

Address by the President of Kenya H.E Uhuru KENYATTA at the 39th session of the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, 19 June 2014, Nairobi - Kenya

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Honourable Dr. Abdalla Kigoda, Co-President of the ACP Council of Ministers and Minister for Industry, Trade and Marketing, United Republic Tanzania;
Honourable Kyriakos GERONTOPOULOS, Co-President of the EU Council of Ministers;
Mr. Alhaji Muhammad Mumuni, ACP Secretary-General;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a great honour for me, on behalf of my government and the Eastern Africa region, to join Honorable Ministers and delegates to this 39th Session of the ACP-EU Council of Ministers meeting.

Allow me to personally welcome all of you to Kenya and in particular to Nairobi. As is our tradition, I say to you all, KARIBUNI, Welcome.

Distinguished Delegates,

The decision by Kenya to host this very important meeting is underlined by the spirit of solidarity and brotherhood within the Eastern Africa region. It is our strong belief that this Assembly of over 100 countries and observers, adequately demonstrates the resolve of the ACP and EU partners to strengthen the long standing cooperation.

I, therefore, wish to convey to you my Government's and Kenyan peoples' gratitude for your decision to attend this meeting in Nairobi. May I also acknowledge the invaluable support of Hon. Alhaji Mumuni and his staff at the ACP Secretariat for the logistical support extended to my Government in the lead up to hosting of this meeting, despite the short notice. This, in my view, espouses the very spirit of cooperation and partnership that underlies the existence of the ACP and ACP-EU relations.

Distinguished Delegates,

The ACP-EU is one of the strongest and vital trans-regional partnerships of our time. The scope of cooperation and partnership amongst the countries of the ACP and the EU, separately and jointly, has evolved and grown over the years.

Today, we present to the global audience our overarching commitment to the joint resolve in addressing the challenges of poverty, sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the global economy.

Member states have continued to benefit from development cooperation emanating from this partnership as envisaged in successive Lome conventions and the Cotonou Partnership Agreements. This partnership has positively contributed to efforts by most of our countries to confront the challenges of globalization.

Furthermore, it has deepened the north-south cooperation and strengthened efforts to promote bilateral, regional and trans-continental trade. It is through this collaboration and forethought that we will derive the much needed economic, social and cultural transformation of our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It should not be lost on our minds that the ACP-EU partnership has occasionally faced hurdles and given rise to challenges which need to be collectively addressed. This is necessary in order to ensure continuity and mutual confidence in the partnership and its objectives.

I, therefore, urge this meeting to address itself to the state of our partnership with a view to coming up with proposals that will strengthen our engagement.

I have no doubt that this meeting will come up with action-oriented and practical decisions and resolutions.

Distinguished Delegates,

The 39th Session accords an opportunity to appreciate and delve deeper into the proposals on the future perspective of the ACP and its engagement with the EU after the year 2020. I recall the healthy exchange of views during the Africa-EU Summit in Brussels in April this year. Among other issues, the Summit pronounced itself on shared policies on trade and development.

It focused on policies that promote trade and investment; guarantee long-term growth and sustainable development, and thereby create jobs for our young people.

Distinguished Delegates,

I have been informed that invitations have been extended to 39 countries to sign their respective National Indicative Programmes on the margins of this meeting later today. I applaud the EU Commission, and in particular, Commissioner Pielbags for this gesture.

The coming into force of the programming under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) provides a seamless link in the process of development support under this partnership. I look forward to an early signing of the Regional Indicative Programmes as the requisite synergy to addressing the regional priorities and preferences.

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me assure you of Kenya's support for the reform process as proposed in the Sipopo Declaration. I have been briefed on the proposals made by the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) under the able chairmanship of His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo.

The suggestions by the Group that the ACP-EU framework be transformed into a multilateral development cooperation body, in my view deserves due consideration. I urge Ministers in their wise counsel, during this meeting and thereafter, to render their support to the reform process as it stands to redefine our bilateral and collective engagement in future.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) have emerged as a critical factor in determining the future trade relations between the ACP and the EU. Many countries and regions of the ACP have approached the EPAs very cautiously. I personally see EPAs both as an opportunity for deeper cooperation despite the challenges posed by the market access resolution.

Kenya is willing to conclude the EPAs and we join the rest of the EPA configurations in calling for greater flexibility from our partners on the outstanding issues.

In our view, the approaching expiry of the market access deadline may not be the key issue with EPAs. What is of concern is how any new arrangement will guarantee market access in a sustainable and progressive manner. Further, it should be clear that EPAs should serve as an instrument for promotion of regional, intra-regional and trans-continental integration.

It is, therefore, my desire that countries and regions should go for sustainable and optimal trade and development agreements that will help integrate ACP countries into the global economy as envisaged in the founding instruments of this partnership.

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me take this early opportunity to express my support and goodwill for the forthcoming ACP Summit due to be held in Paramaribo, Suriname, later this year. I look forward to participating in the Summit.

Finally, I take this opportunity to once again welcome you to Kenya. As you may be aware, the 8th wonder of the world is in motion for the next two months.

For those who are not aware, the 8th wonder of the world is the migration of wildlife from the two sister countries of the EAC, that is, Kenya and Tanzania.

I encourage you to take advantage of your presence in Nairobi to explore the diverse tourist attractions in our country.

Those with pressing schedules can make a quick visit to the Nairobi National park which is less than 15 minutes drive from here. It is now my responsibility to declare the 39th Session of ACP-EU Joint Council of Ministers officially opened.

I Thank You and God Bless you.

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