



Economic Commission for Africa

E/ECA/CRCI-4/6

# Report of the Fourth Session of the Committee on Trade, Regional Cooperation and Integration

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March 2005

## **I. Introduction**

1. The Fourth Session of the Committee on Trade, Regional Cooperation and Integration established by resolution 827 (XXXII) of the ECA Conference of Ministers was held on 23 to 25 March 2005 at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

2. The aim of the meeting was mainly to consider matters pertaining to ECA's activities in support of trade promotion and economic integration process in Africa. In this regard, the Committee reviewed the major activities undertaken during the current biennium and work priorities for the next biennium of 2006-2007. The Committee also reviewed two reports prepared by ECA on *National Commitment on Regional Integration* and *Status and Progress on International Trade Negotiations (WTO)*. The committee finally considered the recommendations of the Ad hoc expert group meeting on Intra African Trade. The recommendations were based on two reports prepared by the ECA on Intra African Trade and on Trade facilitation, in accordance with the work programme of TRID approved for the period 2004-2005.

## **II. Attendance**

3. The meeting was attended by the following member States: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Republic of), Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

4. Observer countries present were: China, Italy and the United States of America.

5. The following regional and international organizations and other institutions participated in the meeting: the African Union (AU), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mission to the AU, Jueunes Cadres Entrepreneurs de Guinee, l'Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (O.I.F), Southern African Development Community (SADC), UNCO/AU, UNLO/AU, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the World Bank, the World Food Programme (WPF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and ZAMTIEE. The list of participants is appended as annex.

### **III. Opening of the Meeting (agenda item 1)**

6. The Acting Deputy Executive Secretary of the ECA, Ms. Josephine Ouedraogo opened the meeting with a short statement on behalf of the ECA Executive Secretary, Mr. K.Y.Amoako.

7. She extended a warm welcome to the participants and emphasized the purpose of the meeting, which was to review progress and constraints of the intra African trade and explore options for further advancing this agenda. She emphasized the low level of intra-African trade as a share of the continent's total trade. She recalled the complexity of multilateral trade negotiations and the need for competent trade negotiators. In light of this, she urged African countries and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to strengthen their capacities, especially in the area of human resources. She also highlighted the role of ECA, through the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) and the ECA's Geneva office, in assisting African Trade Negotiators and RECs in international negotiations.

8. Ms. Ouedraogo also noted the importance of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and the involvement of all African countries and RECs. She emphasized the importance of Africa's regional integration process and the roles played by RECs and other actors. She emphasized that our commitments to regional integration would require that African leaders would have to renounce some national interests for the greater good of the African integration process.

9. Ms. Ouedraogo noted the extremely important role played by African women in fostering intra-African trade on the continent. She also observed the small number of women present at the meeting and hoped that the next meeting of Trade, Regional Cooperation and Integration would have a third of the participants as women.

10. Finally, she expressed the hope that the meeting would benefit from the immense experience and insights of the participants on these and other issues confronting Africa's trade and integration agenda and overall lead to the well being of Africans. She then declared the meeting opened.

### **IV. Account of Proceedings**

#### **Election of Officers (agenda item 2)**

11. The meeting elected the following countries to constitute its Bureau:

Chairman:	Uganda
First Vice-Chairman:	Morocco
Second Vice-Chairman:	South Africa
Third Vice-Chairman:	Burkina Faso
Rapporteur:	Cameroon

### **V. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work (agenda item 3)**

12. Next was the adoption of the following agenda and programme of work:

**(i) Agenda**

1. Opening remarks by the Acting Deputy Executive Secretary, ECA
2. Election of officials.
3. Adoption of agenda and programme of work.
4. Review of *TRID work programme* and report on the work priorities for the next biennium 2006-2007
5. Report on issues and prospects concerning *national commitment for regional integration*
6. Progress and perspectives to *strengthen intra-African trade: Recommendations of the Ad hoc expert group meeting on intra-African Trade*
7. Status and *progress of international trade negotiations*
8. Any other business.
9. Adoption of the report of the meeting.
10. Closing of the meeting.

**(ii) Programme of work**

13. The meeting adopted the following work timetable:

Morning: 08:30 – 13:00  
Afternoon: 15:00 – 17:30

**VI. Session II: Review of *TRID work programme* and report on the work priorities for the next biennium 2006-2007 (agenda item 4)**

14. A representative of ECA presented a report on the current and future activities of the Trade and Regional Integration Division of the ECA, including on the key priorities for the next biennium 2006-2007. The report stressed on the importance TRID places on trade issues, particularly, on international negotiations and capacity building of member states. In light of this, ECA's *Geneva Interregional Advisory Services* continues to provide technical assistance

on international trade negotiations to Africa's trade ambassadors in Geneva. The *Africa Trade Policy Centre* (ATPC), based at the ECA, also undertakes activities on such issues as accession to the WTO, negotiations on the ACP/EU Agreement and market access. To assist African Trade Ministers before and after Cancun WTO Conference, ATPC organised the second and third *High-Level Brainstorming Meetings* of African Trade Negotiators to map out and refine Africa's negotiations strategy. It also held a series of *expert group meetings on Market Access*, providing experts with the opportunity for in-depth deliberations and new findings for WTO negotiations including the "July Package" and "Tunis Roadmap."

15. The *Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)* is another important challenge for Africa. In light of this, TRID undertook a comprehensive study to assess the full impact of EPAs on African economies. The outcome of the study could form the foundation for Africa to engage in an effective and successful negotiation with the EU. To enhance negotiation capacity of each sub-region and RECs, ECA (TRID and Sub-Regional Offices) organized *four sub-regional Expert Group Meetings* in Central, Western, Eastern, and Southern Africa. Through these meetings, member states in CEMAC, ECOWAS, COMESA, and SADC were made aware of the potential implications of the EPAs on their individual economies and the sub-regions. Also these meetings contributed to identify the potential impacts of the EPAs reciprocity principle on regional integration in these sub-regions.

16. For capacity building in regional integration, TRID launched a major new publication, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA I)*. ARIA I provides a comprehensive assessment of the pace of regional integration at the sub-regional and continental levels. It also examined progress made in major sectors such as trade, money and finance, infrastructure, etc. In collaboration with the AU, the next edition of ARIA would focus on the rationalization of RECs. *ARIA II entitled Rationalization of RECs* is aimed at assisting African leaders to make an informed decision through its in-depth analysis on the costs of current duplication, the benefits of rationalization, and suggesting appropriate modalities for rationalization.

17. In the area of transport infrastructure and services, TRID has focused on the preparation and adoption of competition rules for air transport liberalization in RECs such as ECOWAS, CEMAC, COMESA, SADC, and EAC. Main activities undertaken by TRID in this area includes: the joint establishment of the Sub-Saharan Transport Programme (*SSATP*); organising the Annual General Assembly meeting of SSATP; organising the third meeting of the Coordination and Monitoring Committee for the Implementation of the YD in West and Central Africa; and hosting a joint technical coordination meeting to review *REC's transport action plan*.

18. During the biennium of 2006-2007, TRID would increase its efforts on capacity building in international trade negotiations and mainstreaming of trade into national development strategies. On regional integration, the main focus would be on policy convergence, particularly on monetary integration. Finally, TRID would also continue to do work on transportation issues in areas such as the implementation of YD, assessment of transport development and research on coordination of transport sector policies.

19. The Director of TRID, Mr. Hakim Ben Hammouda followed the representative of the ECA by recalling recent four important developments that has led to the revitalization of the

continent: (1) the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD); (2) the Constitutive Act transforming the Organisation of African Union (OAU) into African Union (AU); (3) the dynamism of inter-governmental institutions at the sub-regional levels; and (4) the new international engagements between Africa and other global partners. These new initiative has created new interests and experiences for many African countries and the rest of the world. The G8 and OECD countries and other global partners have also been engaging African leaders on issues relating to the development of the continent.

20. The Director noted that NEPAD, an important programme of the AU, has one of its objectives focused on the development of the continent's infrastructure. TRID has embraced this programme by regarding transport has a vital component of its work programme on regional integration. TRID is also very much interested in Trade issues. Conferences organised by TRID on trade issues, particularly in areas such multilateral trade negotiations and EPAs, have become forums for networking for African professionals. These conferences are highly attended because of the high quality of TRID's research work.

21. The Director ended by reiterating the commitment of TRID and ECA in general to continue to work with the AU, the AfDB, the RECs and member states on matters of common interest to the continent.

22. In discussing the report by the representative of the ECA, participants at the meeting commended ECA on the high quality of its research output. However, they noted that there is a need to strengthen its framework for the dissemination of the research output to African policymakers and institutions of higher learning. The participants therefore recommended the timely publication and a wider distribution of ECA's research output.

23. Participants observed that transport programme presented by the ECA did not include studies on the use of African inland waterways and railways as means of transport. These they noted are very important as the use waterways and railways are cheaper than air and road transport. Furthermore, the strengthening of water transportation could promote trade between African countries, especially landlocked countries.

24. Participants also called for the harmonization of transport policies such as "axle load limit" as way of maintaining the longevity of African roads. In order to increase trade between on the continent it was suggested that African countries have a common legal framework for trade, investment and air transport.

25. To strengthen the continent's infrastructure, participants called on the ECA to undertake studies on the alternatives means of financing infrastructure projects, as the current method is not very effective.

26. It was also observed that intra-African trade has an important role to play in the development of the continent. However, trade would not flourish if countries were at war. Delegates therefore called on the ECA to conduct studies that would examine peace and security on one hand and trade and regional integration on the other.

27. Some participants suggested that it is too early for studies on monetary convergence to be a priority area in the 2006-2007 work programme. However, others maintained that it should remain as a priority for the work programme.

28. The meeting took note of the report.

#### **VII. Session III: National Commitment for Regional Integration (agenda item 5)**

29. A representative of the ECA presented a study that examines African countries' commitments in advancing programmes on integration. The Trade and Regional Integration Division (TRID) of the ECA prepared the study. The paper begins by examining the number of countries that have a ministry dedicated to regional integration. With the exception of a few countries that have a ministry of regional integration, the study finds that the regional integration work in most African countries is carried out mainly in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The reasons given by countries for lack of a focal ministry for regional integration include lack of resources and diversity in policies related to the integration process.

30. The representative pointed out that despite their good intention, most African countries find it difficult to implement RECs goals at the national levels. Lack of resources, long negotiation processes and the enactments of new laws are mainly cited as the reasons for the failure of countries to pursue RECs objectives. Besides lack of resources, the overlapping membership and duplications of efforts by RECs also constrain countries from implementing programmes of regional integration groupings, particularly in the areas of trade policies and the completion of the missing links of the Trans-African Highway. The study also finds that countries are not ratifying the agreed protocols of the RECs because of the lengthy negotiation process. In terms of financing the integration process, the study finds that there are gaps between the RECs' needs and the members' contribution, resulting in most RECs depending on external sources of funding. In order to solve their financial woes, most RECs would like to see other alternatives to financing such as levies on imports from third countries. Overall, countries that have undertaken "cost-benefit analysis" of regional integration find net long-term benefits to regional integration. These benefits include increased investment, stable macroeconomic environment and improved regional infrastructure. The paper ended by emphasizing: (a) a need for a strong institutional framework to coordinate and push regional integration agenda in many countries; (b) minimize multiple focal points of RECs at the national level in order to have an effective coordination of RECs programmes; (c) there is the strong need for political will at the national level to implement RECs programmes and advance the integration agenda; and (d) more involvement of the private sector, civil societies and other partners on integration issues.

31. The presentation was followed by discussions by the participants. Participants commended the ECA for the high-quality report. On the issue of a focal ministry for regional integration, some participants noted that it was not necessary for countries to have a ministry of integration because of the diversity of regional integration issues. The ministries of foreign affairs and trade are well equipped to handle integration matters. What is needed is a coordination mechanism for all integration projects at the national level. Regarding the issue of

rationalization of the RECs, the participants emphasized the importance of strengthening, coordination and harmonization of their programmes. They also suggested that great care be taken so that a pragmatic and realistic approach is used in handling this difficult question. In this order they insisted that the best way to go about rationalization is to strengthen the cooperation and coordination on programmes of the RECs.

32. The meeting took note of the report.

**VIII. Session IV: Progress and Perspectives to Strengthen Intra-African Trade (agenda item 6)**

**(i) Regional Cooperation and Integration Means of overcoming major obstacles to intra-African Trade: Recommendations of the Ad hoc expert group meeting on Intra African Trade**

33. In a bid to improve on intra African trade, the experts recommended the following minimum programme:

1. **Production:** African countries should increase their efforts to diversify their economies. This would require the reinforcement and promotion of private sector investments, increased economic cooperation at the sub-regional levels and create an enabling environment for investments.
2. **Trade:** African countries must reinforce and accelerate the implementation of FTAs in the sub-regions. RECs that are already FTAs should consider implementing customs unions. Countries should also move quickly to reduce non-tariff barriers and have common definition of "rules of origin." Experts also called on the African leadership to start a programme of convergence of trade liberalization schemes at the continental level.
3. **Trade Facilitation:** African nations should increase their efforts of strengthening the infrastructure in different sub-regions and between the sub-regions. Convergence of rules and regulations governing the operation of transport services in African countries is needed. To promote and increase trade, African countries should also develop strong and efficient payment mechanisms between themselves. In addition, countries should also develop efficient insurance mechanisms and reduce administrative and financial procedures.
4. **Macroeconomic Policy:** African policymakers should implement policies that would ensure stability of macroeconomic framework necessary for the development of trade. African countries should also collectively address the issue of the "loss of fiscal revenue" arising from trade liberalization. Furthermore, intra-African trade would be enhanced if countries could ensure the convergence macroeconomic policies.



During discussions, participants thanked the ECA for its presentation. They however suggested that the recommendations be modified to include the following:

- Management of peace and security
- Enhance the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- A study on the implementation of the Abuja Treaty, focussing on the realization of the pan-African customs union.
- Gender issues, particularly the role of women in trade development.
- The integration of the informal trade sectors into the formal national economy.
- An effective compensation mechanism to address the loss of revenue arising from trade liberalization.
- Take into account existing RECs programmes such as transit transport corridors.

**(ii) Trade Facilitation to promote intra-African Trade: Recommendations of the Ad hoc expert group meeting on Intra African Trade**

34. The experts recommended the following:

1. The need for African countries to undertake comprehensive trade facilitation programmes designed to facilitate both domestic and international trade and to effectively integrate African economies in the global economy and trading system.
2. The need for African countries to share and disseminate best practices on trade facilitation, examples of best practices on trade facilitation include that of Tunisia (Trade Network), ORBUS 2000 of Senegal and Morocco trade facilitation system.
3. Need to address physical and institutional obstacles to trade facilitation, through improvements of the infrastructure, such as roads, ports and airports; establishment of sub-regional and regional waterways and creation of transit transport corridors.
4. Need to develop E-commerce infrastructure in Africa, and also enhance the usage of new trade financing mechanisms.
5. Need to enhance cooperation at intra-regional and inter-regional levels for trade facilitation. This could be done through the harmonisation of RECs facilitation programmes.

6. Need to ensure that the Yamoussoukro Decision for the liberalization of air transport in Africa is fully implemented.
7. The Committee on Trade and Regional Integration took note of the ongoing negotiations in Geneva on a multilateral trade facilitation framework and urged African countries to ensure that Africa's concerns and interests are fully reflected in any possible multilateral trade facilitation agreement that may be arrived at conclusion of the current round of trade negotiations.
8. Need to undertake a deeper analysis of the impact of security measures, especially for maritime and air transport, on trade facilitation.
9. Need to improve on payment systems and mechanisms for both intra-African and international trade and use more efficient payment instruments.
10. Need to evolve more effective sub-regional and regional-wide insurance mechanisms for intra-African and international trade, including risk arrangement mechanisms.
11. Need to undertake concrete measures to reduce administrative obstacles to intra-African trade and international trade. Long delays in processing customs documentation and roadblocks in many African countries remain major obstacles to trade facilitation.

The discussion that followed touched on the following:

- Need to harmonize technical standards of vehicles such as axle load limits.
  - Trade facilitation programmes should be comprehensive and integrated, taking into consideration the economy as a whole.
  - Lack of awareness of existing opportunities is hampering intra African trade. There is therefore the need to enhance trade information flow.
  - Need to develop productive and competitive economies
35. The meeting took note of the recommendations.

**IX. Session VI: Status and Progress of International Trade Negotiations (agenda Item 7)**

**WTO: Status of Current Trade Negotiations**

36. The representative of the ECA's Geneva office presented a report on the status of international trade negotiations at the level of the WTO. The representative informed the meeting that the WTO General Council adopted in July 2004 what has come to be known as the "July Package". July 2004 Package outlines modalities for conducting negotiations of the Doha Work Programme. It provides frameworks for negotiations in the WTO on agriculture, NAMA, services, trade facilitation, developmental issues and rules.

37. Extensive consultations and negotiations have been taking place at the WTO on the July Package. A number of sessions on agriculture, NAMA, services and trade facilitation have been held in order to move negotiations forward. Recently a mini-ministerial meeting was held in Mombassa in order to contribute to this process.

38. He noted that **Agricultural Negotiations** have focused on: methodology for calculation and conversion of ad valorem equivalents (AVEs) for non-ad valorem duties; elements of a tariff reduction formula to be used, including bands and thresholds; developmental aspects; and Cotton Sectoral Initiative. WTO members have resolved to try and reach agreement on AVEs methodology by end of March 2005. They have also resolved to have first approximation of "modalities for agriculture" by July 2005.

39. The representative also mentioned that **NAMA Negotiations** have focused on: elements of a non-linear formula, incorporating appropriate flexibilities for developing countries; special and differential treatment for developing countries; issues of non-tariff barriers (NTBs); issues of preference erosion.

40. **Services Negotiations**, he noted, have focused on: the need for WTO members to submit quality initial request/offers as soon as possible; the need for countries to improve on their initial offers and submit "revised offers" by May 2005; the importance of achieving a critical mass of high quality offers, both in terms of numbers and sectoral coverage; and need to pay attention to service sectors and modes of supply of special interest to developing countries and LDCs.

41. The meeting was informed that negotiations on **Developmental Aspects** of the DDA have focused on: how to incorporate appropriate flexibilities in the agreements; special and differential treatment for developing countries and LDCs; how to move on implementation-related issues and concerns; and how to provide policy space for developing countries and LDCs.

42. Broadly, it is agreed that by July 2005 is a first approximation of "**modalities**" on agriculture and NAMA should be achieved. A series of mini-ministerial meetings and other meetings have been programmed to advance the negotiations. The aim of all these meetings is

to ensure that real progress is achieved. The target is to have the First Draft for the Hong-Kong Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference to be finalised by August 2005.

43. It was noted that it is difficult at this stage to be certain as to whether negotiations of the Doha Work Programme can be successfully concluded by the end of 2006. Much will depend on the political backing trade negotiators will receive from Ministers in order to unravel difficult areas of the negotiations in agriculture, NAMA, services, trade facilitation, and rules. The period leading to the summer recess of the WTO as well as the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Conference will be important benchmarks in determining progress in these talks.

44. The representative indicated that the expected outcomes of the Hong Kong Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference are: Agreements on modalities for trade in agriculture and industrial products; critical mass of market opening offers for trade in services; significant progress in areas such as rules and trade facilitation; and proper reflection on the development dimensions.

45. Finally, he noted that the work of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in trade and WTO-related issues has consisted of: support to the Geneva African Group in the negotiations; organising retreats, meetings, seminars, workshops and training courses on various issues in the DDA; organising High-Level Brainstorming Meetings for African trade negotiators and officials in preparation for WTO Ministerial conferences; contributing to relevant research to inform the negotiations; assisting African countries in the preparation of submissions and proposals to the WTO Negotiating Committees and Bodies; and collaborating and coordinating with other UN agencies and sub-regional, regional and international organizations to provide trade and WTO-related technical assistance and capacity building to African countries.

46. The representative of the ECA's Geneva office shared with the meeting elements of a draft communication by the Geneva based African Group on trade facilitation. The draft communication touches on several important issues including, the mandate of the negotiating group on trade facilitation, the priorities of African countries, the cost implications of trade facilitation rules and provide some preliminary views of the African Group on proposals that have been put on the table.

47. The draft communication also looks at ways to reduce transport and communication costs, enhancing the capacity of customs administration, improve integration of African economies and strengthen the framework of trade facilitation.

48. Some specific areas of assistance recommended in the draft communication include: the need to undertake trade facilitation related research, provide funds to cover the travel expenses of national-capital-based negotiators to enable them participate in the negotiations. The paper also calls for enhanced cooperation among agencies involved in trade facilitation.

49. Finally the draft communication notes that some of the proposals that have been made for trade facilitation negotiations go beyond the mandate for negotiations.

50. The report by ECA was followed by a brief presentation by Mr. Elijah Manyara, Senior Assistant Director, Kenyan Ministry of Trade, on the WTO informal Ministerial meeting held in Mombassa, Kenya on 2-4 March 2005. He informed the meeting that the ministers had fruitful discussions on various issues currently under negotiation in the WTO. The ministers identified key elements that need political guidance in order to expedite the process of negotiations at the technical level in a focused manner, aimed at achieving the objectives of the Doha work programme.

51. Mr. Manyara indicated that the ministers have instructed their officials to come up with the first approximation of issues that will form the basis for the Hong Kong Ministerial meeting by July of this year. The issues to be addressed must be related to NAMA, services, agriculture, development and rules including trade facilitation.

52. The meeting thanked the ECA and Mr. Manyara for their excellent status reports

53. The UNDP representative at the meeting provided information on UNDP's assistance to African countries in the following areas: strengthening regional cooperation and integration, capacity building for African trade negotiators involved in WTO negotiations, trade capacity development, sponsoring the participation of delegates at meetings between the AU-RECs/the negotiating groups on EPA negotiations as well as for the High Level Brainstorming meetings. Finally, the UNDP raised the issue of high turnover of African trade negotiators in Geneva. In this regard, the UNDP representative suggested that focal points at Geneva should serve in this position for a period of at least 5 years.

54. The Director of the Trade and Regional Integration Division (TRID) of the ECA, made four important observations in connection to multilateral trade negotiations. He noted that Egypt, South Africa, Morocco and Kenya have traditionally been the big negotiating countries in Africa. However, he said it was encouraging to observe that other African countries such as Mauritius, Senegal, Uganda, Zambia and Rwanda, among others, are also emerging as strong negotiating countries.

55. Mr. Ben Hammouda also noted the improvement in the capacity of African negotiators, who are increasingly basing their positions on sound technical research work. In addition he said African countries are now adopting a common position on negotiation issues. Finally Mr. Ben Hammouda noted with delight the spirit of cooperation that exist between major institutions involved in trade negotiations such as the ECA, UNDP and AU.

56. Participants noted that if immediate action is not taken, Africa would not be in a position to influence the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration, for the simple reason that proposals that are not on the table would not be considered. In addition, they emphasized the need for African trade negotiators to look broadly at the external factors affecting intra-African trade.

57. The delegates called on ECA to organise a high level-brainstorming meeting before the Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong to develop a common position for Africa. It was suggested that the meeting should be back to back with the Ministerial meeting.

58. Participants also stressed the importance of strengthening the understanding of the African Group on trade negotiation rules. In this regard, it was suggested that the African Group in Geneva could benefit from the sharing of their experiences.

59. ECA representative in Geneva informed the meeting that there have been extensive consultations in Geneva between January and March 2005, with the US and the EU increasing their consultations with the African Group. He also urged negotiators based in African capitals to assist their colleagues in Geneva, who are under great pressure dealing with several negotiation issues.

### **Status of the EPA Negotiations**

60. A representative of ECA presented to the delegates the current status of negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreements between the four sub-regional groupings and the European Union. The representative also briefed the delegates on the ECA's work on the EPAs. The ECA's accomplishments to date were explained to be four studies covering each of the sub-regions and the four planned meetings in each of these sub-regions.

61. The presentation then summarized for the benefit of the delegates the outcomes of the research work by the ECA. The key questions that the ECA's research has addressed were presented as establishing: the potential economic gains and losses from the EPAs; sectors likely to gain or lose from EPAs; potential welfare effects; the trade creation and diversion effects; and likely implications. These questions it was noted were tackled at the continental and national level.

62. The following conclusions were presented to the delegates as emerging clearly from the EPAs impact studies at the ECA:

- EPAs will portend significant adjustment costs: de-industrialisation; fiscal and BOP imbalances;
- Consumers will benefit from the EPAs, but such benefits are likely to be outweighed by welfare losses associated to the producers and the loss of government revenue.
- EPAs that have full reciprocity or limited reciprocity and that fail to open up the sensitive sectors of the EU will be costly for Africa.
- Full reciprocity also will undermine the intra-African trade. As a result, the studies have indicated that the principles of reciprocity and deeper regional integration are pulling in different directions.

63. Given the conclusions from the EPAs impact studies, the following recommendations were presented to the delegates in order to guide the member states in their negotiations with the EU:

1. African countries must hasten regional integration processes in the continent to build and

consolidate supply capacities and competitiveness before opening up to the EU.

2. Therefore, sequencing of the EPAs implementation will be critical if African countries are to gain from them. Early implementation should first focus on removing intra-African trade barriers. This should be undertaken concurrently with unrestricted market access for the African exports to the EU.
3. African countries should ensure as much as possible coordination of the EPAs negotiations with the on-going WTO negotiations. In particular, it is recommended that they avoid granting WTO+ concessions to the EU as that might limit their degrees of freedom in future.
4. It is also recommended that African countries closely follow WTO negotiations on regional trade agreements. In particular, if possible, they should consider sponsoring the revisiting of Article 24 with respect to the asymmetry question.

64. The issues raised by participants during discussions that followed the presentation included the following:

- The participants commended the ECA for its high-quality work and to continue to support member states. They also urged the secretariat of the RECs to continue to work closely with the ECA in order to strengthen their understanding of the EPAs.
- The participants also thanked the ECA for organizing the sub-regional meetings where they presented their studies on the EPAs. However, they called on the ECA to organize a continental high-level meeting to develop an African position on the EPAs.
- There was clarification by some participants that that reciprocity is not yet there. However, the other participants noted that even then, the time remaining before reciprocity kicks in January 2008 is not sufficient for the African economies to be fully be prepared for it.
- Participants also noted that 31 December 2007 could be too soon for the signing of the EPAs since a lot still needs to be done. In this respect, addressing market access issues for African products and exports should be a priority.
- The participants also noted that there is likely to be difficulties in amending Article 24 of GATT since WTO rules do not allow Regional Trade Agreement to be compensated. The fact that Australia had even proposed for a retroactive application of the interpretation of this Article shows that there will be a lot of difficulties.
- The ECA presenter responded on the issue of Article 24 by noting that there are commitments in the Doha Declaration and in the July Package that could be exploited to introduce greater flexibilities and asymmetries in any EPAs agreements.
- The delegates raised the question whether, given the emerging results that Africa is not likely to gain significantly from EPAs, whether African countries should be bold

enough to stop negotiations. The ECA presenter noted that there are non-trade aspects in EPAs that might be of interest.

- Some participants emphasized the need for the negotiating groups to push the idea of strengthening intra-African trade. Especially given that the results indicate that the RECs are going to be undermined by the EPAs. In any case, the sequencing recommendation made by the presenter will only be useful if there is deep regional integration in the first place.
- Some delegates also called for the clarification of the sequencing proposal and recommended that it may be possible to see sequencing also in terms of opening up those sectors where there is nothing to fear from the EU competitors. The remaining sectors would then be opened up after capacities have been built.
- The Chair reminded participants that there is an article in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement that allows for a country not to enter into an EPA if it so wishes and the EU made a commitment such a country would not be penalized by punitive new tariffs beyond current preferences.
- African countries should assess the full implications of the EPAs on their economies and Intra-African trade before entering into the agreement with the EU.
- The need for capacity building to handle all the EPAs negotiations.
- ECA should assist member states and RECs in the study of the impact of EPAs.

65. The meeting took note of the reports.

**X. Any other business (agenda item 8)**

66. No issues were raised under this agenda item.

**XI. Adoption of the report of the meeting (agenda item 9)**

67. The meeting adopted the report with amendments.

**XII. Closure of the meeting (agenda item 10)**

68. The chairman of the meeting welcomed the Executive Secretary of the ECA and briefed him on the issues that had been addressed. He also expressed his appreciation for the high quality work being undertaken by the ECA and the excellent presentations made at the meeting. He also noted the effective contributions of participants.



69. On his part, the Executive Secretary, Mr. K Y Amoako thanked all the participants for travelling to Addis Ababa to attend the meeting. He emphasized the importance he attaches to trade, regional cooperation and integration in Africa, noting that one of his preoccupations is the impact of trade on poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs.

70. Mr. Amoako expressed his satisfaction with the working relationship between the ECA and the Committee of Trade, Regional Cooperation and Integration and assured the delegates that the ECA would continue to provide support to African countries and RECs through its advisory services.

71. Replying to Mr. Amoako's address, the Chairman thanked the Executive Secretary for attending the meeting despite his tight schedule. He also thanked Mr. Ben Hammouda and the staff of his Division for the high quality output the division produces. In addition, he acknowledged and expressed his satisfaction with the contribution of ECA's Geneva Office in helping African trade negotiators to develop strong negotiating positions.

72. At the end of the meeting, Mr. Ben Hammouda thanked all participants for the atmosphere of serenity in which the meeting had taken place and for the quality of their presentations. He noted that the ECA has always insisted on the need for strong cooperation between ECA, the AU, and RECs as a way of making sure the views of the continent are heard.

73. He also thanked the members of the Bureau of the committee for their support in the deliberations, the representatives of the AU, UN agencies, RECs and member states for their participation, and for encouraging the work of his Division. In addition, the Director thanked the translators, interpreters, and the support staff for their patience and hard work. Mr. Ben Hammouda ended his remarks by assuring participants that his Division would strive to meet their expectations.

74. On his part, the Chairman of the meeting noted that he had found the meeting quite educative, and was sure participants had benefited from the different experiences discussed during the meeting. He thanked the other members of his bureau for their support and the ECA for the high quality of the meeting.

## ANNEX I

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