

STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE MICHEL KAMANO, ACTING ACP CO-PRESIDENT OF THE ACP-EU JPA AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 38TH SESSION OF THE ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Honourable Carlos Zorrinho, Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,

Your Excellency President of the Senate

Honourable Speaker of Parliament

Honourable Ministers

Speakers of Various Parliaments

Fellow Parliamentarians, Members of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,

Distinguished guests all protocols observed,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for the honour of addressing the Joint Parliamentary Assembly once again. Before I continue, allow me to also commend the Government and the Parliament of the Republic of Rwanda for hosting us and the good hospitality and facilities they have extended to us since our arrival in Kigali. Hosting of these meetings speaks of the importance you attach to the ACP-EU Partnership and its success.

Your Excellencies, Honourable Colleagues,

It has been 9 months since we last met. A good number of colleagues from the European Parliament side who were here for the 37th Session of this Assembly are no longer with us, and we have a number of new faces on both sides of the House. On behalf of the ACP Members of this Assembly and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate you all on your election and certainly welcome you to the Joint Parliamentary Assembly Family. For the familiar faces back in the assembly allow me to congratulate you on your re-election to the European Parliament. May I in the same vein extend heartfelt congratulations to my friend Carlos Zorrinho on his election as Co-President of this Assembly. I am glad that I have an opportunity to draw on his rich knowledge and experience as we work together to advance the cause of this House.

In the last 9 months the ugly pall of terrorism has continued to hang over our countries, in the form of terrorist attacks in countries specifically the G5 Sahel countries. These heinous acts are an attempt to spread fear and hatred. We must not allow such acts to divide our societies, we must reiterate the urgency of working better together globally to eliminate violent extremism in all its forms. Similarly, we cannot turn a blind eye to some of the natural disasters happening in some ACP countries, for example, in August the Caribbean nation of Bahamas was hit by Hurricane Dorian, it was the most intense tropical cyclone on record to strike the Bahamas, and is regarded as the worst natural disaster in the country's history. This calls for a collective approach that will combat terrorism and scale up responses to such devastating acts of nature.

Your Excellencies, Honourable Colleagues,

I always look forward to our Assembly Sessions with keen anticipation. The diversity of our political and ideological backgrounds often makes for very rich debate. But this is not merely a window dressing exercise, because I sense it is a genuine and deep interest in the mutual development of our disparate countries and nations. We may have different approaches and views about how best to address the development challenges of ACP, and indeed EU states, but within this assembly we have the opportunity to have a broader perspective on human development because each one of us has some practical experience on what can be done and what has worked elsewhere.

Allow me colleagues to focus my address on multilateralism

From its inception in the 1970s, this Assembly has mainly focused on discussing the development challenges of ACP states. But over the years, there has been a gradual convergence of our political and economic challenges and needs with the realisation that many of these issues can only be addressed in a collegial way. While we have spoken against the one-size-fits-all approach, we have also spoken against unilateralism, as well as isolationist and protectionist tendencies.

Currently we have seen a wave of unilateral approaches by some of the super powers that have taken a back seat in driving the global agenda while crushing Multilateralism. This fact alone demonstrates that, more than ever before, the ACP-EU Partnership must become a catalyst of Multilateralism.

Global problems can no longer be addressed through fragmented responses, it is therefore critical that we demonstrate that multilateralism can deliver and can highlight the added value to our partnership. In this regard, I have the strong believe that parliamentarians can champion multilateral work as they bring the views of the people to the table and ensure they reflect their perspective.

Your Excellencies, Honourable Colleagues,

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 was without a doubt one of the greatest triumphs of multilateralism in modern history. In an unprecedented show of unity, all Member States of the United Nations agreed on a common, comprehensive blueprint for eliminating extreme poverty, reducing inequality, and protecting the planet in a rapidly globalizing world.

I am happy to note that, most of the issues we shall be discussing in this Session of our Assembly relate directly or otherwise to the need to achieve sustainable economic development for our countries. We must do whatever works to achieve this objective, may I submit however that we cannot remain straight jacketed by ideological or stale theories.

This is why I am glad that the new ACP –EU Partnership is to be based on achieving sustainable development goals through taking into account the evolution of international discourse on development, and the many international initiatives that have been taking place in the last few years.

Efforts have already begun in making sure the ACP and EU work closely together in the international fora. A good illustration of this new collaboration at the international fora was a Joint Declaration on the implementation of SDGs that was adopted by the ACP and the EU at the last UN General Assembly in the margins of the UN SDG Summit. This declaration reaffirms our shared commitment to mobilise in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda a full range of means of implementation in the spirit of partnership; in this regard it recognises the importance of domestic resource mobilisation, development finance, development effectiveness and of strengthening existing partnerships such as South-South and triangular

cooperation including multi-stakeholder partnerships, for effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement. The establishment of new multi-stakeholder partnerships including public-private partnerships is key for diversifying and transforming the economies of ACP countries and EU Member States. The declaration also recalls that in implementing the 2030 Agenda, we should remain guided by our common principles and core values, including democratic principles, rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, equal access to justice for all, gender equality, women empowerment and solidarity as well as our strong commitment to the rules-based global order with multilateralism and the United Nations at its core.

This declaration has clearly set a path in which together we can implement the SDG goals. While such collaborations and outcomes are praiseworthy, we as parliamentarians have the duty to ensure its implementation bears fruit for the citizens and gives rise to the economic and social development of our countries.

Another indication of our role in multilateralism is portrayed in some of the issues we will address that fall within the international processes and agendas, such as the Migration and Sustainable development, Food Security and nutrition, challenges to be addressed under the upcoming COP25 in Madrid Spain. The ACP Parliamentary Assembly has in the past deliberated on issues of similar importance with great enthusiasm, it is my hope that we will bring the same determination and steadfastness to debating the issues that are on the agenda of this session.

The ACP Group shares the conviction that addressing climate change related challenges is now a global mandate for the nations, among the ACP group are the most vulnerable nations including Least developed countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island States who are working together to build resilience, support low carbon transition and sustainable development for their countries. This ambition by our states will not be achieved without the support of our international community.

Your Excellencies, Honourable Colleagues,

Allow me to speak an issue of importance in the history of the ACP group, namely the post Cotonou negotiations. As we are negotiating the way forward for our partnership, we look back and acknowledge that this partnership has grown both in the diversity of the issues covered, as well as in the amount of resources allocated for cooperation. I would like to submit, however, that this partnership should not only be measured in terms of statistics, but also the solidarity that it has helped to build among peoples of the South and those of the North.

You will recall that in all our recent meetings we have prioritised discussions on the post Cotonou negotiations and the role and place of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. This assembly has expressed the need and importance of a strong parliamentary assembly and I can only implore that we continue to be guided by the resolute conviction that a Joint Parliamentary Assembly at all ACP level is key to a partnership that delivers for its people.

I make a fresh appeal to this august assembly and friends in the European Parliament to ensure at all levels they defend the retaining of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly, while cognisant of the need to realign our working methods that will ensure this Assembly is effective in approach, efficient in delivery and an assembly fit for purpose for the 21st century.

Your Excellencies, Honourable Colleagues,

Let me conclude by reminding us all that as we come to the end of our Session, we should resolve to ensure that as legislators, we continuously work to improve our own effectiveness and the realisation of an enabling environment for development, peace, justice and human rights in our countries. Let us all remember, that this forum constitutes the largest democratic expression of peoples in our collective geographic space and therefore the greatest form of expression of an alliance for multilateralism.

I thank you for your kind attention and hope that we shall have a successful session.