

**CLOSING REMARKS BY PROF PALAMAGAMBA  
JOHN AIDAN MWALUKO KABUDI,  
PRESIDENT- IN-OFFICE OF THE 111<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF  
THE OACPS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HELD  
VIRTUALLY ON 17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2020**

Honourable Ministers,

Excellency Ambassadors,

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

**Dear Colleagues,** as the 111<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council comes to an end, I am humbled to make remarks that conclude our deliberations for the present session. I wish to say that it has been an honour for me, my country and my region to chair this important meeting.

**Dear Colleagues,** Covid-19 has brought the world to its knees. The whole world is having to adapt to this new kind of normal, triggering a profound change in the way business is carried out and diplomacy is conducted. The

mere fact that we have managed to bring together, for a couple of hours, over a period of three days, Ministers, Ambassadors and representatives from vastly different geographical locations and time zones, is a feat that illustrates the unity and solidarity which bind the 'A' to the 'C' and to the 'P'. It is not, in any way, to be underestimated. 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.

**Dear Colleagues,** over the past couple of days we have examined a range of issues of importance to the OACPS. We have made important decisions which will have a positive impact not only on our Secretariat in Brussels but on our constituencies in our respective regions. In a bid to make our Organisation fit for purpose, we have deemed it fit to provide our Secretariat with new Staff

Regulations. We have amended the Financial Regulations to make provisions for an Audit and Budget Committee. We have signed off on the post-Cotonou Agreement which will have a significant impact on the lives of our peoples.

**Dear Colleagues,** I strongly believe that each one of these sessions should contribute to bringing the OACPS family closer together. The edification of the OACPS family demands the best of all of us. As the world changes, we want the world to change its approach to us. We don't just want aid, we want trade that fuels our development and progress. We don't want patrons, we want partners who help us build our own capacity to grow. We don't want the indignity of dependence. We want to make our own choices and determine our own future. Building the OACPS We Want, the OACPS we believe in, requires

ambition and imagination in vision, humility and tenacity in work. If we are to share a common destiny, we must each assume our responsibilities. The task ahead of us is not an easy one, but one from which we are not at liberty to abstain.

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

**Dear Colleagues,** I would like to put on record my gratitude to you all who have logged in from the Pacific, the Caribbean and Africa, the ultimate proof - if proof was ever needed - that no pandemic, no lockdown, can prevent us from getting together. Together We Are Stronger. You have enriched the debate with your valuable contributions. Our thanks to our Secretary-General, H.E. Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti and our Secretariat for their constant support and dedication and for their full collaboration which has enabled us to conduct our meeting successfully.

**Dear Colleagues,** I thank very much the Committee of Ambassadors for their valuable work under the leadership of H.E. Ambassador Jestas Abuok Nyamanga. In a very special way, I thank very much the OACPS Chief Negotiator, Prof. Robert Dussey, Minister for Foreign

Affairs, African Integration and Togolese in Diaspora of Togo, and his Ministerial Central Negotiating Group, together with the Ambassadorial Negotiating Group and the TNTs for their valuable work and efforts they all put into the negotiations of the new partnership agreement with the EU.

**Dear Colleagues,** last but not least I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to the interpreters who have worked excellently to enable the Council to conduct its business smoothly and efficiently. I really thank you for the valuable work you have done during these three days of our session.

**Dear Colleagues,** this 111<sup>th</sup> session of the OACPS Council of Ministers stands adjourned.