

Third Meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary Committee

31 October-1 November 2017

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

JOINT DECLARATION

1. The Parliamentary Delegations of the CARIFORUM States Legislatures and the European Parliament laud the holding of the Third Meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary Committee in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The Meeting was chaired by Senator the Honourable Paula GOPEE-SCOON, Minister of Trade and Industry, Trinidad and Tobago and marks the resumption of meetings of the Parliamentary Committee which last met in April 2013. The European Parliament Delegation was led by Mr. Boleslaw PIECHA, Member of the European Parliament and Chair of European Parliament's Delegation to the CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary Committee.

2. The Meeting served as an important occasion for the two Sides to affirm their resolve to renew, strengthen and mainstream the engagement of Parliamentary representatives in the operation of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). Both Delegations underscored their shared commitment to work together to provide fresh impetus to broad-based, open dialogue on the role of the Agreement in delivering concrete results pertaining to long-term sustainable development, inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction and alleviation in CARIFORUM States.

3. In recalling that there are four main joint institutions established under EPA, the Committee expressed satisfaction that these Institutions—which have responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and review of the Agreement—have all been operationalized and have been contributing to the operation of the EPA. The Delegations emphasised that the Parliamentary Committee must be seen as enhancing the institutional framework of the EPA, a partnership for sustainable development, regional integration and the creation of new commercial opportunities between the CARIFORUM States and the EU and its Member States.

4. The Parliamentary Delegations commended the comprehensive and constructive exchange of views which took place on issues of mutual interest relating to the status of implementation of the EPA, as well as associated implementation challenges. The Delegations welcomed progress in implementing the EPA, in particular the duty-free quota-free access for CARIFORUM exports to the EU, as well as the tariff cuts made by the

CARIFORUM States. The Delegations noted the progress made by the Parties in delivering on priorities geared towards addressing the findings of the first joint Five Year Review of the EPA, which was conducted on 16 July 2015 at the Third Meeting of the Joint CARIFORUM-EU Council and urged that the outstanding issues be speedily addressed.

5. The Committee endorsed the finding that CARIFORUM States' trade performance was hindered by key institutional, capacity and structural challenges at the national and regional levels, which encumbered the ability of the region's private sector to fully convert the market access offered by the EPA into meaningful market presence. The Delegations however lauded the positive position adopted by the Parties at the conclusion of the Review in affirming their *"unwavering commitment to the EPA as a comprehensive and forward-looking platform for economic and social cooperation."* The Delegations expressed the hope that the EPA will have a more positive impact on the lives of the ordinary people of the CARIFORUM States in the coming years and that the next five year review will reveal the progress made.

6. The Committee called for an early agreement on the joint monitoring system to be reached as envisaged by Article 5 of the EPA, allowing continuous monitoring of the operation, including of compliance, use and impact, of the Agreement in sufficient time to inform future reviews of the Agreement and for the support required to facilitate the development of the monitoring system to be provided. The Committee endorsed the emphasis the Joint CARIFORUM-EU Council placed on the Five Year Review to determine the Agreement's impact, including the costs, benefits and other consequences of implementation, and to inform any amendment of the provisions of the Agreement or adjustment of their application, and noted the importance of the monitoring system in this regard.

7. The Committee recognised that regional co-operation would allow CARIFORUM States to better take advantage of the Agreement.

8. The Committee underlined that at the technical level, the two Sides need to work for further progress and a new level of ambition in relation to the EPA delivering for a stronger partnership. The Committee called on the Parties to better harness the CARIFORUM-EU Trade and Development Committee—the main subsidiary body to the Joint Council - in order to scale up collaborative approaches to addressing CARIFORUM concerns pertaining to converting the market access offered by the EPA into meaningful market presence. The Delegations underscored the importance of continuous engagement on the services provisions of the EPA, given its importance to the economies of CARIFORUM States and noted CARIFORUM's call for a special committee to treat with services.

9. Through Mutual Recognition Agreements in Services, agreement on the protection of Geographical Indications, the implementation of Article 238 and attention to the agriculture and fisheries provisions, important steps forward can be made. Members welcomed the lifting of the visa requirements for nationals of the Caribbean States visiting the EU as an important measure, but noted that not all CARIFORUM States are beneficiaries.

10. The Committee encouraged the Parties to build on the initiatives pursued thus far in the area of cultural cooperation with a view to ensuring the activation of the Protocol on Cultural Cooperation. The Committee noted that at the technical level, headway had not yet been made in addressing concerns related to the '*octroi de mer*' or dock dues and called for a speedy progress on this matter. The Committee further noted that in spite of the close geographical proximity, CARIFORUM States' trade with the Outermost Regions had not grown significantly since the application of the EPA.

11. The Delegations called on all involved to redouble their efforts to raise awareness around the EPA and the opportunities provided by it and called on the Parties to take the necessary measures to improve their business and investment climate.

12. The Delegations attached importance to the two Sides finding common ground at the technical level on the foregoing issues and call on prospective joint engagements to push forward a wide range of initiatives, such as (i) the establishment of a joint monitoring system; (ii) activation of the Protocol on Cultural Cooperation; (iii) concerns related to the application of the '*octroi de mer*'; and (iv) Technology Transfer as contemplated by Article 142(3) of the EPA.

13. The Committee acknowledged the support which the EU has provided for EPA implementation under the 10th EDF Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme (CRIP), as well as 11th EDF CRIP support for EPA implementation, the instrument for which was signed on 11 June 2015. The existing overall allocation for the Caribbean region for the period 2014 – 2020 has been maintained at around 1 billion euro, making the EU the most valuable development partner in respect of grant aid. In a clear recognition of the specific challenges which CARIFORUM States face in taking advantage of the market access offered by the EPA, the Delegations showed a unified front and called for the continued full implementation of the Declaration on Development Cooperation so as to provide needed resources for EPA implementation if CARIFORUM States are to meaningfully benefit from the opportunities offered by the EPA; to meet the adjustment costs and address the challenges attendant with implementing the Agreement. The Delegations recognized the priorities by CARIFORUM and the need for the two Sides to work closely together on the 11th EDF programming and

respective projects in order to be able to make the most of the implementation of the EPA at the national and regional levels.

14. Having considered issues arising from the expiration of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement in 2020 - including the finite nature of resources available under that instrument - the Committee is convinced of the need for the full use of the available EDF resources as well as of the use of modern innovative financing, such as blending and twinning, if CARIFORUM States are to reap the contemplated benefits.

15. The Meeting drew a link between the implementation of the EPA and wider developments germane to the future of ACP/EU relations post-Cotonou. The Delegations also took note of CARIFORUM's concerns regarding BREXIT and their interest in ensuring that the Region's treatment under the EPA is preserved on Brexit+1.

16. The Delegations stressed that the holding of the Third Meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary Committee was instrumental in revitalizing and deepening the Committee's contribution to the effective operations of the EPA. In that regard, the Committee agreed to inform the Seventh Meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Trade and Development Committee and the Fourth Meeting of the Joint CARIFORUM-EU Council, slated to be held in November 2017, of the positions reached.

17. The Delegations agreed to hold the next meeting in the latter half of 2018 in the EU and expressed their deep appreciation to the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago for the warm hospitality, excellent arrangements and courtesies extended which greatly facilitated the fruitful deliberations of the Third Meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary Committee.

Signed at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 1 November 2017.

Caribbean Delegation to the
CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary
Committee

European Parliament Delegation to the
CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary
Committee

Paula GOPEE-SCOON
Chair

Boleslaw PIECHA
Chair of European Parliament Delegation