

Foreword

After more than four decades of co-operation, the European Union (EU) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are at a turning point in their relationship, as they proceed in redefining their trading relations. Moving away from the non-reciprocal preferences granted by the EU to ACP imports to its market, which prevailed since 1975 under the Lomé Conventions and now the Cotonou Agreement, the two parties have agreed to negotiate free trade agreements. These economic partnership agreements (EPAs), to be in place by 2008, should have broad impacts on the ACP countries, reaching beyond traditional market opening.

In a joint effort by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), this reader aims to provide a broad yet in-depth overview of the issues facing ACP countries, by highlighting key analyses that they have either conducted, stimulated or disseminated, or which have been carried out independently. Offering insights for negotiators and

observers alike, the reader presents a comprehensive treatment of specific issues such as market access, services and investment, as well as addressing key cross-cutting themes such as the development dimension, compatibility with the rules prevailing at the World Trade Organization, capacity building, and the negotiating process itself. Perspectives from the regions are also provided, as well as background material to place the debate in its wider historical context. Bringing together a collection of pieces from a host of organizations and independent experts allows this reader to offer a roadmap on the gamut of relevant issues for the negotiations, highlighting key material in each subject area with additional references for further reading (generally available on www.acp-eu-trade.org).

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