

# Statement by the ACP Secretary General on the Occasion of ACP Day 2019

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On the occasion of the 44th Anniversary of the signing of the Georgetown Agreement, the document that established the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, we celebrate the unity and solidarity with all our member states and long-standing partners while at the same time looking forward to new partnerships.

Anniversaries are always significant mileposts; this anniversary has a special poignancy. It comes at the end of an era, when we find ourselves in the midst of reviewing many institutions that have shaped and marked us in the last 44 years. The most significant of these arrangements are the ongoing negotiations with our major partner, the European Union. This relationship has stood the test of time, from Lomé to Cotonou and next year, we will start the countdown on the next twenty years when we sign the new agreement in Samoa.

At the same time, we are also reviewing the Georgetown Agreement to take account of the current realities as we also gear ourselves to confront present and emerging challenges. At the same time we are ready to leverage on any new opportunities. When this historic document was signed over four decades ago, who would have thought that we would grow from 46 to 79 member countries, working in concert and representing hundreds of millions of people across our three regions.

Sir Shridath Ramphal, one of the ACP Group's founding fathers, in a recent speech recalled the trials and tribulations faced by the early ACP pioneers a half century ago to broker the first joint agreement. Recalling the sense of unity and common purpose that drove those first steps, he detailed the dovetailing of regional agreements which ensured that, to quote him, "there was no turning back to separateness", a time when "the ACP never negotiated otherwise than as a Group and spoke always with one voice. It was often an African voice, sometimes a Caribbean or a Pacific voice; but always a voice that spoke for the ACP."

This ACP voice speaks in a number of different languages. It speaks through a number of different channels and it speaks about a diverse range of issues that are of tremendous concern to our different regions. But what is important is that it is still one ACP voice that expresses the solidarity and shared vision of our members.

On the 44th Anniversary of this illustrious organization, speaking on behalf of the ACP Group of States, I use my voice to wish you all a happy ACP Day.

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