

**STATEMENT BY HON. WILLIAM HAOMAE, MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL TRADE
(SOLOMON ISLANDS)
PRESIDENT-IN-OFFICE OF THE
ACP COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

**17TH SESSION OF THE ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
TUESDAY, 07 APRIL 2009
PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC**

- **Mr. Jan KOHOUT, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic in Charge of Development, and President in Office of the EU Council,**
- **Mrs. Glenys KINNOCK, Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,**
- **Mr. Wilkie RASMUSSEN, Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,**
- **Honourable Members of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is indeed an honour and privilege for me to address this distinguished Assembly for the first time. On behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islands, and the ACP Group, I would like to thank the Government and people of the Czech Republic for agreeing to host us in their beautiful country. To this end, I wish to express with sincere gratitude my appreciation of the warm hospitality and welcome accorded to me since my arrival here in Prague by - our hosts.

May I also take this opportunity to thank Co-President Kinnock for her services to the work of this Assembly over the 7 years that she has been Co-President of the JPA. On behalf of the ACP Group and on my own behalf, we thank you for the advocacy and spirited defence of ACP State, in particular, the MDG goals on health and education. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours, and I hope we can count on your support in other foras in which ACP interests feature.

I am also informed that a number of Members of the European Parliament will not be seeking re-election in the European Elections in June 2009. We thank you for your support doing your time in the EP. For those wishing to come back, we wish you all the best in your campaigns and I hope we can see all of you again during the 18th Session of the ACP-EU JPA in Luanda, Angola, during November 2009.3

Co-Presidents,

I regard it as a duty and honour to participate in this Session of the ACP Parliamentary Assembly, as I believe that it provides us, once again, an opportunity to discuss issues that affect the development of our respective States and the world in general. The combined population of the European Union and the ACP Member States is approximately 1.7 billion, about a 5th of the world's population. On this basis alone, I would say that the work of this Assembly plays a significant part in addressing global issues.

Global Crisis and Trade

Co-Presidents,

In your separate addresses at the official opening of this Assembly, you spoke about the present global financial and economic crisis. I cannot agree with you more on the sentiments that you expressed, especially about the need not to lose sight of the development needs of poorer nations in the frantic efforts of the international community to address the crisis. As a Minister responsible for trade, I am concerned at the impact of the crisis on global trade and in particular, on ACP States' exports.

However, let me from the outset state that we welcome the conclusions of the G20 meeting last week in London. We are all anxious to see how those commitments will be implemented to address development concerns of the entire world, not just the rich countries.

As you are all aware, the WTO has failed to conclude the Doha Round of Trade negotiations. And as you well know, the EPA negotiating Agenda itself could not be concluded on the deadline of 31 January 2007, and to date only the CARIFORUM EPA has been concluded and signed. The basic premise of both the WTO and EPA negotiations agenda is liberalisation of world trade. About the benefits of liberalisation generally, the developed and developing countries are in agreement. As you recall, most developing countries, even least developed countries, have in the last two decades or so implemented far reaching liberalisation of trade and financial markets as a result of the Brettonwoods institutions' policy advice in the framework of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PSRP) or Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). As a result, by the time the Doha Round was launched, most of our States had already implemented significant market and trade opening policies.

However, SAPs and PRSPs did not perform to expectations, and there is evidence that they may have exacerbated poverty and reduced investment in social infrastructure, especially in the health and education sectors. The personal suffering experienced by our people through forced redundancies, falling prices of export commodities and loss of government revenue through SAPs are well documented. Therefore, there was more at stake for developing countries in the Doha Round, and it is because of the concerns of developing countries that the Round was called the Doha Development Round, to reflect developing countries' insistence that the rules of international trade must be structured in a flexible manner that facilitates development and the eradication of poverty. These same concerns were re-iterated during the EPA negotiation process, hence, again the inclusion of a development dimension to the EPA negotiation process.

Co-Presidents,

The fundamental difficulties with both the Doha and EPA negotiations processes were the unwillingness to significantly dismantle protectionist tendencies of the developed economies, in the form of subsidies, tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade (NTBS). These together or in combination have stifled the growth of our agricultural and small to medium size enterprises. ACP cotton, banana, sugar, and beef producers support entire economies, and their failure would increase poverty and compromise sustainable development. We also felt that, and are still firm in our belief, that developed countries have not sufficiently taken account of the vulnerabilities and special development needs of developing countries which free trade alone, without other trade support mechanisms, cannot resolve.

Co-Presidents,

One of the consequences of the financial and economic crisis is that the liberalizing message, selective as it was, risks being abandoned in the face of protectionist tendencies in developed countries in the guise of protecting local industries and employment. I have no doubt that the way this crisis is managed will in the long run bring about some fundamental and positive change in the management of global affairs. As far as trade negotiations are concerned, I think that this crisis is an opportunity to reflect on the needs of developing countries. I believe that the crisis, having presented our partners in developed countries with the kind of challenges that less fortunate countries have been struggling with all along, such as unemployment, loss or lack of social security as well fragile and in some cases ill-functioning markets, will in future approach the Doha Round and EPA negotiations with more flexibility.

Last week, on the occasion of the G20 Meeting in London, people demonstrated on the streets urging leaders to take into account the plight of ordinary people who have borne the brunt of the financial crisis. These protests were reminiscent of protests that have become a regular feature of WTO Ministerial Conferences and G8 Meetings in the past few years. They all carry the same message; World leaders must always take into account the effects of their policies on ordinary people, and not simply be concerned with big corporate issues.

It is for this reason that I think the work of this Assembly is important. This Assembly has always spoken for the poor and marginalized people of this world. I am glad to see that during this Session, the global crisis and the role of the Cotonou Agreement is part of the Agenda.

Revision of Cotonou

Co-Presidents,

As you might already know, the ACP and EU Councils have notified each other of the provisions to be examined within the framework of the second revision of the Cotonou Agreement. Our respective Secretariats are working out the details and the modalities. The ultimate aim of this revision is to ensure that the Cotonou Agreement evolves in a way that will continue to be relevant to changes in the global and regional environment, as well as structural changes in the EU. It is our hope that when we have concluded this revision, we will be able to look back and state categorically that we have strengthened the partnership, and indeed ensured that development assistance will become more effective.

In March 2009, the ACP Group and European Commission signed the Strategy Papers for the Intra-ACP Programming under the 10th EDF. This will facilitate the implementation of programmes worth about €2.7 billion. It is our hope that this Intra-ACP programming will find its place in the revised Agreement alongside national and regional cooperation. Intra-ACP Programming depends on co-decision and implementation between the Parties, and gives further weight to the concept of partnership by ensuring that it rests not only on the sharing of objectives, but also the sharing of responsibilities, resources and results.

Co-Presidents,

The world has changed drastically over the last decade. The challenges of the 21st century are many and complicated. Only through innovative approaches, pro-active action and the involvement of all actors from the developed and developing world – governments, international institutions, civil society and the private sector – can, and will we succeed. Let us join hands to improve the lives of so many, and in the words of President Obama, let us all say – “**Yes, we can**”.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish you success in the rest of your deliberations.
