

110TH SESSION OF THE ACP COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
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OPENING SESSION

Statement by

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**Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya,
Secretary-General of ACP Group of States
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank the Government and people of Kenya for their warm welcome and generous hospitality and for affording us excellent facilities to conduct our work and rendering our stay pleasant.

The 110th Session of the Council of Ministers is taking place at an interesting period of our 45 years of existence. We are about to conclude the negotiations on the post Cotonou Agreement. Multilateralism is being threatened. Climate Change is affecting our communities; therefore, we should brace ourselves to take the right decisions to overcome these challenges.

These challenges require practical North-South, South-South triangular cooperation and the group should consolidate its relationship with existing partners and expand its horizons to accommodate new ones.

The relationship we have shared with the European Union for nearly forty-five years, based on the three pillars of trade and economic cooperation, development finance cooperation and political dialogue must be transformed to respond to the current socio-economic and political global reality. One year after launching the negotiations for a new ACP-EU Partnership, the shape of the future Agreement is becoming clearer by the day. We are happy that strategic priorities of the new Partnership

have been defined. At the same time talks on the regional protocols are intensifying. But more needs to be done, before the Agreement is concluded. Our Chief Negotiator, Professor the Honourable Minister Robert Dussey of Togo and the Ministerial Central Negotiating Group (CNG) supported by our Ambassadors in Brussels deserve to be highly commended for the good job they are doing. We know that more needs to be done and greater effort is required to conclude the negotiations. But we are confident, our negotiating team is equal to the task.

Colleagues, our countries stand on the brink of a new era fraught with challenges and opportunities. We are called on to make this great leap and play our role into the new emerging world.

On the political front, we have had some cause to rejoice at the success noted in some of our regions, with holding of peaceful, free and fair elections in a number of our countries. Democracy in most of our countries has matured. However, our Group is still seriously concerned by the escalation of conflicts in some of the ACP States. While we rejoice and are proud that the **Nobel Peace Prize for 2019** was awarded to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali of Ethiopia and we all join in congratulating him, some countries of our Group are still mired and continuing to face high levels of armed violence. Others are seriously affected by terrorism and violent extremism. This is a constant source of concern.

We cannot walk the road of social and economic development and poverty reduction, in a state of instability. We have to work together to address the problems that afflict our societies.

As we steer ahead, we come across new challenges brought about by world-wide phenomena such as threats to multilateralism, environmental degradation, climatic changes, and natural disasters.

And we need to address these challenges with dedication and commitment because today's vision is tomorrow's reality. At this critical juncture in the life of our Group, and although we still have to grapple with the drastic impact of natural disasters resulting from climate change, the picture is not all grim. Indeed, a "triple win" is within the ACP's grasp, as renewable technologies create opportunities to increase agricultural productivity, improve resilience to climate change and contribute to long-term reductions in dangerous carbon emissions.

Colleagues, it is time to move from rhetoric to action. Indeed, it is high time to transcend current inefficient discourse and implement measures aimed at tackling the growing global environment crisis and simultaneously strive for more equitable international economic relations that would be the basis for promoting sustainable development. This is our future.

A future whose foundation is cast in 44 years of holding on together as a Group, deriving strength in our solidarity and unity as well as our diversity. The task before us is not an easy one. It will require vision and so much political will, such as we have never before witnessed in the history of our Group. Hence, conscious of the common identity of our 79 Member States, our Heads of State and Governments will be meeting on 9th and 10th of December to build on the commitments made during previous Summits and reiterate the determination to create the necessary conditions to transform our Group into an influential actor in global economic and political governance.

We are optimistic that a new dawn is breaking and that peace, stability, good economic governance as well as sustainable development will help us achieve the goals set out in the Georgetown Agreement and those which we have set for ourselves, namely, eradication of poverty and disease, and economic powerlessness. As we do so, we draw strength from the founding fathers of the ACP Group whose achievements we consider with pride. May we all be inspired to face the future with renewed vigour, loyalty and dedication to our Group

It is only with our collective dedication and resolve that we will realise our vision of a stronger ACP Group. We need to exert our collective efforts in all our undertakings to uplift the lives of people in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific as a whole. We should stay focused on our objectives and overcome obstacles and delays to achieve goals and targets that we have set for ourselves and take action without delay in areas where our Heads of State and Government have given us firm directions. For this, it is important to create an enabling environment for our Secretariat to work with us.

As is customary at this time of the year, we are gathered mainly for our annual budgetary session. We all agree that fulfilling the Organisation's mission is the main goal and budgeting makes it possible. In order to enable the Organisation to function smoothly it is important that the budget mirrors its strategic goals. For any organisation, the budgetary session is of crucial importance. It provides a measure of its importance and reveals to some extent the commitment of its members.

While over the years there has been no shortage of strong political declarations and statements in favour of a reinvigorated ACP Group, the time has come to turn rhetoric into action, intent into enterprise. The time

has come to take action commensurate with the size of our ambition, that is, to make our Group the leading multilateral Group of developing countries organisation. Let's hope that the financial resources will match our declared ambitions.

There are other important and strategic issues that will also require our full attention.

As you know, this session will witness the appointment of a new Secretary-General to lead the Organisation. It is important that the next man/woman we elect brings with him/her strong leadership and vision. To the outgoing Secretary-General whose tenure comes to an end on 28 February 2020, we salute him for his stewardship. We all recognise, appreciate and applaud his untiring and committed service to our Group.

Council will also be called upon to make a decision on the issue of top management positions. I invite you to address all these issues in a spirit of unity and solidarity. For united we stand, divided we fall.

I thank you for your kind attention.