

News story: Joint statement on trade between UK and the ESA states

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Joint statement by Trade Minister Greg Hands and the Eastern and Southern African (ESA) states to progress trade continuity talks.



1. Senior trade officials from the United Kingdom (UK) and Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) states met in Mauritius on 8 to 9 February to continue discussions on the future trade relationship between the UK and the ESA countries after the UK leaves the EU. The meeting was opened by the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of Mauritius in the presence of the British High Commissioner.
2. The interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA) between the ESA countries (Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe) and the European Union (EU) was signed in 2009. The iEPA provisionally entered into force between the ESA countries and the EU in May 2012. While the UK remains a member of the EU, the EU–ESA iEPA will continue to apply to trade between the ESA iEPA countries and the UK. Comoros have signed the agreement and are in the process of ratifying.
3. Furthermore, the March European Council agreed that during the implementation period, which will end on 31 December 2020, the UK is to be treated as a member state for the purposes of international agreements. This provides further certainty and confidence that there will be no disruption to existing relationships underpinned by international agreements as we move into the implementation period.
4. And as the UK is in the process of exiting the EU, ESA partners welcomed the UK's intention to avoid trade disruption. The UK re-affirmed its commitment to the trade arrangement under the current EU–ESA iEPA and the aim to maintain current market access to the UK following the implementation period, to ensure continuity of the effects of the EU–ESA iEPA.
5. The 2 sides have focused on steps to agree a new arrangement that replicates the effects of the existing EPA as a means to ensure continuity in trade, and as a framework that can be built on in future.

At this stage, this is a technical exercise to ensure continuity in the trading relationship, rather than an opportunity to renegotiate existing terms.

Minister for Trade Policy Greg Hands endorses progress in trade continuity talks between the UK and ESA states:

I am pleased by the good progress that continues to be made by UK officials and their ESA counterparts towards ensuring a smooth transition of our trading arrangements once we leave the EU. This would build on the £900 million of existing annual trading between our countries.

Free trade has transformed developing economies across the world. As we create our independent trade policy outside the EU, the UK will continue to be a champion for free trade, helping developing countries grow their economies and reduce poverty through trade.

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