

Opening Statement by H.E. Mr. George Rebelo Pinto Chikoti
Secretary-General
Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)
ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE INVESTMENT
FACILITY MANAGED BY THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK

0930-1000, Monday 8 February 2021 | *Webex Meeting*

Vice-President of the EIB, Ambroise Fayolle,

Chairperson of the OACPS Committee of Ambassadors and Ambassador of the Independent State of Samoa, H.E. Dr. Fatumanava Pa'olelei Luteru,

Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, European Commission, Ms. Marjeta Jager,

Deputy Director General, European Investment Bank, Mr. Luca Lazzaroli,

Distinguished OACPS Ambassadors

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to be invited to speak today. This annual joint OACPS-EIB meeting is one of the major events for the OACPS, and I am pleased that this year, despite the circumstances, we are able to meet this commitment.

COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on global economies so meetings such as this, where we can take stock of where we are and where we need to go, are of the utmost importance.

For many of the Members of the OACPS, whose economies are not diversified, the COVID-19 pandemic has had more of an economic than human impact as in many cases, national lockdowns, while necessary, have taken a toll on the mono-economies of these States.

Mr. Vice-President,

Excellencies,

I am here today, to state the obvious – that these are extraordinary times. But I am also here to say, that to respond to these extraordinary times, we will need to embrace and deploy extraordinary measures.

The OACPS values the work that the European Investment Bank has carried out in the framework of the Investment Facility of the Cotonou Agreement.

We are convinced that the Investment Facility (IF) has managed to provide much needed assistance in fulfilling the objectives of the Cotonou Agreement of poverty reduction, integration into the world economy, and sustainable development. Nevertheless, as expressed in the final report of the “End-Term Review of the ACP Investment Facility” published in March 2020, we have the sentiment that the IF “*did not maximize its contribution in that regard*”.

Given the fact that the *development objectives* of the Investment Facility received less attention than *financial sustainability*, it is our understanding that the European Investment Bank’s “risk management” of the IF was overly cautious, especially since 2012 when, according to the end-of term review of the IF, the EIB moved “towards taking lower credit risk projects.”

Concerning the EIB coverage of the OACPS in the future, we would like to see a stronger focus on lower-income countries and those in situations of fragility. In the past, it would seem that the IF portfolio was concentrated in relatively few countries, but in keeping with our mandate that no country must be left behind, it is imperative that we include and assist those countries which most need aid.

In this regard, the OACPS Secretariat remains available to participate in a strategic review that will lead to the identification of the Members States, groups of countries and/or regions which would most benefit from being granted special consideration, with a view to ensuring that EIB future operations have the maximum development effect while guaranteeing the right balance between expected development outcomes and financial risks.

**Mr. Vice-President,
Excellencies,**

The OACPS has noted with appreciation, the decentralization process launched by the EIB which has comprised of the opening of eight offices in Member States of the OACPS. We encourage the EIB to continue this process via the strengthening of OACPS regional offices and through enhancing their role in the management of projects and facilities offered to OACPS beneficiaries.

2020 marked a turning point for the world. There are indications and glimmers of the new world order, but it is still uncertain. Certain trends are obvious, the growth of digitalization; the reinforcing of multilateralism as a foundation for our future endeavours; the primordial importance for a greater collaboration on climate change and the crucial necessity to remain focused on the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. The year 2030 is fast approaching. Are we ready? Last year, in addition to the devastation caused by the Corona virus, many Members of the OACPS were battered by severe climate events. Sustainable growth is only possible when basic needs can be fulfilled.

2021 marks the beginning of a new decade and a new start for the OACPS. This year, we will celebrate our first anniversary as the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States. We will also finalise our new Partnership Agreement with the European Union, which among its Strategic Priorities, includes a commitment to focus our development on people-centered, rights-based, peaceful and stable societies and structural economic transformation through inclusive sustainable economic growth and development. All the while, not losing our focus on the need to foster greater environmental sustainability and climate action.

Going forward and looking for a strong engagement of the European Investment Bank in favor of the sustainable and inclusive development of Members of the OACPS in the framework of the Post-Cotonou dispensation, we pledge our support to the EIB to achieve a better balance between development objectives and financial sustainability. Consequently, we will do our best, together, to ensure greater development impact in individual projects while ensuring financial sustainability at a portfolio level in the longer run, which we agree it is not necessarily an easy task.

In our vision of the world post-2020, we see an EIB prepared to take on a greater proportion of higher-risk projects, especially those with high expected development outcomes and impact.

Moreover, following the initiatives already mentioned, we would like to see the EIB ensure a wider coverage of Members of the OACPS and strengthen its presence in the various regions of the OACPS and hopefully, open a representation in a OACPS Pacific country in the near future.

Finally, and as proposed in the end of term review of the IF, we would like to see a greater collaboration between the EU and the EIB, which would give consideration to allowing the OACPS Secretariat to have an observer status in future loan committees that will consider the approval of facilities in favor of Members of the OACPS.

Mr. Vice-President,

Excellencies,

In previous years, we would have had a different type of meeting. Despite everything, we have found a way to come together to exchange our views, review our progress and work towards more inclusive goals.

Time is of the essence. We are in a period of change, so let us seize the moment to create the world we want. I am looking forward to enhanced cooperation between the European Investment Bank and the Organization of African Caribbean and Pacific States in the framework of the Post-Cotonou dispensation. In the midst of this sea change, let us use this meeting as an opportunity to chart a new course that gives equal weight to all players.

I thank you.