

The Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa



ECOWAS-EU

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

**“What did not happen in 10 years
should not happen under pressure!”**

FECCIWA LOBBY ENGAGEMENTS

Abuja, Accra, Lomé, Berlin, Brussels



A. AGBADOME, Advisor, ECOWAS Trade Department

Eminent Church Leaders and Friends;

Greetings in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.



**Tolbert T. Jallah,
Secretary General**

In the last two months, we have called your attention to the ongoing negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the European Union (EU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

By the help and initiative of FECCIWA members and our international partners, we have tirelessly consulted and held talks with state representatives and negotiators. We have advised political leaders to open up negotiations in a fair transparent manner, to engage national level experts, religious leaders and the public. The two month Moratorium on EPA signature, expressed under the lead of Nigeria at ECOWAS Summit of Heads of States and government in Yamoussoukro, was an important step. Now, states must bring the discussions to the national levels with participation of the citizens. We, as religious leaders will engage and ensure that all actors and the public are involved into the developmental concerns.

Faith leaders are concerned about the outcome of these negotiations. Our leaders must not hamper economic prospects or trade away the future in liberalizing our economies in West Africa. We are calling for a responsible impact analysis, to assure fruitful regional integration, one which will guarantee that the protection needs for the most vulnerable, rural populations and future generations are taken into the equation.

This news letter provides insights into negotiations from the churches' perspectives in West Africa. FECCIWA wants to update and motivate you to engage with decision makers, civil society and academia on the EPAs, as it is going to be central for the socio economic development of our states and regional integration in West Africa.

We are calling on all people of faith to join us in the Sub – region to hold our policy makers accountable and ask these pertinent questions.

How much will our states loose in terms of tariff revenues, as to trade liberalization? Which local production sectors are going to be opened up for competition with European Products? Which of our local industries will most likely suffer from it?

How will the EPA impact on the project of regional integration, and the agenda of industrialization around agriculture? How will it influence our relation to emerging economies such as China, Brazil, India or South Africa?

We will approach a few of these questions in this newsletter. We hope that you will raise the issues with your decision makers in good faith and for the sake of local communities.

Yours sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Tolbert Thomas Jallah, Jr.
Secretary – General, FECCIWA

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West African Church Leaders request Nigerian government to reject EPAs!

Abuja 20/03/14. In the forerun to the ECOWAS Summit of Heads of States and Government, the Most Reverend Emmanuel Josiah Udofia, President of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA) and Primate of the African Church Worldwide, lead a twelve member delegation comprising of senior Church leaders from Nigeria to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ECOWAS Commission.

“We, the people of faith are concerned about the hasty push for conclusion of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between ECOWAS Commission and the EU Commission. Hurried EPA conclusion will send wrong signals to ECOWAS Member States on the importance of people’s participation in economic and social devel-

opment”! He called upon the Minister to reject the hasty push towards conclusion.

The Foreign Minister of State, Dr Mohammed Nurudeen welcomed the church leaders’ statement and said: “The concerns expressed by the Churches are our concerns. I can assure you that Nigeria will not enter into an Economic Partnership Agreement without national consultations and that the present agreement in its format is unacceptable by the Nigerian Government”. He also alluded to the fear that “the agreement in its present state will negatively impact on peace and security, job creation and protection of nascent industries. He promised that Nigeria, as economic powerhouse in West Africa, will pave the way forward for balanced outcome on the EPAs.”



Most Rev Udofia with the delegation of twelve Heads of Churches conferring with the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Mohammed Nurudeen.



Hon. Minister Dr Mohammed Nurudeen Received Most Rev. Emmanuel Udofia at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Abuja, Nigeria.

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Togolese and Ghanaian Church leaders challenge their governments on EPAs

Representatives of the Christian Councils of Ghana and Togo challenged their respective governments share information to the public and hold national level consultations for impact assessments of the EPA.

Lomé 25/03/14: “What interest us are the needs of our populations at the roots, whereas economic operators focus on their interest and neglect the interest of the people on the ground. We as members of the churches will stand with the people. We want to appeal our government to not to mortgage the future of our children. We fear that, once we enter into this agreement it will be difficult to retreat from it without terrible consequences.” said Rev B. Kadera, Vice President of FECCIWA and Treasurer of the Christian Council of Togo in a public statement during an information sharing meeting held at the Ministry for Commerce and Private Sector Development in Lomé.

FECCIWA Food Interim Campaign Coordinator, James Acorlor, and FECCIWA Policy Advisor, Andrea Muller-Frank, distributed FECCIWA campaign materials. The pamphlets stimulated a vibrant debate with the Director of Trade in the Ministry, Mr. Bamana and ECOWAS Regional

consultant for trade policies, Antoine Agbadome, (see picture above). Expected state revenues loss and low prospects of compensation by European Aid for Trade payments were raised.

Accra 20/03/14: “We need to negotiate an EPA that is beneficial to our sub-region and will contribute to the prosperity of our people. We can only do that united as a sub-region.” This was His Excellency President John Mahama’s words addressed to the Summit of ECOWAS Heads of States at Yamoussoukro. Prior to the summit, President Mahama received a common petition from Church leaders and civil society representatives in Accra. The petition warned: “The effect of this agreement will take away from government the very range of policy instruments that are needed to redress the multiple challenges that the country faces at this critical time of economic life.”

Rev. Dr. Opuni - Frimpong, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana supported the petition to the president for careful screening of its implication for local industries.



Rev. KADERA, Treasurer of the Christian Council of Togo and FECCIWA Vice president warns government not to rush into signing the EPA.



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Berlin Briefing: EPAs are the “wrong way of doing business”

Berlin, 31/03/2014: A FECCIWA delgation, comprised of Rev. Dr. Deegbe, Former FECCIWA President, Rev. Dr. Jallah and Ms. Andrea Muller-Frank, FECCIWA Policy Advisor, animated a briefing session with Heads of Divisions of Bread for the World; Africa and Lobby Departments, Karin Döhne and Sonja Weinreich.

“We need a development cooperation that will move people out of poverty, but not undermine our peoples’ livelihoods.” Rev. Dr. Jallah critically challenged recent evolutions made towards the signing of the regional EU-ECOWAS-EPA: “this is the wrong way of doing business. The EU driven ultimatum, issued last year, has forced countries like Ivory Coast and Ghana, being under threat to lose preferential market access to the EU by October 2014, to promote a regional deal between diplomats, instead of technical experts, who are accompanying the process since more than ten years.”

He recalled the initial objectives behind the partnership agreement and announced a violation of principles spelt out in the guiding principles of the Cotonou agreement (2000), which defines the relationship between the EU and African Caribbean

and Pacific countries. It is clearly spelt out that trade negotiations shall be built on transparency and accountability. “The EU must walk the talk and stop the conflicting diplomacy of trade and international cooperation resorts.”

He further questioned economic prospects and new market access opportunities for West African products under EPAs: **“This is a fallacy, if you take into account low production standards in West Africa and high European sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) for agricultural products. All but left to export, will remain raw materials. The EPA in its present format is unacceptable, because of the loss of revenues, it will impact negatively on vulnerable economies and social stability, the role of governments to assure and invest into social infrastructure, not to mention agriculture for food security!”**

Rev Dr. Fred Deegbe, took over by exemplifying business challenges for African farmers and business men, when exploring market opportunities in the EU. “Those will remain the same under EPAs: A member of one of our communities aimed at investing his life savings into a lucrative business for him and a rural community. He chose to grow and export *Sugar-loaf pineapple* a very sweet and most appreciated breed in Ghana. But in 2003 European importers, mostly big retailers dominating the



Rev. Dr. Jallah raising awareness on Churches concerns on the West African EPA with Bread for the World Heads of Africa and lobby Divisions.



Rev. Dr. Deegbe doubts whether EPAs would trigger productive investments into agriculture which are needed to fight hunger and poverty?

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market, asked for “MD2”. A very yellow variety, which apparently matching better European consumer’s image of a “good pineapple”; It was introduced by Del Monte in Costa Rica. The well intended entrepreneur lacking means and capacity was not able to adapt to this demand and is still repaying his debts to the banks.”

Rev. Dr. Deegbe established another example from his community to showcase a successful business story under EU market conditions: “At the same time a Ghanaian importer opted for in-

vestments into meat imports from Brazil -mostly chicken parts. Whereas local farmers suffered, not being able to compete with foreign dumping, he has multiplied his earnings by ten today.” He closed by summing up: **“Against the promises made for the promotion of development and agriculture under EPA, it will not trigger productive investments into the sector. It will fix tariffs at insufficient rates for protecting local production, added to this it will forbid further regulation measures such as import bans and quotas.”**

Whereas the EU and ECOWAS sign the deal, countries remain without information

Berlin, 31/03/2014: Exchange with Trade Division of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development: Daniela Zehentner-Capell, Head of Division and Melanie Grad, Desk Officer.

Mrs. Zehentner-Capell welcomed FECCIWA delegation, by expressing her appreciation for exchanging with FECCIWA after the rejection of EPA signature by ECOWAS Heads of States, at Yamoussoukro meeting on March 29th.



FECCIWA Secretary General, Rev. Dr. Jallah and Rev. Dr. Fred Deegbe, FECCIWA President (rtd), exchanging with Daniela Zehentner-Capell, Head of Trade Division, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and Francisco Mari, Senior Trade Policy Officer at Bread for the World.

Reverend Dr. Jallah and Reverend Dr. Deegbe complained that West African citizens were not aware on the EPA process. “In Liberia for instance we will have the very first EPA consultation on April 8th; we are not even member to the World Trade Organization yet!” Inquiring for Germany’s position they put forwards the question: **“Now that ECOWAS issued a halt, does this mean that we have two more months to think or two more months to sign the EPA??Will smaller countries receive help to understand the deal, which they are supposed to ratify?** We need support by our European governments; we are also looking towards the German government.”

Mrs. Zehentner-Capell on her side expressed her regret that the European Member Countries where equally lacking access to documents and information. She and her desk officer were lacking access to negotiations documents. Moreover, the German government would not agree with the hard stance in negotiations by the European Commission, which was undermining initial ideas behind the EPAs. They claimed a critical approach by

exposing impacts on each product produced in West Africa. “We need to show facts and both sides and stop the polemics.”

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Debate: “Continent of opportunities? What determines the EU-African relations?”

Berlin, 31/03/2014: Public debate with Günter Nooke, the German Chancellor's G8 Personal Representative for Africa, Heike Hansel, German Member of Parliament and Dr. Claudia Warning, Bread for the World Board Member.

The debate came with the question: “Which cooperation with Africa? Which space for private sector cooperation? How to implicate the great mass of small scale farmers, representing 80% of the population by lacking infrastructures? Dr. Claudia Warning opened the debate by drawing the bigger picture of today's context of EU-Africa relations being marked by times of crisis, recession and austerity in Europe and the rise of emerging economies like Brazil, India and China. With regards to EPA she opened the debate by saying:

“We are discussing an outdated subject, it is time to find new, more appropriate concepts for EU-Africa relations.”

Rev. Dr. Jallah in his intervention announced with disappointment that the EU had decided to leave EPA off the EU-Africa summit's agenda, whereas at the same time they aggressively pushed towards their conclusion. He critically put into question: “Who will profit from EPAs? Will it

benefit development or profit the EU?” While taking a closer look on terms of trades, he said one could not ignore the inequalities: “Whereas Europe promises better market access for African products, we are not able to produce according to European standards. Still the EU asks us to liberalize markets for 75% their products.” Reverend Dr. Jallah also lamented on important state revenue losses, reason for which ECOWAS states had put the signing of EPA agreement on halt. **“According to the last official declarations Nigeria is about to lose € 750 Mio annually and estimates for Ghana lie around €110 Mio. As we are lacking tax collection systems we will not be able to compensate for this any time soon. This will hinder states to make investments into social infrastructure.”**

Member of Parliament Heike Hänsel reminded participants when African parliamentarians were gathering in Germany during the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2007. “Hand-wringingly they searched for our help. While proclaiming partnership on eye height, the factual arrogance by the European Union to respond to African expectations needs to be denounced.” Günter Nooke, the German Chancellor's G8 Personal Representative for Africa

used the opportunity to underline the government's position on EPAs: “Trade agreements with Africa needs to strengthen economies and thus peoples livelihoods. The threat of changing tariff regimes under EPAs has already impacted on peoples' lives. Take an example from East Africa: Under threat to lose preferential market access to EU markets, by non-conclusion of an EPA, flower



Rev Dr . Jallah challenged panelists of Bread for the World debate: “Who will profit from EPAs? Will it benefit development or profit the EU?”

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farms have left Kenya for Eritrea. If the regional EPA fails, interim EPAs were to be ratified and some countries stay out, this would lead to conflicts and further fragmentation of regions.”

With regards to these potential side effects he says: **“It is unrealistic to close EPA negotiations according to the deadline set by the European Commission until October. Our biggest interest lies in strengthening Africa to set its own development agenda.”**

He underlined the sensible issue of revenue losses: “Import tariffs are most important sources of permanent income for states with weak economies. “ By making reference to changing trade patterns worldwide, he further said, it was highly problematic that African states had to fix their tariff boundaries from now to 2034 and onwards under EPAs.

He established the argument that region, mostly composed of least developed countries would rather need appropriate regional partnership agreements. In this light he proposed an alternative to EPA: An African wide free trade agreement, which according to its low regional development standard, would be eligible to non-reciprocal trade arrangements with the EU and others according to WTO law.



Rev. Dr. Tolbert Jallah and Günter Nooke, the German Chancellor's G8 Personal Representative for Africa: “It is unrealistic to close EPA negotiations until October!”

Bilateral talks at the EU Directorate General Trade's Unit for EPAs

Brussels, 01/04/2014: FECCIWA delegation meets with the EU Directorate General Trade's Unit for EPAs in the ACP: Mrs. Sandra Gallina Head of Division, Mr. Remco Vahl, Deputy Head of Unit, Mrs. Cristina Alina Modoran, Trade affairs Manager, and Mr. Alvaro Bordallo Sainz, EEAS West Africa desk officer.

FECCIWA delegation met twice with the EU Lead EPA negotiations, Mrs. Sandra Gallina and her team. They were keen to refute concerns expressed by Church leaders and civil society actors

towards EPA negotiations in the run up to the EU-Africa Summit. Mrs. Gallina distanced herself from former Commissioner Mandelsohn's hard stance in negotiations. The latter being one of the causes which led to the collapse of EPA negotiations in 2007. She said: **“We cannot afford the repetition of these past experiences and must adapt new approaches.”**

By taking a closer look on the negotiations, on the degree of market opening and the list of sensitive products, which are going to be excluded from liberalization, she questioned whether ECOWAS

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countries had seized the opportunity to negotiate a deal, which would accommodate the interest of their people: “While negotiating, the list of those products, which under the EPA would enter duty and tariff free into ECOWAS region, I advocated for the following three: 1) Anti-Malaria pills, 2) Cement and 3) fertilizers.” She disagreed that ECOWAS countries, had decided to keep pharmaceuticals and cement markets closed, in order to keep protecting local products from European competition. She criticized Nigeria’s influence on the choice of sensitive products, by making reference to “folkloric items” which were added to the list - such snake skins.

Supporting the FECCIWA slogan *Eat what you grow and grow what you eat*, she shared the delegation’s doubts on the new agreements’ incentives for agricultural development. In this regard she once again challenged ECOWAS governments. In her view they are not sufficiently raising tariff barriers to protect agricultural producers, such as poultry and milk farmers against foreign imports. And further questioned whether agricultural products, which were to be excluded from EPA liberalization, were sufficiently protected under the last band of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) for West Africa to exploit growing local demand in food markets.

She declared that export subsidies on EU agricultural goods, which are to be banned under EPAs, are not applied in Europe recently. Hence, this mechanism was

not responsible for the fact that cheap meats ended up and competed with local chicken products in West Africa, but rather the inherent logic of industrial production capacity of European farmers.

Without going into detail, Gallina and her team informed the delegation of three safeguard measures, which are going to form part of the EPA. ECOWAS would obtain complaint mechanisms against dumping from European side, amongst them a civil society and parliamentary observer committees. She invited FECCIWA to become part of the CSO observer committee.

Rev. Dr. Jallah trying to redirect the conversation to today’s situation, challenged his counterpart: **“What if Nigeria is going to retreat from the deal? The Nigerian government has raised the issues of significant revenue losses under EPA and it is not likely that they are going to accept the deal in its present form.”** Mrs. Gallina expressing unease with the current situation and Nigeria’s lead role, put into question recent figures, released by the latter. She was unwilling to consider a reopening of the negotiations. “If Nigeria was to stay out of the EPA, investors will move to Ghana order to profit

from EPA incentives.”

Still, FECCIWA delegation got the impression that the European side will need to adapt to the new situation and allow for renegotiations to avoid a renewed diplomatic failure.



FECCIWA delegation seeking information from DG Trade representatives: “What if Nigeria is going to retreat from the deal? The Nigerian government has raised the issues of significant revenue losses under EPA and it is not likely that they are going to accept the deal in its present form.”

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Bilateral talks at Brussels



Rev. Dr. Jallah used the occasion to exchange with Peter Pavlovic, from the Conference of European Churches, Church and Society Commission.



Bilateral talk with the Director for West and Central Africa and Sahel region of the European External Action Service (EEAS), Peteris Ustubs. Together with Uta Bracken head of West Africa desk at Bread for the World.

FECCIWA at the NGO counter summit



Rev. Dr. Jallah joins International NGO representatives campaigning against EPAs at the margins of the EU-Africa summit.



Rev Dr. Jallah averted representatives of International NGOs on ongoing pressure towards the signing of the ECOWAS-EU EPA and churches campaign efforts to engage national level experts and the public.



Stop, think, resist EPAs.



FOR AN ECOWAS OF THE PEOPLE AND NOT FOR EU PROFITS !