

OACPS Inter-Sessional Summit calls for enhanced global solidarity to combat COVID-19 pandemic

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Brussels, 03 June 2020/OACPS: Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) today re-affirmed their unity and solidarity with one another and with their development partners in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting social and economic challenges arising thereof. During the three-hour Summit, they called overwhelmingly for a moratorium on debt repayments; greater consultation and dialogue with the European Union (EU) with respect to the policing of money laundering and tax evasion; and increased support for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Themed, "*Transcending the COVID-19 Pandemic: Building Resilience through Global Solidarity*", the virtual Extraordinary Inter-Sessional Summit of OACPS Heads of State and Government, convened by H.E. Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya and President-in-Office of the OACPS, brought together Heads of State of the OACPS' six regions to present the key issues facing the regions as a result of the pandemic. The second segment of the programme featured a high-level exchange with global strategic and development partners.

In his opening remarks, President Kenyatta presented the background against which the Extraordinary Inter-sessional Summit was being held: with 112,243 cases and 3,046 deaths across the regions of the OACPS as of 31 May 2020, and major economic disruptions to key industries and supply chains, which reflected a dire economic situation for Members of the OACPS. Guest speaker H.E. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), stressed that while the caseload in Members of the OACPS was not as high as had been feared, with no cases in 12 of the OACPS' 79 Members and 38 Members having less than 500 cases, the OACPS was still very vulnerable for many reasons and maintained that there was still a need for solidarity, preparedness and a comprehensive approach while maintaining essential health services.

Sharing the actions taken by individual governments to contain the virus, the OACPS Heads of State and Government pointed out the clear but difficult decisions taken by many governments to prioritise saving lives over economic ruin. This has had significant consequences to what were already, in many cases, fragile economies. In addition, several Heads made reference to potential threats such as the active Atlantic hurricane season in the Caribbean, desert locusts and floods in Africa and the effects of climate change in the Pacific. The impact of the publication of the proposed List of High Risk Third Countries on Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing by the European Commission, on the already overburdened economies, was also addressed, with countries calling for more consultation and dialogue, and asking the EU to reconsider the publication of the List, which would further ravage the economies of the included Member States.

Decrying the unjust killing of Mr. George Floyd in the US and the continued instances of racial discrimination and intolerance, Members of the OACPS also called for a cessation of sanctions against its members, as the sanctions make it even more difficult for countries to protect their populations against the pandemic.

The key development partners at the Inter-Sessional Summit included H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council, H.E. Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic of France, H.E. Mrs. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, H.E. Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada and H.E. Mr. Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of Australia. Development partners shared details of several projects and programmes which were initiated as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, and gave assurances of their commitment to ensuring that developing States would receive assistance to adequately fight COVID-19 and the socio-economic consequences as, according to Prime Minister Trudeau, "Each of us can only prosper when all of us prosper".

In his comments at the end of the Summit, President Kenyatta thanked all the participants, remarking that, "If one of us fails, we will all fail. We will only win this battle if we are together." H.E. Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, OACPS Secretary General expressed his view that with this innovative, first-ever OACPS Inter-Sessional Summit, the Organisation has come out stronger, more united and with a clearer mandate for change to meet the demands of its Members.

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The Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), formerly known as the ACP Group of States, is an organisation created by the original Georgetown Agreement in 1975, and subsequently revised in 2019. The OACPS' main goals centre around the sustainable development of its Members and their gradual integration into the global economy; coordination of OPCS activities in the framework of the implementation of the existing Partnership Agreement with the European Union; consolidation of unity and solidarity among Members of the OACPS; and the establishment and strengthening of peace, security and stability in free and democratic societies.

VIDEO RECORDING OF THE SUMMIT ^[1]

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