

'Unity in diversity' emphasised at ACP Council of Ministers

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Brussels, 5 December 2017/ ACP: The Minister of Trade, Industry and the Informal Economy of Senegal H.E. Mr. Alioune Sarr set the stage for discussions at the 106th session of the ACP Council of Ministers, one of the most important decision-making organs of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States.

Presiding over the assembly on 5th – 6th December at the ACP House in Brussels, Mr. Sarr opened the event by rallying the 79 member states of the ACP Group – spanning Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands – to maintain a united voice on the international stage, in order to influence global decisions that can affect the lives of the one billion people living in ACP countries.

“What unites us, identifies us vis-à-vis others, is our common fragility, our structural vulnerability... whether it makes us helpless in the face of natural disasters, economic shocks or at the mercy of the adverse effects of certain human acts,” he told fellow ministers and senior officials in his native French.

He added that ACP must work together to reduce this vulnerability by raising awareness of the challenges faced in ACP regions, including the efforts made to tackle them. This awareness should then be integrated into decisions that affect the future of ACP populations, including the parameters of international development cooperation.

However, the solidarity of the ACP Group must also be marked by a recognition of the specific situations faced in each country or region. Specific issues can be dealt with most effectively at regional or national level, while some are better dealt with on the ACP-wide platform, including addressing global challenges such as climate change and international trade.

“It is out of the question to ignore our differences.... It is because we are diverse that unity is even more imperative,” Mr. Sarr stated.

The message remains important for the group of 79 countries which gathered in Brussels this week to take both policy and administrative decisions for the organisation. Key items on the agenda include financial and administrative matters of the Secretariat such as its budget for 2018, Post-Cotonou negotiations, commodities & trade issues, sustainable economic development, and development finance.

Ministers are also updated on recent work of the ACP Secretariat in achieving ACP goals, such as on the implementation of the Paris Agreement through the launch of the Intra-ACP GCCA+ (Global climate Change Alliance) Programme in July, actions towards a new programme to support the cultural industries to be launched in 2018, and the ACP Blue Growth Initiative which was endorsed by ACP Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture in September.

The Council also allows ACP members to inform each other of key political developments in their respective countries, and rally support where necessary on relevant international issues.

(Photo: President of Council H.E. Mr. Alioune Sarr (centre) with the ACP Secretary General Dr. Patrick Gomes (left) and Chairman of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors H.E. Mr. Amadou Diop, Ambassador of Senegal (right))

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