

Welcome remarks by H.E Dr. Patrick Ignatius Gomes at the 109th Session of the ACP Council of Ministers

Welcome remarks by H.E Dr. Patrick Ignatius Gomes at the 109th Session of the ACP Council of Ministers



Mr. President – Hon. Tjekero TWEYA, Minister of Industrialisation, Trade and SME Development of the Republic of Namibia,

Madam Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa, Hon. Fiame Naomi MATAAFA,

Ministers, Excellencies, Ambassadors, Representatives of Regional Organisations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,... Good morning and Welcome!

It was my honour and privilege to welcome Ministers and their delegations to ACP House for the 108th Session of our Council, just some five months ago, in mid-December 2018.

Today we have come together – “ensemble” – for the 109th Session.

It is most encouraging to observe a noticeable increase in the number of Ministers who have deemed attendance at this session of Council as a priority. In the Secretariat, we fully appreciate all the sacrifices that have been made by members to be here in Brussels with us.

In particular, allow me to recognize those Ministers who are attending Council for the first time and those delegations that have travelled from the Blue Pacific. We appreciate your presence with us especially as you have endured a long and tiring journey.

As with other colleague Ministers and Heads of Delegations, it is expected that the time and your involvement will be well spent and richly rewarding, as you deliberate and discuss the very serious matters on our agendas.

Before us are matters of profound and far-reaching significance for the ACP Group of States. The demand for serious commitment to these matters is inevitable if we are to craft a future that will be meaningful and enriching for the livelihoods of the millions of ordinary people, across the space of three continents occupied by our 79 Member-States.

Mr. President, Ministers & Heads of Delegations,

You may, no doubt, have noted that the Council's agenda addresses matters such as, The Revised Georgetown Agreement which forms the constitutional basis of our unique identity, explicitly and ambitiously embedding the principles and objectives to give life to the unity and solidarity by which the ACP is must be known both in theory and in practice.

Also for consideration are the Regulations to govern Staff relations. These are intended to enable the highest level of professionalism and offer competitive, reasonably attractive conditions of service that will make the ACP an employer of first choice, by the brightest and most dedicated women and men across Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific.

This gathering of the 109th Session of the Council must truly mark the turning of a new page in the history of the A C & P!!!! - and set the trajectory for a higher level in how our decision-making is deliberate, informed, financially sound, adequately resourced and resolved for the most efficient and effective implementation.

Such a path is logically linked to the endorsement that is required by Council to set in motion the Legal and administrative procedures for the next 5-year term of office of the Secretary-General and senior management of the ACP Group of States.

While the Council only sets the spark to light the process and invites the comprehensive search for suitable candidates, it is left up to the Secretariat and the Southern African region to enable a transparent, inclusive, open and deep reflection for the new leadership as of March 1, 2020.

This brings to mind some thoughts on “generations of leadership” by C L R James, the great Caribbean historian and philosopher. According to James, “each generation of leaders has the duty and responsibility to stand on the shoulders of the preceding generation and to see farther, be stronger and carry the current generation to new vistas and “rendez-vous” of victory.”

In considering the Agenda that will serve our session with the European Union, adequate preparation on the encouraging progress in negotiations for a post-Cotonou Agreement will be presented to Council by the ACP’s Chief Negotiator and Chairman of the Ministerial Central Negotiating Group (CNG-M), Professor the Hon. Robert Dussey, Minister of Foreign Affairs & African Integration of the Togolese Republic.

Tough issues on governance, migration and civil society will prove demanding of shrewd negotiating skills, underpinned by principle and core values for which the ACP will remain uncompromising. The form and cultural context in which they become constructs of social reality will no doubt be shaped by historical experiences in our and their societies.

The time-table of substantial progress warrants that the momentum of the negotiations be maintained and some strategic priorities accelerated.

Here, I publicly advise the Council that commendable contributions have been provided to these negotiations by our staff, with exceptional service, far beyond the call of duty. We have to be justly proud and let due praise be given to those so deserving.

Despite substantial progress, realism forces us to recognize that by the terminal date of the Cotonou Agreement of 29 February 2020, a negotiated text will not be ready to be signed jointly by the 79 ACP member states and those of the EU. This requires, in keeping with the Cotonou Partnership, the adoption of a Decision on transitional measures until the new agreement enters into force. The content of the proposed Decision will be the subject of deliberations by this Session of our Council and a similar Decision in the ACP-EU Council, commencing on Thursday 23 May 2019.

With the agenda before us and work to be done, once again may I say how pleased I am, on behalf of our Secretariat, to welcome you to Brussels and to your house and home.

May our deliberations and debate collectively and individually rely on our steadfast determination to defend and deepen those values that we cherish and hold dear: solidarity and unity in diversity.

Mr President, Ministers, Dear Friends,

The stage has been set for the current events by which to continue the journey Towards the ACP We Want and the much needed transformation into an effective global player.

I am reminded of the words of our beloved Madiba Mandela, who once said that “after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb”.

As we continue climbing to greater heights, I welcome you home.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Tags: [SG speeches](#) ^[1]

Source URL: <http://acp.int/content/welcome-remarks-he-dr-patrick-ignatius-gomes-109th-session-acp-council-ministers>

Links:

[1] <http://acp.int/category/story-type/sg-speeches>