

**STATEMENT BY THE ACTING ACP- CO PRESIDENT OF THE
ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

**Hon. TONY AIMO, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF
THE 16TH SESSION OF THE ACP-EU
JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

Tuesday, 25 November 2008

Sir John Guise Indoor Sports Complex, Port Moresby

Papua New Guinea

- **Mrs. Glenys KINNOCK, Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,**
- **Honourable Dr. Puka TEMU, Acting Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea,**
- **Members of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,**
- **Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the substantive ACP Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen, it is my privilege and honour to address this distinguished Assembly. Hon. Rasmussen will only be able to join us this afternoon, due to other commitments in the Cook Islands.

Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)

You all know that only the Caribbean Region has been able to sign a comprehensive EPA with the EU. The EPA process should have been completed in December 2007. The fact that the process has taken this long is an indication that there are issues of real concern to ACP States that still need to be addressed. In this regard, I welcome the appointment of Baroness Ashton as the new EU Commissioner for Trade. In her speech to the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council during November 2008, she indicated a commitment to flexibility in dealing with the concerns of ACP States. We need to applaud this approach, which is in stark contrast to the treatment received from her predecessor.

During the 6th Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government held in Ghana during October 2008, EPAs were discussed extensively by ACP Heads. In this regard, they decided that it was necessary to engage in high-level political consultations with EU leaders. To this end an ACP Heads of State delegation, comprised of the President of the ACP Summit and Chairpersons of the African Union, Cariforum and the Pacific ACP States will endeavor to meet EU Heads of States.

Global Events – Food, energy and financial crises

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world has experienced its fair share of turmoil over the last couple of months. We are still reeling from the effects of high energy and food prices. This, coupled with the recent financial crisis, threaten to wipe out some the developmental gains that ACP States had started to make. Although high food prices have affected the entire world, the impact on developing country families has been much greater, since food represents about 40 to 60 % of consumer spending in developing countries, while the average in industrialised countries is less than 20%. Reports from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reveal that 36 countries are in crisis, and 20 of these countries are in Africa. Globally the number of food-insecure people in the 70 lowest-income countries rose from 849 million to 982 million between 2006 and 2007. The consequences are more pronounced in Africa where most families spend 60% to 80% of their income on food, and where there is an over-dependence on food imports and food aid—about one third of the world's food aid and about US\$ 25 billion worth of food imports per year are channelled to Africa.

The WHO has stated that lack of access to food will impact on health and nutritional status of poor households, leading in turn, to long-term economic and social consequences. Lack of access to food influences food intake, consequently impacting the health and nutritional status of households. For instance, the WHO estimates that of the world's undernourished children, 80% live in 20 countries. The current food price crisis could result, in the short term, in an increase in malnutrition and the number of nutrition-related diseases, with more neglected children, more micronutrient deficiencies in women and children, more children born with low birth weights, and increased morbidity and mortality for mothers, newborns and children under-five. In the long term, the WHO states that this crisis will result in impaired mental development, diminished learning ability, reduced work productivity, and nutrition-related non-communicable diseases.

The food crisis has been made worse by oil prices, although these have started to fall in the last one or two months. However, the demands of development, globally and in our States, will always push up oil prices. A sustainable solution to the world's fatal dependency on fossil fuels is, more than ever before, imperative. However, even as I say this, I am aware that within certain regions in the ACP Group, such as West, East Central and Southern Africa, there are States that are capable of meeting the oil needs of fellow ACP States at perhaps below market prices. Isn't there room for cooperation to harness and develop collective extraction, refinery and distribution processes, OPEC notwithstanding?

The present financial crisis calls for urgent global action. Change is needed that would allow for the developing world to also have a voice in global institutions and regulatory frameworks. What affects the developed world, affects the developing world. We should look at joint solutions, and mitigate the consequences of this financial crises on the developing world, and in particular ACP States.

The Future of the MDG Challenges

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Because of the global financial crisis, banks in developed countries may not be able to lend as much as they have done in the past. On the other hand, I hope that aid budgets, already under pressure because of debt problems and weak fiscal positions in the EU and USA, will not be further compromised. It is worth noting that the aid promises of the Gleneagles Summit in 2005 remain largely unfulfilled.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the combined effects of the financial crisis and unfulfilled aid commitments could lead to, among others, lower investment and growth rates, loss of employment, weaker social and economic systems making it even more difficult to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this regard, I wish to echo the call of IMF Managing Director, Mr. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, that advanced economies must not cut aid budgets because of the financial crisis.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has also said that developed and developing countries should honour their commitments to implement and attain key UN goals aimed at addressing issues such as human development, food crisis and climate change. He has been urging leaders of developing countries not to lose their political will to support the development goals and other vital UN programmes.

Our Assembly is well placed as the voice of the people to ensure that global commitments are respected, and to ensure that the development of our countries is not sacrificed.

Global leadership for change – aid effectiveness/commitments

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At some point, we all had begun to wonder whether aid really works. But that question has been emphatically answered by the impact of global initiatives on, *inter-alia*, education, health, sanitation, food security and infrastructure. The point does not need belaboring any further if we go by the commitments the international community has made in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action.

It is clear that the impact of aid on growth is positive in countries with a good political environment for formulating and implementing development policies and programmes. That is the responsibility that we have to face as ACP States. High levels of aid in the past have failed to make a positive impact because of poor policies, coupled with political instability in most of our countries. Now is the time for real change to see that the present generation leaves a firm foundation for future generations to build on. We, as the voice of our people, need to promote change, change that is in the interest of our people and countries. Real and substantive development will only take place in an environment of peace, security and stability, where democracy, rule of law and human rights are respected.

Situation in ACP States

In this regard, it is a source of constant concern that a number of ACP States are still besieged by cross-border and internal conflicts. Of particular concern are the on-going and simmering conflicts in the Horn of Africa and the African Great Lakes Region. The latest upsurge of the conflict in the eastern DRC is a case in point. What was already a humanitarian crisis for a long time now threatens to become a full blown human catastrophe. It seems that even the international community is helpless to protect the lives of civilians – in particular, women children and the elderly – who have borne the brunt of the violence. The onus is on regional leaders to urgently bring the situation back under control and lay the foundation for lasting peace, security and human development.

We have also seen an upsurge in electoral related violence, and, and this case, the phenomenon of ‘unity governments’. Although this is often proposed as a solution to electoral stalemates, and could in certain instances be in fact the only solution, I am afraid that it might just become another way of subverting the true outcome of democratic processes. These negotiated settlements, however well intentioned, can never be an alternative to the popular will of the people as expressed in free and fair elections in which all contestants respect the outcome. Let us defend this pillar of democracy!

Port Moresby Agenda

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we deliberate the items on the Agenda of the 16th Session of the JPA, let us not forget that the ultimate goal of all our endeavors is sustainable development. We need to:

- Lift ourselves from the margins and poverty unto the mainstream of international development;
- Create wealth and opportunities for its sustainable generation; and
- Establish and maintain political and economic institutions that will secure peace, security and stability as well as environmental protection for present and future generations in our States.

The Draft Reports and Resolutions from the three Standing Committees of the ACP-EU JPA, as well as the Urgent Motions for Resolution on Mauritania and Zimbabwe all reflect our concerns about the issues I have alluded to. To this end, the Report on The Protection of Civilians during Peace-Keeping operations by the UN and Regional Organisations addresses our concerns about the vulnerability of civilians in times of conflict, the Report on Aid Effectiveness and the Definition of Official Development Aid highlights the need to get moving with commitments made by the international community to increase and improve the impact of aid, and the Report on Child labour and the Social consequences of Child labour is a timely reminder of the pernicious consequences of the dire social and economic situation in our States - that of child labour, whereby hundreds of thousands of children are exposed to the hazards of unsafe labour practices at very tender ages, with attendant risks of abuse, disease, physical injury, psychological trauma and lost educational opportunities.

Co-President,

Hon. Acting Prime Minister,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are all important issues worthy of the deepest and committed consideration of this Assembly. Let us not wait until tomorrow, now is the time of action and change.

I thank you for your kind attention.
