

STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. WILLIAM RUTO, EGH. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA, DURING THE OPENING SESSION OF THE 110TH ACP COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING, KICC, NAIROBI 7TH DECEMBER 2019.

Hon. Patrick Pruaitch, President of the ACP Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea,
Dr. Patrick Gomes, Secretary General of the ACP,
Hon. Ministers,
Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Heads of International and Regional Organizations,
Distinguished delegates,

Good morning;

It is a humbling privilege to join you today at this important event.

The 110th session of the Africa Caribbean and Pacific Council of Ministers exponentially builds on previous efforts and promises to yield outcomes of tremendous significance for our countries and peoples.

It is therefore very appropriate that such historic undertakings and outcomes take place in Nairobi, Kenya.

You will agree with me that Nairobi provides the ideal setting for this inspired deliberation. By now, many if not all of you will have experienced the legendary hospitality of our people besides other attractions. Kenya is a beautiful country and Nairobi is a city of innumerable delights.

I am confident that the National Organising Committee, which has done such a fine job in putting together this event, has likewise been mindful to give you hints of Magical Kenya. The collaboration with the ACP Committee of Ambassadors and the ACP Secretariat has facilitated the seamless management of necessary logistics for the 9th ACP Summit, which will also take place here.

Karibu to all delegates. On behalf of the Government of Kenya, we are honoured to have you as our esteemed visitors.

As I indicated earlier, the outcome of your deliberations is awaited with great expectation. Building on our rich history and achievements of the past 44 years, time has come for even more impactful articulation of our leaders' vision.

Consonant with the guidance of the Heads of State and Government, we look forward to greater solidarity in confronting individual and common regional challenges, and in surmounting those we all share as a family.

Hon. Ministers and Distinguished participants;

I am highly encouraged to see this commitment captured clearly in the agenda and the sub-themes.

The next couple of days, therefore, will showcase our cooperation in action. Your discussions will be centered on critical pillars of our people's welfare and shared interests.

Good Governance, Peace and Security (including terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation), Climate Change and the Small Islands Developing States are subjects of vital importance.

Similarly, a more Dynamic Intra-ACP Cooperation is at the heart of our collective interest as we pursue Social and Economic Development.

Your diligent work on these themes will greatly support our leaders in setting the vision and direction in terms of the Summit's theme: A Transformed ACP: Committed to Multilateralism.

Hon. Ministers and Distinguished participants

Committed multilateralism is the most strategic path to overcoming challenges to sustainable development.

In order to accelerate the pace of this progress, this commitment must entail transformative collaboration. And to be truly transformative, a good starting point must be the inclusion, participation and consideration of youth and women in global affairs as well as partnerships with the private sector.

As the Cotonou Partnership Agreement runs towards its completion, it is clear that the ACP-EU is ripe for the next level of engagement.

I therefore urge the Council and every other institution taking part in the negotiations to place the interests of the ACP Group foremost even as we perfect fraternal coexistence as a Group.

As a Group we have been able to march forward and help to shape an ACP that we want. By use of our numbers, we make a big force towards fully integrating ourselves into the global system.

The spirit of South-South Cooperation can help re-live our original goal of growth and development through solidarity and cooperation.

Hon. Ministers and Distinguished participants

As you continue the deliberations in the days to come, I would like to take this opportunity to add my voice to some of the key global challenges that will require greater collaboration and cooperation from member states.

The growing threat of climate change and the disruption it continues to cause must be addressed. It is a reality that although some of the ACP members in the Pacific only contribute 0.03 percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions, the millions of people who live there are experiencing some of the earliest and most severe consequences and some might run out of freshwater long before they run out of land.

People are already feeling the effects of climate change across Africa. Evidence shows that the change in temperature has affected the health, livelihoods, food productivity, water availability, and overall security of our people.

Over the past 25 years, the number of weather-related disasters, such as floods and droughts, has doubled, resulting in the region having a higher mortality rate from droughts than any other region.

In addition to this, projections estimate that climate change will lead to an equivalent of 2 percent to 4 percent annual loss in GDP in the region by 2040.

I therefore urge that as a group of nations, we must continue to speak in one voice on this issue and work towards developing sustainable solutions that will support the most vulnerable of our population.

On that note, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the organizing committee of this summit for giving special attention to the plight of women and youth. Until we create an inclusive enabling environment for these special groups in the economy, change will be incremental, not catalytic.

This should include policy reforms that will see the expansion of economic resources controlled by women and youth in the broader community, such as those developed by business owners and entrepreneurs, which can lay the groundwork for collective action and problem-solving.

Job creation must be at the center of this policy reforms if we hope to empower the youth who make up the majority of our countries' population.

For instance it is estimated that in Sub-Saharan Africa alone will need 11 million new jobs a year through 2030. It is therefore imperative that beyond the traditionally important sectors, it is essential to harness the technological innovation and entrepreneurship that the digital age has unleashed because we continue to see many examples of how innovations are creating new and different jobs.

It is a known fact that countries that are open to international trade tend to grow faster, innovate, improve productivity and provide higher income and more opportunities to their people.

Noting the commitment in the Lome convention towards eliminating obstacles, which impede some members from taking full advantage of the opportunities offered within the APC mechanism, I urge you to continue to work towards addressing the challenges faced by member states. Our efforts must be geared towards strengthening our trade ties and leverage on our connectedness while negotiating with other regions of the world.

The ACP must continue to be supportive of an open, rules-based, predictable multilateral trading system, with the goal of helping its members participate in and enjoy the benefits of such a system.

In addition, developing the private sector through a range of strategies that aim to establish markets that function vibrantly and fairly should continue to be the main stay of our efforts to provide economic opportunities of quality to our people and attract foreign direct investment.

This we should do by focusing our resources on creating enabling conditions for growth, addressing constraints within the markets, and finally by engaging the businesses and where appropriate, allowing business to take the lead.

Hon. Ministers and Distinguished participants

Lastly, the threat of terrorism to global peace, as an evolving transnational menace requires a collective strategy, priority and response by the APC, in addition to action taken by member states.

Terrorism is one of the major causes of instability in the current environment. It seeks to undermine the very values that are the cornerstone of international cooperation.

Terrorism will remain a key challenge to peace and stability and to State power, particularly through its ability to use asymmetric methods to bypass traditional security and defence systems.

We require a global approach in addressing its manifestations as well as the social, economic and political context in which it occurs.

APC member states should lead from the front in providing recommendations on how the global community can collectively counter terrorism and extremism.

I invite you to speak to these same challenges as you pursue your agenda. With those remarks, I wish you very fruitful deliberations.

It is now my duty to pronounce the 110th Session of the ACP Council of Ministers officially open.

Thank You. God Bless You.