

Joint press statement following the meeting between the delegation of the Cotton 4 and the European Union

A delegation of the 4 West African countries, co-authors of the sectoral initiative on cotton (C-4) and a delegation of the European Union met in Geneva on December 16, in the margins of the 8th WTO Ministerial Conference.

The C-4 delegation was headed by Mr Mahamat Allahou Taher, Minister of Trade & Industry of Chad and Ms Madina Sefhou, Minister of Industry, Trade & SMEs of Bénin, while the EU delegation was led by EU Commissioner for Agriculture & Rural Development Dacian Cioloş. The Geneva-based Ambassadors of the countries of the C-4 were also present.

The meeting saw an open and constructive exchange of views on the question of cotton in the Doha Round negotiations and, more generally, of the problems of global food security.

Commissioner Cioloş indicated that he wanted this direct contact in order to have the opportunity to reaffirm clearly the strong support of the EU to African cotton producers. He stated : "Trade, development and agriculture policies are three inseparable pillars of global food security – a major challenge for developing countries and developed countries in the coming decades. We do not simply make statements in Geneva, we have already made major reforms in our agricultural policy in recent decades, including on cotton. As for cotton and the Doha Round, we will continue to actively support the search for solutions to the current situation, in partnership with members of the C-4. Furthermore, I am convinced that we must focus on the development potential of local production, particularly by improving the competitiveness and added value of the African cotton sector. "

Speaking on behalf of the C-4, Chadian Minister Mahamat Taher Allahu thanked the EU for support given to the development of African agriculture in general and the cotton sector in particular, as well as the attention given to the problem of food security. On cotton, he stressed the importance, beyond the aspect of development assistance, of providing a solution through trade in the framework of the Doha Round.

To illustrate the determination of the C4 to dialogue with all relevant parties, the Minister informed the EU delegation that the C4, at their request, had similar meetings with the delegations of the People's Republic of China and the United States of America.

The two sides welcomed the quality of their cooperation and dialogue and reaffirmed their commitment to work together towards a successful outcome of the cotton issue to the WTO.

Geneva, December 16, 2011.