

## Statement

### Consultation of Churches from Eastern and Southern Africa on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)

held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from April 23<sup>rd</sup> to April 25<sup>th</sup> 2007

We, the leaders, representatives and members of seven Councils of Churches from Southern and Eastern Africa and the Catholic church through the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from April 23<sup>rd</sup> to April 25<sup>th</sup> 2007, to deliberate and discuss the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the European Union and the African Caribbean and Pacific countries:

Affirm and support the protection of the livelihoods, the respect of human rights and upholding human dignity of the people in our countries. Any kind of economic policy including international trade policies should be first and foremost geared towards sustainable development and equitable growth, which benefit the people.

We subscribe to the following principles:

- International trade must serve the people rather than the profit
- International trade must be fair and just.
- International trade must not be oppressive.

The Bible requires of all people and institutions to act justly. Micah: 6:8. We therefore believe that the multilateral trading system and the institutions involved in the current EPA negotiations should adhere to justice in all its forms, taking into consideration its impact on all citizens, particularly the poor.

After studying and analysing the current EPA negotiations we come to the conclusion that they are not in line with our principles. On the contrary, they are a threat to the well-being of our people and our economic development.

While we appreciate the development objectives of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, we are mindful that in the current negotiations the European Union and our governments have lost sight of these objectives.

Instead, EPAs have turned out to be free trade agreements, which will have a detrimental impact on our agriculture and food security, infant industries as well as natural resources. In addition, they will lead to a loss of tax revenue that is earned from duties on imported goods.

EPAs ignore and will further undermine regional integration initiatives by the African Union. Ultimately, EPAs in many cases contradict national development goals and policies.

Although the Cotonou Agreement enshrined the involvement of all stakeholders, EPA negotiations have not taken into account the voices and the concerns of the people affected.

**We call upon our governments and the European Union to consider the following options:**

**Policy space and national sovereignty:**

If EPAs are implemented in their current state they would restrict our governments' ability to pursue their own development strategies. EPA negotiations should therefore be aligned to national democratic processes such as parliamentary ratification.

**Alternatives:**

We urge the our governments and the European Union to consider alternatives to EPAs as indicated in the Cotonou Agreement. Such alternatives should not be oppressive, but instead be fair and just and serve the people.

**Inclusiveness:**

The current negotiations have largely included the government negotiators and the European Commission leaving out other crucial stakeholders such as the citizens and their representatives in the parliaments. For EPAs to be legitimate we appeal for the inclusion of all stakeholders into the negotiation process.

**More time:**

The deadline for concluding EPA negotiations is December 31<sup>st</sup> 2007. However, the people of our countries don't have sufficient information and understanding to support this decision. We, therefore, note that more time is required and ask for an extension of the deadline for the negotiations. This would give our governments the opportunity to initiate a participatory impact assessment and include development and benchmarks in the negotiations.

In affirming our role in ensuring that our governments adhere to commitments and responsibilities towards the well-being of their citizens, we further challenge and are ready to support our governments in seeking suitable options that are centered on human values and foster sustainable development.

We call upon the ACP and EU Ministers and parliamentarians to take into consideration our concerns and principles when they meet.<sup>1</sup>

We, as churches together with other Civil Society organisations, commit ourselves to engage more actively to work at the regional and African level on this issue.

**Dar es Salaam, April 25<sup>th</sup> 2007**

**The following organisations participated in the meeting:**

All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)  
Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA)  
Building Eastern Africa Community Network (BEACON)  
Catholic Economic Justice (CEJ)  
Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM)  
Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT)  
Christian Council of Zambia (CCZ)  
Christian Professionals of Tanzania (CPT)

---

<sup>1</sup> Joint Council of Ministers on May 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> 2007 in Brussels, Belgium and ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly on June 23<sup>rd</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> in Wiesbaden, Germany

Economic Justice Network (EJN) of the Fellowship of Christian Councils of Churches in Southern Africa (FOCCISA)  
Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET)  
Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA)  
Kenya Episcopal Conference (KEC)  
Malawi Council of Churches (MCC)  
Missionaries of Africa (MAFR)  
National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK)  
Tanzania Ecumenical Dialogue Group (TEDG)  
The Journey  
Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC)  
Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC)

**Ecumenical partners:**

Bread for the World  
Church Development Service (EED)  
Christian Aid  
ICCO  
Norwegian Church Aid