

**STATEMENT BY HON. TJEKERO TWEYA
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OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**PRESIDENT-IN-OFFICE OF THE ACP COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS**

at the

**37TH SESSION OF ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY
ASSEMBLY**

**Palace of Parliament,
Bucharest International Conference Centre, Romania
20th March 2019**

Thank you Director of Ceremonies

- Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly
- Hon. Louis Michel, and Hon. Joseph Owona Kono,
- Hon. President-in-Office of the EU Council,
- Hon. Members of the JPA,
- Distinguished Invited Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for the opportunity of addressing you at the occasion of the 37th Session of your Assembly. It is indeed an honour and distinct privilege for me and my country, the Republic of Namibia, as it is affectionately referred to as the "**Land of the Brave**" to be of service to the ACP Group and the ACP-EU Partnership in my capacity as President-in-Office of the ACP Council of Ministers which I accepted with humility.

I recognise the tremendous responsibility that goes with this monumental and colossal assignment bestowed upon me to help in increasing the values, the objectives and strategic outcomes of the ACP-EU partnership at this consequential moment in our shared history.

Namibia is privileged and honoured to have played an active role in the evolution of the ACP Group of States and of great relevance Namibia hosted the first Joint Parliamentary Assembly Regional meeting that took place in 2008, and in 2016 Namibia hosted the 31st Session of Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

Two years ago in June 2016 when Namibia played host to the JPA, the EU Ambassador, Ms. Jana Hybaskova in addressing a media conference post a question on what happens after the Cotonou Agreement when it expires in 2020. She added that the post-Cotonou discussions needed to be premised on the Sustainable Development Goals and the eradication of poverty and sustainable development. The Ambassador said then in 2016 that the Sustainable Development Goals were, and I quote: "*...fully aligned with His Excellency, President Hage Geingob's Harambee Prosperity Plan,*" of Namibia.

Our Harambee Prosperity Plan consists of five (5) pillars, namely:

- 1] Effective Governance,
- 2] Economic Advancement,
- 3] Social Progression,
- 4] Infrastructure Development and
- 5] International Relations and Cooperation.

This Plan is constructed around the Namibian narrative, acknowledging that we are not starting afresh, but that we must continue with the construction of an inclusive Namibian House, built on a solid foundation of peace and stability. We are unified by our national identity and stand united in cause, to usher Namibia into the epoch of prosperity.

This having said, my country is pleased to re-affirm its commitment to the ACP-EU partnership and will do all it can to honour its commitment by working towards the attainment of the objectives of the partnership.

In this regard, I want to place on record my sincere appreciation and profound vote of thanks of the ACP Group to the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council for its noble commitment to ACP-EU relations in offering to host these meetings.

The ACP Council acknowledges, without any doubt, the tough conditions and climate of economic austerity, this was certainly not an easy decision to take.

Jeremy Clift said in April 2011, a study published by the *Columbia Journalism Review* titled "**Hiding the Real Africa**" documented how easily Africa makes news headlines in the West when a major famine, pandemic, or violent crisis breaks. However, less attention, if at all any, is given to positive trends, milestones and underlying successes in Africa.

In many cases, despite accelerated economic growth over the past 10 years, the rise of a middle class of consumers, and a more dynamic private sector attracted home grown

entrepreneurs, the narrative about Africa has remained focused on the bad news.

That narrative has, fortunately, started to change and Madam President, I am credibly informed that you have constructively and actively participated in the JPA deliberations in your capacity as incoming chair of the EU Council. This speaks strongly of your dedication to the partnership and how these efforts and milestones of your leadership and that of others consistently change the narrative of our Continent.

Co-Presidents,

We are embarking on a new chapter in the history of our partnership. The future partnership between the ACP and EU will be a unique partnership that is expected to have a greater political and strategic approach on the world fora. This approach will assist our cooperation address challenges that cannot be handled by one country, one region or one actor. It is therefore critical that the outcome of the current negotiations lead to a win – win partnership that delivers on the aspirations of our nations and the objectives of the partnership that is to have development that leaves no one behind. And this is what our President, His Excellency, Dr. Hage Geingob, is affectionately known by his famous quote: **“No one should feel left out of the Namiian-house,”** unquote.

At the 108th Session of ACP Council of Ministers that took place in December, Ministers adopted the Central Negotiating Group [CNG] Ministerial proposal to include regional protocols in the ACP EU Successor Agreement. This inclusion means that we will now have foundation agreement that will be at the EU – ACP level. It will contain the values and principles that bring the EU and ACP countries together to increase their affinity levels. It also indicates the strategic priority areas that the two parties intend to prospectively work on together. The agreement will have three action-oriented regional pillars that focus on each region's specific needs. Consultations on these regional protocols have begun, on the 26th February; the Chief Negotiators Minister Dussey of Togo and Commissioner Mimica

met with Pacific leaders to begin consultations on the expected structure of the regional protocol.

Allow me to also indicate that Ministers at the same session also passed a resolution to facilitate the interaction of the Parliamentary Monitoring Group that will interact with the Central Negotiating Group to ensure that these negotiations remain an inclusive process. In implementing this resolution, the Ambassadorial CNG has granted an observer status to parliamentarians at their meetings in Brussels. I welcome this development and look forward to engaging actively with you in this process.

Co-Presidents

Allow me to update you on some of the institutional programs relevant to this Assembly. The UN Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] open a new era for a repositioned ACP Group to continue and deepen its decisive role in supporting all ACP Member States to achieve the 17 SDGs as the basis for the Sustainable Development of their societies and our only home we have for humanity.

We are at a time when the world's population is growing exponentially. Recent estimates suggest that today's population size is roughly equivalent to 6.9% of the total number of people ever born. This is the most conspicuous fact about world population growth: for thousands of years, the population grew very slowly; but in recent centuries, it has jumped dramatically. Between the nine-teen hundreds [1900] and two-thousand [2000], the increase in world population was three times greater than during the entire previous history of humanity—an increase from 1.5 to 6.1 billion in just 100 years, while on the contrary the availability of new arable land is shrinking, ensuring food and nutrition security is our greatest development challenge, and one we must not fail in.

The ACP Group must endeavor to create the conditions for lasting food and nutrition security. Our efforts must be sustainable, economical, environmental and socially.

It is in this spirit that the Ministers adopted the New Approach on Support for the Development of the Agricultural Value Chains.

The ACP Group has produced a Framework Programme on the Development of Agricultural Value Chains. The Programme will support all actors in value chain including family farms, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, women and youth. This program will address supply-side constraints and facilitate diversification. In this way, the Programme will contribute to enhancing Intra-ACP Trade and actualising the benefits of trade agreements signed such as Economic Partnership Agreements. I am confident that by working together and supporting sustainable agricultural development, we can not only improve the food security of those who are hungry; but instead create new opportunities for the ACP Group to shape the world for a better tomorrow.

Co-Presidents, Honorable Members, Distinguished Guests,

The ACP attaches significant importance to the sustainable development of the blue economy as a whole, and in particular, the fisheries and aquaculture sector. This is a crucial sector that underpins the food and nutritional security, employment, exports trade and livelihoods many countries, particularly for Small Island Developing States [SIDS]. Fish exports trade in particular continues to be of critical importance to SIDS accounting for over half of the total commodities exports in some countries. In fact, as much as US\$5.3 billion worth of ACP fish exports from at least 65 ACP countries are estimated to the international market annually.

The potential of the blue economy remains unmatched; the ACP Group will, therefore, continue promoting collaboration for sustainable partnerships and projects in the various sectors of the blue economy for sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, jobs, and ocean ecosystem health.

Co-Presidents, Honorable Members, Distinguished Guests,

All the efforts made in addressing poverty alleviation will to a large extent depend on the measures that we took to tackle climate change.

The ACP Group maintains the strong conviction that climate change causes an existential threat to humanity. I therefore welcome the strong commitments and support by Member States in addressing climate change as a matter of urgency and priority.

The ambition of addressing climate change is one that calls for partnerships, it is recalled that for the ACP Member States to implement their national determined contributions it will require at least USD 2.317 [two billion, three hundred and seventeen million USD]. In this regard, the ACP Group is grateful for the EU on climate change initiatives such as the Intra ACP Global Climate change Alliance and also UN partnerships such as collaboration with UN Capital Development Fund [UNCDF] that will support NDC implementation in LDCs, SIDS and 79 ACP countries. Such collaborations and partnerships remain key in achieving sustainable inclusive development.

Co-Presidents, Honorable Members, Distinguished Invited Guests,

We continue to follow the Brexit process with keen interest and great interest as a country with which many of the ACP states have strong trade relations. Just last year the total trade between the UK and some of the ACP countries amounted to more than £22 billion pounds. This sort of trade opportunity for ACP States clearly speaks to the ambition of the group to ensure job creation, business expansion and breakthrough opportunities for our people.

It is my sense, therefore, that as UK and ACP countries sign the continuity agreements which set out the issues that need to be comprehensively addressed, the ACP will endeavour to table some of the concerns they still have such as the rules of origin to be applied with to imports from the UK, once the UK is no longer part of the EU customs union. Secondly, the approach to be adopted to the division of bilaterally negotiated EU Tariff Rate Quotas obligations between the EU27 and UK market [which is very important in the banana sector, where the commercial position of current ACP exports to EU27 markets could be undermined if it is mishandled and finally the need to improve the functioning of agri-food sector supply chains serving the UK market so as to eliminate unfair trading practices in what is likely to be an uncertain and difficult trading context under a 'no-deal' outcome to the current EU/UK Brexit negotiations."

I therefore encourage you as the people representative to follow this matter closely to ensure Brexit is an opportunity for the ACP to shape a trade path that will give rise to inclusive sustainable economic growth for our countries.

Co-Presidents, Honorable Members, Distinguished Guests,

In today's turbulent world, where global financial, environmental, security and political crises are recurrent and intense, there is no doubt at all that all countries are better off in a multilateral environment than without it. We do not deny that some countries have benefitted from the system more than others, but the answer lies not in retreat from multilateralism, but in reforming the multilateral system to make its governance more transparent and accountable to effectively address the concerns of all the citizens of this planet that we call our collective home.

The ACP Group believes that the ACP-EU partnership will have an important role to play in this regard since it represents a sizable portion of the world's population.

We believe that this partnership will continue to serve as a much-needed basis for peace and stability, international collaboration and solidarity, and joint solutions to some of the world's most pressing issues.

However, we must work hard together to fully exploit the unique elements of what we have in the ACP-EU partnership for the benefit of our citizens

Co-Presidents, Honorable Members, Distinguished Guests,

In conclusion, I would like to submit that all our endeavours in terms of development interventions in ACP Countries cannot be divorced from the issues of governance. The recent events in Haiti and Guyana have demonstrated that the stability of our political systems rests on the ability of public officials and institutions to engender trust and confidence on the part of our people. Once these are lost, the legitimacy of political leaders goes with it.

The masses have now become equally adept and skillful at the use of the ballot or popular uprising to change the leadership of their countries. As politicians, we need to stay alive to our ultimate obligations to listen to our people and apply the highest level of integrity in our political decisions.

Tomorrow, as I am on my way back home, the President, the Government and my fellow Namibians, together with the International community represented in Namibia, will mark our 29th Independence Anniversary, on the 21st March 2019. On this pleasant note of the ACP-EU, I want to leave you with blessings of Long Live the ACP-EU Member States, Long Live the Republic of Namibia, Long Live!

I thank you for your kind!