



ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY  
ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE PARITAIRE ACP-UE

2 March 2019

**17<sup>th</sup> REGIONAL MEETING (CARIBBEAN REGION)**  
**OF THE ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY**  
**ASSEMBLY**

**Paramaribo, Suriname**  
**2 March 2019**

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**Paramaribo Communiqué**

Website of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly  
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp>

## **Introduction**

In accordance with Article 17 of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement and Article 6 of the Rules of Procedure of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA), parliamentarians from the Caribbean Region of the ACP Group and their European counterparts met in Paramaribo (Suriname), from 28 February to 2 March 2019. Members expressed their gratitude to the National Assembly of Suriname for having organised the meeting and the steps taken to ensure its success.

**Their discussions focused on the following subjects:**

### **Regional Integration and Cooperation in the Caribbean Region**

Members highlighted the added value of holding meetings at the regional level as they allow for in-depth discussions on specific issues and fostering understanding and strengthening cooperation. This is especially relevant in the context of ACP-EU relations after 2020, and in order to conduct a structured and in-depth dialogue with the relevant bodies such as regional and sub-regional institutions which include the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) which has achieved full monetary integration; the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) that brings together 32 States; the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) which includes all Latin American and Caribbean Countries.

The last-minute cancellation of the participation of the CARIFORUM and CARICOM is most regrettable and incomprehensible. Nevertheless, the exchange went ahead with valuable input from the representatives of the European Commission/External Action Service, but Members had no opportunity to hear the views of the key Caribbean institutions on regional and inter-regional cooperation, or their views on the state of play of EPA implementation or on unresolved trade issues.

Members reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening ACP-EU relations. Joint efforts will focus on enhancing regional integration beyond economic co-operation, with strategic priorities being, among others, economic growth and the reduction of poverty and unemployment, as well as contributing to deepening integration processes.

Some Members raised concerns over the slow pace of implementation of decisions. Resolving this is fundamental to overcoming the obstacles to the free movement of people and goods as well as services, which is vital to the development of communities.

Taking note of the 10th anniversary of the EU-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), Members acknowledged that regional integration has the potential to yield more than just trade in goods: it has the potential to support more substantial economic reforms, with sustainable development and regional integration at its heart. However, they stressed that this must be guided by wide-ranging and inclusive dialogues.

Members raised concerns about insufficient progress in the implementation of the EPA and called for the speedy implementation of the joint review and monitoring mechanisms.

Members called for heightened awareness of the importance of EPAs and for political will for action that will lead to transformation of the Caribbean economies

With regard to regional security, Members had an extensive discussion on the current unrest in Venezuela and its repercussions for the entire region.

Members also addressed the appallingly high levels of violent crime and domestic violence in the region that have a profound impact on development and society as a whole.

Members noted the simmering political crisis in Haiti that is attributed to deteriorating socio-economic conditions, the on-going migration issue with neighbouring countries, a divided legislature and weak governance institutions as well as public dissatisfaction with the government's response to corruption.

Members took the opportunity to discuss ways of self-financing for the ACP Group. Members noted the proposals to establish an endowment fund that would provide for the operational costs of the ACP secretariat and a trust fund that would address the challenges facing the ACP Group such as climate change

### **Trade, energy, investment and private sector development**

Members acknowledged the economic benefits of tourism to the Caribbean states and they took note of the tourism management capacity of the region through the Caribbean sustainable tourism policy framework which is currently being aligned to the SDGs. Members also acknowledged the ambition of the region to attract sufficient quality and quantity of talent to facilitate the sustainable growth of the sector.

Members believed that there is benefit to be gained from the Caribbean supplying labour to the EU and vice-versa specifically in the tourism sector. This mobility would result in a transfer of skills, expertise and ideas as well as resources thus raising the standards in the industry through best practice exchanges.

Members took note of some of the challenges faced by the industry such as inadequate infrastructure and the exorbitant cost of inter – regional travel, and differences in the level of development of the industry that lead to unbalanced tourist flows across the region.

Members acknowledged that access to sustainable energy remains a critical challenge for the Caribbean countries and stressed the need for the involvement of various stakeholders including governments, the private sector and the international community.

Members called for the region to provide access to investment in affordable energy for all which would result in economic growth and job creation.

Members from the Caribbean stated that the region is working on new energy sources that are sustainable, affordable and efficient.

### **BREXIT – Implementation for CARIFORUM and the EPA**

Members took note of the on-going Brexit process and highlighted its possible negative impact on the region. Members held extensive discussions on the continuity agreement that would have an effect on trade in certain commodities

Members noted the options for a possible way forward that could include attaching an annex to the continuity agreement to cover trade facilitation arrangements and administration issues.

## **Environmental crime and natural resources**

Members were informed of the decline in agricultural production, low productivity and lack of incentives for young people in the agricultural sector. This has led to high dependence on food imports for many Caribbean countries and has had significant consequences on eating habits and health.

Members noted the devastating impact of natural disasters on agricultural production and emphasized the importance of introducing practices to build up preparedness, response-capacity and resilience. While climate change is a global issue, Members recalled that Caribbean countries are less responsible for climate change but are facing the most devastating consequences therefrom. In this regard, Members acknowledged the importance of fair climate financing mechanisms.

Members called on countries in the region to strengthen and implement policies on forest preservation and reforestation.

Members welcomed the European Union programmes designed to support disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation activities in the Caribbean region, and further welcomed the confirmation that the European Union will maintain its commitments beyond 2020. Members additionally called for the programmes to tackle vulnerability and increase resilience in the region.

## **The Future of ACP-EU Relations Post-Cotonou 2020**

Members noted that negotiations are underway and that as parliamentarians it is their responsibility to monitor closely the process. Members acknowledged the need for a formalised role for civil society in the negotiations with a view to being stakeholders in the future agreement.

Finally, Members stressed the vital importance of an enhanced Joint Parliamentary Assembly as an essential component of the democratic legitimacy of the partnership.

## **Site Visit**

As part of the meeting, members visited the Mangrove Project of Professor S. Naipal in Wegnaar zee, which aims to enhance resilience of the coastal eco-system. Members took note of the success of this climate mitigation initiative.

Lastly, Members invited the Co-Presidents to present the conclusions of this regional meeting at the 37th session of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in Bucharest in March 2019 and to send them to the ACP Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Forum of the Caribbean Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (CARIFORUM) Secretariats, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariats, the ACP Group of States, the Governments and National Parliaments of the Caribbean region of the ACP Group of States and to the EU Member States).

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