

**FAREWELL SPEECH TO THE OUTGOING
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ACP**

ACP House: 28 February 2020

- Your Excellency Madam Ambassador Teneng Jaiteh, Chair of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors,
- Your Excellency, Ambassador Dr Patrick Gomes, Secretary General of the ACP,
- Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Evening

Your Excellency, I had the pleasure of first meeting you long before I arrived in Brussels, at the World Sugar Summit in Cape Town in 2009. We were amongst other speakers at this Summit. Our only regret was that we could not go to Robin Island because of the bad weather. Our paths crossed again when I came to Brussels in April 2015 soon after your appointment as Secretary General. I therefore had the opportunity to work with you for your entire tenure in office.

With this background I feel honored, to deliver on behalf of the Pacific ACP States, a few words to express our gratitude to you, Ambassador Gomes, for your years of service to the family of ACP nations and to your own commitment to the Pacific region.

Excellency, I can say with confidence that all 6 regions of our ACP family expresses its sadness that your term has come to an end. Your leadership in steering this organisation marks an important chapter in your career and a profound impact in our history.

Through your leadership, ACP states have stood stronger together, shoulder to shoulder, working towards the common goal of improving the livelihood of our people.

And with you at the head, the visibility of our Group has grown – demonstrating to the international community the potential of each country here tonight, when we come together as a Group. In return, the visibility and potential of the ACP Group has grown exponentially; especially at the United Nations. And it demonstrates that collectively, we can achieve so many things together.

For the Pacific region, we could not be more welcoming than your leadership and the collectiveness of this group towards reaching the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. And we see this leadership within the ACP addressing the impacts of climate change in each of our regions and pressuring countries to take decisive action in implementing the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Excellencies, for many of us in this room, Climate Change represents a great threat to our economies. For our countries especially in the Pacific, this threat extends to our food security. In Fiji and other member states, the threat of climate change on our sugar industry is significant. Coupled

with other challenges, this commodity is at stake. But we have made strides in protecting this industry and other industries crucial to the economies of member states.

Excellency, it is fair to say that you have been widely recognized as the doyen of the sugar industry which has made significant socio-economic contribution to many ACP states, particularly in generating export earnings and creating employment in rural areas.

Perhaps the biggest reform that you oversaw in your tenure here in Brussels has been the reform of the EU sugar policy in response to the WTO ruling and the EBA initiative.

To cushion the negative impact of the EU sugar policy reform on countries formerly supplying sugar under the Sugar Protocol, you played a key role in reaching agreement with the EU on an Aid for Trade programme called the Accompanying Measures for Sugar Protocol countries (AMSP). This earmarked almost €1.3 billion to assist the affected ACP countries by enhancing the competitiveness of their sugar industry, diversifying economic activity in the cane-growing areas, and addressing the social and environmental impacts of adaptation.

I can confidently speak on behalf of the other 6 regions in congratulating you for successfully leading the ACP into partnership with the EU-UN for the initial allocation of 350 million euros for ACP States to eliminate all forms of violence against women and children through the Spotlight Initiative. This initiative is an investment to address gender equality and

the gender divide in our countries and also harness their potential – look around you - 79 Ambassadors in this room led by a woman ambassador. That's saying a lot! And we still have a lot more work to do to get more of our women in this room!

Excellency, during your tenure the UN Agenda 2030 and SDGs opened a new era for a repositioned ACP - to continue and deepen its role in supporting all our states to achieve these goals for our people.

Now more than ever Excellencies, our partnership is crucial in a world that is over-burdened by the global challenges of climate change, poverty, health, peace, migration and even access to basic resources and services. Global challenges require global solutions, and this is where multilateralism becomes more relevant. In unity comes strength. In strength comes change.

Excellency you will leave the legacy for positioning the ACP to address these challenges and make ACP fit for purpose, through the review of the Georgetown Agreement.

Excellency, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge, on behalf of the Pacific people, our profound gratitude for your leadership of the negotiations for a successor partnership agreement between the ACP and the European Union. And I can say with confidence, that your leadership in this process will be a hallmark of the successful career that you have led.

As we conclude negotiations for a new successor agreement between the ACP and the EU, let us recognize that our people and future generations depend on us.

In closing, may I invite you to take with you, wherever you go, your continued determination to support the role of the ACP and our partnership with the European Union.

When all is said and done, it's the relationships that we carry. Looking back, I am sure you will take fond memories of our relationship and be proud of your accomplishment here at ACP.

The Pacific people thank you and thank your family for your many years of dedication and services and we wish you well in your future endeavors. And if by chance, we meet again in Cape Town, let us try to get to Robin Island.

Vinaka Vakalevu and thank you