

Statement by the Secretary General at the 43rd Pacific Leader's Summit, Rarotonga COOK ISLANDS, 29 August 2012

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Hon. Chairman of the Forum, Prime Minister Henry Puna of the Cook Islands, Honourable Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum, Tuiloma Neroni Slade, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I warmly thank you for the honour of addressing you at this 43rd Summit of the Pacific Islands Forum.

I wish to once again express my deep appreciation to Leaders for allowing the ACP Secretariat to become an observer to this eminent Forum. I join others who have spoken before me in congratulating Prime Minister Henry Puna for assuming the Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, and to express our gratitude to the Government and people of the Cook Islands for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this beautiful country.

This is the third Forum Summit I have attended, and it is testament to our commitment to forge a stronger relationship between the ACP Secretariat and the Forum. Our visits to the Pacific give us immense pleasure and appreciation of your rich traditions and diverse cultures. Attending these meetings helps us to understand better the development challenges facing the Pacific region and thereby makes the ACP able to respond effectively in a timely manner to these needs.

Hon Chair, the relations between the Pacific Forum and the ACP Group are based on shared history, values and shared responses to collective and global challenges. In the last few years, we have endeavored to enhance the bond of cooperation amongst the ACP regional communities.

We established last year an Inter-Regional Organizations Coordinating Committee (I-ROCC), with the objective of ACP regions sharing experiences and best practices on regionalism and development cooperation. We expect that the Inter-Regional Organizations Coordinating Committee (I-ROCC) will continue to serve as a forum for dialogue, while supporting coordinated implementation of regional programmes, mobilising resources for regional integration, programming, monitoring and evaluation. In so doing, we expect the role of the ACP Secretariat to be strengthened to better serve its member states and regional communities.

Hon Chair, the theme of this year's forum is appropriate, very relevant and timely and I commend your vision and wisdom. The recent launch by the Secretary General of the United Nations Mr. Ban ki Moon, of the Ocean Compact with the theme "*Healthy Oceans for Prosperity*" underscore the importance attached to the oceans, and the recognition that oceans are key to sustaining life in the planet. The Oceans constitute a conduit for ninety per cent of world trade, and for connecting people, markets and supporting livelihoods."

This message reverberates the concept popularised by the renowned *Pacific and Oceanian* Scholar, the late Dr 'Epeli Hau'ofa, in his seminal work, "*Our sea of Islands*", where he presents the Ocean as not an obstacle but a medium that links the Pacific and the rest of the world. Dr. Hau'ofa's conceptualization should inspire us to think outside the box and to design strategies that would enable us to harness our ocean resources in a sustainable manner.

Hon. Chairman

We have to reinvigorate the search for lasting solutions to sustainable and inclusive development. Building resilience is important in addition to regional economic integration. As a wave of austerity engulfs the world, donors are under increasing pressure to demonstrate accountability, value for money and effectiveness of aid budgets.

The ACP group has accorded high priority to South-South and Triangular cooperation. In this context we will work closely with the regional economic communities, to facilitate the transfer of best practices and successful development experiences across the ACP Regions and inter regional powers.

The ACP has promoted South-South cooperation in a range of areas including culture, education, science and technology, trade capacity building and migration and development. An opportunity to agree on shared approaches, to strengthen partnerships aimed at building resilience and diminishing vulnerability, and to develop practical collective responses. I look forward to learning in the coming days how the ACP Group can add value to the good work that already been implemented by the Pacific Islands Forum. The ACP Group continues searching and adapting the partnership to changing circumstances and evolving development landscape,

Hon Chairman, I thank you and fellow Leaders for your indulgence. I wish you successful deliberations, and may the decisions you take here be implemented to better the lives of the Pacific peoples. The ACP Group remains a committed and trusted partner that stands ready to work together with the Pacific region for this noble objective.

Mohamed Ibn Chambas ACP Secretary General

(Pictured: ACP Secretary General Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas [seated front row, third from right, in between the Prime Ministers of the Cook Islands and Samoa] with Pacific Heads of Government/ Photo by Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat/ jhonimae)

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