

Africa, Caribbean, Pacific

EU and Caribbean states launch final phase of EPA negotiations

Brussels, 30 November 2006

On 30 November EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson met Ministers from the Caribbean region as part of the EU-Cariforum Ministerial. The talks focussed on the Economic Partnership negotiations between the EU and the Caribbean, which are now entering their critical final year.

Both sides renewed the commitment to complete the negotiations in time, and in a way that would not require a further WTO waiver. Ministers endorsed a frank joint review of negotiations showing significant progress in many areas including competition policy and transparency in government procurement, innovation and the environment.

Ministers agreed that regional integration is a powerful tool towards sustainable development and underscored the sensitivities and complexity of Cariforum's regional integration. They instructed negotiators to examine where Cariforum commitments will be region-wide or national with the objective of going as far as possible in the direction of regional market building. However, Ministers noted the political and other constraints including possible adjustment costs of the process.

The Ministerial ended with negotiating teams mandated to step up negotiations on market access for goods and services. Both sides will submit negotiating proposals early in 2007.

Ministers also discussed the important issue of development cooperation for the implementation of the EPA, stressing the need to specify priorities and making the link with aid from the European Union and other donors.

Read the [Joint Statement](#)