

15 April 2021

**INITIALLING OF THE
NEW OACPS-EU PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

**W. HALLSTEIN ROOM
Thursday 15 April 2021
From 20H00 to 21H00 p.m.**

***Statement by Professor Robert Dussey
Togolese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration
and Togolese Abroad and OACPS Chief Negotiator***

Madam Jutta Urpilainen - European Commissioner for International Partnerships, and Chief Negotiator for the European Union,
Honourable OACPS Ministers
Representative of the President of the European Council
His Excellency, Mr Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, Secretary General of the OACPS
Excellency Ambassadors and EU Senior Officials,
Distinguished participants,

This is a momentous occasion.

We opened negotiations in New York on 28 September 2018 in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly. Being in New York – the Headquarters of the United Nations was symbolic. Together, we confirmed our resolve to cooperate and address global issues that affect our countries. Indeed, we sent a clear signal of our intentions to work together to promote and strengthen multilateralism in support of a rules-based international community.

The message we conveyed in New York has been translated into a contract, in the political agreement we reached on 3 December 2020. The Partnership we have forged has an unparalleled numerical strength of 106 countries. This is a key asset for increased cooperation in international fora.

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At the bilateral level, the OACPS has attached the highest priority to its long standing and valued partnership with the European Union. Our association has for over 45 years strengthened bonds of cooperation and friendship between our peoples and countries with Europe.

The driving force for this partnership is the common pursuit of economic transformation and sustainable development for our countries. As our efforts seek to accelerate development in the framework of the UN Agenda 2030, we hope to strengthen and deepen the political and socio-economic partnership with the European Union and Member States, our key allies and partners. We believe that the Agreement we are about to initial will help us to achieve this noble and mutually beneficial goal.

I say this because, first, in terms of the approach, we have constructed a unique agreement. Unique, in that while constituting a single, legally binding agreement which preserves the relationship of a united OACPS with the European Union, it also will allow us to address the specific concerns, aspirations and needs of the three OACPS regions. We have defined the regional institutional framework for implementation and we have also recognised the role of regional entities in the implementation of this Agreement.

Secondly, we have laid out clearly, our strategic priorities. The focus is on human rights and democracy; peace and security; human and social development; sustainable economic growth and development, environmental sustainability and climate change as well as migration and mobility. The provisions of an entire chapter on means of cooperation and implementation, are to ensure that the strategic priorities are met.

Thirdly, we have created credible structures to support implementation, through good governance, by also strengthening the role of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA). Now it is part of the institutional framework. It has a consultative role, meeting regularly, and it is autonomous to decide its rules of procedures.

Fourthly, we have created space for the participation of stakeholders, particularly the civil society and other economic and social partners. Their importance is unambiguous and are a corollary to democratic governance.

Lastly, we have agreed on how to manage the Agreement under the “final provisions”.

Madame Commissioner,

Honourable Ministers

Concluding negotiations involving 106 countries, in the time that we did, is in my assessment highly commendable.

It is laudable because the outcome is positive. Negotiations are a “give and take” process. We have reached a good deal. Thanks to the Parties, which adopted a positive approach. We cultivated the right atmosphere characterised by cordial and fraternal exchanges. On certain occasions, both sides had to compromise their positions, but without losing face or the essence of their interests.

Today’s initialling is an eloquent testimony of the continuous trust and confidence that has characterised our cooperation.

We have completed part of the journey that we started and walked together. We engaged in dialogue, conversation and exchanges, all in pursuit of a workable framework for cooperation – and all for the benefit of our populations. Our attention must now turn to arrangements for signature and to preparations for implementation of the agreement.

Madame Commissioner, permit me, on behalf of the OACPS to sincerely thank you and your team, in particular, Mr Koen Doens, the Director General and other lead negotiators, for your considerable efforts that have brought us to this stage. I should

not forget your predecessor, Commissioner Neven Mimica, and the former Director General Stefano Manservigi, for their role and contribution in the early stages of the negotiations.

I convey deep gratitude to my OACPS Ministers and their collaborators. Their support and contribution is reflected in the good agreement we are about to initial.

I also acknowledge the OACPS Ambassadors here in Brussels for their excellent work. I single out Ambassador Kokou Nayo M'Beou, the Chairman of the Ambassadorial Central Negotiating Group for the leadership he has provided during this entire process.

We are most grateful to the Bureau of the Central Negotiating Group, and Lead Negotiating Ambassadors, namely:

- Ambassador David Hales of Guyana, Vice Chair of the Central Negotiating Group, lead negotiator for some areas of the General Part of the agreement and who was also the Caribbean Chief Negotiator for the Regional Protocol.
- Ambassador Joshua Kalinoe of Papua New Guinea, Vice Chair.
- Ambassador Collin Connelly of Trinidad and Tobago - Chair of Technical Negotiating Group I.
- Ambassador Fatumanava Luteru of Samoa - Chair of Technical Negotiating Group II and who was also the Coordinator for the Pacific in negotiation of the Regional Protocol.

- Ambassador Tadeous Chifamba of Zimbabwe who was Chair of Technical Negotiating Group III, and
- Ambassador Sibusisiwe Mngomezulu of Eswatini, Chair of the Africa Central Negotiating Group and Coordinator of the negotiation for the Africa Regional Protocol.

I also acknowledge the dedication and contribution of the negotiating teams that supported the regional coordinators.

Finally, I express our deep appreciation to the Secretary General of the OACPS, His Excellency Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, and his staff for their technical, administrative and logistical support to the negotiation process.

The outcome of all of those contributions on both sides Madame Commissioner, was the result of excellent teamwork. Let us look to the future of the OACPS-EU relationship with confidence. In our new agreement, we have established the basis for taking our cherished partnership to a higher level.

I thank you for your kind attention.
