

Maputo, 2 March 2010

European and SADC EPA region stakeholders discuss benefits of EU-SADC Economic Partnership Agreement in Maputo

Yesterday and today representatives of the European Commission and of the private sector, government and NGOs from the Southern African Development Community EPA region met in Maputo to discuss the state of play of the EU-SADC EPA. The trade and development agreement was initialed in 2007 and then signed in June 2009 by Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique, with Namibia pending. Angola and South Africa did not join this first agreement but are negotiating a broader regional agreement. The seminar was opened by the Head of the EU Delegation in Mozambique Mr Glauco Calzuola. Mrs Cerina Mussa, the Senior Official for EPA negotiations at the Mozambican Ministry for Trade, provided very valuable insights on the current EPA negotiations. Participants discussed all aspects of the EU-SADC EPA, with a specific focus on business opportunities for the private sector.

Mr. Calzuola, Head of the EU Delegation in Mozambique, talking to the participants said “We think that development is at the heart of this process and we hope that the businesses in Southern Africa will make the most out of it. “ He underlined “we are mainly here to listen to you, learn from you and promote the exchange with your colleagues from the region. We are seeking a frank dialogue and we hope that this seminar will be followed by another one to take stock of the progress made. “

“The EPA SADC region is a strategic piece of the EPA puzzle,” said Jacques Wunenburger, Head of one of the EPA Units at the European Commission in Brussels. “But it now stands at a crossroads: I invite Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique to complete their internal procedures so that the agreement can enter into force as quickly as possible; I also invite Namibia to take a bold decision on its role in the EPA process, as further delaying signature of the agreement it initialed more than two years ago is creating a very shaky legal situation. This situation cannot be sustained – the state of play is untenable. ACP countries which signed EPAs enjoy free access to EU markets, but they also took legally binding commitments. Those, such as Namibia, which initialed but did not sign the interim EPA, enjoy the same free access without any legally binding commitments. This is inconsistent and in fact contrary to both EU law and World Trade Organisation rules.’

Participants in the seminar addressed all issues at stake in the EPA process in the region, including the state of play of negotiations, and the way forward, taking into consideration the different scenarios. The Export Helpdesk database and

ProInvest funding opportunities were also presented at the seminar. Working Groups went into the details of EPA provisions for trade in goods, also addressing technical issues such as sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards, rules of origin; trade in services and investment, with its potential for unlocking key resources in the region for sectors such as, for instance, telecommunications, banking, transport and tourism.

The EU will be considering follow-up actions to this seminar, so as to keep working with key stakeholders in the region and ensure they can make the most of the EU-SADC EPA.

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