

Discours de S.E. Mme Sheila Sealy Monteith, Ambassadrice de la Jamaïque, à sa dernière réunion en tant que Présidente du Comité des ambassadeurs, 26 juillet 2018

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Dean of the ACP Group of Ambassadors, Excellencies, dear Colleagues, Secretary General, Members of staff of the Embassies of ACP Member States, Management and Staff of the ACP Secretariat

Today's meeting represents the last Meeting of the Committee of Ambassadors over which I have presided as its Chairman. I convey the warm greetings of Senator the Honourable Kamina Johnson Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica and President of the Council of Ministers, and her deep gratitude for the support of this body to the work undertaken by Jamaica under her leadership.

It has been six months since my team and I took office in February of this year and what a remarkable journey it has been. The adoption of our theme: "Common Interests, Common Goals, Common Destiny" may seem like a distant memory, but it has been our guide, our GPS, and remains today our vision for this ACP Organisation.

Since February this year, we have had six (6) regular meetings of the Committee of Ambassadors; four (4) Extraordinary Meetings; four (4) Special Sessions to receive Heads of State of Government, including my own; as well as the introduction of meetings of the Central Negotiating Group and the Technical Negotiating teams, alongside the ongoing meetings of the Sub-Committees, Working Groups, Task-Forces and Forums. We have fielded outreach missions and supported commemorative exercises. We organized and participated in the 107th Session of the Council of Ministers and the 43rd Session of the ACP/EU Joint Council. Most recently, we were involved in the annual EIB Day exercise. We have welcomed eight (8) new Ambassadors, and with regret, said farewell to eight (8) others. Indeed, it has been an extraordinarily demanding and challenging time. One can but think of the thousands of man-hours and pages of documents we have expended in these exercises!

We, together, as a team, Member States and Secretariat, have recorded achievements of which we can all be proud. We have worked hard at accommodating the multiple and unusually high demands for meetings over the past six months. We have put in place mechanisms to absorb the priorities of producing a Negotiating Mandate within an extremely brief period of time and this we did. Simultaneously, we had to carry on the regular business of the Organisation. We have also had to contend with our own dissatisfaction and impatience, as well as the criticisms of others, over the areas in which we have fallen short, knowing that to build the fit-for-purpose Organisation we seek is a marathon not a sprint. Our commitment to this task should not wane.

In all of this, I have been most struck by the capacity of this Group to roll up its sleeves, defy the odds and get a job done well, when it was most needed. That for me is one of the great lessons from the adoption of the ACP Negotiating Mandate in Lomé in May, scarcely a few weeks after we began concrete work on its development. Naturally, its greater significance lies in the value of the document itself, a symbol of the ability we have within us to remain united and focused, in the face of the important task we have of lifting our countries out of poverty. This we must continue to do, by harnessing our strengths and in partnership with those who are ready to accompany us on the journey towards sustainable development. This realisation should serve as encouragement as we move to the next stage of negotiating a post-Cotonou agreement with the European Union.

If I can spare a moment for some lessons-learned along the way, let me quickly say that we have the evidence that we can improve our working methods to better respond to priorities, that we should not settle for mediocrity whether in the production of meeting reports or the Negotiating Mandate; that we must pay more careful attention to the environment and reduce plastic

and excessive printing of documents in the servicing of our meetings; that we can prepare for our engagements with more care; and that the relations between the Secretariat and Member States can better reinforce the technical support and guidance which improves decision-making. We must also be gentler in responding to views that do not coincide with ours. Let us set our standards and expectations so high, that they give us room to fall, if we must!

Excellencies, Colleagues,

In the course of my work here, I have sought to demonstrate my faith in our ability to strive for and secure the greatest aspirations we have set for ourselves within the ACP Group. I have always been guided by the conviction that we do so at the service of every man, woman and child in the countries and regions we represent.

I have also been clear that this is a journey on which I have had no appetite to travel alone. Not only do our Charter - the Georgetown Agreement - and our working methods preclude this, but it makes eminent sense to draw strength from those you serve, to seek wisdom from those who have it in abundance, including those whose views may differ from yours, and to give of your best to those who look to you for consistent, principled and exemplary leadership. I can only assure you that I gave this charge my very best effort.

I have sought to add my thread to the fabric that we are collectively weaving towards a strong and effective ACP Group of States; I am now poised to pass on the baton to my successor.

I would therefore like to use the opportunity of this my final meeting of the Committee, first, to acknowledge the divine presence and guidance of my Lord and God at all times.

I am deeply grateful for the privilege to have served the ACP in this position; to the Government of Jamaica, and especially my Minister and the Foreign Ministry for the confidence placed in me and the support they provided consistently; to the CARIFORUM Region for having endorsing Jamaica's candidacy for the Chairmanship, and the delegations here in Brussels for having supported me at every step of the way. The staff of the Embassy has been my solid companions and deserve the highest of praise for their inestimable contribution to our stewardship.

I have already thanked the Bureau, at our last meeting, for its constant support and ready response.

To them and to you all, the members of the Committee of Ambassadors, it has been my great honour to work alongside you. I have sought to engage you individually and collectively, so that I could benefit from your advice, and you have responded with encouragement and willingness, including to the convening of regular and extra-ordinary meetings, sometimes at short notice. I am grateful for the seriousness with which you approached your representation and defence of the views of your respective countries and regions, and for your own efforts to preserve our unity as the ACP. I acknowledge the prayerful support and the words of commendation, all of which I have received with humility and gratitude. It was for me a particular pleasure to greet as many of you as I could whenever I entered the room. I wanted you to know how touched I was by your genuine acts of support.

Let me thank in a special way, the chairpersons of the Sub-Committees, Working Groups, Task-Forces, Forum, CNG and the TNTs for your important contribution to our tasks.

I must also mention the Observer Representatives for their constant presence and contribution to our work. Theirs is a role we must not take for granted. Our relations with them are important to the ACP outreach.

Excellencies,

Please allow me a few words about the members of your staff who sit behind or deputise for you in your absence. They have been a silent source of strength to me, in their smiles, their nods and sometimes bold expressions of admiration. They are right behind us as leaders and so I am conscious of the examples we are setting for them. I thank them all.

I am grateful to the Secretary General for his guidance and advice, whether he is sitting at my right or at the other end of the telephone. He has always been responsive and has ensured that his Team is available to provide support. I am indebted to every member of the staff of the Secretariat, all those we see when we meet and especially the unseen ones, who collectively support the work of the Committee of Ambassadors and its Bureau. I owe a special debt of gratitude to the interpreters, the translation services, those who service the meeting rooms and transmit documents, the photographer, and all the other very important duties performed by Conference Services. I want all of them to know of my appreciation for their labour. By organizational design, the Chef de Cabinet is the direct link between the Secretariat and the Chairman. Albeit in his absence, we are indebted to the former Chef de Cabinet for the invaluable service he provided to the Chairman and her staff.

At a personal/professional level, this particular journey has been a special one for me, having assumed this position with many odds seemingly stacked against me. I have had an expedited learning process and have been more than grateful to benefit from the experience of others.

I now look forward to joining the ranks of your membership, as the outgoing Chairman, and assure the in-coming Chairman, the Ambassador of Chad, of my ready support, wherever it is required.

Excellencies, Colleagues, Secretary General,

There is no room for complacency given what lies ahead, except for a slowing of pace in August so that we can regain our energies. I therefore wish for you, your staff and your families, the time that you so well deserve for rest and renewal and I hope to see you all refreshed and revived, in September.

I thank you!

SSM

Embassy of Jamaica, Brussels

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