

Statement by the Secretary General at the ACP Ministers of Trade meeting, 21 October 2015, Brussels

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[Protocols]

Good morning: May I begin by conveying my apologies for not being able to be with you yesterday given the demand to be in Luxembourg with the EU's Court of Auditors, the current EU's presidency of Luxembourg and the Commissioner of International and Development Cooperation.

I once again add my words of welcome to the Honorable Ministers to Brussels and to the ACP House, your house. I would like to thank the senior officials who worked hard to put together the report of the important proceedings so far, including a Draft Declaration, for your consideration and approval.

As you are aware, the year 2015, has witnessed a number of global events so important to development, namely; the Financing for Development Conference that took place in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July, 2015, the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York that took place from the 25 to 27 September, 2015, the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) scheduled to take place in Paris from the 30 November to 11 December, 2015 and the World Trade Organization Tenth Ministerial Conference (MC10) scheduled for the 15 to 18 December, 2015 in Nairobi Kenya.

Allow me to express a few remarks on our preparations for the Nairobi 10th WTO Ministerial Conference to be held later this year.

As you are all aware, this is the first time that a WTO Ministerial Conference will be held on the continent of Africa and in an ACP Country, therefore I have no doubt that we are all equally enthused by this fact. Some reports from Geneva on developments in the negotiations at the WTO might dampen our enthusiasm.

Agreement on issues of particular interest to the ACP Group, especially the development aspect, remains elusive. We have learnt of sentiments from some WTO Members that suggest that it is now time to fold the Doha Development Round (DDA) and close shop because of this lack of agreement on the issues under negotiation.

Mr Chairman, Honorable Ministers, ladies and gentlemen, I don't think any of us share the view that the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), a development round, be wound up in this fashion, before it has delivered on core issues central to our development; A Ministerial in an ACP Country must produce tangible fruits for development!

And while we fully appreciate that negotiations allow all parties to adopt certain positions that advance and defend their interests, we are convinced that there still remains room for continued negotiation on the DDA issues on the table.

As expressed in the report of the senior officials and from the draft declaration before you, the ACP Group still believes in the DDA, and in the current format of negotiations as the best way our voice to be heard.

We are therefore rather circumspect about suggestions by some WTO Members that we abandon the DDA framework after Nairobi, if as is likely there is no agreement, in favor of some new, but yet-to-be defined, negotiating approaches. We were in New York in September with our several Heads of Government when the UN adopted The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development: Transforming our World. I believe all of us share the view that the successful conclusion of the DDA will make an important contribution towards the realization of the SDGs.

Mr. Chairman, the ACP Group has grown in its influence at the WTO. After all, we constitute about a third of the WTO membership (61 members, 7 in accession with Liberia soon to join at the Nairobi Ministerial). We must work vigorously for Nairobi to be a success.

The ACP Group has continued to take a constructive approach and must deepen that role. Our track record is good. In the run up to the Bali December, 2013 Ministerial Conference, inputs into the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) led to the setting up of the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility an initiative by the ACP, African and LDC Groups. Ratification has to be encouraged.

Further more in October 2014, the ACP Group developed principles towards defining a post-Bali work programme in pursuance of instructions by Ministers in Bali for WTO members to come up with an elaborate work programme on the remaining DDA issues by December 31, 2014. However due to the impasse, the General Council meeting of 27, November 2014 adopted a decision committing members to resume work immediately and engage constructively towards developing a clear Doha Development Agenda (DDA) work programme by July 2015.

In view of the aforementioned the ACP Group in March, 2015 developed an elements paper for defining a post-Bali work programme on the remaining DDA issues. This proposal was well received by members for instance it showed how the development component in the services pillar could be captured.

Further on In July, 2015 the ACP Group developed another proposal for bridging the gaps on the remaining DDA issues with a view of putting across a possible development package in Nairobi. The ACP also together with the African and LDC Groups developed a G90 joint declaration on development in preparation for the Nairobi MC10.

Mr Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies as you will see from the reports before you, the 8 October General Council commenced consultations on a drafting process and consideration of possible issues to be taken up at MC10 and post-MC10.

The ACP Group of states should insist that the DDA and all the negotiating acquis be explicitly affirmed in Nairobi.

Part of the ACP strategy for the Ministerial is to safeguard continuation of the DDA post-Nairobi. The ACP Group is in support of a Ministerial declaration in Nairobi which will give guidance to members on the future work.

Also the Group emphasises that more development oriented proposals should be included in addition to the LDC package, agreement on the Special and differential treatment proposals by the G90 (ACP, LDC and African Groups), locking in the principles and texts in favour of developing countries in particular LDCs, and SVEs, agriculture ,NAMA flexibilities and an agreement on cotton.

We hope therefore that Honorable Ministers armed with this Declaration adequate content exists for the strategy the ACP Group should adopt in the run-up to, at and post-MC10.

The ACP Secretariat will continue to provide the usual support, including exploring possibilities for technical support and funding, to ensure that the ACP Group remains active and effective in the Doha round negotiations.

We are most grateful to the Government of Kenya to place at the disposal of the ACP Group meeting facilities in Nairobi to help with clarifying and strengthening negotiating positions.

Thank You Very Much.

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ACP Secretary General

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