



**Southern Africa Regional Consultations of the
Eminent Persons Group (EPG) on the Future of the
ACP Group beyond 2020**

**Epic Sana Hotel, Luanda, Angola 1 – 3 September
2014**

Opening Session

**Statement by H.E. Olusegun OBASANJO
Chairman of the ACP Eminent Person Group on
the future of the ACP beyond 2020
1 September 2014**

Your Excellency, **Honourable Georges Rebelo Pinto Chicoti**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Angola

Honourable Ministers

Esteemed Members of the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) here present (Professor ISATA, Madam Patricia FRANCIS, Professor Ibrahima FALL and Mr Peter GAKUNU)

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Honourable Minister Chicoti,

I am happy to be here to attend the Southern Africa consultations on the future of the ACP Group beyond 2020. I am also honoured to address you on this opening session. Allow me therefore to express my deep gratitude to the Angolan authorities, starting with His Excellency President Jose Eduardo Dos SANTOS, for the warm welcome and magnanimity extended to me personally since my arrival in Luanda.

I would like to congratulate Angola for hosting this important event. You can see from the facilities and arrangements for this meeting that the Government of this beautiful country has gone out its way to make us

really comfortable. I am confident that the consultations will be a success.

This meeting has been organized to bring together Southern Africa stakeholders with the purpose of collecting their views on what we should do with the ACP Group in the future.

The ACP Group has existed for close forty years. Since its inception many changes have occurred globally.

Many changes have occurred in ACP States and between the ACP States themselves.

Many changes have occurred with its key partner, the European Union and many changes have occurred in the partnership between ACP and Europe.

All these changes, which many of you are aware of and which you will be discussing today, call for a sombre reflection on how the Group should manage itself going forward.

This reflection has been going on for a while in Brussels through the ACP Committee of Ambassadors. But the erstwhile Secretary-General

came up with the idea that the debate should go beyond Brussels. He suggested bringing in a panel of wise men and women to assist in the thinking process.

The ACP Council of Ministers accepted the idea. Ministers agreed that these wise men and women should envision the future of the ACP Group in a changing and challenging global environment.

They further agreed that the team should explore 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 Members States.

Finally they agreed that the decision making bodies and the ACP Secretariat should be honed to make them stronger and more effective in carrying out their mandate of enhancing cooperation and partnerships.

The 7th Summit of the ACP Heads of State and Government when it met in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea endorsed and mandated the creation of the EPG.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests

The Eminent Persons Group was launched on 25 March, 2013. It is comprised of 12 distinguished luminaries and statesmen from the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions.

The members of the EPG which I have the honour and privilege to Chair, include former heads of state or government, executives at international organisations, accomplished academics, and former high level government officials.

The eminent persons were selected for their distinctive leadership skills, far-reaching experience in international affairs and development, and sound technical knowledge in their various fields. Each of them possesses the demonstrated capacity to 'think out of the box' to find solutions for complex problems.

The significant task assigned to the Group is that of independently reviewing the 79-member ACP Group as an international organisation and to offer the future perspectives that the Group should pursue post 2020 when the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, commonly known as the Cotonou Agreement comes to an end.

As the organisation goes through a process of self-evaluation and renewal, with the aim of becoming

more active, visible and effective in helping its populations, the EPG decided it was necessary, in carrying out its work to engage stakeholders on the ground in ACP countries in the debate on the future perspectives for the ACP Group.

That is how the regional consultations, like the one you are having today, came about.

The EPG has held five consultations so far. These have taken place in Apia Samoa for the Pacific region; in Grand Anse, Grenada for the Caribbean region; in Cotonou, Benin for the West Africa region, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for the East Africa region and in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea for the Central Africa region.

The consultations we are having in Luanda for the coming two to three days are the last but certainly not the least.

As previously stated, the objective is to garner key contributions that must be compiled, reviewed and reflected in the EPG's final report.

The EPG has commenced drafting its report and is expected to make recommendations on the future orientations of the ACP and present its views and final report to the 8th Summit of Heads of State and Government.

The EPG has acknowledged and would like to emphasize that one of the conditions for the success of the ACP Group will be the commitment and buy-in of the recommendations that will be contained in the report at the highest political level.

There is need to renew the political commitment to the ACP Group to ensure its continued existence and strengthened functioning.

However, that political will and commitment will only be achieved if there are common interests that can keep the ACP Group together. These are some of the issues that your meeting will be addressing today.

It is clear though from consultations held with other regions, that there is adequate political will for the Group to continue to exist but reinvented in line with the new world paradigm and focus on a few core and niche areas that the group is better able to handle than existing institutions, in line with the principle of subsidiarity and comparative advantage.

That is why the EPG has indicated that its report should be realistic with targets that the ACP group can meet.

The report should be forward looking and futuristic.

Talking of the future, some renowned economic analysts tell us that in conservative terms, the world economy is projected to double in size by 2032 and nearly doubling again by 2050.

China is projected to overtake the US as the largest economy before 2030. India should become the third 'global economic giant' by 2050, a long way ahead of Brazil, which is expected to move up to 4th place ahead of Japan.

Russia could overtake Germany to become the largest European economy before 2035. Emerging economies such as Mexico and Indonesia could be larger than the UK and France by 2050, and Turkey larger than Italy.

Outside the G20, Vietnam, Malaysia and Nigeria all have strong long-term growth potential, while Poland should comfortably outpace the large Western European economies for the next couple of decades.

These are projections by some analysts and we cannot ignore them when thinking about the future. It is time for us to start making projections of where we want to see our group in the years ahead.

We too should also put the ACP Group on the map so that these analysts can consider our organization as one with the greatest potential for trade and investments, if you take account of the resources and human assets within the Group.

Remembering the adage that the “future is in our hands’ I call on Southern Africa leaders to commit to attend their next ACP Summit when it is held. We know that by participating in large numbers, ACP leaders will ensure that the 8th Summit is a success in a manner commensurate with the stakes involved in securing the future of our Group.

I thank you all for your kind attention.
