



JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

Tenth Meeting of the Association Committee of the Trade Pillar between the European Union and Central America Association Agreement between the European Union and Central America 20 June 2024

The tenth meeting of the Association Committee of the Trade Pillar of the Association Agreement between the European Union (EU) and Central America (CA) took place on 20 June 2024 in Brussels, Belgium.

Meetings of Sub-committees on Market Access, Technical Barriers to Trade, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Matters, Intellectual Property Rights, Customs matters, and the Ad-hoc group on Public Procurement took place in virtual mode in the weeks preceding the meeting of the Association Committee of the Trade Pillar. During those meetings, experts from both sides discussed on-going work and important topics of mutual interest.

The meetings of the Trade and Sustainable Development Board, and the Civil Society Dialogue Forum with the Board were held in hybrid mode (in-person and virtual) between 17 and 19 June 2024. The meeting of the Civil Society Dialogue Forum was well attended, and the discussions highlighted the efforts made over the past year to implement the provisions included in the Trade and Sustainable Development Title of the Agreement.

High Representatives from both Parties attended the meeting. They celebrated the full entry into force of the EU-Central America Association Agreement, revised trade flows and discussed the results of the sub-committees, ad-hoc group and the Trade and Sustainable Development Board.

The EU proposed to strengthen the implementation of the sustainability component of the trade pillar of the Association Agreement and will share more information on this issue at the inter-sessional meetings to be held before the next Association Committee of the trade pillar in 2025. Central America considers it is important to continue the dialogue on these issues for the best use of the Agreement.

The Parties also discussed the implementation of the EU Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products (EUDR), the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and the EU Regulation prohibiting products made with forced labour.

With regards to EUDR, which entered into force on 29 June 2023, parties exchanged on country risk levels and the due diligence obligations for European operators and traders. The Central American countries expressed their concern about the potential negative impacts on their agricultural exports covered by the EUDR, mostly on MSMEs, highlighting the socio-economic significance that these sectors hold for the Central American region. They also underscored the urgency of publishing the official implementation guidelines to provide more clarity and certainty to the implementation efforts currently underway at both public and private level. The Central American countries greeted the European Union for the



development of regional forums and bilateral exchanges that have been held with each of the Central American countries on this topic. They pointed to the need to continue the direct dialogue with EU experts regarding the EUDR implementation in the forthcoming months.

Central America reiterated its commitment to continue working to promote a trade relationship based on principles of sustainability established in applicable international labour and environmental standards.

The meeting was attended virtually by the Secretariat of the Central American Economic Integration Subsystem (SIECA), who highlighted the progress of the Central American Digital Trade Platform (PDCC), financed by the European Union. It also referred to the implementation of the Central American Single Regional Public Procurement Point.

The next meeting of the Association Committee of the Trade Pillar of the Association Agreement will be hosted by Costa Rica and is tentatively scheduled to take place in June 2025.