

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Paris, December 11, 2014

### **NO to the signing by the European Council of the EU-West Africa Economic Partnership Agreement!**

Friday, December 12, 2014, the European Union (EU) Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs will decide on the signing of the "Economic Partnership Agreement" (EPA) between the EU and the 15 ECOWAS States (Economic Community of West African States) plus Mauritania. This is actually a "free trade" agreement to remove 75% of tariffs on imports from the EU and to limit the policy space of Western African States on their trade policy<sup>1</sup>.

#### **A disaster for the West African populations and Europe**

The West African nations, already facing significant development challenges, have everything to lose. The 12 states ranked as least developed countries (out of 16) would be the most penalized as they could have continued to tax the € 11.9 billion of products imported from the EU in 2013 if the EPA is not ratified so that they will incur massive fiscal losses which could not be compensated. Financial counterparties that the EU promised are insignificant: there will not be additional funding to the European Development Fund and to the marginal "recycling" of other Community funds already programmed.

Above all, it is the whole of the peasant and subsistence farming, food sovereignty and all current projects of local processing and development of the regional industry which will be hit hard by an unfair European competition, destructive of jobs, with an increased dependence vis-à-vis world market prices. The endogenous development of the region and regional integration projects will be sacrificed to the benefit of an export oriented economy (including natural resources), highly carbonated, the West African people being condemned to import subsidized products of questionable quality that compete with their own productions.

This agreement will strengthen a massive migration of people deprived of a future in their country, in a context where the West African population will more than double by 2050, reaching 807 million people (against 526 million for the EU at that time), and will face a climate change particularly severe in this region.

On the European side, the agreement will promote intensive agriculture, polluting and destructive of jobs at the expense of sustainable agricultural policies, food sovereignty and ecological industrial transition. It will encourage European imports of raw materials rather than the reduction of their share in the European products.

Many civil society organizations in Europe and Africa have joined forces and signed a call to not ratify the EU-West Africa EPA. In line with this call, we pray the EU Council:

- NOT TO SIGN this Economic Partnership Agreement;
- NOT TO SACRIFICE the people on the altar of the profits of a handful of predatory multinationals;
- TO REQUIRE independent impact studies;
- TO COMMIT to Cooperation and Solidarity Agreements (CSA), which are not based, as are the EPAs, on a "free trade" that threatens human freedom and emancipation.

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<sup>1</sup> See "A TAFTA worse for Africa where the EU shoots also itself in the foot"

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**List of signatory organisations** (very limited by lack of time to react within two days for the majority of those who signed the Call to not ratify the EPA):

**France**

CFSI (Comité Français pour la Solidarité Internationale)  
Aitec-IPAM  
Solidarité  
CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail)  
CRID (Centre de Recherche et d'Information sur le Développement)  
Coordination Sud  
Artisans du Monde  
Peuples Solidaires  
Attac France

**Africa**

Jonction (Sénégal)  
ROPPA (Réseau des organisations paysannes et de producteurs agricoles d'Afrique de l'Ouest)  
Réseau des Organisations de la Société Civile pour le Développement (RESOCIDE) (Burkina Faso)  
Dynamique OSCAF (Afrique francophone)  
Réseau pour le Développement Local et l'Autopromotion de la Femme, l'Enfant et la Famille (Mali)  
Alliance contre la Pauvreté au Mali

**International**

Africa Europa Faith & Justice Network  
Afrika Kontakt (Danemark)  
Sos Faim Belgique  
Pont Universel (Suisse-Togo)