

**ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

**Draft**

**SPEECH**

**by**

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Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is always so much that needs to be said at the outset.

Let me first extend a welcome to our newest ACP state – Timor Leste.

This JPA will want to express its deep concern about the recent breakdown of civil order in that country. These events serve to prove how necessary it is to maintain support for such a new nation which has emerged from a brutal occupation. On Thursday morning, we will have a short debate on the situation in Timor Leste.

May I also say how pleased I am to welcome our new Member of Parliament from Haiti. I would like to assure her that we will continue to give every support to her country's efforts to build peace and security.

And we also celebrate the election of Ellen Sirleaf Johnson as President of Liberia and the first woman President in Africa. We welcome their newly elected Member of Parliament.

Colleagues, there are many uncertainties surrounding the African Caribbean Pacific relationship at this time.

I believe that the Commission's focus on the A, the C and the P in separate Strategy Papers is a cause for concern.

ACP countries are having to deal with the end of their post-colonial economies – particularly preferential trade arrangements - and also to adjust to a Europe of 25, or more, nations.

I do perceive a weakening of that "special relationship" between Europe and the ACP. For instance, the Caribbean is increasingly portrayed as an "add-on" to Latin America.

I am, you know, often asked when I travel in ACP countries why it is that Europe is now so preoccupied with security issues, migration, tax avoidance and money laundering rather than with development? This question remains as we look, for instance, at the decisions Europe is taking on budgetary matters, including on the EDF.

Colleagues,

As we meet this week, so our footballers meet in the World Cup, which is, as Kofi Annan has said is, 'a truly global game played in every country, by every race, and every religion'.

Like him, I wish that we were paying as much attention to where we are in the human development league tables. Also that we were actually competing with each other for the best record on human rights, on school enrolment, or on mother's survival rates in developing countries.

In football, the rules are the same everywhere - in Ghana and Germany, in Trinidad and Tobago and in Togo. It is genuine "level playing field", where the rules are equal and fair.

All the teams now representing ACP countries include players who now live, and play, in Europe. They are welcomed and feted by us, and are often household names. How different that is to the experience of so many migrants who arrive, or indeed are washed up on our shores?

In the coming weeks, World Cup goals will count. Our task here is not a game, but we too will focus on goals – the Millennium Development Goals.

2005 was a watershed and now we need to take stock and assess whether things are on track.

- Over 10 million children's lives are still being lost every year by preventable diseases.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  of rural and low income families in least developed countries do not even have access to water and basic sanitation.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  of African countries are likely to fulfil the goal of universal primary education.
- Although 1 million HIV infected people in poor countries now have access to treatment, this still leaves 6 million people without the medicines they desperately need.
- Only 34 of 143 developing countries, it is estimated, are on track towards halving the number of underweight children.

Indeed, according to the OECD, on current trends most of Africa will fail to meet the target of halving poverty by 2015.

So we have to ask,

Where are we on those pledges?

Where are we on that vision of global mutual accountability?

On debt, there has been substantial progress. In April this year, the largest part of the debt cancellation agreed at Gleneagles was confirmed. But, without full cancellation, 60 countries will fail to meet the MDGs.

On levels of aid, there is a lot of "creative accounting" going on by donors. True aid figures continue to be obscured because official figures still count debt-cancellation deals as new foreign aid.

Once we take into account this clear inflation of the figures, the G8's overall increase in aid for 2005 stands at a meagre 9%.

We need to know now what the future allocation of aid will be. Better scrutiny is urgently needed.

Here in the JPA, and in the European Parliament, we must put pressure on EU Governments to be more transparent and to provide annual reports assessing the progress towards that 0.7% target, the MDGs, and on the effectiveness and quality of aid. That information could be collated by European Finance Ministers at their Council meetings.

The task is to ensure that growth can be pro-poor, that aid can be flexible and better coordinated, and that governance is improved. Then, and only then, will we see real advances on the poverty eradication targets. Indeed, only then will we be able to create the kind of investment climate that the ACP economies need.

Trade remains a source of great concern. The stakes are high and the chance to achieve the potential offered by multilateral trade continues to elude us.

20 years ago, Africa's share of world trade was 6%. Now it stands at 2%.

Meanwhile, the Doha Development Round lurches from one crisis to the next.

Hong Kong was just one step up from failure.

All this is more frustrating, because we know all too well that the potential exists. Just 40 years ago John F Kennedy announced that the purpose of 1960's Trade Round was, and I quote,

'About offering the opportunity to help developing countries like Japan.'

Now look at Japan 40 years later!

Past stories of success teach us that it is only when economies have grown and developed that trading opportunities can be grasped. Developing countries have to allowed to choose the timing and pace of liberalisation and provided with the resources to help them deal with it.

Negotiators continue to grapple with the question of how the benefits of global trade should be shared. There is a strong feeling amongst developing countries that the development dimension of the Doha Round is largely missing.

Peter Mandelson struggles to whip 25 EU member states into some semblance of an agreement to move on agriculture.

Simultaneously, he battles with the powerful emerging economies like Brazil and India, and with the intransigence of the US. Time is running out. The deadlock must be broken if we are to secure an ambitious deal in this trade round.

Agriculture is the key but Europe remains stubbornly defensive.

Agricultural protectionism by Europe and America accounts for \$300 billion a year in subsidies. This amounts to more than the entire income of all the people of Africa and dwarfs the \$50 billion spent on aid for the poorest. That is why many of us are calling for a radical reform of the Common Agricultural Policy which actually sets a timetable to end all forms of agricultural protectionism.

Similarly we should be concerned about proposals from the EU and others which are perceived as unfair pressure to open up fragile manufacturing and service industries to European and US competition.

Minister Patel of Zambia, who leads the LDC group in the WTO, said in Hong Kong, 'Here we are weak because we are marginalised, and marginalised because we are weak.'

This view was reinforced for me when I chaired a press conference on sugar in Hong Kong. Senior ACP Ministers expressed their deep concern and sense of betrayal about how they are being treated.

How it can be that, after the much needed reform of the EU sugar regime, almost €8 billion is allocated for European farmers, and yet there still remains uncertainty about how and when support will be offered to the ACP Sugar Protocol countries? I believe it is unlikely that the Commission's promise of €200 million a year will materialise. In Port Moresby, Ministers called for adequate and timely support and also, of course, an insistence that the funding must be front-loaded.

Since Hong Kong, negotiations have gone on in Geneva and the ACP Group have said very clearly that they will not agree to any WTO deal on agriculture which doesn't take their concerns into account, especially on, for instance, tariff reduction on sensitive products and the Special Safeguard Mechanism.

The missing and misunderstood development dimension remains a central issue at the WTO talks, as it does in the EPA negotiations.

As Dame Billie Miller, who joins us tomorrow, said so eloquently, "An EPA is not an end in itself, but a tool for development".

Under Cotonou, these trade negotiations are defined as being development orientated and an agreement is required by the end of 2007 before the WTO waiver runs out.

At each JPA, we ask what is being done to address concerns about the mainstreaming of development and about supply side constraints. Instead of forced liberalisation, ACP countries must be able to decide, plan and sequence their progress towards an EPA.

On EPAs, the ACP countries are pointing out that they won't be able to survive market opening to Europe if they are not given timely and substantial assistance to overcome structural difficulties, poor infrastructure, unreliable utilities, weak institutions, low productivity and fragile industries.

Now it seems money for EPA support will be available from the EDF. But beware. It's a double-edged sword. Money from the EDF for EPAs means less money from the EDF for our other development objectives. Equally, money from the Development Cooperation Instrument for sugar would mean less money for development elsewhere. This JPA cannot accept a robbing Peter to pay Paul approach to development spending.

In our Committees on Saturday, issues relating to governance and corruption were raised. Corruption is indeed a symptom of systems of governance having failed.

The EU, the UN and, last year, the Commission for Africa, pushed for transparency and accountability, and called for more to be done to build capacity and instigate dialogue on how to support areas which are of concern.

The checks and balances are already in place – there is a proliferation of agreements on the international law enforcement on money laundering, anti-bribery commitments, and anti-corruption agreements. We have in place the UN Convention against Corruption and also the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. I trust that the Political Affairs Committee will look at these issues and report back at our meeting in Germany next year.

None of us should feel defensive about what is already agreed between countries and confirmed by Cotonou.

The EU needs also to strengthen its own measures on these issues, including cracking down on large companies operating in the developing world, and particularly on dealing with export credit guarantees.

We should heed the example set by the Nigerian Finance Minister who is seeking root and branch reform of her Government's systems. This includes ensuring that Nigeria signs up to transparency in the accounts of the oil industry, and puts in place an audit on all government contracts.

If this example is not followed, I fear that ACP countries' efforts to meet the MDGs might be severely damaged.

We have to build a bold framework of human rights and democracy and the rule of law.

There can be no justification for a government's oppression of its people.

Excuses are meaningless to women that have been raped and abused as they collect firewood in the refugee camps in Darfur, or to those tortured, impoverished and silenced, or to war weary people who have no security, no judiciary and no rights, or to those who are promised democracy but never get the chance to vote or choose.

All the statistics I could reel off cannot convey the humiliation, the hopelessness and the loss of dignity felt by millions of people.

They can feel invisible, irrelevant and forgotten when they have no recourse to justice.

Just being female means for so many such terrible disadvantage because of never going to school, to being politically excluded, and without any income of your own.

The mothers and children I saw on the Kenya/Somalia border in May who were so pitifully thin and hungry, the cane cutters in the field in Mauritius where livelihoods are so threatened because of the EU Sugar reform, the HIV patients in Swaziland with the highest rate of infection in the world who don't have access to the medicines, and the Mauritanian politicians and their citizens struggling to build democracy and security. These are the images of the missions we have undertaken since we last sat in plenary. They are images which stay with me and galvanise me to do more.

We have interlocking precise aims – as Europeans to deliver our promises and as developing countries to continue with efforts on comprehensive reform. The positive energy of 2005 continues but without more action it could be disrupted and the global opportunity lost. We must, as the Millennium Summit declared in 2000,

'Spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty'.

It is time to finally turn the corner on extreme poverty. For this let us have less grandstanding rhetoric and more action.