

South-Sudan to accede to ACP-EU partnership

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The world's newest nation - the Republic of South Sudan - is on its way to becoming the 80th member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States, after its request to accede to the ACP-EU partnership was approved at the recent Joint Council of Ministers meeting in Vanuatu.

Since filing its request in March, the country has until November 20 to deposit its Act of Accession before it is able to benefit from the Cotonou Agreement between ACP states and the European Union, including provisions for political dialogue, trade access and development cooperation.

In the meantime, South Sudan has been granted observer status in the partnership.

"The European Union welcomes the request from South Sudan for accession to the ACP-EU Partnership agreement. We do believe that South Sudan is characterised by a structural economic and social situation comparable to those of ACP States and it fulfils the criteria for accession to the agreement," said Danish Minister for Development Cooperation Hon. Christian Friis Bach, who represented the EU Presidency at the ACP-EU Joint Council.

At the same time, he expressed the EU's "deep concern" about the tensions between Sudan, also a member of the ACP Group, and South Sudan and their border regions. Mr Bach condemned the acts of violence and aggression on both sides, and called for both Sudan and South Sudan to end hostilities and return to the negotiation table.

Co-president of the ACP-EU Joint Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of St Lucia Hon. Alva Baptiste said the newly independent nation will need assistance to build infrastructure and public institutions.

"With a population of nearly 10 million people, South Sudan is likely to join the category of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), although with its considerable oil resources, its prospects for growth are very robust. The country suffers from a huge infrastructure deficit, and will need considerable support in terms of development finance and capacity development if its independence is to be meaningful," he told the Council.

The EU has mobilised around 285 million EURO so far in development assistance for South Sudan.



(Pictured: South Sudanese diplomats on a visit to ACP House in Brussels)

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