

Mr.Karel De Gucht
European Commissioner for Trade

Brussels, 18 June 2010

Dear Commissioner De Gucht,

Re: Open Letter on undue pressure on Namibia to sign an interim EPA

We would like to express our concern over the undue pressure on the government of Namibia to sign the interim EPA while negotiations on the "SADC" EPA are still ongoing and contentious issues still remain outstanding. Namibia's concerns about the content of the initialled text are fully legitimate and should be respected by the EU.

The signing of the interim EPA would have serious impacts on agricultural and industrial development in Namibia. Among other consequences, the country would have to forfeit the policy option of using export taxes on raw materials as an important incentive for value addition to raw materials and as a potentially important new source of revenue.

For these reasons it was with great reluctance and under the threat of losing market access to the EU that Namibia initialled the interim agreement with explicit reservations at the end of 2007, and only after the Commission President, Manuel Barroso had made promises of opening up for renegotiations of the unresolved issues in 2008. Namibia's initialing in December 2007 was accompanied by a list of unresolved issues. Angola and South Africa have since then added their concerns to the Namibian list.

Since then several issues have been renegotiated. However, the new formulations have not been incorporated in the interim agreement. Namibia is therefore being asked to sign and implement a version of the agreement that still contains the un-amended contentious provisions.

The EU is insisting that Namibia's signing is required to allow notification at the WTO and that this notification is urgently needed to secure the legitimacy of the EU market access given to the country since the end of 2007. However, neither is a hastened notification necessary to maintain Namibia's current market access to the EU, nor is signing required for notification as this can also take place on the basis of initialled texts. The WTO also still allows for notified agreements to be changed and re-notified. Moreover it seems that except on the MFN clause that the EU is seeking, no serious questions have been raised about EPAs in the WTO so far.

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Instead of putting further pressure on Namibia we urge you to engage positively with the “SADC EPA” countries, and show policy flexibility in addressing the outstanding issues in the negotiations; thereby respecting the priority of the regional integration process and assuring that no country would be worse off, or being forced to sign an agreement that does not serve its best interest.

Looking forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Marc Maes
Trade Policy Officer
11.11.11 – Coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement

On behalf of the undersigned.

Africa Groups of Sweden	AEFJN, Brussels
AG Welthandel und WTO - Attac Germany	Africa Contact, Denmark
Associació Catalana d'Enginyeria Sense Fronteres	AITEC, France
BothEnds, The Netherlands	APRODEV, Brussels
CCFD-Terre solidaire, France	CNCD-11.11.11, Belgium
Comhlámh, Ireland	Comhlámh, Ireland
Coordinadora de ONGD de Euskadi, Spain.	MAIS, Italy
Ecologistas en Acción, Spain	Oxfam International
Forum Syd, Sweden	Red África-Europa, Spain
ICCO, The Netherlands	Setem, Spain
Kirchliche Arbeitsstelle Südliches Afrika (KASA), Germany	Terra Nuova, Italy
KOSA Koordination Suedliches Afrika, Germany	Traidcraft, UK
Observatorio de la Deuda en la Globalización, Spain	Welthaus Bielefeld, Germany
Partnership for change, Spain-Italy-UK-The Netherlands	World Rural Forum
Plataforma Rural, Spain	11.11.11, Belgium

CC:

Commission President José Manuel Barroso
High Representative Catherine Ashton
Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs
Spanish Presidency
Belgian Presidency
The Council's Trade Policy Committee
The INTA and DEVE committees of the EP

Dr Elisabeth Pape, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Namibia