

Tanzania Rejection of EPA

News:

Tanzania media outlets reported on last week's unanimous and vocal rejection by MPs of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union. A harsh stance which is largely reflective of the general mood of the Tanzanian political and intellectual elite.

Comments:

Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union emerged from the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, signed in Cotonou, Benin on 23 June 2000), it was concluded for a 20-year period from 2000 to 2020. It is the so called partnership agreement between developing countries and the EU and it is the framework for EU's relations with 79 countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP).

Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are legally binding contracts between the European Union and developing nations. Once signed, EPAs warrant that within a decade, about 80% of that country's market should open to European goods and services.

In 2010, ACP-EU cooperation adopted new challenges such as climate change, food security, regional integration, State fragility and aid effectiveness.

According to Cotonou principle of *differentiation and regionalization*, the developing countries are encouraged to enter into the EPAs in regional groupings. So far the ACP countries have formed seven regional groupings in which they intend to enter into EPAs with the European Union. These regional groupings are: the Economic Community of West African States, la Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale, the Southern African Development Community, the East African Community, the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA), the Caribbean Community + Dominican Republic (CARIFORUM) and the Pacific region.

It within this context, Tanzania as a member of East African Community seemed to be sceptic and hesitant in agreeing to the EPA. The first deadline for signing the EPA was October 1. Kenya and Rwanda had already signed the deal before last month's deadline, but Tanzania and Uganda asked for three more months until January 1, next year, before making a decision.

The overwhelming feeling in Tanzania is that it does not need the EPA. Debates in Parliament and among academicians have cautioned the government that signing the deal would eventually kill the internal industries. The scholars from University of Dar es Salaam conducted a workshop in which they made clear that signing the EPA among others would deprive the country of its sovereignty when it comes to negotiating other international trade deals. Obviously, opening markets translates into internal agricultural and non-agricultural production finding it very difficult to compete with the most likely cheaper, perhaps better quality and even a larger supply of goods and services from European countries.

This scenario indicates that developing nation's regional groupings are created by capitalist nations as a means to utilize and strengthen their neo-colonial agenda. Secondly, evil and bitterness of capitalism partly felt everywhere including in the developing nations. Thirdly, humanity needs alternate ideology that has fair and just dealings with other nations, that is only Islam under its Khilafah state (Caliphate) under the methodology of the Prophethood.

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