

# Opening remarks by the Secretary General at the 2nd Meeting of ACP Ministers of Health, 25 February 2015, Brussels

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*[Protocols]*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all, on behalf of the ACP Group, to this 2nd Meeting of ACP Ministers of Health.

This Ministerial Meeting is a significant occasion, as it has once again availed a unique opportunity for ACP Ministers of Health to come together and engage in discussions on critical issues pertaining to the promotion of health for sustainable development in ACP States. Indeed, your participation in this Meeting today is a testimony of your commitment to finding solutions to the challenges in the health sector that impede the development agendas of our States.

The 7th Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea from 13 to 14 December 2012, under the theme, "The Future of the ACP Group in a Changing World: Challenges and Opportunities", reiterated its support to efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and post-2015 sustainable development in a manner which will not jeopardize the progress made to achieve the MDGs. The 7th Summit also stated its commitment to continuing and sustaining the relevance and effectiveness of the ACP Group by deepening and enhancing the ACP-EU relationship as a unique North-South Development Cooperation model, while developing diversified South-South and other partnerships, with an aim to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development in ACP States.

As the international community reflects on the post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda, it is timely that the ACP Group of States also deliberates on the unfinished business in achieving the targets set under the health-related Millennium Development Goals.

Health plays a key role in the promotion of human security and development. ACP States therefore need to renew their commitments to improved investments in quality health care for all, including the strengthening of the national health systems and a well facilitated health work force.

It is important to note that investments in basic health services in developing countries is only a fraction of what is needed. The weak health systems compounds the challenge to the timely provision of these services to the populations which need them most.

It is therefore imperative, regardless of income, for countries to design health systems that are responsive to the needs of their populations and aimed at improving access to services for the poor.

The complex nature and processes of the spread and transmission of communicable diseases and epidemics, necessitate highly efficient national health care systems and effective global partnerships.

The Ebola outbreak in the affected countries in West Africa, has clearly demonstrated the urgent need to put access to affordable health services for all, on top of the development agenda in developing countries. The provision of these health services should, at a minimum, cover basic, preventive and primary medical care services as well as referral services.

The shortcomings in the health systems of the Ebola affected countries, remind us that despite the progress observed globally and in several countries of the ACP region, a majority of ACP countries are not on track to meet the three health-related Millennium Development Goals, that is MDGs 4 (Reduce child mortality), 5 (improve maternal health), and 6 (combat HIV/AIDS and malaria and other diseases). Accelerated and focused interventions need to be developed and properly implemented by those countries which are not on track, particularly within the context of the post-2015 development agenda. Such interventions must include the strengthening of human resources for health, as there is a strong relationship between the ratio of health workers to population and the progress toward the Millennium Development Goals.

We acknowledge that the science and epidemiology of viruses such as the Ebola Virus, has advanced, but still these viruses are able to inflict such suffering in poor nations which are Member States of global health governance institutions such as the WHO. It is therefore prudent for the international community to start asking what went wrong for this dreadful Ebola virus with its known mode of transmission, to get out of control.

Further, access to affordable quality medicines remains a problem in a large number of ACP countries and the irregular availability of drugs leads to incomplete treatment and, for the vast majority of the population, to exorbitant out-of-pocket expenditures. The EU/ACP/WHO Renewed Partnership in strengthening pharmaceutical systems and improving access to quality medicines in 15 African countries, aims at addressing these challenges.

Nutrition, as well, is still a major public health challenge in a large number of ACP countries. As such there is a need to systematically include nutrition related indicators in the health sector development cooperation programmes.

The ACP Group of States is committed to strengthening the strategic partnerships with our development partners in order to ensure that health development is appropriately positioned in the post-2015 Development Agenda. We must continue to strive for access to affordable quality health services for all, as this is fundamental in achieving sustainable development in our States.

**Honourable Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In organizing this Ministerial Meeting, a specific effort was made to allocate two days for preparatory technical discussions of health experts from national, regional and international levels as well as Government policy officials responsible for health matters in ACP States. This was deemed necessary, as it would permit our technical experts and officials, with their wealth of knowledge and experience, to exchange views and reflect on intra-ACP cooperation in the Health sector in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. These technical discussions took place with a very specific objective of drawing up a set of Conclusions and Recommendations to be adopted by this Ministerial Meeting.

I am pleased to report to you, Honourable Ministers that our experts and officials have worked in a spirit of intra-ACP solidarity, and invested much thought and energy into this task. Their efforts have successfully resulted into the Draft Brussels Conclusions and Recommendations on Health in the context of the post-2015 Development Agenda in ACP States, before you today for your further deliberation and adoption.

**Honourable Ministers,**

The challenge before you is to ensure that the draft Brussels Conclusions and Recommendations on Health in the context of the post-2015 Development Agenda in ACP States, clearly reflect the commitment of ACP Member States to the promotion and development of the health sector in ACP States. The enrichment you will provide to this document will enhance the major objective of this Ministerial Meeting, which is to reaffirm the intra-ACP cooperation at political level, in the health areas of concern at national and regional levels in ACP States.

We are therefore encouraged by these technical and political discussions on the promotion and development of the health sector in ACP States and we look forward to your guidance and support to ensure that the conclusions and recommendations of this Ministerial Meeting result in implementable and measurable initiatives in priority areas of the health sector in ACP States.

We would also wish to call on you, Honourables Ministers, to explore the modalities whereby health activities can be mainstreamed, at the national and regional levels, into all aspects of development cooperation and support programmes.

As I conclude my tenure as Secretary-General of the ACP Group of States, I take it as a memorable event, to participate in your deliberations at this 2nd Meeting of ACP Ministers of Health, particularly, in the year when the international community will decide on the post-2015 development framework as well as decide on the post-Ebola reconstruction of the most affected countries in West Africa.

Honourable Ministers,

Let me therefore wish you fruitful deliberations and successful outcomes. I am sure the insights and guidance you will provide today will reinforce our development efforts and cooperation in the promotion of the health sector in ACP States.

I thank you for your kind attention.

**\*\*Organisation of the Meeting\*\***

Honourable Ministers  
Excellences,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to make the following proposition with regard to the organization of your Meeting.

This thematic Ministerial Meeting on Health falls under the Work Programme of the Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors, whose Chairmanship is currently being held by the Republic of Gabon. It is therefore the Secretariat's proposition that the proceedings of this Meeting be chaired by the Honourable Minister of Health from the Republic of Gabon, Mr. Jean Pierre Oyiba. If there is no objection to this proposition, I wish to submit that the Hon. Oyiba be elected by acclamation to chair this Ministerial Meeting.

[Yield floor to Delegates]

I thank you for your cooperation

I therefore have the pleasure to invite the Minister of Health of Gabon, Hon. Oyiba to proceed with the chairing of your deliberations.

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Tags: [SG speeches](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

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**URL source:** <http://acp.int/fr/content/opening-remarks-secretary-general-2nd-meeting-acp-ministers-health-25-february-2015-brussels>

**Liens:**

[1] <http://acp.int/fr/category/story-type/sg-speeches>