



Suva

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## **PACIFIC GROUPS PROTEST UNFAIR EUROPEAN TRADE DEAL**

Pacific activists and community groups will join thousands of workers, farmers and campaigners from across Europe, Africa and the Caribbean in coordinated actions outside European Commission Delegations tomorrow (Thursday, April 19) to call for a stop to unfair trade deals between Europe and the developing world.

In Suva, civil society groups will present a letter to the European Commission delegation in Fiji. The letter calls on the EU to make sure the Economic Partnership Agreements, due to be completed this year, do not go ahead in their current form.

Other actions, taking place in more than 20 cities around the world, including London, Berlin, Wellington and Honiara, vary from handovers of symbolic keys and padlocks with the message, "Europe Don't Lock Africa into Poverty" to tug-of-war stunts where campaigners engage in an unequal contest between the large EU and the small Pacific Islands.

Pacific groups argue that free trade deals like those proposed by Europe would destroy livelihoods and the environment and undermine future economic growth. The EU is pushing for unfair trade and has criticised the more development-friendly draft trade proposal put forward by Pacific leaders.

"Europe, with an economy 1,400 times the size of the Pacific, is taking a very hard line in these negotiations by rejecting most of the Pacific's proposals. It is vital that the EU starts listening to Pacific voices and works towards an agreement that will help the region make the most of its resources and skills," said Barry Coates of Oxfam New Zealand.

Suva-based campaigner Roshni Sami, who is coordinator of the Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG), said local and regional civil society groups are becoming aware of how potentially damaging trade liberalisation can be for Pacific peoples.

"This year we're seeing Pacific civil society groups coming together to work on trade issues at a regional level. Next week representatives of more than 15 organisations from seven Pacific Island countries will meet in Samoa to discuss the dangers these trade negotiations pose for the Pacific. Three more meetings are planned culminating in a Pacific People's Platform on Trade," she said.

PANG, which helps facilitate regional civil society action on trade, says any deal between Europe and the Pacific must be fair.

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