

# Opening Statement by the President of Council Honorable Tjekero Tweya Minister of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development of the Republic of Namibia at the 109th Session of the ACP Council of Ministers

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Honourable Ministers,

Your Excellency, Secretary-General GOMES,

Excellencies, Ambassadors

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**I join the Secretary General in bidding you welcome to the ACP House and to the 109th Session of the ACP Council of Ministers.**

At the outset, I convey my gratitude for the honour and privilege that you have accorded to me personally, to my country Namibia and the Southern Africa region, in entrusting me to Chair this Session and the Joint ACP-EU Council of Ministers that will take place on Thursday and Friday this week.

Let me assure you of commitment to deliver on the assignment. I know that with your support and cooperation, we will have a fruitful and memorable meeting.

We meet here this morning as a decision making body of our Group to renew our commitment to the objectives and principles enshrined in the Georgetown Agreement.

Our coming together is driven by our common identity of shared cultural values as well as historical, economic and demographic characteristics. We take pride in the knowledge that our Group is the largest official and structured organisation of the world's developing countries spanning three continents.

In doing so, we reaffirm our vision to improve the living standards of our peoples through good governance, preservation of peace and security and social justice. We recognize that entrepreneurship, building capacity in the private sector, promotion of trade, investments and access to technology will go a long way in achieving sustained and sustainable development, that we seek for our countries. At the same time, we reiterate our belief South-South, North-South and Triangular Cooperation to move forward.

The North-South cooperation, of our long-standing partnership with the European Union, has contributed immensely to the development of our States.

Indeed, we look forward to strengthening and deepening our partnership with Europe when we conclude the on-going negotiations of the new Partnership to replace the Cotonou Agreement.

However, there is no doubt in our minds that we need to rely primarily on our own efforts and strengths, if we are to achieve the desired level of social and economic development to meet with the expectations of our populations.

Closer cooperation among ourselves and with our partners is vital for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which we committed ourselves along with other members of the United Nations in September 2015.

In this regard, I wish to underline the urgency of mobilising adequate resources and financing to ensure the sustainable development to which all our peoples aspire;

- the urgency for mobilising resources for human capital development and capacity building particularly for the youth and young people, as well as women;
- the urgency for prioritising funds for the promotion of programmes in support of youth entrepreneurship, together with vocational skills training, higher education, research, science and technology and ICTs;
- the urgency for the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to our countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms; and
- the urgency to deal with the adverse effects of climate change, witnessed in most of our predominantly vulnerable regions, through floods, drought, hurricanes, sea-level rise and coastal erosion.

While a number of our countries are registering a slight improvement in economic growth, and even as we witness concerted efforts to resolve political problems and conflicts throughout the world, the prevailing international socio-economic and political situation continues to pose numerous challenges to most countries in our Group.

The challenges are enormous but we must rise to the occasion. The challenges are there for us to overcome.

We must rise to the occasion to participate in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, digitalisation and the internet of things, all of which have the potential to raise global income levels and improve the quality of life for populations around the world.

We must rise to the occasion to fight corruption, which remains a scourge and serious threat to sustainable economic growth, good governance and the rule of law. Indeed, it is so serious that the Africa Union, thought it fit to declare last year 2018 as the African Anti-Corruption Year. The Summit theme was: "Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation".

I believe we should all make concerted efforts to eliminate corruption in all its forms in Government and the society at large including private sector as well.

We must rise to the occasion to fight organised crime, in all its forms.

We must rise to the occasion to address unsustainable practices arising from, inter alia, land-based and coastal activities, Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing that are threatening marine ecosystems, fish stocks, food security and livelihoods.

We must rise to the occasion to deal with the root cause of illegal migration even as we recognise the nexus between migration and development or rather the lack of development.

We must rise to the occasion to combat terrorism and violent extremism in the world in general and in the ACP Member States in particular.

We must rise to the occasion to combat xenophobia, racism and hate speech.

In doing so, we must think seriously how to reposition our Group within the current multi-polar world that is characterised by a shift in the balance of economic powers in order to ensure that our Group plays a more catalytic and influential role in global governance with a view to fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of our peoples.

### **Honourable Ministers**

As we embark on our agenda, let us recall that this is a crucial year as our Group is in the process of negotiating a Post-Cotonou Agreement. Since the signing of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement in 2000, major changes have taken place. These include new geopolitical realities, globalisation and regionalisation dynamics, with the maturation of our regional organizations and the AU becoming a more credible and legitimate Pan-African Institution, and a changed European Union.

Brexit looms in the horizon, and the European Parliamentary elections are taking place in the coming days

The post-Cotonou negotiations also coincide with the internal EU budgetary cycle and the revision of the EU's Development Cooperation Financing Instruments that would apply in a post-2020 set-up. All these processes combined pose challenges but also represent a unique opportunity for the ACP.

The road we are embarking on requires vision, courage and political will. In this ever changing world, we should sustain our faith in each other and maintain and consolidate our bonds of unity and solidarity. United we stand, divided we fall! Let us never forget that we are carrying a responsibility to those generations that have come before us, whose foundation we are now striving to consolidate, and those who will come after us. We owe it to them not only to maintain the momentum but to take it to a higher level.

We are optimistic that a new dawn is breaking. May we all be inspired to face the future with renewed vigour, loyalty and dedication to our Group.

I would like to reiterate my confidence in our ability to work together. With your cooperation we will proceed with our work most efficiently and our discussions will take place in an atmosphere of mutual understanding. For my part, I would like to reiterate my availability and that of my delegation and assure you that we intend to continue to serve you to the best of our ability.

**I thank you for your kind attention.**

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