

**Remarks by H. E. Sheila Sealy Monteith, Ambassador/
Regional Coordinator for the Caribbean Group of Ambassadors in Brussels
on the Occasion of the Special Meeting of Committee of Ambassadors
to Bid Farewell to
Dr. Patrick Ignatius Gomes, Secretary-General of the ACP Group of States
ACP House, 28th February 2020**

Her Excellency Mrs. Teneng Mba Jaiteh, Ambassador of The Gambia and Chairman of the Committee of Ambassadors

Excellencies, Representatives of ACP Member States and other Colleagues

His Excellency Dr. Patrick Gomes, (outgoing) Secretary-General of the ACP Group of States

His Excellency Mr. Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, Incoming Secretary-General
Staff of the ACP Secretariat

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Caribbean Group in Brussels. I use the opportunity formally to align our Group with the expressions of gratitude by our Chairperson, to the four Assistant Secretaries-General and the Chef de Cabinet. We are appreciative of the support which you have all provided to our region, individually and collectively. You have contributed significantly to the quality of work produced by the ACP and to the stature it now has on the international landscape.

As we were in 2015 when Dr. Patrick Gomes took office as Secretary-General of the ACP Group of States, representing the Caribbean region, we are today very proud of the stewardship he has rendered over the past five years.

It is now a remarkable fact of history that this eminent Group of countries from the South and across three geographical regions, has undergone periods of self-analysis and re-energising, leaving it much stronger and committed to its mission on each occasion. We will agree that this most recent phase, which unfolded during the tenure of SG Gomes, has distinguished itself by the coincidence of several significant and simultaneous developments, which collectively have major implications for the ACP Group.

The renewed introspection and the culmination in the Revised Georgetown Agreement and the planned transformation of the ACP group into an international organisation; the adoption of the ACP Negotiating Mandate and launch of the post-Cotonou negotiations and work undertaken until now; the staging of the 9th Summit and the adoption of the Nairobi Nguvu ya Pamoja Declaration have, among other developments, set a solid basis for a transformation of the ACP Group to better meet the demands of a changing global environment.

Throughout his tenure, we could not ignore the unending passion with which SG Gomes approached his work, earning him the moniker “Mr. ACP”. While he has clearly put to good use and to the benefit of the ACP Group, the knowledge and experience gained in other spheres prior to his service in Brussels, the years spent as Ambassador in Belgium and the last five years as Secretary-General are witnessed the full breadth and depth of his understanding of the ACP and its relations.

Secretary-General Gomes was at his best when he was able to seek opportunities for cooperation, partnership and for creating linkages at all levels. His grasp of this pursuit was not confined to the academic, but in practice he sought to reach beyond Brussels and to set his sights on how to position the ACP Group in other major centres of multilateralism.

The threat of the disintegration of the ACP on the threshold of the start of post-Cotonou negotiations put our venerable SG into overdrive. He expended his time, energy and credits to plan, strategise and execute missions to lobby in capitals or at some event where he could explain and correct misconceptions that threatened the future of the Organisation. He did so in Kigali at the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement in Kigali, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London and later that year at the United Nations General Assembly. He was indefatigable, but it helped, and he made important in-roads, and here we are now, a still united ACP Group.

On behalf of my colleagues, I thank you Dr. Patrick Ignatius Gomes, for your leadership, for your sterling contribution to the ACP Group as its Secretary-General, in the name of the region you represented - the Caribbean. We are proud of the dedicated service you rendered, of your commitment to pursuing and achieving the ideals of the Organisation and of your unstinting belief in the power of the 79 countries of the South to rise beyond the challenges and to be a force for good in the world.

We wish for you peace and well-being and the satisfaction of knowing that you gave of your best.

I thank you.

SSM
Brussels, Belgium
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