

# ACP saddened by loss of American statesman, advocate for Africa

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*Brussels, 14 March 2012/ACP:* A message of condolence has been sent on behalf of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group to the Speaker of the House of Representatives in the United States after the recent death of U.S Representative Hon. Donald Payne earlier this month.

The Secretary General for the ACP Group Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas expressed his sadness at the loss of the 77-year old New Jersey native, whom he called a “great friend and champion of Africa”.

Hon. Payne died on March 6 after a distinguished career as a Democrat representing New Jersey’s 10th congressional district for 23 years. He was the state’s first black congressman, and at the time of his death, the only one active.

Hon. Payne was also known as a “de facto” ambassador to Africa, sitting as the senior Democrat on the House Committee for Foreign Affairs and the subcommittee dealing with Africa. He championed crucial causes including the global fight against HIV/AIDS, advocated the Darfur Genocide Accountability Act, and helped to author the Sudan Peace Act in 2002. In 2009, while leaving Mogadishu, Somalia after an official visit, his plane was attacked leaving the airfield, although all survived. The following year, he was awarded by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda with the ‘UMURINZI’ – the country’s Campaign against Genocide Medal, for his work while heading a presidential mission to Rwanda in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide.

“His indefatigable work in advocating global health, peace-building, humanitarianism and social justice will be committed to the national memories of our member states – especially those with which he dealt directly – and revered and cherished at all levels of our communities,” Secretary General Chambas stated.

“Honourable Payne leaves behind a legacy of fortitude, passion and great courage which marked his unique character as an international statesman. His passing away is a great loss to both his country and the international community.”

Hon. Payne’s funeral was held 14 March 2012 in Newark, New Jersey.

*(Photo by AP)*

- ACP Press

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