

AFRICAN UNION

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**8th ORDINARY SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE
OF AU MINISTERS OF TRADE
21ST – 25TH OCTOBER 2013
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

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**DECLARATION ON THE ECONOMIC
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS (EPAs)**

DECLARATION ON EPAs

We, the Ministers of Trade of the Member States of the African Union, meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 24th-25th October 2013 in our Eighth Ordinary Session ;

RECALLING the objectives for Economic Partnership Agreement (EPAs) are the achievement of sustainable development of African countries, their smooth and gradual integration in the world economy and the eradication of poverty;

TAKING NOTE of the conclusions of the High-Level Meeting between the African Union Commission (AUC) and the European Commission (EC) held in Brussels, Belgium, on 3 July 2013, particularly the need for a political decision to resolve the contentious issues in EPA Negotiations;

FURTHER TAKING NOTE of the Report of the African Union/Regional Economic Communities (AU-RECs) Coordination Meetings on the EPA negotiations held in Libreville, Gabon, and Brussels, Belgium, respectively on 24-25 July 2013 and 4-5 October 2013;

REAFFIRMING that EPAs should be development-oriented instruments and should not undermine Africa's economic integration and ensure meaningful market access and policy space;

HAVING RECOGNISED that EPA is supposed to be a WTO compatible agreement and need not include WTO plus Commitments

HAVING adequately assessed the state of play of EPAs Negotiations in Africa after a long period of negotiation, reemphasize the need to strengthen political dialogue between the EU and Africa at the appropriate level with a view to finding solutions to Africa's common concerns on EPAs;

RECALLING the past Declarations of AU Ministers of Trade on EPAs;

BEING AWARE of the challenges faced by some African Union Member States that are implementing Interim EPAs;

RECALLING the latest call for High Level Dialogue on EPAs made by the ACP Summit held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in 2012;

FURTHER RECALLING the Decision AU/MIN/CAMRMRD/4(I) of the 1st Ordinary Session the AU Conference of Ministers responsible for Mineral Resources Development 13-17 October 2008; Calling-on AU Member States to work together to ensure that international agreements that they enter into enhance rather than undermine Africa's policy space for integrating mineral resources development into

their economies and in this regard, **Urging** them and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to ensure that the ongoing Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) and World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations do not limit this space;

BEARING IN MIND the upcoming Fourth Africa-EU Summit scheduled to take place in Brussels, Belgium, on 2-3 April 2014;

Hereby:

1. **REAFFIRM** our commitment to continue the negotiations in order to conclude an EPA that promotes the development of African countries and promotes regional and continental integration programmes;
2. **EXPRESS OUR DISAPPOINTMENT** on the fact that after a decade of EPA negotiations, the process has not produced the desired results due to the lack of progress in resolving the differences between the parties on a number of contentious issues;
3. **NOTE WITH CONCERN** that the current situation of the EPA negotiations are further complicated by many factors such as the amendment to the EC Market Access Regulation 1528/2007 which withdraws some AU Member States from the benefits therein; the introduction of new issues in the EPA negotiations by the EU; the proliferation of EU regulations and legislations on non-tariff measures that serve as technical barriers to trade as well as the EU negotiations with third parties.
4. **CALL ON** the EU to demonstrate meaningful flexibility in its EPA negotiating demands particularly regarding contentious issues and not to use the withdrawal of regulation 1528/2007 to force countries to conclude EPAs that do not meet African development aspirations.
5. **STRESS** the need for accompanying measures including additional resources which allow the implementation of the commitments reached in the EPAs and also enable the African states to be competitive.
6. **CALL UPON** the EU to ensure that the EPA negotiations do not impose WTO Plus commitments on African Countries and that the outcome is WTO compatible.
7. **STRESS** the need to include the EPAs on the agenda of the Fourth Africa-EU Summit to end the current impasse in the EPA negotiations. We strongly believe that the Africa-EU Summit provides a good opportunity for Africa and Europe to engage in political dialogue at the highest level, and together find lasting solutions to the challenges in the EPA negotiations.

8. **CALL UPON** the EU to work closely with the AU to ensure that the EPAs are prioritized at all the stages of preparation and be part of the Fourth Africa-EU Summit Agenda.
9. **NOTE** the Joint Matrix on the contentious issues in the EPA negotiations with proposals for their resolution and request Africa EPA negotiating regions to use it as a guide to harmonize their positions in the negotiations.. Re affirm the principle that the most favorable provision in any one EPA configuration would be extended to the others.
10. **CALL UPON** the AU Members states and all other relevant stakeholders, in particular, the RECs, AU EPA configurations, private sector, and civil society to work closely to ensure that unity, cohesion and solidarity are maintained and strengthened, in order to secure the best possible outcome in the EPA Negotiations.
11. **CALL UPON** the EU to agree to provisions on Rules of Origin and Cumulation across the various EPAs that support Africa's integration objectives and promote intra-Africa trade;
12. **URGE** the EU to fully take into account our above fundamental concerns in this regard, in order to preserve and not undermine the current processes for economic integration in Africa.
13. **EXPRESS** deep concern that the EU Raw materials Initiative (RMI) will impact negatively on the extraction, beneficiation and trade in the natural resources of Africa and hinder achieving our industrialization and development goals. We are also concerned that this initiative is also reflected in EPA and could undermine the EPA negotiating process.