

## A difficult start for Cotonou

One Year of Negotiations on new EU-ACP Regional Trade Agreements

One year ago, in September 2002, the European Union and the 79 countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) launched negotiations on new trade agreements under the Cotonou framework. The Cotonou agreement foresees the conclusion of so-called 'Economic Partnership Agreements' (EPAs) between the EU and ACP regions until January 2008. So far little progress has been made. While the ACP group strives to conclude the first round of negotiations by signing a binding framework agreement that includes both trade and development aspects of the new regional trade agreements, the EU considers the first phase mainly to clarify rules and procedural issues of the negotiations on the regional level. The EU would like to consider the main themes raised by the ACP group, namely market access, agriculture, services, questions relating to development, trade-related issues and legal questions, only in the upcoming regional negotiations. Current disagreement on the themes for negotiation reflects the diverging interests of the negotiating parties and has hindered substantial progress in the implementation of the Cotonou principles.

At the eve of the beginning of regional negotiations the organisers want to summarise what has been achieved so far, to examine the positions of the EU Commission, the ACP countries and the German government, and to evaluate the impact of the failure of the Cancún WTO ministerial conference for regional trade agreements. In particular in the light of the temporary failure of multilateral trade negotiations regional and bilateral processes have received added attention. The meeting thus aims to clarify the role regional trade agreements could play towards the aims of poverty eradication and sustainable development in ACP countries. Problems that surfaced with the regional configuration African ACP countries will assume during the negotiations will also be addressed during the conference. Participants will discuss the importance of effective civil society participation, both in the South and North, to make EU-ACP trade agreements work for a truly fair and sustainable partnership. By addressing issues of concern the organisers hope to contribute to a broad public debate on the future of European trade policy and to address political expectations and requirements to political decision makers in Berlin and Brussels.

Volker Vinnai, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Peter Eisenblätter, terre des hommes

Klaus Schilder, WEED

Wednesday, 22. October 2003

### I. Between Development Agenda and Liberalisation Schedule: Cotonou plus 1 – What has been achieved?

13.30 h Registration

14:00h **Welcome**

**Christiane Kesper**, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin

#### **Current State of the Negotiations – The EU Commission's View**

**Ingo Feustel**, EU Commission DG Trade, Brussels

#### **Current State of the Negotiations – The ACP Perspective**

**Sasara Chasala George**, Ambassador of the Republic of Botswana, Brussels

#### **The Failure of Cancún – Relevance for Regional Trade Agreements**

**Marc Maes**, 11.11.11, Brussels

#### **Civil Society Participation – Reality or Wishful Thinking?**

**Simon Stocker**, Eurostep, Brussels

*Discussion*

**Chair: Axel Schmidt**, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn

16:00 h *Coffee Break*

### II. Poverty Eradication through Trade? Policy Requirements for Regional Trade Agreements

16:30 h **Comments on Regional Trade Agreements from a German Perspective**

**Evita Schmiege**, Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development, Dept. for Globalisation, Trade and Investment, Berlin

#### **Role and Influence of the European Parliament in the Negotiation Process**

**Richard Howitt (MEP)**, Standing Committee on Economic Development, Finance and Trade, ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Brussels\*

#### **Litmus Test for Participation – ACP Civil Society and Regional Trade Agreements**

**N.N.**, ACP Civil Society Focal Point\*

#### **EU Regional Trade Agreements – Stepping Stone or Stumbling Block for ACP Countries?**

**Klaus Schilder**, World Economy, Ecology & Development, Berlin

*Discussion*

**Chair: Peter Eisenblätter**, terre des hommes, Osnabrück

**Résumé: Jens Martens**, World Economy, Ecology & Development, Bonn\*

\* invited

18:30 *End*

*Reception at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*

Conference Languages: German/English (simultaneous translation)

