



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACP states call on European Parliament and Member States to support fair and equitable reform of EU Sugar Regime respecting legal commitments

Brussels 13 July: African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) sugar supplying states today called on the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers to oppose current proposals to reform the EU Sugar Regime that would result in huge losses for ACP economies.

The Agriculture Minister of Mauritius, Arvin Boolell, and Ambassador Derrick Heaven, Executive Chairman of the Jamaican Sugar Industry Authority addressed MEPs during a European Parliament hearing on European Commission proposals to slash sugar prices by 39% over a period of only four years starting in 2006. ACP countries favour less drastic price cuts spread out over a period of eight years starting in 2008 in order to allow their sugar industries to survive.

Describing the Commission proposals as “*unjust and unacceptable for ACP states*” Minister Boolell called for “*a reform which is politically, economically and socially sustainable and is consistent with the EU’s own decisions to ensure coherence in its policies on trade, agriculture and development cooperation*”.

“Let us be conscious of the human tragedy the reform proposals will cause in our countries. This is not in the interest of anybody especially at a time when all efforts in the international community are being concentrated on the acceleration of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.”

While generous compensation packages are being proposed for EU sugar beet farmers and processors, the ACP have thus far only been promised a paltry €40 million to cushion what in many cases would be a fatal blow to their industries. Minister Boolell - whose own country would stand to lose over €100 million a year under the terms of the proposals - called for “*parity of treatment*” between EU sugar beet farmers and ACP cane sugar suppliers, as is the legitimate expectation of ACP countries under the terms of the ACP-EU Sugar Protocol and the Cotonou Agreement.

Commenting on the vagueness of the Commission’s proposal for accompanying measures for the ACP, Ambassador Heaven said: “*The measures recognise the need for support on a country specific basis but say little about the criteria that will be used to determine how the still undefined sum proposed will be divided among eligible nations. It also appears to suggest that it is Europe who will decide the policy in each ACP country for their sugar industry*”.

Looking ahead to the first discussion of the proposal at Council of Ministers level on July 19, Minister Boolell urged the UK Presidency and the Member States “*not to undo the recent giant step forward in the fight against global poverty by sanctioning a reform that in many countries would mean two further steps backwards and would threaten the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people.*”

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