

# Parliamentary Assembly

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### Signing of the Charter to create the ACP Consultative Assembly

On 15 April 2005, 27 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries signed the Charter creating the ACP Consultative Assembly at an official Ceremony presided over by Mrs. Sharon Hay-Webster, ACP Co-President of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly, at the Conference Centre in Bamako. The Charter effectively brings the Assembly into existence, thereby providing an institutional framework for the work of the ACP Parliamentarians. The Assembly is not a new structure, but rather the formalisation and re-affirmation of the existing inter-parliamentary cooperation mechanism within the ACP Group, as provided for in Article 18 of the Georgetown Agreement.

In his speech, Mr. Ibrahim Boubakar Keita, President of the National Assembly of Mali, stressed that the signing ceremony was as important as the ceremony that created the ACP Group in 1975, since it henceforth gave an identity to the ACP Parliamentary Assembly. He added that it was high time the ACP parliamentarians demonstrated their organisational, methodological and assertive skills. In his view, the ACP Consultative Assembly would enable its members "to better consult, exchange ideas, harmonise positions, better prepare terms of reference, [...] better negotiate [...]."

Mrs. Sharon Hay-Webster, ACP Co-President of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly, on behalf of all the Parliamentarians, took the opportunity to thank Mr. Amadou Toumani Touré, President of the Republic of Mali, as well as the Government and the people of Mali for their warm welcome and the facilities provided for the 9th JPA Session held in Bamako.

Mrs. Hay-Webster recalled in her address that the creation of an ACP Assembly was an old concept already provided for under Article 18 of the 1992 revised text of the Georgetown Agreement, which reads as follows: "[...] the Council of ministers may, in due course, set up an ACP Assembly and determine its membership, duties and operating procedures." Since then, she added, the realisation of this concept had been discussed on several occasions within both the ACP Council of Ministers and the Committee of Ambassadors. A Working Group was subsequently set up to examine the preliminary drafts of the Charter and the Rules of Procedure prepared by the Secretariat.

The Co-President stated that the Working Group had underscored the urgent need to strengthen the unity of the ACP Parliamentarians to ensure their effective participation in the work of the JPA and the implementation of the Partnership Agreement. The Working Group had further specified that the aim was not to create a new cooperation structure, but rather, to improve the existing mechanism and integrate the reform into a formal process for establishing an ACP Consultative Assembly.

Mrs. Hay-Webster reiterated the determination of the ACP Parliaments to fully assume the role conferred upon them by the Cotonou Agreement, and paid special tribute to the 27 signatory countries to the Charter. The commitment of these countries, she added, was recognition of the work accomplished to create this Assembly. This translates their political will to act as true partners under the Cotonou Agreement.

Among the key figures honouring the ceremony with their presence were Mr. Ousmane Yssouf Maiga, Prime Minister of Mali, and Sir John R. Kaputin, Secretary-General of the ACP Group.

### LIST OF COUNTRIES THAT HAVE SIGNED THE CHARTER AND RULES OF ACP PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY as of 16 NOVEMBER 2007

- ANGOLA
- BARBADOS
- BELIZE
- BENIN
- BOTSWANA
- BURKINA FASO
- BURUNDI
- CAMEROUN
- CAP-VERT
- CONGO
- REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO
- COOK ISLANDS
- COTE D'IVOIRE
- CUBA
- DJIBOUTI
- DOMINICA
- REPUBLIQUE DOMINICAINE
- ERITREA
- ETHIOPIA

- FIJI
- GABON
- GHANA
- GUINEE
- GUINEE EQUATORIALE
- HAITI
- JAMAICA
- KENYA
- LESOTHO
- MADAGASCAR
- MALAWI
- MALI
- MAURITIUS
- MOZAMBIQUE
- NAMIBIA
- NIGER
- NIGERIA
- PAPUA NEW GUINEA
- RWANDA
- ST. CHRISTOPHER AND NEVIS
- ST. LUCIA
- ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
- SAMOA
- SENEGAL
- SEYCHELLES
- SIERRA LEONE
- SOLOMON ISLANDS
- SOUTH AFRICA
- SUDAN
- SURINAME
- SWAZILAND
- TANZANIA
- TCHAD
- TOGO
- TUVALU
- UGANDA
- ZAMBIA
- ZIMBABWE

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