increased and assured market access at remunerative prices aimed at securing the industry's long-term viability.

Both CARIFORUM Heads and the EC Commissioners reaffirmed their commitment to conclude their negotiations in manner that would allow for the Agreement to come into force on January 1, 2008. To that end, they provided the necessary guidance to their negotiators to conclude the negotiations expeditiously.