

Joint statement from the fifth meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Consultative Committee

1. The fifth meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement Consultative Committee (CC) took place on 26 November 2019 in Brussels, Belgium, and was co-chaired from the CARIFORUM side by Kozel Fraser and from the EU side by Brenda King. According to the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the CARIFORUM member countries and the European Union, the task of the CC is to assist the Joint CARIFORUM-EU Council in promoting dialogue and cooperation between representatives of civil society organisations. The agreement also recognises the role of the CC in monitoring the implementation of all economic, social and environmental aspects of the EPA as well as in strengthening dialogue between civil society representatives. The CC would like to thank Domenico Rosa, head of the Strategic Partnerships EU-ACP and EU-African Union unit at the European Commission, and H.E. David Hales, Guyana's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and to the European Union, for their update on Post-Cotonou and their comprehensive replies to the questions and issues raised by CC members.
2. The CC stresses the importance of consulting civil society during the post-Cotonou negotiations and during the corresponding implementation process.
3. The CC welcomes the initiatives taken to date by the University of the West Indies and the European University Institute to establish a CARIFORUM-EU centre in order to help sustain and improve the capacity of these institutions to provide research-based policy advice to address the challenges of Caribbean and European peoples.
4. The CC calls for the parties to use the EU-CARIFORUM platform to work closely together to jointly pursue areas of shared interest in the context of multilateral and plurilateral negotiations, notably in the WTO.
5. The CC repeats its call for it to be given permanent observer status at the Trade and Development Committee (T&DC) in order to facilitate access to relevant documents and to enable the CC to make a timely and relevant contribution to the Joint Council.
6. The CC regrets that most CARIFORUM member countries do not yet apply the regional preference clause, which is key to promoting intra-regional trade, regional integration and the development of regional value chains. The CC strongly recommends that this be a focus for resolution in the upcoming review.
7. On the post-Cotonou negotiations, the CC reiterates its willingness to contribute to developing the future priorities for the CARIFORUM-EU partnership, and wishes to continue to have the opportunity to engage directly with the negotiators that will support this process. The CC calls for the development cooperation under the post-Cotonou agreement to be maintained, in order to address the imbalance between the EU and the CARIFORUM region.
8. The CC recommends that the classification of CARIFORUM small island developing states (SIDS) as middle-income countries also take into account their high level of indebtedness, their vulnerability to external shocks and natural disasters, exacerbated by climate change.

9. The CC wishes to help create a bridge between civil society organisations from Europe and the CARIFORUM region in order to bridge the information gap. We believe this will create more impactful partnerships among, for example, employers, farmers, fisherfolk, capital, consumers, young people and trade unions. CC members can contribute to the success of this measure by linking their organisations' webpages to the CC webpage.
 10. With regard to youth affairs, Article 26 of the Cotonou Agreement sets out ambitious aims for youth cooperation, and post-Cotonou must build on what has already been achieved with concrete deliverables, including scholarships, educational exchanges and institutional partnerships.
 11. The CC states that, in order to fulfil its role as an advocate, it will produce regular views on topics relevant to the EPA and its operation. Disseminating these to the relevant stakeholders will raise visibility, awareness and understanding of the EPA. The CC therefore wishes to access the necessary financial and technical resources, including the existing communications infrastructure.
 12. The CC calls for implementation of the regional preference clause and the mechanisms for temporary entry of natural persons (Mode 4).
 13. The CC notes that most EU Member States have not yet put in place the administrative arrangements to facilitate the market access granted under Article 83 of the EPA for contractual service suppliers and independent professionals from CALIFORUM member countries, and requests that this be established.
 14. The CC welcomes the T&DC's 2017 decision to establish a special Committee on Trade in Services, and calls for quick implementation of this decision. The CC also calls on the parties to provide more information on the establishment of and work of the Committee on Trade in Services. The CC looks forward to working with the Committee on Trade in Services and would welcome an exchange with its members at the next CC meeting.
 15. Further to the 10-year review of the implementation of the EPA, the CC calls on the parties to reinvigorate their commitment and efforts to advance the implementation of this agreement, in order to achieve its stated objectives as an instrument for development, and, in particular, to ensure the inclusion of women, youth, farmers and fisherfolk, as well as small and medium enterprises.
 16. The CC would greatly appreciate receiving information on the implementation of the recommendations stipulated in this joint statement.
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