

SPEECH

BY COMMISSIONER NEVEN MIMICA

at the Joint Parliamentary Assembly ACP-EU

Bucharest, 18 March 2018

Your Excellencies,
Honourable Members,
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

(Introduction)

It's a pleasure to see you all again, for what will be my last Joint Parliamentary Assembly as EU Commissioner.

This is a good time for us to meet.

Last September, when we launched the post-Cotonou negotiations, we set the wheels in motion for a new kind of partnership.

Since then, we have been travelling on this journey together.

We have reached some important milestones along the way.

And I would like to thank this Assembly for its commitment in shaping our ambitious post-2020 agreement.

I am proud of what we have achieved together – and what we have set in motion.

And I know I can continue to count on the Honourable Members of this Joint Parliamentary Assembly to help us reach our destination in less than a year.

(Significance of post-Cotonou negotiations)

But before I give you an update on the post-Cotonou negotiations, let me ask – what have we set in motion?

And what is the significance of these negotiations for our future relations?

From East to West, North to South, small countries and big countries, our partnership connects one in five people around the world.

For over forty years, we have built a strong partnership based on political dialogue, development cooperation, and trade.

A partnership where we value inclusiveness and solidarity.

And a partnership where we stand side by side on the global stage.

But in a world where we have experienced some of the hottest years on record;

Where too many people have to flee war and persecution;

And where too many girls don't get an education just because they are girls....

....We are creating a more strategic and influential ACP-EU alliance on the international stage.

More strategic in a way that helps us honour our commitments under the UN Agenda 2030.

And more strategic in how we pool our resources in the best interests of all our citizens.

Together, EU and ACP, we are creating a partnership where we champion true international cooperation in the face of growing challenges.

(Climate change & gender equality in the context of EU-ACP)

And we have already seen first-hand the power behind our political cooperation.

The ACP-EU alliance during the Paris Climate Conference is one shining example of the important things we can do as a political group.

It gives us a glimpse into what we will achieve together when we take our cooperation to the next level post-2020.

Imagine what we will be able to do when we finally give ourselves the means to match our ambitions!

Speaking about ambitions...

At the start of my mandate, I had the ambition to be “the most vocal male feminist” in the European Commission. And with your backing, we have been able to make strides in championing gender equality all around the globe.

The Spotlight Initiative is very close to my heart.

It renews the EU and UN’s commitment to prevent and end all forms of violence against women and girls.

If implemented right, it has the potential to put an end to so much suffering.

To help break the cycle of violence.

To give every woman and girl a voice and a choice.

And let me be clear – I will be counting on the ACP Parliaments to get the implementation of Spotlight Initiative right.

And to make this initiative a success.

I count on you to challenge discriminatory legislation – wherever it exists.

And I count on you to help fill the legislative and policy gaps, both at national and local level.

(Regional element)

As well as helping our partnership take on some of the most crucial challenges of our time...

.....the Post-Cotonou agreement brings one fundamental new element to the table.

It makes our partnership more in tune with regional and local realities.

People in Samoa have different needs to the people in Angola or Jamaica.

So we need to target our actions according to different regions' – and different peoples' – needs.

Never before have we had such an opportunity.

I have no doubt that this will help us achieve more and be more effective.

It is in the interest and benefit of all our citizens.

(Update on negotiations)

In terms of the actual negotiations, talks have progressed well since the last time we met in Cotonou.

We are going full steam ahead.

Building on our agreed structure and strategic priorities, technical teams are currently drafting the agreement text at EU and ACP level.

We have made the most progress on:

- Human and social development
- Environment and climate, and

- Peace, security and human rights.

Negotiating teams aim to go forward quickly on the drafting of text for the remaining strategic priorities – economic development and migration and mobility.

My counterpart, Robert Dussey, foreign minister of Togo, and I are due to meet early April, to take stock of progress and conclude the second round of talks, if all goes to plan.

And now that all partners have agreed to the principle of having regional protocols, we expect to begin discussions on the tailored partnerships with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Regional consultations have started.

Only a few weeks ago, we held a high-level dialogue in Samoa with Pacific leaders.

We discussed their region's needs and priorities.

This meeting shows how our future bilateral relations – EU–Pacific, EU-Africa, EU-Caribbean – will grow deeper and stronger under the next ACP-EU agreement.

These were very productive exchanges.

And they showed us just how important it is to hold focused and dedicated consultations between the EU, the ACP and the regions.

These dialogues will help us shape an agreement that reflects who we are, what we value and what kind of future we want.

On this basis, we will hold a similar meeting with Cariforum Ministers in mid-April.

Robert and I are currently looking into the possibility of organising a regional meeting with the African region soon.

I welcome the positive feedback from the African Union Commission on involving AU mandated experts in the negotiations on the African regional protocol.

And I look forward to officially launching the regional talks.

Overall, I am pleased with the sustained pace of our negotiations.

And I think we can commend the efforts both Parties are making to deliver on the ambitious deadline.

(Conclusion)

Ladies and gentlemen,

In December 2014, at my first Joint Parliamentary Assembly as EU Commissioner, we debated together the 2015 deadline of the Millennium Development Goals.

Since then, in under five years, we have jumped from MDGs to SDGs.

We have continued to champion the values and principles that bring our countries and people closer together.

We have continued to choose multilateralism and international cooperation, when others cry isolationism and unilateralism.

But at this critical moment in time, we are giving our relationship a new strategic dimension.

In less than a year, we will have a new Partnership for our ambitions, which serves our common interests and all our people.

And I am proud to be on this journey together with you.

(1148 words)