From the Secretary General

Friends show their love in times of trouble, not happiness. - Euripides

In August 2014, the world realised the staggering gravity of the ebola outbreak in West Africa when the World Health Organisation declared the epidemic a public health emergency of international concern. The countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea were the worst hit, with the number of new cases rising exponentially each day, and thousands – including children – suffering agonising deaths caused by the ebola virus disease (EVD). Meanwhile, governments, aid agencies and the international community struggled to contain the scourge.

For the ACP Group, the news had sent shockwaves through our membership, and had an acute impact on the work of the organisation. Major conferences were cancelled and important projects delayed, as fears of the spread of EVD put the feasibility of future collaborations into question. During this period of uncertainty and disruption, it was easy – even justifiable – for countries to withdraw, protect themselves, and wait quietly and apprehensively for the tide to turn, leaving those affected to find their own solutions.

But I am glad to say this was not the case. In fact, what did transpire demonstrated that it is during the bleakest hours that the solidarity of the ACP Group is most crucial, in terms of providing a network of support and assistance for its members. The way in which fellow ACP governments, businesses and independent bodies have reached out, financially and in kind, to support the fight against ebola has been exemplary, and must be commended.

Alongside the hefty pledges from leading world players such as the European Union and the United States, ACP countries have contributed millions of Euros as well as other forms of aid to the cause, despite their own economic challenges. Countries such as Botswana, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Gambia, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda, amongst others, have ardently answered the call for assistance.

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Alhaji Muhammad Mumuni
Secretary General
ACP Ambassadors call for international conference on ebola

Representatives of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries based in Brussels have made a joint call for an international conference to be organised by the ACP Group, the African Union and the European Union on the subject of ebola.

In a declaration adopted on 6 November 2014, the ACP Committee of Ambassadors also urged member states to lift any travel and trade restrictions imposed as a result of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, and called on airlines and shipping companies to maintain trade and transport links with the affected countries.

The declaration follows a high level symposium recently organised by the ACP Secretariat on the issue on 17 October. At the event, spokespersons from the worst hit countries – Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone – as well as others in the region, shared insights on how their countries were coping with the crisis, including expectations from the international community.

“Our urgent needs are, above all, to strengthen our health related capacities. We must also assist in reinforcing our hospitals... [as well as] training specialists, nurses, doctors – this is a huge gap that we face,” said the Chairman of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors, H.E Dr. Ousmane Sylla of Guinea, adding that the disbursement of aid funds also need to be expedited.

The event included statements and reports from pharmaceutical scientists and high officials from the World Health Organisation, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the World Bank, the European Commission, UNICEF, UNOPS, Brussels Airlines, the Red Cross Society, and the ACP-CBL.

ACP Ambassadors reiterated in their declaration the appeal to the 79 member states of the Group for contributions to the efforts to control the spread of the virus, while also commending the support already received in solidarity from many ACP countries, particularly Cuba’s medical brigades.

They appreciated the work done so far by the international community, while urging further support for the implementation of synchronised cross-border interventions, as well as strengthened epidemiological surveillance, rapid assessment, social mobilisation, and training of health personnel, among others.

“We are facing the most serious epidemic of ebola ever seen in history, with multiple locations - in the large cities, and in the ports. There are 22 million inhabitants in these regions, where the virus is being actively transmitted.”

Stephan Van Damm, WHO Brussels

“The negative impacts of isolating countries [affected by ebola] are disrupting trade flows... This should be avoided whenever possible. We need to have trade and we need to have people moving around to limit the level of economic impact.”

Hans-Peter Schadek, European Commission

“Ebola did not happen in a vacuum... One of the major issues we had and still have is no routine vaccination. Those countries have in the past year facing a lot of outbreaks – measles, meningitis, and constant repetitive outbreaks of cholera.”

Lila Peters, UNICEF

“We are asking our international partners to help us again to try and ease this food problem. We appreciate the medicine, but before we can take medication, we have to eat. We don’t have a sufficient food bank.”

Ambassador of Liberia to Brussels, H.E. Jarjar Kamara

“The 2 year regional financial impact could reach USD 32.6 billion by the end of 2015 [if not contained]. The short term impact for 2014 is about 2.1% of GDP in Guinea, 3.4% in Liberia and 3.3 % in Sierra Leone. This is a major setback for countries that have been growing after periods of civil war.”

Massimiliano Paolucci, World Bank

“We are facing the most serious epidemic of ebola ever seen in history, with multiple locations - in the large cities, and in the ports. There are 22 million inhabitants in these regions, where the virus is being actively transmitted.”

**“QUOTED”: ACP Symposium on the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa**

All-ACP Private Sector Development Strategy

The High-Level Symposium on Private Sector Development (PSD) in ACP countries, took place 10 - 11 November 2014 at the ACP House in Brussels, bringing together more than 150 stakeholders including reps from ACP Missions, regional economic communities, private sector, international organisations, and other development partners to lay the groundwork for an “All ACP” platform for PSD.

The event focused on how to build a new strategy that enables a resilient, value adding private sector as an engine of sustainable and inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction in ACP countries. The Informal Sector was identified as an important target group, in terms of supporting their growth and graduation into the formal economy.

The outcomes of the meeting, led by the Chair of the Sub-Committee on Private Sector Development, Ambassador Daniel Evina Mbe’e of Cameroon, will be submitted to the governing bodies for further action.

Role of grassroots women in development

A study on the role of women in advancing sustainable human development in African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries has highlighted the “outstanding contributions” of grassroots women on the ground, across a wide range of development sectors.

The EU-funded report, titled ACP Women, Actors in Development, documents 30 case studies illustrating the vital role of women’s grassroots organisations, as well as their potential to stimulate learning and innovation in development programmes.

“The diversity of good practices is remarkable, not only because of the wide scope of sectors covered but also because of the diversity of organisations working to advance gender equality and women’s rights,” states ACP Assistant Secretary General in charge of Political Affairs and Human Development, Mme. Michèle Dominique Raymond.

Key trends cited by authors Ms. Marguerite Appel and Dr. Patricia Munoz-Cabrera include the holistic, multidimensional approach grassroots women take to development; the need for policy coherence at the micro and macro levels; the need to link women’s leadership amongst different social sectors and generations; and the prevalence of social and cultural norms that discriminate against women in ACP regions.

ACP on COP 20

An issues paper detailing the common views of ACP countries on climate change leading up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP20) to be held in Lima, Peru in December 2014, stresses ACP’s full support for efforts towards a new legally binding, global climate agreement in 2015.

The paper was finalised in a key consultative meeting organised by the Intra-ACP component of the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) in Brussels in October 2014, before submission to the ACP Committee of Ambassadors. It backs the work of the Ad-hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) to develop a legal arrangement applicable to all Parties, as well as enhance mitigation ambition.

The paper also covers relevant issues on climate change adaptation, loss and damage, mitigation, financing, technology transfer, and REDD+ (Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), calling on developed countries to scale up new, predictable financing to ensure a successful 2015 agreement. Full text available on www.acp.int.

ACP, ITC sign MOU

ACP Secretary General H. E. Alhaji Muhammad Mumuni and the Executive Director of the International Trade Center (ITC), Ms Arancha Gonzalez, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to enhance the cooperation between the two organisations on 18 June 2014.

ITC’s role (a joint subsidiary organ of the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations based in Geneva) is to connect enterprises from developing and transition countries to global market and assist these countries in designing export oriented strategies and strengthen their Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). On the other hand, ACP Group’s mandate is to promote the sustainable development of its member states for their beneficial integration into the global economy.

The MOU provides a cooperation framework to strengthen private sector development, catalyse business advocacy, and enhance trade policy capacity building in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

ITC has been involved in the last few years in the implementation of capacity building activities in several ACP countries and the signing of this cooperation framework marks a new phase in their relationship.
All-ACP Development Cooperation examined

Results of an intensive study on the outlooks of a cohesive development cooperation policy for the ACP Group, were presented to at a joint meeting of the Sub-committee on Development Finance Cooperation and the Working Group on the Future Perspectives of the ACP Group on Friday 19 September.

The EU-funded study, authored by Ruth Kaeppler and Alexei Jones, explored the possibilities of the ACP Group forming cooperation partners in addition to the EU. It also considered additional contributions from ACP states and the international donor community, and innovative financing models such as levies on airline tickets, visas and tourism activities.

Two core niche areas were proposed as focal points for development cooperation - private sector development and sustainable resource management. The report added that the South-South cooperation should be systematically introduced in Intra-ACP programmes, and that the ACP Secretariat would need to be strengthened to handle any new responsibilities of an all-ACP development cooperation policy.

Declaration on Burkina Faso

The ACP Committee of Ambassadors issued a declaration following the political unrest in Burkina Faso in late October 2014, which reportedly saw more than 20 killed and more than 200 injured in protests against long-time President Blaise Compaoré.

The Committee extended its condolences to the bereaved families and expresses heartfelt compassion and solidarity with all the people of Burkina Faso. It commended the decision of President Compaoré to demit his post as President of the Republic, which helped prevent any further deterioration in the situation in the country. It urged all the parties involved to exercise restraint so as to avoid any worsening of the situation.

The Committee stated the support of the ACP Group for all measures to swiftly restore constitutional order, peace and security to Burkina Faso. It commended all efforts made to restore constitutional order, a peaceful transition, guaranteed security across the country, and the protection of people and property.

The Committee of Ambassadors congratulated all the international organisations involved, notably ECOWAS led by the Heads of State of Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal, for the successful mediation being carried out in that respect.

Former Commissioner Piebalgs honoured

ACP delegates paid tribute to the commitment and friendship of Mr. Andris Piebalgs, who completed his term as European Development Commissioner on October 2014. In a special session of the Committee of Ambassadors, Chairman Dr Ousmane Sylla of Guinea applauded Mr. Piebalgs’ role in promoting global energy security, driving the European Commission’s new development policy known as “Agenda for Change”, and facilitating joint ACP-EU positions on certain key international agendas, including a joint declaration on the post-2015 development agenda and joint declaration on the Rio+20 conference on sustainable development.

The 11th cycle of the European Development Fund for ACP countries, worth EUR 31.5 billion for the period 2014-2020, was agreed during his tenure. A former Minister of Latvia, Mr Piebalgs served as European Commissioner for Development since 2010. In this capacity, he was the European Commission’s focal point for ACP-EU development cooperation.

New approach to commodities

A milestone step for the ACP commodities sector took place 18 November 2014, with the ultimate aim of creating a sustainable integrated programme for commodities in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

The Forum on the New Approach to the ACP Commodities Sector marked the opportunity to review the preliminary results of a key feasibility study funded by UNCTAD for a highly targeted and pro-active multi-sectoral approach to ACP commodities as a whole. Discussions will help to define an “All-ACP” roadmap for a sustainable comprehensive programme for the ACP commodities sector, to be financed under the European Development Fund.

Commodities account for a major part of ACP exports. Cotton, bananas, sugar, tobacco and rum are some examples of commodities that have been of particular concern in ACP trade with the EU. The new approach will focus on vertical and horizontal diversification, the functioning of supply chains, trade practices and market innovation, management of economic resources, and effective commodity-related policies.
SPECIAL INTERVIEW

Chair of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors
H.E Dr. Ousmane Sylla

Former Mines Minister of Guinea and current Ambassador to the European Union H.E Dr. Ousmane Sylla presides over the Committee of Ambassadors of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group for the period 1 August 2014 - 31 January 2015. In an interview with ACP Press, he discusses his work programme, the post-2015 development agenda, and the economic transformation of ACP countries.

ACP Press: As the new Chair of the Committee of Ambassadors, you are steering the organisation’s most active governing organ. What are the focus areas for Guinea’s six months at the presidency?

H.E Dr Ousmane Sylla: The first main challenge we face is making a bigger impression as an organisation. At the moment, ACP is not very well-known, and one of the first priorities is to be more offensive in terms of communication. We have 80 countries in our Group (South Sudan being an observer member) so it’s a very big group, but we must communicate more with our people, internationally. I think leading up to 2020 we must be much more offensive in this area.

Secondly, we need a restructured Secretariat. The Secretariat at the moment is doing a good job, working very hard with very little financial resources. My call as Chair of the Committee is that all member countries pay their contributions to the Group for 2014. We need these resources - in order to achieve anything we need to be financially independent. I would like to expressly thank Equatorial Guinea and Angola, for voluntarily committing additional funds to the ACP Group for its operations... The role of the Secretary General should also be reinforced as the manager of the Secretariat but also as the political speaker for the Group, similar to his counterparts in other international organisations.

Thirdly, there will be a stronger focus on intra-ACP cooperation, South-South and North-South cooperation, and also triangular cooperation. At intra-ACP level, we need to make a diagnostic about the possibilities or opportunities found in one country and see how they work in another. For instance, take countries like Cabo Verde, Mauritius and Botswana, which are doing well financially. Before looking towards Europe or India or China for inspiration, why not ask our own ACP members: what are you doing to be so successful? How are you executing your reforms? What can we learn from you in terms of small enterprise development, gender mainstreaming, job creation, or protection of the environment? Why not explore how Guyana, for instance, can send technical assistance to African countries? Intra-ACP cooperation and exchange of experience amongst ACP countries is crucial.

Fourthly, we are looking at our relationship with the European Union. We need our traditional partners even after 2020 - that’s certain. But 40 years together is a long time and I feel the EU wants to see the ACP Group a little more independent! We need to diversify sources of financial support and not rely only on the European Development Fund (EDF). This is one of the key focuses for the ACP Eminent Persons Group (which has been consulting all member regions about the orientation of the organisation after the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement concludes in 2020) and the ambassadorial Working Group on Future Perspectives of the ACP. We must try to enhance our relations with the emerging countries known as BRICS. We must be more aggressive, more offensive to introduce our group to USA, Japan, Canada, and the Arabic countries. The idea is to intensify the relations we have now, but also diversify.

ACP Press: Speaking of the future, you are chair of the ACP Ambassadorial Working Group on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. What are the key concerns of the ACP Group as far as that is concerned?

OS: The Working Group worked very hard on elaborating an ACP Declaration on the post-2015 development framework. We integrated issues on development, transforming our economies, industrialisation of our countries, as well as social aspects such as education and training, health, and protection of the environment. We also underlined the need for inclusive development – that is, not only developing the capitals, but the rural areas as well.

We were successful in coming up with an ACP-EU joint declaration on the post-2015 development agenda which was adopted in June. It was not easy! We had many many meetings. The EU side was insisting on highlighting good governance, democracy and human rights, and not too much on industrialization, development, and transforming economies. We, as the ACP, insisted on the development aspect. There was even an issue with the title, where we had to push for the inclusion of the word “development”, as in “Post-2015 Development Agenda”.

At the end of the day we reached a good compromise – each side had to make concessions. It was the first time for two large groups (the ACP and EU) to work together in parallel on a joint post-2015 declaration. Normally you have an African Union posi-
tion, or a declaration coming from the Caribbean or Pacific. But this is the first common paper from a bloc of 80 countries from the South plus 28 European countries, so it was quite historical. Now the hope is to have a common position for both organisations at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015.

ACPP: You spoke about the “economic transformation” of ACP countries – especially since the vast majority of the member states are still developing, with 40 amongst the Least Developed in the world. Can you elaborate further, especially on the role of the ACP Group in this process?

OS: For 50 years, ACP countries have been exporters of raw material and commodities to the industries of Europe. This must stop. We have to make transformations in our own countries to create industries. For example, Guinea, since independence in 1958, has been exporting bauxite - the raw material used to make aluminum and metal. We are now in negotiations with companies in the world to tell them that we cannot continue to export bauxite. Instead, we need technology, energy, and infrastructure to transform bauxite in our own country and to bring some added value. This is the same for many other ACP countries.

However the focus is not only on industrialisation but also on the need for equity, justice and inclusivity. We must train our people. If you look at the role women are playing, they need to be encouraged and get educated, build their capacity so that they can manage small enterprises and medium enterprises. We need to promote youth. Why are youth dying in Lampedussa? They are risking their lives because they are jobless! We must create jobs in our countries, then they will stay and develop our countries instead of emigrating. Take the example of Angola and Portugal. Angola was a port colony for many years. We used to see young Angolans go to Lisbon to get jobs. But now there are more and more Portuguese migrating to Angola because Angola has oil, diamonds, and it’s developing its economy. This is what we need – European immigrants to our countries.

ACPP: Post-2015 framework is a follow up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s). Obviously they were not all achieved in the targeted time frame. Why?

OS: The MDG’s fell short in ACP countries because of bad governance. We have to be very frank with ourselves. The truth is that in the past 20 years, many countries have not had a very good record in terms of governance. Corruption is one of our weaknesses, dictatorships, lack of democracy, inequality, the destruction of the environment etc. What Africa needs is good leaders and elite who respect our constitutions. They need to know that there is no chance to develop if Africa stays the same. But there are more and more cases of leaders accepting defeat and letting others take the helm, rather than trying to hold power forever. I do see positive change coming. Secondly, we didn’t have the political will to help us transform our economies. They want to keep us as raw material suppliers. But if we can change these things, we can achieve many many post MDGs.

At the same time, we must be positive. There has been a tendency amongst some of our partners to concentrate only on “fighting extreme poverty”. Personally I don’t like this phrasing. Instead of speaking about poverty, disease, and wars, why can’t we be more positive to say “creating wealth”. This is more optimistic, and I am very optimistic for the future of the ACP Group.

The Bureau

The Bureau of the Committee of Ambassadors is comprised of a representative of each of the six ACP regions, who are responsible for coordination and reviewing issues before they are addressed at the level of the Committee of Ambassadors. For the period 1 August - 31 January 2015, the members are H.E Mr. Johnson Weru of Kenya (East Africa), H.E Dr. Alfredo Lopez Cabral of Guinea Bissau (West Africa), H.E Mrs. Grace Kabwe of Zambia (Southern Africa), H.E Mr. Ousmane Matar Breme of Chad (Central Africa), H.E Dr. Dylan Vernon of Belize (Caribbean) and H.E Mr. Joshua Kaline of Papua New Guinea (Pacific). The Bureau also includes members of the Troika, made up of the presiding Chair of the Committee (H.E Dr. Ousmane Sylla of Guinea), along with the outgoing (H.E Dr. Diodorus Kamala of Tanzania) and incoming chair (H.E Sir Roy Mickey Joy of Vanuatu, who will begin his term on 1 February 2015).

Appointments last for a term of six-months before the next representatives are selected on the basis of regional rotation.

The Committee of Ambassadors assists the Council of Ministers in the performance of its functions. Based in Brussels, it comprises of one representative from each of the ACP Group’s 79 member countries. The Committee of Ambassadors is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement, with a view to achieving its objectives.
ACP-EU RELATIONS

ACP-EU partnership priority for new Development Commissioner

The new European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Mr Neven Mimica announced his plans to hold a dialogue process on the future framework for EU relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries in 2015.

During his confirmation hearing as commissioner designate in the European Parliament on September 29, 2014, Mr Mimica outlined three priorities for his portfolio.

Mr Mimica said his main concern is forging an "ambitious post-2015 development framework" and boosting Europe’s leadership role in “defining a truly transformative agenda”. Key issues include development financing and means for implementation of development programmes. He called for innovative financial tools, the inclusion of businesses and civil society in the strategy, and reenergised commitment from EU members to meet the target of 0.7% of GNI dedicated to development assistance.

The EU continues to be a global leader in international development, contributing more than half of the world’s development aid. This includes EUR 31.5 billion for ACP countries for the period 2014-2020.

“My second priority would be to launch and negotiate a post-Cotonou framework and to strengthen the Union’s strategic partnership with Africa,” he continued, referring to the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou in 2000, which defines modes of cooperation between Europe and the member states of the ACP Group.

“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. The question is not whether the ACP countries are still important to us – they are, more than ever. The question is how to best design our cooperation in the future.”

With the current agreement coming to a close in 2020, he added that the new framework will have to adapt to “the new realities” and reflect the outcome of the post-2015 process.

“The ACP Group is already reflecting on the way forward. Europe has to do the same. We need an enhanced approach that builds on strong partnerships with the ACP countries, incorporates overarching principles, such as respect of all fundamental values, and takes account of specific realities in countries and regions.

“I will launch a broad consultation and dialogue process in the coming year,” Mr Mimica told the hearing.

The third priority is striving for greater policy coherence between external and internal European policies. Development policy must work “seamlessly” together with security, trade, migration, humanitarian aid and foreign policies.

Mr Mimica said the post-2015 strategy and post-Cotonou framework will shape development policy for the next decade.

ACP, EU stand together on post-2015 agenda

Seventy nine member states of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group and 28 members of the European Union declared their joint support for a strong overarching global framework that seeks to achieve poverty eradication and sustainable development, while also addressing the challenges and unique vulnerabilities of ACP countries.

The declaration was endorsed at the 39th session of the ACP-EU Council of Ministers on 19-20 June in Nairobi, Kenya. Climate change was underlined as a key threat to vulnerable ACP states, posing immediate and long term risks to development efforts. There was a call to integrate the cross-cutting issue of climate change into the post-2015 global development framework.

The declaration also stressed the need to address specific issues faced by ACP Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Countries and post-conflict territories. It also recognised challenges of Middle Income Countries.

In addition, the declaration demanded more focus on basic living standards, including measures such as universal healthcare, as well as inclusive and sustainable economic growth, with the framework acting as a key driver to reduce inequalities, create decent jobs, improve the sustainability of consumption and production patterns and promote structural economic transformation.

ACP and EU member states called on all countries and the international community at large to play their part in mobilising financing for the post-2015 development agenda, both through public resources as well as private financial and investment flows. It called on the developed countries that have not done so, to fulfill their pledge to commit 0.7% of Gross National Income as Official Development Assistance.

The joint statement affirmed that while the development agenda should be a single universal framework, national ownership and political support in all countries were vital for its success, taking into account different national capacities and levels of development.
ACP FUTURE

Roadmap to 2020 and beyond

The final report of the Ambassadorial Working Group on Future Perspectives will be submitted to the ACP Council of Ministers in December 2014, marking the culmination of comprehensive, multi-stakeholder reflections taking place since 2011, on the critical process of transformation currently being pursued by the ACP Group.

The Working Group, chaired by the Ambassador of Guyana H.E Dr. Patrick I. Gomes was created to re-examine the work of the ACP Group as well as its relations with the European Union, in order to boost its effectiveness as an international organisation, especially for its member populations on the ground.

With the current partnership agreement with Europe ending in 2020, the follow up is yet unclear. The ongoing global discussions on the post-2015 development agenda are likely to influence any future forms of ACP-EU cooperation.

“[The report] is an attempt to reposition and transform the ACP Group of States into a dynamic and results-oriented inter-governmental organisation fully conversant with global challenges of an unsettled multi-polar 21st century,” said Ambassador Gomes.

Reforms

The report recommends some fundamental reforms, including remodeling the institution as a “hub and facilitator for South-South and Triangular Cooperation”. Proposals include amending the Georgetown Agreement in order to reinforce relations with regional organisations and economic communities in the ACP, as well as providing platforms for collaboration with non-state actors and private sector organisations.

Moreover, it puts forward a better-defined set of strategic areas of focus for the Group’s work, namely: Trade, enterprise development and integration; Rule of Law & Good Governance; Global Justice and Human Security; and Financing for Development.

The ACP Secretariat would need to be reshaped to allow better coordination, enhanced focus on development policy analysis, programming and resource mobilisation, as well as strategic communications.

In terms of financing the institution, the first priority is to encourage member states to meet their commitments, in addition to a range of recommended income streams, such as setting up Endowment/Trust Funds, project management services, and resource mobilisation for donor assistance from EU and other traditional or “emerging” donors.

The report includes a roadmap and action plan for implementation. The findings will feed into the work of the ACP Eminent Persons Group, an external high level panel of distinguished experts and political figures which will also make recommendations to ACP Heads of State and Government.

“The Working Group has articulated a clear and revitalised outlook for the ACP Group to be ‘fit for purpose’ in the pursuit of poverty eradication, sustainable development, and equitable integration of member states into the world economy,” said Ambassador Gomes.

The Working Group on Future Perspectives is made up of members from all six ACP regions (including the Ambassadors from Barbados, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Fiji and the Seychelles, with Grenada, Senegal, Malawi, Congo, Vanuatu and Sudan as alternate members), as well as members of the ACP staff association.

From the vault

Signing of the first Lomé Convention in Togo.

From left to right: Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and President in office of the Council of the European Community Mr. Garret FitzGerald, Prime Minister of Mauritius Hon. Seewosagur Ramgoslam, and the President of Togo H.E Gnassingbé Eyadéma.

The Lomé I Convention was a trade and aid agreement between the European Community (EC), then made up of 9 members, and 46 African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries, first signed in February 1975 in Lomé, Togo. It was followed by a series of four such conventions leading up to the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement of 2000.

Regional Observatory for Biodiversity and Protected Areas

The Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Programme (BIOPAMA), has launched a regional Observatory for biodiversity and protected areas in Central Africa on 14 October 2014, with OFAC (Observatory for Central African Forests) as the host organisation, based in Yaounde, Cameroon.

The BIOPAMA initiative under the ACP-EU partnership aims to provide a better understanding of the trends and threats to protected areas in Central Africa in order to support better decision-making to improve the management of protected areas. It is jointly implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC), in collaboration with the Observatory for Central African Forests (OFAC).

€20 million has been allocated for this key initiative under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF). The Regional Observatory will contribute to the collation and sharing of relevant data and information on protected areas in Central Africa and provide support on decision-making processes to governments across the region.

The 14th meeting of the CBFP (Congo Basin Forest Partnership) in Brazzaville on 8-9 October, provided the opportunity to launch the Observatory. The Observatory is housed within OFAC and implemented in close relationship with RAPAC (the Central African Network of Protected Areas), and will work with a wide range of government, civil society, local and international conservation organizations, and the private sector.

The Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) programme aims to address threats to biodiversity in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, while reducing poverty in communities in and around protected areas. It is financially supported through the Intra-ACP envelope of the EDF.

For more information, visit www.biopama.org

EU, ACP, FAO step up action against desertification

The European Union (EU) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in collaboration with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) launched in October 2014 a €41 million, 4.5-year programme, to bolster sustainable land management and restore drylands and degraded lands in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

The programme, named Action Against Desertification (AAD), is crucial in fighting hunger and poverty, fostering stability and building resilience to climate change in some of the world’s most vulnerable areas.

In Africa, the programme’s efforts build on the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative, which has become Africa’s flagship initiative to combat the effects of climate change and desertification.

AAD supports local communities, government and civil society in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal in the sustainable management and restoration of their dryland forests and rangelands and will support agro-forestry. It will also promote income-generation activities and the creation of employment opportunities in rural areas.

In the Caribbean and Pacific, AAD will concentrate on Haiti and Fiji, building on lessons learned from Africa to help local communities adopt improved sustainable land- and forest-management practices, while enhancing capacities of governmental and non-governmental organisations to support these efforts.

Action Against Desertification is implemented by FAO in partnership with the African Union Commission, the governments of the concerned countries, the ACP Secretariat, the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew and the Walloon Region of Belgium, and others.
Microfinance & renewable energy

A pilot model of green energy finance has the potential to make a difference in the lives of many ACP families, through big savings on energy costs. Financed under the ACP-EU Microfinance programme, which aims to strengthen the microfinance sector in ACP countries, the “New Financial Products for Sustainable Development” pilot initiative recently wrapped up in July 2014, with hopes to implement the model on a larger scale.

The New Financial Products for Sustainable Development Action is implemented by MICROFINANZA1 and Partners AFRAC (Kenya’s MFI network) and AFRACA (African Rural and Agricultural Credit Association). Between July 2012 and July 2014, it worked to strengthen the distribution of renewable energy technologies through Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Ghana.

To start, existing partnerships between MFIs and renewable energy Technical Providers (TPs) were assessed. It appeared that the sales of renewable energy products were well below expectations, because of the high operational costs involved in the distribution and of the lack of incentives for loan officers.

Also, it was found that there were ways for improvement in the relationship between the MFIs and the TPs.

After several months working with 12 MFIs / TPs “links”, MICROFINANZA came to the following conclusion: by using renewable energy products, households save on energy costs. The purchase of a renewable energy device (solar lantern, photovoltaic home system, charcoal cook stove, biodigester, etc.) is therefore not financed by a standard loan, but by a Reduction Expense Energy Product (REEP). The savings on the household’s monthly energy expenses are used to reimburse the loan and cover the green product distribution costs.

This approach was embedded into a business-model toolkit called Reduction Energy Expense Product Delivery Model (REEP-DEMO), a series of 8 Excel-based tools to guide MFIs and TPs in working together to set-up a sustainable financing and delivery model. REEP-DEMO was pilot-tested on 12 “links” across the 4 countries of implementation of the Action. The “links”, confirmed that the toolkit allowed them to better define their partnerships, even if translating this into increased energy product sales requires time.

The Action co-funded by ACP/EU MICROFINANCE came to an end in July 2014. Although there is still a lot to be done, the Programme believes in the demonstration effect of this innovative pilot project. The business model can now be implemented on a larger scale, with bigger MFIs and TPs, attract seed capital to fund the initial distribution and bring on-board Social Investors to scale-up the scheme.

- Adapted from the ACP-EU Microfinance Newsletter.
For more information visit www.acpeumicrofinance.org

10th anniversary for EU-Africa partnership on cotton

It has been 10 years since the creation of the EU-Africa Partnership on cotton, funded under the Intra-ACP envelope of the European Development Fund. The European Union and its member states have provided an estimated €400 million to develop the African cotton sector from 2004 to 2014, equivalent to almost 70% of total assistance from major donors towards the sector.

Development gains made under the EU-Africa Partnership on Cotton were marked at the 19th meeting of the COS-cotton (Comité d’Orientation et de Suivi sur le coton - Steering and Follow up Committee on Cotton) at ACP House in Brussels in July. The programme aims at achieving the sustainable improvement in competitiveness, added value and viability of the African cotton value chains, so as to maximise the impact on the income of producers. EU assistance is available to 28 cotton producing ACP countries through grants, short term expertise, as well as projects implemented by the FAO (training, capacity-building) and ITC (strategic planning for resource mobilisation, policy advocacy and competitive intelligence).

The Brussels meeting, chaired by the Ambassador of Benin in Brussels H.E Mr. Charles Todjinou, discussed cotton and trade negotiations after the most recent WTO ministerial conference in Bali. Participants also heard progress reports on support programmes under the EU-Africa Partnership on Cotton, as well as the state of play for regional cotton strategies, and the main activities of African cotton trade organisations.

For more information, visit www.coton-acp.org
REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

Raising Resilience in SIDS - A Caribbean Perspective

Island countries have long capitalised on their unique geography, tropical climate, remote locations and vibrant cultures to attract tourists from across the globe looking for a quick “get away”.

But beyond the sand and sun, life for local communities is complicated by a unique set of challenges, due precisely to islands’ small size and, in the case of the Pacific, relative isolation.

“In 2004 in Grenada, Hurricane Ivan wiped out two years’ worth of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 20 hours,” points out Dr. Len Ishmael, Ambassador of the Eastern Caribbean States to the European Union and a prominent voice in Brussels on issues relating to Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Increased risk of floods, droughts, extreme weather events, and sea level rise are just some of the effects that come with climate change, the most serious long-term threat to the very survival of SIDS.

Moreover, a narrow range of resources, high dependency on international trade, serious exposure to external shocks, and high transport and communication costs, set further hurdles for sustainable development for island countries, which make up almost half the membership of the ACP Group of States.

“When the Millennium Development Goals were first touted in 2000, the Caribbean generally had to work to localise and make the MDG’s relevant to us. Some of the variables were not relevant to us, such as the focus on extreme poverty. We had to decide on whether these benchmarks were at the ceiling or floor. In many cases we had to raise the benchmarks,” Dr. Ishmael explains.

Reflecting on the 3rd International Conference on Small Island States recently held in September in Samoa – which itself suffered a devastating tsunami in 2009 that killed more than 140 people and deepened the sting of the global financial crisis on the islands – Dr. Ishmael says the biggest setbacks for her region are gaining access to finance to support development and the inherent lack of economic resilience.

In search of resilience

The paradox faced by most Caribbean economies is that they are classified by international bodies as “upper middle income” or higher, based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP). (Haiti is the only “low income” country and Guyana the only “lower middle income”).

The growth of GDP was largely thanks to sound investments in socio-economic structures and high yielding agricultural programmes, which were especially lucrative in the 1970’s and 80’s under special and differential access into European markets.

Unfortunately, the figures do not automatically translate to economic resilience.

Dr Ishmael cites the case of St Kitts and Nevis, which has one of the highest GDP per capita amongst the SIDS, but was at one point one of the most indebted countries in the world.

The global financial crisis since 2008 also caused a severe economic recession across the Caribbean region, to the point where social infrastructural gains from the 1970’s and 80’s are under threat of reversal.

Meanwhile, to take just one example on the effects of climate change, some countries are losing their famed beaches to sea level rise – along with the tourism revenue they generate.

Despite these conditions, SIDS continue to be “graduated” up the economic ladder based largely on GDP – a trend Dr. Ishmael calls “sobering and scary”.

“The issue of graduation based only on GDP flies in the face of the reality of SIDS vulnerability and lack of economic resilience. GDP could be based on a single high net worth sector, which, if compromised, leaves the whole country at risk,” she stresses.

Caribbean states, through the ACP Group, have thus strongly resisted the European Union’s approach to “differentiation”, whereby aid is directed mainly to “the poorest of the poor” – that is, the Least Developed Countries. For many SIDS that may appear better off in GDP terms, this could mean less access to EU development finance, and less support for their long term sustainable development, including the capacity to bounce back after economic crises.

Homegrown models

However, island states continue to come up with innovative solutions to fortify their economies.

For instance, nine countries in the Eastern Caribbean jointly boast a “homegrown model” of regional integration, featuring a common currency, common Supreme Court, a common authority for regional aviation and another for telecommunication, a regional parliamentary assembly, and a permanent Secretariat.

The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), as it is known, is dedicated to economic harmonisation, good governance between countries and shared responsibility and liability in the event of natural disasters.

“As the OECS, we are able to provide services in common in certain areas that we would not be able to do separately as individual countries,” says Dr Ishmael, who served as OECS Director General for 10 years from 2003 to 2013.

She adds that the most important thing for SIDS is to move forward as a unified and distinct grouping. Their increasing unity
is perhaps a key point of progress since SIDS were recognised as a distinct group in 1992. This was followed by the finalisation of the Barbados Programme of Action of 1994, the Mauritius Strategy in 2004, and most recently, the Samoan Pathway of 2014, which identifies main focus areas for the sustainable development of SIDS.

“It is vital that the issues which face SIDS find resonance within the different international summits and different fora if progress is to be made on the SIDS agenda,” concludes Dr. Ishmael.

ACP Ministers declaration on Small Island States

Ministers from the ACP member states urged a recommitment of the international community to addressing the vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) at its 99th Council meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in June.

The ACP Council of Ministers issued a declaration in Nairobi, Kenya, 17-18 June, recognising the 37 ACP member states classified as SIDS. Ministers argued that SIDS were a “special case for sustainable development,” noting the persistent and unique vulnerabilities such as small size, narrow resource and export base, high levels of poverty and indebtedness, remoteness, increased exposure to global environmental challenges and external shocks, and problematic access to energy.

The declaration noted that higher frequency and intensity of natural disasters due to climate change also require means and tools for a preventive approach towards natural disasters at the international level.

ACP Ministers called on developed nations to honour their pledge to commit 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) as development aid. They also urged that development financing be maintained for those SIDS that have graduated from Middle Income to Upper Middle Income status (based on GDP), but still face unique vulnerabilities that could threaten this progress.

The green economy and blue economy – ocean and marine resources – were highlighted as growth engines for sustainable development of SIDS.
Cultural industries at the heart of sustainable development

By Michele Dominique Raymond

No future without culture: this assertion is not just merely part of the promotional efforts of the ACP-EU Program’s support for the cultural sectors (ACP Cultures+). Rather than a cry, it is a profession of faith.

It is a belief built upon the philosophy, vision and fundamental essence underlying its goal of reducing poverty by structuring and consolidating the creative industries of the ACP Group’s member States. In addition to supporting the creation and production of cultural goods and services and improving access to the appropriate markets, which requires an increase in the expertise of the sector’s players, operators and entrepreneurs, the focus is on the positive impact and the remarkable influence that the sector can have in terms of its contribution to sustainable development.

Since 2000, on the premise that culture and the creative industries bring proven potential for economic diversification, the ACP Group has been financing art-related activities in Sub-Saharan Africa and the regions of the Caribbean and the Pacific. Therefore, creative industries should be placed at the center of all initiatives aimed at creating jobs, accelerating economic growth and increasing trade.

This example demonstrates the need to maintain and above all to substantially expand financial support for creators so that they may benefit from the fact that creative goods and services are the most dynamic of all global trade sectors. As attested to UNCTAD, its expansion is the fastest in the global economy with a growth rate of 13.9% in Africa.

The rise of Africa is undeniable; all the forecasts of renowned economists support this statement. Nevertheless the value chain of the creative industries must not be marginalized or neglected. If professionals in the cultural industries in Africa innovate, shake things up and channel all their energy and enthusiasm into bringing their arts to life, it is essential to give continued momentum to the production and transmission of culture while establishing the regulations necessary for safeguarding intellectual property rights. In this way, culture can continue to fulfil its noble functions of generating wealth, employment, diversity, value, meaning and identity.

In memory of the late Ambassador of Fiji, H.E Peceli Vocea

The ACP diplomatic corps in Brussels mourned the tragic loss of one of its key members, the Ambassador of Fiji to the European Union and the Kingdom of Belgium, H.E Peceli Vocea who passed away on 26 June at the age of 46.

The late Ambassador of Fiji (pictured) was the Chair-in-office of the Subcommittee on Political, Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Affairs of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors. He represented the Pacific region on the Sub-Committee on Financing and Development, and was an active member of the ACP’s Sugar Committee, the Ambassadorial Working Group on Future Perspectives of the ACP Group, as well as the Working Group on the 8th ACP Summit for Heads of State and Government.

He also served as Chair of the Trade and Commodities Subcommittee for the year 2012, and in this capacity oversaw the preparations for the ACP and Joint ACP-EU Ministerial Trade meetings, which were presided over by Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, then Attorney General and Minister for Industry and Trade of Fiji.

Ambassador Vocea is remembered as a hardworking, committed and esteemed member of the ACP family in Brussels, and a strong advocate for issues affecting the Pacific region and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

He had a remarkable career in Fiji’s civil service spanning 23 years, which included a two year assignment with the World Bank in Washington, appointments as Permanent Secretary for Finance and National Planning then as Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Civil Aviation, as well as as a Director on the boards of the Reserve Bank of Fiji, Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority, and Fiji Islands Trade and Investment.

The late Ambassador is survived by his wife Vasiti, and five children.

The late Ambassador

Peceli Vocea

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PEOPLE

Welcomes and farewells

The ACP Committee of Ambassadors welcomed several recently appointed peers since the second quarter of 2014.

In addition to welcoming new officials, the Committee of Ambassadors bid farewell to several prominent peers who came to the end of their tours in Brussels in previous months.

H.E Félix-Kodjo Sagbo bid adieu as Ambassador of Togo in June 2015, along with another prominent diplomat, H.E Dr. Brave Ndiasale, who was Ambassador for Malawi. Ambassador Sagbo was coordinator of the group of Ambassadors from the West African region in 2008 and 2011 and was serving as the Dean of the ACP Diplomatic Corps when he took leave. Ambassador Ndiasale was chair of the Sub-Committee on Investment and Private Sector as well as the Sub-Committee on Development Finance Cooperation.

The Ambassador of Cabo Verde H.E Ms. Maria de Jesus Veiga Miranda Mascarenhas (below) and Ambassador of Cuba H.E Ms. Mirtha Maria Hormilla Castro (below left, receiving gift from the Chair) were honoured in a farewell ceremony by their fellow envoys, after having served many years in Brussels. Both were commended for their commitment to strengthening ties with the ACP Group as well as promoting the ACP-EU Partnership.

The ACP Secretariat welcomed new Assistant Secretary General, in charge of Administration, Finance and Human Resources Mrs. Ivy Chaza.
Ambassadors’ Spouses donate to communities in need

The Association of ACP Ambassadors’ Spouses presented donations to beneficiaries in Rwanda and Burkina Faso, for total amount of €11,000, raised mainly through the annual charity gala dinner organised by the association earlier this year at the Sheraton Hotel.

“The funds raised will make a difference in providing support for vulnerable women in the rural areas of Burkina Faso, where the programme provides support to abused women, while initiating projects to generate revenue for the betterment of their quality of life. They will also support single women-headed homes in Rwanda to promote peace, equality while also improving the quality of lives to such families,” said Mme. Smangele Nkosi, who is married to the Ambassador Mxolilsi Nkosi of South Africa, and served as President of the Association until September 2014.

The cheques were presented before the Committee of Ambassadors in July, namely to the L’Organisation Panafricaine des Femmes of Burkina Faso and Reseau Culturel Sangwa in Rwanda. They were awarded €5,000 and €6,000 respectively.

The Organisation Panafricaine de Femmes, otherwise known as POWA, was founded in 1962 with the aim of empowering women in rural areas through targeted programs such as civil rights promotion, revenue generation, HIV support and literacy. The POWA Burkina chapter was established in 1990, although its effectiveness has been hampered by the lack of physical infrastructure and equipment. The support from the Spouses Association will assist in setting up a POWA administration office in Burkina Faso and pay for budgeted overheads.

The second project, the Cultural Sangwa Network, is a non-governmental organisation founded in 2006 with the mission to assist households in accessing basic needs and promoting peace, security and socio-cultural development. The project is aimed at educating and bringing awareness to single mothers about dangers of war, and fosters dialogue between parents and children in women headed homes to promote peace and equity in communities while improving their living conditions.

The ACP Ambassadors’ Spouses Association brings together representatives from African, Caribbean and Pacific countries based in Brussels. The group holds annual fund-raising events for charitable causes, coordinated by the current President, Mrs Lilian Leuelu of Tuvalu.

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