

79-Nation ACP Moving into a New Era of Global Partnerships

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Brussels 11 June 2019/ACP: To bring "Asia and the Americas into closer bonds of friendship" with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and "strengthen South-South solidarity", Secretary-General Dr. Patrick I. Gomes is keen to "build bridges with India on technical cooperation" and initiate a "new partnership" with Peru. He was speaking at the 'ACP Day' celebrations.

"The occasion rightly deserves that we recall the wisdom and vision of that first generation of 46 Leaders from Sub-Saharan Africa, islands and coastal countries of the Caribbean, in the Blue Pacific, who, on June 6, 1975, conceived and nurtured into birth this unique Institution, now comprising a membership of 79 developing countries" working in concert and representing hundreds of millions of people across three regions.

The 44th anniversary was celebrated on June 7 in Brussels, which Dr. Gomes described "the end of an era", with the ACP finding itself in the midst of reviewing many institutions that have shaped and marked it in the previous years. "The most significant of these arrangements are the ongoing negotiations with our major partner, the European Union. This relationship has stood the test of time ... we will start the countdown on the next twenty years when we sign the new agreement in Samoa."

The ACP is also reviewing the Georgetown Agreement to take account of the current realities as it gears itself to confront present and emerging challenges, and is ready to leverage on any new opportunities.

Dr. Gomes referred to past and present generations of women and men, "our many friends, partners and allies who have provided dedicated service and commitment, in various ways, to make us justly proud to be the ACP family of nations".

In so doing, he said, he was cognisant that the contributions and achievements to date, for the structural transformation and development of ACP economies and the advances in trade and economic cooperation to eradicate poverty, are commendable, but yet face many significant, although not insurmountable challenges.

Emphasizing the need for "deepening and diversifying partnerships", Dr. Gomes said: "Celebrating 44 years invites us to pause and reflect on how we can become engaged to elevate to the next level – 'Towards the ACP We want' – and thereby evolving into an effective global player – joining forces with countries North & South in the battle to end poverty in all its forms, everywhere (SDG 1)."

The historical legacy of the ACP-Europe Partnership, he said, is illustrated in the four decades from the infancy of the 1975 Lomé Convention until the widely-renowned Cotonou Agreement, which is to be superseded by a new Agreement beyond 2020, whose over-arching framework is the United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"In that legacy of ACP-EU relations, new chapters are being crafted, fully conscious of many previous conversations around the Cotonou Agreement with contested views and hard-fought dialogues, as much on governance as on weapons of mass destructions but all in pursuit of mutual and common interests," the ACP Secretary-General said.

Anchored in the respect of sovereignty, self-determination and the promotion of access to justice; for justice to be done and seen to be done, the relations of the ACP and Europe provide a justifiable cause for celebrating the diversity of human culture and the supreme dignity of the human person, he added.

Dr. Gomes further pointed out that the 44 years of ACP-EU relations have evolved into a formidable platform for the advancement of multilateralism, which is underlined by many joint actions. These relate to climate change, defence of a rules-based multilateral trading system of the World Trading Organization (WTO), ensuring gender equality and confronting trafficking in human persons, and protecting the oceans, seas, lakes and marine resources, while offering the promise for

development of a sustainable Blue Economy.

"Looming large on a common ACP-EU agenda, these issues are global in their substance and consequences and demands the ACP to move to the centre stage of multilateralism and craft and shape new and deep relations across the Global South," the ACP Secretary-General said.

He recalled that the ACP had hosted Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, the Director-General of India's Research and Information system for Developing Countries and the launch of his book: 'The Logic of Sharing – India Approach to South-South Cooperation'.

New and growing cooperation with Peru, Dr. Gomes said, "embodies enormous potential for a dynamic and innovative partnership with a special focus on the fulfilment of SDG 14 – to conserve and sustainably use the Oceans, Seas and Marine resources for sustainable development".

Of great appeal to the ACP's Blue Pacific States, in the large oceanic expanse of some 40 million square kilometres that fall under their stewardship, will be the knowledge and advanced marine technologies of Peru.

The ACP's growing emphasis on the Blue Economy: Fishing, Aquaculture and Marine Resources development provides an opportunity for both Island and Coastal states to be engaged with Peru on investments and industrialization for public and private sectors. "This underlies the discussions now being pursued for a Cooperation Agreement between the ACP Group and the Republic of Peru," Dr. Gomes said.

The ACP Secretary-General continued: "Our gathering marks another milestone in the history of inter-governmental unity and solidarity and the ACP is proud, with your support to have achieved tangible benefits for the millions of our peoples.

"Beyond confines of space, geography, language and cultural customs, the love and respect for the dignity of each human being have indeed made the world better – we must strive together with the willingness and determination to continue in such service and dedication."

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Photo: H.E. Mme Gaitri Issar KUMAR, Ambassador of India and Dr. Patrick I. Gomes ACP Seceratry General

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