



REPORT ON THE 2nd ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE EU AND FIVE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES FOR THE DEEPENING OF THE CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTED ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

6-8 July 2020

The EU and the five Eastern and Southern African countries (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Zimbabwe) implementing the interim Economic Partnership Agreement met virtually via video conference from 6 to 8 July to hold the second negotiating round for the deepening of this agreement, following the launch of the negotiations on 2 October 2019 in Mauritius.

All partners were well prepared and coordinated for this round, thus confirming their willingness and commitment to move forward in these negotiations despite the difficult situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the technical constraints of a virtual meeting.

The meeting was held in a very positive and constructive atmosphere and allowed the partners to make substantial progress on the outstanding issues relating to three issues: technical barriers to trade (TBT); customs and trade facilitation (C&TF); and sanitary and phytosanitary issues (SPS), and towards better understanding of both sides' proposals on rules of origin.

The five ESA EPA countries have requested to hold the next round virtually for three days in the last week of November 2020 to discuss two new topics, services and investment (S&I) and trade and sustainable development (TSD), and to continue discussions of the first round on agriculture.

More details about the four topics discussed in this round are included below.

Customs and Trade Facilitation (C&TF)

Very productive round in spite some technical difficulties concerning the sound and connection. The Parties made further progress towards an ambitious Customs and Trade Facilitation Chapter. The parties aim at providing a high degree of trade facilitation to their traders, while enhancing their cooperation in customs matters.

REPORT ON THE 2nd ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE EU AND FIVE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA COUNTRIES FOR THE DEEPENING OF THE CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTED ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)

Both parties exchanged views on their respective policies notably on conformity assessment and market surveillance. Good progress was made on some of the remaining substantive articles, notably on Technical Regulations, Conformity Assessment and Market Surveillance, where large parts or all of the text was agreed. Cooperation and technical assistance will be discussed in the wider context of development cooperation.

Sanitary and Phytosanitary issues (SPS)

The Parties had fruitful discussions on the SPS Chapter, which allowed additional progress, in particular with an agreement in principle on pre-listing and an agreement on the recognition of regionalisation (zoning) with a view to a more sustainable trade in food products. The Parties also committed to consider a provision for a framework on equivalence and to clarify some other issues. The Parties agreed that the cooperation and technical assistance would be of utmost importance for full implementation of the ambitious SPS chapter they are working on.

Rules of Origin (ROO)

The EU made a detailed presentation of its proposal for origin procedures, comprising self-certification, verification and administrative cooperation, and denial of preferential tariff treatment. The Parties further discussed the general provisions based on documents exchanged by the Parties ahead of the round and clarified their respective positions. A number of convergent and divergent positions were identified. Both sides agreed to continue working on a joint working document taking into account the two proposals.