

# THE LIBREVILLE DECLARATION

## A. PREAMBLE

1. Anxious to seek ways and means of enabling our peoples to integrate actively and participate in the qualitative changes of the globalizing economy and thus prepare them to face up efficiently and successfully to the stakes and challenges of the third millennium, we the Heads of State and Government of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States, pursuant to the Mauritius Declaration of November 1995: met in Libreville, Gabon, on 6 and 7 November 1997, undertook an in-depth review of the political, economic and social situation in our countries, the relationship amongst our countries, the relationship between our countries and the European Union, and the relationship between our countries and the wider international community.

2. On this historic occasion, we reaffirm our commitment to the principles and objectives enshrined in the Georgetown Agreement which led to the establishment of the ACP Group in 1975. We are also conscious that this Summit is being held at a most critical juncture in the existence of our Group, given the profound changes in the international, political and economic environment, particularly the end of the cold war, the global trading framework and the forthcoming commencement of negotiations between the ACP countries and the European Union (EU) on a successor arrangement to the current ACP-EU Lomé Convention.

3. We affirm that the development of our countries is first and foremost our responsibility and that of our peoples. Consequently we agree to lay a firm foundation for a human-centred, equitable and sustainable development based on sound macro-economic policies, social justice and the rule of law, and collective self-reliance. We recognize the fact that our countries are endowed with immense human and natural resources and it is therefore, our commitment and determination to utilize these resources for the betterment of our peoples.

4. We are conscious of the reality that the process of socio-economic development of our societies is a protracted one and calls for dedicated sustained national efforts and prudent policies in a supportive international environment.

5. We recognize the importance of regional integration, intra-ACP cooperation and cooperation among ACP and other developing countries as a means of promoting the socio-economic development of our countries and strengthening our solidarity. We are determined to intensify our efforts to these ends. In this regard, we re-commit ourselves to implement the Suva Declaration, the Montego Bay Plan and the Harare Declaration.

6. We recognise the contribution of the Lomé Convention to the economic, political, social and cultural development of the ACP countries and the need to strengthen this relationship on the basis of a renewed, true and more equitable partnership. While we firmly believe that this partnership has been mutually beneficial to both the ACP countries and the European Union, we contemplate a new and even more vigorous relationship with the European Union and its member States.

7. We are determined to ensure the gradual and harmonious integration of our countries into the world economy and that future ACP-EU cooperation constitutes one of the effective and coherent frameworks for facilitating the achievement of the ACP's socio-economic development objectives.

## **B. CHALLENGES FOR THE ACP GROUP**

8. Rampant poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation are overriding scourges that affect a large number of our countries. Eradication of the causes of poverty, attainment of food security, and the need to integrate all sections of our population into the mainstream of political, economic and social life remain the top priority of our development efforts.

9. We, attach considerable importance not only to the fight against poverty that besets our peoples, but to the development of a society where human dignity is paramount. We, therefore reaffirm our commitment to the values of democracy, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

10. In support of such a vision for the ACP Group, we dedicate ourselves to:

- (a) strengthen the unity and solidarity of the Group and retain it as a geographical entity;
- (b) enhance the political identity of the ACP Group to enable it to act and speak with a single voice in all international fora;
- (c) consolidate and achieve peace and stability as a precondition for improving the livelihood of our people in a democratic and free environment;
- (d) facilitate the development of the private sector in the context of appropriate macro-economic and sectoral reforms;
- (e) promote and reinforce economic cooperation and regional integration so as to enable ACP countries to increase their competitiveness and to meet the challenges arising from the liberalisation of the world economy;
- (f) develop institutional and human capacity building with particular emphasis on women and young people and their effective participation in development;
- (g) develop education, training and primary health care;
- (h) develop food production so as to ensure food security for the populations;

(l) promote education and training through exchange and cooperation programmes; master information technologies and develop infrastructure, particularly telecommunication informatics;

(j) promote sustainable development and population management policies in rural and urban areas;

(k) preserve the environment and address the issue of rational management of our natural resources, in particular, tackling the problem of desertification, water, and of climate change;

(l) intensify efforts aimed at debt relief for the ACP countries.

11. We invite the EU and the international Community to support the above initiatives of the ACP Group.

### **C. ACP COUNTRIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

12. We recognize that changes on the international scene are engineering a new World Order which demands the adoption of more creative approaches in the management of international affairs. Conscious of the need for change, many of our countries have undertaken painful structural adjustment programmes to adapt to these changes. Most of our countries have also brought about radical reforms in the area of democratization, rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights. We note with satisfaction that as a result of economic and political reforms, prospects for a brighter economic and social development of our countries are improving.

13. We reaffirm our commitment to discharge our international obligations to adhere to and promote a fair international trading system. Nevertheless, we are deeply disturbed by the prospect of disruption in our fragile and vulnerable economies and disintegration of the social fabric of our countries which would arise from the insensitive application of WTO rules and obligations, as potently demonstrated by the recent ruling of the WTO Appellate Body on the EU Banana regime.

14. Unrestrained liberalisation of trade in agricultural products threatens the market advantages safeguarded by the Lomé Convention. We therefore call on the EU and WTO members to accommodate the legitimate interests of ACP producers.

15. We call for a new positive and supportive approach by the developed countries, and the European Union in particular, in addressing the development problems of ACP States. We draw attention to the inequities of the international economic order and to the continued absence of a level playing field, and hence, the need for special and differential treatment for developing countries in the application of rules and regulations governing international economic transactions.

16. In this regard, we strongly call on the international community to adjust WTO rules to the special circumstances and needs of the fragile and weak economies of the least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries.

17. We appeal to the developed countries to honour and give practical effect to their declarations on the environment, the 20-20 social compact, on the gender issues, and to devote the necessary resources to development cooperation, in particular, by attaining the ODA target of 0.15 percent of GNP for the LDCs and 0.7 percent of GNP for other developing countries. We also urge the international Community to pursue the mobilisation of new and additional sources of development finance.

18. We are deeply concerned that the development efforts of many ACP and other developing countries are being seriously hindered by the crippling effects of the debt burden and that initiatives taken so far to alleviate this problem have been slow in coming, too restrictive in scope and too limited in the range of beneficiary countries. Consequently, we urge the developed countries and the multilateral financial institutions to adopt new strategies with a view to relieving ACP's indebtedness.

19. The security of many of our states and their social fabric are constantly threatened by the insidious menace of drug trafficking and its attendant problems, namely, arms smuggling and money laundering. We request the help of the international community in our efforts to develop measures to combat these deadly scourges.

20. In the light of the daunting challenges posed by the fast changing international environment and with the aim of contributing to a meaningful partnership in international relations we resolve:

- a. to organise ourselves collectively and to act as a politically cohesive force in international relations and in fora such as the United Nations and the WTO in order to ensure that the concerns, interests and special needs of ACP States are fully taken into account;
- b. to negotiate for a successor agreement to the Lomé IV Convention which provides for the enhancement and contributes to the accelerated development of our countries;
- c. to establish contacts, and relationships with other countries and groups of countries.

## **D. ACP-EU RELATIONS BEYOND THE YEAR 2000**

### **I. General Framework of ACP-EU Cooperation**

21. We recall the long-standing history of ACP-EU cooperation. This cooperation has been based on principles of solidarity, sovereignty and equality between partners. Among its valued and fundamental aspects are those of predictability, dialogue, partnership and its contractual nature. A new ACP-EU agreement must build on the acquis of the Lomé

Convention, improve its achievements, and address the challenges of a globalizing economy.

22. We also subscribe to the principle of positive differentiation and adaptation of cooperation policies and actions to the needs and specificities of individual countries and regions. We are resolved to preserve and reinforce the unity and solidarity of the ACP Group within the current geographical framework that has stood the test of time. We subscribe to the principle of regionalization to take due account of the challenges of regional integration and the insertion of those countries in the globalizing world economy.

23. Future ACP-EU cooperation should also contribute positively to the realisation of our objective of enhancing regional cooperation and integration.

24. Furthermore, owing to the low level of development of certain regions or groups of countries, we recognize the need to introduce the principle of positive differentiation to meet their increasing development needs. This principle should equally apply in the case of landlocked and small island countries taking due account of the fragility and vulnerability of their economies.

## II. Development Cooperation

25. We recognise the need for a new ACP-EU Cooperation arrangement to respond to and cater for the changing and diverse development requirements of ACP States. To that end, we aim to establish with our European partners a development cooperation agreement, which, in addition to the consolidation, renewal and upgrading of the key elements of earlier Lomé Conventions as outlined above:

- a. places greater emphasis on the development of our human resources, on enhanced access to science and technology, especially on information technology and the financing of research relevant to our socio-economic development;
- b. recognises the peculiar vulnerability of the numerous small states in our Group and the special difficulties posed for the diversification of their economies;
- c. reinforces the development of the service sector in building more balanced and viable economies, with the greatest possible improvement in their competitiveness based primarily on private sector development;
- d. emphasizes the preservation of our environment, thus achieving the sustainable development envisaged by our cooperation;
- e. reinforces human capacity in the agriculture sector; this plays a key role in the reduction of poverty and promotion of socio-economic development, especially in the least-developed countries. In this context, it is necessary to strengthen and reinforce the role of the CTA in ACP institutional capacity development, particularly information

management in order to improve access to technologies for increasing agricultural productivity, commercialisation, food security and rural development; and

f. attaches importance to the accelerated transformation of our economies and to the critical role of industrialization in the economic development of our countries.

### III. Political Cooperation

26. The provisions of a new Convention should establish the framework of a dialogue at appropriate levels that would usher in a new era of ACP/EU partnership. In this regard, we believe that a broader, more intensive political dialogue with the European Union would enhance our partnership and cooperation. Political cooperation should also contribute to the strengthening of regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

27. Joint Assembly deliberations are also valued by the ACP and should be continued and given new vitality. To this end, we mandate the Council of Ministers to take the necessary steps for the early establishment of the ACP Assembly provided for in the Georgetown Agreement, that would enhance the participation of ACP States in the ACP-EU Joint Assembly.

### IV. Trade and Investment

28. We recognize that trade and investment are vital engines of growth and development. In this regard, we commit ourselves to pursuing macro-economic policies that create an environment conducive to expanding trade, encouraging domestic savings and investment and attracting foreign direct investment. We believe, however, that at this initial stage in the transition of our economies, more, appropriate mechanisms of cooperation are necessary to enable us to improve the competitiveness of our economies and further their gradual integration into the world economy.

29. We believe, however, that at this early stage in the transition of our economies, more appropriate mechanisms of cooperation are needed to enable us to improve our competitiveness and further our gradual integration into the world economy.

30. We are conscious that trade preferences, valuable as they are, will not be enough to sustain our competitiveness and improve our export performance. We therefore commit ourselves to undertaking a comprehensive trade development programme. We call upon the EU to assist us in our drive to tackle supply-side constraints, promote vertical and horizontal diversification of our economies and remove other bottlenecks to trade development. We therefore call on the EU to:

a. maintain non-reciprocal trade preferences and market access in a successor agreement;

- b. maintain the preferential commodity protocols and arrangements;
- c. adhere to transparent processes of consultation with the ACP Group prior to the adoption, execution and extension of safeguard and other restrictive trade measures, likely to adversely affect ACP States;
- d. liberalize and improve the existing rules of origin so as to foster the expansion and diversification of ACP exports;
- e. maintain and improve STABEX so that its resources are disbursed more expeditiously;
- f. maintain and improve SYSMIN so as to accelerate investment in our mining industry;
- g. encourage the development of the services sector, including tourism;
- h. strengthen and enhance the role of CDI so as to provide the ACP private sector with the necessary support in the promotion of industrial development activities.

31. We acknowledge the need to foster a culture of private enterprise and strengthen the institutions of a market economy. We therefore commit our governments to promote the development of a socially responsible private sector and encourage its participation in the development process. We intend to continue our efforts to create the kind of environment that attracts foreign direct investment including the appropriate incentive measures. To support these efforts we call on the EU to provide the necessary resources and give incentives to their private sector to ensure that investment is directed to ACP countries, especially by guaranteeing foreign investment. We further call on the EU to support the ACP initiatives to develop dynamic private sector institutions.

32. We also call for the establishment of an ACP-EU business forum of ACP and EU business institutions and enterprises.

33. We urge the European Union to take voluntary initiatives to foster, through mechanisms that have proven successful on international capital markets, access by ACP private enterprises to the funds of the wider segment of the European investment enterprises

#### V. Development Finance

34. Financial and technical assistance play a critical role in our national and regional development. A post-Lomé Agreement should:

- a. ensure that the objectives are coherent and consistent;
- b. ensure necessary financial resources for the development of the ACP countries;

- c. be based on mutual and reciprocal rights and obligations designed to achieve long-term goals and a more explicit allocation of the responsibilities between partners;
- d. establish a co-operation policy and framework that is suitably tailored to specific circumstances of individual ACP States and sensitive to the different needs and conditions in the ACP regions;
- e. establish a post-conflict facility geared towards the needs of countries recovering from war and similar catastrophes;
- f. assist ACP countries with programmes aimed at the protection and rehabilitation of flora and fauna in countries that have been victims of war and host to refugees;
- g. ensure transparency, efficiency and accountability in the use of resources;
- h. establish an investment guarantee agency to facilitate investment flows from EU to the ACP regions. This agency will operate in synergy with the World Bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

35. Delays in the decision-making process, as a result of over-centralization and lack of transparency in procedures and management, hinder the proper and effective absorption of available resources. There is thus a need to simplify and rationalize aid mechanisms and instruments. Similarly, there is a need to ensure both sound management of resources and a clear and pragmatic division of responsibilities. There is a need for the continued reinforcement of national capacity-building and development of expertise with a view to a greater adaptation of the preparation and implementation of national development programmes.

## **E. ORGANISATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ACP GROUP**

36. We are committed to enhancing our cooperation at the international level and to adapting the structure of our organisation to meet the new challenges and to taking advantage of the opportunities arising from the new environment. We accordingly instruct the ACP Council of Ministers to;

- a. review the role of the ACP and ACP-EU institutions with a view to making them more effective and relevant to contemporary challenges;
- b. give directions for future intra-ACP cooperation, bearing in mind the need to maintain cohesion at the sub-regional, regional and international levels;
- c. to organise, on a regular basis and as the need arises, meetings of Ministers responsible for the various aspects of our cooperation;



d. adopt, after appropriate consultations, the ACP negotiating mandate for future ACP-EU relations no later than mid-September 1998.

37. We undertake to maintain our contacts with each other and with the leaders of the European Union, the Commission and the European Parliament to ensure a better understanding and appreciation of the ACP's positions and aspirations.

38. We undertake to meet periodically, and consequently we mandate the Council of Ministers to make the necessary arrangements to this end.

DECISION N°1

**PREPARATION FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The Summit,

RECALLING that cooperation between our countries and the European Union has the object of promoting and expediting the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States and of consolidating and diversifying their relations in a spirit of solidarity and mutual interest;

RECOGNIZING the contribution of the Lomé Convention to the economic, political, social and cultural development of the ACP States and the need to continue this relationship on the basis of equal and true partnership;

HAVING REGARD to the impending negotiations with the European Union with a view to a successor agreement to the Lomé Convention;

INSTRUCTS the Council of Ministers to establish a work programme, at the very latest by January 1998, on a:

- a. negotiating Mandate and strategy;
- b. mechanism for monitoring and reviewing the negotiations.

**Done in Libreville, 7 November 1997**

**Hon. Mr Jean PING H.E. El Hadj Omar BONGO**

**Minister of Plan, Environment and Tourism President of the Republic of Gabon & of the Republic of Gabon President of the First Summit of**

**President, ACP Council of Ministers ACP Heads of State and Government**

## DECISION N°2 ON

### **TRADE**

The Summit,

BEARING IN MIND the globalizing world economy, the importance of trade in goods and services in development, the fast-moving developments in the WTO in which ACP countries are not well represented and where their interests are not fully taken into account;

MINDFUL of the impending negotiations on a new Convention with the EU and the need to give emphasis to trade and investment;

MANDATES the Ministers responsible for trade to meet, not later than the first half of 1998, to consider:

- a. the appropriate measures and frameworks to maximise trade cooperation among all ACP countries, including close ACP cooperation and coordination in the WTO;
- b. the feasibility of establishing ACP Free Trade Areas;
- c. the best ways of protecting, preserving and promoting the ACP's interests in the field of trade in goods and services, paying particular attention to the support required to enhance the supply side capacity, competitiveness and access to world markets.

**Done in Libreville, 7 November 1997**

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## DECISION N°3 ON

### **MONETARY AND FINANCIAL MATTERS**

The Summit,

DEEPLY concerned at the continued indebtedness of ACP countries which makes it practically impossible for them to pursue vital economic and social reforms;

MINDFUL of the efforts currently under way to ease the debt burden of developing countries;

MINDFUL also of the imminence of the European Monetary Union with the establishment of a single currency;

DECIDES to mandate the Ministers of Finance of ACP countries to meet by the end of the first half of 1998, pursuant to Resolution N° 6/LXVI/95 of the 61st Session of the ACP Council of Ministers to formulate strategies aimed, inter alia, at:

- a. securing the speedy implementation of the initiatives on debt already adopted by the international community including the extension of debt-relief measures to other heavily-indebted ACP countries;
- b. ensuring the urgent adoption of a more comprehensive set of measures pertaining to debt, taking full account of debts to multilateral financial institutions;
- c. cancellation of the debt of the least developed countries; significant reduction of multilateral debt; and reduction in the remaining debt stock to sustainable levels;
- d. ensuring closer cooperation and coordination among ACP countries on monetary and financial matters;
- e. examining the implications for ACP countries of the planned EU single currency, including the existing possibilities and potential for enhancing ACP-EU cooperation.

**Done in Libreville, 7 November 1997**

**Hon. Mr Jean PING H.E. El Hadj Omar BONGO**

**Minister of Plan, Environment and Tourism President of the Republic of Gabon & of the Republic of Gabon President of the First Summit of**

**President, ACP Council of Ministers ACP Heads of State and Government**

## DECISION N°4 ON

### **INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS OF THE ACP GROUP**

The Summit,

RECALLING the 1975 Georgetown Agreement as amended and the main objectives thereof,

RECALLING ALSO the 1977 Suva Declaration, the 1980 Montego Bay Plan and the 1985 Harare Declaration;

CONSIDERING that the objectives and aims of the afore-mentioned documents have remained largely unfulfilled;

COGNIZANT of the fundamental needs to strengthen and enhance the capacity of the ACP Group to meet the challenges and imperatives facing it at the coming dawn of a new Century;

DECIDES:

a. to mandate the ACP Council of Ministers to undertake urgently, a review and revision of the overall institutional and organizational arrangements of the ACP Group, with the first meeting taking place before the end of the first quarter of 1998; such review and revision shall include, inter alia:

- inter-governmental arrangements;
- the role of the Presidency and Bureau;
- the nature, range and frequency of Ministerial meetings;
- the framework, structure, composition, organization, role and functioning of the Secretariat;
- the role of the ACP and ACP-EU institutions and the relationship of the Secretariat thereto;
- the facilitation of initiatives to establish relationships with other countries and regions;
- the political aspects of the Group's operations.

b. to request the ACP Council of Ministers to conclude the assigned undertaking by the end of the first half of 1999 at the latest and, in this regard, to determine the procedures and mechanisms required for the fulfilment of its mandate, including the convening of any further meetings necessary;

c. to authorize them to take the steps necessary to enable the resulting modifications to the Georgetown Agreement to be incorporated therein by the end of 1999, and to report thereon to the next Conference of ACP Heads of State and Government;

d. to mandate the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to follow-up the implementation of matters relating to political cooperation under the Convention.

**Done in Libreville, 7 November 1997**

**Hon. Mr Jean PING H.E El Hadj Omar BONGO**

**Minister of Plan, Environment and Tourism President of the Republic of Gabon &  
of the Republic of Gabon President of the First Summit of**

**President, ACP Council of Ministers ACP Heads of State and Government**