

Declaration of the European and African civil society on the EPAs
before the African Union-EU Summit in Abidjan (29-30 November 2017)

**Let us denounce the EPAs, Economic Partnership Agreements,
imposed by the EU on ACP countries (Africa-Caribbean-Pacific)**

Since their independence, the former European colonies of African-Caribbean-Pacific countries (ACPs) have benefited from trade preferences with the EU, where their exports were not taxed when they could tax EU exports. With the creation of the WTO in 1995, the banana exporting countries of Latin America (LA) sued the EU with success at the WTO for discrimination because their banana exports were taxed.

Consequently in 2000 the EU decided in Cotonou to end its preferential agreements with the ACPs and transform them into **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)** known as **EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements)** where these countries should abolish their import duties (IDs) in 20 years from 2008 on about 80% of the EU exports, which eliminates its IDs on 100% of its imports from the ACPs (compared with 97% before).

Actually the EU did not defend itself in the WTO although **maintaining discrimination was possible on the basis of differing living standards**, since the per capita GDP of the nine LA countries exporting bananas was in 1995 2.3 times higher than that of the three sub-Saharan African (SSA) exporting countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Cameroon) and 4.7 times higher in 2014. Besides the "banana war" was buried by an 2009 agreement at the WTO, where the EU has lowered its IDs on LA bananas, a decrease accentuated after the FTAs concluded since 2012. Furthermore the US has got a WTO consensus to maintain its trade preferences with SSA countries until 2025.

But the EU wanted to open up the SSA markets and in fact welcomed its condemnation by the WTO. And, while it decided in 2001 to import duty free and quota free all products from least developed countries (LDCs) while allowing them to tax its exports, the EPAs will oblige all LDCs to reduce their IDs on EU exports by 80%. This will be the case for the West African (WA) EPA, which has 16 States – of which 13 LDCs and three Developing Countries (DCs): Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria – whose average per capita GDP in 2016 was 23 times lower than that of the EU28.

The European Commission claims that EPAs are "win-win" agreements. Why then did many SSA countries refuse to sign them, of which Nigeria and Tanzania for whom the EPAs would ruin their industrialization agenda? **Why then did the Commission refuse to disseminate the three impact assessments that it had funded on the WA EPA of April 2008, April 2012 and January 2016 as they concluded to a negative impact for WA?** Why does the Commission prides on the 6.5 billion euros of aids to the WA EPA for the period 2015-20, while its Directorate for Cooperation has written that it does not bring an additional euro to the funds normally allocated by the European Development Fund, the European Investment Bank and the EU Co-operation Budget?

Why, while regional integration is being portrayed as the first objective of the WA EPA, has the Commission pushed the European Parliament to ratify the interim EPAs of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana and to begin their application since the end of 2016, as part

of their duty-free imports from the EU reduces the competitiveness of other WA States even though the WA EPA has not been finalized?

If the WA EPA were finalized, WA would lose 66 million euros of IDs and VAT on imports five years after its entry into force and 4.6 billion in the 20th year, the cumulative loss of the first 20 years being 32 billion and would continue to grow. **But Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana will lose much more IDs on their imports from the EU than the IDs they would have had to pay on their exports to the EU if they had not implemented their interim EPAs.** And they will suffer many other economic policy constraints, starting with the prohibition to increase their export taxes, especially on cocoa, while their population will be multiplied by 2.1 for Côte d'Ivoire and by 1.8 for Ghana by 2050.

Moreover, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana will suffer more from the dumping of EU agricultural exports than the rest of WA since the already small 5% IDs on milk powder and cereals (excluding rice) will disappear as of September 2018 for Côte d'Ivoire and in January 2021 for Ghana. Already in 2016 the EU dumping on dairy products was of 11.7 million euros to Côte d'Ivoire and of 12.8 million to Ghana, plus of 141 million to the rest of WA. And the EU dumping on cereals (excluding rice) was of 42 million euros to Côte d'Ivoire in 2016 and of 8.5 million to Ghana, plus of 164 million to the rest of WA. And we do not count the dumping on meat and sugar.

The EU intends to redeploy much of its aid to WA to military aid and the fight against illegal immigrants to the EU, the number of whom coming from WA has quadrupled from 2014 to 2016, exceeding 100,000 according to Frontex. With the EPAs, their number would skyrocket given the explosion of the number of young people deprived of future who will also increase the ranks of Boko Haram, Aqmi and Ansar Dine.

As the Summit of the 54 Heads of State of the African Union and of the 28 of the EU will be held on 29 and 30 November 2017 in Abidjan, where the future of post-Cotonou Africa-EU relations is on the agenda, it would be good that the Heads of State listen to the civil society organizations that have serious reservations about the impact of EPAs on the African countries. These organizations will intensify their pressure to end the EPA negotiations and the States which have already signed them should rescind these fraudulent signatures before their respective courts as the EPAs are actual **Economic Pauperization Agreements.**

The civil society organizations of the EU and Africa are invited to sign on this Declaration and may propose amendments until 20 October at SOL, Alternatives Agroécologiques et Solidaires (contact@sol-asso.fr) with a copy to jacques.berthelot4@wanadoo.fr, with the mention "2017 Declaration on EPAs"