



State of the Organisation (SOrg) Address

by

H.E. Mr Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti

Secretary-General

Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)

“OACPS: Innovation and Resilience”

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**Mr. President, Hon. Peter Kenilorea Jr.
Honourable Members,
Excellencies,
Representatives of Regions and Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Introduction

Thank you for the honour and privilege of allowing me to deliver my second State of the Organisation (SOrg) Address in person at this session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS).

Honourable Members, as the elected representatives of your peoples, you have the important task of ensuring that the OACPS remains on track to meet the expectations of our peoples. I count on you, and I am convinced that with the contributions of other organs of our Organisation, we will be able to stand as a champion of solidarity, a promoter of multilateralism, and a trusted, valuable, reliable and visible partner on the international scene.

The OACPS was established on 5 April 2020, after the entry-into-force of the Georgetown Agreement as revised in 2019. As we commemorate this day, a little early this year, on this special occasion because of the presence of parliamentarians, my State of the Organization Address gives us the opportunity to open up not only to our own stakeholders, but also to a wider audience, including our partners, the media, and all those interested in the largest transcontinental organisation representing 79 countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, with a total population of more than one billion people.

The theme for the 2022 edition of my State of the Organization Address is, "**OEACP: Innovation and Resilience**". As we begin to better manage and progressively contain the COVID-19 pandemic, the time has come to realise our immense potential while improving our resilience to our own challenges and global issues.

**Mr. President,
Honourable Members,**

The 2022 SOrg Address provides the opportunity to briefly reflect on some of our major accomplishments, and to outline my key goals for this year and beyond. However, the OACPS does not live in a vacuum. It operates in a multi-polar and interconnected world, with its various elements closely linked to each other. So let me begin by providing an overview of the global and external contexts.

Global and external contexts

Despite high hopes, and numerous successes to suppress the effects and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen and experienced that the global community still faces major challenges from COVID-19.

As we have said before, it is unacceptable that the supply of vaccines is not equal, that countries are not treated the same, and that we are suffering the most. As the OACPS, we support the initiative of the President of the European Union Council for the creation of a **Pandemic Preparedness Treaty**. Furthermore, I urge the developed world to lift the intellectual property rights on COVID-19 vaccines, and ensure the equitable deployment of medical breakthroughs, including vaccines.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now more evident than ever, that **“no one is safe until we are all safe”**. According to experts, variants are a deadly side effect of **vaccine inequality**. The closing of borders has had a disastrous impact on the economies of our countries, and we should fight to keep borders open.

COVID-19 made a compelling case for the strengthening of health systems of our countries. It is disappointing to note that with the COVID-19 pandemic, the fight against several diseases have suffered setbacks, for example Tuberculosis.

I am optimistic that we are managing the pandemic, and please allow me, once again, to pay tribute to all frontline workers and helpers – they have helped us, guided us, protected and cared for us in an

unselfish way. Without their efforts, commitment and dedication, we would have lost the fight a long time ago.

The Ukraine-Russia conflict has exposed the deficiencies of the UN system and the entire post-World War II security architecture. This is mainly due to the persistent refusal by leaders to modernise international institutions in line with the vastly redrawn geopolitical landscape of today. Decades of demands for overhauling the UN Security Council have been impeded by the five permanent members of the Council, which could see their power diminished under new global rules.

The impact of the conflict is substantial, due to the heightened external vulnerabilities of Members of the OACPS. Countries are suffering from reduced tourism inflows, higher food, petroleum and fertiliser prices, which will result in greater financing challenges. For people in the rich world, the coming food shock will put further upward pressure on grocery bills already affected by the high inflation. For poorer countries, still suffering from the economic impact of COVID-19, higher food prices may spell catastrophe. I would like to appeal to all involved parties in the conflict to reach a negotiated settlement that would prevent any further loss of life and limit the humanitarian disaster.

A full recovery from COVID-19 had not occurred, before the arrival of this new shock in the form of conflict, which has undoubtedly damaged international relations, enhanced concerns over national security, and undermined the legitimacy of globalisation. Geopolitical divisions will put globalization at risk. Today, separate events are accelerating a shift that is transforming global politics.

**Mr. President,
Honourable Members,**

2021 Highlights

Late last year, the OACPS Secretariat adopted a Strategic Plan covering the period 2022-2025. This Plan will guide the transformation of the Secretariat into a Centre for Excellence, and charts its course of transition for the next four years. It reflects our ambition for change, our quest for excellence, our commitment to

deliver results, and our goal to make a meaningful difference to the lives of the peoples of the OACPS.

The Strategic Plan fully takes into account the operationalisation of the Revised Georgetown Agreement, the discharge of decisions of Summits of OACPS Heads of State and Government, as well as the OACPS Council of Ministers, and the implementation of the new OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement.

In this regard, the five main strategic objectives of the OACPS Secretariat for the period 2022-2025 are as follows:

- Strategic objective 1: Enhancing intra-OACPS cooperation and collaboration.
- Strategic objective 2: Enhancing and broadening the role and visibility of the OACPS on the international scene.
- Strategic objective 3: Securing new alliances and strengthening the partnership with the EU.
- Strategic objective 4: Adapting and modernising the OACPS Secretariat.
- Strategic objective 5: Achieving sustainable financing of the Secretariat.

Based on this Strategic Plan, it is therefore my vision for the OACPS to become a respected and effective international organisation that fosters resilient societies and sustainable economies in its Member States and Regions, and an Organisation that strives to revitalise multilateralism through dialogue, partnerships, and appropriate action.

For the next four years, through our Strategic Plan, we will focus our work to achieve progress in the following five key impact areas:

- i) Sustainable and inclusive development;
- ii) Governance and peace building;
- iii) Environment and Climate change;

- iv) Multilateralism and global governance; and
- v) Focus on women and youth affairs as cross-cutting themes.

**Mr. President,
Honourable Members,**

Other key highlights for 2021, to name but a few, were the following:

- Initialing of the New OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement by the Chief Negotiators;
- Conducting a dialogue with international partners on the list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes and that of high-risk third countries on combating money laundering and terrorist financing (AML/CFT) of the European Union (EU);
- Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for future cooperation with the Community of Portuguese-Language Countries (CPLP);
- Publishing the 2020 OACPS Secretariat Annual Report entitled, “*OACPS 3.0: The Power of Change*”;
- Launching of the new OACPS Centre for South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea during a SSTC Symposium organised by the new Centre;
- Signing of a Host Country Agreement with the Republic of Angola for the hosting of the 10th Summit of OACPS Heads of State and Government, scheduled to take place during December 2022;
- Releasing of an OACPS Leaders Statement on Climate Action for COP26;
- Hosting a High-Level Event, ‘*The EU-OACPS Partnership: strengthened cooperation on climate action and the use of science-based information to build resilience*’, in the framework of COP26;
- Organising the 9th Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in conjunction with the United

Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS); and

- Signing of a Letter of Intent on cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Brussels.

Challenges and Opportunities for the next year and beyond

Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the poorest countries have seen a surge in their debt repayments. Developing economies have taken on more debt to cope with the impact of the pandemic and the rising cost of refinancing existing borrowing, as well as the resumption of debt repayment suspended in 2020/21. This resumption of debt payments comes at a time when our countries do not have the resources to honour commitments. In addition, one should not underestimate the impact of inflation. When Central Banks react to inflation by tightening financial spending, it leads to unemployment and a reduction of economic activity.

Therefore, the **availability of vaccines**, its **equitable distribution**, the **suspension and/or cancellation of debt**, and the **creation of mechanisms that would allow the use of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)** more generally to help countries with their balance of payment challenges, will remain focus areas this year to ensure that OACPS economies can start to recapture lost ground, and if possible, even expand their economies.

This year, in the lead up to the **10th Summit of OACPS Heads of State and Government** in Luanda during December 2022, I will work tirelessly towards the **full operationalisation of the Georgetown Agreement**. At the Summit, the main issue at stake is to reaffirm the ambition of the OACPS as a **dynamic global player in advancing multilateralism, and strengthening our collaboration with regional organisations**. One focus area will be to develop strategies to maximise the benefits and advantages of **South-South and Triangular cooperation**.

The **New OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement** will be signed in the next couple of months, and the Secretariat is geared towards its implementation as soon as possible. The new Agreement promotes

the OACPS to an equal political partner of the EU and acknowledges the role we can play on the international scene. In this regard, I am optimistic that the OACPS and the EU will be able to establish a **mechanism or instrument to facilitate cooperation at the international level.**

Being a fully-fledged international organisation, it is just natural that the expectations are high, not only from our Member States, but also partners. To this end, we will increase our footprint, relevance and **impact on the international scene** in all our critical areas, as outlined in the **Strategic Plan 2022-2025 of the Secretariat.** Of utmost importance will be, through **strategic partnerships, to mobilise additional resources, and ensure the operationalisation of our Endowment and Trust Fund** for the effective and efficient functioning of the Secretariat, and indeed for the benefit of our regions and countries. This would also allow for the adequate provision of **value for membership of the OACPS.**

**Mr. President,
Honorable Members,**

The new OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement requires that we, as the OACPS, consult more, and that we deepen our cooperation and exchanges. I will make it one of my priorities to ensure that there is a major improvement in the engagement and cooperation with our countries and regions.

Our Member States constitute an important number of our main respective regional blocks, and there is a need to develop solid working relationships with the Commission and Secretariats of the African Union, Pacific Island Forum and the Caribbean Community.

Initiatives for the benefit of our regions and countries that we will undertake, include the following:

- a) establish a universal/multidimensional vulnerability index for commodity-dependent developing countries, including SIDS;
- b) exploit opportunities for transitional financing for climate adaptation;

- c) utilise the digital economy to boost economic recoveries and in the process draw on a younger generation of digital entrepreneurs;
- d) contribute to addressing the digital divide;
- e) muster the contribution that the diaspora can make to our development;
- f) support SIDS economies and build resilience;
- g) develop and support programmes for improved road safety in our countries; and
- h) assist with putting in place comprehensive strategies that will tackle root causes of violence against women and girls, transform harmful social norms, provide services for survivors, and end impunity.

With reduced financial and human capacities at the Secretariat, we will have to **focus and prioritise our work**. The restructured Secretariat is now operational, and the next process is to examine the **work methods and practices of organs** to ensure compatibility and complementarity with our international role, status and vision. Increasingly we will make **use of labour-saving technology** for effective and efficient work practices and processes. With reduced financial resources, it is also important to improve the financial management, and the Secretariat will commence the process of becoming **Pillar Assessed and Compliant**.

Conclusion

**Mr. President,
Honourable Members,**

As I said last year, much work lies ahead. Together, we are stronger, **more innovative and indeed more resilient**. Our unity and solidarity are unwavering and solid.

Together, let us ensure that assessed contributions to the Secretariat are made in a timely matter. Together, let us work tirelessly to improve the political and security situation in some of our Member

States and Regions. Stability and security are so important for the sustainable and inclusive development of our countries.

I am very optimistic for the future. We have great potential and let us contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

I thank you.