

Statement to be delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Eswatini Hon. Senator Thulisile Dladla, on behalf of the Africa Regional Protocol on the occasion of the Initialling of the Successor OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement

Co-Chairs and Chief Negotiators of the OACPS-EU Post Cotonou Partnership Agreement;

Your Excellency Secretary-General of the OACPS;

Director General of the EU;

Colleague Ministers;

Excellences Ambassadors;

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we may recall, the ACP Negotiating Mandate was adopted by the Council of Ministers in May 2018 and subsequently amended to provide for the Regional Protocols, in December 2018. In concert with the EU Negotiating Directives, which were published in June 2018, this mandate provided for a foundation agreement to address the common priorities of the OACPS and the EU and its member states, whilst providing that the Regional Protocols would address regional specificities and be subservient in nature to the legally binding general part of the Agreement.

Co-Chairs, after more than two years of often arduous negotiations, we finally have a mutually acceptable New Partnership Agreement ready for initialling, and in this regard, we eagerly await the EU's final decision on what entity shall constitute the EU Party, for purposes of prompt conclusion and actual implementation of this agreement.

This Agreement is premised on the achievement of the SDGs, the EU Priority areas and the collective and unique priority areas of the three Regions of the OACPS. Its inclusive and far reaching foundation seeks to enhance the partners' development and better the lives of all our peoples, - a commendable objective that enjoys the consensus of all stakeholders.

Co-Chairs, within this single undertaking, the Africa Region Protocol remains cognisant of the imperative to strengthen coordination between the four (4) Sub-Regions of Africa whilst further encouraging the active involvement and participation of the AU as well as the inclusion of the various Regional Economic

Communities in its implementation. Nevertheless, whilst it is important to remain faithful to these imperatives, we need to ensure that the OACPS Secretariat continues to play the lead role in the implementation of all aspects of the New Agreement, including the Regional Protocols.

Co-Chairs, as this marks the end of the negotiations phase, allow me once again to congratulate and commend you both for your dedication and exemplary leadership throughout the process. I further wish to commend the Chair of the Ambassadorial Central Negotiating Group, his team of OACPS negotiators, the EU Negotiating Teams and the OACPS Secretariat for their model conduct and resolute dedication to the successful completion of this monumental task.

Co-Chairs, as Lead Negotiator of the Ministerial Central Negotiating Group of the Africa Regional Protocol, I wish to especially acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Africa Regional Protocol Negotiating Team led by Ambassador Sibusisiwe Mngomezulu of the Kingdom of Eswatini and constituted by ; Dean of the OACPS Ambassadors, H.E Daniel ABE'E of Cameroon; Her Excellency Jacqueline ZABA of Burkina Faso; H.E Grum Abay of Ethiopia who unfortunately had to leave in the middle of the negotiations, and his successor, Ambassador Negassi TEKLE of Eritrea.

In conclusion, Co-Chairs, as we celebrate the conclusion of the negotiation phase, we look forward to the Signing Ceremony, which is expected to take place later this year. We also hope that the initialling of the Regional Protocols will equally proceed at regional level, thus giving impetus to the respective mechanisms of the regions in implementing the successor Partnership Agreement. In this regard, I look forward to warmly welcoming you again to the Kingdom of Eswatini for the launch of the Africa Regional Protocol.

I Thank you