

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Don't stop EPAs!** **EUROCHAMBRES supports current ACP negotiations**

In anticipation of tomorrow's "Stop EPAs" demonstrations, EUROCHAMBRES criticises the mystifying and demonising campaign against Economic Partnership Agreement (EPAs) with ACP countries that is being carried out loudly by social coalitions and NGOs.

Such groups claim that "EPAs will open up ACP markets to devastating competition from EU exports" and that "this will lead to increased social inequality and poverty through the destruction of local industries and small-scale agriculture."

EUROCHAMBRES, instead, reiterates its support to EPAs, and stresses that trade is at the very heart of development.

*"Sustainable development can only be achieved through further enhancement of African economies and the benefits that their integration into the global trading system will bring in the long run. EPAs are the best instrument to start this process through fostering regional integration and thus making the enlarged markets more attractive to invest in,"* said Pierre Simon, President of EUROCHAMBRES.

*"Business cooperation between the EU and African countries does not only mean income for the parties involved but also know-how transfer,"* added Mr Simon. *"In particular, investments of European service companies will contribute significantly to a more efficient service sector in the ACP countries, and this will benefit all other business in the region."*

### **Constructive dialogue instead of bashing**

EUROCHAMBRES welcomes that the European Commission increasingly involves civil society into its policy making processes. But it is disappointed to see that many NGOs spoil the opportunities for constructive dialogue for the sake of populist anti-EPA statements that do not help anybody.

Instead of looking into the provisions of EPAs and the opportunities they offer to developing countries, NGOs discuss broader principles such as the reciprocity of trade preferences and the pressure caused by the 31 December deadline.

*"The principle of reciprocity was set by the WTO, not the European Commission, and the deadline was defined 7 years ago, together with the ACP states,"* clarified Mr Simon.

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EUROCHAMBRES – The Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry represents over 19 million enterprises in Europe through 46 members and a European network of 2000 regional and local Chambers.

*“Moreover, the EC is definitely not asking for free market access as from tomorrow, but for a gradual trade liberalisation in line with the development of ACP economies. It is definitely time for replacing polemics by substance, and for using traditional discussion fora, instead of drums in the street.”*

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