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Brussels, 22 October 2012/ ACP: Three presidential visits to the Secretariat for the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group in Brussels last week highlighted the commitment of ACP member states to reviewing the outlook of the Group, and its role in promoting development amongst its members.

The theme The Future of the ACP Group in a Changing World: Challenges and Opportunities is set to guide talks at the upcoming 7th Summit for ACP Heads of State and Government, scheduled for 13-14 December in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

The President of Benin and President-In-Office of the African Union, H.E Yayi Boni told the ACP Committee of Ambassadors on Thursday that the Group was at a “crossroads”.

“This very important meeting will allow us Heads of ACP States to have very frank discussions, not only to give us political and strategic direction, but also some real commitment to the cohesion and improvement of our Group and the future of our organisation... As President-in-Office of the African I am working in collaboration with the ACP Secretary General on sensitizing our African colleagues on the significance of the event in Malabo to ensure their full participation,” he reported.

He added that in a world marked by globalisation, the world financial crisis, changing aid modalities and the appearance of new emerging actors, ACP states need to reposition themselves to better face new social and economic risks such as food security, peace and stability, and climate change. He saluted the creation last year of an ACP Ambassadorial Working Group on the Future Perspectives of the ACP Group.

The President of Senegal H.E Macky Sall also visited on Wednesday, where he told ACP Ambassadors that economic and social development was a central concern.

“The ACP Group carries the imprint of solidarity amongst three regions of the world which share historic and cultural identities, and above all, a common destiny... The foremost challenge that concerns us directly is that of development, given that our 79 members are developing countries, and that the group includes the highest number of Least Development Countries,” he observed.

Gabonese Head of State H.E Ali Bongo Ondimba called for solidarity amongst ACP members on his visit to the ACP House on Tuesday.

“Let me urge the necessary strengthening of the solidarity of the ACP Group, in order to better contend with the multifaceted challenges that we all currently face... I have no doubt that the 7th ACP Summit will, for us, be an opportunity to express our faith more strongly in the capacity of our Group to make the best of its partnership with the European Union, in defining more
timely and innovative orientations for the Group.”

The three Chiefs of State were in Brussels last week to attend the EU Development Days events. Each paid a special visit to the ACP House to update ACP representatives on developments in their countries. The leaders all underlined the importance of concluding Economic Partnership Agreements with Europe that were fair and development-friendly.

The 7th Summit in Malabo, Equatoriale Guinea (13-14 December 2012) will be preceded by the ACP Council of Ministers meeting and a meeting for ACP Ministers of Foreign Affairs (10-12 December). The last ACP Summit for Heads of State and Government was held in Accra, Ghana in 2008.

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