

# **SPEECH: STATEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN OF THE ACP COMMITTEE OF AMBASSADOR AND AMBASSADOR OF GUYANA, H.E PATRICK I. GOMES, ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF SIERRA LEONE, H.E. ERNEST BAI KOROMA**

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(Thursday 17th February 2011)

Your Excellency, Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone  
Your Excellencies Ambassadors  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is not often that we have the pleasure and honour to welcome our Heads of State in these hallowed precincts of ACP House. We are most delighted that you have been able to make out time from your busy itinerary to be with us at this moment.

Mr. President, Sierra Leone is an important and much-valued member of the ACP family. Your country is a symbol of the new rebirth that is sweeping through the continent of Africa. Tempered by the scourge of war, tested and tried in the embers of a long and bitter conflict, the people of Sierra Leone have emerged triumphant and strong.

You stand before us, Mr. President, as a symbol of the triumph of hope over adversity.

I understand that in April your country will be celebrating its Golden Anniversary. Since last year, over a dozen African countries have celebrated their Golden Jubilees. Such occasions provide an opportunity to celebrate; to reaffirm national goals and aspirations and to bury the ghosts of a painful past.

Mr. President, we shall be celebrating with you and you can be rest assured of our support and solidarity always.

Your Excellency, the world is changing. The forces of globalisation have reshaped the contours of world politics and economics in ways that no one would have foreseen even a generation ago. Such changes bring with them challenges as well as opportunities. The intensification of global economic competition and a difficult business environment characterised by world recession makes it more difficult for low-income countries to achieve their developmental objectives and to lift their people out of a millennial poverty.

But there are also opportunities. Regional economic communities such as ECOWAS have made enormous strides, opening up opportunities for regional trade and coordinated regional policy actions in such sectors as roads. Leaders like you, who have taken to heart the travails and sufferings of your people, give us hope that the candle of hope can never extinguished in Africa, in the Caribbean and indeed the Pacific.

We also acknowledge that, in the challenging global environment in which we live, the ACP has to reassess its position vis-à-vis our traditional European partners. While seeking a firmer foundation for our enduring relationship, the Committee of Ambassadors has put together a working group to explore various scenarios for the future, including deepening South-South linkages and leveraging on the opportunities opened up the rise of China, India and Brazil.

We would be counting on the support of our leaders like your good self to provide the moral leadership we need to take the ACP Group to the next level.

In concluding my remarks, permit me, Mr. President, to note how pleased we are that Sierra Leone has agreed to host the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly in November. We know that we can count on the traditional hospitality of your warm-hearted people. We look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead and we wish a fruitful tour of duty in Brussels.

I thank you for your kind attention.

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**Liens:**

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