

## NEWS: Namibian President calls on EU to waive EPA deadline

### NEWS: Namibian President calls on EU to waive EPA deadline



Windhoek, NAMIBIA 30 July 2012/ TN: Namibian President Hifikepunye Pohamba has called on the European Union (EU) not to implement its 2014 trade pact deadline which, if missed, will cost his country millions in export levies.

During his official talks with King Mswati III of Swaziland at State House last week, Pohamba said Namibia believes that the "ultimatum given by the EU regarding the signing of the [Economic Partnership] Agreement should be waved so that the current negotiations can proceed without undue pressure".

The European Commission (EC) last September made the unilateral decision to cut Namibia's duty- and quota-free market access for beef, grapes and fish if the country hasn't signed the controversial EPA by January 2014. Should this happen, Namibia would reportedly have to pay levies of more than N\$600 million to export to the bloc, based on 2009 trade figures.

Pohamba's call follows an intensive campaign by Namibia to get the deadline postponed to January 2016. The European Parliament will vote on the matter on September 10.

The Namibian Embassy in Brussels has already sent letters to every member of the European Parliament to lobby support for the postponement. *The Namibian* has reliably learnt that several positive responses have been received from the parliamentarians.

The campaign follows the decision by the European Parliament Committee on International Trade (INTA) to extend the deadline to 2016. Of the 29 members on the committee, 25 voted for the postponement.

Swapo parliamentarian Piet van der Walt, who is Namibia's voice at the EPA negotiations in Brussels, told *The Namibian* that INTA agreed that the 2014 deadline is "neither fair nor realistic".

The consensus was that some African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) countries, like Namibia, are still grappling with poverty and development needs, and would therefore be hurt if they lose their preferential access to EU markets or have to pay levies by 2014, Van der Walt said.

He said Namibia has partnered with Botswana to fight for an extension to 2016.

"Things are moving in the right direction," said Van der Walt, also the second vice chairman of the ACP Committee on Economics.

The EU's Committee on Development (Deve) has also shown support for the ACP. Deve said it "regrets the fact that in spite of the recent progress achieved in the [EPA] negotiations, which the regions concerned are pursuing in good faith, the EU has decided unilaterally to impose a deadline".

Deve further said it "insists that the conclusion of the negotiations should be driven by content, which must take into account the interests and address the concerns of both parties, and not by timeframes".

Although Namibia has already provisionally initialled the interim EPA in December 2007, it refuses to seal the deal unless outstanding issues regarding unfair competition are settled.

One of the European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) backing Namibia and Botswana is Traidcraft. On its website, the NGO said thousands of "handwritten and personalised letters" from campaigners are on their way to European parliamentarians to stop the 2014 deadline.

On Tuesday, Pohamba said: "The EPA negotiations should retain the character of being development-friendly partnerships and should not result in a situation where SADC members states would be economically disadvantaged."

(Photo: Namibia's President Pohamba/ The Telegraph UK)

- Jo Mare Duddy, The Namibian

Source <sup>[1]</sup>

---

---

Tags: News articles <sup>[2]</sup>

---

**Source URL:** <http://acp.int/content/news-namibian-president-calls-eu-waive-epa-deadline>

**Links:**

[1] [http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=28&amp;tx\\_ttnews%5btt\\_news%5d=99841&no\\_cache=1](http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=28&amp;tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=99841&no_cache=1)

[2] <http://acp.int/category/story-type/news-articles>