

EU and ACP countries conclude first round of negotiations to modernise their relations

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Brussels, 14 December 2018/ACP: The two chief negotiators met today in Brussels to take stock of the progress achieved and discuss next steps.

The first series of talks between the EU and 79 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) led to broad convergence on the structure of the future agreement and the strategic priorities.

Today, at the ACP house in Brussels, the EU's Chief Negotiator, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, said: "We welcome the progress made so far. There is still a great deal of work ahead, given our ambitions and the scope of what we want to achieve together. We are looking forward to stepping up the pace to embark on a new path with the negotiation of tailor-made EU-Africa, EU-Caribbean and EU-Pacific pillars early next year."

The ACP Council of Ministers met on Wednesday 12 December 2018 to take stock of the negotiation process. The Ministers appreciated the substantive progress made in the talks and observed that the coming stage in the process is demanding and would require flexibility and convergence from both sides.

The ACP Chief Negotiator and Chair of the Ministerial Central Negotiating Group who is also the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Africa integration of Togo Professor Robert Dussey, said: "I take pride in the achievements recorded in a short span of time since the start of the negotiations. The positive spirit exhibited by the two sides is greatly encouraging and extremely useful in reaching a meaningful outcome in the next round."

Next steps

As of January, talks will intensify. The second round of technical negotiations is expected to take place over a three-month period. Throughout that time, EU and ACP countries will start drafting the agreement around agreed priorities.

Background

The Cotonou Agreement currently governing EU-ACP relations is due to expire in 2020. Political negotiations on a new ACP-EU Partnership were launched in New York on 28 September, although the renewal process started in the course of summer 2018.

Since mid-October, the technical work, organised in five specific sessions, mainly focused on the so-called common foundation at EU-ACP level. This contains the values and principles that bring the EU and ACP countries together. It also indicates the strategic priority areas that the two sides intend to prospectively work on together. In the future agreement, on top of the foundation there will be three action-oriented regional pillars to focus on each region's specific needs. Through the future partnership, EU and ACP countries will seek closer political cooperation on the world stage. Together, they represent more than half of all UN member countries and unite over 1.5 billion people.

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