

**Glenys Kinnock MEP, Co-President ACP-EU Joint  
Parliamentary Assembly**

**16th Joint Parliamentary Assembly,  
Ljubljana, March 17th 2008**

**Prime Minister, Speaker, Excellencies, Ladies and  
Gentlemen**

**I am delighted to be here in Slovenia, a new and  
valued EU Member State, where we are being offered  
very welcome hospitality and support.**

**Prime Minister, we are grateful to you for being here  
today and we know that you will agree with us that it  
is parliamentarians who are responsible for  
scrutinizing the executive's actions and also for  
holding it to account.**

**A strong and capable state needs a legitimate  
constitution, which clearly defines and separates, the  
powers of the judiciary and the legislature from the  
executive.**

**It is our view that effective Parliaments have a central  
role to play in building democratic standards and  
values.**

**I believe that this JPA has contributed to effective  
participation in the political dialogue that brings the  
democratic legitimacy which the Cotonou Partnership  
Agreement demands.**

**And this week we will hear from a number of ACP  
colleagues about their discussions in their national  
parliaments on the Country Strategy Papers.**

**This week we will deal with a challenging agenda.**

- **We will assess what must be done on Economic Partnership Agreements.**
- **We will consider progress on the Millennium Development Goals.**
- **And, we will reflect on the continuing crises in DR Congo, Somalia Darfur, and on Kenya's recent troubles.**

**We will need to take stock of the slow pace of ratification of the Revised Cotonou Agreement. The last EU Member State to complete ratification - Poland - will do so by about the middle of April. Then there remains 32 ACP States which should ratify - 6 of them are needed to allow for the formal coming into force of the Revised Cotonou Agreement and EDF 10 funding.**

**The ACP have, in the past, ratified swiftly and efficiently and this must beg the question - Why is it that we have so many ACP countries which have not completed ratification?**

**Colleagues, since we last met there have been many developments, not least on Economic Partnership Agreements.**

**And we know of the conflict and contention that has mired the whole EPA process - particularly as that rush to the finishing line of December 2007 approached.**

**With the exception of the Caribbean, the agreements were scaled back, and WTO-compatible interim deals**

were made, mainly on trade in goods, and signed in haste.

In fact, fewer than a third of ACP countries agreed interim EPAs by the deadline.

The Financial Times described the result as:

'a tangled cat's cradle, if not a mangled dogs breakfast.'

It is a fair description.

Perhaps the biggest casualty of the whole process has been regional integration.

Regionalism is a key component of a progressive development strategy, and yet the Commission's policy of concluding separate deals with individual states, or groups of countries, has splintered ACP regions.

The Commissioner continues to blame - what is clearly a limited outcome - on NGOs and on European Parliament members like myself.

This clearly fails to recognise the disquiet and concern that has been most forcibly expressed by ACP Ministers and governments and by parliaments, the private sector, business people, farmers, trade unions and civil society more generally.

Indeed the Declaration of the ACP Council of Ministers Declaration in December 2007 confirmed this when it boldly stated that the ACP:

'deplored the enormous pressure which they had been under, and regretted the fact that the process had

been contrary to the letter and spirit of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.”

Let us be clear - economic restructuring to accommodate EPAs will be expensive.

It needs long-term resources to deal with capacity building, supply side constraints, loss of fiscal revenue and much else.

ACP governments have to put pressure on the EU to make binding commitments in the legal text of each EPA to provide the necessary resources.

Certainly, past experience has shown - on bananas, rum, sugar and rice - that Commission procedures, to put it mildly, do not facilitate these objectives.

I urge the ACP private sector to continue to press the Commission to ensure that effective, timely and incremental funds are dispersed.

The need for reform on Rules of Origin must be addressed, as must EU subsidies that harm ACP producers.

ACP countries should not be obliged to negotiate binding commitments in these areas which are not required for WTO compliance, such as liberalisation of services, investment and government procurement.

There has to be a more participatory approach, more transparency, respect and understanding for ACP regional and national interests.

**The dependence of ACP countries on primary commodities is well known and, indeed, linked to the EPA debate is the current banana dispute.**

**May I just add here that, given that the US has no direct involvement in banana production, its participation in the dispute over so many years is truly shameful.**

**The Caribbean Bananas Exporters Association warned recently that in spite of assurances, the EU might bow to pressure from Latin American producing countries to reduce the tariff for bananas from that region.**

**The Caribbeans say that this would 'dilute and nullify' the benefits of EPA agreements before they are even formally signed.**

**And on cotton, I think we can fairly say that this JPA shares the view, as expressed at the recent Least Developed Countries meeting in Lesotho, that without a satisfactory resolution of the cotton question, the Doha Round cannot be completed.**

**Colleagues, we know that EPAs are just one of the many challenges we face.**

**In December one those challenges hit international headlines as Kenya's descent into violence shocked the world.**

**In Kenya, the international community was again tested on its response to dealing with atrocities within the borders of a sovereign state whose government is unwilling, or unable, to stop the killing.**

**But, there was, as Archbishop Tutu said, an international consensus that it was simply unacceptable to ignore violence, or to consider it to be somehow just a matter to be dealt with internally.**

**This response in Kenya has reflected that internationally agreed and fundamental principle—the Responsibility to Protect.**

**We here recognise the work of Kofi Annan, Graca Machel and Benjamin Mkapa who have, at the request of the African Union, provided admirable mediation.**

**Let us hope that the compromise reached can be successfully sustained.**

**And we can anticipate international coverage of the elections in Zimbabwe due to take place on March 29th. A country which has the world's highest inflation rate at 150,000%. The formal unemployment rate is 80%. The death rate for children under five in Zimbabwe has doubled over the last decade, and so has the number of women dying in childbirth. And that is why we can only hope that the elections can be peaceful and fairly managed.**

**Of course, while some crisis hit the headlines, others can seem forgotten.**

**Somalia is just such an example.**

**According to UNICEF if you “take all the indicators for children it is the most difficult place on the globe to be a child’.**

**There has not been a functioning national government since 1991.**

**700,000 people have been driven from their homes and there are no basic services. Meanwhile aid agencies can't tackle the crisis because they are increasingly targets of bandit groups.**

**Somalia is a massive humanitarian emergency, but it is by no means the only one.**

**In Congo, the suffering of the people continues.**

**Each month an estimated 45,000 people die - many as a result of the complete collapse of health systems.**

**Congo has the lowest spending on health care in any country in the world.**

**The death rate is nearly 60% higher than the Sub Saharan average and nearly half of the fatalities are children under the age of 5.**

**The people of Congo now have a chance of peace but there is a very tough road ahead, unless the world reacts with strong action - and this means practical and predictable finance.**

**And once again I must return to the continuing suffering of the people of Darfur.**

**International inaction has enabled the violence to continue unchecked, and to spread into Chad.**

**Now we are seeing a return to the deadliest tactics reminiscent of the early days of the bloodshed and violence.**

**For Sudanese refugees and Chadian displaced people living in refugee camps, time is not on their side.**

**The quibbling and stalling tactics from Khartoum must not be allowed to continue to hamper the deployment of the UNAMID Force, which must be properly resourced.**

**While we continue to urge an end to the death and destruction wrought by conflicts, we also acknowledge that the biggest killer of all is hunger and hunger related disease.**

**MDG 1 calls for the eradication of poverty and hunger by 2015 and we recall that the poverty gap ratio in sub-Saharan Africa remains the highest in the world.**

**Estimates based on current trends show that by 2015 there will actually be more malnourished children in 32 countries in the world than there are today.**

**Last year more people died because they were hungry or malnourished than from AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.**

**We know that a chronically malnourished or stunted child never regains that precious time, and that the damage done is irreversible.**

**Colleagues, child and maternal under-nutrition must be our priority. So today, I am urging you to join me in calling for a major global summit to tackle this pressing issue.**

According to the Director of the WFP “there are 854 million hungry people in the world and 4 million join their ranks every year.”

And now rising food prices are affecting our ability to deal with the crisis. The Director has described the 'perfect storm' of factors:

- a rise in demand for animal feed from India and China
- the use of more land and agricultural produce for bio-fuels
- and, climate change.

The impact is being felt around the world.

Wheat has doubled in price, maize is nearly 50% higher and rice is 20% higher.

Developing countries as a whole will spend €32 billion importing cereals this year—10% more than last.

It is predicted that soaring prices for basic foods could cause instability. Indeed we have already seen food riots in some ACP countries as governments attempt to control food and fuel costs.

This has to be one of the most critical issues of our time.

You don't need me to tell you that a prerequisite for tackling poverty is a clean environment, healthy families and educated children. For this to happen, parliaments, civil society and the private sector must be involved, and they must be integrated into strong publicly provided systems.

**But such action should, however, not be a substitute for governments having predicable funding and the capacity, and, of course, the commitment to make public systems work in the interests of the poor.**

**Meeting the MDG targets on health, education, water and sanitation would require an extra \$47 billion a year compared with annual global military spending of \$1 trillion.**

**As parliamentarians our aim should be to globalise social justice and as European and ACP MPs we must put pressure on our governments, and hold them to account.**

**And we join the UN Call to Action on the MDGs, initiated by Gordon Brown and Ban Ki Moon.**

**Let it not be said of any of us that we walked away from children who crave education.**

**Let it not be said of any of us that we walked away from women who, because of the low value accorded to them, die in their thousands in childbirth.**

**Let it not be said of any of us that we walked away from the young people who leave their homes and families to make deadly journeys by sea in the hope of a better life.**

**We have a responsibility to each other.**

**We are elected by our citizens and we can't look away when there is such need.**

**I'll finish with some words from Nelson Mandela:**

**'In this century, many of the world's poorest countries ..... are trapped in the prison of poverty. It is time to set them free. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings'.**

**That is why we cannot, and will not, walk away.**