

ACCEPTANCE STATEMENT BY THE AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO, HER EXCELLENCY MRS MPEO MAHASE-MOILOA AS THE IN-COMING PRESIDENT OF THE ACP COMMITTEE OF AMBASSADORS

Secretary General of the Secretariat of the ACP Group of States, Dr. Patrick Gomes
Your Excellencies, Colleagues Ambassadors;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

First and foremost; on behalf of my delegation and myself, wish to express deep appreciation and gratitude to Your Excellencies; Ambassadors and to my region, Southern Africa, for the honour and trust bestowed on the Kingdom of Lesotho, to preside over this august body for the duration of six months. We are fully cognizant of the magnitude and challenging nature of this assignment but we take courage knowing that we can count on your support. Moreover; I will consult many instructive examples of my predecessors. I am particularly privileged to follow in the footsteps of my immediate predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Roy Mickey JOY of the Republic of Vanuatu, whose leadership, experience and commitment guided the Committee of Ambassadors in the right direction during the past six months.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

We learned with deep regret of the shocking devastation caused by tropical storm Erika which struck the Small Island of the Commonwealth of Dominica on the 27 August 2015, leaving over 20 people dead and dozens missing. Another Sister country, the Republic of Cape Verde also suffered the effects of hurricane Fred which struck the Island on the 31st August 2015. I wish to convey, on behalf of the Committee of Ambassadors, sincere condolences to the Government and peoples of the Commonwealth of Dominica. We are

thankful that no lives were lost in the Republic of Cape Verde due to the country's investment in Capacity Building and enhanced Early Warning Mechanism and hope that similar preventive measures are replicated in other countries susceptible to hurricanes. We call on the Secretariat to take necessary steps to secure assistance as appropriate in the framework of the ACP-EU Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes to support the Commonwealth of Dominica and the Republic of Cape Verde in their reconstruction efforts.

The outgoing Chairperson and Bureau handed over to myself and the incoming Bureau a long list of outstanding issues; some of which I will comment on at a later stage. However; I wish to encourage us to endeavor to conclude these assignments, most of which require the Committee of Ambassadors to report, to the 102nd Session of the Council of Ministers, on progress achieved.

During my tenure as Chairperson, I will encourage the Committee to pay special attention to issues relating to the future of the ACP Group, trade and development cooperation with the EU as well as governance as foreign policy impacts directly on some issues pertinent to the ACP Group such as migration.

As we are all aware, the Cotonou Agreement is coming to an end in five years' time. The time is therefore; now for the ACP Group, to work in earnest towards development of a constructive position and strategies to forge closer and mutually benefitting modes of cooperation and partnerships with our traditional partner- the EU and other global actors. While striving to achieve this goal, it is important that we maintain the solidarity and partnership that the Georgetown Agreement, Lome Conventions and the Cotonou Agreement are founded on. Be that as it may; it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge

and appreciate that the ACP has invested a lot of time and resources in trying to shape its future as well as the nature of the ACP-EU partnership going forward in view of the impending end of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020. In this regard, the work of the Task Force on the implementation of the recommendations from the Report on the Future Perspectives of the ACP Group with its extended mandate to cover issues relating to trade, development and cooperation will go a long way in reinforcing the efforts of the Group to shape its future. These efforts will no doubt, be complemented by the outcome of the study commissioned by the ACP Secretariat to develop the ACP position on the cooperation between the ACP and the EU post 2020, which I hope will benefit from the wealth of knowledge within the Committee of Ambassadors. In the same breadth, we continue to eagerly await the Report of the EPG on the subject matter.

The 8th Summit of the ACP Heads of State and Government proposed for the second quarter of 2016 in Papua New Guinea presents a good opportunity for the Heads of State and Government to consider the Report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) and adopt a roadmap on the future perspectives of the ACP Group. We therefore need to engage more resolutely in preparing for the Summit to motivate participation at the appropriate level and ensure that its outcome makes a deep and lasting difference to the ACP economies and peoples. It would therefore be vital that the Working Group on the preparations for the 8th Summit is resuscitated, while we await a written commitment from the Government of Papua New Guinea.

We are all aware now more than ever; of the nexus between financial viability and, an autonomous and efficient organization. It is therefore; critical to mobilize domestic resources in order to reduce dependency on external financing for our programmes including our Secretariat. In this regard, the design of a long term Endowment Fund to

ensure financial sustainability of the Organization warrants our attention. The role of the ACP Ministries of Finance and Central Banks in this process is indispensable. The achievement of this will provide the Organization with a sound financial footing in order to make it fully functional, effective and able to perform its tasks, in particular, in preparation for the renewed ACP we envisage post 2020. I wish, on behalf of the Committee of Ambassadors, to pay special gratitude to the Government of Papua New Guinea for the generous contribution to this Fund.

A pattern is emerging; whereby as an Organisation, we find ourselves faced with increasing responsibilities, whilst our budget with regard to Member States contributions decreases with each year. As we engage on the discussions for the Budget for 2016, I wish to encourage all Member States to have an open and constructive spirit and to take into account the long-term effects of this trend and honor their financial obligations to ensure that the Organization has adequate resources at its disposal, if it is to fulfill its mandate and indeed reach the destination we are aiming for after 2020.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

The EPA negotiations have been among our primary concerns. While the ACP is committed to the negotiations and implementation processes, the outcome of the negotiations has not met with the aspirations of the Group, in particular, to realize full incorporation of the development dimension into the Agreements, to ensure that the partnership becomes truly meaningful. The continuing erosion of preferences resulting from trade negotiations between the EU and third parties adds up to the concerns. We will recall that the Joint Undertaking on Administrative Cooperation was recently adopted by the Ministerial Trade Committee, it remains for our Committee to facilitate its timely

signing.

Regarding development cooperation, the adoption of the Intra-ACP Cooperation Strategy after a long period of engagement marked a milestone. However; its timely implementation remains challenged due to the ongoing internal EU processes. We therefore have a duty to persuade the timely conclusion of these processes. Regrettably, there has been a noticeable trend of the minor role played by the ACP in the programming and implementation of the EDF. This imbalance undermines the ACP efforts to promote the visibility of the Group. We therefore need to devise strategic ways to improve the involvement of the ACP in programming and implementation of these projects. The development of the Project Management Framework is one step in the right direction and we look forward to its implementation.

It has become more important than ever for the ACP to leverage the ACP-EU partnership to become an effective vehicle for improving global governance. You will agree with me, Excellencies, that the prerequisite to this is to have a common understanding of both the challenges in the world order and in the global governance, but more importantly, for both Parties to have open mind set to change. I therefore challenge the ACP Group to be more diligent in addressing the issues of migration in the framework of the ongoing ACP-EU Dialogue on Migration and Development.

While undoubtedly some measure of progress has been noted on different fronts, in particular, development of recommendations from the three thematic areas agreed under the Dialogue, there have been, over the recent past, devastating developments in migration trends, noting mainly the Mediterranean migration crisis which involves nationals of some ACP Member States. The ACP should therefore seek to broaden the discussion to

evaluate factors leading to these migration flows aimed at finding lasting solutions as well as to give more prominence to development dimension of our cooperation. The launch of the Migration Action Programme to support the implementation of the recommendations from the Dialogue on Migration and Development is a welcomed initiative. I urge that we closely monitor developments in relation to its implementation in order to take full advantage of the resources to support ACP Member States' development strategies. In the same breadth we applaud the preparatory processes currently ongoing for the Valletta Summit on Migration to be held in Malta from 11 to 12 November 2015. We are hopeful that the ACP Group would draw some lessons from the outcome of this Summit.

You will agree with me, Excellencies that the work on the development of the strategy for Private Sector Development in ACP States has occupied our attention for some time now. I therefore advocate that we scale up our efforts in urging the EU to ensure that the ACP-EU Framework on Private Sector Development is implemented soonest.

Our Committee has also been seized with reflections on the possible review of the ACP Staff Regulations to bring more clarity on the issues relating to the appointments to High Level Posts in the ACP Secretariat; the increasing number of resigning Secretariat's Staff Members and the Terms and Conditions of hosting main ACP Meetings. I call on the Committee to work amicably in developing recommendations for consideration by the 102nd Session of the Council of Ministers. In the same manner, I wish to call your kind attention to the importance of reaching a conclusion on the way forward regarding the ACP Headquarters so that the allocated resources can be put to use. We are aware that the Working Group on the Geneva Office will visit Geneva in the coming week. We hope that the findings of the Mission will bring us close to winding up this assignment.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We shall be chairing the Committee of Ambassadors during an era when important decisions have to be taken; not only by us as ACP Group but by various global actors. These include: the UN Summit on Post 2015 Development Agenda and adoption of SDGs later this month; 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Paris in December; and the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference (WTO MC10) in Nairobi in December. Our participation in these meetings will further enhance the visibility of the Group.

As highlighted earlier, the UN Summit will in the coming week adopt a Post-2015 Development Agenda including a set of Sustainable Development Goals. I wish to encourage the Committee of Ambassadors to mandate the Secretary General to engage, in the margins of the Summit, the President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly, H.E. Sam KUTESA to establish a process of developing closer ties with the General Assembly. In the same vein, to meet with G77 plus China to explore the possibilities for establishing a platform to cooperate on common interests.

The effects of Climate Change are now alive and visible, and continue to threaten development efforts of ACP countries, in particular, the LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs which have least resources to cope with the changing climate. It is important for the ACP Group to work towards a meaningful participation at the COP21 to influence the agreement on the new global deal to tackle climate change. Similarly, the Committee should seek to implement Decision No.9/CI.15 of the 101st Session of the Council of Ministers relating to the establishment of the SIDS Forum. I encourage that similar initiatives be considered in other configurations.

We commend Kenya for being the first ACP country to host the WTO Ministerial Conference and the preparatory work that has thus far been achieved. The Trade Ministerial Committee will convene in Brussels in October to reflect and provide guidance on the work towards the meeting that marks an important era to ensure that the confidence to the Multilateral Trading System is restored. I therefore call for enhanced coordination with the ACP Group of Ambassadors in Geneva to ensure effective participation of the ACP Group.

Excellencies; allow me to conclude by raising some of the concerns directed to myself as the incoming Chairperson and to the new Bureau. The concern is mounting not only amongst ourselves but also amongst our Ministers in the manner in which we conduct our business. Notable are the time management and most importantly organization of our work, which does not provide the Ministers with the opportunity to engage and make decisions, rather for them to only take note. This discourages their participation in the meetings. If this status quo is maintained; we are likely in the near future to see meetings of the Committee of Ambassadors being relegated to Senior Officials meetings and The Council of Ministers being attended by us the Ambassadors. I wish to emphasize the importance for us as Members of the Committee of Ambassadors to uphold appropriate etiquette in our deliberations even when we are in total disagreement with each other. The remedy to all these challenges is fortunately entirely in our control.

I look forward to working with all of you in the coming months of my tenure to further enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the ACP Group in the global arena.

I Thank You

