



### **1st meeting of the Ghana – EU EPA Committee**

Wednesday 24 January 2018, Alisa Hotel Accra

#### **AGREED MINUTES**

The first meeting of the EPA Committee under the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (IEPA) between Ghana and the EU was held in Accra, Ghana on 24 January 2018.

1. In their opening speeches the Ghanaian Minister of Trade and Industry and the EU Ambassador reaffirmed their commitment to the iEPA as a mechanism for dialogue and partnership, as well as a tool to boost trade, investment and foster development.
2. The Agenda was adopted by the EPA committee with no changes (see attached agenda).
3. The EPA Committee has adopted its rules of procedures governing the Joint EPA committee. (see attached initialled rules of procedures).
4. The Parties discussed the state of play in the implementation of the iEPA in Cote d'Ivoire and West Africa and exchanged information in respect of Rules of Origin; liberalization schedule; institutional set up; and the monitoring of the EPA.
5. The EU party made a short presentation of the EPA regional State of play. The EU informed that Nigerian authorities have requested for more time to examine the EPA. The new government of The Gambia has announced its willingness to sign the EPA. The signature process is expected to commence in the beginning of 2018. Mauritania and ECOWAS signed in August 2017 an "association agreement", which paves the way for EPA signature. Ghana highlighted the challenges of not having a regional EPA by the time the ECOWAS is entering in the second phase of its CET ECOWAS post 2020 which include the setting up of a single customs territory and the setting up of an ECOWAS common market. The current ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) is experiencing challenges. Parties agreed that Ghana would share Ghanaian trade statistics on imports and exports benefiting from the ETLS.

6. The Parties discussed the example in the implementation of the iEPA in Cote d'Ivoire and West Africa and exchanged information in respect of Rules of Origins, liberalization schedule, institutional set up and the monitoring of the EPA.

- EU and Côte d'Ivoire started discussions on a draft protocol of Rules of Origins based on the protocol of Rules of Origins of the West African regional EPA. EU and Ghana agreed that the EU will share with the Ghanaian authorities a first draft of the protocol of the Rules of Origins. Discussions are expected to be finalised by July 2018 in Brussels;
- Discussions with Côte d'Ivoire on the revision of the liberalisation schedule started based on the principles of a "catch up scenario". Côte d'Ivoire will present a revision of its liberalisation schedule during its 2nd EPA Committee in March 2018. Ghana and EU started the discussion on the liberalisation schedule which took place during the technical meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018. Parties agreed that Ghana will make a proposal of its liberalisation schedule by July 2018;
- Côte d'Ivoire has established an institutional set up, which encompasses all the different EPA stakeholders. Côte d'Ivoire has also developed a comprehensive set of monitoring indicators inspired by the indicators of the future regional observatory of competitiveness. The Ghanaian party informed that their own institutional set up as well as their Monitoring and Evaluation framework will be finalised by end of March 2018 and submitted to the EU for information and discussion. Both parties agreed to finalise the discussion during a technical meeting in July 2018.

7. Ghana presented its EPA accompanying measures strategy, which provides an ambitious package of clear objectives, reforms and institutional set up to maximize the opportunities of the EPA. The strategy is comprehensive and the three (3) strategic pillars are relevant and complementary. It was noted that the current vision of the Government of Ghana, which is Ghana Beyond Aid, is in line with the new EU-Ghana trade relations and the implementation of the strategy will contribute to materialising this vision. The institutional set up was well described and expected to be operational by July 2018.

8. The EU is fully committed to supporting the EPA accompanying measures strategy. The EU will be providing a total of EUR 12 million through the 11<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund to support its implementation. (9 M€ from RIP + 3 M€ from NIP). The programme targets the three (3) Strategic Pillars of the EPA accompanying measures strategy. Other programmes on Agriculture, Energy, Transport, Climate Change will also play an important role in supporting the implementation of the EPA programme.

9. The objective of the technical meeting on Market Access Offer (MAO) was to proceed with the transposition to HS2017. This work was based on the previous transposition of the MAO to HS2012. The transposition exercise focused on categories of liberalization and tariff rates. Tariff cuts dates were maintained as indicated in the original offer. Ghana proposal for discussions on any change in the dates regarding tariff cuts implementation will exchange via diplomatic mails.

10. As the MAO HS2012 was labelled in line with ECOWAS CET 2017, a correlation table linking CET 2012 and CET 2017 was used to proceed to the migration of categories and rates. The migration process resulted in 6,097 tariff line direct transpositions. It was pointed out that 32 tariff lines transposition needed an arbitrage in terms of what category and rate to be assigned. Parties have agreed that the Ghanaian authorities will review the document including the 32 conflicting cases and revert to the EU by the end of March 2018. Both parties agreed to provisionally endorse the updated MAO in HS 2017. Two hard copies of the transposed offer have been initialled by both Parties.

11. The EPA Committee discussed the consequences of the accession of Croatia in the EPA.

The parties agreed that the EU should share a draft of the Decision with the Ghana side for consideration.

12. As regards to the next steps, The Parties agreed to:

- a) Set up an appropriate mechanism of monitoring of the implementation of the iEPA;
- b) Start negotiating the procedures relating to a reciprocal Protocol on Rules of Origin of the Ghana-EU iEPA;
- c) Endorse the final transposition of the tariff nomenclature in HS 2017.
- d) Start reviewing the liberalization schedule.

The Parties agreed to exchange information on proposals of each Party on these matters with the view of finding an agreement on those issues during a technical meeting which would take place in July 2018 in Brussels. This meeting could be followed up by a technical meeting in October 2018 in Accra.

The second meeting of the EPA committee will take place in Brussels during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2019.

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