

Speech by Mme Smangele Nkosi, Chairperson of the ACP Spouses Association, and Spouse of the Ambassador of a South Africa to Belgium and Head of Mission to the European Union, Brussels, 30 May 2014

Mme Programme Director, Safia Rodrigues
Your Excellency, Secretary-General of the ACP, Mr. Alhaji Muhammad Mumuni,
Members of the ACP Spouses Association,
Your Excellencies Ambassadors,
Maternal ACP Diaspora,
Representatives of Sponsors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the ACP Spouses Association and on my behalf, I would like to extend warm and maternal greetings to all of you. We are extremely humbled, and indeed feel honoured that you have graced the 2014 edition of the ACP Spouses Gala Dinner with your presence tonight.

The Annual ACP Spouses Gala Diner has become a prestigious and glamorous event bringing the lively, dynamic and diverse cultures of Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific regions into the heartland of Europe. The event is now a permanent fixture in the Brussels diplomatic calendar, providing a unique opportunity for networking.

The Gala Diner is a joyful culmination of months of hard work by a conscientious and dedicated team of the Spouses of ACP Ambassadors that I am sincerely privileged to lead. These women have devoted their precious time and energy to contribute towards good causes, all in the name of supporting development in ACP countries.

The work that we do is not unrelated to what the Excellencies, Ambassadors do.

We engage in activities that complement the work of our husbands and make a meaningful contribution to development in ACP countries through capacity building and poverty eradication programmes. Our efforts are more pertinent this year as we begin the countdown towards the UN Millennium Development Goals, which are up for review in 2015. In this regard, these efforts will help towards meeting goal no. 3 of the MDGs, namely, to promote gender equality and empower women.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As has it has become tradition, it now gives me great pleasure to announce the two projects that are beneficiaries of your generosity for the year 2014.

The first project is:

Organisation Panafricaine de Femmes otherwise known as POWA

POWA was founded in 1962 with the aim of liberating women in Africa. The aim of POWA is to empower women in rural areas through targeted programs i.e. promotion of women civil rights, revenue generation, HIV support and literacy.

The POWA Burkina chapter was established in 1990. Its effective functioning has been hampered by the lack of physical infrastructure and equipment. In this regard, we have decided to assist with the setting up of a POWA administration office in Burkina Faso and also to pay for budgeted overheads.

The value of our assistance is € 5 200

This project will benefit women in rural areas.

The second project is:

Cultural Sangwa Network

This is a non-governmental organisation founded in 2006 with the mission to assist households in peace and equality, access to basic needs and socio cultural development. The project is aimed at educating and bringing awareness to single mothers about dangers of war and it also seeks to strengthen their economic power. It also fosters dialogue between parents and children in women headed homes to promote peace, equity in communities and improving their living conditions. It is a project that touches on very crucial soft issues.

The value of assistance to this project is € 10 211.

We congratulate both our sisters from Burkina Faso and Rwanda on their successful bids, and wish them well in the successful execution of these projects.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Inspiring humanity with the spirit of solidarity, Maya Angelou, legendary American civil rights activist and poet who passed on Tuesday this week stated:

"I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver".

May her soul rest in peace!

I have no doubt that you feel good tonight having contributed to the charitable work of our association. We thank you most sincerely for this gesture which will go a long way in changing the lives of women and children in Africa for the better.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year we have achieved yet another Milestone in our cooking project that was launched last year in partnership with COLE ACP. I feel greatly honoured to officially introduce to you the 1st edition of our Cook Book Excellence. This edition features ten African Caribbean and Pacific Spouses of Ambassadors based in Brussels. The book showcases a diverse range of natural recipes based on indigenous culinary practices. It also provides vital information about ACP countries.

The main objective of the book is to profile the art of preparing our traditional meals. In this way we seek to contribute to the promotion of our agricultural produce and stimulate the development and growth of the agro-processing industry in ACP countries.

Allow me to give you a quick snapshot of the book. [SHOW VIDEO](#).

The hard copies of the book are available and if you are interested in owning this piece of our heritage please register your interest at the table outside.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tonight is an occasion for celebrating our collective achievement. The circumstance is joyous and the mood is convivial. It is a perfect setting for celebrating something that we initiated.

For we carry the primary responsibility for our development.

Our future and the destinies of our countries is in our hands. We are demonstrating to all, including our partners that we are capable to start something and see it to its logical conclusion. Of course our achievement would not have been possible without the generous support of our partners, to whom we shall forever be grateful.

Allow me therefore to take this opportunity to thank all ACP member states, the Secretary General of the ACP, His Excellency Alhaji Mumuni and the entire ACP Secretariat for their unstinting support.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge our sponsors:

Platinum - Antwerp World Diamond Centre, Brussels Airlines, Cole ACP, Starwood Hotels, Steigenberger Hotel, Embassy of Angola, Embassy of Democratic Republic of Congo, Embassy of South Africa, Embassy of Taiwan.

Gold Sponsors – ACP Group of States, Chacallia, Da Vinci Wellness Centre, Discovery World Travel, European Fitness, Royal Windsor Hotel, Yambola, Madam Susan Awanbor, Fiji Embassy, Khazakistan Embassy, Namibia Embassy, Rwanda Embassy, Swaziland Embassy.

Silver Sponsors – Forever Living Products, Hotel Amigo, La Boule Bleue Tarven Restaurant, Papeterie Du Parc Leopord, Rosine Décor, Stanhope Hotel, Top Esthetique, Botswana Embassy, Cameroon Embassy, Congo Brazzaville Embassy, Gabon Embassy, Malawi Embassy, Tanzania Embassy, Trinidad Tobago Embassy.

Most important – Regional Cultural Hampers were Sponsored by Members of the Association, we thank Central Africa (Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, DRC, Gabon), East Africa (Burundi, Mauritius, Tanzania, Rwanda), Southern Africa (African Union, Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland), West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal) and the Pacific (Fiji, Tuvalu, Vanuatu).

We thank you most sincerely for your patronage.

We also thank the Fiji, Tuvalu, Rwanda and DRC for kindly availing artists to entertain us tonight.

Lastly, I would like to thank the 2014 Fundraising Committee, the members of the Association for their hard work and support, and for entrusting me with the leadership of our association. I will forever cherish this moment which provided new learnings, opportunities and networks for me.

I thank you very much for your attention and please enjoy the evening!