

ACP shares condolence upon loss of Tongan Head of State

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Brussels, 20 March 2012/ACP: Parliamentarians from 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries observed a minute of silence this morning in Brussels, in solidarity with the people of Tonga after the death of the country's monarch King George Tupou V on Sunday afternoon.

At the 27th session of the ACP Parliamentary Assembly today, the President of the Assembly Kenyan MP Hon. Musikari Kombo expressed his condolences to the South Pacific nation over the loss of its Head of State, which he noted occurred on heels of recent tragedies in Brazzaville, Congo, where a bomb blast killed more than 200 people and in Belgium, where 28 lives were lost in a coach car accident.

In support, a letter from the ACP Secretary General Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas to the Prime Minister of Tonga Lord Tu'ivakano stated:

"We remember His Late Majesty as a genuine advocate of progress, a distinguished statesman, and a true gentleman. Despite many challenges faced during the course of his reign, he successfully and peacefully ushered in Tonga's first democratically elected government in 2010, after relinquishing much of his executive powers for the sake of a more democratic political system. The significance of such a bold and historic move will remain for generations to come."

On behalf of the ACP Group of States, the Secretary General conveyed sincere sympathies to Members of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister, and the people of Tonga.

Attending the parliamentary meeting in Brussels along with nearly 300 international delegates, Tongan MP Sione Taione said: "This loss was unexpected, but we are united as a nation in mourning. To have fellow members of the ACP family of nations standing with us during this difficult time is admirable, meaningful and appreciated."

A state funeral for the king is scheduled for 27 March in the capital Nuku'alofa.

The Tongan High Commission in London, United Kingdom will hold evening prayers at the High Commissioner's Residence commencing 19 March until further notice. A memorial service is also planned.

Meanwhile, a book of condolence will be open to the public at the Tonga High Commission at 36 Molyneux Street, London W1H 5BQ from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm every day from Wednesday to Friday this week, 21 – 23 March.

(Photo: ACP Parliamentarians sharing a moment of silence for victims of recent tragedies in member and partner countries)

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