

EPA Implementation Bulletin



Official E-Newsletter of the EPA Implementation Unit within the CARIFORUM Directorate of the CARICOM Secretariat

A Bulletin of Authoritative News, Rigorous and Original Analysis and Expert Views on the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and its Implementation

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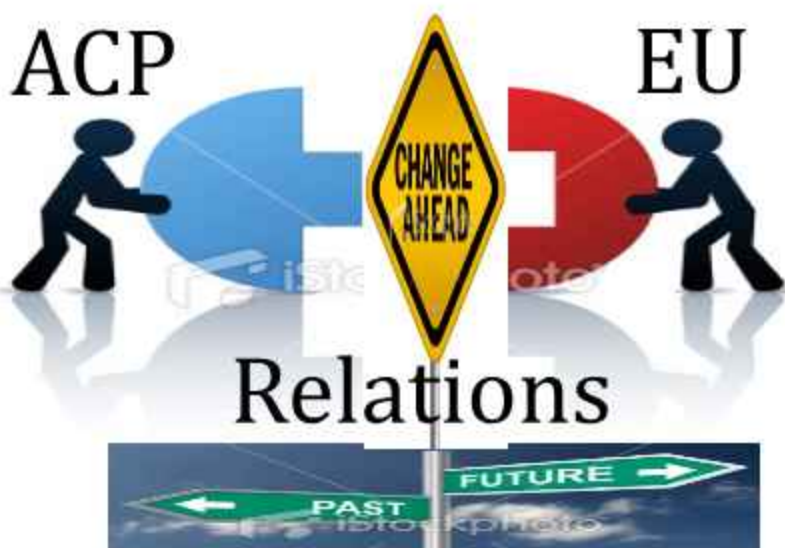
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Editor's introduction



HERE IS A WIDESPREAD PERCEPTION and a strong argument that the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP)-European Union (EU) relationship has started down the path of a systems change. As the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) is one cog, albeit a very important one, in the larger machinery—so to speak—of the ACP-EU relationship a sound understanding of key currents of that touted *change or relational redefinition* is critical, all the more so for CARIFORUM which is the first and to-date only ACP Region to have signed a comprehensive EPA with

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the EU. The featured article in the current Issue—by **H.E. Shirley Skerrett-Andrew**, Ambassador, Embassies of the Eastern Caribbean States (ECS) to the Kingdom of Belgium and Missions to the European Union and Chairperson of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors on behalf of Saint Lucia—attempts to advance such an understanding. In examining the break from one era to the next and the extraordinary complexities that arise, Ambassador Skerrett-Andrew's article sets out the implications for the *co-operation* at the heart of the long-standing, inter-regional relationship, the largest of its kind in the broader context of North-South relations. The four article contributions that follow have a common theme; they bring into focus a private sector narrative as regards the CARIFORUM-EU EPA. The first two offerings are by Caribbean Export Development Agency staffers. **Ms Stephanie Bishop** draws attention to a recently developed initiative, which seeks to encourage the CARIFORUM private sector to take advantage of opportunities available under the EPA. **Mr David Gomez**, a senior market intelligence staffer, outlines an emergent signature Caribbean Export market intelligence initiative. National private sector views on the EPA from the vantage point of senior staffers at the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce and the Barbados Private Sector Trade Team are provided by **Ms Catherine Kumar** and **Mr Joel Richards**, respectively. In the Perspective Section articles are featured that variously showcase recent work of the CARICOM Secretariat-based EPA Implementation Unit and other recent Secretariat events of note.

As is the norm, a **News Briefs** section also appears. A variety of missives are featured. The cover of this Issue is a depiction of the theme that the lead article deals with, ACP-EU relations at a crossroads. EPA Implementation Bulletin's editorial team welcomes your feedback. Please send any comments or suggestions to nbardouille@caricom.org

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EPA Implementation Bulletin's editorial team welcomes your feedback. Please send any comments or suggestions to nbardouille@caricom.org



f oreword



This second Issue of *EPA Implementation Bulletin* for 2012 shines the spotlight on the ACP-EU relationship, which has garnered increasing attention in recent times for reasons that the comprehensive article by H.E. Shirley Skerrett-Andrew sets out. This detailed article offers important insights.

The balance of the Issue showcases private sector-oriented and CARICOM Secretariat perspectives, which serve to provide: (i) a better appreciation of how the regional private sector can take advantage of various facets of the EPA; and (ii) coverage of trade and aid initiatives and meetings that contribute to the cause of EPA implementation.

We offer this edition with the hope that the analysis featured will be of interest and of value to the publication's readership.

Branford Isaacs

Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the EPA

Feature Contribution

ACP-EU Relations at a Crossroads

H.E. Shirley Skerritt-Andrew*

*This article was submitted
in early March 2012*

On 1 February 2012, Ambassador Shirley Skerritt-Andrew took up the position of Chairperson of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors on behalf of Saint Lucia, for a period of six months. The following article highlights issues that will occupy the attention of this Committee.

Photo sourced from <http://www.ons.org>



The African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) Group of States, to which the Caribbean Region belongs, and the European Union (EU) have nearly forty years of develop-

* Ambassador, Embassies of the Eastern Caribbean States (ECS) to the Kingdom of Belgium and Missions to the European Union and Chairperson of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors on behalf of Saint Lucia. The ECS Mission is a joint diplomatic mission representing and advancing the interests of the Eastern Caribbean States consisting of the Commonwealth of Dominica, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

ment cooperation experience. This relationship is one of the largest and most successful examples of North-South cooperation, to date. Successive agreements have modelled the relationship to take into account core development-oriented principles and values and have to a large extent reflected certain changes in the global economic landscape. However, many of the changes that have taken place within the ACP-EU relationship are also the product of long-matured internal processes with respect to the EU, and these are thought to have a lasting impact on ACP-EU relations. It is, therefore, a truism that the tenor of ACP-EU relations is, more often than not, determined by changes in EU policy orientations. The Lisbon Treaty and emergent orientations in EU external policy are the latest in these changes. Another vector of change in this asymmetrical relationship is the impending expiry of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020, which has added new uncertainty to ACP-EU relations. It can, therefore, be surmised that the ACP and EU have arrived at a fork in the road in their relationship. What are the characteristics of the crossroads at which the ACP and EU find themselves and what is the impact on their relationship? In the face of this uncertainty, and for the first time, the ACP Group seems to have embarked on a new quest for self-definition and discovery, as a response to the fear of irrelevance in a world that is in the midst of change. But what will be the effect on its decades-old development relations with the EU, its major development partner?

The Lisbon Treaty and ACP/Caribbean-EU Relations

After a protracted period of reflection on how to take the European integration project forward, following the latest round of enlargement that brought the Union to 27 Member States, the EU accepted the major tenets of what was originally expected to be a constitutional order as its new legal compass. Of note in December 2009, the Lisbon Treaty entered into force and with its entry came an avalanche of questions and uncertainty, both internally and internationally. Consequently, the interpretation and implementation of the major tenets of the new treaty have arguably been a critical exercise for the EU. This continues to be the reality three years later. However, amid all the uncertainty, what perhaps remains unambiguous

is the impact that the new post-Lisbon European landscape will have on its external action, including development finance cooperation and trade relations. For the ACP and specifically the Caribbean, there is a lot at stake. The EU, after all, is recognised as the Region's largest partner in terms of development finance, both in scope and volume. For the ACP and the CARIFORUM Group within it, which shares a historical relationship with the EU, the new orientation merits deep reflection.

“ [The ACP-EU] relationship is one of the largest and most successful examples of North-South cooperation, to date.”

The principal innovations of the Lisbon Treaty are the European External Action Service (EEAS) and its High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security, as well as the President of the European Council. These new

Editor's Note

Publications on the EEAS that may serve as useful background references include:

- HEMRA, STAFFAN, THOMAS RAINES, AND RICHARD WHITMAN. (2011) *A Diplomatic Entrepreneur - Making the Most of the European External Action Service*. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House)
- CROWE, BRIAN. (2008) *The European External Action Service - Roadmap for Success*. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House)
- ALLEN, DAVID AND MICHAEL SMITH. (2012) *The EU, Strategic Diplomacy and the BRIC Countries*. Policy Paper 11 in The Diplomatic System of the European Union Series, Jean Monnet Multilateral Research Network, Loughborough University, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and Maastricht University

institutions, intended to drive a more political, st-

strategic and coherent foreign policy agenda come with new interlocutors and new intentions. With reference to a critical global agenda that holds relevance for the Caribbean, such as climate change, commercial policy, trade and investment and development

“For the ACP and the CARIFORUM Group within it, which shares a historical relationship with the EU, the new orientation [in the EU brought on by the post-Lisbon European landscape] merits deep reflection.”

finance, the EU is now seeking a more coordinated approach across its directorates in the Commission services, as well as with Member States. The EEAS is expected to take the lead, in this regard. This could either be positive or negative for the Caribbean, depending on the dispensation of the actors and structures involved; i.e., is the objective of the given policy area political in nature or technical? This comes into starker focus when one considers the role of development aid in foreign policy,

For a long time, it can be argued, the European Consensus on Development was driven more by a genuine concern to take a new approach to development than that practiced by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) guided by the Washington Consensus. With the new Commission's "Agenda for Change" proposal for revamping EU development policy, there are some glaring differences in approach that raise more questions than answers. Of course, it is always difficult to separate the linkages between development aid and foreign policy in the larger scheme of international relations, and evolutions in political systems have more often than not lent themselves to these types of questions.

In this context, the architecture of the EU and how it relates to Third Countries and Regions should be of prime importance to the Caribbean Region. It is now more evident than ever that the principle of regional partnerships and strategic partnerships with BRICS countries (i.e. Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and emerging markets are becoming central to EU external action.

Editor's Note

Publications on the BRICS that may serve as useful background references include:

- KULETA, GENE. (2012) Will the BRICS Nations Evolve into a More Powerful Bloc? *Latin America Advisor*, featured on <http://www.cigionline.org/articles/2012/04/will-brics-nations-evolve>
- GATEWAY HOUSE. (2012) *India and the BRICS - BRICS Summit 2012*. Mumbai, India: Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations.
- CHELLANEY, BRAHMA. (2012) The Cracks in the BRICS. Featured on *Project Syndicate*, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-cracks-in-the-brics>

While this is not new, it does raise concerns specifically among the ACP States. This becomes increasingly significant in light of the removal of any reference to the ACP from the new treaty, which, since the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, acknowledged the ACP-EC relationship and the role of the European Development Fund (EDF) as part of that institutional arrangement.

Does the absence of reference to the ACP from the Lisbon Treaty point to a declining relevance of the ACP? Does the reference in Article 21 of the Treaty regarding the EU's commitment to poverty eradication, sustainable development and the like adequately substitute for the lack of reference to the ACP? While only specul-

ation and prognostication can suffice on that point for now, trends do indicate an EU ready to move beyond traditional relationships and to partnerships based on co-responsibility and co-management. The Joint Africa-EU Strategy and the pursuit of the Joint Caribbean-EU Partnership Strategy do reveal a pattern of the regionalisation of its relationships, a point referred to later in this article.

Editor's Note

For background regarding the Joint Caribbean-EU Partnership Strategy, refer to:

New Joint EU-Caribbean Strategy Being Drafted, *CARICOM Secretariat Press Release 91/2010* (5 March 2010)

It could also be argued that the regional Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) within the ACP further corroborate this trend. While a regional approach to external action should not be surprising and is not new given the EU's own experience as the world's most advanced regional integration project, questions of *asymmetry* and *predictability*—particularly as it relates to the Caribbean—will inevitably emerge. The extent to which this new approach will weigh on the general ACP-EU relationship and the Caribbean-EU partnership in the long-term is still the subject of much reflection by foreign policy and development strategists across both regions.

“Does the absence of reference to the ACP from the Lisbon Treaty point to a declining relevance of the ACP?”

There is no doubt that the EU is currently undergoing momentous changes that will have serious implications for all aspects of its foreign policy. For the ACP and the Caribbean, the EU's development cooperation policies, which have now become more explicitly “an instrument of foreign policy”, signals that the contagion of change in Europe and globally must be heeded with foresightedness and strategic vision. The simultaneous implementation of the Lisbon Treaty—encapsulating as it does in the EEAS a blueprint for a future single, coherent European foreign policy—adds an extra layer of complexity to the mix. It must, therefore, be acknowledged that these circumstances present the ACP and the Caribbean with a challenging agenda for continuing partnership with the EU and demands that strategies be developed to effectively manage this change.

Conundrum of Global Change and Impact on ACP-EU Relations

Global paradigms including the development agenda have been evolving seemingly in slow motion, that is, until the last few years that have witnessed new interests and interlocutors coming on the scene. Old orthodoxies that have to a large extent driven the global economic and development agendas are being questioned, even while new discourses surrounding power and power relations are taking center stage in the grand analysis of contemporary international relations. These new developments are displacing old ones, with disconcerting rapidity. The economic and financial crises of the past few years coupled with the movement to the right along the political spectrum in important theatres have up-ended the conventional wisdom in powerful ways. The end result of these developments is that they are forcing States, such as those in the Caribbean dependent as they are on the global system, to initiate strategic reviews. Nowhere is the uncertainty of the times more evident than in the EU and the evolution of its external action *vis-à-vis* the ACP. The EU's new policies reflect an emergent mindset that results in the reconsideration of the place of old partners in its global outlook as well as the rearrangement of new relations. As these new configurations appear, they present old and new allies alike with challenging implications. Responding to the challenges brought on by these changes requires profound adaptation in the policies, practices and institutions of the joint ACP-EU relationship. It is not clear, though, what the results will be.

The current international financial and economic crisis has caused Europe to pause and refocus, reel-

“Old orthodoxies that have to a large extent driven the global economic and development agendas are being questioned, even while new discourses surrounding power and power relations are taking center stage in the grand analysis of contemporary international relations. These new developments are displacing old ones, with disconcerting rapidity.”

ing as it were from successive blows dealt by trade deficits, the sovereign debt crisis and the corollary eurozone crisis. The resulting economic meltdowns in many of the weaker, peripheral European countries have led to across-the-board implementation of austerity measures, some of which are still under discussion with a view to rapid implementation. The Union is trying to apply preventative measures,

Editor's Note

For useful background references on the eurozone crisis, refer to:

- SUBACCHI, PAOLA AND STEPHEN PICKFORD. (2012) Broken Forever? Addressing Europe's Multiple Crises. *Chatham House Briefing Paper* IE BP 2012/01. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House)
- BEGG, IAIN. (2012) Eurozone Crisis: End In Sight? *Expert Comment* posted on <http://www.chathamhouse.org/media/comment/view/182370>

to stave off total meltdown in its economy. The EU also has to reassure its investors that it is committed to supporting the Atlantic economic system, and as such has agreed to refinance the debts of Italy and Spain before the Greek contagion spreads and does more damage than at present. It is clear and understandable that at least on a financial level, EU policies have become more introspective than before. Not only are these policies more inward-looking, but also they will become tougher. For example, the European Commission threatened to withdraw €495 million in EU cohesion funds that Hungary was due to receive in 2013 because it had not made enough effort to get its public deficit under control. Further, some Member States are putting pressure on the EU, insisting that its spending take into account economic and budgetary constraints in each State and enjoining the Union to maintain budgetary discipline at all levels.

The EU's concerns at this moment are not limited to the widely-published fiscal austerity, increasing interest rates, diminishing credit worthiness of enterprises and households, low level of investment and declining exports. The confluence of a lingering economic recession marked by calls for a fiscal union also coincides with Europe's drive to achieve deeper integration in order to remain a pivotal pole in an increasingly multi-polar world. The shadow of recession is thus being cast over all policies emanating from the EU and its resolution is foremost in the minds of European leaders at present. The Union is

Continued on PP. 11

Contribution

Break Point: Using the EPA to Drive Entrepreneurship

Ms Stephanie Bishop*

*This article was submitted
mid-February 2012*

CARIBBEAN
EXPORT
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Logo sourced from <http://www.caribb-export.com/webat/>

It has been three years since the CARIFORUM States signed the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union (EU). During this time, however, the EPA has remained under-utilized throughout the Region. The Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export) views the EPA as a critical catalyst for achieving long-term sustainable growth in the Region, while breaking the cycle of debt and economic malaise. It is against this backdrop that Caribbean Export developed

* Advisor, Marketing and Public Relations, Caribbean Export Development Agency.

Break Point.

Break Point is a regional business competition that encourages the CARIFORUM private sector to take advantage of the opportunities available under the EPA, and fundamentally changes the way that Caribbean businesses and entrepreneurs engage the global market place—in particular the European market.

The EPA is more than just a Free Trade Agreement. It is a development tool that presents market access opportunities for the Caribbean, while providing the framework to support regional integration amongst CARIFORUM States. This is why Caribbean Export is of the view that *Break Point* is well positioned to provide a launch pad into the global market for regional companies and enterprises.

“*Break Point* is a regional business competition that encourages the CARIFORUM private sector to take advantage of the opportunities available under the EPA, and fundamentally changes the way that Caribbean businesses and entrepreneurs engage the global market place—in particular the European market.”

“This initiative ushers in a new era of export capacity-building and enhancements, and is geared towards achieving our objective of building brands across the region that have the DNA to be globally competitive,” remarked Mr David Gomez, Senior Advisor, Market Intelligence at Caribbean Export. “*Break Point* represents a paradigm shift for Caribbean Export in terms of how the Agency assists companies in getting their goods and Serv-

ices to market. More importantly, this initiative fits perfectly with the three pillars of the Agency including trade and export development, innovation and competitiveness and investment promotion,” concluded Gomez.

Break Point is supported by the EU's 10th European Development Fund (EDF) Regional Private Sector Development Programme and the UK Trade & Investment (UKTI). The initiative also received 500,000 GBP from the Department for International Development (DFID), as a part of its mandate to assist in the development of *Break Point* and facilitate the ability of regional companies to benefit from London 2012. Priority areas for *Break Point* include Agro-processing, Renewable Energy, Sports, and Technology.

“*Break Point* represents a paradigm shift for Caribbean Export in terms of how the Agency assists companies in getting their goods and Services to market.....[T]his initiative fits perfectly with the three pillars of the Agency including trade and export development, innovation and competitiveness and investment promotion.”

From a Market Intelligence perspective, *Break Point* is intended to serve as a concrete example of how the EU market can be effectively accessed under the EPA, with the UK serving as a potential and important point of access for business, investments, and trade. The UK has historically been one of the most important export markets for products coming out of the Caribbean and continues to serve as an important market for to-

urism and traditional exports from the Region, but more importantly, for new export products including value-added agro-produce. The UK is also an important source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for the Region, and maintains strong linkages with a number of key economic sectors across the Region.

Break Point was launched on 21 January 2012, during the 7th UK-Caribbean Forum, held in St. George's Grenada. Six companies pitched their ideas to a panel of successful business persons and venture capitalists drawn from the Caribbean and the UK in the inaugural round of the event, with David Weekes & Associates (Barbados) and SMAKS, The West Indies Tea Company (Trinidad & Tobago) emerging as the winners (see inset pictures). Other participants included Bio-Tech R&D Institute Ltd (Jamaica), Merkimport CXA (Dominican Republic), NutMed (Grenada), and Xocolat (Dominican Republic).

Photo courtesy Caribbean Export



David Weekes and Byron Gibson receive their award from Minister Jeremy Brown

Photo courtesy Caribbean Export



Kieran Akel receiving his award from Jeremy Brown, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK

In related news.....

Caribbean Export Launches *Break Point* Reality TV Series for CARIFORUM Firms

This note is an extract from a Caribbean Export News Release of the same title

"Twelve CARIFORUM private sector firms and enterprises will be given the opportunity to pitch their business ideas to prospective investors, distributors and retailers in London during the Olympics this summer. This was revealed during the recent Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export) regional launch of the *Break Point* at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, St Michael, Barbados.

"The objectives of this concept are to discontinue ineffective mechanisms previously employed, change the old 'wineskins' and implement new mechanisms, and cease cond-

ucting business as usual. The criteria for *Break Point* will focus on demand, innovation, brand strength, EPA application, speed to market and management," said Mr Christopher McNair, Manager - Competitiveness and Innovation at Caribbean Export during his presentation. "Break Point is the point at which we break from doing business as usual and begin the process of empowering our regional businesses. This is yet another step in Caribbean Export's mission to do things differently and embrace innovation to achieve better results for regional firms," McNair concluded

"During the competition, companies will be required to submit a video pitch, expression of interest and executive summary. Following the screening and firm selection, thirty companies will be identified for firm coaching followed by business pitches. Another round of selection will be undertaken on completion of all rounds of pitching. The final twelve firms will then pitch their ideas in London. At the end of the competition, all footage filmed will be produced into a reality television series to be aired across the CARIFORUM Region."

Feature Contribution



ACP-EU Relations (Cont.)

H.E. Shirley Skerritt-Andrew

thus facing much criticism and its policies are undergoing more scrutiny than before from EU citizens. There is greater pressure for accountability regarding every euro spent and if these policies affect European citizens' purses it is at best unrealistic to expect that they will not affect Europe's development cooperation commitments. This has a bearing on ACP-EU relations.

The ACP side has been hit by more than just the economic and financial crises. The backlash of the financial crisis is currently being felt, *inter alia*, in their exports where ACP countries experience trade deficits and lower economic performance, all of which contribute to grim trade outlooks for the year. In the Caribbean, for example, where most are net food importing developing countries and where energy costs are extremely high, the pinch of the worsening food and energy crises is keenly felt. This is already amplified by a general increase in prices.

Editor's Note

For useful background references on the effects of the global financial crisis on developing countries and rising energy/commodity prices in the Caribbean, respectively, refer to:

- Overseas Development Institute. (2009) The Global Financial Crisis and Developing Countries: Taking Stock, Taking Action. *Briefing Paper 54*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- COTED Targets CET Suspension, Partnerships to Tackle High Prices of Fuel, Commodities, *CARICOM Secretariat Press Release 193/2011* (23 May 2011)
- Energy Ministers Call for Urgent Action to Address Rising Oil Prices, *CARICOM Secretariat Press Release 111/2011* (25 March 2011)

The already high indebtedness of most Caribbean states and lack of access to global financial markets means that there is little fiscal space available to ensure rapid recovery. Additionally, the precariousness

and vulnerabilities of ACP States worsen in the face of the weakness of global financial governance structures that do not adequately respond to their needs.

The result is that a financially constrained development partner, on the one hand, and vulnerable developing countries, on the other, may lead to the proliferation of stress points in an already strained relationship. As previously noted, the ACP-EU relationship is feeling the winds of change as claims for budgetary accountability lead to tougher policies and even a reorientation of EU strategies and policies with regard to developing countries. There have been calls for EU development aid to continue despite current crises that threaten to sabotage it. In response, the Council of the European Union underscored its commitment to ACP countries to help them face the global economic crisis. In a joint communiqué, it promised, *inter alia*, to assist in achieving ODA targets by 2010 and 2015 and to mobilize all possible sources of funding for development, to support ACP countries in their efforts to meet the MDGs, protect vulnerable ACP countries and to support investment with quick imp-

act on productive activities and job creation for all, as well as support ACP countries in creating an enabling business environment, in order to stimulate equitable growth and attract and promote foreign investment. However, it is unclear to what extent these calls will truly be heeded as the EU is still far from reaching its commitment to ODA targets, the MDGs are far from being met and even the EDF for the next financial period might end up being subject to a substantial cut.

“.....[A] financially constrained development partner, on the one hand, and vulnerable developing countries, on the other, may lead to the proliferation of stress points in an already strained relationship.”

New Development Cooperation Focus of the EU on the Poorest of the Poor

As previously noted, the EU Member States are demanding greater accountability as regards the funds that they allocate to development cooperation, in the context of tight budgetary space which has led the EU to embark on a new drive to tailor its external and development policies towards achieving that goal. One of the new imperatives of the Lisbon Treaty, as regards EU development cooperation, is that of policy coherence for development where EU development activities must respond to the EU's own policy objectives. This implies that not only should EU policies on external relations have a positive impact on development, but also all EU positions on the international scene must work together to further the EU's global agenda. However, some elements of the new orientations in EU foreign and development policies have begun to be of concern to ACP development cooperation practitioners, and these include the new *differentiated approach* towards eligibility for and allocation of development resources.

Editor's Note

The European Commission Communication cited below may be of interest:

- European Commission. *Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: An Agenda for Change*. Brussels, 13.10.2011 COM(2011) 637 Final (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions {SEC(2011) 1172 final} {SEC(2011) 1173 final})

It must be recalled that in 2006, the EU as part of the OECD quietly introduced a system for assessing a country's need for development aid

“.....[S]ome elements of the new orientations in EU foreign and development policies have begun to be of concern to ACP development cooperation practitioners, and these include the new *differentiated approach* towards eligibility for and allocation of development resources.”

based on income per capita. In the EU's classification, countries are put into low, middle or high income categories and will not be considered eligible for development aid if their per capita income level exceeds a specific benchmark value in the middle-income range for three consecutive years. This specifically related to development cooperation funds that came directly from the EU's budget and so at that time, ACP countries funded through the EDF were not affected. Even then, however, it was feared that this could someday impact the ACP States as budgetization of the EDF had already been mooted. All the CARIFORUM States, with the exception of Haiti, and including the Members States of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) sub-region, are in the middle income category. OECS Member States have consistently fought the regressive 'graduation' policy of the IFIs, which penalizes vulnerable Small Island Developing States (SIDS) before they have fully developed. This view of development is once again rearing its head in EU deliberations regarding the Caribbean. In lumping many Caribbean countries together with emerging economies, they will have been differentiated because of an artificial indicator. The European justification for this measure is

aid harmonization and 'policy coherence for development'. However, it is also important to note that these policies are in tune with and indeed provide a basis for the hard decisions that Europeans will have to make regarding the rationalization of development aid budgets, as part of their global interventions as they enter a period of retrenchment within Europe itself.

“OECS Member States have consistently fought the regressive 'graduation' policy of the IFIs, which penalizes vulnerable Small Island Developing States (SIDS) before they have fully developed.”

In the current conjuncture of economic and financial crisis, differentiation has pervaded all EU policies with regard to developing countries. Commission Communications have been issued, in this regard. A recent one noted, "The growing diversity of developing countries calls for more differentiation in the design and implementation of EU policies. Emerging economies and poorer ones have different potentials, needs and objectives thus requiring a different policy approach."² In 2011 the European Commission issued a new development policy,³ in which it introduced its new principle of differentiation among developing countries with regard to its aid policy. It justified its intention to reduce the level of assistance and focus it on the poorest of the poor for various reasons: new global economic and geopolitical realities where developing countries, specifically upper middle-

2. Commission Communication, Trade, Growth and Development: Tailoring Trade and Investment Policy for those Countries Most in Need, SEC(2012) 87 Final, 27.1.2012

3. Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: An Agenda for Change, COM(2011) 637 Final, 13.10.2011

income countries, experience growth patterns that suggest viability, and more robust performance from emerging countries in terms of distribution of development aid as well as their contribution to fostering new partnerships with other developing countries in an unprecedented manner. In summary, the impact of EU financial challenges and policy reorientations result in development cooperation being one of the casualties.

ACP States therefore, and specifically middle-income countries, to which most Caribbean countries belong, should be concerned about this new approach of differentiation which will exclude them as they face the risk of losing all the development gains that decades of cooperation with the EU has afforded them. Their inherent structural vulnerability cannot be assumed to be resolved through GDP per capita growth, or development assistance focused solely on the impact of climate change and environmental degradation. Rather, it also requires the focused and sustained support of their biggest development partner in a variety of areas that take into account their insularity, small size and openness to international shocks as well as the challenges to resilience that they face. Therefore, any differentiated approach in these countries' development cooperation with the EU that does not take these vulnerabilities into account would certainly mean a serious step backwards for their long-earned development.

Are ACP-EU Trade Relations, Casualties of EU Policy Shifts?

What of ACP-EU trade relations? Within the ACP, only one region has already signed a full EPA with the EU, that is, the Caribbean; while other regions are experiencing difficulties, in arriving at consensual positions that find resonance on either side of the negotiating table. The bones of contention include insufficient levels of regional integration at the level of the negotiating configuration, WTO-plus requests, inflexibility on the part of EU negotiators, capacity issues, and issues of substance, the MFN clause, etc. This does not necessarily mean that the Caribbean is better off, as implementation and co-management issues bedevil the smooth running of the EPA engine.

One of the major changes in EU trade policy as a result of the Lisbon Treaty is that the Common Commercial Policy of the entire Union falls within the exclusive competency of the Union, becomes an objective of the EU external action and, of interest to the ACP, provides greater legislative oversight and decision-making power to the European Parliament in area of trade policy. This latter point is interesting in so far as the shift in the balance of power in the EU towards the Parliament can present an opportunity for ACP States, that

through proper strategizing and alliance-building, can have a significant influence on decisions taken at the level of the Union. For example, the European Parliament had been lobbied by ACP States on the importance of the adoption of the Banana Accompanying Measures (BAM) at a time when the deadlock between the Council and the Parliament was impenetrable, and on 1 December 2011, two years after the agreement between the Commission and the ACP, the BAMs were adopted.

Other general policy changes within the EU have serious implications for ACP States' relations with the EU, but also with regard to each other. It must be borne in mind that EU external policies are executed with EU interests in mind. The EU's recent Trade, Growth and World Affairs document⁴ seeks to develop the Union's trade policy as a core component of the EU 2020 strategy and in this manifesto the EU makes a plea for more open economies, greater liberalization and reciprocity with developed and emerging countries. The new Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and the GSP+ provide preferential market access to developing countries that have not signed an FTA with the EU. ACP concerns with regard to this policy include the fact that they see it as forcing those that have not yet signed an EPA to do so before the end of 2013 at the risk of losing their current preferential access to the EU market. It must be stated, though, that the guaranteed margins of such preferential access are slowly being eroded because of

4. European Commission. Trade, Growth and World Affairs. Trade Policy as a Core Component of the EU's 2020 Strategy, 2010, accessed on http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2010/november/tradoc_146955.pdf, 1 March 2012.

the level of commitment that the EU has been making in FTAs already signed with other developing countries that are not part of the ACP Group. Also, the use of GNI per capita as an eligibility criterion for such a policy only results in differentiating and alienating many ACP States.

Further pressure is being applied to ACP trading relations with the EU by the new proposal for amendment of the EU Market Access Regulation.⁵ This proposal lists certain ACP States that have either not yet signed an EPA or that have signed and not ratified the agreements, and states that "these countries no longer meet the conditions of the Market Access Regulation for advance provisional application of trade preferences which were extended to them as of 1 January 2008 in anticipation of the steps towards ratification of an EPA". Based on the apparent un-sustainability of this situation, the Commission proposes to withdraw duty-free quota-free market access for these 18 ACP countries. This unilateral decision, considered to be in the EU's interest, results in ACP countries being put before a *fait accompli* which has put an added strain on the relationship. This substantiates the fear that pervades certain ACP quarters that the EU could modify and then impose certain policies that could be detrimental to their development aspirations and have a reverse effect on their sustainable development.

These are a few of the challenges that the ACP Group faces as it advances at varying speeds and with varying objectives compared to its major deve-

lopment partner.

We must now turn to an examination of the ACP Group's need to redefine itself, in the face of an external environment that is in flux.

ACP Redefining its Role in the Global Theatre

The ACP Group needs to redefine its relevance and role in a dynamic international environment so as to maintain any semblance of viability, in light of EU political and economic reorientations highlighted above. The ACP Group of States has much going for it in this current environment of instability: it is the largest trans-regional, inter-governmental organization of developing countries; has remained intact over a period of nearly 40 years, during which the international global order has experienced radical change in political and economic terms; it has to its advantage decades of inter-regional solidarity on various global issues such as trade, development finance, political dialogue and relations with other international and regional organisations. This is a healthy starting point for reinforcing the Group at this global crossroads of change and opportunity.

“The ACP Group needs to redefine its relevance and role in a dynamic international environment so as to maintain any semblance of viability, in light of EU political and economic reorientations.....The ACP Group of States has much going for it in this current environment of instability.....[t]his is a healthy starting point for reinforcing the Group at this global crossroads of change and opportunity.”

5. European Commission Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Annex I to Council Regulation (EC) No 1528/2007 as regards the exclusion of a number of countries from the list of regions or states which have concluded negotiations COM(2011) 598 Final, 30.9.2011

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Contribution

Enhancing the International Competitiveness of the Caribbean: Caribbean Export's Market Intelligence Initiative

Mr David Gomez*

*This article was submitted
in late April 2012*

CARIBBEAN
EXPORT
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Logo sourced from <http://www.carib-export.com/vcbsite/>



Photo courtesy Mr David Gomez

Background

Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export) is a regional export development and trade and investment promotion organization of the Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific (CARIFORUM) States, and is the beneficiary of financing from the European Union (EU) for the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) under which the Ag-

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ency is responsible for the implementation of the Regional Private Sector Development Programme (RPSDP). The overall objective of the 10th EDF RPSDP is to contribute to the gradual integration of CARIFORUM countries into the world economy, and by so doing to enhance economic growth and by extension alleviate poverty. The 10th EDF RPSDP has four specific objectives, namely:

- a) Enhancing competitiveness and promoting innovation among CARIFORUM's private sector;
- b) Promoting trade and export development among CARIFORUM States;
- c) Promoting stronger trade and investment relations among CARIFORUM and the French Caribbean Outermost Regions (FCORs) as well as the European Union (EU) Overseas Countries and Territories in the Caribbean; and
- d) Promoting stronger trade and investment cooperation between CARICOM and the Dominican Republic (DR).

“The overall objective of the 10th EDF RPSDP is to contribute to the gradual integration of CARIFORUM countries into the world economy, and by so doing to enhance economic growth and by extension alleviate poverty.”

The project also provides for the complementary objective of strengthening the institutional capacity of Caribbean Export to implement trade and investment promotion programs in the Region, through its export development programming and through support to the Caribbean Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (CAIPA).

Under the component dealing with export development, one of the key output areas is market intelligence, specifically for the development and piloting of a regional trade and market intelligence system.

Why Market Intelligence?

Over the past twenty years, the competitiveness of the Caribbean Region's exports have declined relative to other countries. This decline may be attributed to a number of factors including, amongst others: (a) Insufficient diversification in the basket of goods exported by Caribbean States; (b) Greater trade liberalization, resulting in the removal of the traditional barriers to trade and the emergence of new ones; and (c) The erosion of the preferences for primary agricultural products of historical export importance – sugar and bananas.

Attempts at diversification in a number of countries over the years often resulted more in horizontal diversification, which involved other primary products also traded under preferential arrangements than in vertical diversification which would have involved moving production up the value chain. The need for greater vertical diversification is even more evident, given the fact that the industrial productive structures in a number of Caribbean States are inadequate for transitioning these economies from ones reliant on one or a few primary agricultural products to ones with internationally competitive economic sectors. In the face of the twin forces of preference erosion and trade liberalization this deficit has been exposed, and Caribbean states are now faced with eroding terms of trade and international competitiveness.

As countries struggle to redefine their economic bases, it has become increasingly difficult for Caribbean firms to make accurate forecasts about the business climate environments within which they operate and even more difficult to navigate the highly competitive international markets for their products. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in particular find it difficult to assess the competition and competitor threats, and to anticipate and respond to changes in consumer behavior even within their own domestic (home) markets. This is important, as the removal of trade barriers has resulted in the integration of the dom-

estic and international markets, and hence SMEs within the Region are increasingly unable to compete even within their own domestic markets. Often, the result is loss of jobs, increased imports, and more importantly lower foreign earnings.

“As countries struggle to redefine their economic bases, it has become increasingly difficult for Caribbean firms to make accurate forecasts about the business climate environments within which they operate and even more difficult to navigate the highly competitive international markets for their products.”

Market intelligence provides an opportunity for reversing the trends set out above, and for getting Caribbean economies back on the track towards international competitiveness. In order for companies, in particular SMEs, to successfully engage international markets, they must develop a better understanding of such markets for their goods and services in order to allow for, *inter alia*: better customer targeting, product placement, positioning, and promotion; better navigation of the influential market forces bearing down on the relevant markets; and better compliance with market entry requirements and local regulations - if they are to effectively compete with other local and foreign companies operating within those markets.

“Market intelligence provides an opportunity for reversing the trends set out above, and for getting Caribbean economies back on the track towards international competitiveness.”

Market Intelligence under the 10th EDF RPSDP

The main objective of the market intelligence program under the 10th EDF RPSDP is to develop a regional trade and market intelligence system which provides *'SMEs and other private sector enterprises and stakeholders within the region with the type of market and competitor information that would enable them to make informed business decisions regarding product development, placement, and pricing to enhance their international competitiveness.'*

Caribbean Export's market intelligence programs and activities will involve a number of initiatives geared at achieving the above objectives through a participatory approach. The programs and activities will involve the establishment of an advisory council drawn from trade promotion organizations (TPOs), business support organizations (BSOs), and other regional agencies from within the Region. The programs and activities will include three different sets of things. First, a series of research or market studies will be undertaken. This effort will include compiling a 'library' of other market studies that have already been completed, as well undertaking new research in some areas. It will also involve the articulation of export profiles at the country and sector levels. Second, it will involve development of a market and business intelligence portal, an online Exporter's Helpdesk, systems and processes which

will provide information related to export performance and trends, market entry requirements, pricing, demand demographics, competing products, competitor analysis, investment trends, logistics etc., as well as compilation of a registry of businesses, intermediary organizations (BSOs), TPOs, and public sector agencies across the CARIFORUM Region. Finally, it will involve training and capacity building regarding key partners across a network of stakeholders.

“ Caribbean Export’s market intelligence programs and activities will involve a number of initiatives geared at achieving the above objectives through a participatory approach. The programs and activities will involve the establishment of an advisory council drawn from trade promotion organizations (TPOs), business support organizations (BSOs), and other regional agencies from within the Region. The programs and activities will include three different sets of things.”

Caribbean Export is currently undertaking consultations at the national level across the Region, to present plans for market intelligence to stakeholders and to secure their feedback and buy-in to/support for those plans. The consultative process involves developing two networks for the provision of information services. The first is the ‘information demand network’ and this involves all users of market intelligence in particular the end users such as enterprises (SMEs), intermediary organizations (TPOs and BSOs), and others. The process involves direct consultations and meetings with these stakeholders and trade information needs assessment surveys. The other network is the ‘information supply network’ and this will co-

mprise the various statistical institutes across the Region as well as other important agencies such as the CARICOM Secretariat, the Caribbean Development Bank, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ), etc.

The market intelligence portal is expected to be completed in the third quarter of this year, and will require a few months for the databases to be populated. Once this is ready a formal launch and roll out will take place through a road show, at which time private sector enterprises will have an opportunity to learn how to navigate the portal and to formally register on to the system. Over the next few months, consultations at the national level will continue, and technical assistance and capacity building for providing enhanced trade information services will be offered through a regional trade information training program to be held for various TPOs and BSOs in each country. This training will be offered in conjunction with the International Trade Centre, Geneva.



Feature Contribution



ACP-EU Relations (Cont.)

H.E. Shirley Skerritt-Andrew

In 2012, the ACP Group has begun to focus its energies on “strengthening South-South solidarity and collaboration, intensifying attention on the Millennium Development Goals and boosting the collective voice of ACP countries and their role as a group in the global arena.” The Group has participated at a high level in many international fora in the recent past and is preparing its hymn sheet for the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio + 20. This new and reinvigorated insertion into the global economy is not without difficulty, as the group faces a global system that could be exclusive at times and unrepresentative of their interests, despite their large number. Global governance institutions or encounters such as the IMF, World Bank and G20 meetings are limited to a select few and even ACP Heads who attend from time to time have not been able to turn the tide in their favour.

It has been mooted that the rise of emerging economies is one of the major factors affecting ACP-EU relations at different levels. There is no denying the fact that many EU policies are initially directed at a reconfiguration of its relations with emerging countries. The EU is also seeking reciprocity and an abolition of asymmetrical relations with countries that can match their efforts at trade liberalization for example, or even who can rival EU distribution of development assistance to other developing countries.

The ACP Group also, in the wake of its sometimes tested relations with the EU, has begun to emphasize the complementarity of South-South and even triangular cooperation to North-South cooperation, as these perspectives offer a broader scope for development cooperation and added value. Furthermore,

Editor's Note

The three references below may be useful, in the context of this section:

- REISEN, MIRJAM VAN (2011) Laying the BRICs for a Better Future. *The Broker*, Issue 5 - June/July.
- REISEN, MIRJAM VAN (2011) Payback Time. *The Broker*, Issue 5 - June/July.
- REISEN, MIRJAM VAN (2011) The Old Man and the Seas. *The Broker*, Issue 5 - June/July.

it creates a new framework for deepening of ties and sharing knowledge and best practices between developing countries. In short, the Group is seeking to have many bites at the global pie and putting its eggs into many baskets. Individual ACP States have opened up over the last few years to building economic alliances for greater investment, trade and other relations with some of the larger emerging developing countries and, while the EU still holds the lion's share of their trade, that of Brazil, China, India and South Africa is increasing.

There have always been migratory movements between Brazil and Africa, and now India and China have joined the flow with specifically entrepreneurial activities and provision of technical assistance, with a more grass-roots approach to development and with less insistence on governance and human rights (though the benefits of this approach may be questionable). Also, their potential-oriented approaches that are closer to the reality of developing countries are often appreciated.

For example, ACP States' relations with China are taking on new dimensions. China's relations with Africa follow the vision out-

lined in China's African Policy that focuses on a "new type of strategic partnership with Africa, featuring political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchange" and seeks to enhance all-round cooperation with the continent. China's interest in Africa, as with many South-South cooperation activities, dates all the way back to the post-Bandung conference era. Its renewed interest in the continent, though, is being analyzed as focusing on business first, politics later, and this has contributed to raising the economic and political value of Africa in Europe, to the extent that some suggest that China and Europe are on a collision course with each other on that continent. Chinese companies buy considerable volumes of raw materials from Africa and the many businesses they set up on the continent spread their influence on the infrastructure, energy and banking markets. Africa, combined with Asia, receive up to 80% of Chinese development aid.

The Caribbean has also opened up increasingly to China, as the latter seeks to strengthen its influence in the Region by taking on partners that wealthy Western nations are being seen to sideline. The Region lacks natural resources (with some country exceptions) and has little scope for economies of scale, but has an enormous tourism potential from which China intends to maximize its gains, such as through FDI. China also provides increasing levels of trade and development assistance to Caribbean countries, and as such exchanges with the Region and China have been multiplied by 100 over the last twenty years, according to the IMF. Indeed, the balance of power/trade lies in favour of China and this is in line with China's outreach for political recognition as a global economic and heretofore incontrovertible interlocutor, and confirms its vision as laid out in its policy paper on Latin America and the Caribbean, viz., to have "friendly cooperation with all countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and build a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity." Yet still, China has not displaced the EU as the Caribbean's primary development partner.

Another example is Brazil, the emerging powerhouse of the South. The December 2011 signing of an MOU between Brazil and the ACP Group in Brussels was seen as a "landmark agreement to build South-South solidarity through enhanced technical cooperation and dialogue between the two parties" and cooperation is expected to start in areas such as education, health, agriculture and bio-energy. This momentous event was preceded by the first ever symposium on South-South relations between the ACP and India, Brazil and South Africa. Brazil has been clear about its intentions in Africa, spurred onwards by more than just a "moral and historical obligation" and, seeking to forge stronger relations of solidarity across the South, through technical cooperation and FDI.

The Caribbean is within Brazil's purview and its political stability as well as economic emergence have strengthened its outreach as its economic and diplomatic presence in the Region grows. Also, with the liberalization in the EU market that led to the fall in preferences for Caribbean exports, Brazil represents a viable alternative and a gateway to the rest of South America in terms of trade and other relations. The signing of the EPA with the EU and its restrictive MFN clause leave some space for these relations to be

further refined in upcoming years. In terms of cooperation, Brazil has committed 9% of its technical cooperation to the Caribbean, through the technical cooperation Agreement that it has signed with the Region.

Beyond relations with these global growth generators, the ACP Group is currently in reflection mode as regards the establishment of an ACP-wide Free Trade Area as a means to deepen South-South cooperation among similar partners. This very interesting initiative can, however, only be viable if the sub-regional integration movements are consolidated. Even the all-Africa (Continental) Free Trade Area proposed at a G20 Summit in 2010 will first need to overcome myriads of hurdles before even a written agreement could see the light of day.

The question arises, though, as to whether all these movements will eventually displace the EU as ACP's most important partner, or rather, provoke it to jealousy. The EU still provides over 60% of international development assistance and maintains its position as a global soft power. It still uses its development cooperation as a vehicle for its values, and many question the ability of the EU to reconcile these with its political and commercial interests in the world. Moreover, having been recipients of development cooperation for decades, ACP States should have acquired the capacity to analyze the interests of their new development partners from the South, who are more powerful than they. Despite all these musings, the question remains as to whether the ACP can protect its own interests in the face of new interlocutors as their own interests multiply.

Where to for ACP and Caribbean Relations with the EU post 2020?

Observing the signs of the time, it has become pellucid that the EU and the ACP have begun to reflect on their partnership beyond 2020 after the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement. The development aid dimension of the relationship has been challenged and is under serious pressure from many quarters, not least from within the EU itself. One argument that is consistently put forward is the insufficiency of

results of EU aid. However, this argument does not hold true in the Caribbean where States can objectively be seen as 'poster countries' that the EU can use to its advantage to strengthen its image of a tried and true development cooperation partner.

“Observing the signs of the time, it has become pellucid that the EU and the ACP have begun to reflect on their partnership beyond 2020 after the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement.”

Another question that arises is the relevance of the ACP as a Group, in an era where their trade agreements with the EU are negotiated on a regional level. Furthermore and as previously noted, in keeping with the EU's focus on regional approaches to political dialogue, joint partnership strategies have been developed or are in the process of being negotiated, and these cover a large ambit of issues that are supposed to take their bi-regional partnerships forward.

For example, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy and Action Plan, adopted by Heads in Lisbon in 2007, seek to break away from their traditional relationship and “forge a real partnership.” It also aims to move beyond the stereotypes that exist between the two continents and to pursue equality and common objectives, as well as creating conducive conditions for sustainable social and economic development. The strategic areas for partnership include: (a) peace and security; (b) governance and human rights; (c) trade and regional integration; and (d) key development issues. The dynamics of these two continents are such that, though awareness and ownership of this process have not yet been fully obtained, their Joint Strategy has become a reference in all relevant EU policy documents with regard to development cooperation. This profoundly political document does not, however, provide a le-

gal framework for comprehensive relations (including trade) and thus for the moment must be seen as complementary to the Cotonou Agreement.

Regarding the Caribbean, as previously noted, the Joint Caribbean-EU Partnership Strategy is currently under negotiation between the two regions. It seeks to advance the partnership beyond traditional development cooperation ties, and emphasizes the added value of shared interests and commitment to global peace, progress and prosperity. It also aims to become a political umbrella that covers the many existing frameworks between the Caribbean and the EU, but at a regional level, while taking advantage of opportunities to cooperate on key challenges and shared priorities in their respective regions, including the promotion of regional integration and cooperation, focus on providing responses to climate change and natural disasters, as well as security issues, and joint positioning with regard to global issues. This strategy is not meant to replace the development cooperation relationship with the EU, but will provide the platform for further engagement on the political and economic elements of their partnership. It should also serve as a complementary framework for the execution of existing commitments between the EU and the Caribbean Region.

“[The Joint Caribbean-EU Partnership Strategy] is not meant to replace the development cooperation relationship with the EU, but will provide the platform for further engagement on the political and economic elements of their partnership. It should also serve as a complementary framework for the execution of existing commitments between the EU and the Caribbean Region.”

Conclusion

Whether deliberate or the result of natural evolution of relations in a real world of competition, self-interest and compara-

tive advantage, ACP-EU relations, and indeed, Caribbean-EU relations, to remain relevant, must adapt to the changes highlighted above, otherwise other mechanisms may take the bang out of this exemplary model of North-South relations that has lasted for nearly forty years. This consideration attracts hard questions such as the adequacy of the Cotonou Agreement and a legal instrument and framework to address emerging global challenges, and even EU policy change that the Group wishes to tackle. Furthermore, there are still what some might see as tensions between the two groupings on a series of issues ranging from lack of support in multilateral global fora, to embarrassing geopolitical situations, to issues on which the Group wished for prior consultations based on Article 12, but that were not forthcoming. It is not a secret that EU external and development policies are being operationalized in accordance with its own strategic interests and it cannot be denied that the economic challenges faced by the EU may have negative implications on its development cooperation agenda.

However, are these reason enough to jettison the *acquis* of this partnership that has been borne out by years of cooperation experience? Can the ACP go it alone in a world where alliances and partnerships are essential to survive? Or should the group redeploy, reconfigure and regionalize? What are the implications of the disbanding of the ACP Group?

These questions have been brought under deep scrutiny by the Working Group on Future perspectives of the ACP Group that is tasked with looking at various scenarios and coming up with proposals for adop-

tion by ACP Heads as early as 2014. Whatever the solution found, it must not lead to a watering down

“....ACP-EU relations, and indeed, Caribbean-EU relations, to remain relevant, must adapt to the changes highlighted, otherwise other mechanisms may take the bang out of this exemplary model of North-South relations that has lasted for nearly forty years.”

of the relevance of the Group but rather a reinforcing of the relations between the three components of the A, C, and P in order to respond to immediate and future challenges. At the same time, the EU must also be clear on how it sees itself with regard to ACP States: just a development partner that also benefits from a ready ACP market for its products, or a viable partner of 27 voices working with an additional 79 voices to take crucial issues of global importance forward.



About the ACP Group

The ACP Group

The African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) is an organisation created by the Georgetown Agreement in 1975. It is composed of 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific states, with all of them, save Cuba, signatories to the Cotonou Agreement, also known as the "ACP-EC Partnership Agreement" which binds them to the European Union. There are 48 countries from Sub-Saharan Africa, 16 from the Caribbean and 15 from the Pacific.

Objectives

The ACP Group's main objectives are :

- sustainable development of its Member-States and their gradual integration into the global economy, which entails making poverty reduction a matter of priority and establishing a new, fairer, and more equitable world order;
- coordination of the activities of the ACP Group in the framework of the implementation of ACP-EC Partnership Agreements;
- consolidation of unity and solidarity among ACP States, as well as understanding among their peoples;
- establishment and consolidation of peace and stability in a free and democratic society.

List of ACP Countries

Angola - Antigua and Barbuda - Belize - Cape Verde - Comoros - Bahamas - Barbados - Benin - Botswana - Burkina Faso - Burundi - Cameroon - Central African Republic - Chad - Congo (Brazzaville) - Congo (Kinshasa) - Cook Islands - Cte d'Ivoire - Cuba - Djibouti - Dominica - Dominican Republic - Eritrea - Ethiopia - Fiji - Gabon - Gambia - Ghana - Grenada - Republic of Guinea - Guinea-Bissau - Equatorial Guinea - Guyana - Haiti - Jamaica - Kenya - Kiribati - Lesotho - Liberia - Madagascar - Malawi - Mali - Marshall Islands - Mauritania - Mauritius - Micronesia - Mozambique - Namibia - Nauru - Niger - Nigeria - Niue - Palau - Papua New Guinea - Rwanda - St. Kitts and Nevis - St. Lucia - St. Vincent and the Grenadines - Solomon Islands - Samoa - Sao Tome and Principe - Senegal - Seychelles - Sierra Leone - Somalia - South Africa - Sudan - Suriname - Swaziland - Tanzania - Timor Leste - Togo - Tonga - Trinidad and Tobago - Tuvalu - Uganda - Vanuatu - Zambia - Zimbabwe

Source: <http://www.acp.int/content/secretariat-otp>

Contribution

Assisting Trinidad and Tobago Firms in Leveraging the EPA: The Experience of TTCIC in Utilizing the Trade.com Facility

Ms Catherine Kumar*

This article was submitted in late April 2012



Logo sourced from <http://chamber.org.tt>



Photo courtesy Ms Catherine Kumar

The Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce works to further the interests of its 600-plus Members, by supporting their export and business development aspirations. At times, this support can extend to identifying or advising on areas of opportunity that have not yet been explored by the private sector. This role can be fulfilled through

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advocating for policy change or trade agreements, facilitating training on export techniques and problems, organizing overseas trade missions, collating trade and economic information, and co-operating with foreign Chambers to exchange trade information.

When it comes to trade agreements like the EPA, the Chamber is especially committed to actively advancing the interests of its Members. The fact is, the European Union (EU) stands as the world's largest trading bloc, and has traditionally been of economic importance to Trinidad and Tobago. The EU is our third largest export market. As such, the Chamber played an active role in the negotiation process for the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), to ensure that private sector concerns were factored into the process.

“....[T]he Chamber played an active role in the negotiation process for the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), to ensure that private sector concerns were factored into the process.”

Despite the fact that Trinidad and Tobago has enjoyed a trade surplus with the European market in recent years, in the period following the signing of the EPA a key question lingers: why has the private sector not aggressively moved to increase exports to the EU? Awareness, or the lack thereof, of important facets of the Agreement looms large in this regard.

The Chamber recognized the need to better convey to its Members the issues confronting them in trading under the EPA, and also how it could improve practical assistance to enable them to take better advantage of the Agreement.

To this end, the Chamber commissioned a study entitled *'Trade Opportunities under the EPA for the Private Sector in Trinidad and Tobago'*, which was completed in 2010. The study was funded by the Trade.Com Facility based in Brussels, under the European Development Fund (EDF).

Three surveys were undertaken, one each in goods, Services, and ICT and trade opportunities were assessed in relation to the UK, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands—which were the most relevant markets for the private sector as identified in the survey. A two-day validation workshop was held to present the findings of the study to the private sector, business support organizations (BSOs) and Government officials.

“....[T]he Chamber commissioned a study entitled *'Trade Opportunities under the EPA for the Private Sector in Trinidad and Tobago'*, which was completed in 2010.”

The surveys identified as a challenge: (i) the lack of awareness of the EPA, which was particularly visible in the inability of firms to follow the built-in time-bound changes; and (ii) a lack of capacity to decipher the Agreement in the detail needed, in order to identify the particular advantages that a firm in a specific sector could extract from all the various provisions. This deficit was deemed to be especially acute among young entrepreneurs who, it was thought, would be most likely to take the new risks to export to the EU and service providers that are generally much smaller in size. Additionally, findings revealed that there was a lack of EU market familiarity, insignificant or no market research being undertaken on the EU and little or no market representation in the EU.

In many cases, particularly for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), the acquisition of this intelligence was proving to be costly. Since gathering market intelligence involves being in the

marketplace, it was suggested that there was a role for Government in seeking to increase trade representation and better use foreign missions to gather information. Trade Facilitation Offices could also be established abroad in the targeted markets.

“Three surveys were undertakenThe surveys identified as a challenge....the lack of awareness of the EPA [among other issues].”

Also identified as a priority was the provision of an in-depth assessment of the Agreement and clarification of the plethora of technical provisions that would help in determining how a firm can benefit from the Agreement. Accordingly, the Chamber was pleased that the Ministry of Trade and Industry in October 2011 established the Trade Implementation Unit (TIU), which placed immediate focus on EPA implementation. The Chamber's Trade and Business Development Unit and the TIU have already been in consultation and dialogue on private sector needs.

The study further identified areas where knowledge transfer appeared to be critically required viz rules of origin, SPS and TBT measures and recommended that specialized seminars and workshops for particular sectors be

organized as a first step to thrash out the possibilities inherent in each area for existing businesses in the sector. These are to be conducted soon.

It was also recommended that BSOs undertake more sector-specific trade missions to the EU, based on a priority listing of export ready sectors. These would be devoted to seeking strategic partnerships which appear crucial for service companies, given the predominance of small firms which have little or no foreign equity participation and few corporate connections with the EU.

As regards firm constraints, the high cost of exporting emerged as a major obstacle to the development of exports. Many companies felt that more incentives were required to effectively do the job. One area that was mentioned was the refunding of expenditure on trade fairs, similar to what pertained in the former Tourism and Industrial Development Company (TIDCO). The Chamber has been active in advocating such support from Government.

“It was also recommended [by the study] that BSOs undertake more sector-specific trade missions to the EU, based on a priority listing of export ready sectors.”

There were many perceived constraints to exporting at the level of the economy and public policy. Inflation, the exchange rate, and high wage cost were signaled as being significant constraints. At the level of the EU, major export hurdles were not identified for those already in the market though hindrances were definitely noted, such as meeting SPS and TBT standards and labeling and marking requirements.

In Services, mutual recognition of degrees, licenses, and certificates was seen as presenting quite a challenge and requiring development assistance to get the organizations concerned to acquire the capacity to deal with their EU counterparts. In goods and Services, at the firm level, priority is given to better use of available export information noting that while the EU Export Help Desk is a free facility it does not cover Services.

In the area of ICT, the study recommended that the Chamber should align itself with Digital Europe; organize Chamber to Ch-

amber ICT visits and create a reference material section on the EU in its library. Furthermore, within its E-Business, Information Technology and Telecommunications Committee (EBITT) a person whose sole responsibility is seeking opportunities in Europe for its members should be appointed, it was noted.

Generally, it was recommended that: the Chamber should launch a sustained EPA information and discussion campaign as soon as possible; monitor EPA-related developments affecting Trinidad and Tobago and the wider region, including the dynamics of EPA implementation, with a view to a robust advocacy role by the Chamber; prepare itself to contribute to the formulation of positions in relation to the EPA's built-in negotiating agenda; be proactive in forging partnerships with European BSOs, through the signing of MOUs; and promote more business missions to Europe in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry and/or other Government agencies. The Chamber should also consider forging a stronger relationship with organizations such as the Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export) and the International Trade Centre (ITC), it was noted, to facilitate market research for its Members as well as play an important role in tracking and disseminating information concerning development cooperation opportunities available to sectors and firms.

With all the above recommendations in mind, the Chamber once again secured funding from the Trade.com Facility to embark upon a trade mission with the objectives of seeking strategic partnerships for Members, obtaining market intelligence, forging relationships with European BSOs and capacity building of Chamber staff. From 26th February to 7th March, 2012 the Chamber led a delegation of nine companies to five cities in three countries. The delegation comprised of five ICT companies, two food and beverage companies and two construction companies.

Opportunities were explored in Hamburg and Munich (Germany), Rotterdam (the Netherlands) and in Birmingham and Manchester (United Kingdom). In each city, the delegation was hosted by Chambers of Commerce and in total, one hundred and thirty seven business-to-business meetings were held. Also included in the agenda were site visits to ICT clusters, innovation parks, food factories, and research institutes. Some of the larger mission companies were interested in investment opportunities, specifically in the field of renewable energy and were able to have productive meetings in those areas. From initial feedback, there are approximately forty-one business leads that the companies will be immediately following up on. Indeed, since returning to Trinidad and Tobago such follow up activity has been ongoing.

“With all the above recommendations in mind, the Chamber once again secured funding from the Trade.com Facility to embark upon a trade mission [from 26th February to 7th March 2012] with the objectives of seeking strategic partnerships for Members, obtaining market intelligence, forging relationships with European BSOs and capacity building of Chamber staff.”

The mission provided the opportunity to market Trinidad and Tobago in sectors that have been targeted by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for economic diversification and also matched one of the objectives of the EPA, which is to assist with the diversification of the export and production base of CARIFORUM States. Moreover, throughout the mission the opportunity was taken to market Trinidad and Tobago as a gateway to Latin America, given its geographic location and current initiatives such as the Partial Scope negotiations with Panama and Guatemala.

Furthermore during the mission there were fruitful intra-group exchanges, particularly in the ICT sector. It is expected that our local companies will leverage the partnerships made among themselves to maximise opportunities in the larger external markets. Due to the relatively small size of our companies in this sector 'cooperating to compete' has to be the way forward.

As previously noted in mounting the recently concluded trade mission, the Chamber's objectives included increasing the capacity of staff to provide practical assistance to Members and to forge relationships with the European BSOs. At each of the five Chambers visited, we met with either their respective Chief Executive Officer and/or their Head of International Trade. Lessons have been learned from their operational practices and membership services, and there have been offers by the Chambers to assist us where needed. It is our belief that without the face-to-face interaction, these new relationships would not have been forged. Further, the Chamber has gained increased experience in trade promotion activity, and looks forward to implementing the lessons in future projects of this nature.

The Chamber was also able to deepen its existing relationship with Caribbean Export, which participated in the trade mission as an observer. This relationship is a very important one for the Chamber and for its members, as Caribbean Export plays a critical role in EPA implementation within the Region.

The support given by our diplomatic Missions was invaluable, and their participation throughout the mission should prove to be useful for the embassies in better understanding the EU market and challenges faced by individual companies. As mentioned earlier, effective trade representation abroad is deemed to be critical for gathering market intelligence and establishing strategic alliances. The Chamber has also been active in advocating adequate staffing levels and competencies at our Missions abroad.

The Chamber has implemented a tracking mechanism to ensure follow up with mission participants, and will be seeking to implement further support measures to advance the recommendations of our EPA study. Finally, at the level of the Government we will continue to advocate for the ratification of the EPA and its full implementation. As a result of the trade mission, new requisite framework elements such as legislation governing renewable energy have arisen and we will be following these developments closely.



About the Chamber

Mission Statement

To seek the interests of our members and the wider business community by forging a sustainable framework for successful business through effective advocacy, representation, facilitation and enablement of legitimate and responsible enterprise.

Vision Statement

"To be the voice of business towards the ongoing development towards a strong sustainable national economy".

Source: <http://chamber.org.tt/about-the-chamber/>

Contribution

Identifying Market Opening Challenges & Opportunities in Europe for Barbadian Businesses: The BPSTT Perspective

Mr Joel Richards*

This article was submitted in late April 2012



**BARBADOS
PRIVATE SECTOR
TRADE TEAM**

A DIVISION OF THE BARBADOS PRIVATE SECTOR ASSOCIATION

Logo sourced from <http://www.tradeturn.bb/>



Photo courtesy Mr Joel Richards

The Barbados Private Sector Trade Team (BPSTT), a division of the Barbados Private Sector Association (the umbrella agency of private sector organizations in Barbados), was established in March 2003. The mission of the Trade Team is to represent and promote the interests of Barbados' private sector in the arena of international trade negotiations.

* Trade Consultant, Barbados Private Sector Trade Team.

The BPSTT researches, documents and provides information to the private sector on a wide range of extra-regional negotiations, including the World Trade Organization (WTO) theatre and the on-going CARICOM-Canada Trade and Development Agreement negotiations. BPSTT also extends analytical support to its stakeholders in such areas as the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) implementation.

“The mission of the Trade Team is to represent and promote the interests of Barbados’ private sector in the arena of international trade negotiations.”

Thus, BPSTT contributes to trade negotiations involving Barbados, on behalf of the Barbados private sector. These contributions are facilitated through implementation of the BPSTT work plan, which includes: the evaluation of the competitiveness of Barbadian businesses; assessment of the impact of trade agreements; and identification of opportunities for operating in the liberalised international trade environment.

In April 2012, BPSTT convened the most recent series of its workshops and roundtable discussions. This particular Series sought to “provide information on the EPA to business owners, managers and workers.” The Series, as with some others, was funded under an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) project, which also includes a study on the benefits and challenges of the Agreement.

The Series was convened against the backdrop of a fair amount of discussion as to whether or not regional governments and the private sector have taken ownership of the EPA. To varying degrees, there has been some level of ownership within both the private sector and governments across the Region. Several countries have established EPA

“[The seminar series on the EPA in April 2012] was convened against the backdrop of a fair amount of discussion as to whether or not regional governments and the private sector have taken ownership of the EPA.”

Editor’s Note

The enclosed extract from a presentation delivered by the Head of the European Union Delegation to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, Ambassador Valeriano Diaz, at a Caribbean Export Development Agency event on 29 March 2012 may be useful in contextualizing the sentiments expressed above:

“Despite the passage of time there seems to be a perception, as I travel through the region, that enough benefits have not accrued from its coming into force. Let me state clearly that ownership of the EPA in the Caribbean does not belong to the European Union; it is the purview of regional governments. They have to ensure that the legislative and other frameworks are in place so that the private sector, entrepreneurs and others can reap the benefits which the EPA offers....But the private sector also has to get on board, instead of passively standing on the sidelines....Business people who are interested in penetrating extra-regional markets should be aware of what legislation needs to be in place in their countries so that they can lobby government to have such legislation enacted in a timely manner. They need also to know the necessary requirements which will assist them in accessing elements of the EPA, which are beneficial to their enterprise.”

or Trade Implementation Units, and there is also a regional EPA Implementation Unit. These developments certainly demonstrate that regional governments are taking their obligations under the EPA seriously. There have also been efforts in the private sector to sensitize the business community about the EPA. BPSTT's just-concluded workshops and roundtable discussion Series on the EPA is a case in point. Other Barbadian agencies, such as the Barbados Small Business Association and the Barbados Coalition of Service Industries, have also undertaken notable initiatives geared at sensitizing their constituents on the EPA.

However, despite the work that has been done in Barbados, specifically on promoting the EPA, results have been mixed in terms of the ability of the business community to fully capitalize on the market access opportunities stemming from the EPA. A look at the trade flows reveal that in 2007 before the EPA was signed and 2010, two years after the Agreement was signed, exports of goods from Barbados to the EU increased by approximately 60 percent. While there has been an overall decline in the exports of sugar, we have seen increased exports in areas such as pharmaceuticals. In fact, pharmaceuticals are almost single-handedly responsible for the increase in Barbados' exports to the EU and in 2010, exports of pharmaceu-

ticals accounted for roughly 47% of our exports. Pharmaceuticals, sugar and rum represented nearly 80% of all of Barbados' exports to the EU in 2010.

“....[D]espite the work that has been done in Barbados, specifically on promoting the EPA, results have been mixed in terms of the ability of the business community to fully capitalize on the market access opportunities stemming from the EPA.”

The figures cited above illustrate that while we have been able to export more to the EU in terms of value, the diversity of our product range is extremely small. This is a clear indication that we are simply not producing enough and in order to benefit fully from Agreements such as the EPA, we need to have the production infrastructure in place to make these Agreements meaningful. This sentiment has been expressed time and again, and yet again at our most recent seminar series.

Apart from the issue of the paucity of production, there are also measures in the internal market and the EU market that have restricted some producers. For instance, as a result of outdated sanitary and phyto-sanitary legislation in Barbados, products of animal origin such as processed meats, fish, poultry, ice cream and dairy products do not qualify for export to the EU. On the EU side, some manufacturers have faced technical barriers such as certification requirements for some goods which they were not previously aware of before testing the market. Cement has been a major casualty of this particular situation. In the EU overseas territories, such as the French Caribbean Outermost Regions (FCORs) of Martinique and Guadeloupe, some Barbadian and CARIFORUM producers also face what appear to be unfair or discriminatory taxes such as *L'octroi de mer* (dock due), which applies a higher rate to imported goods as opposed to those produced in the EU overseas territories. For instance, the 'octroi de mer' on imported basic cement is 20% while the rate for locally produced cement stands at 2.5%.

With respect to trade in Services, we are yet to complete all the requirements such as the negotiation of mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) with Europe which are required to give full effect to the ability of engineers, architects, accountants and other professional service providers who may wish to supply their Services directly to Europeans either as independent contractors or commercial

service suppliers.

In the months ahead, the BPSTT will continue to undertake activities to support EPA implementation. We will be disseminating a manual on project proposal writing, which will be geared towards assisting the business community in taking advantage of any development assistance opportunities that may arise. This manual has been developed with assistance from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)-administered Caribbean Aid for Trade and Regional Integration Trust Fund (CARTFund), an initiative of the United Kingdom Government. We will also be assisting several sectors in developing export guides on entering the EU market; this will be done with funding from the IDB.

BPSTT recognizes that the task of EPA implementation, in general, and assisting the private sector in responding to the challenges and opportunities of trading with the EU, in particular, are mammoth tasks. Therefore, there has to be initiative taken by the private sector from across CARIFORUM in organizing itself sufficiently to capitalize on the market and trading realities occasioned by the EPA. Governments throughout the Region need to also ensure that the appropriate legislative framework and business climate are in place, so as to facilitate the private sector. Importantly, the donor community also has a role to play in facilitating both governments and the private sector in building capacity to meet their respective obligations under the EPA.

Documents (including presentations) from BPSTT workshops and roundtable discussions are available for download at:
<http://tradeteam.bb/resources/category/presentations>



Quotables

"According to an old African saying, "When the music changes, so does the dance". We at the ACP are keenly aware that the music is changing not only in Europe but also in our member states, and, indeed, globally. It was in recognition of this fact that we launched our own dialogue process through the *Sub-Committee on Future Perspectives* chaired by H.E. Dr. Patrick Gomes, the distinguished Ambassador of Guyana to the European Union and the Kingdoms of Belgium and Luxembourg.

"[W]e recognise the need to reinvent the ACP as a meaningful player on the world stage....[T]he Lisbon Treaty came into force in December 2009. The Treaty seeks a major overhaul of the European system and far-reaching restructuring of its key institutions. What has been rather troubling for the ACP is the fact that the Treaty makes no express reference to the long-standing partnership between the EU and the ACP. It is also unclear whether the EDF will come under the Commission budget and if the ACP countries can feel entitled to a predictable source of development assistance as has been the case hitherto. Global re-alignments and major shifts in EU policy orientations have given rise to concerns of possible downgrading of the importance of the ACP-EU Partnership.

"It is evident that the ACP will continue to need Europe as a predictable source of ODA to finance their development.

"We also believe that Europe will continually need the ACP to validate its evolving role as a global actor in international relations. As principal donor to the ACP, the EU has access to 79 member countries within its sphere of diplomatic and geopolitical influence. Cotonou provides a basis for the wielding of 'soft power' by Europe.

"The rise of the emerging economies and Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – the nations generally referred to as the BRICS – offers a new window of opportunity. The ACP feel that they can leverage on their numeric strength and moral authority to promote their collective interests while building new alliances with the emerging economies of Asia and Latin America.

"One of the sore points in ACP-EU relations is obviously the slow progress that has been made so far on the EPA negotiations. While the Caribbean region has already finalised its EPA, the African and Pacific regions are yet to do so. The EU meanwhile is proposing to withdraw Regulation 1528 that had guaranteed

entry for exports from the ACP countries by January 2014. Without saying it in so many words, it would appear that the Commission, with an inflexible posture, is predicating any continuing relations with the ACP on the finalisation of the EPA negotiations. It is also clear that ACP countries that are in the high and upper middle income categories will also miss out on the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) following an EU proposal to revise the scheme in a manner that will graduate them out of the benefits."

— Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, ACP Secretary General, Opening Remarks at the Consultation Session on the Future Perspectives of the ACP Group (Hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat and ACP Secretariat), 17 April 2012 - London, UK

"Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General Ransford Smith has described the rise of the world's Dynamic Developing Economies (DDE) as a 'defining period', which could benefit both emerging economies and the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries.

"Mr Smith was speaking at a Special Event on 'Dynamic Developing Countries and LDCs: Integrating the South', organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which took place on 25 April 2012 in Doha, Qatar, on the penultimate day of UNCTAD XIII. He said that co-operation between the world's poorest countries and DDEs can result in a win-win scenario for both groups with DDEs gaining greater global leverage and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) benefiting from new trade and aid opportunities."

— Extract from Commonwealth Secretariat Press Release entitled, *South-South trade can be a win-win scenario – Ransford Smith* (issued 27 April 2012)

"With our 79 member States from Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific, the ACP is a living example of South-South cooperation, with all its challenges as well as opportunities....As a complementary to North-South cooperation, it provides a framework for deepening the ties between developing countries, sharing knowledge and best practices, and helping to structure a brave new world."

— H.E. Shirley Skerrett-Andrew, Chair of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors, Remarks at the Building Block on South-South and Triangular Cooperation Meeting, held on 5-6 March 2012, Brussels

News Briefs

Austerity Negatively Impacts EU Development Aid, Reports say

A missive posted recently on the ACP Secretariat's website reports that the overall development aid budgets of European countries were reduced in 2011, especially so amongst those euro-zone countries hardest hit by the debt crisis. A drop by some €500 milli-

on in EU aid to developing countries in 2011 was cited, which it is reported represents 0.42% of Gross National Income compared with 0.44% in 2010. It was further reported that the OECD's Secretary-General said: "The fall of ODA is a source of great concern, coming at a time when developing countries have been hit by the knock-on effect of the crisis and need it most." However, an European Commission Press

Release issued in early April, featuring remarks by the EU Commissioner for Development Cooperation on the state of development aid, noted that the EU and its 27 Member States still rank at the very top as providers of official aid. It further stated that in 2011, development aid from the EU and its Member States stood €53 billion. In some cases, aid from a few of these countries actually increased in that period.

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Perspective

Interface with Cross-Section of Stakeholders Continues, for CARICOM

Secretariat-based EPA Implementation Unit



"Under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) the Parties recognize that fostering innovation and creativity improves competitiveness and is a crucial element in the economic partnership in achieving sustainable development," — entrepreneurs must be seized of this imperative, in their efforts to take advantage of the Agreement.

Photo courtesy Mr. Karen Heckshaw, GIZ



Hon. Douglas Slater (at the podium), Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Consumer Affairs of St Vincent and the Grenadines, along with members of the Head Table at the Opening Ceremony for the St Vincent and the Grenadines EPA Consultation Series, 18 April 2012

This was the charge laid down by Hon. Douglas Slater, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Consumer Affairs of St Vincent and the Grenadines, who delivered

the feature address at the opening ceremony of the recently concluded *St Vincent and the Grenadines Consultation Series on the CARIFORUM-EU EPA*. The Consultation was held on April 18 in the capital city, Kingstown, under the theme Trade Related Issues (TRI), with special reference to Innovation, Competitiveness and Intellectual Property in the EPA and the interests of St Vincent and the Grenadines therein. The CARICOM Secretariat-based EPA Implementation Unit once again mounted this public education-styled EPA consultation for St Vincent and the Grenadines, in concert with the national EPA Implementation Unit there.

A record number of participants attended. There were over sixty-five participants in all, for what by all accounts was a "very interactive, informative series of sessions."

Mr Malcolm Spence, Senior Coordinator-Intellectual Property, Science and Technology Issues at the Office of Trade Negotiations (OTN), delivered the lead presentation. Other experts followed, hailing from both the public and private sectors (including industry groups), as well as civil society.

Photo courtesy Ms Karen Heckshaw, GIZ



Mr. Malcolm Spence, OTN, delivering his presentation, April 18

Against the backdrop of what Minister Slater described as "the National 20-25 Plan [having] set a goal of St Vincent and the Grenadines becoming a Modern, Competitive, Multifaceted, Post-Colonial Economy which is local, national, regional, and global in its approach, deliberations centered on how the EPA can open new market opportunities for Vincentian entrepreneurs and innovators, and importantly the "opportunities and avenues" available for Vincentian enterprises to collaborate with EU counterparts in leveraging the Agreement. Perspectives of entrepreneurs themselves also took center stage, with the panel of resource persons comprised of Vincentian entrepreneurs, too. Vital private sector perspective on the EPA and the innovation/competitiveness narrative were provided by the founder of *Welectricity*, Inc., Mr Herbert Samuel, as well as a representative of the firm *VincyFresh*, to the spirited audience. A representative of the Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export) was on hand, and lent insight on that agency's competitiveness and market intelligence initiatives geared at converting the market access provided under the EPA into effective market penetration. A passionate and extremely well received case for intellectual property and the link with innovation was made by Ms Rene Baptise, Barrister-at-Law at Baptiste & Co. Chambers.

Attorney-at-Law and Lecturer in International Business, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill), who engaged another set of stakeholders on the possible effects of the EPA on Vincentian society along gender lines.

This particular Consultation was the final engagement in the three-pronged Consultation Series for St Vincent and the Grenadines launched in September 2011, with a seminar on Trade in Services. That engagement was spearheaded by the Regional EPA Implementation Unit's Trade in Services and Investment Specialist, Ms S.H. Allyson Francis. A follow on Consultation in March 2012 focused on the thematic area of Trade in Goods, and was led by the Unit's Trade in Goods Specialist, Mr Branford Isaacs.



File photo: CARICOM Secretariat

Mr Branford Isaacs (in front of Head Table) delivering his presentation, March 7

The Vincentian Consultations followed a similar three-pronged thematic template that the Regional EPA Implementation Unit has utilized in consultations in the other States in which it has mounted such activities. The invitees/audience are typically wide-ranging, inclusive of public and private sector groups and civil society, namely the academic community, and social and economic partners. In those signatory States to the EPA where consultations have been mounted, the Regional EPA Implementation Unit collaborates closely with national authorities in the country with responsibility for EPA implementation. The responsible national authorities liaise with, identify and invite relevant participants. This extends to identification of key national public and private sector as well as civil society focal points to serve as resource persons who support primary resource persons selected by the Regional EPA Implementation Unit to spearhead the respective sessions. In this regard, the Unit regularly draws on OTN and Caribbean Export staffers.

The various Consultation Series are geared at



Photo courtesy Ms Karen MacGillivray, GIZ

A section of the audience at the TRI component of the St Vincent and the Grenadines EPA Consultation Series, April 18

Consideration of the possible Gender Impact of the EPA, a theme requested by St Vincent and the Grenadines for inclusion in the agenda, also formed part of the proceedings. The feature resource person was Ms Ayanna Young-Marshall,



Photo courtesy Ms Karen MacGillivray, GIZ

Ms Ayanna Young-Marshall, UWI, delivering his presentation, April 18

affording participants a better appreciation of how the regional private sector can take advantage of the possibilities flowing from and leverage the various facets of the Agreement, while drawing attention to the content of the provisions of the EPA. The expectation is that respective Consultation Series will also form a basis for deepening and expanding engagement between institutions with responsibility for facilitating the implementation of the EPA and those stakeholders involved in the areas under consideration in this Consultation.

To date, the Regional EPA Implementation Unit has responded to requests for Consultations from Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname. The Unit has requests from other States which are being scheduled.



File photo: CARICOM Secretariat
Suriname EPA Consultation Series, February 2012:
Members of the audience



File photo: CARICOM Secretariat
Suriname EPA Consultation Series, February 2012:
Members of the audience

The various Consultation Series have been funded under the 9th European Development Fund (EDF), Caribbean Integration Support Programme (CISP). They are also made possible by UKaid from the Department for International Development, through the Caribbean Aid for Trade and Regional Integration Trust Fund (CARTFund). Some of the Consultations have been made possible through the generous support of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.



News Briefs (Cont.)

Caribbean Export Unveils Plans for London 2012

This note is an extract from a Caribbean Export News Release of the same title

"CARIFORUM businesses, enterprises and entrepreneurs will soon receive a much-needed boost in engaging the European market place. This was revealed at the recent regional launch of Caribbean Export Development Agency's (Caribbean Export) London

2012 Initiative in Barbados.

"In his opening remarks, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Ambassador Colin Murdoch lauded the commitment of regional and international stakeholders in making this and other Caribbean Export initiatives a success. "These three initiatives, London 2012, Break Point and the CARIFORUM-EU Business Forum, are all inter-related and together play a critical role in the continued growth

and export potential of the region's private sector businesses and enterprises. The common thread that binds the three together is the CARIFORUM-EC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)," commented Ambassador Murdoch. "Through the planning and execution of these initiatives, Caribbean Export will give the region a much-needed boost in maximizing on the potential of the EPA," Ambassador Murdoch concluded."

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Perspective

Report: EPA Provides Comprehensive Framework to Improve Flow of Investments



The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the European Union (EU) and the Caribbean Forum of African Caribbean and Pacific States (CARIFORUM) provides a comprehensive framework to improve the flow of investments between the two parties. This is according to a new report commissioned by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat-based EPA Implementation Unit.

This was one of many findings, along with recommendations, of the recently completed report, tasked with a review of the legal framework in CARIFORUM States with respect to investment and the flow of investment between CARIFORUM States and the EU for consistency with their commitments in international agreements. CARIFORUM and the EU are to review their investment legal framework, and related areas, in accordance with Article 74 of the EPA.

“

The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the European Union (EU) and the Caribbean Forum of African Caribbean and Pacific States (CARIFORUM) provides a comprehensive framework to improve the flow of investments between the two parties....This was one of many findings, along with recommendations, of [a] recently completed report.”

As a result of national consultations, CARIFORUM States had indicated the need to determine the impact of their liberalization commitments in the EPA towards ensuring that the benefits to be derived under the Agreement are obtained as well as to make informed decisions on additional areas for further liberalization. In response, a project was launched by the EPA Implementation Unit. This included hiring of a Consultant to provide appropriate technical guidance to allow informed decisions to be taken in respect of the Region's obligations under the Investment and Commercial Presence obligations of the EPA. The consultancy took account of the investment legal framework, investment environment and the flow of investment from the EU to CARIFORUM. Cognizant of the importance of monitoring and evaluating to assess the impact of commitments, the Consultant was also tasked to provide recommendations on an instrument to monitor the flow of investment between CARIFORUM and the EU.

"Having a better appreciation of the realities in States is crucial to making decisions to ensure that the benefits to be derived under the agreement are obtained," said the Regional Unit's Trade in Services and Investment Specialist, Ms S.H. Allyson Francis. She further stated, "the findings are enlightening and form a good basis to better focus our minds on the task at hand, which is improving the investment climate and the flow of investment between the EU and CARIFORUM."

While some of the findings were encouraging, they were tempered by some stark assessments with respect to the EPA. Of note, the Report underscored that there is little awareness of EPA/foreign direct investment (FDI) tied advantages among the private sector in CARIFORUM States and within the EU. It was fou-

nd that this lack of knowledge extended to EU investors as well.

Particular note was made that the legal framework of CARIFORUM States is in need of harmonization to cope with the FDI commitments of the EPA. With respect to national legislation pertaining to foreign investment, asymmetries were revealed in their respective legal systems and the level of regulation that needs to be addressed in order to create a reliable framework for investors. Government bureaucracy and the lack of a common policy among CARIFORUM States on investment promotion were also cited as areas of concern.

In the main, the report's recommendations dealt with ways of addressing deficiencies, as set out in some of the findings. These include the call to increase awareness of the EPA, as well as its commitments and advantages, among the business community, in particular through: (i) education; (ii) sharing of best practices; (iii) showcasing successful regional FDI models; and (iv) implementing a methodology to collect and process statistical information on FDI in CARIFORUM States.

Advancing the recommendations is a top priority for the EPA Implementation Unit and the expected result is an improved climate and flow of investment from the EU to CARIFORUM.



“While some of the findings were encouraging, they were tempered by some stark assessments with respect to the EPA.”

Perspective

'Fend More for Ourselves' — COTED Chair



In the face of the challenges currently confronting the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Member States needed to fend more for themselves and expand intra-regional trade within the Community. This was the charge laid down by Honourable Dr John Collin McIntyre, Minister of Employment, Trade, Industry, Consumer and Diaspora Affairs of Dominica and Chairman of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) as he spoke at the Opening Ceremony of the 34th Meeting of COTED in Georgetown, Guyana in late March.

Minister McIntyre acknowledged that the deliberations were taking place against the background of the continuing fall out of the global financial and economic crisis and the sovereign debt situation being experienced in Europe.

"The signals are clear. We have to begin to 'fend' more for our own selves. We must begin to deliberately target expanded economic activity, including intra-regional trade, among ourselves. I sincerely hope that, that spirit of mutual reliance can inform our approach to all of the agenda items which we must discuss," Dr McIntyre said.

Calling for efficiency in the way the business of the Meeting was conducted, he charged Trade

Ministers and delegates not to put off for tomorrow what could be done today.

"Colleagues, this meeting of the COTED takes place at a time when CARICOM is undergoing a period of introspection. Our Heads of Government gave clear indications at their Conference earlier this month in Suriname, that it was time to ask ourselves and to answer some serious questions. These questions relate to how, as an integration grouping, we organize ourselves to deliver goods and services to our people and how we promote their interests and welfare. The next twelve (12) months promise to bring interesting times and developments to the Region," Minister McIntyre said.

He added that the COTED Meeting could continue its own process of introspection. "Maybe it is time that we agree to approach our work in the most direct manner going to the heart of the issues brought before us for discussion and decision-making. Let us not put off for tomorrow what can be done today," the Chairman told the Meeting.

The Chair's outlook was shared by Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, CARICOM Secretary-General who, in his statement also referred to the current mode of reform and change in the Community to-

wards a more meaningful impact on the lives of the people.

The changes, the Secretary-General pointed out, were designed for a more effective, efficient and dynamic Community and Secretariat to deliver on the promise of a Community for all.

The impatience demonstrated by the Region's people to enjoy integration's benefits, the Secretary-General said, should act as an impetus to ensure that the outstanding issues hindering Community nationals including the private sector, from taking full advantage of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), be urgently resolved.

"Let us move swiftly to consolidate and strengthen our Single Market and Economy as it is critical that we collectively engage the global market, particularly in these stringent times. Even as we continue to fight to ensure that the international community takes account of our special and vulnerable circumstances, we have to put our own house in order," Ambassador LaRocque said.

Editor's Note

H.E. Dr John Collin McIntyre and Secretary General Irwin LaRocque's Statements at the opening of the COTED are available on the Secretariat website as CARICOM Secretariat Press Releases 86/2012 and 85/2012, respectively.



News Briefs (Cont.)

Belgian Senate Supports more Flexibility on ACP Free Trade Agreements

This note is an extract from a news item of the same title featured on the ACP Secretariat website

"The Belgian Senate has adopted a resolution urging more flexibility in free trade dealings with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP Group), while also endorsing the negotiation of new trade relations with the European Union which take stronger consideration of the

development needs of ACP countries."

GCSI Launched

The long-awaited launch of the Grenada Coalition of Service Industries (GCSI) took place in late March. The launch had been delayed for some time, it is reported.

The following is an extract from the statement by the Hon. Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda and Lead Head of Government with responsibility for Services in the CARICOM

Quasi Cabinet, on the occasion of the launch of the GCSI.

"The launch of the Grenada Coalition of Service Industries represents a feat in perseverance, and focused and positive tenacity in the face of severe economic and social challenges. You have stayed the regional course in the pursuit of long-term national, economic and social sustainability.

"I am aware that you have great expectations in the area of Services. I assure you that

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Perspective

CARIFORUM and EU Sign EURO 82.6 million Agreements



CARIFORUM and the European Commission (EC), in late March, signed three financial agreements designed to boost the Caribbean Region's ability to deliver tangible results of integration to its populace.

With a total value of Euro \$82.6M (US\$110M), the financing agreements provide EC support for, among other things, the economic integration and trade of the nine-member Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS); the further development of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), with special allocations for Belize and Haiti; and CARIFORUM's implementation commitments under the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

Advancing the OECS Economic Union, particularly in the areas of harmonized policies in tourism and agriculture; strengthening its capacity to integrate into the wider CARICOM arrangements and boosting competitiveness and export capacity of the private sector, are the key elements of the Euro 8.6M agreement that will be implemented by the OECS Secretariat.

The CSME-related Programme, worth Euro 28M, will lend support to develop areas of government procurement, labour market information systems and e-commerce. It will also place emphasis on

transferring social security benefits, and building capacity in statistics, among other areas. Funds have been set aside under this agreement to support Belize and Haiti to be better placed to take advantage of the CSME, as well as to assist other CARICOM Member states to bridge the implementation gap.

The third agreement provides Euro 46.5M to boost CARIFORUM's capacity to take full advantage of the provisions of the EPA and to honour its commitments therein. The programme provides support for fiscal reform and adjustment; sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures; services; the rum sector and (removing) technical barriers to trade.

Prior to affixing his signature to the agreements, Secretary-General of CARIFORUM, Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, said that the EU support to the Region came at a time when Heads of Government had declared their determination to ensure that the benefits of integration were felt by the people.

While the signature of the agreements signaled a beginning, the Secretary-General cautioned that the end product would have no meaning if the people of the Region did not feel the impact of the resources.

"Impact, results and benefits must be the watch-

words at the level of implementation. We must satisfy regional stakeholders that our actions bring them added value to their lives. That is the bottom line," he reiterated.

In his remarks at the ceremony held at the headquarters of the CARICOM Secretariat, EU representative to CARICOM, and Head of the EU delegation in Guyana, H.E. Robert Kopecky, traced the historical foundations of both the EU and CARICOM, pointing out that the integration process was long and dynamic and not without "obstacles". "The path to full integration is a long and dynamic process, not deprived of obstacles. The European Union was not made all at once, or according to a single plan but rather it has been built through concrete achievements which created solidarity. As such The EU has been supporting the integration steps of CARICOM along this process," Mr Kopecky said.

He added that the funds for three programmes will be drawn from the € 165 M Regional Programme of the 10th European Development Fund (EDF).

The funds, he said were "a testimony of the EU's continued commitments to support the Caribbean Region in the dynamic process of regional integration and signal another milestone in the longstanding relation between the Caribbean Forum of ACP States and the European Union."

Editor's Note

H.E. Robert Kopecky and Secretary General Irwin LaRocque's Statements at the signing ceremony are available on the Secretariat website as CARICOM Secretariat Press Releases 84/2012 and 83/2012, respectively.



News Briefs (Cont.)

the regional team and I are working hard to live up to your expectations. The year 2012 offers many opportunities for all of us in this Sector, especially the national coalitions."

Community Council sets up Working Group to Study Associate Membership of CARICOM

At a meeting in February, the CARICOM Council of Ministers agreed to establish a Working Group to look at issues pertaining to Associate Membership of CARICOM. Saint Lucia is to head the Working Group.

The Ministers were discussing proposals for enhanced participation of and criteria for Associate Membership as well as the expression of interest by the Dutch-speaking islands of Sint Maarten and Curacao in becoming Associate Members of the Community. Currently, Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands and Turks and Caicos Islands are Associate Members.

Caribbean Export to host 2nd CARIFORUM-EU Business Forum

This note is an extract from a Caribbean Export Press Release on the 2nd CARIFORUM-EU Business Forum featured on its website

"Caribbean Export in partnership with the ACP Business Climate and the European Union will be hosting the 2nd CARIFORUM-EU Business Forum to take place in the United Kingdom in July 2012. This project is also being implemented in collaboration with the CARIFORUM Directorate, the CARICOM Secretariat, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and GIZ. The theme of the 2nd CARIFORUM-EU Business Forum will focus on *"Making the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement Work"* and the main objectives are to create awareness about the Agreement and to promote business opportu-

nities within sectors that are readily positioned to do business in the European Union.

"The sectors to be covered are Manufacturing and Cultural Industries. Specific focus will be placed on agro-processing, music, audio visual, fashion and publishing. The Business Forum will take the form of three (3) Study Tours to the United Kingdom, Germany and France and the hosting of a Business Forum within the UK where Business persons and representatives from suitable Business Support Organisations will be given the opportunity to engage potential clients, investors, distributors and partners from Europe as well as with business representatives from Africa and the Pacific."

For details, refer to aforementioned Press Release.

Guyana makes Strides in EPA Implementation

In early April *EPA Implementation Bulletin* was informed by a senior Official that following Cabinet's approval for Guyana to proceed with the ratification of the EPA, the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, H.E. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, will be presenting a motion in the National Assembly for Guyana's ratification of the EPA. It is anticipated that the motion is expected to be tabled by the end of April 2012, following which Guyana will take the necessary steps to notify two bodies – CARIFORUM and the Depositary.

In related news the Minister of Finance, Dr Ashni Singh, in his budget presentation on 20th of March 2012 informed the National Assembly that he will be presenting a bill for the removal of customs duties on exports, to comply with the requirements of the EPA. *EPA Implementation Bulletin* has been informed that it is anticipated the bill will be expedited during the budget debate.

Board Members for Caribbean Network of Service Coalitions selected

EPA Implementation Bulletin has been advised that at a recent Caribbean Network of Service Coalitions meeting, the following Board members were selected: Mr Nirad Tewarie (of the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services Industries) as Chair; Ms Yvonne Agard (of the Saint Lucia Coalition of Services Industries) as Deputy Chair; and Ms Lisa Cummings (of the Barbados Coalition of Services Industries) as Secretary. The respective term of office is one year.

CARIFORUM States with EPA-related Websites

Antigua & Barbuda

<http://abepa.gov.ag/#>

Barbados

<http://www.foreign.gov.bb/pageselect.cfm?page=235>

Dominican Republic

<http://www.seic.gov.do/comercioexterior/Acuendo%20AAE%20o%20EPA%20en%20ingls/Forms/Todos%20los%20elementos1.aspx>

Grenada

<http://nepaiu.gov.gd/>

Jamaica

<http://www.mfaft.gov.jm/?q=acp>

Trinidad and Tobago

<http://www.tradeind.gov.tt/Agreements/TradeAgreements/EconomicPartnershipAgreementEPA.aspx>

Calendar

- 7 March 2012: Seventh Special Meeting of the Community Council of Ministers, Suriname
- 8-9 March 2012: Twenty-Third Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, Suriname
- 26-30 March 2012: Thirty-Fourth Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), Guyana
- 7 March 2012: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Consultation Series on the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)—Trade in Goods (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)
- 18 April 2012: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Consultation Series on the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), Trade Related Issues (with special reference to Innovation, Competitiveness & Intellectual Property) and the Gendered Impacts of EPA (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)



Forthcoming Issue Notification

- Volume 2(No.3)—*Special Issue: Promoting stronger trade and investment relations between CARIFORUM States, FCORs and EU OCTs.*

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http://www.caricom.org/jsp/community_organ/epa_unit/epa_unit_main_page.jsp?menu-cob

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