

CONCLUSIONS

1. The EPAs negotiations in all sub-regions should give prominence to the developmental dimension of the subsequent EPAs. Emphasis on building supply-capacities should be a top-priority in the negotiations and must supersede trade liberalisation question linked to reciprocity.
2. Given the emerging evidence that inequality is a key constraint to fighting poverty; EPAs should aim not to worsen inequality through the internal reforms that might be required upon their signing. Negotiations at the sub-region level should use capacity to reduce inequality as a check to any reform commitments and adjustments to be necessitated by the EPAs.
3. The potential for regional integration to mitigate on some of the possible adverse effects of the EPAs should be harnessed from now by the removal of the existing intra-REC and inter-REC tariff and non-tariff barriers.
4. Africa should take advantage of the EPAs negotiations to argue for much less restrictive SSA-wide compatible rules-of-origin. The simple 10 percent value-added suggested by the Commission for Africa would be an appropriate starting point. Establishment of a region wide working group of Ministers to negotiate uniform non-restrictive rules-of-origin for all ACP could give impetus to operationalisation of this conclusion.
5. Harmonisation of RECs is an important pre-requisite to realizing benefits that likely to accrue from the EPAs. The overlapping memberships that could hinder realization of such benefits must be addressed now to avoid undermining or unnecessarily delaying these benefits.
6. Negotiations at sub-region levels should aim at deep asymmetries that result in balanced outcomes between specialization in primary commodities sectors and diversification of economies at the national level. Hence the need for a common understanding on what “substantially all the trade” means since only then can asymmetrical EPAs be immunized against challenge at the WTO.
7. African countries should aim to achieve reasonable number of years at the WTO in the current negotiations as a minimum time-frame necessary under Article XXIV for North-South RTAs that EPAs will characterize.
8. Optimal sequencing of the EPAs is one that addresses the internal barriers first before the opening up for the EU. Therefore, sub-regional negotiations should all aim to have dismantlement of tariffs in favour of the EU back-loaded in the agreed time-frame.
9. As a way forward, there is need for better coordination of the negotiations as the varying speeds have potential of setting precedents that may not be universally accepted across the continent. It is necessary for the different regional negotiating forums to compare negotiating strategies to ensure coherence with the Ministers’ of Trade Declaration on the EPAs.