

African countries and the EU. Studies on the proposed EPAs suggest that if African countries agree to equivalent reciprocity for commitments by the EU, it will be the EU that gains economically, with Africa suffering significant costs. If the EU were to abandon the idea of symmetry in the final agreements to accept "non-reciprocity", it would demonstrate a commitment to a new, pro-development approach to trade.

The spirit of the Doha Declaration is clear: Africa should integrate into and benefit from global trade. Africa is committed to trading its way out of poverty, but cannot do so with international trade arrangements stacked against it.

The ECA, along with the African Union, the African Development Bank, the UN Development Programme and other UN partners, is hosting African trade negotiators and experts in Tunis this week to analyse the WTO's July package and develop strategies to re-engage politicians in the Doha process.

Strong political commitment and leadership is vital. Otherwise, January's WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong risks becoming another Cancún.

The writer is the executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa and a member of Tony Blair's Commission for Africa

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