

Statement by the Secretary General at the 37th COMESA Council of Ministers meeting, 3 November 2017, Lusaka, Zambia

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Preparations for ACP-EU relations post-2020: Approach and Core Principles

Chairperson;

Your Excellency, Dr. the Honourable Vice-President Inonge WINA;

Secretary General Ngwenya;

All protocols observed

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me from the onset to express my profound gratitude for the opportunity to address this august assembly. I would also like to express my deep appreciation to our gracious host Mr. Sindiso Ndema Ngwenya, Secretary General of COMESA and the Government of Zambia for the excellent facilities placed at my delegation's disposal since our arrival.

Chairperson; Honourable Ministers

Since assuming office I have made it a special undertaking during my tenure to strengthen the bonds & ties for more structured relations between the ACP Group and the RECs/RIOs of our respective regions. I would therefore like to pay special tribute to COMESA for its indelible imprint on the continental integration process, not only through its formidable geographical and economic size, but more importantly through the pioneering nature of many of its programmes and institutions. As a further example, I noted with great interest the theme of this Council Meeting: "COMESA Towards Digital Economic Integration".

Today African states can boast of intra COMESA trade that has grown by 12% in a span of two years, primarily through the tripartite agreement, a single trade regime whose comprehensiveness is worthy of emulation.

Distinguished Ministers; Excellencies

I welcome today's opportunity to provide an update on the preparations for ACP-EU relations post-2020; our approach and core principles.

As you know, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement which came into being in the year 2000, is due to expire in 2020, with formal negotiations for its successor due to commence in August 2018, with the exchange of Negotiating Memoranda. The advent of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement was considered as an ambitious and innovative milestone, intended to enable trade to be an effective and essential instrument of development; enhance political dialogue and reinforce development finance cooperation. It is considered a unique model of North-South political and development cooperation that encompasses economic, social and human development, as well as crosscutting issues.

The ACP Group continues to critically consolidate the achievements of the Cotonou Agreement that entail multi-sectoral initiatives that are transformational to our economies and contribute substantially to sustainable development.

Access to predictable funding to support peace and security and the development objectives of ACP Member States at national, regional, continental and intra-ACP levels, most recently through the 11th EDF with a total budget of EURO 30.5 Billion, is certainly commendable..

Cotonou has also succeeded in bringing to the fore the regional dimension of development through its support for Regional Indicative Programs designed to strengthen regional integration in particular, by leveraging on the principles of complementarity and subsidiarity.

At the continental level, under the framework of Cotonou, the Africa Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union has benefited, in the current 11th EDF, from at least One Billion Euros to support its laudable efforts to ensure peace, security, and stability in the continent – an indispensable prerequisite for sustainable economic development.

ACP Member States also have benefitted from various interventions spanning virtually all sectors of the economy, from education to health, infrastructure, energy agriculture and trade, while targeting women, youth and SMEs.

Chairperson, Honourable Ministers

While we highlight these successes, we are also mindful of the challenges that have been encountered in the process, not least the imbalance in the relationship with the EU that needs to be fully addressed, going forward. The ACP Group therefore views the upcoming negotiations for the successor agreement to Cotonou as a unique opportunity to build on the acquis (achievements) of the partnership, while addressing, critically and creatively the shortcomings experienced.

Dear Friends

The Port Moresby Declaration and the Waigani Communique of the 8th Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government in June 2016, unanimously reaffirmed unequivocal commitment to the principles of unity and solidarity that underpin the existence of the ACP Group of 79 developing countries, as well as its role in advocacy and global governance, as they relate to the interests of its Member States. That 2016 commitment of ACP Heads of State and Government is in keeping with the 2012 Sipopo Declaration of the 7th ACP Summit, which reaffirmed that the ACP Group will remain united as a Group ...continuing to be a catalyst and advocate of the Global South.

With the outcomes of the two Summits in mind, the ACP Group adopted the approach of situating ACP-EU relations within the context of “The ACP We Want”. This is our policy framework document that underscores the need for the Group to reinforce its efforts towards becoming a more effective global player, allowing its unique relationship with Europe and others to be a fundamental part of that effort. This is in line with the recommendations of both the Eminent Persons Group and the Ambassadorial Working Group on the Future of the ACP Group. The ACP We Want envisages the Group as a more prominent global player, reinforcing its relations with the EU while diversifying its partnerships, strengthening intra-ACP cooperation through South South Cooperation, reinforcing its relations with regional and continental groupings, in order to foster complementarity and synergy, and enhancing its financial sustainability.

Consequently, the ACP Group has begun its preparations for negotiations towards a new ACP-EU Agreement based on the following 5 core principles:

- a) The post-2020 Agreement with the EU must be placed within the UN's Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals
- b) The ACP Group of States shall remain united as an intergovernmental organization that will negotiate as one unified trans-regional entity, with formally structured relations addressing regional and continental issues and interests;
- c) An ACP – EU post-Cotonou Agreement should maintain the core geographic and geo-political character of the Group, while being open to different types of association with other countries and groupings
- d) The Agreement must be legally binding and
- e) A dedicated development finance mechanism or protocol is to be included within the Agreement, over a fixed period of more than annual appropriations.

Honorable Ministers; Excellencies

At the 104th session of the ACP Council of Ministers in November 2016, the ACP Committee of Ambassadors was mandated to accelerate the preparatory process for the forthcoming negotiations. That Session also approved three strategic pillars to guide the work and focus of the ACP Group post 2020. These pillars are

1. Trade, Investment, Industrialization and Services
2. Development Cooperation, Science, Technology and Research/Innovation
3. Political Dialogue and Advocacy

During its 105th Session in May this year, the ACP Council of Ministers mandated the Committee of Ambassadors to put in place a Central Negotiating Group and three Technical Negotiating Teams. The composition of these groups will ensure representation takes into account factors such as the leadership role of ACP Member States at regional level, complementarity with regional mechanisms, economic status and population size of its Member States, for example.

Finally, the 105th ACP Council also mandated the Committee of Ambassadors to set in motion the process of revision of the constitutive Act of the ACP Group, the Georgetown Agreement.

A fundamental part of the preparations for the negotiations on a post-Cotonou Agreement on our part involves the engagement of all of our respective stakeholders, including ACP Capitals, regional and continental groupings and organisations, parliamentarians, and Non-State Actors. Engagement with key European Capitals, in addition to its key institutions namely the European Commission and the European Parliament, is also seen as a critical part of the preparatory

process.

To this end, the ACP Group has embarked on outreach missions to Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. In Africa, these included missions to Guinea to meet with H.E. President Alpha Conde, the Chairperson of the African Union; to Nigeria, where an audience was granted with the Vice-President, and to Togo, which currently chairs ECOWAS, with further missions planned.

In the Caribbean, political leaders in Guyana, Chair of CARICOM, and in Haiti, have been engaged. At the Pacific Leaders Forum that was held on the 6th of September this year – at which I was a Guest – Leaders adopted a Resolution on the future of the ACP Group post-2020, reaffirming their strong commitment to and support for the decisions taken by the ACP Summits and the Council of Ministers.

ACP Members of Parliament also had the opportunity to provide their input on the future of ACP-EU relations during the 46th ACP Parliamentary Assembly in June. A special session was organized on 10th October between the ACP Bureau of the Committee of Ambassadors and the ACP Parliamentary Assembly.

To capture the input of our Non-State Actors, earlier this week, on 30th and 31st October, the ACP Secretariat hosted a Meeting of ACP Non-State Actors that brought together representatives of civil society, private sector organisations and SMEs all identified by ACP Missions in Brussels, to examine post-Cotonou issues and formulate positions.

At the level of the European Union, while formal and informal consultations continue with the European Commission, EU political leaders from Malta, Italy, Hungary, and Estonia (which currently holds the EU Presidency), have been engaged, with outreach missions to more EU capitals planned.

Excellencies

As we finalize the negotiating mandate of the ACP Group next year, efforts must be redoubled to engage with all stakeholders. And as part of the effort towards reinforcing the role and input of regional and continental Groupings, I am proposing that a meeting of the Inter-Regional Organisations' Coordinating Committee be held early next year. The IROCC which was set up in 2011, was admirably co-chaired by the ACP Secretariat and the COMESA Secretary-General. ECCAS was encouraged to take the lead in a reinvigorated mechanism. We urge that the leading role of COMESA be captured as a guiding light for the future.

In conclusion, may I underscore the fact that in unity lies our strength. As the famous mathematician Henri Poincare said: "It is the harmony of the diverse parts, their symmetry, their happy balance; in a word it is all that introduces order, all that gives unity, that permits us to see clearly and to comprehend at once both the wholeness and the details."

The ACP Group has been always proud of the collective role we play in tackling global challenges. We are living in times of great challenges and threats to multilateral institutions. We look forward to deeper and stronger working relations with COMESA that remains a catalyst for global and continental action and innovation.

I thank you for your kind attention. ALL SUCCESS in your successful deliberations.

Patrick I. Gomes
ACP Secretary General

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