

## ESA Signatories of the interim Economic Partnership Agreement Prepare for Negotiations in October

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Brussels, 18 September 2019: Member States of the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) signatories of the interim Economic Partnership Agreement held an internal meeting from 20-22 August in Cape Town, South Africa to prepare for the negotiations on the strengthening of the ESA - EU interim Economic Partnership Agreement (EU - iEPA). The group, which consists of Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe (ESA – 5) harmonised and coordinated their positions in advance of the first joint negotiations with the EU at technical level which will be held in Mauritius from 3-4 October 2019.

H.E. Mr. Marcus Cornado, EU Ambassador in South Africa, expressed, in his opening statement at the meeting in Cape Town, the EU's appreciation for the commitment of the ESA-5 to negotiate the deepening of the iEPA and to move the EU-ESA partnership to a higher level. He also welcomed Comoros to the negotiations as a member of the ESA iEPA group and confirmed that the EU will be committing additional funds.

In his opening remarks, H.E. Mr. Haymandoyal Dillum, Ambassador of Mauritius in Belgium and Chair of the ESA-5 countries, welcomed all the participants and thanked the EU for its continued support to the ESA-5. He further reiterated the commitment of the ESA-5 countries to negotiate a modern and ambitious development-oriented trade agreement with the EU, despite the globally challenging trade environment.

Welcoming this new development, Mr. Viwanou Gnassounou, Assistant Secretary General of the Sustainable Economic Development and Trade Department at the Brussels-based African, Caribbean and Pacific Secretariat, congratulated Ambassador Dillum and the members of ESA-5 on this step ahead to further the negotiations, calling it: "A new and long-anticipated development in EPA negotiations, in terms of responding to calls by Member States and the ACP Secretariat for the widening and deepening of the concluded iEPAs."

Substantive issues of interest to the ESA-5 relating to the negotiations will be discussed during the first technical meeting to be held in Mauritius.

The Honourable Prime Minister of Mauritius, H.E. [Pravind Jugnauth](#) [1] will launch both the regional ministerial talks and the joint negotiations in Mauritius on 2 October 2019 in the presence of the ministers of the ESA–5 countries and EU dignitaries. During the Launch, an agreement on the Scoping Paper on the Deepening of the EU-ESA iEPA and the Roadmap will be signed in the presence of the Ministers of the five iEPA Member States.

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