

WEST AFRICAN TRADE UNION WORKING
GROUP ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

A COMPILATION OF WORK DONE



2005-2008

FRIEDRICH
EBERT 
STIFTUNG

CONTENT

0	Foreword.....	5
1	Context.....	11
2	Background.....	15
3	Working Group Members.....	19
4	Activities carried out.....	29
4.1	Brainstorming Meetings, Training Sessions and Development of Positions.....	31
4.2	Strategic Alliance Meetings.....	35
4.3	Study Tours.....	36
4.4	Advocacy Meetings.....	37
5	WORKING GROUP'S POSITIONS.....	41
5.1	Economic Partnership Agreement.....	43
5.1.1	The Working Group Position on «Current Challenges of Regional Integration in the Context of EPA Negotiations».....	43

5.1.2	Working Group and Farmer’s Associations Position on «The Impact of EPAs on Agricultural Development and Food Security in West Africa».....	51
5.1.3	The Working Group and Private Sector Position on the «Economic Partnership Agreement» (EPA).....	59
5.1.4	The Working Group Position on the «Economic Partnership Agreement» (EPA).....	64
5.2	Food Security	73
5.2.1	Trade Union Responsibilities with Regard to the Challenges of Food Security.....	73
5.2.2	The Working Group Position on «Food Security».....	79
5.3	The Working Group Position on «Regional Integration»	85
6	Perspectives	91

0 - FOREWORD

The present economic and social realities show that integration into the global economy can be one of the most powerful means for promoting economic growth, ensuring development and alleviating poverty. However the positive results obtained from the global trade have been felt more in industrialised countries than in the developing ones, even though during the last ten years, the latter countries have benefited from globalisation-induced prosperity, especially those commonly known as “emerging nations”.

Unfortunately, African countries have stayed aside of global trading activities, while their share in world trade has substantially diminished, presently standing at around 2%. Contrary to the emerging nations, Africa still largely depends on the production and export of raw materials.

The obstacles against the integration of West Africa into the global trade system have been embodied by inherent challenges for a long time. These challenges should be met.

In fact, the West African Region, with about 270 million inhabitants unequally spread over 16 countries with different degree of development (3 developing countries, 12 less advanced countries and 1 transition country), needs

to comprehensively study and evaluate its potentials and weaknesses as a way of ensuring its full participation in global trading activities.

To enable the trade unions in the Sub-Region to contribute towards conducting such an analysis and evaluation, towards effectively taking into consideration the aspirations of the populace and actively participating in the Sub-Region's development, a regional trade union working group, made up of six countries (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal,) was set up in May 2005, with the support of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES).

Right from its inception, the said working group set specific key objectives, prominent among which are:

- Working towards an enhanced involvement of social stakeholders in the elaboration, negotiation and implementation of any trade agreement, particularly the Economic Partnership Agreements currently being negotiated between the European Union and the ECOWAS;
- Focusing on the impacts of these agreements, as far as the economy and employment opportunities are concerned;

- Training and sensitising trade unionists on the importance of issues pertaining to trade;
- Influencing trade policies, particularly through lobbying;
- Working towards effective regional integration, highlighting the social responsibility of both the State and the private sector, formulation of an employment promotion and protection policy at the national and regional levels and promoting the unity of workers' organisations;

During its few but enriching years of existence, the working group can proudly list its concrete achievements as follows:

- Successful holding of eleven regional conferences on various topics dealing variedly with the Economic Partnership Agreements currently under negotiation between the Economic Community of West African States and the European Union, food security and regional integration.
- Systematic development of positions on international trade challenges, with particular reference to the Economic Partnership Agreements, food security and regional integration;
- Organising study trips, advocacy drives and lobbying actions in Africa and Europe with a view to interacting and liaising with the leaders of various institutions on

- the stakes of globalisation and the consequences of the Economic Partnership Agreement;
- Compilation in part of the various standpoints developed and approved by the Secretary-Generals of the trade union organisations, that are members of the working group.

The negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement and, in particular, the initialling of the provisional agreements entered into shortly before the end of 2007 between Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, provided the West African trade union leaders with the right opportunity, in 2008, to look once more into the challenges inherent in these various trade agreements and their impact on the regional integration process.

Moreover, lack of progress in the Doha Round negotiations, the food and financial crisis, the uncertainties linked to GMO production, the opportunities and threats of agro-fuels production, worldwide financial and investment issues, just to mention these few items, form part of the major concerns of the West African trade union organisations. Consequently, the group is determined to go ahead with its analysis and development of positions concerning the above-mentioned challenges.

Thereupon, members of the working group unanimously took the decision to compile, once more, the activities and positions developed from 2005 to 2008.

Such an endeavour is to help all those who are interested in this important work to realise the extent of progress so far made, particularly concerning the development of positions in terms of both the methodology applied and content.

The present publication, just as the previous one, is designed to serve as a precious information and working tool for all those who are concerned with the benefits of multilateral trade and negotiations of trade agreements.

It is my fervent hope that the African trade union organisations, just as their Northern counterparts, their traditional role notwithstanding, contribute their valuable share towards giving globalisation a human face by getting actively involved in working out and implementing all development policies.

I wish you all pleasant reading and a judicious use of this publication.

Uta Dirksen,
Resident Representative,
FES Regional Office,

1 - CONTEXT

The development strategies implemented on attaining independence gave African governments the main responsibility of conceptualizing, implementing and evaluating strategies and policies of growth and development. The Lomé Conventions followed this logic, offering other actors of the development process (such as civil society and the private sector), limited opportunities to take part in the formulation and implementation of policies.

The Cotonou Agreement signed on the 23rd of June, 2000 in Cotonou, Benin brought this trend to an end. This accord contains a substantial amount of new provisions that make room for far reaching legal rights for non-state actors and the possibility of them playing an active role in the ACP-EU cooperation. While this agreement recognizes the right of the ACP member countries to define their development strategies, it broadens their role to include other development partners who are in a position to play a 'complementary role' in policy making and implementation, thus, the involvement of non-state actors is no longer limited to the implementation of projects designed by governments.

For the first time, the EU and ACP countries have committed themselves to legally involve new actors in

both the formulation and the implementation of ACP-EU relations as well as the assessment of the outcomes. On paper, this provision marks a decisive turning point compared to the Lomé conventions, which preceded it.

For the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the European Union to extend their partnership ties to non-state actors imposes a commitment on the part of these non-state actors to seize the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the partnership. It is against this background that West African trade union leaders thought it wise to constitute a sub-regional working group on trade and development to build the capacities of Trade Unions for achieving participation in all aspects of the EU-ACP partnership.

The working group is organized at national and regional levels to consider the ramifications of trade negotiations and the implementation of the agreement . Through the working group, the unions have worked at enhancing their expertise and their capacities to dialogue on issues of trade and development. This has enabled them to exert a measure of influence on the decision-making process, through position papers backed by strategies of advocacy.

With the issues of regional integration and trade negotiations, related to the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement , the unions are also faced with challenges resulting from globalization. This is why trade union experts must strive to develop and implement their capacities to

dialogue on the implications of multilateral trade in order to allow them to contribute their share to making the globalization process more favorable and supportive of workers and the poor.

Lack of progress of negotiations in the Doha round, the food crisis, the implications of sovereignty, the uncertainties associated with producing GMOs, the opportunities and threats linked with the production of agro-fuel, issues of global finance and investments, etc... have culminated in a situation where West African Trade Unions are motivated to commit themselves to the issue of « international trade and development».

Negotiations for the setting-up of an EPA and particularly the signing of a series of provisional agreements towards the end of 2007, between Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana as far as the West African Region is concerned provided West African Trade Union leaders with the opportunity they are rightly seizing, to look into, through the Trade Union Working Group, the issues of trade and development, the challenges inherent in these different trade agreements between the European Union and certain countries of the Sub-Region, with reference to the regional integration process.

1 - Background

Time and again, the challenge of integrating West Africa into world trade comes to the fore, especially with regards to the advantages it stands to gain in taking part in international trade. It is evident that international trade and the development of the export sector in particular can propel the economic growth of a country and a region to great heights. Under these conditions, trade will certainly help in tackling the challenges the West African sub-region is facing by:

- Improving regional integration,
- Diversifying much of its agricultural and industrial production,
- Improving the value of raw materials and
- Building the capacity of economic operators.

To achieve this, it is imperative for the sub-region to design a long-term development vision supported by a corresponding political commitment. International trade has been a contributory factor to the wealth of nations. Unfortunately, the enabling environment for making this a reality is simply non-existent in West Africa.

Due to the varied challenges, West African Trade Unions are obliged to:

- Develop abundant and quality human and material resources;
- Work at optimizing their role in designing, negotiating and implementing all trade agreements especially the EPAs;
- Work towards the achievement of food security standards at the regional level;
- Focus on the impact of the agreement on employment and the economy;
- Train and raise awareness among unionists on the importance of trade related issues;
- Influence trade policies especially through lobbying;
- Effectively work towards regional integration, towards getting both the state and private sector to give priority to social responsibility, towards designing an employment promotion and protection policy at the national and regional levels and towards the unity of workers' unions.

In order to ensure that trade unions in the sub-region attain better results in meeting the requirements of their mandate and actively participate in the development of the sub-region, a regional trade union working group made up of six countries (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Sénégal) was formed in May, 2005 with the support of FES to provide workers in the region with the possibility of reflecting on important topics and to ensure that the appropriate authorities are made aware of their position on various issues.

The Organization of West African Trade Unions' has mandated its working group on international trade to make known their stance on such burning issues as:

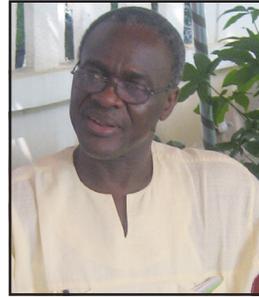
- The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) being negotiated between the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);
- Food security within the West African region;
- Regional integration.

The overall objective is to improve the capacity and position of trade union organizations on issues relating to international trade, the economy and the development of the sub-region:

3 - WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

3.1 Kingsley OFEI-NKANSAH

is a Ghanaian. He was born on October 28, 1956. He holds a Bachelor Degree (BSc) in Political Science with Philosophy from the University of Legon Ghana, a post graduate certificate in Labour Policy from Cape Coast University-Ghana, and is currently taking a MA in Democracy, Governance and Law also at the University of Cape Coast. He is the General Secretary of the General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) of TUC. He is interested in issues related to training, negotiation capacity building, political economy, international trade, agriculture and informal economy workers organisation. He represents the GTUC on the Inter-Institutional Committee on Trade.



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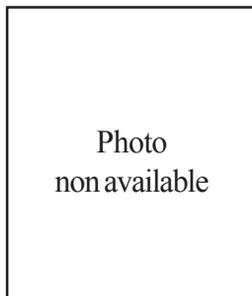
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Is a Nigerian. He was born on August 24, 1960 at Ingle-Edumoga, Okpokwu LGA in Benoue State. He holds a BSc in sociology and a Master of Science (MSc) in political science from the University of Jos, Nigeria. He is currently the General Secretary of Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC). He occupied several positions at various levels as member of the Nigerian National Labour Council, substitute delegate of the working group for the International Labour Organisation (ILO). He represented NLC at various organisations' meetings to which NLC is affiliated like the Organisation of Trade Unions of West Africa (OTUWA), the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the Commonwealth Trade Unions Council.



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Is a Nigerian. She was born in Kaduna-Nigeria on August 25, 1965. She holds a BSc in Economics and a



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Is a Ghanaian born on January 19, 1975. He holds an MPhil in Economics from the University of Ghana and a Bachelor of Arts (Economics) from the University of Cape Coast. He also holds a Teacher's Certificate 'A' from the Foso Teacher Training College. He is the Acting Director of the Policy and Research Institute of the Ghana Trades Union Congress. His interest is in the field of international trade and its impact on the labour market.



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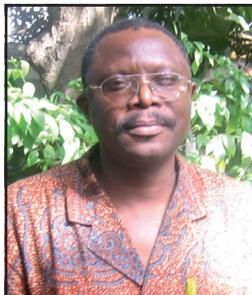
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3.5 Siméon Toundé DOSSOU

Is a Beninese. He was born on January 28, 1956 at Dassa-Zoumè in Benin. He holds a Master of Science (MSc) from the Agricultural University of Wageningen in the Netherlands in Sylviculture and Forestry Ecology. He is the Executive Secretary for Benin Trade Unions Organisations (ROSYB) on Cotonou Agreement. In this framework, he has worked on the Cotonou Agreement during the training of workers and other Benin civil society stakeholders on the issue as well as formulating Benin workers' concerns related to the negotiation of the Economic Partnership Agreement.



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3.6 Mamadou DOUMBOUYA

is a Senegalese. He was born on February 27, 1954 in Dakar-Senegal. He is the Administrative Secretary of the Senegal Independent Trades Union Confederation and Coordinator of the Senegal Trade Unions Confederation Monitoring Committee on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). He is currently the chairman of the Senegal Civil Society Commission in the PRSP review process and Secretary General of the Democratic Trade Union of Road Transport Workers. He has a passion for writing and has published a novel entitled: «je l'aime encore» in the collection: «Plaisir de lire» of NEI.



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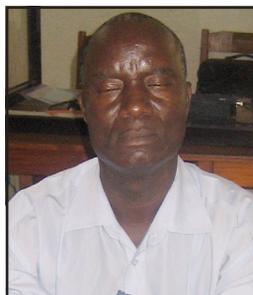
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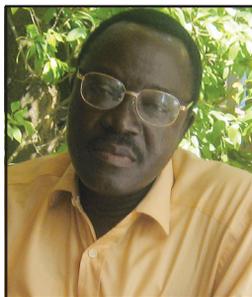
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He is a Beninese. He was born in 1956.

He is a mathematics teacher in secondary school (CEG). He is the General Treasurer of the Independent Trade Unions Organisations Confederation (COSI) in Benin and Deputy



Executive Secretary of the Benin Trade Unions Organisations Network (ROSYB), on the Cotonou Agreement. In this context, he participated in all reflection and training activities of Benin's workers on the Cotonou Agreement as well as the Economic Partnership Agreement.

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3.9 Sette DIENG

From Senegal, born around 1948, he is a trained biochemist from Dakar and Dijon (France) Universities where he holds a Master of Science. He was involved early in trade union activities in public service (Teachers Trades Unions) as well as in the private sector (food industry, Maritime Transport Workers Trades Union) as officer for communication and workers' education. He was the Secretary of Education and Training of the Trade Union Centre UNSAS from 1991 to 2002.



Presently he is Secretary for Education, Training and Cooperation of the Autonomous Transport Workers Trade Union.

He has published with ILO and FES on different subjects like workers' legal protection, the evolution of the trade union movement in Western Africa and the dynamics of globalisation in workers' lives.

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Is a Malian. He was born on April 7, 1948. He holds a Degree in Letters as speciality. Director of Koulikoro Regional Library, he is member of the National Executive Committee of the National Education Research and Culture Confederation (FENAREC); member of the National Executive Committee of the Mali Trade Unions Confederation (CSTM) in charge of International Cooperation and civil society. Member of the Civil Society National Council and Commissioner in charge of the national unit of the West African Civil Society Forum (FOSCAO).



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Is a Malian. He was born on February 27, 1957 in Senegal. He graduated in Economics from Georges Dimithrov University of Sofia in Bulgaria. He is General Secretary of the National



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4 - ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

Considerable work has been accomplished in the areas of training, reflection, awareness-raising and advocacy since May 2005, when the working group was set up in Cotonou. This achievement enabled the working group to gain a non negligible recognition with regard to the definition of a new strategy aiming at protecting the interests of the Sub-Region and its population.

The relevant activities took place alternatively in Benin, Ghana, Mali, Senegal, Nigeria, and at the European Union. These activities made it possible for the members of the group to gain an expertise which, today, confers to them a significant role in the advocacy drive regarding the trade unions' position in respect of the various negotiation processes within the framework of international trade.

During its first meeting, the Working Group set three goals for itself, namely:

- Acquiring knowledge;
- Developing position papers;
- Adopting a working plan.

With regard to knowledge, the challenges inherent to trade agreements, trade treaties, their impacts, as well as the functioning of the following bodies and/or structures:

- WTO,
- WAEMU,
- NEPAD,
- AGOA,
- ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement,
- EPA,
- PRSP,
- OHADA's Provisions and
- SYSCOA,

were singled out.

The identified topics that would require common stands concerned:

1. Regional integration;
2. Debt cancellation;
3. Common External Tariff (CET);
4. Governance;
5. Regional food security;
6. Trade Unions' involvement in economic, social and trade policies;
7. Gender issues;
8. Respect for human and labour rights;
9. Economic Partnership Agreement.

A working plan was adopted by the Group, followed by reflection, meetings, training sessions and the development of position papers, the forming of strategic alliances, study trips and an advocacy plan.

4.1 Brainstorming meetings, training sessions and development of positions

July 2005: Dakar (Senegal)

Topic: The Economic Partnership Agreement being negotiated between the EU and the ECOWAS.



Participant's of the Dakar and Saly workshop

This meeting, which gathered members of the working group, considered the challenges inherent in the Economic Partnership Agreement, with regard to its impact on the West African Region, particularly the youth's employment opportunities.

October 2005: Accra (Ghana)

Topic: Food security in West Africa;

This topic, which is a recurrent concern in the West African Region, in connection with the livelihoods and well-being

of the population, was dealt with during this meeting that gathered trade union experts, on the one hand, and seasoned specialists from the region, on the other hand. The latter, by means of their respective papers and reflections, assisted the trade unions leaders in working out a trade union's stand on the issue.

January 2006: Bamako (Mali)

Topic: Regional integration and participation in the multi-dimensional social forum;

Over 30 years after the Western African countries attained independence, it is obvious that the Sub-Region remains quite as divided as ever. Differences pertaining to trade, language and cultural barriers have contributed to entrenching the division. In spite of efforts made to reduce these obstacles, progress towards a sound regional cooperation is still slow.

This Bamako meeting reviewed the progress so far made on the integration process within the Sub-Region and pondered on the role that can be played by the trade union organizations in this part of Africa towards an effective and efficient integration drive that could promote sustainable development in the various countries concerned.

May 2006: Abuja (Nigeria)

Meeting with the Secretary-Generals on the EPA;

This meeting, which gathered the Secretary-Generals of the Sub-Region's Trade Union Confederations, enabled the working group to let them know the achievements so far attained and the relevant constraints, inform them on the challenge inherent in the EPA, its impact on regional integration and economic development within the ECOWAS region, and to obtain their adherence to the actions that should be taken within the framework of the implementation of the advocacy plan outlined to them.

July 2006: Cotonou (Benin)

Meeting to train on advocacy techniques;

The work carried out by the trade union organizations, which make up the working group dealing with the topic of International Trade and Regional Integration, highlighted the need to implement an advocacy plan targeting decision-makers. This plan was adopted by the secretary-generals during their Abuja and Geneva meetings. The main objective is to bring to the attention of the public at large, through the implementation of the said advocacy plan, the trade union organizations' position on the EPA, via the appropriate ways in order to influence the course of the on-going negotiations between the ECOWAS and the European Union in a manner as to take into consideration the major concerns of the workers in the Sub-Region.

The Cotonou meeting aimed at capacity-building of the Sub-Region's trade union organizations in modern advocacy techniques to enable them to influence the course of the EPA negotiations.

May 2008: Accra (Ghana)

Topic: Interim EPAs and Regional Integration: Trade Union Responsibilities

After long and difficult discussions on an integrated EPA, a series of provisional agreements were signed shortly before the end of 2007, between Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana as far as the West African Region was concerned.

The meeting enabled the trade union experts to thoroughly examine the form and content of the interim trade agreements so as to assist the West African trade union organizations in assuming their responsibility in a more efficient manner, in connection with the integration process in the Sub-Region.

November 2008: Cotonou (Benin)

Topic: West African Trade Union Responsibilities with regard to food security

Agriculture constitutes the mainstay of most of the economies in the West African Sub-Region. It mobilises between 70 and 80 % of the active population, while largely remaining subsistence agriculture.

Food security, meaning adequate food availability at all time, anywhere, quantitatively and qualitatively, forms the prime objective of any sound agricultural policy. It is a fundamental right that any social organisation should strive to preserve.

It is against this background that the meeting was called which enabled members of the Working Group to perceive their responsibility and that of the trade union organisations in the West African Sub-Region with regard to this topic.

4.2 Strategic Alliance Meetings

December 2006: Dakar (Senegal)

Meeting between the working group and the West Africa private sector on the EPAs;

From 05 to 08 December, 2006, the meeting between the Private Sector and the West African Trade Unions took place in Dakar and Saly. It was an exchange and consultation forum on the on-going negotiation of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the West African Region and the European Union.

This meeting enabled the participants to sum up the negotiations so far conducted between the European Union and the ACP countries, in respect of the EPA, with a view to assessing the EPAs' impact on the private sector and employment opportunities in West Africa. The

framework was also used to consider issues pertaining to regional integration.

June 2007: Accra (Ghana)

A Meeting between the Working Group and West African Producers on the impact of EPA negotiations between ECOWAS and the EU on agricultural development and food security.

As food insecurity constitutes one of the major threats to the Sub-Region, with reference to the signing of an Economic Partnership Agreement between the ECOWAS and European Union, the trade union organizations deemed it useful to meet the agricultural producers and exchange view points with them on their stands towards reaching a synergy between both groups for concerted actions.

4.3 Study tours

September 2005: Bruxelles (Belgium)

An information and study tour of the European Union.

The group, as a body, met several actors of the European Union, both at the Directorate General of Trade and Directorate General of Development. The purpose of the trip was to enable members of the group to understand how the Union operates, its various bodies and the support it grants to the African countries' development efforts.

4.4 Advocacy Meetings

May 2006: Abuja (Nigeria)

Meeting with the ECOWAS;

Officials of the Community met with the working group. The need to involve Non Government Actors in the negotiation of the Economic Partnership Agreement was reaffirmed, especially the consultation of the Sub-Region's Trade Union Organizations by ECOWAS. Moreover, the group's stand on the EPA was explained and understood.

June 2006: Geneva (Switzerland)

Meeting with the Secretary Generals of West Africa, visit to the WTO, to UNCTAD and to the South Centre;

Following the Abuja meeting, the need for a delegation of the Working Group to meet the other Secretary-Generals of the Sub-Region's Trade Union Confederations was felt. The 2006 International Labor Conference provided the opportunity to exchange view points with the leaders of other trade union confederations. Positions adopted on the Economic Partnership Agreement, Regional Integration and Food Security were explained, understood and adopted.

Furthermore, the Working Group's delegation shared and explained the trade unions' positions to the WTO, UNCTAD and other Non Governmental Organizations.

July 2006: Brussel and Berlin (Belgium/Germany)

Meeting with the European Union, with the ITUC, the ETUC with the 1111 NGO; with the German Ministry for Cooperation, with the German Parliament, with NGOs and social research groups.

In the implementation process of its advocacy plan, a delegation of the Working Group, made up of Comrade Vamory Touré of Cote d'Ivoire, representing the Secretary-Generals of the Sub-Region, Comrade Kingsley Ofei Nkansa of Ghana, Focal Point for English-Speaking countries, Comrade Dossou Siméon Toundé, Focal Point for French-Speaking countries, traveled to Brussels to meet several European actors, as well as the European Council Commission, Ambassadors of the ACP Countries and the European Trade Union Organizations, particularly the European Trade Unions' Confederation (ETUC) and the then Free Trade Unions' Confederation, now International Trade Unions' Confederation (ITUC). Thereafter, it moved to Germany, as this country was holding the presidency of the Union, to meet several political and social actors, mainly members of parliament, civil servants, ambassadors and NGOs.



Comrades DOSSOU Siméon Toundé (Benin), Kingsley Ofei Nkansa (Ghana) and the late Vamory Touré (Cote d'Ivoire) with two civil servants of the German Ministry of Cooperation

January 2007: Nairobi (Kenya)

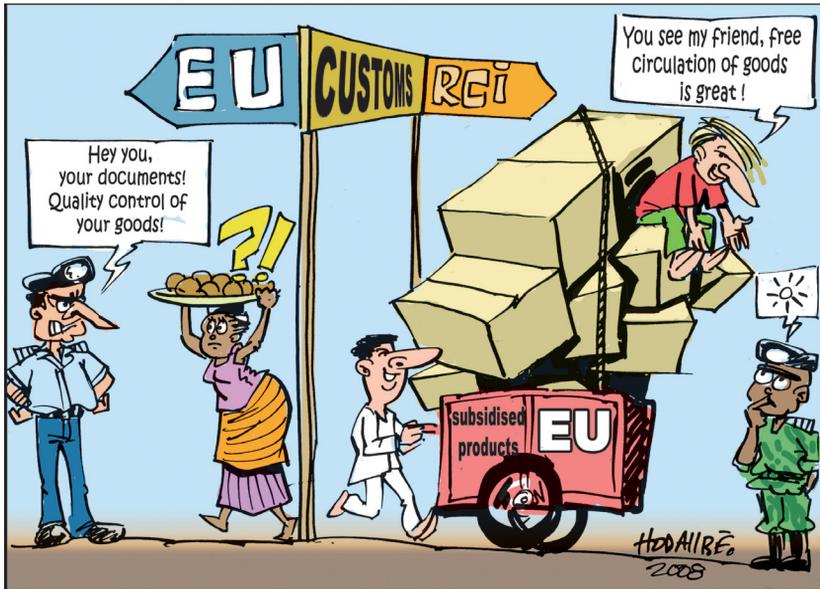
Participation in the World Social Forum;



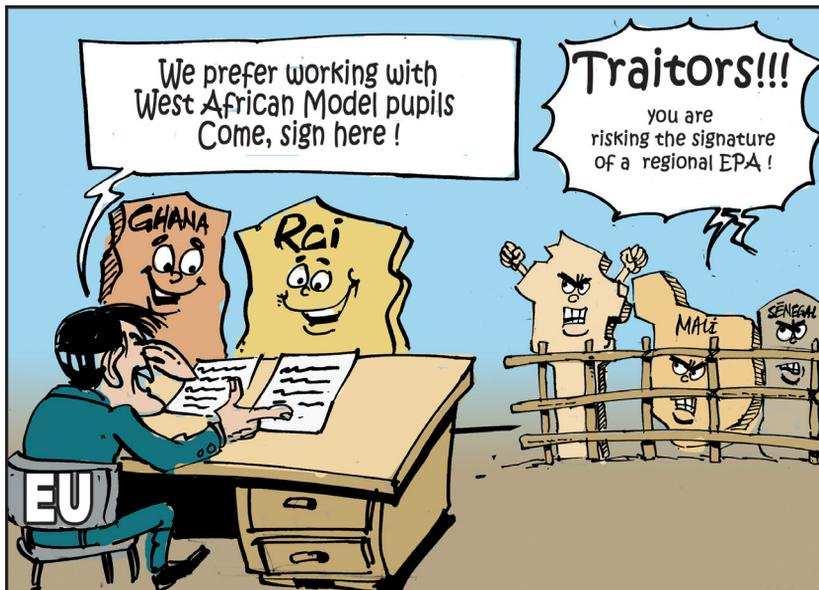
Comrade DOSSOU Siméon and Mr Jan Niklas Engels, Resident Director of FES Benin during the World Social Forum in Nairobi

The participation in the Forum enabled a delegation of the Working Group to share, during a Panel Session, the trade union's stand on the Economic Partnership Agreement. Several actors who were working on the topic, as well as other regions' trade union organizations became acquainted with the West African trade unions' concerns on the issue.

5 - WORKING GROUP'S POSITION



5.1 ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (EPA)



5.1.1 The working groups position on “Current Challenges of Regional Integration in the context of EPA negotiations”

1. The Sub-Regional Working Group on Trade and Development met in Accra, for a three day meeting, from 27 – 29 May 2008, to appraise the interim EPAs and regional integration towards reviewing trade union responsibilities.
2. Building on previous positions taken by the Working Group between 2005 - 2007, the meeting discussed:

- The background, challenges and content of the interim trade agreements that have been initiated between the EU on one hand, Ghana and Ivory Coast on the other hand;
- The current challenges for regional integration resulting from the interim economic partnership agreements;
- Market access negotiations and the determination of sensitive products in the context of the West African EPA negotiations;
- The challenges and responsibilities of West African trade unions in relation to the regional integration processes.

On the interim Economic Partnership Agreements

3. The meeting noted with much concern the arm-twisting, manipulative manner in which the European Union drove the EPA negotiation process and agenda throughout 2007 in particular.

4. What is more, the meeting noted that this EU insistence on December 2007 deadline was in spite of the persistent calls by negotiators, governments, trade unions and other civil society organisations to extend the timeline for concluding the negotiations.

5. It acknowledged the immense efforts of civil society to get governments not to yield to the pressures of the EU, and lamented how without due reference to legislative structures and the population at large, Ghana and Ivory went ahead to initial the interim agreements.

6. Commending Nigeria's consistency in resisting the manipulation of the EU the meeting called on Nigeria to reach out to others in the Sub-region, both State and non-state actors, to mobilise and resist the EU tendencies towards re-colonisation

7. The interim agreements are straight Free Trade Agreements which have nothing to offer development. They all go beyond liberalisation commitments within the WTO, thus being WTO- Plus. They are far beyond what ACP has ever been asked to do in Doha Round and also go beyond requirements for WTO-compatible trade relations.

8. Europe is giving almost nothing while Ghana and Ivory Coast are agreeing to major opening and restructuring of their economies. The core elements include trade in goods which entail complete opening to between 81% and 87% of trade from Europe within 10-15 years.

9. Meanwhile there is no substantial improvement in access to European markets resulting from the duty-free, quota-free offer of the EU. This offer is only marginally better than before and comes with lots of strings attached.

10. The EU offer of ***Everything-but-Arms*** to the LDCs has virtually yielded no increase in access to EU markets.

11. Though there is supposed to be an exclusion list of sensitive products from the market access tariff dismantling schedule, the process of identifying the sensitive products at the national and sub-regional levels have been fraught with many difficulties and done in a manner that is neither transparent nor participatory.

12. The meeting noted that EU at the WTO level could not commit itself to eliminate export subsidies before 2013. Meanwhile the many subsidies within the context of EU Common Agricultural Policy are not touched upon in the EPA, thus allowing the exports of EU subsidized agricultural products to enter and destroy markets in West African and other ACP regions.

13. The interim agreements confirm the earlier positions of the Working Group and other CSOs that the conclusion of the EPA would destroy domestic agriculture and industry, other productive sectors, jobs and food security and, in some instances, cause trade diversion.

14. The agreement is even more disturbing because it has no built-in review mechanisms.

15. The meeting notes with concern the time-lines for negotiating a full EPA by 2009, which could cover contentious issues like competition, investments, government procurement and far-reaching intellectual property clauses, as well as services liberalisation beyond commitments at the multilateral level.

EPA implications for Regional Integration in West Africa

16. The high-handed manner in which the interim agreements were finalised as well as the tendency to divide and ruin actually leaves many more sections of the West African population convinced that the EPAs are far from furthering sustainable development and regional integration.

17. That the EU could go ahead and sign interim EPAs with individual countries when the entire agreed negotiation road map provided for a collective sub-regional negotiation is clear evidence of how the EU is out to destroy integration gains in pursuit of its offensive and defensive interests.

18. The result of this divide and ruin tactics by the EU is heightening distrust among countries involved in the negotiation process

19. The current negotiation time-lines being forced on countries and the Sub-region as a whole is extremely disruptive of regional integration, as noted in earlier positions, given the drive to finalise negotiations before a deepening in the scope and level of integration within ECOWAS

West African Trade Union responsibilities

20. Against the backdrop of the challenges implied in negotiation of EPAs and their negative implications for regional integration and sustainable development the meeting noted that trade unions have a critical responsibility to play by way of:

- a) Mobilising all trade union members, potential members, and all non-state actors to back genuine demands consistent with objectives of regional integration and sustainable development;
- b) Coordinating, harmonising and offering leadership to civil society at all levels for mass expressions in support of our genuine demands;
- c) Building bridges at the international level for more concerted and consistent advocacy.

Demands

21. The meeting, on the basis of the above, demands:

- a) That all country-level negotiations with the EU ceases immediately;
- b) a moratorium on the EPA negotiations in order to ensure that the eventual outcomes of new trade relations are consistent with development and regional integration objectives of the sub-region;
- c) a deepening of the regional integration process as a basis for a free trade agreement with the EU;
- d) the implementation and enforcement of existing integration protocols, in particular the ECOWAS common agricultural policy;
- e) the reinforcement of African Union responsibilities to play a monitoring and coordinating role in ensuring that WTO – compatible trade arrangements with the EU do not undermine regional integration;

- f) All trade unions and civil society organisations committed to regional integration and sustainable development must rise up in unison in defence of the independence and sovereignty of our countries.

5.1.2 Working group and Farmer's Associations Position on the Implication of EPA on Agricultural Development and Food Security in West Africa



1. Representatives of farmers' organisations and West Africa workers' unions met in Accra, Ghana from 26 to 29 June 2007 with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in the framework of a meeting on : «The role of agricultural development and food security in Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations».

- 2.** This meeting is held on the purpose that trade unions and farmers organisations positions on economic partnership agreement should be put together.
- 3.** The meeting made the wrap up of negotiations between the European Union and the Commission of West African States in the framework of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) and assessed EPAs impact on the agricultural sector and food security in the sub region.
- 4.** During the meeting, it has been noticed that the food situation which is already precarious will be exacerbated with the signing of EPA between ECOWAS and EU.
- 5.** The challenges related to food sovereignty and agricultural development in the sub-region have also been analysed by the participants ; this helped them to examine the consequences of setting up a free trade zone between EU and ECOWAS in the labour market in general and on West African farmers in particular.
- 6.** The meeting has noticed that contrary to the objective of development affirmed in Cotonou agreement, EPA's negotiations are mainly directed to issues such as liberalisation of access to markets, services liberalisation, setting up an agreement on investment, competition and public markets which can not lead to development alone.

7. It has also been noticed during the meeting that tariff disarmament will have a negative impact on social structures and West African economies mainly based on agriculture sector. In fact:

- The opening of West African markets would lead to a massive importation of subsidised agricultural and agribusiness products which would affect negatively productive activities of the region as well as agriculture sectors and even semi agriculture sectors and would constitute a serious threat for any agricultural and industrial development;
- Customs returns drop which constitutes the resources on which the states and the community can count on at most would deprive them of an important lever of social and economic policy in a context in which agriculture sector of the sub region needs to be supported by personal resources in accordance with the commitment taken by the head of states in Maputo;
- Customs returns mitigation as the consequence of tariff disarmament will increase social facilities costs like health, education and water. It is quite obvious that women will be the most affected for they are the most vulnerable.

8. The meeting has also noticed that with respect to Singapore issues (investment policies, competition rules and public deals) that are still important economic policy instruments which developing countries including African countries have so far refused to negotiate in the framework of EPAs.

9. The meeting recalls that despite the formal protocols set up by West African governments in the region, then implementation level is low, in particular with regard to the creation of integrated regional markets. Namely public policies harmonisation, effective cancellation of formal and informal impediments to free trade, applies harmonised tariffs at borders, free movement of people and goods etc.

10. With regard to negotiations, the meeting has observed:

- An in-depth unbalance of human and institutional capacities between parties in negotiation.
- A wrong impact evaluation of prior reforms to design, negotiate and implement at national as well as regional levels in order to set up conditions for an effective participation of ECOWAS in EPA (Customs union, common external tariff, competition and investment policy, trade facilitation measures, technical standards harmonisation, suppression of technical obstacles to

trade, health and phytosanitary standards harmonisation etc.) and finally;

- Divergence on point of view between ECOWAS and the European Commission on certain key issues, mainly on EPA's «development content».

Following the exchange among the participants, they commonly agreed on:

11. It has been concluded that it's extremely dangerous and suicidal to artificially accelerate the formal process of negotiations to necessarily conclude the negotiations in the coming months and allow EPA's implementation right from January 1st, 2008.

12. Request that the following prerequisites be achieved before any creation of free trade zone between EU and ECOWAS, namely:

- a) Effective creation of the regional customs Union and common external tariff that facilitate ECOWAS agricultural policy (ECOWAP) implementation and guarantee food sovereignty;
- b) Work out an open list of sensitive products excluded from liberalisation and consequently protected by a certain level of Common External Tariff (TEC) ;

- c) Improvement of productive sectors competitiveness mainly agriculture sector;
- d) Imperial necessity to prior conclude the Cycle of Doha in order to set up a multilateral framework which meets clearly the expectations of developing countries in which respected bilateral agreements (like EPA) would then be arranged accordingly.

Our eleven requirements run as follows:

- a) Stop the negotiations and review the mandates, the agenda and reinforce the capacities of all stakeholders of West African region;
- b) Effective implementation of ECOWAP as a priority and the elaboration as well as implementation of a plan of action within ECOWAP, targeting the attainment of food sovereignty objectives for a regional economic, socio-cultural development;
- c) In-depth regional integration : regional markets development is a most profitable perspective in matter of poverty control and economic development as well as hypothetical growth of international markets;
- d) Define a trade regime based on asymmetry and fairness : this is the only way to reduce the gap between EU

and ECOWAS and give a real meaning to special and differentiated treatment principle, known at WTO as well as in Cotonou Agreement. This asymmetry must absolutely lead to conclude the exclusion of all sensitive products ; that is to say products imported from EU and which compete local sectors in ECOWAS region ;

- e) Improvement of the participation of all actors in EPAs preparation and negotiation: this participation is beyond democratic standard principles in Cotonou Agreement; a guarantee of relevant standard and indispensable choices for an efficient implementation of concluded agreements;
- f) Popularisation at ECOWAS countries' parliaments level of all position papers of European parliamentarians who are against EPA;
- g) Dissemination of TEC/WAEMU's evaluation reports, mid term review of EPA's negotiation and discuss the democratisation of negotiations in progress;
- h) Carry out sectorial impact studies at national as well as community level by using appropriate and comparable models and finalise those which have been worked out with a view to anticipating on possible consequences at socio economic and cultural levels;

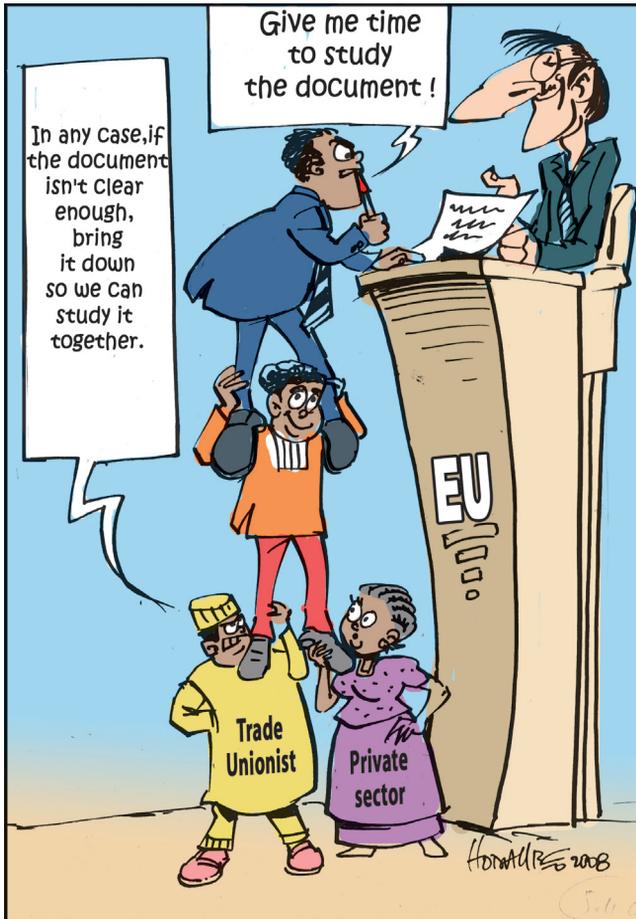
- i) Take into account the standards, operational conventions and fundamental principles of the negotiations with a view to guaranteeing a decent work within ECOWAS;
- j) Create and preserve jobs as well as the living and work conditions improvement for the population;
- k) Finally, gender issue integration in the negotiations is important because of the capital role women play in agricultural production in the sub region.

13. Common commitment

Trade unions and farmers organisations representatives who took part in the meeting are committed to:

- Work together in collaboration with other social strata in order to meet the requirements formulated above;
- Be against any legal means at negotiations so that agreements are concluded under their current form;
- Disseminate the proposals agreed upon in this meeting to other social strata.

5.1.3 Working Group and Private Sector Representatives Position on EPE



1. A three days meeting of West African representatives of trade unions and the private sector was organised at Saly, 5-7 Dec 2006 to discuss the Economic Partnership Agreement with the support of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

2. The meeting discussed the current state of the negotiations with a view to assessing the likely impact on the private sector and employment in West Africa. They deplore the fact that the private sector and trade unions have not been adequately involved in the EPA negotiations.

3. The meeting discussed in particular the trend towards the establishment of a free trade agreement between the EU and the ECOWAS.

4. The meeting noted that contrary to the development objectives the main thrust of the ACP-EU negotiations are:

- Market access liberalisation;
- Liberalisation of the services sector;
- To reach agreement on investment, competition and government procurement policies.

5. The meeting also discussed related regional integration efforts and processes.

6. On market access:

The meeting noted that the removal of tariff barriers would have a negative impact on West African economies; in that connection the meeting noted the following:

- To open up domestic markets would lead to the influx of cheap and highly subsidised foreign goods that would be a serious threat to industrial, agricultural and other productive activities;
- Removal of tariffs would deny governments of customs revenues that are the most reliable source of revenue and remove the possibilities for using tariff as a tool for leveraging national and sub-regional industrial and other productive development activities.

7. On services liberalisation:

The meeting recalled that ACP countries are not obliged to negotiate the liberalisation of services sector within the EPA negotiations. The existing rules on services between the two partners are already WTO compatible.

8. On Singapore issues

The meeting underscored the fact that investment, competition and government procurement policies are important tools for development that African and indeed all developing countries have consistently refused to negotiate in any trade agreement. In any case, ECOWAS is not obliged to negotiate Singapore issues under EPA.

9. On the basis of the preceding observations, the meeting demands the following:

9.1. The extension of EPA negotiation deadline by ***at least*** three years.

9.2. The following conditions should be in place before negotiating reciprocal trade arrangements:

- a) Regional integration should be deepened by encouraging and implementing sub regional trade;
- b) Relevant sectoral impact studies at both the national and regional levels should be undertaken, funded by our countries and the community; the outcome of the studies should be comparable;
- c) Develop national policies and harmonise regional policies on competition; investment and Government Procurement;
- d) The development and harmonisation of sub-regional strategies for agricultural and industrial development;
- e) Mass education and sensitisation of companies and the population should be undertaken;
- f) Governments should meet their obligation to set up systems to manage rules of origin and product quality issues.

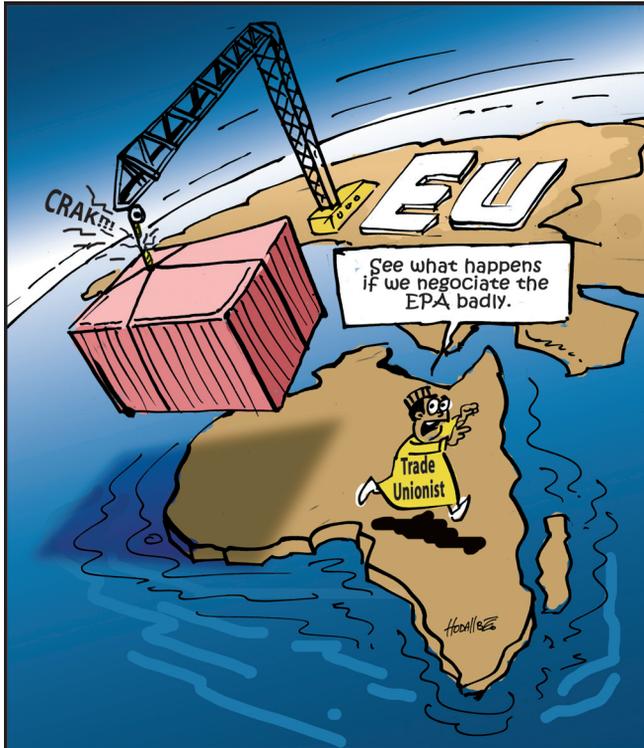
9.3. Within the context of the ongoing trade negotiations West Africa:

- a) must maintain the right to exclude sensitive products from liberalisation; the exclusion should however be stated in terms of percentage rather than a product list;
- b) should not commit itself to services liberalization beyond commitments that have been offered in the WTO;
- c) must refuse to negotiate Singapore issues with particular reference to Investment, Competition and Government Procurement policy;
- d) must secure compensation mechanisms to enable companies and other producers to cover their adjustment costs, upgrade the production system, improve productivity and competitiveness, diversify products and enhance their ability to meet international quality standards.

10. Shared commitment

The Private sector and the trades unions are committed to working together with other social forces in the sub-region in furtherance of these positions and demands. They commit themselves to working for the negotiation of trade arrangements that serve the industrialisation by West African companies, employment creation and over all national and sub regional development.

5.1.4 The working group's position on the «Economic Partnership Agreement» (EPA)



Elaborated by the group during its meeting in Saly (Senegal), from 26 to 29 July, 2005, this position was adopted by the Secretary-Generals of the Trade Union Confederations of six countries belonging to the group during the Abuja meeting (Nigeria), which took place from 10 to 12 May, 2006, on the one hand, and by all the Secretary-Generals of the countries belonging to the West African Sub-Region, during the International Labor Conference of June 2006, on the other hand.

In fact, the working group estimated that West Africa counted 280 million inhabitants in 2002, about one third of the continent population where a great number of countries go through a social and economic situation particularly difficult.

In fact, out of 16 countries in the sub region, 13 are classified among the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and 14 have low level of human development (HDI<0.5).

Access to world markets for those countries is more and more difficult and one can notice the disintegration of tariff preferences that were granted to them on the world market for they are dependent on resources derived mostly from primary products exportation.

Public or semi public companies where governments invested a lot of resources have been less productive due to competitiveness limitations and policy orientation which are less satisfactory. The poor quality of the social and economic infrastructure as a whole is an obstacle to production capacity and exchange development.

It was in this context that the cooperation agreement was signed in Cotonou on June 23, 2000 between European Union and ACP countries called «Cotonou Agreement». The aim of this agreement is to make the commercial dimension of this cooperation comply with World Trade Organisation rules (WTO).

Negotiations for the establishment of an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between European Union and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) started on October 6, 2003 in Cotonou. A road map of those negotiations had been adopted since August 2004.

It is obvious that the signing of such an agreement will have some impacts over all the countries of West African region. Thus, some agreements wrongly negotiated which would not be efficient at all for economic and social development of ECOWAS countries are threats to be avoided.

It is important to remind that the first objective of those negotiations is the development of West African countries through their integration into the world economy through an effective and efficient regional integration.

West African economy is facing many very serious challenges which have certain impacts over its development. They are mainly:

- Unfavourable macro economic environment;
- Poor primary infrastructures (power, transport and communication);
- Poor industrial sector;
- Poor qualification of workmanship;
- Non diversification of agriculture as well as archaism of means of production;

- Poor processing of local products;
- Poor investments;
- High interest rates of the financial institutions;
- Difficult access to regional and international market;
- Massive importation of subsidised products from European Union;
- High unemployment rate that leads to drop of labour cost;
- Difficult access to credit by SMI and SME;
- Poor Legal system;
- Administrative slowness;
- Growing and permanent corruption at all levels;
- Inappropriate choices in matter of economic strategy;
- Ill identified and ill defined priorities;
- Lack of complementarities between agriculture and industry;
- Non respect of labour fundamental standards and finally;
- Poor legislative and legal device in matter of land management.

Meanwhile pursuant to analyses carried out it happens that this agreement should also have some positive and negative effects:

Thus, as far as the positive effects are concerned trades union associations of the sub region believe that EPA can contribute into:

- Provide improvement at qualitative and quantitative levels;

- Opening of markets;
- Enhance competitiveness;
- Increase trade;
- Stimulation of Regional Integration.

Nevertheless, the negative impacts are the following:

- Reduction of exportations (poor supply);
- Increase of import products including subsidised products;
- Reduction of customs returns;
- Risk of closing some enterprises and consequently employment reduction;
- Possible accentuation of labour rights violation and possible deterioration of working conditions.

In connection with the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), the West African Trade Union Organizations have, for years now, been asking questions on the implications that the free trade agreement, if signed, could have as far as the daily life of the Sub-Region's populations is concerned.

They observed that the trade unions are not adequately involved in the EPA negotiation process.

The advent of a free trade zone between the European Union (EU) and the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS), contrary to the development objective stated in the Cotonou, Agreement, is currently evolving towards:

- Free access to markets,
- Liberalization of the services sector,
- The adoption of an agreement on investments, competition and public contracts.

It is quite obvious that total removal of tariff barrier would have a negative impact on the West African economic system.

Indeed:

Opening up the West African markets would lead to a massive entry of subsidized and cheap products into the Sub-Region, which would compromise all its production activities, in the industrial and agricultural sectors and seriously undermine all the industrialization efforts so far made. It would deprive the Community's member states of customs revenues that form the most reliable resources for the construction of social amenities, particularly schools, health centers, etc... It would also deprive them of a key instrument for implementing a sound economic and industrial policy and securing investment capacities.

The African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are not under any obligation to negotiate the liberalization of the services sector within the framework of the EPA, since the existing rules between the European Union and the ACP are already compatible with the WTO's rules.

Similarly, the investment policies, the rules governing competition and public contracts remain as key economic policy instruments that developing countries, including their African counterparts, should refuse to subject to negotiation.

Consequently, the West African Trade Union Working Group on International Trade would like the negotiators of the Economic Partnership Agreement to take into consideration the following issues of prime concern.

For this purpose West African trades union associations on international trade wish that Economic Partnership Agreement negotiators should address the following issues :

- **1.** Carry out impact surveys of those partnership agreements in each country and at regional level and refine those carried out already with a view to anticipating over possible consequences at social, economic and cultural levels;
- **2.** Reduce the negotiations rhythm in order to take necessary time to grasp and master all the implications of this agreement;
- **3.** Involve trades union associations into EPA's tripartite negotiation Committees at local as well as regional levels with clear positions and reinforce actions coordination at regional level;

- **4.** Regional integration reinforcement and particularly facilitate free movement of people and goods;
- **5.** Be aware of the necessity for our region to determine its own trade and investment policies;
- **6.** Be effectively aware of labour international standards and conventions as stipulated in article 50 of the Agreement with a view to guaranteeing to workers the compliance with the fundamental labour rights at work within ECOWAS and also gender issue;
- **7.** Set up common sectorial policies and mainly in agriculture;
- **8.** Preserve at national and regional levels the lessons and preferences granted to Least Developed Countries;
- **9.** Reinforce businessmen capacity at national as well as regional levels in order to improve the quality of products following health and phytosanitary standards;
- **10.** Identify and exclude EPA's sensible products;
- **11.** Negotiate some compensations for returns losses;
- **12.** Further investment in infrastructures development;
- **13.** Set up a permanent concertation framework between trades union associations of the region on international trade issues and EPAs.



Some German NGO members following the discussion on EPA

5.2 FOOD SECURITY



5.2.1: West Africa Trade Unions responsibilities with regard to food security challenges

The Working Group on Trade and Development met in Cotonou, Benin from 4-6 November 2008 to appraise the Food Security Challenges in West Africa following the global food price crisis which has heightened the food insecurity situation in the sub-region.

Attended by trade union members from all six participating countries (Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Senegal and Benin) the Working Group discussed the food security challenges in the context of current global crisis, regional integration and the negotiation of economic partnership

agreements with the EU. It recalled that since its inception in 2005 these have been the main issues it has been working on and noted with concern the gravity of the food security challenges. It accordingly came out with a number of positions and demands for the consideration of various stakeholders.

Global food crisis and Food Security challenges in West Africa

Freedom from hunger is a fundamental human right which obliges Governments of West Africa to respect, protect and fulfil citizens' rights to food. Food security is the condition where all citizens have access to adequate and quality food at all times for a healthy and productive life. There is therefore the need to generate adequate incomes to ensure that people, communities and nations that are not able to meet their food requirements are able to procure them from elsewhere.

The food security situation of the 270 million people living in West Africa is precarious, as 15% on average and as high as 51% of the population in some countries are malnourished and even hungry. While the food insecurity is particularly pronounced among small scale producers who are mostly women there is growing hunger, malnutrition and poverty among the increasing urban population with the growing informalisation of work and the burgeoning informal sector. An assessment of the

current crises in terms of causes and effects throws up useful lessons for governments and peoples of West Africa.

While trade is necessary for the promotion of food security, countries that have been depending on food imports from outside the West African sub-region have been harder hit by the global food price hikes.

While trade in food and agricultural produce is useful for food security, the recent food crisis has exposed the fallacy of producing agricultural produce for the export market while importing increasingly more of the food needs of the countries in West Africa and increasingly more of the inputs that go into agricultural production. This situation is certainly more serious given the fact that agriculture is the single most important sector in terms of contribution to GDP, employment and export earnings.

The West African countries suffer food insecurity as result of various factors including:

- the historically-structured production of food and non-food agriculture produce for exports;
- the removal of all forms of support, including subsidies, for food production which is the mainstay of small scale producers, the majority of whom are women;

- the weak backward and forward linkages between agriculture and industry within the member countries and the ECOWAS community as a whole;
- the growing importation of highly subsidised food from rich industrialised countries;
- weak intra-regional trade within West Africa;
- poor post harvest management and marketing;
- increasing promotion of non-traditional export crops that out compete and divert productive resources such land, credit, inputs and extension services away from food;
- the dependence on rainfall for agricultural production;

The high level of dependence on food that is imported more so from outside the ECOWAS region has provided the conditions for transmitting global food price hikes onto the domestic market, thus worsening the food insecurity situation in West Africa.

Regional integration and food security

The Working Group reiterated its commitment to regional integration as a necessary condition for sustainable development with in-built food security strategies. The negotiation of the Common External Tariff, with a fifth

band should be pursued with the fundamental concern for the creation of decent employment and food security based on harmonised and synchronised national and regional food security strategies. ECOWAP should therefore receive due attention and have the requisite mechanisms for implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Economic Partnership Agreement and Food Security

The emerging outcomes of EPA negotiations, in particular the push for sweeping liberalisation and the reduced policy autonomy of national governments directly threaten food security and regional integration. These are concerns the Working Group and other CSO have consistently drawn attention to in the past.

Notwithstanding the initialling of interim EPAs, governments and peoples of WA should step up their campaign to resist the inequities and imbalance in the negotiations with the view to securing an alternative that is consistent with our own regional integration and food security agenda.

Trade union demands for food security

The trade unions accordingly demand the following as a necessary condition for promoting food security in the ECOWAS sub-region:

- 1.** redirect the focus of agricultural production in each country away from the emphasis on cash crop production for exports to address the food needs of the population.
- 2.** institute support and legitimate protective schemes for food production which is the mainstay of small scale producers, the majority of whom are women.
- 3.** use appropriate strategy and tools to protect domestic producers from the trade-distorting effects of subsidised foods imported into the region.
- 4.** strengthen the backward and forward linkages between agriculture and industry within the member countries and the ECOWAS community as a whole.
- 5.** strengthen intra-regional trade in West Africa with clear food security strategies that take advantage of the eco-climatic diversities in the sub-region; these should necessarily have a strong post-harvest management and marketing dimension.
- 6.** promote non-traditional export crops and agro-fuel production only to the extent that they do not divert resources such as land, credit, inputs and extension services away from food production.
- 7.** develop water management and irrigation technologies that reduce dependence on rainfall for agricultural production.

8. promote the development of improved seeds and agricultural equipment within the West African region.

Trade union responsibilities

- mobilisation of all trade unions in WA in support of the above demands;
- mobilisation and collaboration with other civil society organisations;
- mobilisation and sensitisation of entire populations for food security based on sub-regional integrated objectives;
- mobilisation and sensitisation of populations against EPA.

5.2.2 The working group's position on «Food Security»

Agriculture accounts for over 70% of employment in the economies of developing countries. It is also a major export earner and major contributor to the GDP in region thereby contributing directly or indirectly to livelihoods, food security, rural development and poverty reduction. Despite its contribution, the sector cannot be said to provide the food security that the sub-region needs even with the availability of arable land.

However, as trade unions, this phenomenon poses a great challenge to efforts to reduce poverty and improve rural development. It is on this basis that trade unions within the region through the working group share perspectives on these areas with the aim of contributing towards improving agriculture to ensure food security, rural development and better livelihoods within the sub-region.

We therefore state our positions with regards to policy development, modernization of the sector, availability of support and access to credit, market access and research outcomes.

Policy Development

The development of agriculture in deed is critical for transforming our productive sectors in order to create an enabling economic environment conducive for food security at the national and regional levels. Therefore the development of clear policies and measures that would provide appropriate supportive and protective environment for agriculture production is a pre-requisite for poverty reduction.

There is the need to develop forward and backward linkages with agriculture, industry and services as a means of providing a ready source of raw material for the other sectors of the economy. These linkages will contribute towards processing of our products either semi processed or processed for consumption.

Modernisation and diversification of Agriculture

For trade unions, modernization should mean a socially and economically sustainable agriculture that ensures a fair share of the benefits of increased productivity and production to those in actual production. Diversifying through the development of competitive and varied products specifically the development of seeds with high resistance to the many diseases that plague the agriculture sector can increase export volume on the international market and thereby create jobs at the national and regional levels for small scale farmers especially women and youth.

Increasing the volume of our agricultural export as well as providing raw materials for our productive sectors requires a strong infrastructural base, incentives, institutional reforms that safeguard especially the traditional landownership and farmers initiatives in terms of entrepreneurship. Thus the development of basic infrastructures such as energy, transport and communication among other to facilitate the movement of agricultural products from producers to consumers as well as generating the needed employment and the eradication of poverty in the region.

Support to the sector in terms of the development of efficient and reliable irrigation system will facilitate access and control by small scale farmers to irrigated land. This is important towards ensuring that agriculture in the sub-region is neither only rain fed nor subject to the vagaries of the weather. This critically raises the issue of promoting rural water and sanitation as it adds to the development of human capital in the rural areas and improved health profile for enhanced productivity.

Availability of support and Access to credit

For the agriculture sector to play its role in ensuring food security and food sufficiency, all effort should be geared towards mechanizing agriculture in the region so as to do away with old farming practices and its small productive capacity which subsequently militate against the achievement of food security and rural development in our economies. We recognize the high number of farmers producing at subsistence level and constrained by insufficient or no credit facilities, poor technical know-how and support particularly in the areas of storage and preservation that are characteristics of post harvest losses, a key problem in the sub-region.

It is therefore necessary that our farmers are empowered to enable them continue to produce to feed the country and for export. Policies should seek accordingly to introduce improved and modern technological applications in all stages of the farming and make them accessible to small scale farmers. As such the small scale farmers or rural workers will be assured of their social protection in the area of health, job security and socio-economic security. There is also the need for ***extension services for our farmers especially the small scale farmers to produce.***

It is also important to put in place a mechanism for funding agriculture which will enable farmers to have access to credits at reasonable interest rates or farming implements which are essential to improvement in yields or productivity.

Market Access

A particular concern for many small scale farmers in the region had been the issue of market access. Finding market for agricultural products is necessary for sustaining livelihoods of the many who depend on this sector. The issue of market access should first and foremost take into account the development of cooperatives or producers' organizations in the agricultural production especially where production in the sector is on a small scale. This will give operators in the sector access to markets and also have control over prices and distribution channels. This will lead to improved incomes and thereby reduce poverty in the sector and make the sector more attractive to the unemployed especially women and youth.

Beyond that, consideration must be given to the establishment of a pricing and food reserve mechanism to protect farmers especially during bumper harvest. We advocate for the establishment of institutions that intervene in the marketing of produce of small farmers in order to ensure fair pricing and returns to the producers. Promotion of the consumption of locally produced foods, despite its being protectionist, is one of the major means of ensuring food security in a country, and must be encouraged.

The opening up of markets, set against high levels of trade-distorting subsidies, has greatly undermined the economic survival of small scale farmers in developing nations. Therefore slowing down the pace of liberalization of the agricultural sector through a system of Special Product (SP) and Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM), is an important first step in addressing the inequities of the present agreement and its damaging effect on the small agriculture stakeholders. Providing

agriculture with the special differential treatment will also act as compensatory mechanism for the imbalances of the present agreement on agriculture. More importantly giving agriculture a Special and Differential Treatment (SDT) will provide a guarantee on sustainable development and poverty eradication.

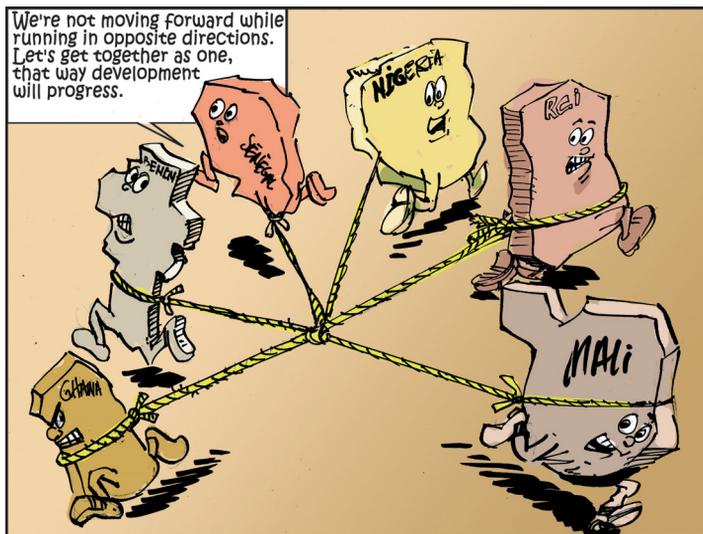
Research

Having access to improve or high yielding seeds that improve productivity is underpinned by effective research support for any agriculture sector. A major drawback in agriculture in the region has been the low level of research and mostly research outcomes are appropriated by multinationals. It is therefore important to put premium on agricultural research and development particularly on how best to come out with new and improved seeds that can help modify production. The research outcomes must be disseminated as widely as possible and should inform the education and training of the small scale farmers on new farming practices that are important for ensuring food security in the sub-region.

Conclusion

Agriculture has a great potential for Africa's industrialization and efforts should be geared towards identifying the possibilities for realizing this potential so as to generate employment, improve food security, rural development and thereby reduce poverty in the region.

5.3 THE WORKING GROUPS POSITION ON «REGIONAL INTEGRATION»



The Regional Trade Union Working Group on the International Economy, Regional Integration, Trade and Development held its fourth session in Bamako, from 16 to 19 January, 2006. The proceedings dealt with the issue of regional integration in the West African Sub-Region. Just like the last two meetings, the regional workshop adopted a common stand on the regional integration process.

1. Integration of the sub region is a necessary condition for its development though it is confronted with general poverty, under development and conflicts.

2. The establishment of OAU in 1963 was a political precedent for regional integration efforts initiated in various regions of the continent.

3. The Plan of Action of Lagos, the African Framework of Reference for Structural Adjustment Programmes (AFRSAP) and the Treaties of Abuja are impulses given to integration efforts in the sub region.

4. The establishment of ECOWAS is a capital turning point for integration efforts in the sub region. Despite this important stage, one notices slowness in the speed taken by member States to ratify and operationalise various protocols of the treaty.

5. Integration efforts are confronted with various limitations like the difference in size, natural resources, development level and countries position in international trade.

6. In addition to political and ideology cleavings between countries, the weight of colonial heritage, internal and trans-border conflicts have seriously affected the integration process and undermine the hope of a great number of the population who were aware of the advantages and necessity of sub regional integration.

7. Economic crises of 70's and 80's had created the conditions for the establishment of structural adjustment

programmes by Brettons Wood institutions and they had affected ongoing integration process already.

8. ECOWAS revised Treaty has recently widen and deepened integration with a stronger commitment of member states.

9. Multilateral trade demands and its implications on bilateral trade negotiations between European Union and ACP countries gave a new impulse to regional integration, knowing that EPA's negotiation is done between European Union and ECOWAS.

10. EPA's negotiations determine the rate and level of sub regional integration risk to maintain West Africa in the role of supplier of raw materials for European Union interest.

11. The path taken by EPA's negotiation in terms of national production, industrialisation and free movement of goods, services and capital presents a certain danger for sub regional integration.

12. It is necessary to implement an integration that favours intra regional trade, increases productive activities of national companies, food security for the population, improve living conditions in rural areas, poverty reduction and industrialisation.

13. Taking into account what has been mentioned above, West African trades union association recommends / takes the resolution to work towards:

Political Level

1. Democratic participation of trades union associations and population for regional integration process and regional institutions reform by taking them really into account and consult them.

2. Reinforce the power of ECOWAS and WAEMU to ensure the implementation of decisions taken on common agreement basis.

3. Community institutions reinforcement with access to proper resources in order to promote peace, political and economic environment stability.

4. A better movement of people and goods between countries.

Economic Level

5. Physical integration through infrastructures, power, transport and communication development.

6. Establish conditions that afford the private sector and farmers to highly increase their productivity,

7. Reinforcement of ECOWAS common agricultural policy in order to satisfy the community market needs and increase competitiveness at international level,

8. Develop a regional strategy in order to increase industrial growth directed towards the satisfaction of the community market needs,

9. Establish an external community tax to afford ECOWAS to acquire proper resources to contribute to Common agricultural Policy of the Community funding and its industrialisation,

10. Implementation of appropriate trade policies, combining judiciously some selective protection measures for sensible products and sectors,

11. Establish a structural funds and other devices that can help countries which have weaker industrial sector or higher unemployment rate,

Social Level

12. Women and Youth promotion,

13. Increase of intra community, social, cultural, political and security cooperation,

14. Set up some cooperation and exchange devices at educational and cultural levels within the community and

trading logics must be protected in the framework of global agreements on trade and services,

15. Take efficient collective measures to fight against trans-border issues like AIDS, children work and women slavery,

Work Level

16. ILO's fundamental conventions implementation in all policies worked out at the community level and their effective enforcement,

17. Promotion of social responsibility of enterprises at the community level.

6 - PERSPECTIVES

In the hope of maximizing the outcome of the Working Group's activities, the group would like to establish a follow-up mechanism at the regional level which will include the following:

- The establishment of a trade union platform that is a network made up of trade unions specifically committed to economic, trade and social science research issues;
- The establishment of a regional trade union alliance;
- To be given a «permanent observer» status at the regional and sub-regional organizations.