Welcome Remarks by Dr. Patrick Gomes ACP Group of States Secretary General on the Occasion of ACP Day 2019

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Your Excellencies,

Madam Gaitri ISSAR KUMAR, Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Belgium, the Netherlands and the European Union,

Senor Gonzalo Gutierrez REINEL, Ambassador of the Republic of Peru to the European Union,

Mr. Leonard Mizzi, Directorate for International Cooperation & Development of the European Commission,

Mr. Pranab KUMAR DAS, Chairman, Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs, India,

Dr. Kaire Mbuende, Ambassador of Namibia to the European Union and Chairman of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors,

Heads of ACP Missions, Regional & International Organisations,

Distinguished guests, Dear friends & colleagues,

I extend my deep appreciation to all distinguished guests, who have taken the time and made the effort to be here with us today.

You have graciously bestowed on us the honour and privilege of coming home to the ACP House to celebrate the milestone achievement of the 44th anniversary of the ACP Group of States.

The occasion rightly deserves that we recall the wisdom and vision of that first generation of 46 Leaders from Sub-Saharan Africa, islands & coastal countries of the Caribbean, in the Blue Pacific, who, on 6 June 1975, conceived and nurtured into birth this unique Institution, now comprising a membership of 79 developing countries.

Today as we celebrate our 44th birthday, it is indeed my honour and privilege to pay tribute and acknowledge past and present generations of women and men, our many friends, partners and allies who have provided dedicated service and commitment, in various ways, to make us justly proud to be the ACP family of nations.

In so doing, I am cognisant that the contributions and achievements to date, for the structural transformation and development of ACP economies and the advances in trade and economic cooperation to eradicate poverty, are commendable... but yet face many significant, although not insurmountable challenges.

Celebrating 44 years invites us to pause and reflect on how we can become better engaged to elevate to the next level – Towards the ACP We want – and thereby evolve into an effective global player – joining forces with countries North & South in the battle to end poverty in all its forms, everywhere as stated in SDG 1.

The historical legacy of the ACP-Europe Partnership is illustrated in the four decades from, the infancy of the 1975 Lomé Convention, until today's widely-renowned Cotonou Agreement, which is presently to be superseded by a new Agreement beyond 2020, whose over-arching framework is the United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals.

In that legacy of ACP-EU relations, new chapters are being crafted, fully conscious of many previous conversations around the Cotonou Agreement with contested views and hard-fought dialogues, as much as we did on weapons of mass destructions but all in pursuit of mutual and common interests.

Anchored in the respect for sovereignty, self-determination and the promotion of access to justice; for justice to be done and seen to be done, the relations of the ACP and Europe provide a justifiable cause for celebrating the diversity of human culture and the supreme dignity of the human person.

The 44 years of ACP-EU relations have evolved into a formidable platform for the achievement of multilateralism which is evident in many of our actions. Some examples are in joint actions on Climate Change, the defense of a rules-based Multilateral Trading System of the WTO, ensuring gender equality and confronting trafficking in human persons as the Oceans Seas, Lakes and Marine resources are protected, while offering the promise for development of a sustainable Blue Economy.
Looming large on a common ACP-EU agenda, these issues are global in their substance and consequences and demands the ACP to move to the centre stage of multilateralism and craft and shape new and deep relations across the Global South.

So it is today with exceeding JOY and great humility, the ACP’s new partnerships with the Republics of India and Peru will bring Asia and the Americas into closer bonds of friendship with the 79 ACP Group and strengthen South-South solidarity.

Here at the ACP in this hall, we were honoured to host Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, the Director-General of India’s Research and Information system for Developing Countries and the launch of his book: “The Logic of Sharing – India Approach to South-South Cooperation”.

Dear Madam Ambassador, India has been a friend of the ACP for many years and Your Predecessor, His Excellency Mangeev Puri was very instrumental in many exchanges on India’s Experience in South-South and Triangular Cooperation. We are indeed delighted that Your Excellency will today address our observance of ACP Day.

Our new and growing cooperation with the Republic of Peru embodies enormous potential for a dynamic and innovative partnership with a special focus on the fulfilment of SDG 14 – to conserve and sustainably use the Oceans, Seas and Marine resources for sustainable development.

Of great appeal to the ACP’s Blue Pacific States, in the large oceanic expanse of some 40 million square kilometers that fall under their stewardship, will be the knowledge and advanced marine technologies of Peru.

The ACP’s growing emphasis on the Blue Economy: Fishing, Aquaculture and Marine Resources development provides an opportunity for both Island and Coastal states to be engaged with Peru on investments and industrialisation for public and private sectors. This underlies the discussions now being pursued for a Cooperation Agreement between the ACP Group and the Republic of Peru.

My dear Mr. Ambassador: in welcoming you to ACP House, I am even more appreciative of the advance notice that your colleague Ambassador in Equatorial Guinea has advised the ACP Secretariat of intentions to explore a joint action programme with the newly-established ACP Information Centre on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The ACP Malabo Centre expects to be operational by October this year.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

My dear friends,

Our gathering marks another milestone in the history of inter-governmental unity and solidarity and the ACP is proud, with your support to have achieved tangible benefits for the millions of our peoples.

Beyond confines of space, geography, language and cultural customs, the love and respect for the dignity of each human being have indeed made the world better –we must strive together with the willingness and determination to continue in such service and dedication of humanity.

Welcome home!! Thank you very much.

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