

Statement by Prime Minister of Ethiopia at the opening session of the 26th ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, 25 November 2013

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Your Excellency Dr Joyce Laboso, Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,
Your Excellency Mr Patrice Tirolien, Representative of the Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly Hon. Louis Michel
Hon. Adadulla Gameda, Speaker of the House of People's Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
H.E Mr Alhaji Muhammad Mumuni, Secretary General of the ACP Secretariat
H.E Mr Marco Aguiriano, European Union Co-Secretary General
Mr Rolandas Krisciunas, Deputy Foreign Minister of Lithuania and Representative of H.E Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Honourable Speakers of Parliaments of ACP Member States and Members of the European Parliament
Ministers, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen

Let me begin by expressing how Ethiopia is immensely honoured to have been given the opportunity to once again host the 34th ACP Parliamentary Assembly in Addis Ababa. The choice of Addis Ababa as a venue for these two sessions is not only an honour for us, but also of significant importance to our Parliament and indeed for the whole of Ethiopia, and I believe for Africa too.

Allow me therefore, to warmly welcome you on behalf of the Government and People of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and that of my own, to Addis Ababa, the diplomatic Capital of Africa – and your home away from home.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all of you for the confidence and trust that you have bestowed upon us to host this important event. For us here in Ethiopia, the opportunity given to us and the confidence shown in our regard to host the 26th Joint Parliamentary Assembly of the ACP and that of the EU in Addis Ababa, 9 years after the JPA Conference held in 2004 in our capital, is also a testimony to the far-reaching and increasing engagement that we in Ethiopia and the ACP member states were able to forge with our partners within the European Parliament and indeed member states of the European Union.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen

Today, the ACP is the largest trans-regional intergovernmental organisation of developing countries in the world. As we face the challenges of the 21st century, we need to re-orient the ACP platform as a meaningful player on the global stage.

In this regard, ACP member states must take full responsibility and ownership of their own future, drawing on their own national resources and capabilities as well as on their collective strengths with a view to building a relationship with our partners, both in Europe and the rest of the development world based on the principle of equality and mutual interest.

Needless to say, the ACP member countries will for some time to come continue to count on Europe as a reliable source of FDI and ODA, increased overseas investment and trade relationships in their endeavours to harness their potential and finance their development activities. Europe on the other hand will continue to play a key role in many of the ACP countries not only in terms of FDI and ODA, but also in the areas of human capital development, technology and know-how transfer and efforts and ensuring the establishment of democratic institutions and good governance.

True, the issue of financing development is still central to our partnership, and traditional donors, such as the EU and its member states still remain the main providers of aid to ACP countries and continue to be important partners. The Assembly will however also discuss the opportunities and challenges involved, and the support of emerging countries in the process. Through this form of cooperation, partners should obtain tangible development results, by exploring comparative advantages and complementarities and improving transparency with regard to spending and accountability of all actors involved in the process.

The fact that we live in a world where the entire humanity continues to face serious existential challenges irrespective of geography or our economic background, simply requires thinking well beyond the traditional notions of FDI and ODA. In this regard, our continued cooperation in the fight against climate change and global warming, and our collective quest for greener paths of development for the future of humanity cannot be easily understood within the narrow prism of development cooperation. There is ample room for more enhanced partnership in many areas of interest to both sides.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen

Most ACP countries today are not only registering significant progress in their economic development efforts, but also they have assumed more and more responsibility for their citizens in terms of ensuring democracy, good governance and the rule of law. There is an almost universal consensus that democracy and the rule of law are not choices among many options – however desirable – but a matter of existential imperative without which, neither economic development nor the viability of states can be maintained for long. As is the case in our economic endeavours, so too in our political initiatives such as the democratisation and good governance we often lack the capacity due mainly to the absence of mature institutions that could effectively address undemocratic proclivities.

This session is therefore expected to take stock of the main challenges that we face in this regard and recommend ways of addressing these. In this regard, attention needs to be paid to: strengthening rules on the separation of powers in member countries' respective constitutions; widening the political space for the loyal opposition; and supporting civil society; improving the structure and functioning of the judiciary; effective mechanisms of preventing corruption and the promotion of citizenship education.

But in a larger sense, this relationship should not in any way be based on the rather obsolete assumption that one side is the ultimate provider and the other perennial receiver of resources, whatever the object of the relationship might be – economic or political. Unlike in the past where ACP member countries were largely beneficiaries of generous aid and wily recipients of unsolicited political advice from elsewhere, there is today more than ever before, a realisation that our partnership is indeed mutually beneficial and the days of paternalistic political interference are gone.

It is in light of these myriad challenges and opportunities that the importance of the ACP's future cannot be understated. The world we live in demands collective action by partnership of institutions like the ACP and our partners in the EU. To see to it that the vision and the founding principles of this partnership are not relegated to the dustbin of history. This will require the necessary determination and commitment from all of us.

It is my sincere hope that the 26th Joint Parliamentary Assembly, like its predecessors in the past will be a forum where we will be able to witness a marked departure in our relations, paving the way for a more equal partnership for the mutual benefit of our people whose destinies are linked to each other more than any time in the past.

I wish all participants very fruitful deliberations and a pleasant and enjoyable stay in Addis Ababa.

I thank you for your kind attention.

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