

# Statement by the Secretary General at the Opening of the 102nd session of the ACP Council of Ministers, Brussels, 24 November 2015

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The Right Honourable Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, Ratu Josia Voreqe Bainimarama  
Honourable Dr. Mamphono Kakheta, Minister of Finance of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and President of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Council Session,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

May I begin by expressing how deeply honoured I am to welcome you to the ACP House for the 102<sup>nd</sup> Council Session. A special welcome to the Right Honourable Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, Ratu Josia Voreqe Bainimarama, whose presence with us today signals the high esteem the Government and people of Fiji accord the ACP Group.

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addressing this august gathering in May, I reminded the distinguished audience that this year is indeed an important one in the history of our Group. It marks the fortieth anniversary of the signing of the Georgetown Agreement, which brought into existence the ACP Group. The Secretariat worked closely with the Committee of Ambassadors to commemorate the occasion on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of June, in a manner befitting of the importance it richly deserves. Not only did we have stimulating symposia about our achievements and weaknesses, challenges and future path, but these were interspersed with cultural performances and culinary delights that celebrate our cultural diversity. Excerpts from the statements made during the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary symposium have been compiled, and will be published and distributed throughout the member states.

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies

We strongly believe that the ambition of the group must take into account ever evolving and turbulent global dynamics. To deepen this awareness and increase the visibility of the Group, the Secretariat has taken part in various international fora of the ACP Group to become an effective global player. Efforts have also been made to place the Secretariat closer to the ACP regions by participating in regional summits. We were particularly heartened to be in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, for the regional summit of the Pacific. Reference to such engagements is given in my report to be presented later.

While this year is significant as it marks the fortieth anniversary of the ACP Group, 2016 also will be an enormously important year in the history of the ACP. This is primarily because our Leaders are expected to make definitive pronouncements regarding the future direction and structure of the Group and its organs. Such pronouncements will follow the 7<sup>th</sup> Summit of ACP heads of State and Government in Malabo in 2012 that unequivocally reaffirmed the position that the ACP must remain united as a group. Both the ACP Group on the one hand, and the European Union on the other, have begun a process of consultation and reflection regarding our future relations beyond 2020. These will gather momentum in the course of 2016.

Honourable ministers, Excellencies,

Before concluding, please allow me to allude to the issues of financial as well as human resources, which are a prerequisite to the continued wellbeing of the ACP Group in general, and your Secretariat in particular. I would therefore like to appeal to Member States to step up your efforts towards the timely payment of statutory contributions in order to support the smooth functioning of the Secretariat, and to fill essential posts. Additional voluntary contributions outside of statutory obligations have seen so admirably demonstrated, and for those countries providing such assistance, we are deeply grateful.

In closing, I would like to place on record my deep appreciation for the extensive collaboration and support I have enjoyed from the Chair of the Committee of Ambassadors, the Distinguished Ambassador Mpeo Mahase-Moiloa of Lesotho, as well as the Bureau of the Committee of Ambassadors, and indeed the Committee itself. I am also highly appreciative of the work done by the various Working Groups set up by the Committee of Ambassadors to implement your Decisions from previous council sessions. Finally, let me once again underscore the level of professional commitment demonstrated by the staff of the Secretariat in the discharge of their duties, an essential ingredient for this administration – “Team 2020” – so that we satisfactorily and with high acclaim fulfil our mandate.

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies

May I once again welcome you to the ACP House, your House and Home, and I wish the 102<sup>nd</sup> ACP Council successful deliberations. I thank you for your kind attention.

**Dr. Patrick I. Gomes**  
**ACP Secretary General**

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