

**Special Meeting of the Committee of Ambassadors
Presentation of the Ambassador of Jamaica
Intervention by the Ambassador of Jamaica
H.E. Vilma Kathleen McNish
ACP House, Thursday 10th May 2012**

Chairman of the Committee of Ambassadors
Secretary General,
Assistant Secretaries General and staff of the Secretariat
Distinguished Ambassadors
Colleagues all,

At the outset, let me thank you for your warm welcome on the occasion of my first meeting of the Committee of ACP Ambassadors in Brussels.

I arrived in Brussels three weeks ago and I can honestly say that I have been anxiously awaiting the opportunity to commence my formal interaction with this august group. I wish to extend my own personal welcome to the Ambassador of Samoa.

Colleagues, as I assume this assignment as the representative of the Government of Jamaica in Brussels, I am mindful of two facts.

First, I am very conscious of the legacy of my predecessors who have served with distinction and have ensured Jamaica's active participation in the ACP over the years.

Jamaica values highly its membership in the ACP and I can assure you that during my tenure, I will endeavour to build on the legacy of these Jamaican pioneers and continue this active engagement as we collectively seek to promote the interests of our respective countries.

Secondly, and fundamentally, I am very much cognizant of the fact that my assignment coincides with a pivotal moment in the history of the ACP and its relationship with the European Union.

After almost four decades of formal existence, it can be said that the ACP is at a crossroads. It is on this second issue that I will focus my intervention.

Colleagues, there is no question that the Africa, Pacific and Caribbean Group of states has a unique place in the multilateral fora, representing as it does almost half the world's states.

Since its inception in 1975, the ACP has been a powerful advocate on behalf of the poorest people in our countries, ensuring that their interests are represented in the international arena.

This inter-regional body has worked assiduously to manage relations between its member States and the European Union, giving voice to the voiceless in the pursuit of its objective to achieve the sustainable development of its member-states and their integration into the global marketplace.

Notwithstanding the challenges, the ACP is the only body of its kind consisting of developing countries that has delivered tangible and practical results for the benefit of millions of its citizens.

As we have witnessed, since the signing of the first Lomé Convention in 1975, the international environment has shifted dramatically across a broad spectrum of human activity and engagement.

These shifts have fundamentally altered the international landscape politically, economically and culturally. Globalization has resulted in unprecedented interdependence and connectivity.

It is undeniable that we continue to be in the midst of a profound global transition as new actors emerge and old paradigms have given way to new constructs. The centre of economic power no longer resides in the so-called metropole to which many of our countries were traditionally anchored.

Today, we are witnessing the growing political and economic clout of the emerging economies, challenging the status quo as it relates to global economic governance.

We also have to grapple with a myriad of global phenomena such as climate change, environmental degradation, pandemics, food and energy security, transnational organized crime, terrorism and migration among others.

It is against this still unfolding backdrop that the ACP must review its relationship with the EU and by extension its very own existence. We have all seen the ACP's partnership with the EU evolving overtime through successive Lomé Conventions to the Cotonou Partnership Agreement which is due to expire in 2020.

Internal dynamics in the EU itself have altered, particularly since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, which established a new institutional framework to bolster the EU position as a global leader.

The EU has further embarked on an examination of its approach to development assistance. This is reflected in the latest proposals by the EU contained in recent communications on development cooperation, budget support and trade, growth and development.

A major concern for many of our countries is the proposal to introduce a differentiated approach to development partnerships.

We are particularly concerned about the likely impact on those countries that are classified as middle income countries. This will be a prominent issue on the agenda of the CARIFORUM-EU Dialogue taking place this week in Dominica.

Excellencies, the ACP is traditionally defined in terms of its relationship with the EU. As we look to the future, a pertinent question must therefore be: Do we continue to see our existence through the prism of this relationship particularly in a context where trade and aid are no longer the primary *raison d'être* of this relationship?

How can the ACP effectively insert itself into the discourse on global issues while recognizing overlapping interests and relationships?

I am aware that the organization is already engaged in reflecting on its existence and that these and other pertinent questions may already have been raised. In this regard, I wish to commend Secretary General Chambas, for his leadership in establishing the Ambassadorial Working Group on the Future Perspectives of the ACP Group after 2020 which is chaired by my colleague Ambassador Gomes of Guyana.

Colleagues, Jamaica stands ready to actively engage in the consultations in the Working Group as we seek to determine the future

role of the ACP and define the nature of its relationship with the EU within a context where the world has changed dramatically. We must examine the various options and permutations available to us.

As in 1975, we must be visionary and bold in crafting strategies that allow the organization to respond to paradigm shifts. Coherence and consistency must be our frame of reference even while recognizing our national and regional diversities.

Excellencies, as you may be aware, this year Jamaica celebrates its 50th anniversary of independence. Notwithstanding the many challenges and constraints we have faced, great strides have been made in the political, social, and economic fields. Without fear of contradiction, it can easily be said that it is through the instrumentality of the ACP that we have been able to realize several of our achievements.

I look forward to working and collaborating with you on this renewal process and other issues on the ACP agenda over the next few years.

Thank you for your attention.