

**Presentation on behalf of the Eastern African Region – Delivered by H.E. Haymandoyal Dillum  
Ambassador of the Republic of Mauritius**

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**SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF ACP FAREWELL RECEPTION IN HONOUR OF  
SECRETARY GENERAL, AMBASSADOR P.I. GOMES**

**28 FEBRUARY 2020, BRUSSELS**

It is my distinct honour to address this special meeting today on behalf of the East African Group in the absence of the Regional Co-ordinator to bid farewell to our Secretary General Ambassador Gomes – indeed a seasoned diplomat who has presided over the destiny of this organization over the last five years.

S.G., today you are moving from this stage and tomorrow will definitely be ours. This is a cycle of life. Sir – retirement is not merely an act of ending but more opportunistically, an act of commencement and the promise of a meaningful future.

A person of the stature of Ambassador Gomes fits in all the characteristics if we are to describe a perfect human being:

- Humble and affable: he is liked by all;
- Charismatic: he tops the list;
- Professional: we have all witnessed it daily;
- Jovial: always with his smile;
- Cool and calm: by his softness;
- Accessible: with his availability at all times;
- Wise and determined: the art of bringing compromise and understanding in differences did not go unnoticed;
- Dedicated and devoted: to his duty;
- Tough: when the need arises.

This is Ambassador Gomes.

His distinguished professional career path, hailing from a humble beginning in Guyana, juggling with different responsibilities at the national and regional level, was a unique mix of experience and dedicated professionalism that he brought to the ACP while serving as Ambassador and later as Secretary General of the ACP.

Chair, while assuming the position of Secretary General of a major developing block, he very wisely and ably guided the ACP through a challenging period of shifting global dynamics.

Indeed, he has been at the vanguard of the many challenges that the ACP family has faced in their developmental strides.

## **Mr. Secretary General**

Your list of accomplishments, that I have witnessed first-hand, is quite long and I will probably leave that to your biographers. However, I do wish to enumerate three of them which we consider as historical.

### **First**

As a committed multilateralist, your firm leadership role in steering this group to revise and actualize the Georgetown Agreement and transform the ACP from a mere grouping to an Organization today, is an indelible mark that you have left in history.

### **Second**

Your resoluteness to ensure that the interests of the ACP States are fully safeguarded and reinforced in the nearly concluded Post Cotonou negotiations is a fitting and enduring legacy which you are leaving to the generations to come;

### **Third**

The launch of the Endowment Trust Fund, which if properly managed will make ACP a financially independent organization, is testimony to your deep commitment to the development and prosperity of the ACP States. However, without forgetting your personal commitments and proactive engagements for the promotion of South-South Cooperation particularly on issues of climate change, fisheries among others.

Indeed, Sir, your journey from Georgetown to Brussels has been a diverse but momentous one. Throughout your career, we have noticed your constant efforts to tackle the challenges and initiate actions that would allow the ACP regions to prosper. Your actions and initiatives touched all of us without distinction. Being a Secretary General of a body such as ours is no sinecure.

And how could it be otherwise.

Madame Chair, many of us may not be aware that Ambassador Gomes was ordained Priest at the beginning of his professional career. So this combination of divine spiritual calling, coupled with hands-on experience with the material world, cannot make him fail as a human being and become a tireless advocate for good.

I think this is best embodied in the saying “service to mankind which he has been doing, is service to God.”

As you leave, Sir, a befitting farewell to you, would be for us to build on your legacy and move forward. The road will no doubt be long and arduous. However, the qualities and the direction that you are leaving for this Organization shall be the guiding principles to help us to build on it and move forward in a spirit of consultation and engagement.

It is unanimously acknowledged that you have constantly sought the interest and the welfare of all the Group. We should admit it was not an easy responsibility.

To carry such a heavy cross, it is always said that behind many men there often stands a force, a presence whose contribution is too often unacknowledged. I would therefore wish to seize this

opportunity to express our deep gratitude to Mrs. Gomes, the untiring lady for her steadfast support given to you in your work as well as her own dedication to the ACP cause. I would say a big “Thank You” to Madam Gomes.

Excellencies, friends and colleagues, it is just a farewell but not an *‘au revoir’*.

Let me quote from Shakespeare:

“All the world’s a stage,

And all the men and women merely players;

They have their exits and their entrances,

So one man in his life plays many parts”

And Sir, there are still many other parts to play – we have no doubt, Sir, you will proceed to open yet another chapter in an already rich experience after this episode. Once again, on behalf of the Group I wish you and your team of management, good health, peace and all the best in your new endeavours. In the same vein, I would also like to acknowledge one of the sons of the Eastern African region who served as Director of CTA for a period of ten years. We wish him well.

I take this opportunity to welcome and congratulate the incoming new Secretary General and wish him well.

Thank you and God bless you All.