

Statement by the Secretary General at the 38th session of the ACP Parliamentary Assembly, 12 June 2015, Suva, Fiji

Statement by the Secretary General at the 38th session of the ACP Parliamentary Assembly, 12 June 2015, Suva, Fiji

[Protocols]

I wish to thank you for another opportunity to be with you for this series of your meetings. I count it an honour and privilege to interact with our elected representatives from across the length and breadth of the ACP Membership.

I would like to place on record the deep appreciation of the Secretariat to the Government and people of Fiji for having offered to host this session of the Assembly at short notice. These meetings should have been held in Vanuatu, as the president has indicated, but for the tragic events of cyclone Pam, that had rendered the practicality of going ahead with the meetings untenable.

Mr. President,

The last time that ACP and ACP-EU parliamentary meetings of this nature were held in the Pacific was in November 2008, when you met in Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea. Since then, a regional meeting was held in Samoa and a fact-finding mission was undertaken here in Fiji, all in 2012. For the Secretariat and I, when we come to one of the countries of the Pacific for official business provides an opportunity to empathise with our colleagues from this region with regard to the long distances and huge expense that they themselves have to incur regularly to attend meetings in Brussels or in Africa and the Caribbean.

The expression of ACP solidarity is meaningless if it does not cost us something, and if we cannot make our sister states in geographically distant areas of the globe feel and experience that they too deserve equal attention from the time and resources of the Group.

However, beyond the symbolic value of hosting meetings of the JPA in different countries, it also gives Members, the opportunity to glean first-hand, experiences, challenges and opportunities of development in other ACP States, and what lessons can be drawn and possibly transposed into other countries and institutions.

At the multilateral level, development countries are calling for similar consideration from more developed partners with regard to the hosting of important institutional meetings. It is this spirit that for the first time, the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference is being held in Nairobi, Kenya; it is indeed the first time that the Conference is being held on the African continent. We join in congratulating Kenya. Our solidarity is with you for great success!

Mr. President, Last Saturday June 6 marked the 40th Anniversary of the signing of the GT Agreement that established the ACP Group.

The year 2015 is for us a major milestone to both reflect on the past and look to the future.

The Secretariat has just concluded long and intensive meetings of the ACP Council and the ACP-EU Joint Council of Ministers that took place in Brussels from 25 to 29 May 2015. The Decisions and Resolutions of the Council will be distributed during the session, and I am sure that the President of the ACP Council will address some of the issues in his Statement to the JPA on Tuesday next week. I would like to point out, nevertheless, that the future direction of the ACP Group was once again prominent in all the discussions. In this regard, Council mandated the Task-Force for implementation of the recommendations of the Ambassadorial Working Group on Future Perspectives to widen its discussions to include trade, development and cooperation as well to fast track the design of a long term development Fund and address financial sustainability of ACP as a matter of great urgency.

Mr. President,

When I first addressed your gathering at your 37th Session on 17th March at ACP House in Brussels, it was in the wake of my assumption of Office of Secretary-General, and I therefore took the occasion to briefly outline the major strategic direction of my tenure.

This will comprise four (4) strategic domains: rule of law and good governance; global justice and human security; intra-ACP trade and industrialization and fourthly, building sustainable, resilient and creative economies.

As I intimated in my previous address, one of my priorities is the elaboration of a Strategic Management Plan, which will form the basis for the implementation, advisory and facilitative role of the Secretariat in its service to the governing organs and

indeed to the member States.

Even as discussions on future strategic policy domains of the ACP Group continue, and indeed the framework of ACP-EU relations beyond 2020, the overarching vision is the achievement by fundamental reforms and transformation, of a highly dynamic, fit-for-purpose Secretariat that will be the channel through which the ACP Group will impart substantive content to its aims and objectives.

The principle outcomes from the Strategic plan is to map the path for the enhancement and deepening of cooperation between the ACP Group and regional integration groupings. It is also intended to re-examine the interaction between the ACP Group and the EU, with a view to improving the quality of this cooperation from an ACP perspective.

In an effort to broaden partnerships, we intend to explore further links and synergies between the ACP Group and other countries and groupings, in order to increase the role and profile of the Group as an effective global player particularly in the field of South-South and triangular cooperation. Also important is to step-up the Observer status of the ACP at the UN in New York as was urged by the President of the UN General Assembly, Hon. Sam Kutesa of Uganda when he addressed our 40th Anniversary Symposium last Friday June 5.

Because the role of the Secretariat is important in all these processes, we shall identify measures to improve processes, systems, working methods and functions of the Secretariat in order to align it with the afore mentioned objectives.

My vision of an effective Secretariat is that of an instrumental and dynamic collaborator in shaping and defining the programmes, projects and actions and all other desirable outcomes that we hope for in a revitalised and strengthened Group.

Mr. President

As we look to the future, we have in the interim, some current business to attend to. We are in the process of finalizing the programming for the 11th EDF with our partners in the EU. We have made some proposals which have been considered by the Committee of Ambassadors and the Council of Ministers. However, I wish to state that this is only one part of the process, the bulk of EDF resources are devolved to the national level.

A number of ACP countries have already completed their consultative processes for their Country Strategy Papers and National Indicative Programmes.

I would like to encourage you to take an active interest in the implementation of the Strategy papers through national parliamentary channels so that you can inform this Assembly of the efficacy of the EDF and other ways in which we can improve on development cooperation. The Cotonou Agreement provides for the participation of national parliaments in its implementation for just this kind of purpose.

We need to ensure that your EU counterparts take notice of your interest in this matter so that they can support and press for simplified procedures for implementation and release of funds, which have been long-standing issues for the EDF. Further, this is one of the ways in which we can help to press for a plurilateral financial framework that is legally binding with mutual responsibilities on our side and that of the EU in the period after 2020.

Mr. President, Hon. Members, dear friends:

The European Commissioner for Development has indicated that the EU would like to begin negotiations for a successor Agreement by about 2017. It is incumbent upon the Secretariat to take a proactive approach with regard to the future of the ACP Group beyond 2020 so that we can be in a position to provide the appropriate technical advice to our Governing organs.

In this regard, we have commissioned a consultancy exercise to formulate the ACP position paper. The consultants will rely on wide-ranging data collection utilising the reports of the future of the ACP Group from the Ambassadorial Working Group and the Eminent Persons Group, focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews, among others.

I am aware of the sentiments that have been expressed by your Assembly on this matter, during discussions I have had with you when I made presentations on behalf of the Ambassadorial Working Group, as well as the debate you had with the drafting team of the EPG at the 36th Session of the ACP PA held in Strasbourg on 28 November 2014. All these will be duly taken into account.

We hope to complete the process by September and thereafter, we shall invite further comments from the regions, non-state actors and private sector entities, trade unions and think-tanks. We shall also definitely benefit from the views of the JPA in the next Report of the Committee on Economic Development, Finance and Trade on the theme 'Forty years of partnership: evaluation of the impact on trade and development in the ACP countries and prospects for enduring relations between the ACP countries and the European Union.'

Mr. President, Hon. Members,

I would like to end my address with a brief tribute. My long association with the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly from my time as Ambassador in Brussels has convinced me of its value as an irreplaceable source of initiatives, proposals and analysis. The long and extensive list of topics dealt with is evidence of your vitality and the varied nature of your work.

I am of the view that the JPA shall, and must, remain one of the strongest institutions for the ACP and the EU as we strive to forge a coherent and comprehensive approach to development policy and poverty eradication.

In fact, the Cotonou Agreement bears the imprint of the work of the Assembly over many years. Items on human rights, accountability, transparency, good governance, rule of law and the participation of non-state actors and parliaments were included at the behest of this Assembly.

However, I have begun to sense, particularly over the last few years that Members are not making maximum use of this Assembly. Other partners yearn for the opportunity that you enjoy to interact so closely with Representatives of EU institutions whose decisions have a tremendous impact in the rest of the world. May I therefore urge you to take full advantage of this opportunity that you have to help advance the objectives and goals of this unique inter-governmental ACP Group..."the trade union of developing countries", as we were called by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere.

Mr. President, Hon. Members,

I thank you... asante sana!

Dr. Patrick I Gomes
ACP Secretary General
12 June 2015

Tags: [SG speeches](#) ^[1]

URL source: <http://acp.int/fr/content/statement-secretary-general-38th-session-acp-parliamentary-assembly-12-june-2015-suva-fiji>

Liens:

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