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Brussels, 9 June 2022/OACPS: Participants at the hybrid 114th Session of the Council of Ministers of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), held from 8-9 June 2022, deliberated eleven Decisions and one Resolution arising from the Meeting, which took place at the Brussels-based Headquarters of the OACPS.

The Council Meetings, chaired by H.E. Mrs Sylvie Baiipo Temon, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic and President-in-Office of The OACPS Council of Ministers, were preceded by three ministerial meetings on Trade, Development Finance Cooperation and of the Ad Hoc Contact Group on the European Union (EU) Blacklist.

Ministers with responsibility for OACPS affairs discussed, *inter alia*, the finalisation of the new OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement; the EU list of non-cooperative tax jurisdiction and that of third countries regarding anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT), projects being undertaken by the five departments of the OACPS in the areas of trade, fisheries and aquaculture, as well as the upcoming 10th Summit of OACPS Heads of State and Government, to take place in Luanda, Angola in December 2022.

Ministers expressed serious concern about the delay in signing the new OACPS-EU Agreement as a result of EU internal procedures that require unanimity for entering into international agreements. They took note of the proposed 12-month extension of the transition measures to allow the continued application of the provision of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement pending the signing of the new Agreement. Ministers further urged the concerned EU Member State(s) blocking approval of the new Agreement to positively consider facilitating the normal functioning of the relations, such as the holding of regular joint meetings, as foreseen in the new OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement.

Another area of grave concern centered around the closure of the bank accounts of several diplomatic missions of the OACPS accredited to the Kingdom of Belgium and/or the EU by Belgian banks. The closure of the bank accounts causes enormous difficulties that affect the proper functioning of the diplomatic missions concerned and disrupt the fulfilment of their mandate. Available information has indicated that the measures to close the bank accounts result from the application of EU law on AML/CFT. The OACPS, reiterating its commitment at the highest level, to combat illicit financing flows, including the important issues related to AML/CFT, has expressed its desire to work with the relevant European Organs to find mutually satisfactory solutions to both issues.

The application for OACPS membership by the Republic of Maldives was also among the Decisions under consideration. Pursuant to Articles 5 and six of the revised Georgetown Agreement (2019), the decision will be submitted for adoption to the upcoming Summit of OACPS Heads of State and Government.

The Council of Ministers is the OACPS' main decision-making body. It is the supreme body responsible for implementing the guidelines laid down by the Summit. The Council is composed of a member of Government from each Member of the OACPS or a government-designated representative and meets twice annually in ordinary sessions.

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