



ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

14 February 2014

**11th REGIONAL MEETING (EAST AFRICA) OF THE
ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

**Port Louis, Mauritius
12-14 February 2014**

Port Louis Communiqué

Website of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp>

Introduction

In accordance with Article 17 of the Cotonou Agreement and Article 6 of the Rules of Procedure of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA), Members of the Assembly from the East Africa Region of the ACP Group and their European Parliament counterparts held a regional meeting in Port Louis, Mauritius, from 12 to 14 February 2014. Members expressed gratitude to the Government and Parliament of Mauritius for hosting the meeting and the excellent facilities put in place for the success of the meeting.

Their discussions focused on the following subjects:

Progress and challenges of regional integration in the region, including Economic Partnership Agreements and the EDF Financing

Members underscored the crucial importance of regional integration in creating an enabling environment for economic growth, employment, development and poverty reduction, and called for the harmonisation and rationalisation of regional integration processes given the multiple and overlapping memberships of regional organisations, which could compromise the objectives of integration. Members also acknowledged the financial support of the EU to regional integration processes in East Africa.

Members took note of the recent developments on the negotiation of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). Members noted the potential of EPAs for economic growth and emphasised the need for EPAs to foster development and to support regional integration.

ACP Members expressed concerns on the elimination of EU sugar quotas scheduled for 2017, and called for additional time to complete their adjustment processes, because the abolition of sugar quotas could lead to loss of competitiveness, revenues and adversely affect living conditions.

ACP Members called for the EU to recognise the special vulnerability of Small Island Developing States and therefore to apply a transitional period for phasing out bilateral development funds under the 'differentiation' policy of the EU's Agenda for Change.

Regional infrastructure development

Members stated the need to prioritise infrastructural investments as a vector and catalyst for the development of other sectors. They expressed appreciation of the efforts of regional integration bodies in East Africa in particular, and in the rest of Africa in general, to coordinate infrastructural programmes and investments both at the regional and continental level, in which process they also recognised the support of donors such as the European Union.

Whilst acknowledging the steps that had been taken, Members stressed that attention also needed to be paid to the needs of islands nations for marine and air transport, as well as digital connectivity, in order to assist them to contribute to, and benefit fully from, regional integration.

Conflict and terrorism prevention

Members recalled the importance of targeting root causes of conflicts, such as social injustice, growing inequality, unemployment, and lack of public services. Members stressed the need to

focus on conflict prevention, strengthening early warning systems and exchange of information. Prevention of conflicts and terrorism requires political will for appropriate responses in a coordinated and timely manner.

Members called for targeted actions particularly for youth, such as education and skills development programmes to support their livelihoods and prevent them from criminal activities.

Members noted the need for effective controls of the supply of small arms and light weapons to prevent armed conflicts and violence and protect potential victims, in particular women and children. East African ACP Members sought the support of the EU Member States in securing the ratification of the UN Arms Trade Treaty in order to stop the flow of arms to conflict regions.

Piracy

Piracy is an increasingly important global concern, a threat to maritime transport security that negatively affects the economies of the region. Members welcomed the success of international efforts (such as the EU-NAVFOR-ATALANTA operation), and in particular the good cooperation of EU and regional partners in the process of reducing pirate attacks in the Indian Ocean.

Members recalled the need to strengthen institutions, especially of the government of Somalia, to combat piracy, and to enhance judicial cooperation efforts to bring pirates to justice. They also called for efforts to trace the ransom money in the international financial system because of the possible links to other criminal activities and networks.

Urbanisation challenges, waste management and development

Members recognised the challenges generated by rapid urbanisation, such as effective waste management, adequate supply of physical and social infrastructure, as well as safe drinking water. They expressed concern at the disproportionate attention paid to improving facilities in urban areas at the expense of rural areas, which only fuels further urban growth, leading to more overcrowding in cities.

Members emphasised the need for political will, decentralisation strategies and appropriate legislative frameworks to encourage sorting, recycling and sustainable management of household, industrial and electronic waste. They further noted that, given the health and environmental hazards of medical waste, including radioactive materials, these should be treated separately within hospital facilities. Whilst solid waste management was fraught with challenges, members recognised that it also had potential for the production of green energy (biogas, oil), as well as reused and recycled goods.

Members called for an integrated approach to address the challenges of waste, waste water and energy. Members also raised concerns that urban concentration generates increased levels of waste water, which weaken sanitation systems with consequent risks to public health.

The services industry and its contribution to development

Members recalled the contribution of the services industry, such as tourism, health and educational services to development. While acknowledging the importance of the financial

industry for other sectors of the economy, they highlighted the need for effective and adequate regulation to ensure ethical practices and avoid money laundering. Tax havens were also highlighted as areas that needed to be addressed nationally as well as through international cooperation in order to ensure fiscal justice for all.

The dangers of over-reliance on the financial sector were highlighted as well as the need for the right balance between the financial and other sectors. While there was scope for private sector participation, social services such as education and health are the prime responsibility of government.

Improving democratic accountability through strengthening institutions for democracy

Members commended Mauritius as a model of democracy and accountability, which is characterised by effective separation of powers, independent judiciary, free and fair elections, and respect for human rights. Mauritius' experience in this area offers valuable lessons for other countries in the region.

Members stressed the general importance of free and independent media and raised concerns about the growing influence of financial and other operators in this sector. They called on parliaments and all other public institutions to uphold ethical standards, good governance, transparency and accountability. Members noted the importance of gender equality and stressed the need for a change of mentality to ensure equality of opportunity and participation in all sectors of life.

Members called on the Co-Presidents to present the conclusions of the regional meeting to the 27th session of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly to be held in Strasbourg, France, in March 2014, and to forward them to the ACP Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament, the European Commission, regional economic communities (COMESA, EAC, IOC and IGAD) in the East African region, the Pan-African Parliament, the African Union Commission, the ACP Group of States, the Governments and National Parliaments of the East African region of the ACP Group of States and to the EU Member States.