

# Presentation by the Secretary General at the Southern Africa Regional Consultations (Session 1) of the Eminent Persons Group, 2 September 2014, Luanda Angola

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Your Excellencies,

Honorable Members of Parliament and

Distinguished participants

1. At the outset, let me thank our Chair for this session, Dr Howard Sigwele from Botswana. I have been asked to speak on the subject of the *"The ACP Group and the Georgetown Agreement: Vision and Objectives, Growth and Evolution, Gains and Lessons Learned"*

2. This topic, I think, is important because it will set the stage for our consultations today by responding to the following questions

- What is the genesis and what were the objectives behind the formation of the ACP Group?
- What are the main elements of the Georgetown Agreement of 1975 which govern the work of the ACP as a Group?
- How has the Membership of the ACP evolved since the Georgetown Agreement?
- Have the stated objectives in the Georgetown Agreement been met, and what are the challenges, achievements, and lessons learnt?

3. I have structured my short presentation by attempting to respond to these questions and hope to be brief so that we can have adequate time for consultations – which is the main purpose of this meeting.

### Genesis and objectives behind the formation of the ACP Group

4. The ACP Group consists of 79 Member-States, all of them, except Cuba, signatories to the Cotonou Agreement which governs their cooperation with the European Union: 48 countries are from Sub-Saharan Africa, 16 from the Caribbean and 15 from the Pacific. South Sudan is in the process of becoming the 80<sup>th</sup> Member hoping that the political and security situation in the country will be resolved soon.

5. The Group was originally created with the aim of coordinating cooperation between its members and the European Union. Its main objective was to singularly, severally and collectively negotiate and implement cooperation agreements with the European Community.

6. Over the years, the Group extended its range of activities. Cooperation among its members has transcended development cooperation with the European Union and covers a variety of fields spanning trade, development cooperation, economics, politics and culture, and in diverse international fora such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). However the degree of success of intra-ACP cooperation has lately been a matter of debate. No doubt much more could have been achieved than is presently the case.

7. Cooperation between the European Union and the ACP Group began in 1975 with the First Lome Convention but the origin of the partnership dates back to the birth of the organization of Europe's as a regional entity. In fact, as soon as the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957, it created an avenue for cooperation with the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) of the six signatory countries: Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and Holland, essentially West and Central African, countries with ties to France.

8. The first Association Agreement was devised in 1957 and endowed with resources from the first European Development Fund (EDF). In 1963 and 1969, 18 African States and their six European counterparts signed the First and Second Yaoundé Conventions, supported by resources from the 2nd and 3rd EDF respectively. The agreements were geared mainly towards financial, technical and trade cooperation, primarily in the sectors of economic and social infrastructure.

9. The United Kingdom's accession to the European Community in 1973 paved the way for the extension of the Europe-Africa cooperation to the Commonwealth countries, whether African, Caribbean, or Pacific. Later on, Spain's accession would also have an impact on the membership of the ACP Group to attract Spanish speaking African and Caribbean countries.
10. The Georgetown Agreement, the Group's charter or constitution, which was signed in 1975 at the time the First Lome Convention came into force, laid down the rules for cooperation between the countries of three continents, the main link being shared aid from the European Community.
11. The Georgetown Agreement reviewed two times has set objectives for the ACP Group at three levels.
12. At the ACP level, the objectives were:
- (i) To promote and strengthen unity and solidarity among the ACP States, as well as understanding between ACP peoples;
  - (ii) To consolidate, strengthen and maintain peace and stability as a precondition for improving the well-being of ACP peoples in a democratic and free environment;
  - (iii) To contribute to the development of greater and closer economic, political social and cultural relations among developing countries and, to that end, cooperation between the ACP States mainly in the fields of trade, science and technology, industry, transport and communications, education, training and research, information and communication, the environment, demography and human resources;
  - (iv) To promote policies especially in the areas of the environment and the rational management of natural resources, in pursuit of sustainable development;
  - (v) To promote and reinforce intra-ACP regional integration so as to enable ACP States to increase their competitiveness and to meet the challenges of globalization;
  - (vi) To promote and reinforce political dialogue within the ACP Group so as to consolidate ACP unity and solidarity.
13. However the degree of success of intra-ACP cooperation has lately been a matter of debate. There is no doubt that much more could have been achieved than is presently the case.
14. At the ACP-EU level, the objectives were:
- (i) To strengthen relations with the European Union with the aim of speeding up the development of ACP States;
  - (ii) To ensure the realization of the objectives of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreements in particular, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and the smooth and gradual integration of ACP States into the world economy;
  - (iii) To co-ordinate the activities of the ACP *Group* in the implementation of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreements;
  - (iv) To define a common stand for the ACP vis-à-vis the European Union on matters covered by the ACP-EC Partnership Agreements and on the issues tackled by international bodies likely to affect the implementation of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreements;
  - (v) To engage in effective and meaningful political dialogue at the appropriate levels with the European Union in order to strengthen ACP-EC Partnership;
  - (vi) contribute to strengthening regional mechanisms for the prevention, management and peaceful settlement of conflicts and by pursuing and developing cooperation between ACP States and third States, and;
15. At the Global level, the set objectives were:
- (i) To aim for the promotion of a fairer and more equitable new world order;
  - (ii) To strengthen the political identity of the ACP Group to enable it to act as a coherent political force in international bodies and to ensure that due regard is accorded its specific interests; and
  - (iii) To establish contacts and relations with other States and groups of States.
16. On this latter objective of establishing contacts with other States, I must say that the ACP has only made some fleeting attempts with nothing major to report.

#### Main elements of the Georgetown Agreement of 1975 which governs the work of the ACP as a Group

17. In addition to setting the objectives, the Georgetown Agreement established the principle organs that govern the

functioning of the ACP Group.

18. The structures laid out by the Georgetown Agreement as revised include the following:

Ø The ACP Summit – (the highest decision making body)

Ø Council of Ministers (the main decision-making body)

Ø Committee of Ambassadors (a secondary decision-making body, acting on behalf of the Council of Ministers between ministerial sessions)

Ø ACP Consultative Assembly (established in 2005; also called the Parliamentary Assembly)

19. Two institutions are jointly owned by the ACP and the EU, namely

Ø Centre for the Development of Enterprise (CDE, which was set to encourage and support the creation, expansion and restructuring of industrial companies in the ACP countries) and the

Ø Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation (CTA, which was to help improve access to, and use of, information for agricultural and rural development).

20. I must add here that the ACP and the ACP-EU joint Council of Ministers at its meeting in Nairobi last June reached a decision to wind down the CDE, albeit in an orderly manner. This decision was based on years of mismanagement and alleged failure to deliver on its mandate.

21. There are also a number of joint bodies, bringing together representatives of the ACP countries with those of the European Union:

Ø the ACP-EU Council of Ministers conducts the political dialogue, adopt guidelines and measures to implement the Agreement

Ø the ACP-EU Committee of Ambassadors assists the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, and

Ø the Joint Parliamentary Assembly, a consultative body which establishes contacts with economic and social actors and civil society.

22. All the structures are technically supported by the ACP Secretariat based in Brussels with a satellite office in Geneva.

#### How the Membership of the ACP has evolved since the Georgetown Agreement

23. The negotiation and conclusion of each partnership agreement since the Yaounde days witnessed an increase in the Membership of the ACP Group.

24. Starting with 18 countries mostly former French colonies in Africa, plus Somalia in the Yaounde 1, they were joined by the three East Africa countries of Kenya Uganda and Tanzania in 1969 and soon thereafter by Mauritius in 1972.

25. When the United Kingdom (plus Denmark and Ireland) joined the EEC in 1973, 21 Commonwealth countries including those in the Caribbean and Pacific as well as other countries in Africa that had gained independence namely Ethiopia, Sudan, Liberia, Equatorial Guinea and Guinea Bissau joined to negotiate the First Lome Convention. The convention was concluded by 9 EEC members and 46 ACP countries. The 46 became the founder members of the ACP Group.

26. The Second Lome Convention was signed by 58 rising to 64 at the third Lome Convention. By the Fourth Lome Convention, the ACP number had increased to 68 and to 77 in 2000 when the Cotonou Agreement was concluded. The present number is 79 as Timor Leste joined later and Cuba which joined earlier did not sign the Cotonou Agreement. South Sudan's is currently an observer and its membership is expected soon.

#### Meeting the objectives in the Georgetown Agreement - challenges, achievements, and lessons learnt

27. One of the major achievements of the Georgetown Agreement has been to solidify the unity and solidarity of the ACP group over the years. This has been witnessed for example, during negotiation with the European partners, at the World Trade Organization and during the Joint Parliamentary Assembly sessions.

28. But one of the major challenges that the ACP has faced in implementing Georgetown Agreement, in fact I will term it as a failure, is the inability by the ACP Group to give substance to intra- ACP cooperation particularly in the area of trade.

29. Although trade has advanced at the ACP regional levels, nothing substantive has been achieved at the all ACP level. But I can say that the ACP Secretariat, with the assistance of the International Trade Centre is carrying out a study on "ACP

trade: prospects for stronger performance and cooperation" in the context of establishment of an ACP Free Trade Area. The request for this study was made at the suggestion of the Eminent Persons Group Report Drafting Team to assist in developing their report. The study which was recently released to the EPG Team will soon be disseminated to the larger ACP Group so that lessons can be drawn on what must be done to enhance intra-ACP trade cooperation.

30. The new shape of cooperation with the EU, with its distinct agreement with different ACP regions also constitutes a major challenge. Today, the EU has concluded strategic partnerships with the three major ACP Regions – EU-Africa, EU-Caribbean and EU-Pacific Strategic partnerships.

31. Going forward, the ACP will need to find a new momentum and new ambitions in discussions with Europe perhaps to go beyond bilateral issues and start to deal comprehensively with global issues and challenges. A start has been made on climate change and global food prices and recently on the post 2015 development agenda.

32. I look forward to hearing views and proposals from this august gathering.

Mr Chairman, I thank you for your attention.

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