

Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly at the Official Opening of the 20th Session of the ACP-EU JPA on Thursday 2 December 2010, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

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Statement by Hon. David Matongo, MP (Zambia)

H.E Mr. Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo,

H.E. Mr. Evariste Boshab, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Hon. Louis Michel, Co-President of the JPA,

Distinguished invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for the honor and privilege of addressing this Assembly for the first time in my capacity as Co-President of the JPA.

In this regard, Mr. President, I bring you greetings from your brother from across your southern border, H. E. Mr. Rupiah Bwezani Banda, the President of the Republic of Zambia.

Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo share many cultural and ethnic affinities due to the fact that 70 percent of the people of Zambia migrated over a period of hundreds of years from the Luba and Lunda kingdoms of the Congo into modern Zambia.

Mr. President, On behalf of the JPA and indeed on my personal behalf I would like to thank your country for offering to host this 20th Session of the JPA. The Assembly extends its gratitude to you, Mr. President, the Government, Parliament and the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo for your hospitality and the facilities that have been put at our disposal for the efficient conduct of our meetings.

This Session of the JPA will give us an opportunity once again to critically examine the issues that impact on the ACP-EU partnership and the trade and development challenges facing ACP States. Even as we meet, several ACP States are grappling with some unforeseen tragedies. In West Africa, 1.9 million people in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ghana, Togo, Niger and Nigeria have been affected by floods, with Benin as the most affected. Cholera outbreaks have been reported in many countries across the region, with latest figures indicating 52, 000 reported cases since May 2010.

Niger, aside from the floods, is also facing critical food shortages. In the Caribbean Region, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica and Haiti and the Grenadines have also been severely affected by hurricanes, which have destroyed telecommunications, electricity and water utilities.

The agricultural industry in this particular has suffered heavy losses, as their main livelihood and export crop, bananas, has been entirely wiped out. Needless to emphasise that the cholera epidemic in Haiti has had devastating consequences on the health of the vulnerable communities in that country. I would like to urge the international community to please do more to come to the help of this resilient and long-suffering people, especially that they are also moving ahead to conduct democratic elections.

These natural disasters expose the fragility of many of our Member States, their limited capacity for emergency and longterm responses and indeed the link between natural disasters and poverty. In particular, we note the disastrous consequences of Climate Change on Small Island states in the Caribbean and the Pacific and the grim implications on the livelihoods of so many. While we are grateful for the assistance of the international community, the European Union in particular, for emergency relief, we need to be able to put in place mechanisms that should enable our States to respond better to calamities such as the aforementioned.

On the specific question of Climate change, the ACP Group acknowledges that although the Copenhagen Conference fell short of our expectations, it was still an important framework for addressing this global challenge. Our approach this time around in this Session of the JPA is focused on the practical and technical requirements of the ACP States for ensuring that our future growth is based on environmentally sustainable development.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, The topics for discussion at this Session of the JPA reflect in general some of the current topical issues in trade and development that affect us as a Group. In this regard, the negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) continue to be a source of concern to ACP Members.

We are concerned about the lack of flexibility that is necessary from the EU side to facilitate progress in the negotiations. I wish to reiterate the call of the ACP Council of Ministers that the conclusion and smooth implementation of comprehensive and balanced EPAs that would help to speed up the sustainable development of the ACP states and the strengthening of regional integration must remain a joint and shared aim of the ACP Group and the EU.

Our further concern in this regard is the lack of progress in the Doha Round of Negotiations, which would ensure the development agenda of our States. Any EPA without the development agenda would be detrimental to speedy economic development and slow the process of regional integration of ACP States. The other concern to the ACP Group is the possible implications of the Lisbon Treaty on the existing ACP-EU cooperation.

In this regard the future of the multi-annual financial framework after the expiry of the current 10th EDF remains a great concern. The ACP Group needs to be re-assured that the principle of programmable resources will be maintained post 10th EDF. There is therefore need to address the funding gap after the expiry of the 10th EDF in 2013 and the end of the Cotonou

Agreement in 2020.

In the meantime, there is also need to address the slow disbursement of the 9th and 10th EDFs. Mr. President, In terms of other development issues, I am pleased to note that there is serious recognition at the United Nations to pay more attention to those necessary steps so critical to the attainment of the internationally agreed targets of the Millennium Development Goals. The principles for effective delivery and disbursement of resources for development have already been adequately addressed within the framework of the Accra Agenda for Action on aid effectiveness.

The September 2010 United Nations Summit has given us renewed hope that the international development community will do what it takes to move this agenda forward towards its successful conclusion. Mr. President, At this juncture, permit me to note that the United Nations Millennium Project's analysis indicates that a total quantum of Official Development Aid (ODA) of 0.7% of developed countries' GDP can provide enough resources to meet MDGs by the deadline of 2015. It is regrettable however, to note that only five countries have so far met and surpassed this target, and we salute them.

These are Denmark (0.84%), Luxembourg (0.81%), Netherlands (0.80%), Norway (0.92%), Sweden (0.79%). We therefore urge those countries that are lagging behind to rise up to the summons of history. As the Old Book says, blessed is the hand that giveth more than the hand that taketh.

Mr. President, this Session, as is customary in all JPA meetings, will also take a look at the political situations in a number of ACP States, and the general condition of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The JPA is gravely concerned by the situation in the Saharo-Sahelian region and its impact on human security. The Assembly will adopt a resolution on free and independent media, the Fourth Estate, which we believe to be an indispensable attribute of democracy.

In addition, we are not unaware of the tremendous steps that have been taken by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to restore peace and stability in this blessed country as well as the region in the aftermath of the Great Lakes Conflict that had done so much havoc to peace and security.

This Assembly has been an important forum for useful exchanges and sharing experiences and knowledge which have contributed to engendering a better understanding of the trade and development challenges of the ACP-EU relationship. In this respect, we would like to make a contribution in fostering better understanding of some of the challenges facing your country in terms of post-conflict reconstruction and the exploitation of natural resources with the seriousness it deserves.

Mr. President, At global level, we are witnessing a fundamental shift in the discussion on development as a result of the recent global financial crisis. The Human Development Report of 2010 reminded us once again that the real wealth of nations is people. This is why when we talk of development; we should now be focusing on the quality, not the quantity of economic growth. The economic goals of society have to be broadened, moving away from fixation with income growth and profits, to the improvement of living conditions and ensuring of the respect for human rights. The development model of the future must bring about instruments, processes, and forms of governance that will radically change how we have been doing business in the past.

There must be effective representation and participation of people's representatives in the establishment of economic and development policy.

We need the best forms of collaboration, governance, and human interactions in order to establish the collective good to benefit all people; to develop the best quality of life across the planet; to empower people, create opportunities and security; and thus create a world embedded in freedom, justice, abundance and peace. The new development model should have as its sole objective, the elimination of absolute poverty as well the provision of employment. We must improve governance, judicial and security systems in order to protect the rights of women, children and the elderly.

The political, social and economic system of the future must concentrate on what the Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen calls human capabilities, which enable every human being to develop their full potential.

In this context, there must be zero tolerance for war, ethnic divisions and xenophobia. We have to improve our understanding of issues like, how effective political visions can be formed and be deployed to inspire various individuals and groups to act in a concerted manner, how to build nations and communities out of disparate groups that may even have a very long history of mutual hostility and mistrust.

We must work out how to work out social pacts and build lasting coalitions around them, and how to get the best out of government bureaucracy to facilitate the achievement of these objectives. Mr. President We believe as ACP States that we can do all this, with enough political will and determination from our leadership. But we cannot do it alone. We need to forge effective partnerships and alliances with developed countries. We shall continue to reflect on these issues as we seek to serve the people who it is our honour and privilege to represent. I thank you for your kind attention.

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