

## Political talks kick off ACP parliamentary sessions in Suriname

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Paramaribo, Suriname, 22 November 2012/ ACP: ACP parliamentary sessions opened today with the Committee of Political Affairs hearing updates on critical situations in ACP states, including the crises in Somalia, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Resolutions on these topics are expected at the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) next week.

“During [ACP sessions], we are able to assist our member countries to solve the problems we have. There are also issues that need the solidarity of members,” said Hon. Thandeko Zinti Mnkandhla of Zimbabwe, who stood in for Samoa to chair the meeting of the Political Affairs Committee this morning. “Members are also able to take what we discuss here to their own national parliaments.”

Over the next three days (22-24 November), parliamentary delegates from 79 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific will gather to strategise and prepare for joint sessions with European counterparts 25-29 November.

Three standing committees – the Committee on Political Affairs; Economic Development, Finance and Trade; and Social Affairs and Environment – will hold discussions before the full ACP plenary session on Saturday.

Talks today focused on a proposed resolution on the European and ACP Group response to the Somali crisis. The country has witnessed incessant armed conflict for more than 20 years, made worse by lack of governance, health care and problems such as piracy and drought.

The draft resolution welcomes the set up of the African Union’s African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to support the transitional government, as well as various EU programmes to address the crisis. It highlights key challenges such the deregulation of Somali markets, funding sources for terrorists, and health and nutrition.



Meanwhile, the occupation of Northern Mali continues, and will be raised as an urgent motion for resolution. Mali MP Hon. Assarid Ag Imbarcaouane reported that the international community and African Union were watching the region closely, as rebels occupying more than two thirds of the Northern territory are now fighting against each other. The European Union has sent in 250 officers to train the Malian army.

Also on the table as an urgent motion is the instability in the Great Lakes region – especially in East of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Armed rebel forces M23 continue to destabilise the resource-rich SADC member state, while neighbouring countries have been accused of backing them. During the meeting, the DRC delegate called for solidarity amongst ACP members and an African solution to the problem.

Guyana, Sudan and Haiti also took the floor to inform members of important political developments in their countries.

The report of the Political Affairs Committee will be tabled at the ACP Parliamentary Assembly plenary session on Saturday 24 November before joint debates and voting with the EU side.

*(Photo: Hon. Thandeko Minti Mnkandhla chairing the meeting; Political Committee parliamentary delegates)*

- ACP Press

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