

# **ESA-EU Interim EPA**

## **EPA COMMITTEE**

### **8<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

**Seychelles, 14 January 2020**

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#### **Joint Communiqué**

The eighth meeting of the EPA Committee under the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA) between the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) states - Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Zimbabwe (ESA-5) and the EU was held in Seychelles on 14 January 2020 and co-chaired by Ambassador Haymandoyal Dillum for ESA-5 and Cecile Billaux for the EU.

The Parties reaffirmed the importance of ensuring a smooth implementation of the Agreement to achieve its intended objectives of enhancing trade and supporting sustainable development goals.

The Parties took note of the status of implementation of tariff reduction and modification of the tariff nomenclature respectively for all Parties involved and agreed to continue exchanging information thereon.

To fully benefit from the iEPA, the Parties recognize the need for appropriate implementation strategies to improve access and diversify exports to EU individual member states.

The Parties agreed to undertake further steps towards the development of a common methodology aimed at finalizing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the iEPA. Both Parties agreed this is an important step to define a joint understanding of the progress and remaining challenges as to be able to address those adequately. Both Parties agreed that a dedicated discussion on this matter will take place in the margins of the next round of negotiations in Brussels.

The Parties took note that negotiations on the deepening of the iEPA were launched in Mauritius in October 2019 and that the EU would undertake a sustainable impact assessment in support of the negotiations and invited the ESA-5 to participate in the consultations.

The ESA reiterated its concern on the application of dock dues levied by the French Overseas Territories having an impact on products from ESA-5. The ESA-5 also called on the EU not to extend the dock dues (Octroi de Mer) after December 2020.

The Parties adopted the decision 1/2020 on the technical amendments of the Protocol 1 on Rules of Origin of the ESA-5-EU iEPA. The decision will come into effect on 31 March 2020.

The EU took note of the remarks made by Mauritius on the derogation request on salted snoek fish submitted end of 2019 and will consider the needs expressed by Mauritius for flexibility regarding requests for derogations from ESA states in particular when SMEs are involved.

The Parties reviewed progress relating to the accompanying measures undertaken by the five countries and the implementation status of financial support provided under the 11th EDF. The role of the EU's development instruments in supporting iEPA objectives was acknowledged. The ESA side requested the EU to explore the possibility of shifting funds to the iEPA and identifying new instruments for implementation of the Agreement should there be any EDF unused funds. The EU welcomed the request from ESA-5 states to facilitate cross border investment, setting up of special economic zone as well as sharing of experience in the manufacturing, ICT/BPO and agricultural sectors. In this context, new opportunities arising from such regional initiatives, including projects related to research and innovation will be considered in view of increasing the competitiveness of ESA-5 business operations. The need for capacity building of the private sector was also emphasized.

The ESA-5 stressed the need to develop internationally agreed standards for cooperation between jurisdictions. The ESA-5 suggested to hold consultations prior to downgrading of any jurisdictions. Both sides will continue mutual discussions regarding reforms that will be undertaken by ESA States in this area.

The ninth meeting of the EPA Committee will take place in Brussels in 2021 at a date to be jointly decided.

The meeting took place in a very cordial atmosphere.