



ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

20 July 2012

**8th REGIONAL MEETING (PACIFIC REGION) OF THE
ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

**Apia, Samoa
18-20 July 2012**

Apia Communiqué

Website of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp>

Introduction

In accordance with Article 17 of the Cotonou Agreement, Members of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) from the Pacific region of the ACP Group and their European Parliament counterparts held a regional meeting in Apia, Samoa from 18 to 20 July 2012, for the organisation of which they thanked the Legislative Assembly and Government of Samoa.

Their discussions focused on the following subjects:

Regional Integration

Regional integration and cooperation was recognised as one of the key areas of ACP-EU development cooperation. Regional organisations play a crucial role assisting Pacific States to integrate into the global economy, in view of the small size of their economies and the great distances between them.

Concerns were raised about the possible duplication of efforts and overlapping mandates of the two principle regional bodies in the Pacific region: the Pacific Islands Forum, which includes Australia and New Zealand; and the Pacific Community, which includes France and the United States as well as Australia and New Zealand.

Members emphasised that it was up to the Pacific States to choose the best form of cooperation at regional level, with the EU providing technical support and assistance according to national and regional priorities, as well as supporting continuous political and policy dialogue to increase mutual understanding and advance shared agendas on matters of common interest. The important role of the European Union in this process was highly appreciated.

Members stressed that National parliaments play an active role in setting up the priorities and monitoring the implementation of the Regional Strategy Paper (RSP) and Regional Indicative Programme (RIP), jointly elaborated in the framework of the European Development Fund (EDF).

Members also called for support for the preservation of the unique cultural heritage of the Pacific region. Properly structured policies and programmes for the cultural sector had great potential to contribute to the growth of the tourism industry and creation of employment.

Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA)

Members stated that the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) must aim at enhancing regional integration, sustainable development and economic growth. It was recognised that the parliaments in the Pacific region and the European Parliament should play an important role to ensure the conclusion of a mutually satisfactory and comprehensive regional EPA.

As the EU has opened its market fully (duty and quota free) to the EPA signatory countries, it was noted that the MFN clause was a particularly sensitive issue, with a view to their future trade relations with New Zealand and Australia, but also China and other regional actors. Members were of the view that some of the challenges and specific needs of small island developing Pacific States need to be addressed adequately. Significant progress has been made by Pacific

negotiators in 2011: market access offers were awaiting the Commission's response prior to the next negotiating round in October 2012. Pacific States had called for flexibility on Rules of Origin, notably on global sourcing on fisheries.

It was acknowledged that there is a lot of misunderstanding and misinformation about EPAs, notably with regard to their benefits and the reciprocal approach required by WTO rules. Members asked for more factual information to be communicated to all stakeholders.

Climate change

Climate change was recognised as a major area of concern in the region, given that the islands are vulnerable to natural hazards and rising sea levels.

Members highlighted that the EU and ACP States form a significant block in international fora and thanks to Cotonou Agreement as well as other long term relations they already have in place a solid foundation for working together, which should help them advance their mutual interests in climate change negotiations, as demonstrated by the ACP-EU joint declaration on the Rio+20 Conference.

Members acknowledged the important contribution of the EU in assisting Pacific States in mitigating effects of climate change, and called for similar approaches from other developed and emerging economies.

The problem of rising sea levels and other specific structural challenges such as the possible submerging of a number of islands in the region would not be solved by additional funds alone. Members also voiced frustration about slow pace of any concrete action.

Members also called for better and more effective partnerships, which would enable to strengthen structured capacity at all levels - at local, national, regional and global level and to develop targeted and focused actions to address the specific needs of the Pacific region, including renewable energy sources. Moreover, they expressed concern on the issue of the status of migrants caused by climate change.

The attainment of the Millennium Development Goals

Members noted the progress of the Pacific States towards achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and stressed that, they are, and must remain the most broadly supported, comprehensive and specific development goals the world has ever agreed upon. In the Pacific region, major steps have been taken to meet the health targets, while there is need to address social and economic determinants of health and the high rate of diabetes, obesity and hypertension. Members also appreciated the efforts in the region in attaining universal primary education.

Members urged countries in the Pacific region to make strong efforts and to adopt proper legislation to address gender inequality in general, and violence against women in particular. Impunity for perpetrators of gender-related violence must not be tolerated.

The important role of civil society in the attainment of the MDGs was highlighted.

Support for good governance, democracy and respect for human rights

Members affirmed that good governance is indispensable for sustainable development and attainment of the MDGs. It was emphasised that national Parliaments should be effectively engaged in enhancing good governance, democracy and respect for human rights in addition to their oversight role in monitoring the implementation of national budgets. Moreover, Members called for parliaments to ensure that the budgetary processes in the respective parliaments took adequate account of funding needs for the MDGs.

Members reaffirmed that the attainment and maintenance of democracy require the establishment of strong and effective institutions, such as legislatures, independent and efficient judiciaries, active civil society, as well as regular and free elections.

Members expressed concern regarding the low number of women in legislative assemblies and called for specific legislation and measures to address this imbalance, such as introducing temporary quotas, offering financial support to programmes aiming at empowering women and removing the cultural and other barriers that impede access to political office for women.

Members noted that generally, there is a good tradition of governance, democracy and the rule of law in the region. They commended the work of the UNDP and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIF) in support for capacity building and strengthening democracy, especially in the strengthening legislative and judicial systems and the rule of law.

Members called on the Co-Presidents to present the conclusions of the regional meeting to the next Bureau meeting in September and to the 24th session of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly to be held in Paramaribo (Suriname) in November 2012, and to forward them to the ACP Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Pacific Island Forum and Pacific Community Secretariats, the ACP Group of States, the Governments and National Parliaments of the Pacific region of the ACP Group of States and to the EU Member States.