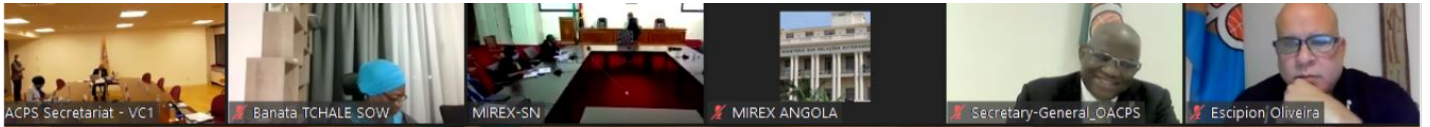


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Brussels, 3 December 2021/OACPS: Members of the Council of Ministers of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) concluded three days of intense discussion during their 113th Session, held virtually from 30 November to 2 December 2021.

H.E. Mr Tete António, External Relations Minister, Angola and President-in-Office of the OACPS Council of Ministers, presided over the meeting, which was preceded by a virtual meeting of the Bureau of the Council of Ministers on 30 December.

During the meeting, Ministers and their representatives from the 79 Member States of the OACPS, discussed pressing topics for the Organisation and their constituents. The impact of the new Omicron variant, which has already resulted in travel restrictions to several Southern African Member States was an issue of concern as was the potential impact of the new COVID-19 strain to the already battered economies of many of its members; some of which had already seen a double-digit drop in their national gross domestic product (GDP) as a result of the pandemic.

In his opening remarks to Council, Minister Antonio spoke of the unequal distribution of the vaccines across the developed and the developing worlds, and the risks of vaccine nationalism and hoarding, calling on those countries who had made promises, to fulfil their pledges and to share the technology and intellectual property to allow countries of the South to produce vaccines themselves.

Speaking in a similar vein, Secretary-General of the OACPS, H.E. Mr Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, also spoke of the inequities regarding vaccines, recalling that while vaccination rates are high in the North, currently, only 6% of the 1.2 billion people in Africa are vaccinated. The Secretary-General urged the developed world, especially with respect to the rapid advance of the Omicron variant, to lift the intellectual property rights on COVID-19 vaccine production.

Despite the continuing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021, the OACPS advanced with the restructuring of the Organisation as a result of the entry-into-force of its constitutive agreement, the revised Georgetown Agreement in the previous year. In April 2021, the OACPS and the European Union (EU) Chief Negotiators initialled the new OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement, which is still being finalised, with a proposed date for the signing of the new Agreement in the first half of 2022, in Apia, Samoa.

On the final day, Council approved 12 decisions and two resolutions on topics ranging from the new Partnership Agreement and other collaborations at the international level, the creation of an OACPS Cultural Foundation, the establishment of relations with the Republic of Indonesia, the Small Island Developing States Forum and the new ACP Endowment and Trust Fund.

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