

Honourable Dr. Temu,
Honourable Speaker of the Parliament,
Acting Co-President,
Honourable Parliamentarians,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I begin by thanking the Parliament and Government of Papua New Guinea for your welcome and hospitality.

At a time when there is heavy snow in Europe, we are pleased to be here, on the other side of the world, enjoying your warm friendship and, of course, your warm climate.

Colleagues, these are challenging times, and this will undoubtedly be reflected during our debates this week.

Climate Change

Honourable Doctor Temu, you in your country have a justifiable interest in the effects of **climate change**, and of course we will be debating this issue in our session.

What has been achieved in the fight against poverty could be unravelled by climate change. It represents a grave **humanitarian** threat.

- Farmers in Africa see their crop yields becoming more unpredictable.
- Thousands of people from Tuvalu have already left for New Zealand because of rising sea levels, and in the South Pacific there is a growing threat from malaria and dengue fever.
- In the Caribbean this year, they have experienced a number of hurricanes and tropical storms. In Haiti, in particular, they have suffered terrible suffering and loss of life.

Three quarters of the world's population live in countries which consume more than they replenish.

So we urgently need collective action, and we need leadership. Those responsible must make amends for the damage caused. The polluter must pay.

Finally I would say that in the forthcoming high level meetings on climate change, we must reserve a place at the top table for **small, vulnerable island states** - as they are the ones who will be hardest hit.

Global crises

Colleagues, we will have a declaration this week on the global financial, food and energy crisis.

We face a 'perfect storm' of ecological, financial and social pressures, and we are all concerned, and are contemplating where we go from here.

Credit conditions, weakened growth, a decline in investment, falling commodity prices and lower remittance revenues will stymie efforts to meet the MDG targets.

Let us be clear about the economic turmoil. If the strongest economies in the world need economic stability – and they do – the weaker economies of the world need economic dependability.

Clearly, the message we must send from our JPA is that people in the poorest countries should not pay the highest price for the profligacy of others.

MDGs

And as we all grapple with the financial crisis we should not lose sight of the human crisis which sees the poor enduring the worst of the ravages of spiralling prices and turmoil in the global markets.

Now is therefore clearly not the time to turn away from the development emergency which the world faces.

It is not a time for **backsliding** or **compromise** on the pledges and promises made.

- We can't turn our backs when **10 million** children die every year from **poverty**-related preventable diseases and **70 million** primary school children are missing out on an education.

So now is **not the time** to put the MDGs on hold.

I reject the view that this suffering is **inescapable** - that it is somehow part of the "**human condition**".

How can we be, for instance, so off-track on **MDG 5** on maternal mortality?

In PNG, over the last 10 years there has not been any progress - and what is worse, we have actually seen an increase in maternal deaths.

And similarly, **globally**, we won't meet the targets set -

- not in 2015.
- **Not until 2050.**

And so the **carnage** caused by the lack of simple, affordable assistance for women continues.

Here and elsewhere, a lack of thread for stitching, of anaesthetic to blunt the pain and shock, or of three cents-worth of Magnesium Sulphate to stop haemorrhaging.

In ACP countries, millions of women and newborns can be saved if investment is made in the **health and rights** of women.

Colleagues - this will not happen simply by osmosis. It can only be the result of political action and **choices** made by governments.

Choices such as were made in Rwanda - since the election in September, they hold the world record - 56% of their Members of Parliament are women!

They certainly deserve the JPA's congratulations.

Recently the President of the African Union has spoken of the fear that the global crisis will affect donor support for poverty reduction in the developing world.

And he is right to be concerned because we know that in 2005 the G8 promised to devote more than **\$25 billion** to Africa by 2010 - but in fact only **\$3.5 billion** has been delivered.

Surely no-one seriously thinks that a gap of over **\$21 billion** can be filled in less than 2 years?

However, it **has** been encouraging to learn that last week's negotiations on the €1 billion EU Food Facility resulted in

approximately 75% **additional** money to fund agricultural development, and food production, in developing countries.

And we certainly need to look again, and more seriously, at innovative sources of financing for the MDGs if we are to fill the yawning gap.

As the African Progress Panel said recently, "We need to look at currency transaction taxes, global environmental taxes, carbon taxes, taxes on air travel and freight transport and a global lottery, measures that increase private funding of development agencies."

The political will which is needed to meet the MDGs must also extend to the trade strategies of the most prosperous and powerful.

Trade

Colleagues, the Lome Agreement and the Cotonou Partnership Agreements were based on development, shared security and mutual respect.

However, I regret to say that we have seen these principles jettisoned in favour of a race to the EPA finishing line.

Voices raised by governments, parliaments and civil society across the ACP bear witness to the acrimony and dissent which has arisen because EPAs have been negotiated behind closed doors,

with little parliamentary or public engagement in the whole process.

Yet if ratified, these agreements will have enormous influence on ACP livelihoods, business, politics and regional relations.

We have however been encouraged by the statements made by the new Commissioner, and by the conclusions reached by the EU Council on the 10th November.

Member States are urging a more **flexible** approach, respect for the need for **regional integration**, and consideration of "**the different needs and development of ACP countries**".

ACP countries and regions are adamant that they wish to revisit contentious issues in their agreements. The five year mandatory review secured by Guyana within the Cariforum EPA may offer a way out of the commitments which are of concern.

However this Cariforum review process requires **strong political and financial backing** if it is to be a **productive** and **legitimate** process.

Here in the Pacific region we know that the negotiators want a focus on trade in goods, fisheries, development and dispute settlement. They are making it absolutely clear that they are against the inclusion of services, or intellectual property at this time.

And as far as those contentious clauses in the Fiji and PNG Interim EPA are concerned, the negotiators are calling for modification or removal from a final EPA.

As we look at the negotiation process, we see that we now need a number of clear commitments from the Commission.

- A commitment to a change of pace and to allowing sufficient time to complete the negotiation of a development focussed agreement.
- The balance between national and regional ACP interest must be achieved in any full EPA including varying degrees of commitment on trade in services and trade related issues.
- From now on there needs to be both transparency and scrutiny by Parliaments, and civil society.
- There needs to be guarantees on Aid for Trade and EPA related development support in order for countries to withstand the effects of external shocks. We will argue that this means the addition of development support which is adequate and which arrives before the onset of liberalisation.

Finally, as always, I have to refer to threats which our ACP banana producing countries are facing.

These countries are shocked that **only a week** after the signature of the EPA with the Caribbean, the EU has negotiated a trade agreement with the Central Americans which jeopardises the entire ACP banana industry.

In the Caribbean, for instance, thousands of small banana farmers and their families face the grim prospect of loosing their livelihoods and this is perceived as a **betrayal** of the ACP - EU partnership.

We have a new trade Commissioner and we have been heartened by her willingness to engage with the ACP and the European Parliament. We also welcome her commitment to bring a different style and tone to the process.

I very much hope that she will accept our invitation to come to our next JPA in Prague.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as Parliamentarians, let's join together to make poverty our enemy.

Too many of our people feel isolated, powerless and threatened by ethnicity, class, gender and disability. These threats can be dealt with if we have the strength of our convictions and if with our citizens we can generate the political will.

The cost of neglecting our duties will be high and will be measured in precious lives squandered and lost.

Let us declare our shared vision of a world where there is education and health for all, and where people have dignity and rights.

Colleagues, let's have no more of a world of "insiders" and "outsiders" - of "haves" and "have-nots".

Only then can we afford to relax our efforts.