



STATEMENT¹ BY
HON. IBRAHIM RASSIN BUNDU
CO-PRESIDENT OF THE ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
at the
34th SESSION OF THE ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
Karibe Conference Centre, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Monday, 18 December 2017

¹ Check against delivery

**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT-IN-OFFICE OF THE ACP
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (JAMAICCA) AT THE 34th SESSION OF
THE ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

- *H.E. Mr. Jovenel Moise, President of the Republic of Haiti,*
- *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti, His Excellency Mr. Guy Lafontant,*
- *President of the Senate of Haiti, Hon Youri Latortue,*
- *President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Haiti, Hon. Cholzer Chancy,*
- *Ministers of the Government of Haiti,*
- *Members of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,*
- *Members of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies of Haiti,*
- *Acting Secretary-General of ACP Group of States, H.E. Mr. Léonard-Emile Ognimba,*
- *Distinguished invited guests,*
- *Ladies and gentlemen,*

It is a singular honour and privilege for me to address this session of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly here in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Since Haiti is still in effect in an election year, allow me to present the congratulations of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly to you, Mr. President, on your election as President of Haiti on 7 February 2017. We wish you success in your onerous task of continued political, economic and social transformation of your beautiful country.

I also take this opportunity to express the gratitude of the ACP Group and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in particular, to the Government, Parliament and People of Haiti for offering to host these meetings, and for all the attendant facilities that they have put in place for the convenience and comfort of Members.

Members of the JPA are well cognizant of the fact that hosting these kinds of parliamentary meetings is a huge undertaking in terms of the logistical, human

and financial resources involved. That Members States are willing to take on these costs in the face of other national demands is truly an expression of ACP solidarity and demonstration of commitment to ACP-EU cooperation, and one that deserves special recognition especially in the case of Haiti, which had a very short notice to plan for these meetings. It is even more remarkable given the natural disasters and other emergencies that Haiti has gone through in the recent past.

Prime Minister, President of the Senate,

Haiti occupies a special place in the consciousness of ACP countries, having been the first independent Republic founded by people of African descent.

Historian Laurent Dubois in his book “Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution” put it very succinctly when he said that,

“By creating a society in which all people, of all colours, were granted freedom and citizenship, the Haitian Revolution forever transformed the world. It was a central part of the destruction of slavery in the Americas, and therefore a crucial moment in the history of democracy, one that laid the foundation for the continuing struggles for human rights everywhere. In this sense we are all descendants of the Haitian Revolution, and responsible to these ancestors.”

The history of Haitians is mirrored in the travails of peoples of the third world. Their struggles to free themselves from the shackles of oppression, to found a new nation, to define their own place in a hostile world, are experiences most ACP countries can identify with. Along the way, most ACP states have experienced similar false dawns and false hopes, internal strife as well as external interference and intervention.

The vision of the founding father of Haiti’s independence, Toussaint Louverture, to create a society in which people of all races would be equal before the law and could rise according to their abilities, is still as relevant today as it was then.

Hon. Members,

At this JPA, ACP and EU Parliamentarians will again have an opportunity to reflect on the issues that affect the ACP partnership and uphold the democratic principles on which it is based. This Assembly and its members individually and collectively have been a force for good in the quest for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

The JPA is a product of the evolution of the ACP-EU Partnership, and was created to provide parliamentary legitimacy and an institutional framework for parliamentary cooperation between the ACP Group and the EU, its principle development partner. The primary objective of the JPA is to promote and facilitate greater understanding between the peoples of the EU and those of the ACP States, and in furtherance of this primary objective, to compliment the efforts of other institutions and organisations in realising the objectives of the ACP-EU partnership.

The JPA helps to play an important role in fostering the democratic nature of ACP-EU cooperation. There are still no equivalent international organisations that bring together legislators representing peoples of diverse economic, cultural and political backgrounds from developing and developed countries dedicated to fostering and enhancing development.

The post-Cotonou Agreement must therefore continue to have a strong Parliamentary dimension, as we clearly stated in the Declaration that we adopted at the 33rd Session of the JPA in Malta.

Mr. President,

The key word in ACP-EU relations is ‘partnership’. This extends to the way global issues are addressed and managed beyond the ACP-EU circle, as we are all part of the larger international community. The social, political, financial and ecological emergencies that the world has been experiencing recently have vindicated the need for the international community to address the challenges that the world faces from the premise of partnership and shared common interests. The antithesis to this approach is a self-centred approach based on unbridled national interest only, which might not be sustainable in the long-term.

Mr. President,

The greatest challenge that most ACP States still have to grapple with before they can make any advances on the development front is ensuring and sustaining the right political and institutional environment for sustainable development and the reduction of poverty. This is the responsibility of each and every Member State, because sustainable development and political processes have to be driven by the citizens themselves, who have intimate knowledge of the needs of their populations and who can take long-term responsibility for their development processes. The international community can only assist in this respect, especially through vigilance to ensure that governments respect the political and development aspirations of their own people.

Mr. President,

The themes of the Urgent Motions for Resolution and the Reports from the Standing Committees that will be presented during this Session amply reflect some of the most pressing challenges of ACP and EU States.

For instance, the debate on the role of natural resources in promoting sustainable development is a multi-faceted question with implications for peace and security as well as the health and well-being of people, especially with regard to mineral extraction. A number of resource rich countries have been being adversely affected by the lack of efficient and sustainable management of their natural resource base. There is, further, concern about how natural resource depletion is affecting environmental diversity.

A related topic to that of natural resources is the blue economy. This is an issue of special importance for countries in the Caribbean such as Haiti. Oceans, which are critical to the ecological and climatic balance of our planet, will be discussed in the context of the opportunities and challenges offered by the appropriate utilisation of ocean resources. The same concern about natural resources motivated our thinking to discuss sustainable tourism.

The Committee on Political Affairs will present a report on challenges in the security development-nexus in ACP and EU policies. Development and peace are closely linked. Indeed, real, sustainable development can only be achieved in an environment of peace, stability, security and solidarity.

Mr. President, Hon. Members,

As I end, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate those ACP States that held successful legislative and presidential elections in 2017. Electoral cycles are a fundamental feature of democracy. However, I must hasten to add that elections should not be seen as an end in themselves, but as part of a wider process of institutional building and strengthening that promotes 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.

Mr. President, Prime Minister, Hon. Members,

I thank you for your kind attention.
