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REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON THE CARIFORUM-EU ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

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EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON THE CARIFORUM-EU ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Introduction

On 15 October 2008, the European Union (EU) and the CARIFORUM Group of Countries – the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Dominican Republic – assembled in Barbados to commemorate the beginning of a new chapter in their economic relationship by signing the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) after four and a half years of negotiation. In signing the Agreement, a joint declaration was also issued calling for a comprehensive, five-yearly review of the Agreement in order to determine its impact, including the costs and consequences of its implementation.

During negotiations between the parties to the Agreement, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean undertook several studies directed at examining the implications of the EPA for the region as well as informing the process for the preparation of an implementation plan for CARIFORUM. The possible gender implications were also considered in collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

ECLAC, in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat, UNIFEM and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Subregional Office for Barbados and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) convened an expert group meeting on 12 February 2009 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The objectives of the meeting were to disseminate the findings of the four studies that were conducted; create a deeper understanding of the required actions for implementing the Agreement at the regional, subregional and national levels; and to promote dialogue on the development of selected benchmarks for monitoring and assessing the impact and effectiveness of the Agreement.

Present at this meeting were experts from the ministries of trade and industry of the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, the Netherlands Antilles, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago. Also in attendance were representatives from the University of the West Indies (UWI); the Organisation of American States (OAS); Delegation of the European Union; Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); the United Nations system; the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB); the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM); the CARICOM Secretariat; the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO); the GTZ and the German Ministry for Cooperation and Development. The private sector was represented by the West Indies Rum and Spirits Producing Association (WIRSPA), Barbados; ANSA McAl Ltd (Trinidad and Tobago); the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce (CAIC); the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce; and the Caribbean Employers' Confederation (CEC). The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were also represented by the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC) and the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC), respectively. The full list of participants appears at Annex II.

Opening session

The Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Mr. Neil Pierre, welcomed participants to the meeting and acknowledged the co-sponsors: UNDP, the CARICOM Secretariat and UNIFEM. Mr. Pierre extended a special welcome to His Excellency E. Federico Alberto Cuello, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic based in Brussels, and other members of the high-level expert panel, comprising persons drawn from the international, regional and national community.

He recalled the intense negotiating three-year period for the EPA free-trade agreement which had the principal aim of achieving sustainable development by establishing a trade and development partnership which promoted regional integration and the gradual integration of CARIFORUM countries into the world economy. The meeting was reminded that the provisional application of the Agreement took effect on 29 December 2008 following its signature by 14 CARIFORUM countries and the European Commission, respectively. Mr. Pierre also listed the incumbent obligations derived upon signature of the Agreement by the Parties.

Mr. Pierre advised the meeting that the CARICOM Heads of Government had already given consideration to an EPA Implementation Road Map that stipulated the legislative and policy actions required at the national and regional levels, the timelines for accomplishment of each of the identified actions and the estimated volume of resources required for EPA implementation and possible sources of funding, including those already committed by the EU.

He identified the role of ECLAC and reiterated that his organization and the rest of the United Nations system in the Caribbean stood ready to assist CARICOM member States in implementing and monitoring the Accord.

Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough, United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative for Barbados and the OECS, which covers seven of the 14 CARIFORUM signatory States to the EPA, greeted the participants. She reminded the meeting that the overarching objective of the EPA was “to contribute to sustainable development through the reduction of poverty and inequality, promoting regional integration, economic cooperation, the gradual integration of the CARIFORUM member States into the world economy, and enhancing capacity, competitiveness and economic growth in the region”. She noted that these were shared objectives of the UNDP, especially at a time when resources for financing development were contracting rather than increasing in line with global commitments. Against this backdrop, she assured the meeting of her agency’s continued support to national and regional change efforts that contributed to deepening the regional integration process to reshape economic fortunes and livelihoods.

She pointed to several regional capacity constraints which could slow the implementation progress of the EPA if not addressed. These included technical, human and institutional resources in the light of expected high implementation costs in such areas as trade facilitation, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures (SPS), technical barriers to trade, trade-related aspects of

intellectual property rights and customs. She also drew reference to the CARICOM Secretariat's need to augment its technical resources significantly in order to discharge its new responsibilities in respect of EPA implementation. She further noted that CARIFORUM countries would need to build institutional capacity in the areas of tax and customs administration, public financial management, financial sector regulation and supervision, statistics and macroeconomic analysis.

Ms. Gyles-Donnough suggested that regional and national entities would need to be strengthened to be able to undertake legislative reviews and modernisation based on international instruments and norms, while also seeking to provide harmonised legislation, practice and procedures across CARIFORUM; to engage in standard setting and conformity assessment procedures based on international standards; and to both promote and take advantage of south-south cooperation. She noted that development cooperation, in both financial and non-financial forms, would be necessary if the Parties were to achieve the objectives of the Agreement. In closing, she pledged the support of her agency in supporting the longer-term Road Map for realisation of the EPA objectives and looked forward to the discussions at the meeting that would define the framework for monitoring implementation and regular review of the impact of the Accord at the national and regional levels.

Ambassador Irwin La Rocque, Assistant Secretary-General for Trade and Economic Integration at the CARICOM Secretariat, addressed the meeting. He noted that EPA negotiations had commenced at the time when attention focused on the impact that an increasingly liberalized and competitive global trading environment would have as CARIFORUM and the European Community (EC) moved to an agreement that would bring to an end the non-reciprocal preferential arrangements of the past. He further stated that the expert group meeting was taking place at a time of upheaval in the international economy and questions were being raised about the unregulated and unfettered global market; signs of protectionism were beginning to emerge; and the global financial system was in turmoil.

He identified the opportunities and challenges of implementing the ambitious and complex trade Accord – opportunities which included prospects for the region's services sector to move beyond the regional market into the European sphere and an opening for cultural products. Challenges included the following: (a) enhancing competitiveness of the private sector in order to take advantage of market access opportunities; (b) institutional strengthening in the public sector; (c) providing enterprises with the regulatory and policy framework conducive to fostering competitiveness through innovation and creativity; and (d) putting the necessary frameworks in place to make the region more attractive to European investors. Another noteworthy challenge would undoubtedly be the cost of executing the provisions of the Agreement.

The meeting was informed that the CARICOM Heads of Government had mandated the CARICOM Secretariat to coordinate EPA implementation among its members. To that end, the Secretary-General of CARICOM had already taken steps to put in place the structure to facilitate implementation of the EPA by all States. In this regard, Ambassador La Rocque informed that some CARIFORUM States had already established EPA implementation units while others were in the process of so doing.

The Assistant Secretary General stressed that while the region moved apace with EPA implementation, the highest priority for CARICOM remained the completion of the arrangement for the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). He reminded the meeting that one of the objectives of the EPA was the fostering of regional integration and it was imperative that the EPA supported such efforts at both the regional and subregional levels in the Caribbean.

Agenda Item 1: The EPA and its implications

a) Market access, safeguards and regional integration

Dr. Lester Henry presented the main findings of an ECLAC study on issues relating to market access, safeguards and implications for regional integration under the EPA. In setting out the contextual background of the EPA, he explained that the region had signed a full Accord with the EC rather than an interim agreement like the African States primarily because of the need to avoid trade disruptions and tariff imposition in the EU, if the 31 December 2008 deadline was not met. He emphasized this point by referring to preliminary estimates which suggested that CARIFORUM stood to lose as much as US\$300 million annually in tariffs paid to the EU if there was a de facto resort to the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) (i.e. in the event that an EPA was not concluded). He further argued that the impact on the region's major exports to the EU would not have been trivial, for example, cane sugar exporters would have faced tariffs between €33.9/1000kg (for refining) and €41.99/1000kg (other), resulting in some \$202 million in tariff levy. While he emphasized the rationale for CARIFORUM's decision to sign a full EPA, he also explained that the region had exposed itself to charges that it broke rank with the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) grouping and that its actions could lead to an undermining of "South-South" trade.

He provided the meeting with a concise outline of the issues of liberalization and market access in goods. He presented a table on the CARIFORUM tariff liberalization schedule and pointed to a number of examples to highlight the fact that the special interest concerns of individual CARIFORUM States had been taken into account. He further suggested that in comparison to other international trade agreements, the long phase-in period of 25 years for 86.9% import liberalization on EU products entering the CARIFORUM market appeared to be very favourable. He apprised the meeting of a 2005 study by Scollay and Grynberg that found only two cases where a party to a bilateral free-trade agreement excluded from full tariff elimination more than 10% of imports from its partner. In the case of the CARIFORUM-EU EPA, the figure is 13%.

He spoke on the issue of market access and the impending safeguards which needed to be put in place to address the exclusion lists, protection of sensitive goods, and the high tariff on goods. He also provided details on some of the salient features of the new rules of origin negotiated in the EPA, notably in the areas of cumulation across ACP States and Mexico; relaxation of rules applicable to some specific products; and the streamlining of provisions dealing with derogation. He flagged the issue of non-cumulation in sugar-related products as an

area of concern for some CARIFORUM countries, particularly Trinidad and Tobago, whose confectionery exports would be affected.

He drew the meeting's attention to several areas of concern regarding certain aspects of the services chapter in the EPA. These include, for example, potential conflict between obligations by governments to universal access and compliance with liberalization commitments. He cited a 2008 article by the South Centre to emphasize the point that the EPA succeeded in guaranteeing European services suppliers access to CARIFORUM markets without certainty regarding concomitant obligations on universal access. He recommended that a further in-depth review of the specific implications of these issues be considered. He noted that CARIFORUM had already liberalized 65%-75% of its services and was therefore well on its way to achieving the 90% target under the EPA.

In closing, he outlined some of the major issues that required further study to inform the implementation process. These included, for example, the exact implications of the most favoured nation (MFN) clause; the non-accumulation in sugar-related products; the shift to non-tariff revenue sources, especially in the least developed countries (LDCs); and the precise make-up and power relations within the various EPA committees and CARICOM bodies.

b) Review of EPA: Development cooperation

Prof. Anthony Peter Gonzales provided the meeting with an overview of the main issues relating to the nature and scope of the development cooperation provisions of the EPA and the targeting of trade development needs at the national, regional and subregional levels. He presented a table on the overall implementation and adjustment costs of the EPA which he estimated to be in the order of €873 million (i.e. fiscal adjustment: €355 million; export diversification: €189 million; employment adjustment: €134 million; and skills/productivity enhancement: €195 million).

In terms of next steps, he explained that CARIFORUM was presently in the process of preparing an EPA Implementation Road Map stipulating a schedule and plan of action to guide member States on the legislative and policy actions required at the national and regional levels; a timetable for the accomplishment of each of the identified actions; the estimated volume of resources required for EPA implementation; and the possible sources of funding, including those already committed by the EU.

In discussing the value added of the EPA, he suggested that its implementation provided an opportunity to increase aid effectiveness in line with the Paris Declaration. For example, ownership could be strengthened, as well as donor harmonization and coordination and aid management. He also noted that the region was already clear on the regional agency that should be used to channel EPA and/or Aid for Trade (Aft) resources and suggested that this, in turn, should facilitate implementation. He further explained that the EC had already held discussions with the CDB on inserting a financing window in the Caribbean Development Fund (CDF) specifically to underwrite funding of EPA implementation in CARIFORUM.

He also suggested that in some CARIFORUM quarters, the advantages of having a specific EPA Adjustment Facility which operated on a time-sensitive and multi-annual basis had been discussed, but was not accepted. Nonetheless, he emphasized that it was important for CARIFORUM to have a sound idea of its adjustment needs and appropriately cost them since it appeared that adjustment funding would have to come from the All-ACP facility and Aft sources.

In closing, he recommended that the sequencing of EPA implementation must be done appropriately and underpinned by a sustained trade development programme if the Caribbean was to fully exploit the increased market opportunities under the Agreement. He further recommended that the Caribbean's trade liberalization schedule should be dependent on the disbursement of EC assistance in reversing the national taxation regimes and providing assistance to affected industries.

c) Review of EPA: WTO compatibility

In his presentation, Prof. Anthony Peter Gonzales noted that it was not possible to determine a priori (based on World Trade Organization (WTO) law and practice) whether any element of the EPA would be challenged. He further noted that concerns in the WTO had already been raised, *inter alia*, about the MFN clause, the use of free-trade agreements (FTAs) to protect special preferences, and the degree of asymmetry and length of transitions. Whether these would lead to legal challenges was, therefore, open to speculation.

On the issue of the application of the MFN clause, he stated that the granting of duty-free status to any product from a major trading party which might not pose any competitive risks to the EU and CARIFORUM should not automatically qualify for an extension under the MFN clause. He noted that the MFN issue was not sufficiently clarified in the EPA and should therefore be revisited in the context of the mandatory review of the Agreement in 2013.

Turning the meeting's attention to the issue of the EPA and existing WTO special and differential provisions, he noted that in the areas of trade in goods (customs duties, other duties and charges, non-tariff measures, trade defense measures), investment, trade in services, e-commerce, trade-related issues and MFN clauses, special and differential treatment provisions both in asymmetry, safeguard measures and transition time periods to reduce transitional costs of implementation had gone along the lines of those in the WTO. On this basis, he stressed that the EPA reinforced the asymmetries and flexibilities found in the WTO in a WTO-Plus arrangement.

In closing, he reflected on the fact that in so far as new ground was being broken in a free-trade arrangement between a developed region and small, vulnerable economies, the precise suitability of the transition periods and the asymmetries in various areas could only be tested in time, and it was for this reason that the EPA had a built-in review mechanism.

Discussion

A number of participants were of the view that the growth model built primarily on neo-liberal principles and free trade was in crisis, and this provided an opportunity to question the principles on which the EPA was designed. In addition, as developments in the global economy unfolded, the final impact on the economies of the EU was as yet unknown. Also unknown were what Europe's needs would be to ensure that its own companies and investors retained free access and remained competitive in the CARIFORUM markets and other markets of the Global South. All participants agreed that the adjustment costs and required transition periods would determine how much the region's economies could benefit.

The representative of the CPDC stated that the EPA must first and foremost be an instrument for development. She called into question the potential impact of the EPA on poverty and poverty eradication, on CARICOM regional integration processes and on the unity of the ACP group; as well as the merits of reciprocal market opening; the capacity of the Caribbean countries to implement the Agreement; and the linkages and coherence of the Agreement with the ongoing Doha Round at the WTO.

The representative of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean drew the meeting's attention to ECLAC Document No. LC/CAR/L.176 entitled *Review of CARIFORUM-EU EPA – Implications for the British and Dutch Caribbean OCTs*. He stressed that irrespective of the fact that the territories were not a party to the EPA, the Agreement would potentially have the economic effect of isolating them from the independent Caribbean. On the question of asymmetry from which the CARIFORUM countries would benefit vis-à-vis access of EU goods to the regional market, he cautioned that the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) might not necessarily find themselves on the "right side" of the asymmetry if they were to become a party to the Agreement (i.e. allowing them to not open all markets on account of the non-reciprocal trade arrangements currently in force with the Community and given the possibilities set out in the EC Treaty).

Agenda Item 2: The gender impact of the EPA

a) Gender and the CARIFORUM-EC EPA

Mr. Jason Jackson presented the main findings of a UNIFEM-ECLAC report on issues relating to gender and the CARIFORUM-EC EPA. The report analyzed the difficult international economic context within which the EPA was designed and would be implemented; discussed the significant developmental challenges facing the Caribbean region; and defined an initial agenda for the implementation of the Agreement by making the linkages between trade and gender explicit.

The report identified some of the potentially positive and negative effects arising from the EPA and their relative impact on men and women, and was thus centrally concerned with the

potential for asymmetric distributional outcomes arising from the Agreement. The report stated that women and men played different roles and had different responsibilities in the productive and reproductive sectors of the region's economies. As such, trade and economic shocks had differential impacts upon women and men, in different communities and from different skill and educational backgrounds. Further, given the significant heterogeneity in the economies and societies in the region, the report showed that these effects varied significantly across countries based on their social and economic structures, as illustrated by the examples of Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana and Jamaica.

He concluded with a series of recommendations on how the CARIFORUM-EC EPA might best be implemented in support of gender equality, women's empowerment and poverty reduction. Key among these were a focus on skills certification; technology transfer to support regional businesses; creating linkages with science and engineering institutions in CARIFORUM and EU countries; institutional strengthening of civil society; improving mechanisms for interaction with national and regional public organizations responsible for the design and implementation of the EPA; and, ensuring that implementation and monitoring of the EPA, as well as upcoming trade negotiations were guided by closer dialogue between government and civil society and were informed by gender-aware analyses.

b) EPA and Cotonou: Identifying the gender links

Ms. Judith Wedderburn provided the meeting with an overview of how gender had been treated in ACP-EU development cooperation relations from the time of LOME IV (1990-2000), through the Cotonou Partnership Agreement of 2000, and into the EPA negotiated with ACP countries, during the period 2000-2008.

She noted that there were clearly stated links between the Cotonou Partnership Agreement and the EPA that indicated not only how these two agreements generally should be implemented in a complementary and mutually reinforcing manner but also how gender issues specifically should be treated. These included direct links through Article 1 (i.e. Objective "a") of the EPA which spoke to the establishment of a trade partnership consistent with the objective of sustainable development; MDG 3; Section 4, Article 31; and the Compendium to the Cotonou Agreement, as well as Article 5 on Monitoring which sought to ensure that the objectives of the Agreement were realized, properly implemented and that the benefits for men, women, young people and children deriving from their Partnership were maximized.

In closing, she recommended that CARIFORUM countries use the Cotonou Partnership Agreement and the 10th EDF as an entry point for integrating gender into the EPA.

Discussion

The representative of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) acknowledged the need for transformation in the analysis on gender and the EPA and

the place of women in an unequal world. She also supported the recommendation for research to be carried out on the likely impact of the EPA on gender inequalities in the region.

The representative of the CPDC noted that there was insufficient attention to gender analysis in the RNM's work programme. She called on the RNM to increase its capacity in this area with a focus on the development of a gender indicators programme. Commenting on Mr. Jackson's paper, she shared the view that the concentration of women in the services sector had yielded several benefits for women that could conceivably be eroded under the EPA. She stressed that the dependency ratio at the household level would increase dramatically if such jobs were lost at a fast rate as a result of trade liberalization under the Agreement. She also lamented the fact that at present State policy showed a greater concentration and growth in employment rather than on growth in incomes that would lead to decent work.

The need to look at the links between competitiveness of the CARIFORUM and EU member States, respectively, and issues of vulnerability was expressed. Participants agreed that not all groups were equally vulnerable or had equal resilience.

The representative of the Dominican Republic suggested that civil society organizations were suitably placed to monitor the outcomes of the EPA in such areas as market access and gender inequality; national treatment under Mode 4 and its impact on gender-intensive services; social standards and the implications for crime.

The representative of Saint Lucia commented on the decreasing number of working males in the economy and its effect on the distribution of labour. There was, however, an increase in the number of males working in the services sector. He concurred that there was a shift in economic activity towards services.

In his intervention, the representative of Barbados reported that there was equal access to all employment opportunities in his country but there was disparity of entrance to education.

Agenda Item 3: Perspectives on EPA implementation

a) CARICOM Secretariat

The Assistant Secretary-General of CARICOM provided the meeting with an overview of the EPA Implementation Road Map. The CARICOM road map was intended to guide member States in implementation of the EPA, however, it was noted that some of the actions had not been allocated timelines. It was, therefore, necessary to define what activities were due now and what should be pursued in six months time. That determination would be based on a prioritization of activities in implementation. The road map was based on the fact that 52% of CARIFORUM exports to the EU were zero-rated. The type of work to be done would be determined by the legal platform for zero-rated items.

He expressed the hope that the EPA implementation unit would be operational by the end of February 2009. This unit would comprise three to four experts in the areas of market access in goods, services and the legal aspects, respectively. The EPA implementation unit would coordinate activities geared towards implementation of the EPA. It would be important to address capacity constraints and to put governance structures in place. Financing needs analysis should be conducted. In closing, he reflected on the fact that EPA implementation was a process that would not occur overnight but was ongoing.

b) Jamaica country brief

The presentation by the representative of the Government of Jamaica addressed four levels in EPA implementation, namely, national, regional, CARIFORUM/ACP and the multilateral. It was noted that the foreign missions would backstop the process. Jamaica was adopting a holistic approach to EPA implementation by making linkages with the WTO, the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and the national Vision 2030 process as well as in the National Export Strategy. This would facilitate the integration of trade in all national development plans. In March 2008, Cabinet had mandated the establishment of a Technical Working Group under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and this Group had convened its first meeting in May. Essentially, the functions of the Working Group were to: drive and oversee implementation of the EPA; sensitize and build awareness of the EPA; ensure dialogue with major stakeholders; assist in national implementation programmes; and, make recommendations to Cabinet through the International Relations and Trade Committee. To date, a desk review of all trade-related projects was conducted and the EPA matrix was revised to identify commitments already undertaken in order to develop an action plan and assess national priorities through a study. In addition, consultations were held with small business associations and the private sector; a national coordinator was appointed; and a trade agreement coordination and implementation unit was established. Further actions to be taken included the conduct of a needs assessment exercise and the amendment of national legislation, respectively.

The representative of Jamaica stated that his government expected to encounter a number of challenges during the implementation phase of the EPA, notably in the areas of proper and efficient coordination with all stakeholders; public education strategy; strengthening sectoral interventions; addressing the revenue fallout from the agreement; the transition from direct to indirect taxation; supply side constraints; and human and financial constraints.

c) Saint Lucia country brief

The representative of Saint Lucia reported that his country had developed a national export strategy, as well as a quadrant development plan. He explained that an attempt was being made to mainstream trade in all government processes. He advised that an EPA implementation unit had not yet been established, but it was expected that this would take place shortly with the likelihood that the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade would be assigned as the coordinator of the unit. The unit was expected to be operationalized through funding support from the donor community and that it was the intention to collaborate with the EPA

implementation units of the other CARIFORUM countries. To date, a senior implementation officer had been appointed and a matrix for EPA implementation had been developed. It was intended to hold a national consultation to discuss EPA implementation and to inform elaboration of the matrix and its finalization. Attempts were being made to mainstream EPA implementation into national development plans. In closing, he emphasized that the country required inter-ministerial collaboration to successfully implement the Agreement.

d) Trinidad and Tobago country brief

The representative of Trinidad and Tobago reported that the Ministry of Trade and Industry had been assigned lead responsibility for implementing the EPA. To date, an EPA implementation plan had been approved by Cabinet, an EPA Implementation Unit supported by a Technical Coordinating Committee was established, and a public awareness programme involving the Chambers of Commerce and the business organizations was developed. He explained that the EPA Implementation Unit would liaise with other government agencies, coordinate and monitor implementation of the EPA, and serve as the national focal point in Trinidad and Tobago. The Unit would also liaise with the private sector and would improve trade relations with other institutions. He also stated that the government would use existing agreements to access markets in Europe and noted that the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Customs and Excise Department were working on customs tariffs to ensure compliance with their obligations.

e) Dominican Republic country brief

The meeting received a status report on trade negotiations and implementation in the Dominican Republic. The presenter noted that the structure was anchored on two pillars: (a) the National Trade Negotiations Commission (NTRC) in the form of an inter-agency body; and (b) DICOEX, the National Coordinator for EPA implementation housed at the Ministry of Trade. He explained that the NTRC mandate was six-fold: to set up consultative mechanisms; to ensure active and effective participation; to formulate a positive negotiating agenda; to oversee the design and implementation of trade-related reforms; to ensure compliance with international trade law provisions; and to achieve balanced negotiating outcomes. To date, the NTRC had been instrumental in establishing the Consultative Council for Civil Society and the Business Commission for International Negotiations, respectively. He emphasized that one of the main negotiating thrusts of the NTRC was to ensure that free-trade agreements, such as the EPA, enhanced rather than compromised the country's development efforts. This was based on the principle of the five C's: commercial relevance, coherence, competition, cohesion and competitiveness.

At the operational level, he advised that the coordination of activities related to implementation of the EPA in the Dominican Republic had been assigned to DICOEX. He stated that a regional coordinator was yet to be appointed. In closing, he stated that achievements of the negotiating structure and the implementation scheme were now apparent in the performance of the real sector. The Dominican Republic was presently the main exporter of

bananas to the EU from the ACP; the country supplied 4% of the EU cocoa imports; three million boxes of rum and has had successes in sugar and textiles exports under the EPA.

Discussion

Issues pertaining to coherence and cohesion were key among the discussants, as concerns about whether all countries were, in fact, implementing the EPA and the different stages to which implementation had reached across countries. The need for more coordination in ensuring equality in implementation was expressed, particularly in light of the lack of resources which was cited as a constraint by some of the LDC representatives. A number of participants lamented the fact that there had been a lack of consultation on implementation issues at the national level.

The representative of Grenada suggested that implementation of the EPA should be done in the context of all existing agreements and that the effects of open market access should reach the stakeholders, something that was thought not to be occurring. It was conceded by the panel that there were parts of the CSME agreement that could be compromised by the EPA (i.e. Chapter 7, Article 164), but proffered that the EPA was also based on integration and that national and regional mechanisms could be put in place to ensure some degree of dovetailing between the differences in the two agreements.

A representative of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean raised the issue of the global economic meltdown and its likely consequences for the successful implementation of the EPA. The representative of Saint Lucia suggested that the deepening of trade through the EPA would help to mitigate the effects of external shocks. The representative of the Dominican Republic noted that the EU proposed new rules as long as the sectors were liberalized and that new financial services from the EU were not provided on the basis of the EPA.

Agenda Item 4: Monitoring and reviewing the EPA

a) ECLAC

The representative of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean presented a brief assessment of some key points related to monitoring the socio-economic impact, development outcomes and implementation process of the EPA. He identified trade access, regional integration, development cooperation and WTO compatibility, respectively, as the four broad areas for monitoring the operation of the Agreement.

He suggested that the two main areas to monitor in terms of trade access were the economic impact (i.e. trade evolution, fiscal revenue and job creation), and the social impact (i.e. poverty reduction and gender issues). He emphasized that the notion of strengthened regional

integration was a key concept underpinning the EPA and that monitoring of the social impacts in particular should coincide with the process of monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that was in place in all countries of the Caribbean. He noted that the timelines for both the Goals and EPA were also coincidental. Possible indicators and topics for analysis in this area therefore encompassed integration within CARICOM, integration within CARIFORUM, and integration at the wider Caribbean level. He also recommended that the timely and effective delivery of trade-related assistance should be monitored.

In closing the presentation, he reflected on the fact that there were a myriad of areas to be monitored throughout the EPA implementation process. It was therefore necessary to ensure that the goals and indicators selected were measurable, reliable and relevant.

b) CPDC

The representative of the CPDC presented a preliminary overview of some methodological issues linked to the design of a monitoring mechanism for the CARIFORUM-EU EPA. She drew the meeting's attention to Article 5 of the Agreement which stipulated that the Parties undertake to continuously monitor the operation of the Agreement through their respective participative processes and institutions. She discussed the reasons why civil society should take up the challenge of monitoring the impact and implementation process of the Agreement, including the need to be able to quickly identify areas where remedial action would be necessary.

She posited the following strategic questions that she felt should be addressed in setting up a monitoring mechanism for the EPA: what would be the key objective of the monitoring exercise; what were the key relevant indicators in view of the objectives pursued; what was the purpose of a monitoring mechanism; who should be involved in monitoring; what format and legal status should the mechanism have; and what methodology should be adopted.

She drew the meeting's attention to the ultimate goals of the EPA (i.e. key objectives outlined in Article 1 of the Chapter on Trade Partnership for Sustainable Development) and suggested that these were indicative of four broad monitoring areas: (a) market access and fair trade; (b) an assessment of actual improvements for promoting the competitiveness of CARIFORUM productive sectors, growth with equity and sustainable development; (c) compliance with trade and trade-related rules to ensure they remained in line with regional integration objectives and priorities; and (d) the static impacts and dynamic processes. She outlined the benefits of the development benchmark approach for deriving specific goals and objectives of an EPA monitoring instrument. She explained that these specific goals would fall within one of three categories: (a) the monitoring of economic and development outcomes to ensure that the package of EPA-related economic reforms was coherent with the overall national trade and development strategy; (b) institutional implementation processes and improvement in terms of implementation capacity, relevance and adjustment costs; and (c) the governance process to ensure that it was participatory and transparent.

She concluded the presentation with a list of key benchmarks for the conduct of an EPA monitoring study in the Caribbean.

Discussion

The representative of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) was pleased that the issue of poverty reduction was given due consideration in the presentations. The matter of qualitative monitoring was also raised with particular reference to the labour market. The need for improvements in labour market information systems, including the conduct of baseline studies was expressed.

A representative of ECLAC raised the issue of the difficulty in monitoring the MDGs, and hence the need to invest in what was necessary to obtain results, not only related to poverty reduction but also equality measurement issues. Another concern was the matter of production, i.e. job creation, level of employment, skills development, education, and crime prevention. Appropriate actions should be taken to deal with these issues at the national and regional levels.

The representative of the GTZ raised the issue of the change process. He stated that the EPA in itself forced a lot of change and enquired about the process in between that change and what could be done regarding the mechanism for social dialogue. He suggested that government should tackle the issue of long-term and short-term change.

The Assistant Secretary-General of CARICOM highlighted the need to monitor measures within the EPA to ensure they remained in line with CARICOM regional integration objectives and priorities. He expressed concern as to whether or not to include WTO compatibility as part of the monitoring process. He also recommended that immediate focus should be placed on the institutions of CARICOM, CARIFORUM and the OECS.

The representative of the CPDC stated that in most countries labour statistics in the formal sector were reliable but for immigrant workers this was not the case. Furthermore, collecting data on the informal and unofficial sectors was very difficult because of the fear of being taxed. There was also the issue of unpaid household workers. However, it was agreed that there was a need for better data on labour and the need to also look at equality.

A representative of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean highlighted the fact that labour statistics across the region were very heterogeneous. He stated that there was no sector-specific data on employment which begged the need to improve labour statistics in the whole region. This would require collaboration among countries. As regards poverty data, there should be sustainable and regular monitoring of such data to understand the reasons and forces behind recognizable changes. Inequality indicators were extremely important in strengthening poverty data analysis (e.g. Gini coefficients). It was suggested that a systematic review of the monitoring process be done annually at the national, regional and international levels.

The representative of the CPDC again noted that one must recognize how poverty and equality were impacted at these levels and it was important not only to monitor but to share

information and results of the monitoring exercise. She emphasized that the monitoring process should be open and transparent.

The Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean apprised the meeting of the current activities engaged by ECLAC on the collection of data. Mention was made of the informal sector project, the Millennium Development Goals Development Account project, and the Household Surveys project, respectively. He noted that other United Nations agencies were also involved in a number of projects that would improve the amount and level of information to be made available within the region.

The representative of UWI raised a question about the methodology currently being employed by CARIFORUM to ensure a continuity of consciousness of the EPA. For instance, in Africa much attention was received from the Diaspora on the issue. From a policy standpoint, he stated that the structural changes currently taking place in India and China might result in many EU countries deepening trade with them instead of focusing on the EPA.

A participant raised the issue of the need to be selective in monitoring the EPA. He reminded the meeting of both the European Development Fund (EDF) and AfT monitoring systems within the WTO. Since monitoring required many resources there was the need to be selective. In addition, micro level activities should be considered for an idea of what was taking place at this level; for instance should there be a focus on liberalization; and what methods should be implemented to monitor resources at the general or sectoral level. He highlighted that the Agreement represented 20% of trade, hence monitoring should be done in accordance with the region's priorities.

A representative of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean stated that other aspects of the Agreement such as investment, intellectual property rights and the need to develop indicators should not be overlooked. A crucial point was that the quality of indicators would depend on how the adjustment process took place. In this regard, the real exchange rate would have a real impact on these indicators.

One participant highlighted the importance of the nature of the monitoring framework at the outset of the exercise. The framework should set out the objectives, a clear idea of what to monitor and at different levels, the possible outcomes i.e. cause and effect linkages, specific and measurable indicators, sources of the information (though generated at a cost) and the systems and procedures needed which will underline the capacity and resources constraints.

A suggestion was tabled by a representative of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean as to how to move forward in developing a common set of indicators. It was suggested that the formation of an inter-institutional task force might be necessary.

In summary, the Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean stated that monitoring was best done at the regional level which was a cost effective way to deal with some of the constraints facing the region. He committed to working with the CARIFORUM Secretariat and other regional entities to define a framework within which the

impact of the EPA would be effectively monitored and evaluated and using as critical inputs the contributions made in the discussion.

Closure of the Meeting

The Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean brought the meeting to a close by extending thanks to the participants for their active participation and valuable contributions to the discussions. The participants also joined in expressing their satisfaction at the organization of the meeting and the openness of the discussions.

Annex I**PROGRAMME**

- 8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Registration
- 9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. **Opening remarks:** (*Chair: Mr. Ronald Williams, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean*)
- Mr. Neil Pierre, Director, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean
 - Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough, Resident Representative, UNDP, Barbados
 - H.E. Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, Assistant Secretary General, CARICOM Secretariat

9:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. *Break*

Session 1 – The EPA and its Implications

(*Chair: Mr. Neil Pierre, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean*)

- 9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Market access and regional integration implications of the agreement - *Dr. Lester Henry*
- 10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Development cooperation and WTO compatibility implications of the agreement - *Dr. Anthony Gonzales*
- 10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. Moderated panel and plenary discussion

Session 2 – The gender impact of the EPA

(*Chair: Ms. Sheila Stuart, UNDP*)

- 11:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. The gender impact of the EPA in the Caribbean – *Ms. Judith Wedderburn*
- 11:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon The gender impact of the EPA in the Caribbean – *Mr. Jason Jackson*
- 12:00 noon – 12:30 p.m. Moderated panel and plenary discussion
- 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. *Lunch*

Session 3 – Perspectives on EPA implementation

(Chair: Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough, UNDP)

- 2:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. Updated implementation roadmap of the EPA – *Mr. David Hales, CARICOM Secretariat*
- 2:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Jamaica: Status of implementation of the EPA – *Mr. David Prendergast, Head, Trade Implementation/ CSME Unit*
- 2:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. Saint Lucia: Status of implementation of the EPA – *Mr. Titus Preville, Permanent Secretary/Trade*
- 2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Trinidad and Tobago: Status of implementation of the EPA – *Mr. Wayne Punnette, Acting Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry*
- 3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Dominican Republic: Status of implementation of the EPA – *H.E. Ambassador Federico Alberto Cuello, Embassy of the Dominican Republic, Brussels*
- 3:15 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Moderated panel and plenary discussion

Session 4 – Monitoring and reviewing the impact of the EPA

(Chair: Mr. Neil Pierre, ECLAC)

- 4:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. Approaches to monitoring and evaluating the impact of the EPA – *Mr. Armando Mendoza, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean*
- 4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monitoring the EPA - *Ms. Cecilia Babb, Caribbean Policy Development Centre*
- 4:30 p.m. – 5:20 p.m. Moderated panel and plenary discussion
- 5:20 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Wrap-up and closing remarks

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