



THE PACIFIC CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE PERSPECTIVES FOR THE ACP GROUP BEYOND 2020
APIA, SAMOA
17 – 19 OCTOBER 2013

MULIFANUA CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Setting the Context and Key issues

1. In setting the context of the consultations, there was a need to reflect on the historic first steps of the signing of the Georgetown Agreement – ensuring the realization of the objectives of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement in particular, the eradication of poverty, ensuring sustainable development and the integration of the ACP States into the world economy. These objectives remain. Key to the current existence of the ACP Group, is its relation to the European Union (EU).
2. Globalisation, geopolitical developments, and the state of the world economy necessarily brought changes within the EU and the ACP Group. To adapt to those changes, the ACP Group needs to reform itself to remain relevant to the aspirations and needs of its member states. The approaching expiry of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement in 2020 compels the ACP to consider the options open to it. It is clear that the status quo is not an option; it can no longer be business as usual, but stronger and broader political partnerships, and financial sustainability are required.
3. The ACP Group should determine its own future. As a Group, it has the numeric strength to drive critical agendas in the international community. Combined with vision, clear identification of needs, and a strategic packaging of issues, the ACP beyond year 2020, could be strengthened to be an effective platform for a global voice for ACP States, thereby extending its influence in international relations.
4. ACP solidarity is important and the Pacific has a role to play in maintaining that solidarity.
5. There is a compelling argument for greater regional cooperation and integration across the Pacific, and the solution lies in re-establishing a robust political process around regionalism. Useful lessons can be drawn from regional policy frameworks such as the Pacific Plan, for the future of the ACP Group.

Lessons and Best Practices from Lomé to Cotonou

6. The ACP-EU partnership is described as a model for North-South cooperation. In addition to aid provided by EU over the years under various cooperation agreements from Yaounde to Lomé to Cotonou, the approval of over €31.5 billion of funding by the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP)-EU Council of Ministers for EU development cooperation with ACP countries for the period 2014-2020 was acknowledged, noting that both the EU and the ACP Group benefit from the partnership. The contribution of the EDF in accomplishing the development objectives of the Pacific region was also noted.
7. National Indicative Programmes (NIP), Regional Indicative Programmes (RIP), Intra-ACP, and thematic project funds, are being channeled through the EU-ACP relations. The options for the future for this development assistance needs to be considered. The supplementary role of CROP agencies in the implementation and delivery of RIP and NIP is recognised. The regional 11th EDF programming needs to be inclusive and there is a need for it to complement the NIP initiatives and other related development projects. The need to mainstream the initiatives into national and regional plans and priorities was noted.
8. It was further recognized that the strategic packaging of needs and issues, the prevalence of accountability, transparency, and good governance would not only ensure the effective utilization of aid funds, but are an indication to donors, of good practice, standards and capacity to absorb aid.
9. The Pacific region's good performance in the management of the EDF resources, as confirmed by the reviews of the projects being implemented in the region, was acknowledged. The role of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in its capacity as the duly mandated Regional Authorising Officer (RAO) in supporting the implementation of the EDF projects in partnership with the technical agencies, was acknowledged.
10. The format, structure and content of the ACP-EU relationship needs to be reviewed for post-Cotonou options. The issue, however, of the Pacific being linked with the Asia region, needs to be critically looked into, and representations made, so that the interest of the Pacific is not compromised.

Post 2020 options

11. The consensus of the Conference was for the Pacific to remain an equal partner in the ACP Group.
12. The lessons to be learned from the partnership with EU, is that the ACP Group is the best conduit for EU support for the group. There is a need however, to revamp the ACP relationship with EU. ACP should not try and do everything but should focus on identifying its priority needs.

13. For the Pacific, climate change, renewable energy, sustainable development and management of natural resources, including marine resources, are priorities. The Pacific also needs to have a position on the Post 2015 development agenda and decide whether to work with the EU or other partners/donors, and garner the support of regional agencies to achieve the new sustainable development goals.
14. There was a consensus that there should be a political mandate on the future of the ACP as it is the political agenda that drives the technical aspects.
15. How the EU and other regional groupings view the Pacific, will be determined by good governance and how the resources are utilized. While numbers are important, more important is how the issues are packaged.
16. In terms of institutional reform, there is a need to look closely and critically at reforms of the roles and the functions of the ACP Secretariat and the governing organs of the ACP.
17. The private sector needs to be recognised as the engine for growth, including the important role of the Civil Society Organisations. The Non-State Actors need to be considered as a true partner in the implementation of the projects and the achievement of development objectives.

Perspectives for the future and alternatives

18. As the end to the Cotonou Agreement is fast approaching, it is necessary to consider, and do so realistically, the next level of action for the ACP Group post 2020. The restructuring of the European legislative machinery in 2009 and the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty, have seen a down grading of the ACP-EU relationship. This gives rise to the ACP Group seeking possible partnerships with other partners.
19. The ACP Secretariat Strategic Plan for 2011 - 2014, proposes to reposition the ACP Secretariat as a knowledge institution, which is commendable.
20. The existence of the ACP Group for close to forty years shows that there is value in having the ACP Group. A replacement for it has to be of relevance. A number of options has been suggested: to disband the group; to maintain the status quo; to split the organisation on the regional groupings as configured for the EPAs consultations; to decrease membership to include only LDCs; or, to set up an independent ACP Group with a multiple set of partners of which EU will be one.
21. The preferred option of the Conference is an independent ACP Group with multiple partners including the EU. This option begs the questions of what the ACP Group needs to do as a Group and how? The Suva Declaration 1977 provides guidance on areas which can form the basis of intra-ACP cooperation – trade, transport, education, culture – to name a few. To determine how the ACP Group deals with trans-regional cooperation, a two step approach is needed: 1) To identify the common interests and issues, i.e. determine what are the needs for the trans-regional level and what are the needs at the regional level? 2) To determine what the value added is that the trans-regional cooperation gives? If there is none, then the issues are better left at the regional level.

22. Visibility is a real issue not only for the ACP Group but for the Pacific region. Mechanisms should therefore be put in place for accessing information about the work of the ACP Group, its activities and achievements. For the Pacific, it is important to be able to participate in international debates armed with the right information. The Joint Parliamentary Assembly of the ACP and EU serves as an example for partnerships with other Parliaments in which issues of global interest and of interest to the Pacific can be raised.
23. Uncertainty in the region has arisen from the fact of a growing population which many economies cannot sustain. While focusing on Pacific issues, the Pacific as a region should also consider what value it adds and the contribution it makes to the ACP Group.

Recommended options and alternatives

24. A three pronged approach was considered:
- a. The ACP Group remains as a group which needs to continue in a re-engineered form. In particular, the following format is proposed:
 - An all ACP overarching umbrella dealing with a limited number of issues that are of interest and concern to the ACP Group as a whole. For the Pacific, these include sustainable development of natural resource development and management, climate change and renewable energy.
 - At the regional level, the revised Pacific Plan Framework could deal with Pacific specific issues and may also include fisheries, sports, culture, South-South cooperation and investment as issues for consideration.
 - Finally, at the national level, dealing with all other matters that are sovereign to individual member states
 - b. The Pacific's interaction with the ACP Group and the EU needs to be revamped;
 - c. Institutional arrangements need to be looked into, including the restructuring of the ACP Secretariat and the governing organs of the Group. The best complementarity should be explored between the role performed by the ACP Secretariat and other institutions of member States.
25. A comparison with other regions would also assist in defining purpose, practice and partners of the ACP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above conclusions, the Conference recommends:

1. The ACP Group should remain, with the Pacific as an equal partner in it.
2. The Group needs to be re-calibrated in order for it to compete or to be a force in terms of the Group's vision and mission post 2020.
3. That regional economic integration be the key driver of the ACP Group, and more so for the Pacific region in achieving its development goals.
4. That mechanisms be put in place to raise the visibility, relevance and effectiveness of the ACP Group and the Pacific engagement.
5. The priorities and challenges of the Pacific – climate change, renewable energy and sustainable development and management of natural resources including marine resources - should be given equal treatment, voice and consideration in the global agenda. Other important issues such as the private sector development, labour mobility, migration and remittances, and investment, should receive the same level of consideration.
6. The essential and fundamental elements of democracy, rule of law, good governance, protection and promotion of human rights should be paramount guiding principles in a reformed ACP Group.
7. Consideration should be given to strengthening intra-ACP cooperation in the fields of sport, culture and education among others.
8. The revised Pacific Plan would be considered as a policy framework for the Pacific region on regional integration. All issues that should properly be decided at the national level should remain as such.
9. The reference to South-South and Triangular cooperation as a vehicle for development should remain at the all ACP level and could be an area of key engagement by the ACP Group.
10. Once there is clarity on the organisation's vision, mission and objectives beyond 2020, the institutional framework for implementation should be considered as a matter of priority. Political commitment will be essential in terms of resources to fund the ACP Secretariat and its financial sustainability. Proposed amendments to the Georgetown Agreement to effect these reforms may be required.

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