

Cooperative Republic of Guyana



Address

of

His Excellency Brigadier David Granger
President *of the* Cooperative Republic of Guyana

to the

Committee of Ambassadors
of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States

Brussels, Belgium

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Economic and environmental security

I am honoured as Head of State of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to address the Committee of Ambassadors of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States.

I thank you for this opportunity to recall that our Group was conceived, and our charter was signed, on 6 June 1975 in Georgetown, my country's capital and the home of the Caricom's head office.

Guyana's engagement with the ACP has always been substantial. This has taken place not only through our active engagement on pan-ACP issues but, also, through the provision of human talent. Our current Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Carl Greenidge served as Deputy Secretary General of the ACP Secretariat and the present Secretary- General of the ACP, Dr. Patrick Gomes, is also of Guyanese origin.

The ACP Group of States

The ACP is a complex, multi-state group, straddling three distinct regions of the world – Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

This complexity requires political solidarity in pursuing our common interests. It is this spirit of solidarity which has kept the ACP united and protected the vital interests of its members. It is this spirit of solidarity that should inspire us as we continue towards 2020 and beyond.

The *Georgetown Agreement* of 1975 was a major, multi-state initiative to correct the distortions of the economies of former colonies and transform their relations with European states.

1975 was meant to be transformative. 2020 must have a clear objective of fulfilling that mission.

I commend the Committee of Ambassadors and the Secretariat of the ACP for the work they are doing in preparing for the post-Cotonou negotiations with the European Union.

The negotiations represent an opportunity for ensuring environmental security and economic security for ACP states and of reinforcing the Group's solidarity.

I have identified and isolated two elements which embody some of our common aspirations.

- Economic security will allow us to overcome legacies of underdevelopment and dependency.
- Environmental security protects us from present threats and lays the foundation for a better future for all of our peoples.

Economic security

A future ACP-EU agreement must usher in a new era of economic relations between the North and the South and between rich countries and poor countries. This century must be the century of the South.

The ACP – belonging to the South – must ready themselves to become the drivers of global economic, human and social development in the 21st century.

The ACP must seek a new economic covenant aimed at supporting the transformation of its economies through investment in industries, infrastructure and information communications technology.

Investment in economic industries is the key to unlocking the potential of our economies and moving production higher up the value chain.

Investment in infrastructure will support the structural transformation of our economies and reduce inequality.

Investment in information communications technology will reduce the digital divide and foster improved integration into the markets of the North.

Unemployment, particularly of young people and women, remains a major developmental challenge across the ACP. Job-creation remains the best means of extricating persons out of the clutches of poverty. Jobs are necessary to curb emigration and retain skilled persons.

A new ACP-EU agreement must assign high priority towards reducing unemployment through job-creation and job-promotion initiatives, including support for small and medium-scale enterprises which have demonstrated a capacity to reduce employment.

Environmental security. Climate change is a common threat faced by all. It has left a trail of death, destruction and destitution. Drought and desertification have triggered famine and hunger and increased emigration to 'greener' countries.

Floods and other natural disasters have resulted in fatalities and have undermined productive infrastructure. The acidification of the oceans, resulting from high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, has disrupted the livelihoods of those who depend on the oceans for their survival. Rising sea levels are affecting fishing grounds and threatening small-island developing and low-lying coastal states.

ACP states need to be environmentally secure if they are to guarantee their peoples human security and sustainable livelihoods.

A future ACP-EU agreement, therefore, must establish mechanisms for addressing environmental security. These must include measures which promote climate adaptation, guarantee food security and support sustainable livelihoods. All of this must be supported by development finance accessible by all ACP countries, including those which are deemed middle-income countries.

Ambassadors,

We are tasked with an important responsibility in recasting the foundation for long-term relations with the EU beyond 2020. It is a grave responsibility which has been entrusted into our hands. The reasons we argue, the resolve we demonstrate and the results we achieve will influence the lives and livelihoods of a billion constituents whom we collectively represent.

I thank you.