

# Concept Note for Mobilising the WTO for the UN Permanent Forum for People of African Descent

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## Introduction

This concept note builds on a suggestion made in a previous concept note for the Permanent Forum on PAD from a UK Perspective:

### *Diplomatic Pressure linked with trade*

Provide Member States, upon their request, with assistance and advice for the implementation of recommendations relevant to people of African descent made at the universal periodic review, by treaty bodies, special procedures, the High-Level Political Forum at ECOSOC or other relevant bodies or mechanisms. ([Section 2f: p. 2](#))

As part of The Forum's high-level coordination activities, it will need to participate in universal periodic reviews where member states review their participation in treaty agreements but also the political forum at [ECOSOC](#) and the [UNCEB](#) where it liaises with the [WTO](#) on the [2030 Sustainable Development Goals](#). Through these instruments, The Forum should be able to exert subtle **diplomatic** pressures on member states (in our case the UK) in relation to cases brought to it.

Taken from <https://critracemmu.files.wordpress.com/2021/04/concept-note-for-the-un-permanent-forum-for-people-of-african-descent.pdf>

## Background to WTO, its relationship to the UK and its potential diplomatic application

Now the UK has left the EU it now has to negotiate its own WTO schedules. The UK has always been part of the WTO as it helped to set it up in 1948 (when it was the GATT; General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade before becoming the WTO in 1995) but because of its EU membership it never had to negotiate its own schedules or deal with any trade disputes, thanks to EU representation and management. Now it does. The main member states (or blocks) who are relevant to The Permanent Forum that it has to negotiate with are:

[Economic Community of West African States \(ECOWAS\)](#) and [CARIFORUM-EPA](#)

## Issues around Negotiation with Recommendations

### Finding “diplomatic” pressure points

#### ECOWAS

Ghana one of the ECOWAS member states has not completed its trade deal with the UK totalling £1.2bn. The issue is that Ghana is frightened of striking a more liberal deal with the UK than its neighbours have with their current EU deal (which the UK has now to negotiate on its own). If Ghana goes ahead with the UK deal, it could face harsh sanctions from its ECOWAS neighbours (i.e higher export tariffs and harsher border controls).

NB – the UK has set up a new GSP (General Scheme of Preferences) for developing countries that could allow special rates of 0% tariffs. (Could this be a “diplomatic” form of inducing cooperation?) and Ghana could well qualify for a version of this but would it risk a rift with its closest neighbours?

### Recommendation

It would be worth contacting members of ECOWAS to see if they can actively support The Forum as a place where their Civil society and grassroots activities could also find a home, see <https://www.ecowas.int/doing-business-in-ecowas/projects/> for their SDG programmes

#### CARIFORUM-EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement)

Currently EPA exists only with the EU and is known as the CARIFORUM-EU-EPA (<https://ec.europa.eu/chafea/agri/en/content/cariforum-eu-economic-partnership-agreement-epa>). The UK is negotiating its own with CARIFORUM. In conducting its own negotiations, it is aware that Jamaica, The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Barbados and The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago had the largest value in trade to the sum of £2.5bn in imports and exports (a 2107 estimate see: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/internationaltradeinservicesbypartnercountryapriltojune2018>). If the UK fails to reach an EPA with CARIFORUM, the main area of loss will be in tariffs on imports and exports. It has to be noted that tariffs would revert back to Most Favoured Nation (MFN) rates of 0% but MFN does not cover ALL goods and tariffs on those could still be very high in the absence of specific agreements like the EPA. The UK would also try to use its

GSP for influence. However, it is estimated that this would only amount to an annual increase on all duties of around £63m. This would not be hugely significant for UK trading figures; the largest effect would be felt specifically by UK businesses relying on regional imports (disrupted and more expensive supply chains etc). Overall, it is unclear what leverage CARIFORUM has over the UK at this stage.

## **Recommendations**

It would be worth reaching out to CARIFORUM members to see where they are in the negotiating a UK-EPA and to see what if any influence they could exert.

It would also be a good idea to reach out to CARIFORUM for support of The Forum so that their populations could also enjoy the benefits of The Forum.

## **Further Reading**

Continuing the United Kingdom's trade relationship with the CARIFORUM States

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/803587/CARIFORUM-UK-EPA.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/803587/CARIFORUM-UK-EPA.pdf)

Ghana won't sign new UK trade deal in 2020

<https://www.politico.eu/article/ghana-wont-sign-new-uk-trade-deal-in-2020/>

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

<https://www.ecowas.int/>

CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

<https://ec.europa.eu/chafea/agri/en/content/cariforum-eu-economic-partnership-agreement-epa>

UK trade in services by partner country experimental data: April to June 2018

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/internationaltradeinservicesbypartnercountryapriltojune2018>