

## Updating on the EPA Negotiations EU ESA Group

The last Civil Society Dialogue of the EU commission held the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March provided information about the ongoing negotiations of the existing EU-ESA Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and the so called “ESA-5 – Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles and Zimbabwe.

It started by an overview of the state of negotiations by Ewa Synowiec, the Chief Negotiator from DG Trade followed and Andreas Freytag the team leader in charge of the evaluation of the EU-ESA EPAs negotiations.

According to DG Trade it was the ESA-5 that approached the EU with the question to start negotiations about deepening of the current EPA. The EU then decided to do a joint scoping exercise and after that had been done the EU agreed to start the formal process, that then started in October 2019.

At the last negotiation round in the last week of November 2020 they made further progress on 5 issues they already had discussed earlier, namely: customs and trade facilitation (C&TF), technical barriers to trade (TBT), sanitary and phytosanitary issues (SPS), rules of origin (ROO) and agriculture.

In addition they also started to talk about two new issues: The trade and sustainable development chapter and a block of issues: trade in services, investment liberalisation and digital trade.

On Agriculture DG trade emphasized that negotiations are NOT taking place on market access, so neither tariffs on non-tariff barriers. So I'm very much unclear what they talk about, but they already moved to text based negotiations based on a “joint negotiation text” and some articles already seemed to have been agreed.

Asked about the relations and implications of the EU negotiations with ESA for the AfCFTA negotiations the EU commission responded that they supported the AfCFTA and said “we like to create a convergence of the two processes”. The EU wants to stimulate intra-Africa trade and that the Rules of Origin (proposed by the EU) aim at continental integration, and that they also financially support the AfCFTA process.

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