

PRESS RELEASE: ACP's future post-Cotonou discussed during ECDPM's 25 anniversary celebrations

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ACP PRESS RELEASE – July 3 2011 – A high level meeting organised by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) was concluded on Friday in the beautiful city of Maastricht, The Netherlands.

The meeting, provided an opportunity for representatives from Europe, the ACP and emerging powers to openly discuss the future perspectives of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group's evolving relationship with the EU following the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020. The meeting, which coincided with the 25th Anniversary of the ECDPM, critically examined the options for the ACP's continued relationship with the European Union, which has been a source of concern to numerous stakeholders following the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009.

In commending the ECDPM for taking the lead to put ACP's future perspectives on its agenda, Secretary-General Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas said the discussions allowed the ACP Group to listen, participate and take stock of the options pertaining to its relationship with the EU.

He said that the ACP-EU has evolved over the past 36 years and changes are imminent to conform to the changing global trends, reiterating that it is important that the ACP Group takes the lead in defining its own future.

In responding to the challenge, the ACP Group has moved swiftly and established the Working Group on the Future Perspectives of the ACP Group since the beginning of this year and is chaired by the Ambassador of Mauritius, H. E Sutiawan Gunessee.

Both Ambassador Gunessee and Secretary-General Chambas were part of a powerful panel which opened the discussions on future perspectives of the ACP Group on Thursday night.

Meanwhile, Dr Chambas underscored that the EU remains the ACP's most important partner and strongly urged ACP countries to capitalize on its huge market as a means to trading out of poverty. At the conclusion of the two-day meeting, there was a general feeling that it's now up to the ACP to define the future that it wants with the EU. Secretary-General Chambas said the ACP Secretariat will facilitate the process with the Committee of Ambassadors to further advance progress in defining the ACP's place in the global arena.

He noted that the two-day meeting had been most helpful illuminating key options for the future and that the ACP Group would welcome concrete suggestions on the way forward. The meeting proved useful as it permitted the ACP Group to sit down and listen to what the Europeans think about the evolving relationship while also allowing the emerging economies and expert views from high level delegates who have worked with the EU and the ACP to be expressed. ENDS.

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