

# **SPEECH**

**BY COMMISSIONER NEVEN MIMICA**

**At**

**the 8<sup>th</sup> Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government on  
repositioning the ACP Group to respond to the challenges  
of Sustainable Development.**

**Future relations between the ACP countries and the EU  
after 2020**

**Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 31 May 2016**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
All protocol observed,

It is a great honour to be invited to this 8<sup>th</sup> Summit of the ACP Heads of State and Government and to address you in this opening session. I am also particularly pleased to be here today, as we are both at a crucial time in our reflections about our relations after the expiration of the Cotonou agreement in 2020. This Summit is a key milestone in this process.

The European Union and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries are longstanding partners.

What links us together is unique; there is indeed no similar international treaty agreement, which legally binds so many countries, which encompasses so many actors, and which deals with such a variety of aspects and objectives.

We have a true longstanding and comprehensive partnership, but true partnerships are not set in stone. They are alive and evolving. And the quality of any partnership is defined by its capacity to adapt to changing circumstances.

We are gathered here, just a few months after COP 21, where we could together show the world that we are strong partners. Paris showed that our partnership works and delivers on its objectives, contributing to the reduction of poverty, increased trade or the provision of peace and security. But there is room for improvement. Our thinking on the future

should take into account lessons learned from the past as well as the strengths and weaknesses of our current relationship. We shouldn't be afraid of leading a self-critical exercise in this respect.

Looking forward, our starting point is that the relationship should become a true political partnership, based on common interests, away from the traditional donor-recipient relationship, ranging from global issues, to political, peace & security, trade & economic, developmental and migration issues.

Furthermore, one has to take into account the evolved context, with substantial changes having taken place within our current partnership and in the broader international environment.

The countries that signed the agreement 15 years ago are not the same today. The Member States of the European Union has almost doubled and we have experienced one of the toughest economic crises of all times. On the other hand, ACP countries have also changed. Many countries that were previously considered to be developing have reached middle income status. New actors have emerged and parallel partnerships have arisen. New global challenges have risen sharply in significance and require solutions that can only come out of partnership, negotiation and compromise.

Our relationship needs thus to be flexible and adapt towards the today's needs and interests of the parties and take on board the evolved context to ensure that the successor framework strengthens our relationship.

Concerning common priorities, some issues that were on the top of the list in the current agreement have been addressed, some remain – and have become even more pressing – and new ones have emerged, such as security, climate change, international mobility and migration.

These issues are also prominent in the framework of the new 2030 Agenda. It is clearly in our objective to ensure that the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 is fostered by the future development of our relationship.

In this regard, I can already tell you that we will adapt our core policy document – the European Consensus on Development – and link it to the Post Cotonou framework for its implementation.

After having defined on which common interests we should focus, we should carefully reflect on how to cooperate together as to be most effective. The principles of subsidiarity and complementarity should be applied in this regard. We should identify which levels and frameworks have proved most effective over the last years. Based on their track record, it seems to have performed best at national level, followed by regional, continental and ACP level. We should also acknowledge that some regional and continental organisations have seen their role markedly increase in the last 15 years.

In addition, this also means that it will be necessary to look at the instruments of our cooperation to ensure that they are appropriate and adequate to pursue our common objectives.

At the same time, we should reflect together as well on who should be further closely involved, as Governments alone cannot do the job. To be most effective, we need to go beyond and work more intensively with all relevant partners, including civil society and private sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have a lot of work to do – today, tomorrow, in the coming weeks, months and years. On addressing the issues of today and ensuring that we are able to anticipate the needs and demands of the future for our peoples.

I am here to carefully listen and take into account the ACP countries' ambitions. This is very important to me, as we should not come to the negotiating table with too distant and opposite positions. The process in front of us should be less a negotiation exercise but more a dialogue on how to shape a partnership based on common interests, which is fit for the future, and which brings more prosperity to all.

I therefore wish you a fruitful Summit providing for a clear decision on the future of the ACP group for the decades to come.

Thank you very much for your attention.

*(880 words)*