

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



STATEMENT

BY

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PARLIAMENT

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Honourable Speaker
Honourable Members

I rise to provide this August House an update on issues, at the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group – an organisation to which Namibia is a member. The ACP is an organisation created by the Georgetown Agreement of 1975 (currently under review) and is composed of ACP countries. It is founded on principles of Pan- Africanism, and the consolidation of unity and solidarity amongst ACP States and their peoples.

APC is composed of 48 countries from sub-Saharan Africa, 16 from the Caribbean and 15 from the Pacific – all signatories to the Cotonou Agreement, also known as the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement. Annexes to the agreement set the maximum amount of resources available for financial development assistance under the ACP-EU partnership for a given number of years. The current Cotonou Agreement will expire in year 2020.

Honourable Members, the Council of Ministers is ACP's main decision-making body and is responsible for implementing the guidelines laid down by the Summit. The Council meets biannually, as well as when necessary. Namibia is represented by the Minister of Industrialisation, Trade and SME Development on the ACP Council. The group has various Ministerial Committees and various Sub-Committees such as the Trade and Commodities and Development Finance. Namibia is currently chairing the SubCommittee on Development Finance at Ambassadorial and Ministerial level.

As Co-Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee on Development Finance and Cooperation (DFC), I attended ACP Council Meetings from 27 May to 1 June 2018 in Lomé, Togo. The meetings in Lomé took place in a cordial manner with a record turn-up of Ministers from both the ACP and the EU. An important matter on the agenda of DFC is the "Situation of ACP Countries listed by the EU as non-cooperative tax jurisdictions for tax purposes".

Honourable Members, as you all know, Namibia is on that list. The listing was done in a unilateral manner which is in contravention of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, which clearly states that there should be consultations first before any measures are taken that affect the ACP States. It goes without saying that such listing could result in a negative effect of the image and economy of the country.

The EU was again reminded in the strongest terms about their error in handling the matter and they took note. The EU notwithstanding informed ACP Members at the meeting in Lomé, even though the process required under Article 12 of the Cotonou was not followed by them, contacts by way of official letters requesting engagement and several follow-up efforts were done by them to all affected countries. In that regard, it is only those countries that have ignored the requests to engage who were listed, while others that had responded and indicated willingness to engage with the EU were not put on the initial list. In efforts to have a proper dialogue and to discuss the issue in depth, the ACP-EU Joint Committee has agreed to set up a Contact Group consisting of representatives from both sides.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,
I am pleased to inform the House that ACP Council has adopted the ACP Negotiating Mandate for the Post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement with the EU at its meeting in Lomé, Togo. The adoption paves the way for the sustainable future of the ACP Group based on the principles of strength, unity and solidarity. For Namibia, such alliance is of strategic

importance, especially in terms of potential benefits that could accrue under this Group for countries like Namibia, classified as middle-income countries.

Since the ACP Group has a high number of such countries, it is recognised that they still need cushioning in terms of development assistance. In addition, The ACP Group advocates equal partnership in development efforts for their countries – a departure from traditional development aid to a more sustainable cooperation in different areas critical for economic development.

The official launch of the negotiations for the commencement of negotiations for a Post-Cotonou Agreement with the EU will take place on 19 June 2018 in Brussels, Belgium, where the ACP Secretariat is based.

The engagements with the European Union have positive directions, moving away from unilateralism to more of a partnership approach, which is a matter that we have always advocated. There is a more focused consideration of the special needs of middle income countries, and the adjustment of the European External Fund to fund more projects of developmental nature in ACP countries is indeed a positive move.

In conclusion, I wish to inform the House that I held bilateral talks on the margins of the ACP Council meetings with Spain, among other countries. Spain has expressed its intention to focus more attention on the plight of Middle Income Countries, an initiative that was started years ago with a first Conference in Madrid. Spain will, in collaboration with the Embassy in Brussels, commence with a comprehensive engagement on cooperation to revive the work related to how to overcome the challenges faced by the middle income countries to achieve internationally agreed developmental goals.

Finally, Hon. Speaker and Honourable Members, allow me to thank His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Kaire Mbuende and the staff from the Embassy who have provided me with all necessary support for the meetings in Lomé, Togo and who will continue to support us for the processes at ACP level in Brussels.

I thank you.