



Corporate Europe Observatory

Press Release

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## **EU Commission Manufactured African Business Support for EPAs**

BRUSSELS, 23 March – Internal email communication by DG Trade obtained by Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) unveils how the EU Commission has actively orchestrated African business support for its Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. MEPs will vote on the EPA negotiations at their sitting in Strasbourg today and tomorrow.

According to the information revealed to CEO, DG Trade was responsible for setting up a business trade forum – the Business Trade Forum EU-Southern Africa – to provide active support for the EU's EPA negotiations with Southern African Development Community (SADC). Together with the European employers' federation BusinessEurope, DG Trade also drafted the pro-EPAs position of the EU-Africa Business Forum.

Corporate Europe Observatory trade campaigner Pia Eberhardt said:

“DG Trade has deliberately set about creating an EU-African corporate consensus on EPAs to back up its own agenda. It even pushed the European employers' federation, BusinessEurope, to take a more extreme position on the negotiations. African businesses, meanwhile, have been completely by-passed in the process.”

The European Parliament session today and tomorrow will decide whether or not to give assent to the two Economic Partnership Agreements which have been signed so far. It will also vote on a number of related resolutions. Several civil society organisations, including CEO, are calling on MEPs not to support these agreements.

Pia Eberhardt added:

“MEPs must deny their support for these agreements until there has been a complete overhaul of the EPA system. The Commission must be called to account over its bullying of ACP governments and told to stop manipulating African business to do the dirty job of legitimising agreements, which will only benefit big business in the EU.”

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The article Pulling the strings of African business is available at <http://www.corporateeurope.org/docs/pulling-the-strings-of-african-business.pdf>