The future of the Cotonou agreement
What place for trade and the private sector after 2020?

Trade

Preferential market access to the European Union has always been a core element of the EU-ACP partnership. Twenty years ago, during the preparation for the negotiations for a successor to the Lomé Agreement, the European Commission proposed replacement of the preferential market access - for which a WTO waiver was required- by WTO compatible free trade agreements. The Cotonou Agreement signed in 2000, prescribed the negotiations of such agreements -labelled Economic Partnership Agreements. Negotiations started on 27 September 2002, aimed at having the EPAs in force by January 2008. This did not happen. Even today only 28 ACP countries are implementing an EPA and only the Caribbean region concluded a full comprehensive EPA foreseen by the negotiating guidelines of the EU. The protracted EPA negotiations have soured, and continue to sour, EU-ACP relations today.

Yet there is wide recognition that trade is an important instrument for development. The improvement of the trade relations between the EU and the ACP countries and between the ACP countries will remain on the agenda of the partnership. However more than ever there is recognition that intra-ACP trade is key for moving away from raw material exports towards the exports of intermediate and finished goods. ACP region markets have been strengthened and deepened and intra-ACP trade agreements have been concluded. Negotiations for an African continental free trade agreement are on their way.

At the same time trade relations with other regions and countries are increasing and the ACP trade relations are becoming more diverse. Global value chains commanded by transnational companies based in the global North are becoming increasingly important. Africa is seen as a region with great opportunity for foreign investors and exporters, including the agricultural sector. This renewed interest for Africa brings opportunities and challenges. What policies will African and ACP countries develop to make sure that trade and investment will offer them a fair share of the benefits, contribute to their structural transformation in a sustainable way? Will the EU have due regard for the political choices and development priorities of the ACP countries in the renewed EU-ACP relation?

We want a post-Cotonou agreement to place the trade relations squarely in the framework of Agenda 2030 and to restate the principles mentioned in Art.34-35 of the Cotonou Agreement such as: due regard to the political choices and development priorities of the ACP countries; promotion of their sustainable development; contributing to poverty eradication; building on regional integration initiatives of ACP states; taking account of the different needs and levels of development of the ACP countries and regions.

A post-Cotonou agreement should not contain an obligation for the ACP countries to negotiate, expand or conclude trade agreements with the EU. The EPA-experience demonstrates that this has led to great tensions and frustration. However if ACP countries wish to negotiate trade agreements with the EU they should be based on the above mentioned principles and must be designed to contribute to the implementation of Agenda

2030 and the Paris Agreement. They should contain an enforceable sustainable development chapter with effective civil society involvement. ACP countries that wish to conclude a trade agreement should not be forced to accede to existing (i)EPAs but must be given the opportunity to negotiate agreements that replace existing EPAs.

EU-ACP trade negotiations should take place in a transparent way involving regular civil society consultation. A future EU-ACP partnership agreement should foresee means for civil society and grass root organisations to monitor negotiations and the implementation of trade agreements.

Private sector
Like trade, the private sector plays a key role in the economic development of the ACP countries. Also here the challenge will be to create an enabling environment for domestic and foreign investors that leaves adequate policy space for governments to direct the economy towards socially just and ecologically sound development. Trade and investment policies and relations in a time of climate change must be drastically reformed so that they help, not hinder, achieving the necessary transition towards a low carbon world.

Enhancing the development role of the EU and ACP private sector via public support and ODA requires careful policies that are based on clear principles like transparency, accountability, and democratic ownership; that are accompanied with regular assessment of impacts and effectiveness and that do not undermine the public sector. We find that the objective of support to private sector in development should be to contribute to eradicating poverty in all its dimensions, injustice, and inequalities, promoting human rights, decent work, sustainable development and dignity for all. The EU-ACP partnership needs to ensure that private companies operating on the ground behave in a sustainable way, pay their fair share of taxes, and do no harm. Legally binding solutions are needed in that regard.

When using private sector financing for development purposes the partnership must make sure that human rights and public interest are safeguarded. Multi-stakeholder approaches and mechanisms should be established to pre-assess, monitor and evaluate private sector initiatives in a transparent way and that intended beneficiaries are centrally involved in these processes.

The EU-ACP partnership should fully take into account that the family farmers and those working in the informal economy constitute the largest part of the "private sector" and that they should be supported and enabled. The partnership and eventual EU-ACP trade and investment agreements should not create more rights and opportunities for the large investors, whether EU or ACP, to undermine the livelihoods and land rights of the majority of the people.

CONCORD
European NGO confederation for relief and development

NATIONAL PLATFORMS

Global Responsibility

BELGISCH PLATFORM PLATE-FORME BELGE
CONCORD
CNCD-11.11.11   11.11.11
ACODEV   ngo-federatie

BPID
Bulgarian Platform for International Development

Platforma za međunarodnu građansku solidarnost Hrvatske — Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity
CROSOL

CYINDEP
Cyprus Island wide NGO Development Platform

FORS
České fórum pro rozvojovou spolupráci
Czech Forum for Development Co-operation

GLOBAL FOCUS
- Danish CSOs for Development Cooperation

AKÜ

KEHYS ry

Coordination SUD
Solidarité Urgence Développement

VENRO
ASSOCIATION OF GERMAN DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN AID NGOS

Hellenic Platform for Development

HAND

Dóchas
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

CONCORD ITALIA
Network delle ONG in Europa per lo sviluppo e l'emergenza

LAPAS
WWW.LAPAS.LV

Lithuanian National Non-Governmental Development cooperation Organisations' Platform
LITDEA

Cercle de Coopération
des ONG de développement

SKOP
Solidarjetà u Koperazzjoni

PARTOS

GRUPA ZAGRANICA

ONGD
PLATAFORMA.PORTUGUESA

FOND
Federatia Organizatiilor Neguvernamentale pentru Dezvoltare din România

MVRO
SLOVAK NGDO PLATFORM

SLOGA
SLOVENIAN GLOBAL ACTION

COORDINADORA ONG PARA EL DESARROLLO ESPAÑA

CONCORD
Swedish & European NGOs for development
Sweden

NETWORKS

bond
FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

actalliance eu
Formerly APRODEV

act!onaid

ADRA

care

caritas europa

cbm
together we can do more

ChildFund Alliance

CIDSE
together for global justice

eu-cord
European Christian Organisations for Relief and Development

Habitat for Humanity
Europe, Middle East and Africa

HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL

IPPF
International Planned Parenthood Federation
European Network

ISLAMIC RELIEF

OXFAM International

PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Save the Children

solidar

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES INTERNATIONAL

Terre des Hommes International Federation

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

World Vision

ALDA
European Association for Local Democracy

eaea
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

WWF