

Call of civil society to elected representatives in Europe and Africa

The national Parliaments and the European Institutions should not ratify the "partnership" agreements (EPAs) between the EU and the Sub-Saharan African countries

On 10 July 2014, in Accra, Ghana's capital, the 16 West Africa's Heads of State have initialed a so-called regional Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the European Union (EU) and the 15 States of ECOWAS (Economic Community of Western African States) plus Mauritania. Shortly after, another EPA was initialed on July 22 by six States of Southern Africa. They are in fact "free trade" agreements aiming, in the case of West Africa, to remove 75% of tariffs on imports from the EU and to limit, beyond the WTO requirements, the leeway of African countries to run autonomous trade policies. These agreements are the result of the European multinationals' pressures, to the service of which the European institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament) have entered, managing to take along the African Heads of State who, with few exceptions, remained insensitive to the warnings of their civil societies mobilized for 14 years.

With these agreements, the African countries will not be able to tax most European products they are importing, leading to considerable fiscal losses, while their development requires strengthened resources for public interventions. What the EU promises to pay in compensation is a mirage: there is nothing more than the usual amounts from the European Development Fund – 4 euros per person per year! –, which is provided by Member States outside the EU budget, plus the marginal "recycling" of other Community funds already programmed.

The agricultural and industrial production of African countries will be in competition with more competitive imported European products, often heavily subsidized, jeopardizing their possibilities of development and regional integration.

African countries agree to open negotiations with the EU six months after the conclusion of the EPAs for an even more extensive liberalization of their economies, including the services sector, government procurement, investment, intellectual property and competition.

We may expect that other trading partners of African countries (including the United States and major emerging countries) require in the coming years the same commercial advantages that they have granted to the EU, leading to an even more destructive liberalization of their markets and to a higher dependence vis-à-vis world market prices. The foreseeable consequences will be amplified cases of famine, disease and lack of medical care, and higher migrations of populations without a future in their country, while the West Africa's population would rise from 340 million in 2014 to 510 million in 2030 – as much as in the EU today as in 2030 – and 807 million in 2050, in a context of pronounced global warming in this region.

Finally, in Europe, these agreements will promote productivist agriculture, polluter, job-destroying, and some industrial sectors not less productivist, exporters of goods of poor quality at the expense of policies for sustainable agriculture, food sovereignty and ecological industrial transition.

We, the citizens and civil society organizations of Europe and Africa, ask the European and African politicians and particularly the European and African parliamentarians to:

- REFUSE to ratify these EPAs, all the more unacceptable that the European Commission has refused to consider any alternative option proposed by civil society, which would have maintained the trade benefits to African countries without forcing them to liberalize their markets;
- COMMIT to Cooperation and Solidarity Agreements (CSA) with African countries which would not be based, as are the EPAs, on a "free trade" that threatens human emancipation.

The signatures should be sent to Coordination Sud, Gauthier Centlivre: centlivre@coordinationsud.org who updates the list of signatures.