

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ACP COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

HON. MISA TELEFONI

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF SAMOA

AT THE 14TH SESSION OF THE ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

KIGALI, RWANDA

WEDNESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2007

- **Honourable Radembino Coniquet, Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly**
- **Honourable Glenys Kinnock, Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,**
- **Honourable Members of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,**
- **Distinguished Invited Guests,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

“Sheer beauty so pure it takes my breath away”

Rupert Brooke

These are the words used by famous English poet Rupert Brooke when he first set eyes on my country – Samoa.

Our ACP region is equally blessed by God, Allah, or whatever divine deity you subscribe to, in so many ways.

It is my honour as your chosen ACP President to address you this afternoon.

We must work in perfect harmony and in close collaboration with our donor partners, and especially the European Union, to ensure that all our ACP citizens can live happy, productive, and fulfilling lives.

Only if we achieve these lofty goals, can our leaders rest easy at nights knowing nobody in our respective countries is going to bed hungry, oppressed, abused, exposed to disease, and without access to housing and education.

It is a cause of grave concern that many of our ACP States are nowhere near achieving their Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – especially in the areas of health, education and access to basic human rights. I will show below, that this is not a situation all of our own making.

Good governance is still a lofty ideal for many of our countries, and the twin pillars of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty are still beyond the grasp of many of our members.

Indeed, all of you ACP and EU Parliamentarians have much to concern you, you have many serious issues to address. These are all lofty but highly achievable goals that are the only justifiable basis and foundation of any ACP-EU Partnership.

In this context, it concerns me that all the global verbose infatuation with the western concept of democracy, has resulted from the West losing sight of the reality of the need for culturally sensitive democratic processes.

As I stated in a lecture on Good Governance at Georgetown University – *“For any agenda of development and reform to be successful, sensitivity must be shown to the particular country’s unique situation, and the appropriate time frame for necessary changes to occur provided for”*

Our focus must be the relentless and indefatigable search for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

The Holy Bible tells us *“the love of money is the root of all evil”*. Abject poverty however, drives decent persons to commit the most heinous of crimes – just to put a little bread on the table to feed their families.

Why else has the Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Micro-Credit guru Mohammed Yunus? Micro-credit lifts the self esteem of its borrowers by enabling them to earn a living.

Poverty is the breeding ground for violence, abuse, and yes, even terrorism.

What then is the main challenge for this Assembly?

We must strive to lift our peoples out of poverty and set our economies on the path to sustainable development.

We must strive to allow our people access to a decent education, good health, and credit to enable them to earn a reasonable living. Micro-credit schemes are just as vital as the provision of essential social services, in terms of achieving these goals.

STOCK TAKE

Any stock take of our current situation offers hope but not a great deal has been achieved, but not all has been our fault.

It is quite clear now that the promises of the G8 Summit in Gleneagles were not worth either the hot air of the rhetoric, or indeed the paper those promises were written on.

The vulnerability of the ACP Group, due to natural disasters and armed conflicts, is aggravating the economic degradation that signals that most of our countries will not achieve our MDGs.

It is the major challenge for all of us to ensure that these issues, and all aspects of human security, remain the focus of national, regional, and international development policies.

RATIFICATION OF THE REVISED COTONOU AGREEMENT

**Excellencies,
Co-Presidents,**

Before I proceed any further, I must express my concerns at the slow pace of the ratification of the Revised Cotonou Agreement. To date, 17 EU Member States and 31 ACP States have ratified and deposited their instruments of ratification of the Revised Cotonou Agreement. To enter into force, the Agreement must be ratified by two thirds of the members of the ACP Group and all the Member States of the EU. Without the completion of this ratification process, it will not be possible to access the resources of the 10th EDF as of 01 January 2008.

We have a duty as Parliamentarians to pressure our Governments and demand that the ratification process is completed before the end of this year. This is a serious matter, and we should not fail our peoples who are, and should be the main focus and beneficiaries of our joint development cooperation efforts.

ACTIVITIES OF THE ACP GROUP

**Excellencies,
Co-Presidents,**

INAUGURAL ACP MINISTERS OF HEALTH MEETING

The ACP Council of Ministers remains committed to addressing the social, economic and developmental challenges that I have outlined and which continue to be the main challenges to the ACP Group.

Last month, from 25 to 27 October 2007, the ACP Group held the Inaugural ACP Ministers of Health Meeting at ACP House in Brussels. Ministers discussed the many challenges of health management in ACP States, especially in the light of the fact that many of the ACP States are nowhere near achieving the relevant Millennium Development Goals in Health.

The ACP Ministers of Health reaffirmed the importance of intra-ACP dialogue in the framework of the Georgetown Agreement, and particularly within the context of the ACP-EU Partnership. This may only be achieved by placing health issues at the centre of development programmes in our countries. The ACP Ministers of Health adopted a substantive Brussels Declaration on Health for Sustainable Development in ACP States and its Framework for Action and Recommendations. This is a major achievement and we congratulate the Secretary-General and the ACP States Secretariat for this initiative.

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

ACP States participated actively in the 1st Global Forum on Migration and Development that was held in Brussels during the period 9 to 11 July 2007. The meeting was attended by representatives of 160 States and many Non-State Actors. ACP Representatives underscored the importance of a global and multi-disciplinary approach to migration and development. This is the only way forward to ensure that the positive and developmental elements stemming from migration can be further enhanced and utilized, not only for the alleviation of poverty but also the promotion of sustainable development in our Region.

EPA NEGOTIATIONS

**Excellencies,
Co-Presidents,**

These negotiations have to a large extent, not been successful. At least in terms of Cotonou's promise of a fair and equitable partnership among equals. The ACP Group and EU should be in the final phase of the negotiations of EPAs. The intention was to put in place WTO compatible trading arrangements by 1 January 2008. During the period 6 to 9 November 2007, the ACP Group held a meeting of ACP Ministers responsible for EPAs in Brussels to discuss progress in the EPA negotiations. The Ministers reiterated concerns that have been raised before at various fora regarding critical aspects of these EPA negotiations. The concern

was whether these EPAs will be tools for development or will further impoverish and marginalise ACP States in the global economy. All trade negotiations are difficult, and the concerns that ACP States have raised before should not be construed to mean that ACP States are not willing to negotiate WTO compatible agreements with the EU. The critical word here is negotiations, which implies reasonable flexibility by both parties.

It would be fair to say, in this regard, that the EU and ACP States should conclude mutually agreed EPAs. Their trading relationship needs to be compatible to a system in which developing countries have repeatedly found it extremely hard and most of the time, failed to obtain significant advantage.

The ACP States have entered into these negotiations in good faith, despite many well founded misgivings in certain quarters. ACP States are ready and willing to conclude negotiations which will not make them worse off than under the current regime, but which on the contrary, will promote their development and effective integration in the world economy.

The concerns of ACP States on EPAs have been emphasised many times before, and it is now about time that our message is heard.

It is quite clear that for EPAs to work, and to be an effective tool for sustainable development, we need to implement measures to address these key factors:

- i. Devote additional resources, and make them accessible more easily and promptly, to address supply side and other structural constraints to boost production capacity, strengthen competitiveness and diversify economies in ACP States;

- ii. EPAs must be based on the premise that no ACP State should be worse off after 1 January 2008;
- iii. The different levels of development among negotiating partners needs to be accounted for in the obligations imposed;
- iv. The regional integration element of EPAs should ensure support for, and a positive contribution to the regional integration processes in ACP Regions. They must never dictate the pace of that integration;
- v. The need to ensure an adequate transition period to allow ACP States to put in place complementary measures that will allow them to closely monitor EPAs; and
- vi. Reform the EU's Common Agricultural Policy in such a way that it contributes to more sustainable agriculture production in Europe, which must not harm the agricultural and trade interests of third countries.

We must ensure that ACP States not in a position to enter into EPAs are provided with a new framework for trade that is at least equivalent to the status quo, and in conformity with WTO rules. Any other outcome makes a farce of the entire process.

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO) DOHA ROUND

**Excellencies,
Co-Presidents,**

On 9 November, 2007, ACP Ministers of Trade issued a substantive Communiqué on the WTO Doha Round of Negotiations. The main focus of that communiqué, are detailed below:

- i. Emphatic reiteration that the development dimension must be included in all aspects of the results of the Doha Round. Express concern that to date, limited progress has been made to address the development dimension especially in terms of ensuring that development is reflected in all areas of the WTO Doha Work Programme. Making Special and Differential Treatment more precise, effective and operational. Express concern that no Agreement has been reached on outstanding implementation issues.
- ii. Emphasise that the modalities to be agreed upon must reflect the ACP Group's interests and concerns. ACP Ministers were always committed to contribute to the Round in a collective effort to achieve its development outcomes.
- iii. Call on WTO Members to be fully engaged in the negotiations by demonstrating the necessary political will to address the development concerns of developing countries. This engagement is based on the principle of shared benefits but differentiated responsibilities.
- iv. Re-affirm the primacy of the multilateral process in the WTO Doha Round of trade negotiations. Welcome the resumption of multilateral negotiations in Geneva which respect the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and a bottom-up approach; and
- v. Recall that the outcome of the WTO Doha Work Programme shall be a "single undertaking". Stress that all issues of importance to members must be considered in a balanced and equitable manner.

POLITICAL SITUATION IN ACP STATES

**Excellencies,
Co-Presidents,**

Development policy, development cooperation and political dialogue, are closely linked and inter-related. Our Group is striving to address, as effectively as possible, the deep-rooted causes of conflict and instability in the ACP Group. This may be achieved through intra-ACP political dialogue, with a view to implementing the principles and objectives of the Cotonou Agreement. Real, sustainable development can only be achieved in an environment of peace, security and stability. Although there has been considerable progress in establishing peace, security and stability in the ACP Group, a number of on-going and simmering conflicts are still a cause for concern. All the gains that we are striving to make in development cooperation and trade will come to nothing as long as there is political instability within and among ACP States and Regions.

We are encouraged by the progress made towards resolving the Darfur crisis. However, the complete resolution of the crisis remains a major challenge. The situation for civilians is far from secure. The crisis has spilled over into neighbouring Chad, despite the best efforts of the African Union and the United Nations. This kind of political insecurity creates conditions for other types of crimes to be perpetuated. I am pleased to inform you that, on behalf of the ACP Group, the ACP Committee of Ambassadors, on 31 October 2007, issued a Declaration which condemned the attempted abduction of minors from Abéché in Chad. We must ensure that this Declaration is effective in putting a stop to such inhumanity.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate those ACP States that held successful Legislative and Presidential Elections during 2007. Electoral cycles are a fundamental feature of democracy. I should add, though, that elections

should not be seen as an end in themselves, but as part of wider democratic process that build and strengthens and promote effective political participation, good governance and respect for human rights. These are our only refuge against tyranny and oppression from which our people have already suffered enough.

It goes without saying that as colleagues, within the ACP family of Nations, we need to help each other as much as we are able when conflicts and other such turmoil, impact on the lives and livelihoods of our people.

PERSPECTIVES OF THE ACP GROUP FOR 2008

Excellencies, Co-Presidents,

The ACP Group continues to be confronted with many challenges, and it is our duty to always endeavour to formulate and align present activities to address some of the most pressing development challenges facing our people.

Given the current global outlook, and taking into consideration the historical context of ACP-EU cooperation, the ACP Group is currently in discussions concerning its future, and how it can continue to play an effective role on behalf of its members on the international scene. At the next Session of the ACP Council of Ministers that is scheduled to be held in mid- December 2007 in Brussels, one of the issues that Council will discuss will be the Report of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors on the Future of the ACP Group.

In October 2008, the 6th Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government shall be held in Accra, Ghana at which major issues of importance to the ACP Group, including the future of the ACP Group, EPAs, human security, and the political situation in ACP States will be discussed.

INAUGURAL MEETING OF ACP MINISTERS OF MINES

The ACP Group will be holding its first Meeting of ACP Ministers of Mines, especially given the strategic importance of the mining industry, not only to sustainable development, but also to peace, security and stability in ACP States.

COMMON ACP POSITION ON MIGRATION

Migration is today one of the most prominent global issues. In preparation for the 2nd Global Forum on Migration and Development in the Philippines during September 2008, the ACP Ministers responsible for Migration, Mobility and Asylum will meet in Brussels to develop a common ACP position for this Forum. The ACP Group is giving due recognition to the importance of the migration and development nexus for the advancement of our peoples and States.

MONTERREY CONSENSUS

The Monterrey Consensus of 2005 produced a global partnership for development in which developing countries would adopt policies to improve the mobilization of domestic resources while developed countries pledged to provide additional financing and improved access to their markets. This agreement would ensure that these policies had the potential to produce the desired results, in terms of economic growth, macroeconomic stability and poverty reduction. The UN General Assembly has called for an international conference on financing for development to be convened in Doha in the latter half of 2008. This Conference will reaffirm goals and commitments of the Monterrey Consensus. It will also focus on sharing best practices and lessons learned, and identify the obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and initiatives to be overcome and important measures for their further implementation.

This conference will also focus on new challenges and other emerging issues. Since the members of the ACP Group form the majority of beneficiaries of the Monterrey Consensus, we should all be participating in this follow-up Conference in Doha in order to provide our perspectives on the best way to realise the promises of the Monterrey Consensus.

GLOBAL WARMING-ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Given the importance of the global debate on climate change, the ACP Group will play its part and participate fully in initiatives to safeguard our planet. It is also appropriate that your Assembly pass a Motion for a Resolution on Natural Disasters, which is closely linked to climate change.

The global emphasise on environmental issues is fully accepted by and integrated into the agenda for the ACP Council.

CONCLUSION

Excellencies,

Co-Presidents,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to note that many of these concerns have been considered by you. I challenge you not to relent but to continue to exercise your mandate with the courage, conviction and persistence that you have always demonstrated.

We must all be unashamedly proactive to protect the interests of our peoples, who quite rightly look to us to improve both their lives and their livelihoods.

I conclude by paying tribute to President Paul Kagame, and the People and Government of Rwanda, for being such excellent and cordial hosts.

It has been an honour and a privilege for me to have this important opportunity to address you on these issues of crucial importance to our joint development agenda.

Thank you for your attention and your patience.

I wish you all every success in your important deliberations ahead.

God bless ma la Manuia

Hon. Misa Telefoni

President of the ACP Council of Ministers

Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa
