

EPA Provisions on Customs and Trade Facilitation

The EPA creates reciprocal obligations in the area of Customs and Trade Facilitation for the EC and CARIFORUM countries with the objective of ensuring effective control while improving efficiency, transparency and non-discrimination in customs operations and border management procedures of the Parties.

The Chapter places strong emphasis on co-operation on customs matters between the EC and CARIFORUM. It recognizes the differences in the level of institutional development and capacities of the Customs Administrations in the EC and CARIFORUM, particularly in relation to the application of best practices and international standards. As a result, a number of the commitments to be undertaken by CARIFORUM are conditional on the provision of technical and technological assistance, financial support and training.

The Agreement establishes a clear link between specific (CARIFORUM) commitments and the delivery of development support in the following areas:

- a. the application of modern customs techniques, including risk assessment, advance binding rulings, simplified procedures for entry and release of goods, post release controls and company audit methods;
- b. introduction of procedures and practices which reflect as far as practicable, international instruments and standards applicable in the field of customs and trade, including WTO rules and WCO instruments and standards, inter alia the revised Kyoto Convention on the simplification and harmonisation of customs procedures and the WCO Framework of Standard to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade; and
- c. The automation of customs and other trade procedures.

Specific provisions aimed at improving transparency, efficiency, integrity and accountability of customs operations include commitments to:

- (i) Reduce, simplify and standardize data and documentation;
- (ii) Simplify requirements and formalities wherever possible, in respect of the rapid release and clearance of goods;
- (iii) Make publicly available (as far as possible through electronic means) all legislation, procedures and fees and charges, as well as whenever possible the necessary explanations.
- (iv) Conduct timely and regular dialogue with economic operators on legislative proposals related to customs and trade procedures;
- (v) Provide, wherever possible, advance information to economic operators when new or amended legislation and procedures are introduced.

Protocol II on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters provides an operational framework for information sharing and collaboration between EC and CARIFORUM Customs Authorities in order to ensure the correct application of their respective customs legislation, in particular by preventing, investigating and combating operations in breach of customs legislation.