

FACT SHEET: COTONOU AGREEMENT AFTER 2020 AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE PACIFIC

What is the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) between the African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP) and the European Union (EU)?

The Cotonou Partnership Agreement is the legally binding framework outlining relations between the ACP countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) and the EU. It is one of the oldest and most comprehensive frameworks of cooperation between the north and south. Signed in 2000 for a period of 20 years, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement unites more than one hundred countries (79 ACP countries + 28 EU Member States). The ACP group was created by the Georgetown Agreement in 1975. The Pacific ACP States (PACP) within the ACP consists of 15 countries in the Pacific region¹.

Why the post-Cotonou negotiations?

The Cotonou Partnership expires in February 2020. A new Partnership Agreement would need to be negotiated taking into account the current shifts in geo-politics as well as other emerging aspects and changed circumstances not covered under the Cotonou Agreement.

The ACP Negotiating Mandate for a post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement was adopted in May 2018, whilst the Council of the European Union approved its Negotiating directives in June 2018, wherein negotiations commenced in October 2018.

Why is it important to the region?

The main aim of the Agreement is to reduce and eradicate poverty and promote the integration of ACP States into the global economy. It is mainly financed by the European Development Fund (EDF), a financial instrument outside the general budget of the European Union that has contributed significantly to the Pacific region both nationally and regionally with non-refundable financial assistance in the form of grants.

Examples of EDF Funding in the region: Water and Sanitation to promote public health, economic growth and environmental protection as seen in the Cook Islands where upgrading of septic tanks in water treatment facilities around Muri Lagoon benefiting up to 10,000 people. The Pacific-EU Marine Partnership Programme focusing on sustainable use of fishery resources, fight against IUU fishing, marine protected areas and biodiversity conservation, etc. Other support under EDF includes allocation to rural development, civil society and budget support measures in Pacific ACP States.

Post 2020 Financial Arrangement

The ACP Group have maintained that any new Partnership should at least maintain the status quo of the European Development Fund, and in particular include elements of maintenance of financial commitments at the appropriate level, ensuring of resource predictability and sustainability, formal guarantee that allocations will only be used for the benefit of ACP States, preservation of co-management through the role and responsibilities of National (in this case the respective PACPS) and Regional Authorising Officers (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat).

¹ Fiji, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu

Specific Priorities for the Region as agreed by the Pacific ACP Group in the negotiations

The 2018 PACP Leaders meeting in Nauru, supported the Pacific priorities for negotiations: ocean governance through the Blue Pacific identity; safeguarding the regions' resources and security; elevating the Blue and Green Economy; commitment to addressing climate change and disaster resilience; developing micro-small-medium enterprises; and supporting youth and vulnerable groups.

In terms of trade and development cooperation: aid-for-trade, fisheries, trade in services, investment, industrialisation (through value addition and supply chains), e-commerce, digital economy, cultural industries, gender, youth, labour mobility, and rural development, including informal sector

The Pacific Island Forum Secretariat's role in the post – Cotonou negotiations and supporting a positive outcome for the region.

The PACP Leaders had mandated the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat as the regional coordinating entity on post-Cotonou negotiations to support the PACPS engagement in advancing the region's collective agenda in the negotiations. The Secretariat will coordinate and facilitate regional position briefs through consultations with PACPS, civil society and the private sector through the PACP Ambassadors in Brussels and the regions representatives in the Negotiating machinery. The Secretariat will also provide regular updates to the PACPS and the regions stakeholders throughout the negotiations.

Inclusivity – Civil Society and Private Sector

The PACP Leaders directed the Secretariat to further consult, coordinate and articulate the region's negotiating priorities with the PACPS, Council of Regional Organisation in the Pacific (CROP) agencies, private sector and civil society. Briefings, updates and dialogue has been ongoing with civil society, private sector and other stakeholders since 2017 and will continue throughout the negotiation phases.

The Negotiating Machinery - ACP and EU Negotiators

The ACP Central Negotiating Group (CNG) is composed of representatives from the three regions of Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific - led by the Hon. Robert Dussey, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of Togo. The Pacific is represented by Papua New Guinea and Samoa in the Central Negotiating Group, whilst at the Technical Negotiating Teams Papua New Guinea and Fiji – Pillar 1; Samoa and Vanuatu – Pillar 2; Solomon Islands and Timor Leste – Pillar 3; and alternatives are Tonga and Tuvalu.

The Pacific Islands Representative to the ACP and the European Union, based in Brussels will also provide support to the PACPS during the negotiations.

The EU Chief Negotiator is Commissioner Mimica on behalf of the European Council.

For more information: info@forumsec.org