

Remarks by H.E. Joy-Ann Skinner, Ambassador of Barbados to the 909th Meeting of the Committee of Ambassadors of the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of Ambassadors

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Brussels, Belgium, April 12, 2018



Chairman of the Committee of Ambassador H.E. Mrs. Sheila Sealy-Monteith, Excellencies, Secretary-General, Colleagues,

I bring you warm greetings from the sunny shores of Barbados on behalf of my Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Freundel Stuart, as well as from the Government and friendly Barbadian people.

Colleagues it is my distinct honour to address this august body as the Ambassador of Barbados, mindful of the importance that my country has placed and continues to place on the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. It is the position long held by successive governments of my country that this organization, above all others, is best placed to execute the considerable and dynamic functions in a post-Cotonou world to facilitate the coordination and advocacy of our shared and diverse interests and aspirations at the global level. And to do so loudly and vigorously.

Madam Chair, it was just 10 short years after attaining independence that Barbados joined the countries represented in this Group then, in signing the Georgetown Agreement in 1975 to create the ACP. I am proud to say that over the past 43 years my country's commitment to this unique and important multilateral grouping has been unwavering.

We can all agree that the year ahead will be challenging for our delegations, the teams that support us back in our capitals and, not least, for the ACP Secretariat, as together, we finalise our common mandate for the upcoming negotiations with the European Union to craft an agreement to replace the Cotonou Partnership Agreement and to commence negotiations, a few months from now. Colleagues, I am sure that we are up to this challenge and that in keeping with the spirit in which this organisation was founded will propel us to the successful negotiation of a successor agreement that is beneficial to all.

Be assured that I am committed to leading my delegation in active consultations towards finalizing our preparations for the negotiation and conclusion of a legally-binding Agreement with the EU. An agreement that is robust enough, sufficiently balanced and flexible to meet all our pressing needs to replace the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, which has served us well.

As the ACP family contemplates its future with the EU, the future of the ACP itself is no less important. Barbados would therefore wish to see an ACP of the very near future that is operating on the basis of a clear mandate to assist the developing countries that are its members. We also want to see an ACP Secretariat that is efficient, effective, financially viable and fit-for-purpose to carry out the mandate in the future. Colleagues, I therefore look forward to deliberations in this Committee and other bodies towards the determination of this future path for the ACP and its Secretariat. I also use this opportunity to encourage all Member States to honour their commitments to the Group as the matter of arrears in contribution is one of particular concern to Barbados, and an issue which gravely affects the ability of the organisation to function.

It is critical for us to remember that the diversity of the 79 Member States of the ACP is also our strength. While our countries and Regions may not all have the same developmental and foreign policy objectives, the history of this organisation has taught

us that when we cooperate we are strong. The pursuit of coordinated and compromise positions taking all parties into account is when the ACP is at its strongest.

In this regard, as we enter into this critical period, we should be mindful not to allow divergent positions to pull us apart, but instead to be more accommodating of each other's realities.

The ACP is unique amongst multilateral organisations, this body bringing together so many developing countries from three distinct regions is unparalleled and should not be taken for granted. Colleagues we must be prepared to celebrate our diversity and learn from our differences so that we may leverage them all to the best possible advantage.

Colleagues, I commit to you today that my tenure will be spent focused on strengthening ties with our partners in the regions of the Pacific and Africa, building on our commonalities and shared history through cultural exchanges. We the countries of the South, with aspirations to become fully part of the global dialogue must also look for inspiration from within and each other. We need to better harness the talents of our youth, entrepreneurs, academics and diaspora if we are to truly influence and set the framework of our development paths. The ACP needs to be even more strategic in its alliances as it charts the way forward and ably represents the interests of the Group.

Madame Chair, Excellencies, Secretary General, Colleagues, it is great to be back among friends.

I thank you.

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