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Brussels, 09 September 2019: In a wide-ranging interview with the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC), ACP Secretary General, Dr. Patrick I. Gomes opined that the recent visit of Kenya's President, Uhuru Kenyatta, to the Caribbean could help boost the region's participation at the December 9-10 ACP Summit to be held in Nairobi, Kenya.

Dr. Gomes told the CMC that the response has been "encouraging" given President Kenyatta's visit to the Caribbean in August when he held talks with Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness, Barbados' Prime Minister Mia Mottley and St. Lucia's Prime Minister Allen Chastanet.

"We believe that African and Caribbean relations have great potential for possibilities and this is expanding significantly," Gomes said.

President Kenyatta described his meetings with Holness and Mottley as "very constructive engagements" focused on enhancing cooperation in diverse areas between the two regions, serving also as a catalyst for rebuilding the global African family, in the service of development and integration.

President Kenyatta said he was also inviting the Caribbean countries to establish diplomatic missions in Kenya and in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN-Habitat to facilitate and deepen frequent consultations, as well as follow-up on environmental and human settlement matters.

Dr. Gomes said that the December summit, themed: "A Transformed ACP: Committed to Multilateralism" is "very important for us, because as you know multilateral institutions, such as the WTO (World Trade Organization) are under threat by some of the major powers."

"We believe that without a global international rules-based order... the developing countries will lose out. For example, there is the long-standing case of Antigua and Barbuda, which won a favourable decision in the WTO dispute settlement, but which has not been able to receive the benefits of that decision and now the United States is in fact refusing to nominate another member to the dispute settlement in the WTO."

In 2005, the WTO ruled that Washington had violated international trade agreements by prohibiting operation of offshore Internet gambling sites. Antigua and Barbuda claimed that it lost US\$3.4 billion a year due to the US action, but the WTO awarded the island US\$21 million.

Dr. Gomes told the CMC that the upcoming Summit will focus on the theme of strengthening multilateralism "because our 79-member states... in the global south is looking to join forces, not only with Europe but with all like-minded organisations such as the G77.

“We will also look at other ways and means, for instance, we are now collaborating with AOSIS (Alliance of Small island States – a coalition of 44 small island and low-lying coastal developing states) to deal particularly with climate change and the implications of climate change.

“Overall the Summit is taking that broad theme and will have some three broad sub-themes, one of which will be climate change, oceans and small island developing states, which is a very important area for us in the Caribbean as for the Pacific.”

The ACP Secretary General said he was also encouraged by the decision of the Barbados government to name former prime minister Owen Arthur to head a commission in preparing for how Small Island Developing States (SIDS) will play a key role in next year’s United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) XV to be held in Bridgetown.

The Barbados-sponsored Global Commission on Small Island Developing States – Trade Development Options 2020, are expected to prepare papers on issues ranging from the high indebtedness of SIDS to global warming and the impact of artificial intelligence.

The ACP summit is also intended to lay the groundwork for finalising the Post-Cotonou Agreement as well as the revision of the 1975 Georgetown Agreement that established the ACP.

The Cotonou Agreement linking the ACP and the European Union was signed in June 2000 in Benin’s largest city. It entered into force in 2003 and was subsequently revised in 2005 and 2010.

It is regarded as the most comprehensive partnership agreement between developing countries and the EU. In 2010, ACP-EU cooperation was adapted to new challenges such as climate change, food security, regional integration, state fragility and aid effectiveness.

The fundamental principles of the Cotonou Agreement include equality of partners, global participation, dialogue and regionalisation.

Photo: Prime Minister Andrew Holness of Jamaica and President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya

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