

The world's poorest people are under unfair pressure to accept new trade terms with the EU. The European Parliament Socialist Group has taken a firm stand: unless EPAs become a true development tool, we will oppose these deals.

Talks about Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) have been going on since 2002 between the EU and 78 developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP countries).

The European Commission promised that EPAs would focus on sustainable development and fighting poverty.

But critics accuse EU negotiators of:

- putting EU commercial advantage first;
- pressurising ACP countries to negotiate on sensitive issues – services, intellectual property, public procurement, competition policy, and investment protection;
- undermining cooperation between countries in poor regions of the world;
- aggressive negotiating tactics.

Many ACP countries are worried about how they will be hit by deals they have already initialled or are yet to settle. The Socialist Group insists that the talks go back to their original, over-riding aims:

- sustainable development
- gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy
- regional integration
- advancement of the UN's Millennium Development Goals



FIVE SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES TO PUT ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS BACK ON TRACK

1. DEVELOPMENT – THE OVER-RIDING PRIORITY

EPAs must meet development needs, bring trade benefits for ACP countries and promote the Millennium Development Goals;

Every EPA should:

- give stronger commitments to development cooperation
- offer ACP countries more market access than the EU demands in return
- compensate for loss of customs revenues
- safeguard the right to food and access to basic public services.

ACP countries must be free to accept or reject clauses on services, intellectual property, public procurement, competition policy or investment.

2. PROMOTE REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Every EPA should:

- be negotiated regionally without dividing regional trading partners
- include financial and technical support, to strengthen regional organisations and support regional trade.

3. BOOST ACP ECONOMIES

Every EPA should

- give ACP countries the best possible access to the EU market and offer ACP countries more market access than the EU demands in return
- safeguard sensitive sectors of the ACP economies
- help ACP countries to manage change, including impact on sensitive or growing sectors
- encourage trade between poor countries through simpler "rules of origin" for products

- help build capacity to trade, creating competitive regional economies
- help ACP countries to develop their negotiating capacities

if it covers services, set out strong rules to ensure key services are available to everyone at affordable prices. However *fundamental public services should be kept outside the negotiating framework*.

4. HONOUR FUNDING COMMITMENTS

- The EU Member States and Commission must keep their promises of €2 billion a year of new Aid for Trade funding by 2010.
- Access to Aid for Trade should not depend on signing an EPA.
- EU development funds should not be raided to pay for Aid for Trade
- ACP countries need to know how much money is earmarked, and how, when and where it will be spent.

5. EPAs MUST BE ACP-OWNED

- ACP countries must have enough time to negotiate effectively on a clear, agreed agenda.
- Every EPA should have a 3-5 year review clause and development impact assessment
- ACP Parliaments and the European Parliament must be fully involved
- Unions, NGOs and civil society must be heard.

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FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR **FAIRER TRADE** WITH POOR COUNTRIES



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