



Center for African Affairs and Global Peace

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Resist EU pressure on new Trade deals

At the close of a meeting in Namibia, Trade Union leaders called on AU governments to resist any pressure which the EU governments may put on them to sign new trade deals without referring to WTO terms. This resolution came ahead of an AU/EU summit scheduled to take place in December this year. The summit between the EU and the ACP (78 African, Caribbean and Pacific rim countries) will put in place new Economic Partnership Agreements by this year's end. These new agreements will replace the current Preferential Trade deals hitherto in place between the two regional bodies, an agreement which the WTO termed illegal.

The Union leaders called on the EC, the EU's executive branch, to "take a step back" and change the direction of the negotiations. If subjected to sign the new deal, the workers in AU would be worse off. By losing their preferential tariffs to exports to Europe, it is feared that many AU countries will lose access to their main markets. Elsewhere, the Kenyan Trade Minister had accused the EU of stepping up pressure on the ACP countries by using the fast approaching deadline to obtain more concessions. Meanwhile, in a bid to avoid WTO imposed tariffs, the EU seems set to reach interim agreements with small clusters of AU countries that have similar trade interests and levels of development.

AU/EU Partnership: Beyond the Rhetoric

The EU development day which takes off in Brussels on 13th-17th November will go beyond the usual rhetoric with regards to EU partnership with AU. The EU is set to look at this relationship beyond the traditional donor/receiver. The 14th -15th November will see a business forum consisting of European and African business representatives along with policy makers. This forum will discuss ways towards putting in place policies that will boost private sector development and ways to encourage European investors to explore business opportunities in Africa. Following on this, 15th-17th November will be a governance forum bringing together no fewer than 15 Heads of States and Governments, NGOs, development ministers, diplomats and experts and top officials from various international organizations (World Bank, UN, OECD, ILO, etc.), the meeting of which it is hoped will put in place measures that will reduce poverty, injustice and violence and successful leadership transitions.

Under this new policy thrust, EU Commissioner Louis Michel will pay a visit to the African continent. He will be accompanied by the winners of the various competitions that will be held during the festival.

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