

Foreword

The Lomé IV Convention, which provides the framework for development cooperation between the European Union (EU) and 71 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) developing countries, is to expire in the year 2000. Negotiations on a successor arrangement are scheduled to begin in September 1998. The form it takes will be crucial to many of the ACP countries, particularly those dependent on the special trading arrangements of the Convention for the terms of market access for their principal exports.

As many as 39 of the 50 developing countries in the Commonwealth belong to the ACP Group. Naturally, given their shared concern about the future of ACP countries' relations with the European Union, Commonwealth governments have in their meetings – notably at CHOGM in October 1997 – paid close attention to developments in this area. They have also asked the Secretariat to provide support to the ACP countries in ongoing discussions on a successor arrangement.

After the EU Commission published a Green Paper on future ACP-EU relations in November 1996, the Secretariat commissioned Professor Matthew McQueen, Dr Christine Phillips, Dr David Hallam and Professor Alan Swinbank, from the University of Reading, to prepare a study examining the various options under consideration and suggesting the elements of a successor arrangement capable of addressing the diverse trade and development interests of the ACP countries. This study examines the factors accounting for the limited success of the Lomé Conventions in contributing to the development of the ACP countries. It analyses how in a new arrangement, instruments of cooperation in the areas of trade, development finance and technical assistance could be better designed and co-ordinated, in order to enhance the supply capabilities of the ACP countries and promote diversification of their economies.

The study has been finalised in the light of comments made at a workshop for ACP country representatives which was jointly organised by the Commonwealth and ACP Group Secretariats and held in Brussels on 26-27 May 1997.

This study is being published in the hope that its technical analysis of the issues involved and its recommendations of improvements will continue to be useful to the governments of the ACP countries in the negotiations ahead with the EU.

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