

Opening Ceremony of the 35th session of the Joint ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly - Statement by Honourable Joseph Owona Kono, ACP Co-President

Opening Ceremony of the 35th session of the Joint ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly - Statement by Honourable Joseph Owona Kono, ACP Co-President



Brussels, Belgium, 19 June 2018

Your Excellency – Yuri Sterk, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Hon. Louis Michel, Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Distinguished Colleagues and invited guests,

I thank you for the honour and privilege of addressing this session of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. I wish to place on record the appreciation of ACP Members, and indeed of the ACP Group, to the European Parliament for offering to host these meetings.

Your Excellency, Hon. Members,

I have been associated with the Joint Parliamentary Assembly for a while. I have found this assembly to be a great opportunity for parliamentary exchanges on development and democratic processes. As representatives of our various peoples and as policy and decision makers overseeing government functions, we are in a unique position to engage with policy makers in ACP and EU institutions. The theme based debates of our assembly, as well as the interactive and participatory process of adopting resolutions provide a means and a common platform, cutting across ideology and different levels of development. Our primary role is to ensure that multilateral governance encompasses the values, rules, and processes through which people and organisations attempt to work towards common objectives, make decisions, generate authority and legitimacy and ultimately exercise power for the benefit of the people who ought to be the object of all our human endeavours.

The combination of 79 ACP + 27/28 Member States has the distinct potential to play a decisive role in shaping global governance and decision making in international fora and must therefore be leveraged in a more consistent and institutionalised manner, based on mutual interests and priorities. Sessions of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly are a re-affirmation of our commitment to parliamentary governance in the multilateral context. A role that is not taken lightly by this august assembly.

In this regard, we have adopted a Declaration in which we made it very clear that we would like the post-Cotonou framework to include an enhanced role for the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. This will enable this Assembly to continue to play its role in successor agreement that ensures multilateral governance encompasses the values, rules, institutions, and processes through which people and organizations attempt to work towards common objectives, make decisions, generate authority and legitimacy, and ultimately exercise power for the benefit of the people who ought to be the object of all human endeavors.

Critical to the ambition of a modernised fit for purpose partnership with the EU is the issue of financing. The ACP Group continues to advocate for a financial mechanism that assures resource predictability which is critical to long term development. I remain conscious of the case of middle income countries while we note their development they continue to face challenges such as lack of infrastructure, undiversified economies and low levels of industrialisation. In addition, to dealing with harsh climatic conditions which manifest themselves in the form of severe prolonged and frequent drought or floods which affect crop production, livestock and tourism. Middle income countries need consistent and assured support to enable them to escape the so-called middle income trap. Some of this assistance is not necessarily in monetary form. Greater efforts should be made to help countries diversify their economies through private sector development.

Your Excellency, Hon Members,

We all have only one planet to call home, and it is incumbent on the present generation to pass on to future generations a planet suitable for human habitation, as indeed it has been for our generation. It is therefore important that we reaffirm our commitment to the protection of the planet as was agreed by the Paris Agreement on climate change.

In the course of the 43 years of the ACP-EU partnership cooperation between the two parties in international fora has become increasingly significant over time, culminating in the decisive role this partnership played towards the outcome of COP 23 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. This assembly shares the concern of vulnerability of ACP countries to the threat of climate change which underscores the importance of multilateral approaches in addressing such challenges to enhance sustainable development for ACP Countries.

With the global nature of the threat of climate change, it is expedient to continue engagement at parliament's level. The momentum to achieve the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is irreversible, and should therefore remain a priority for national, regional and continental actions to ensure its full implementation. 2018 is a critical year under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as Parties need to adopt the Paris Agreement Work Programme at COP24 in Katowice, Poland in December. I urge this assembly to ensure we also engage with the executive so that we can play a key role that will ensure full operationalization of the Paris Agreement from 2020, is robust, comprehensive and fully consistent with the core principles of the Convention, in particular the principle of equity, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Your Excellency, Hon. Co-President, Hon. Members, distinguished invited guests,

Let me conclude by emphasising that all discussions that will dominate our session in this particular instance, as well as those in the future should be anchored in the global discourse on development and poverty eradication.

As we begin negotiations for a post Cotonou successor agreement we should strive to have this Joint Assembly, the European parliament and indeed our national parliaments play a key role. I implore each of us to resolve to ensuring that the Successor Agreement constitute a legal basis for a renewed and strong partnership that will reaffirm commitment to democracy, peace and security, justice for all that will help to drive the transformation of our economies, driven by the determination to grow, innovate, industrialize, trade, and reinvigorate and add value to our products, with the ultimate goal of improving the standards of living of our peoples. We, as legislators need to continuously work to improve our own effectiveness and realisation of an enabling environment for development in our countries.

Let us all remember that this forum constitutes the largest democratic expression of peoples in our collective geographic space. It is therefore an obligation to ensure our executive authorities do incorporate as best as possible the outcomes of our deliberations.

Beyond all those necessary elements of finance, strategic planning and improved working relations, today more than ever, has to be the steadfast commitment of our political leadership. Leadership that is courageous enough to do the impossible, leadership that is principled enough to do the admirable for the sake of the 1.5 billion populations the partnership oversees.

I thank you for your kind attention and hope that we shall have a successful session.

Tags: [News articles](#) ^[1]

Source URL: <http://acp.int/content/opening-ceremony-35th-session-joint-acp-eu-parliamentary-assembly-statement-honourable-josep>

Links:

[1] <http://acp.int/category/story-type/news-articles>