

SPEECH: Opening Statement by H. E. Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Secretary-General of the ACP Group on the occasion of the First Ministerial Meeting on the Development of Mineral Resources Brussels, 15 December 2010

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Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies Ambassadors,
Distinguished Representatives of International Organisations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to the First ACP Ministerial Meeting on the Development of Mineral Resources. I am happy to note the presence of several Ministers, despite the difficult travel connections and busy schedules especially, at this time of the year. Your presence here today is a clear demonstration of the importance of the Mineral resources sector for your countries.

Honourable Ministers,

The main objective of this meeting is for you to provide political guidance on priority areas in the Mineral resources Sector and on the resulting actions; you wish to see undertaken in the near future to complement your existing National and Regional initiatives. These elements would eventually form the basis of an ACP Framework of Action for the Mineral Resources sector.

Honourable Ministers,

One of the paradoxes of our time is that while many of our countries are rich in natural resource endowments, they are also the region where poverty and destitution still prevail. Yet, to survive and flourish in the emerging global economy, we must focus on those competitive products and sectors that will enhance incomes while providing jobs for our teeming millions of youths.

Honourable Ministers,

The mineral industry has the potential to fulfill this role and to become an important component in the wheel that is driving the fight against poverty and underdevelopment in our countries. There is therefore a pressing need for us to fully exploit this potential which in many of our states is still dormant.

Honourable Ministers,

This Ministerial Meeting could not have been more timely. On the hand we are at a juncture when our Development partners are endeavoring to secure access to raw materials, while on the other hand we are in the process of elaborating an ACP Framework for Action in the Mineral Resources sector. Clearly, these two objectives should be reconciled so that we can successfully achieve win-win partnerships for sustainable development. In this regard we need bring our development partners on board so that together we explore all possibilities for technical and financial support measures, which can be made available to assist ACP States in developing their Mineral resources sector.

Honourable Ministers,

The structural transformation of our Mineral resources industries into competitive ones is an essential component of any long-term strategy to ensure the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

It is a fact that most of our minerals are exported as ores, concentrates or metals, without significant value-addition. Investment in value-added processing of raw materials in the production of which ACP has demonstrated comparative advantage, would allow our exporters to exert greater control over a larger portion of the value-chain. This would thus offer them, higher returns and increased protection against terms of trade fluctuations while boosting employment and incomes.

Honourable Ministers,

ACP countries also face major challenges with regard to access to geological and other data, related to the exploitation, transformation and commercialization of their mineral resources.

Yet, access to data is vital to help ACP countries, for instance to better manage their natural resources; devise the appropriate policies for attracting investments; and
Negotiate better terms for the extraction of their resources, etc

Honourable Ministers,

The role of private sector in Mineral sector investments should not be neglected. I am convinced that, with political will and the right macroeconomic and transparent institutional environment, we can attract the necessary investments which will propel the development of the Mineral resources sector in the ACP countries, while enhancing overall competitiveness.

Indeed we cannot but encourage ACP states to put in place the appropriate legal and institutional frameworks, which contribute to transparency and good Governance. Transparency has to be promoted at all levels, including amongst Multinationals. This is essential to ensure that the ACP countries fully harness the opportunities arising out from the development of the Mineral resources sector, and that these benefits effectively trickle down to the poorest and most vulnerable segment of the population.

Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

On this note, I conclude my intervention and wish you all a fruitful debate.

Thank you for attention.

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