

**EMINENT PERSONS GROUP ON THE FUTURE OF THE ACP GROUP BEYOND 2020:  
PROGRESS REPORT  
TO THE 99<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE ACP COUNCIL OF MINISTERS  
NAIROBI – KENYA 16 – 18 JUNE 2014**

# EMINENT PERSONS GROUP ON THE FUTURE OF THE ACP GROUP BEYOND 2020: PROGRESS REPORT TO THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

## I Introduction

1. Decision No. 2/XCVI/12 of the 96<sup>th</sup> Session of the ACP Council of Ministers held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in December 2012 endorsed the Secretary-General's initiative to form an Eminent Persons Group (EPG), with a view to:

- a. widen and deepen reflections on the future of the ACP Group in its regions and the South;
- b. envision the future of the ACP Group in a changing and challenging global environment;
- c. examine options for reform to shape the ACP Group as a contemporary organization that is responsive to the aspirations and expectations of the citizens of its member states; and
- d. to hone its decision-making bodies and its Secretariat into a stronger more effective framework of cooperation and partnership.

2. At their 7<sup>th</sup> Summit, also held at Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in December 2012, the ACP Heads of State and Government adopted the "*Sipopo Declaration*" which endorsed the setting up of the EPG to enhance the process of reflection on the vision, mission, organisation and response of the ACP Group to ever-changing global challenges.

3. The EPG was launched in Brussels on 25 March 2013. Members of the Group were selected from the six regions of the ACP Group. The Chairman is Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria. The Vice Chair position is jointly held by former President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana and former President Dr. Leonel Fernandez Reyna of the Dominica Republic.

4. Other Members include Ms Patricia Francis (Jamaica) former Executive Director of the International Trade Centre; Dr. Daoussa Bichara Cherif (Chad), Former Minister of Public Works, Transport, Housing and Urbanisation, Chad; Amb. Kaliopate Tavola, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fiji; Prof. Ibrahima Fall (Senegal), Former United Nations Assistant Secretary General; Mr. Peter Gakunu (Kenya), Former Executive Director, International Monetary Fund, Prof. Sebastiao Isata (Angola), Former Special Representative and Head of African Union Liaison

Office in Guinea Bissau, Amb. Nureldin Satti (Sudan), Former Acting Special Representative for the UN Secretary General in Burundi, Mr. Kolone Vaai, Former Secretary of Finance, Samoa and Ms. Valentine Sendanyoye Rubwabiza, Formerly Deputy Director General, World Trade Organisation and presently Chief Executive Officer of the Rwanda Development Board; Mr Sylvain Maliko of Central Africa Republic and Dr Libertine Amathia of Namibia<sup>1</sup>.

5. Meetings of the EPG have also been attended by the Chairman in Office of the Committee of Ambassadors and the Chairman of the Ambassadorial Working Group on the Future Perspectives.

6. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress achieved by the EPG so far.

## **II Meetings of the Eminent Person Group (EPG)**

7. The EPG has held four meetings including the launching session held on 25 March 2013. The first meeting (see Doc ACP/28/020/13/OM/evo) introduced the members and appointed its Chair and Vice chairs. It was addressed by the Secretary-General and the President of the ACP Council of Ministers. The meeting received a brief from the Chair of the ACP Ambassadorial Working Group on the Future Perspectives and examined the EPG's draft terms of reference. The first meeting laid the ground work for the execution of EPG's mandate and in this regard proposed modification of its terms of reference on the basis of inputs by Members.

8. The second meeting, (see Doc ACP/28/012/14/GEA/otc) was held at ACP House in Brussels on 12 – 13 September 2013. It focused on refining the strategy for carrying out the Group's work and in this regard adopted its terms of reference (See Doc ACP/28/003/13Rev 4) and considered its communication strategy. As a result an EPG webpage <http://www.epg.acp.int/> on the ACP website was opened.

9. During its second meeting, (see Document *ACP/28/051/14*), the EPG:
- a. Decided that a study be carried out on the successes and failures of the organization since its inception to enable the Group deepen its reflection process. An executive summary of the interim report has been received and is undergoing review and further refinement.
  - b. Agreed on plans to hold several rounds of consultations with stakeholders in the six major ACP regions (West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands). These consultations would involve sessions with government officials, parliamentarians and

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<sup>1</sup> The latter two members resigned from the team for personal reasons after the first meeting.

members of civil society, aiming to garner key contributions on their perceptions, views and analysis on the past, present and future of ACP, as well as on the relationship between regional integration and ACP activities including ACP-EU relations that would enrich EPG's work and be reflected in the EPG's final report. At the same time, inputs from ACP peoples from all walks of life were strongly encouraged, through online discussions on the EPG webpage mentioned above (see webpage reference).

- c. Considered the financial situation and noted with concern that resource constraints would not permit the Group to carry out all the activities it deemed necessary. The Secretary-General and Members therefore agreed to seek additional funding from ACP Governments and other organizations.
- d. Held consultations with representatives of the European Union from the External Action Service and the Commission, at the end of which, the two sides agreed that future cooperation should be based on the fundamental values and interests of both parties.
- e. Consulted with the ACP Ambassadorial Working Group on the Post-2015 development agenda and shared views on elements that should be taken into account in the process of formulating an ACP position.

10. The third meeting was held on 27 February in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on the margins of the East Africa regional consultations. At that meeting:

- a. The EPG received and considered reports on the regional consultations that had been concluded in the Pacific, the Caribbean, West Africa and East Africa. Outstanding consultations remained for Southern and Central African regions. In view of time and resource constraints, the EPG recommended that these be combined and be held as soon as possible. However, should combination of the two events generate sensitivity in the regions concerned, then separate consultations should be accommodated.
- b. The EPG held a very fruitful exchange of views with key personalities from major African organizations, namely United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (Dr Abdalla Hamdok - Deputy Executive Secretary); Africa Union Commission (H.E. Mrs Fatima Haram Acyl – Trade and Industry Commissioner) and African Development Bank (Mrs Josephine NGURE – Resident Representative Addis Ababa). The representatives outlined the immense opportunities as well as key developmental challenges confronting the African Continent and outlined how their respective organizations were responding to these issues. A fruitful dialogue took place on the future of the ACP and how the Group could in future play a role in dealing with these issues.

- c. The meeting designated three EPG Members – Mr Peter Gakunu (Africa), Ms Patricia Francis (Caribbean) and Mr Kolone VAAI (Pacific) to constitute a Drafting Committee that will spearhead the preparation of the EPG report. It was recommended that a professional report drafter be recruited for the purpose, finances permitting.
- d. The meeting directed that the study on the successes and failures of the ACP since its inception be carried out as matter of urgency. This would assist the EPG to identify niche areas in which the ACP could focus in the future.
- e. The meeting agreed that it would hold at least three more meetings to (i) consider the outcome of all regional consultations and come up with an outline for the report of the EPG; (ii) consider the draft final report and (iii) adopt the final report respectively.
- f. The meeting adopted a communication strategy that gives visibility to the ACP Group. In this regard, the Secretariat was requested to keep EPG Members updated with the developments so that EPG Members can articulate or defend them as necessary. It was agreed that the EPG webpage ([www.epg.acp.int](http://www.epg.acp.int)) must be updated regularly.

11. Following the initiatives of the EPG, the Governments of Equatorial Guinea and Angola thereafter donated to the Secretariat Euros 200,000 and Euros 64,000 respectively to contribute to the work of the EPG. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa while not able to provide financial resources has agreed to provide technical support as would be requested by the EPG. These generous gestures were acknowledged and appreciated by the EPG.

12. The fourth meeting was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea on the margins of the Central Africa regional consultations. At this meeting, the EPG considered

- a. the progress report to the 99<sup>th</sup> Session of the ACP Council of Ministers (16 – 18 June 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya);
- b. the outline and synopsis of the Final EPG report;
- c. the interim report on the Study on Successes and Failures of the ACP Group since its inception;
- d. the updated Matrix on outcome of EPG regional consultations,

- e. the draft final report of the Working Group on Future Perspectives (WGFP) and
- f. the programme of work for the remainder of the EPG's work.

13. The EPG has agreed on the approach in the preparation of its report to the next ACP Summit and its delivery mechanisms as well as the communication strategy. The structure of the report would be in form of KEY recommendations with sub-sets of proposals under each recommendation.

14. There was need to focus on core values, derived from moral, ethical, ideological, social or other internationally acceptable norms, that should drive and govern the ACP Group.

15. The basis of the final report would be drawn from, *inter alia*, wisdom and views of the EPG Members, issues arising from various meetings with stakeholders including ACP Ambassadors, EU officials, reports of regional consultations; the outcome of the study on the successes and failures; a mapping of ACP trade globally; and existing reports and documents on the future of the ACP from various sources..

16. It was agreed to identify the complementarities between the EPG report to the ACP Summit and the final report of the Ambassadorial Working Group on the Future Perspectives (WGFP) in order to avoid duplication.

#### **IV Conclusions**

17. In spite of challenges facing the EPG, some of which have been enumerated above, the EPG is on course and remains committed to complete its report by the foreseen deadline in its terms of reference. In this regard, at its last meeting held in Malabo from 2 - 4 June 2014, the EPG adopted its programme of work on the remaining part, as contained in the annexed document.

18. The EPG acknowledges that one of the conditions for success for the ACP Group will be the political commitment and buy-in of the recommendations that will be contained in the report at the highest political level. Political commitment by the ACP Group must be renewed and even strengthened if the existence and functioning of the ACP Group is to be sustained. The EPG recognizes that sustaining political will and commitment will only be achieved if there are common interests that can keep the ACP Group together.

19. One of the main emerging conclusions drawn from the various consultations with stakeholders is that there exists strong political will that the ACP Group should remain but be reinvented in line with the new world paradigm and focus on a few core and niche areas that the Group can be able to handle and deal with better than existing institutions in line with the principle of subsidiarity and comparative advantage.

20. The EPG is of the view that its report should avoid recommending grand plans that were unachievable but should instead come up with realistic, doable and reachable targets for the ACP Group to function in the future.

21. In view of the complementarities between the work of the EPG and that of the Ambassadorial Working Group on the Future Perspectives of the ACP and so as to avoid possible duplication, Council is requested to mandate the Ambassadorial Working Group, once it has finalized its report, to send it to the EPG by early September 2014, so that its contents can be taken into account in the final EPG report.

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## Indicative Programme of Activities leading to Finalization and Presentation of Final EPG Report

Date	Meeting	Group	Purpose
November 2014	ACP Summit	EPG	Attend and Present final report to ACP Summit in Paramaribo
		Chair	Consult with the EU
October 2014	Lobbying	EPG	Together with SG, EPG to lobby selected HOSG <sup>2</sup> in preparation for the Summit
	Dispatch Report to HOSG	Chairman	
Mid-September 2014	Draft Report	EPG	EPG to receive, debate and adopt report of Drafting Committee
	Distil Ambassador's report and prepare final draft.	Drafting Committee	To debate/test ideas with COA <sup>3</sup> , discuss in Geneva with WTO/UNCTAD/ITC, regions and other focus groups
August 2014	2nd Draft Report	Drafting Committee	Finalization of the report by the Drafting Committee <sup>4</sup>
End July 2014	1st Draft Report	Drafting Committee	Preparation of the first draft of the report of the EPG
16-20 June 2014	99 <sup>th</sup> Session of the ACP Council of Ministers – Nairobi, Kenya	EPG (Prof Fall and Mr Gakunu)	Present progress report Refine Preliminary Draft Report Outline
10-11 June 2014	Southern Africa Regional Consultations, <sup>5</sup>	EPG	Drafting Committee Member designated to attend and finalize the matrix of outcome of all the regional consultations
2-4 June 2014	Central Africa Regional Consultations, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea		Approval of Preliminary Report Outline, progress report to Council of Ministers and consideration of the report on successes and failures

<sup>2</sup> Heads of State and Government with focus on current and incoming Chairs of the Summit and those who hosted regional consultations

<sup>3</sup> Committee of Ambassadors

<sup>4</sup> Proposal is to expand the Drafting Committee to six at this stage to expedite the work funds permitting.

<sup>5</sup> Now postponed until a later date