

## Statement by European Development Commissioner at the 28th ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Neven Mimica, 2 December 2014, Strasbourg

### Statement by European Development Commissioner at the 28th ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Neven Mimica, 2 December 2014, Strasbourg



Co-Chairs, Honourable Members,

First of all, let me say how pleased I am to be meeting you so early in my mandate. As a forum for discussing key development issues and connecting with people in Europe and our partner countries through their directly elected representatives, the Joint Parliamentary Assembly is both unique and vital.

The face of the European Commission may have changed. This Assembly has changed, too. But the challenges we all face remain the same. So, too, do the priorities I believe we need to pursue to address those challenges. I outlined them at my hearing as Commissioner-designate just over two months ago and, with your permission, I would like to reiterate them to you all today.

And for me, the common values running through them are solidarity and partnership. These, too, are values I mentioned at my hearing. They are values that have underpinned the relationship between the ACP States and the European Union. And as such they are values that are familiar to us all.

More than that, they lie at the very heart of EU development policy and our determined efforts to eradicate poverty.

Development policy is a people policy. And here I would like to underline that in line with this I plan to mainstream gender and basic equality – not to mention human rights and good governance – in all our development dialogues and actions.

Development policy also understands the need for partnership based on mutual interests. In our interdependent, interconnected world, threats to our partner countries' security and stability are threats to our own. Likewise, trading and business opportunities for them are opportunities for us, too.

The European Union takes its role as a global champion and constructive partner for poverty eradication and sustainable development very seriously. I want us to maintain that role under my leadership. It will be especially important in two strategic development processes that will shape our development policy for the next decade. I am, of course, referring to the post-2015 agenda and the negotiations on a post-Cotonou framework.

I will start with the post-2015 development agenda.

The Millennium Development Goals have helped drive unprecedented progress in development across the globe.

In ACP countries, for example, significant progress has been achieved – often in partnership with the EU – in fields such as primary education, water and sanitation, the protection of the environment and the eradication of poverty in all its forms.

These are remarkable achievements, but we must not be complacent. We still need to speed up our efforts to achieve the MDGs by the 2015 deadline. And 2015 will not be the end of the road. We need to build on the MDGs, and go much further.

The post-2015 development agenda presents the governments and peoples of the world with a tremendous and unique opportunity to agree a transformative agenda to eradicate poverty and give the world a sustainable future.

The UN General Assembly's Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals has set out a bold basis for the intergovernmental negotiations ahead. Forging a single, universal, comprehensive framework will not be easy. But we can – and must – succeed. And to succeed, we must all act together.

The ACP States bring together almost 80 countries from different regions of the world. But your diversity is a result of much more than geography. You are middle-income countries; you are least developed countries; you are small island developing states; you are landlocked countries. As such, you have a wealth of knowledge to bring to the table. And you have a key role to play in moving the post-2015 process forward.

But even more importantly, we can play a key role together, building on our special partnership. This is why the Joint ACP-EU Declaration on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which we adopted last June, is so valuable.

Together we have set out a vision for a framework addressing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner.

We have also stressed that the agenda should address good governance, equality and equity, as well as peaceful societies and freedom from violence.

And we have stressed that the framework should be underpinned by an inclusive, transformative and effective Global Partnership. This is a particularly important point, ahead of the Post-2015 Summit next September and, before that, the 3rd Financing for Development Conference in Addis next July.

We will need to mobilise and effectively use all means of implementation, in order to make the post-2015 agenda a reality.

For this universal agenda, each country will need to take responsibility and ownership for its own development, and contribute its fair share in the global efforts. The EU is of course committed to playing its role; this includes supporting those most in need.

The EU cannot of course act alone; another priority for me is our joint efforts with other donors, such as the United States, China and Brazil. I will strive to use my experience to explore the EU's relationships with them and with other key partners on the international stage.

The new framework must also include business, civil society, and people. Only by establishing a Global Partnership in which all players play their part will we succeed.

I truly believe that together, we can make a real difference. Our Joint Declaration is already an achievement.

But it is not an end itself: together, we can continue to build consensus and contribute to meaningful and ambitious outcomes in July and September next year.

And our drive for ambitious outcomes must not stop there.

It must extend beyond next year, as we look together at what we need to do to launch and negotiate a post-Cotonou framework. This brings me to the second priority I wanted to mention today.

The current Cotonou agreement is the most comprehensive North-South agreement in the world. It has been a success on which we need to build.

We should not be asking whether our cooperation and partnership is still important. Because it is – more so than ever. Instead, we should be asking how we can best equip our cooperation for the future, so that it delivers maximum benefits.

It's clear to us all, I think, that any framework worth its salt will have to reflect the outcome of the post-2015 process and changes in the world. I'm delighted that the ACP group is already reflecting on the way forward. The ACP Summit set up an Eminent Persons Group in December 2012.

Chaired by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria, this group comprises 12 ACP figures with a proven record of international leadership. They have been asked to reflect on the future of the ACP group as well as its relations with the EU. They will present their report to the next ACP Summit, the date of which is yet to be confirmed.

With the transition to a new Commission, preparations on the EU side to date have been more low key and essentially internal. However, we now have an Inter-Service Group up and running to accompany the process further.

A broad consultation and dialogue on post-Cotonou will be organised in the coming year. This will take the form of a two-phased process, starting with a targeted expert consultation, the outcome of which will feed into an open public consultation to underpin democratic legitimacy.

Naturally, the process will also take on board the ACP group's reflections, and in particular the outcome of the Eminent Persons process and the objectives the ACP members formulate for the group, taking account of their parallel membership in overlapping regional organisations. In this context we would be very glad to hear your views on the future relationship, as

Members of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

Whatever the final outcome, we can agree on the need for an enhanced approach that builds further on our strong partnership, incorporates overarching principles such as respect for fundamental values, seeks to ensure increased efficiency and synergies with other partnerships, and takes account of specific realities in countries and regions.

We also believe that in a world of partnership and ownership, development cooperation should be about more than donors and recipients.

It should be about mutual benefit. All of which opens up development cooperation in a range of other policy areas.

My third priority, therefore, is stronger Policy Coherence for Development.

Taking development aims into account in other policy areas – making them “pro-development” if you like – makes complete sense.

That’s why the EU supports efforts to promote PCD at all levels and in all countries. And it’s why we are enhancing PCD in our own policies – from agriculture and fisheries to trade and migration.

Moreover, PCD is already bearing fruit. The Commission has been working hard to improve the PCD tools we have. We also need to look beyond the EU, promoting a PCD-based approach and thus making an important contribution to the Global Partnership that will implement the post-2015 agenda.

And in our interdependent world of fast-paced change, greater coherence between our internal and external policies is a must as well. So is a coordinated approach to development goals between the European Union and the Member States. We need to speak with one voice.

I could not end my speech without mentioning the terrible tragedy that is the ongoing Ebola epidemic.

It goes without saying that the EU is deeply concerned about the epidemic in the affected countries and is working hard to help tackle it, under the able coordination of my colleague Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian aid and Crisis Management. We have put in place a response package of over 1 billion euros to support our partner countries in their efforts to contain the crisis.

Of course, how we respond to the outbreak now is vital – and you heard about this aspect yesterday when a humanitarian aid colleague spoke to you. But we understand also that our development cooperation with our partner countries in the region must go well beyond immediate measures and cover long-term planning.

Accordingly, the planned national indicative programme for Guinea under the 11th EDF reflects the fact that the impact of the Ebola will be felt for years. Health is a focal sector in Guinea and with ongoing health programmes we will be able to work with Guinea to rehabilitate and equip health structures at local level, upgrade sanitary conditions and help improve health service delivery.

Our development response in Liberia and Sierra Leone has sought to address the economic and social impact of the Ebola epidemic. To this end we frontloaded past budget support operations.

The aim was to cushion the impact on the economy and on society, and to ensure that health systems received sufficient funding. And in both countries we will address one of the most important side effects of Ebola: the closure of the education system.

All educational institutions in Liberia and Sierra Leone are closed. They will have to reopen. Education is a focal sector in both countries under the 11th EDF and I am personally looking forward to seeing how we can use it to get schools open again.

It is important to underline that we have not touched our financial allocation to the three countries to fund Ebola. When we resume our cooperation we will do so with the same allocation of funds as before.

Furthermore, a 28 million euro regional programme has just been launched to support healthcare systems in Ebola-affected countries as part of our Linking Rehabilitation, Relief and Development efforts. Funds for affected countries could become available in January.

And across the region we have contributed funds for mobile laboratories to test rapidly for the virus and for training for health workers practising in the affected countries.

Indeed, with neighbouring countries also at risk, the EU is supporting preparedness activities across the region. Our Delegations in the most at-risk partner countries are talking to the government, other donors and civil society about their preparedness plans. In countries where health is a focal sector – namely Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Mauritania – Delegations have started to identify specific elements of the national preparedness plans where the EU could provide extra support.

In terms of medium- and longer-term support, much of the 148 million euro that the Commission has already mobilised will take the form of budget support to boost governments’ capacities to deliver public services – in particular health care – and maintain macro-economic stability. Our policy dialogue with governments on these funds is vital to support service delivery in this crisis – in particular providing for salaries to be paid in the health sector.

On this basis, we will deliver half of the budget support funding by the end of 2014 and the remainder in 2015.

A further key part of our long-term strategy to defeat Ebola is research. To that end we are boosting EU research funding on Ebola with an additional 280 million euros from the Horizon 2020 programme to work with our industry partners on developing vaccines and medications to help save more lives around the world.

And I will be working with High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini, Commissioner Andriukaitis and EU Ebola Coordinator Commissioner Stylianides on preparations for a major high-level conference on the Ebola crisis and the post-Ebola challenges in early 2015.

Lastly, I very much support the AU's most recent calls for an increase in health personnel from all African countries to support the fight against the Ebola Virus in the affected countries. The African Union has a very important mission on the ground - 'ASEOWA' - to which the EU has provided some €5 million in funding, helping health workers from African countries to practise in Ebola affected countries.

This multi-faceted crisis requires a multi-dimensional response, particularly for the post-crisis recovery process. So what will the EU be doing in the coming months?

In Guinea, we are looking at the possibility of a State-building Contract, if budgetary needs are confirmed and eligibility criteria are met.

Liberia and Sierra Leone will come under increased economic pressure as their capacity to raise revenue weakens further. That's why here, too, we must pursue budget support operations as part of our development response. These operations will enable both countries to pay all staff, including health workers. New State-building Contracts are under preparation in both countries. We also need to use 11th EDF programming to support the recovery process in key focal sectors like education and agriculture. Getting children back to school, adults back into work and food security and harvests back on track is vital.

We will closely track developments and needs in the region and we are of course concerned about the recent cases in Mali.

So strengthening health systems and preparedness in the medium to long term across West Africa remains a key priority. The resilience sector under the 11th EDF Regional Indicative Programme for West Africa could be used to support more long-term regional preparedness.

We should also look at how EU contributions to global health initiatives such as the Global Fund and GAVI could help.

Co-Chairs, Honourable Members,

The Ebola crisis has brought home to us in graphic terms how disease and poverty can keep people in despair and deny them the chance that they should all have of fulfilling their potential. The European Union is determined – and I, personally am determined – to put an end to this and give everyone on the planet the same opportunity to build a decent life for themselves and their children.

It's a determination that I know you share. I look forward to working closely with you to make it a reality.

Thank you.

Tags: [Press releases](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.acp.int/content/statement-european-development-commissioner-28th-acp-eu-joint-parliamentary-assembly-mr-neve>

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.acp.int/category/story-type/press-releases>