

Prime Minister of Samoa calls for genuine and durable partnerships in combating climate change

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Brussels, 26 April 2018/ ACP: The Prime Minister of Samoa, the Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi met with Ambassadors of African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries in Brussels on Monday, urging ACP countries to work together towards building genuine and durable partnership in combating climate change.

Indeed, under his leadership Samoa has become an international point of reference in terms of combating climate change thereby making the Prime Minister one of the most visible and influential spokespersons on the latter in the Pacific region.

He also made it clear that he sees a future for the ACP Group with all regions working together in solidarity during his remarkable address to the ACP committee of ambassadors.



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ACP press

Speech of honorable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa

Madame chairperson of the committee of ambassadors

Secretary general of the ACP group

Your excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen

Greetings and Talofa lava

It is an honour for me to be back in the ACP house where I spent many hours during my tenure as expert on intra-ACP Trade, Transport and Communications. Whilst some things have obviously changed since the late 1970's, the central preoccupation of the group has remained relatively constant – “reducing and eventually eradicating poverty”.

Today, I wish to focus my intervention on two key and strategic issues which are central to our future as the ACP family: the upcoming negotiations with the EU on a successor post-2020 agreement; and the issue of climate change.

Centrally, and of paramount importance to us all is the issue of climate change. The Paris agreement heralds in a new beginning. It demonstrates what is possible at the global level if countries are prepared to set aside their differences and vested interests for the common good of humanity. There must be acceptance that climate change will have a profound effect on sustainable development for our countries. It also reaffirms the critical importance and support for genuine and durable partnerships based on common interests, cooperation, understanding and good faith.

The Paris Accord is the thread that binds the global community together. Promises are not enough, NOW is the time for urgent action and we must act together.

We in the Pacific have been proactive in contributing to the solution with the acceptance of the fact that we are responsible for our own development. Palau for instance has created the world's six largest ocean sanctuaries – with no fishing, and other extractive purposes.

All of our countries, in particular the Small islands developing states, have shown commitment through the signing and ratification of the Paris Agreement. Many have also put in place programs for the implementation of their respective ambitious Intended Nationally Determined Commitments. My own country in our commitment to climate action, is preserving its biodiversity, ensuring mangroves as crucial marine ecosystems are conserved and protected, in turn help to strengthen resilience against the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, we are on target in our goal to achieve 100% renewables in terms of electricity generation by 2020 and sustaining that thereafter.

Population displacement – is fast becoming a reality and more importantly we must ensure that every avenue is explored to guarantee migration with dignity should the need eventuate. The world must realize and accept that saving small and most vulnerable countries from the adverse impact of climate change, is in effect, saving our planet.

The Sustainable Development Goals is our collective roadmap for the future. The ACP Group must learn from each other – share best practices and lessons learnt and wherever possible execute these responsibilities through south-south cooperation. As a family, we need to strengthen our resilience not only to climate change but other exogenous shocks whether they be natural disaster induced or economic and social in nature.

The Pacific's roadmap on the SDGs was approved in 2017. Samoa's program for the implementation of the SDGs is integrated into its national development strategy. We need to do more in area of intra-ACP cooperation, as the Committee of Ambassadors you need to lead in this area.

The land is what defines us. It is integral and a part of who we are. The impact of climate change on food security and hunger is a challenge we must face front on. Land rights, particularly in the context of developing countries, are inextricably linked with the right to food, the right to work and a host of other human rights. In many instances, the right to land defines a community's identity, its livelihood, its very survival and a vital component of our particular way of life.

Samoa is working to keep its waters clean and healthy from land-based pollution with legislation and regulations. Around 80% of marine debris is from land-based sources, all of which present a threat to Samoa's marine wildlife. Plastics is an immediate and priority concern.

The Sea surround us. The Pacific at its last Forum Leaders' meeting has identified as one of its top priorities the ocean and the sustainable management of the resources therein through its Blue Pacific initiative.

While there is plentiful to sustain our livelihoods, we must guard against damaging our natural environment in the haste to develop and in the name of development. We must be sure that we manage our natural resources efficiently for future generations. Policies framed around our uniqueness and diversity must prevail. What sets us apart is our unity and solidarity.

Our collective strengths will ensure that we, as the ACP Group, is an effective global player as well as an attractive partner to the EU and other potential development partners. It is what allows us to pursue our individual dreams and yet can come together and coalesce as one family – the ACP family.

Climate funding is strategic to our efforts to fight the adverse impact of climate change. There are still numerous hurdles in the path to accessing climate financing. Our global commitments must also be seen against our national obligations to education, health and other pressing needs which we accept are our responsibility. However, the attempt to shift the funding burden to developing countries must not be allowed to go unchallenged. Natural disasters are a part of our everyday struggle. A hurricane, a tsunami, heavy flooding can all impact to push back development gains. In some severe cases by at least 10-20 years in some of our ACP regions. The committee of Ambassadors must find a sustainable and practical response to this challenge for our ACP communities.

Small Islands developing States (SIDS), LDCs and landlocked countries need our special attention. For SIDS, the SAMOA pathway provides the foundation for future actions and partnerships. I applaud the decision of the ACP Council of Ministers to establish a SIDS Forum within our ACP structure. This is a clear demonstration of our unity and solidarity to address the challenges of all members of our ACP family.

All of us are also members of various international organisations and financial institutions. We must leverage our numbers and resource endowment to secure positions that are of collective benefit to our Group. With the EU, climate change and sustainable energy come to mind.

Excellencies, my second point concerns our future, post-Cotonou.

The Sipopo and Port Moresby Summits gave our Group clear directives on the focus and modalities for negotiations with the EU for a legally binding agreement post-Cotonou. As such, I understand Council at its next session in Togo will consider a draft negotiating mandate to guide the Group in its negotiations with the EU. The critical importance of having a clear mandate supported by all cannot be overstated.

But I must caution against division within our ranks. As Chairman of the Pacific Islands Forum, I have been clear in our position as stated in our Declaration of September 2017 in Apia- that is, the Pacific position is already solidly incorporated into the ACP position. I believe the Caribbean region has also reaffirmed its position to negotiate with the EU as an integral part of the ACP Group.

The current Chair of the ACP Council of Ministers was kind enough to brief some ACP leaders in the margin of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting last week in London of the AU position as decided by Foreign Ministers in Kigali on 19 March 2018. The AU decision is of grave concern for it calls into question the collective resolution of ACP Heads of States and Government taken at Sipopo and Port Moresby.

Whilst understandable, the AU's Executive Council decision is regrettable, given Africa's long association, shared history and common values and interests with the Caribbean and Pacific regions over the last 43 years. Africa as the strongest, most influential and largest sub-grouping within the ACP Group appears, by taking this position, to have discarded its smaller and most vulnerable partners in pursuit of its global vision to be more influential and stronger global player. The timing and lack of real genuine consultation and political dialogue amongst ACP member states is of concern.

But I am an optimist. Even if the current AU position remains there is room for constructive compromise. I have every confident in this august body finding that compromise if there is a need. As we move towards August 2018 we must ensure that the message of unity and solidarity coming out of the ACP Group is clear in its focus and unambiguous in its intention. The ACP Group must operate from a position of strength reflecting our numbers, political commitments and actions. In clearly understanding our common position we will be projecting and demonstrating our unity and solidarity to negotiate as one. Seventy nine countries speaking with one voice.

We in the ACP must construct a future that will strengthen our global influence in key strategic areas utilizing our strength in numbers. To this end, it is possible to envisage a post-2020 ACP Group as a "cohesive force capable of articulating its shared concerns and interests in a participatory and inclusive manner at the global level. a group with strong and effective institutions geared towards speedy and timely decision-making and implementation. A Group focusing on and embracing its constituents and development partners, capable of demonstrating its value-added and utility. A group that will forge new links and strengthen existing ones".

One thing is certain – we shall face many challenges that will test our resolve as a group in the coming years. Some will be familiar, others will be new and untested. But the common denominator is the imperative for us to meet them together and front-on with clarity of purpose and vision, unwavering commitment, renewed hope as was evident in Sipopo, and above all in unity and solidarity. There is no other choice but to succeed – it is a moral imperative and our duty to the people we are honoured to represent and to serve.

The ACP is a Group steeped in traditions that cherish our diversity, seek to uphold the rule of law and the principles of democracy and good governance, believe in the equality of opportunities for all communities and above all in seeing poverty become a thing of the past and the attainment of sustainable development. We must never forget the hopes of our peoples, whether in the land continent of Africa, or the ocean continents of the Caribbean and the Pacific. For we all share and common commitment to remove injustice and poverty.

We, the ACP Group, must look to the future with renewed hope and belief. We are one family. Let us consider the best options our Group to meet the future challenges that await us, as well as effectively respond to the development needs of the ACP.

Madam Chair, Excellencies,

As we look beyond 2020, my sincere expectation is for us to engage more in genuine political dialogue that will fast track our collective decision making process and thereby arrive at an ACP-EU partnership that will endure for the next 40 years. A partnership that we can all be proud of, that encapsulates the aspirations and hopes of our peoples, and ultimately will launch the next generations of our communities into a more prosperous and peaceful future.

To this end, we must also consider effective and practical ways and means to enhance and strengthen intra-ACP cooperation as envisaged in our Constitution, the Georgetown Agreement.

Let me conclude my remarks by thanking all of you for honouring Samoa with your presence today through your attendance at this special session of the Committee of Ambassadors. I have also been requested by my Ambassador to remind your

Excellencies of Samoa's strong interest to host the signing of the new Agreement in 2020. I understand the matter has already been raised at both the Committee of Ambassadors and Council of Ministers levels. I very much welcome your support and look forward to hosting you in 2020.

Soifua and God bless you all.

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