

SPEECH
BY COMMISSIONER JUTTA URPILAINEN
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(Welcome)

President Kenyatta, Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Ambassadors, Secretary-General, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to take the floor this morning on behalf of the European Union, soon after taking up my post as European Commissioner for International Partnerships.

Let me first of all warmly thank Kenya and President Kenyatta for hosting this Summit. In the times we live, this summit itself is a strong proof. Together we stand against the tide of breaking ties.

By beginning with the fundamentals, I believe that “I” precedes “we” only in the dictionary. European Union strongly promotes cooperation, dialogue, mutual respect and joint push for better. In “we” there is the power to change the world.

To reflect the same, the large number of Heads of State and Government, who have made the trip to Nairobi from Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, is proof of the active role that Africa plays in **promoting multilateralism and South-South**

cooperation. We at the EU share this objective: multilateralism is key for us all.

With this in mind, this ACP Summit on “*A Transformed ACP committed to Multilateralism*” is the perfect place for the European Union to convey our message of support in earnest. Because the partnership that binds the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and the European Union together is truly special.

Our partnership is both long-lasting and unique. It is the only one that spans the globe from north to south and east to west.

Our challenge will be to make this partnership deliver the best possible results – not only bilaterally, but as a vehicle for multilateralism as well.

We are now at a crossroads. But a crossroads in the positive sense. Because we have an unprecedented opportunity to decide on the best way forward together.

Allow me to take a look back at the path we have taken to get us here; because we can be proud.

We have shown the world that we can join forces to bring about real change on issues of global importance.

Let me just tell you two concrete steps:

1. We came together around the Sustainable Development Goals and
2. We formed a 'high ambition coalition' to get the Paris Climate Agreement through.

These are major achievements. We must build on them.

Our multi-dimensional partnership has proven time and again that we are stronger when we stand **together**.

Together, we are a hundred and seven countries, representing more than a billion and a half people.

Together, we account for more than half of the seats at the United Nations. We can build a powerful alliance that reflects our common interests and values in the international agenda.

Together, we are a force to be reckoned with.

So, while some are questioning the future of multilateralism, we are showing the world that multilateralism is very much alive.

Acting together is precisely how we can give our alliance more weight on the world stage and make a real difference to tackle global challenges. This starts with implementing the Paris Agreement and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Which brings me to the future. In our view, the agreement we adopt to succeed Cotonou must serve four basic purposes.

Firstly, as the blueprint for our future partnership, it must be able to cope with the trends and realities of our modern world. A lot has changed in the twenty years since the Cotonou Agreement was adopted.

Secondly, our agreement must be an example of the new development paradigm. We are in this together. The SDG framework and the Paris Agreement must be at the core of our work and our partnership.

Thirdly, the new agreement must be flexible. That is why we believe in one common foundation of values and principles. This foundation should be complemented by three regional partnerships, and these partnerships should be action-oriented.

And **fourthly**, the agreement must be fair. Because partners treat each other fairly.

With the agreement in place, I know that our partnership will go from strength to strength. We should then focus on **priority areas**:

- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including
 - eradicating poverty,
 - fighting climate change,
 - protecting biodiversity,
 - supporting ocean governance, or
 - sustainable investment.

These are core themes of your Summit and core themes of our partnership. They rest on multilateralism. They are areas where we can make a difference for the better.

The 2030 Agenda is our common plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity.

We need to act now and we need to act together.

Let me give you an example: None of us can hide from climate change. This is something that our partners in the Caribbean and the Pacific know only too well. Weather hazards are becoming ever more frequent and severe. For some, rising sea levels are putting their very existence at risk.

Very recently, right here in Kenya, problems have taken a tragic turn: After a severe drought, unusually heavy rains have affected at least 330,000 people: 18,000 people have been displaced and at least 120 people have died due to floods and landslides.

The European Union sends its condolences.

But I am afraid that condolences are not enough. We cannot simply stand by and let tragedies strike. We need to act now. I am a big believer in the power of youth. You must all have heard of Greta Thunberg, how she is rallying her generation, and how she is demanding all of us to act.

In Europe, politicians are already acting: The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, is working hard to bring a European **Green Deal** into being. We aim to lead the climate fight from the front. Our level of ambition is unprecedented. This is only right, given the scale of the problems we face.

But we need more than a European Green Deal. Because we cannot win the fight alone. That is why our partnership with all of you is crucial to make this planet secure and sustainable for generations to come. Therefore the Green Deal is truly a joint opportunity.

On critical issues, our partnership must set the agenda.

And through our joint action on a positive agenda, we will be able to learn from each other, as true partners.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The kind of future for us as partners reminds me very much of the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*: “I am because we are”. We would do well to make that a guiding principle.

In Finnish, we have a saying: “A strong will takes you through the grey stone” [*Luja tahto vie läpi harmaan kiven*]. The equivalent in English would be “where there’s a will there’s a way”. The will is there. And the way ahead, beyond the crossroads, is becoming ever clearer.

It will take us towards a brighter future for us all. For a vibrant ACP-EU partnership of shared values is not only good for us – it is good for the whole world.

Thank you.

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