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**REPORT FOR THE 1ST MEETING
OF ACP NON-STATE ACTORS (NSAs)**

Towards the ACP we want: The Role of Non-State Actors

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 1st Meeting of ACP Non-State Actors (NSAs) was held at ACP House on 30-31 October 2017. The meeting brought together representatives of NSAs from all the 6 regions of the ACP Group to examine issues of common interest to the ACP Group with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate change, private sector development and the future of ACP-EU relations post Cotonou. The list of participants is attached at Appendix I.
2. The main objective of the meeting was to provide a platform for NSAs to share their views on the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies for a coherent ACP approach on the above themes, and to effectively translate development objectives into actionable results at national level.
3. The meeting's objectives were to enhance the role of NSAs in the ACP Group's governance process through more participatory and inclusive policy dialogue and to define modalities for enhanced NSA participation in intra-ACP programmes.
4. The aim of this report is to summarise these discussions, as outlined in the detailed minutes attached in Appendix II, and make initial recommendations in accordance with the ACP Group's agenda in areas such as climate change and natural disaster risk management, ACP private sector development strategy, and ACP-EU negotiations for a post-Cotonou Agreement, that would:
 - (a) Identify key priority issues for which the ACP Group can harness the important role of the NSAs and
 - (b) Highlight the role of NSAs in the implementation of the SDGs.
 - (c) Make recommendations on the way forward

II. LEGAL BASIS

5. The Cotonou Agreement provides for the role of Non-State Actors in the implementation of the Agreement. Article 4 mentions NSAs among the entities *"to be informed and involved in consultation on cooperation policies and strategies, on priorities for cooperation especially in areas that concern or directly affect them, and on the political dialogue."* The Article further provides that NSAs and local decentralised authorities shall, where appropriate *"be provided with financial resources, under the conditions laid down in this Agreement in order to support local development processes."*

6. Article 6 of the Cotonou Agreement defined Non-State Actors (NSAs) under three main categories: private sector, economic and social groups and civil society in all its forms according to national characteristics. Article 6(2) states that *“Recognition of NSAs shall depend on the extent to which they address the needs of the population, on their specific competencies and whether they are organised and managed democratically and transparently.”*

III. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

7. The ACP Group has provided a forum for consultation of NSAs principally through the ACP Civil Society Forum. Three Civil Society Forums have been held so far, in 2001, 2006 and 2009 (Additionally, a report on the implementation of the outcomes of these Forums will be provided at the 1st NSAs meeting). Civil Society Forums were primarily intended for representatives of civil society and did not include representatives of the private sector and economic groups.
8. The ACP Group decided to broaden the participation of NSAs to include all the actors identified in Article 6 of the Cotonou Agreement. With the imminent expiry of the Cotonou Agreement and negotiations with the EU in 2018, the ACP Group is in the course of elaborating negotiating positions on the specific issues for negotiations according to the guidelines provided in the Decisions, Declarations and Communiqué of the ACP Heads of State and Government, as well as the Decisions of the ACP Council of Ministers.
9. Extending and widening consultations with ACP NSAs will ensure that all the interests and views of all ACP stakeholders are taken into account in the negotiating briefs and approach to the negotiations with the EU for the best negotiating outcome.

IV. ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE 1ST MEETING OF ACP NON-STATE ACTORS

a. Future of the ACP Group

10. The perspectives and ambitions of the ACP Group to be a more effective global player have been articulated in the document *‘The ACP We Want’* which was adopted by the ACP Council of Ministers at its 105th Session held in Brussels on 3 and 4 May 2017. The document elaborated the three strategic pillars adopted by the 104th Session of the ACP Council of Ministers in Brussels on 29 and 30 November 2016, which are:
 - i. Trade, industrialisation and services;
 - ii. Development cooperation, technology, science and innovation and research; and
 - iii. Political dialogue and advocacy

11. Participants were expected to make concrete proposals on the role of NSAs in a revitalised and restructured ACP Group. Some of the pertinent questions in this regard are the following:
- (a) How to enhance engagement of NSAs with the ACP Group and support ACP NSAs' engagement in in policy formulation and monitoring of development cooperation programs:
 - (b) The promotion of policy and political dialogue that targets sustainable interventions to positively enhance ACP NSAs' identification of needs; and
 - (c) Identification of the principal challenges at national and regional levels that create barriers to greater NSA engagement with ACP Governments.

b. The Future of ACP-EU Relations Post 2020

12. The Cotonou Agreement, which was signed in June 2000 In Cotonou, Benin, expires in 2020. The ACP Group has for the past three years held discussions at the level of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors, ACP Council and ACP Heads of State and Government on future perspectives of the ACP Group which have also included ACP positions on post 2020 relations. The Port Moresby Declaration of the ACP Heads of State and Government states the intention of the ACP Group to continue and enhance cooperation with the EU and to diversify its partnerships to include other entities.

Summary Discussions on the Future of the ACP Group and Post-Cotonou

The discussions amongst the participants focused on:

- The need at the state level, to recognize and reinforce the driving role of the private sector - especially a private sector that works well, in the development and creation of wealth
- The difference between NSAs especially between the private sector and civil society
- The importance of the role of women and youth • The indispensable link with the SDGs
- Correct the lack of visibility of youth with regard to the Cotonou Agreement and to integrate young people in the whole process
- Encourage youth mobility in ACP countries and to give more opportunities to youth to participate to make the ACP work for all

Three concrete proposals were expressed falling under the three strategic pillars:

- To strengthen NSA engagement with the ACP group especially in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of cooperation programs, there is

a need for a clear mechanism or policy for NSA participation at the ACP level in general but also at the level of each of our Member States

- At the regional and global ACP national level, it is necessary to ensure an enabling environment for NSAs to engage freely and effectively in this dialogue.
- Think about creating an NSA advisory group to assess the work of the ACP

13. As stated earlier, the 104th Session of the Council of Ministers held on 29 and 30 November 2016 adopted strategic pillars to guide the work of the ACP in future. These pillars will also be the basis of the work of the ACP Group towards the attainment of the sustainable development goals.

14. Participants were expected to make concrete proposals on the following strategic pillars of the ACP Group which will also guide its negotiations with the ACP Group for a post Cotonou framework:

i. Trade, Investment, Industrialization and Services

15. The Group recognised the importance of industrialization and services. Although by definition trade covers both the movement of goods and services, greater emphasis on services would deepen the integration of ACP States in the global economy. Similarly, a dedicated focus on industrialization would facilitate the attraction and retention of more domestic and international investments.

16. The Group will *inter-alia* aim at deepening intra-ACP trade integration and investment cooperation to take advantage of the ACP's huge and growing population and market potential through improved participation in the global, regional and national value and supply chains. The Group will also aim at strengthening institutional arrangements necessary to build and scale up the capacity of the private sector and governments to take advantage of the new trade arrangements under Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), as well as other trade arrangements with third parties.

17. The most relevant SDG in this regard, in addition to those mentioned under pillar 2 is Goal 10 on reduced inequalities (within nations, as well as among nations), which will necessitate improving the regulation and monitoring of financial markets and institutions, encouraging development assistance and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to regions where the need is greatest.

18. In view of the above, participants were requested to consider the following questions:

- (a) What is the NSA perspective on negotiations for a post- Cotonou framework to ensure that trade is perceived as an effective tool for poverty eradication and strengthening of regional integration?
 - (b) What is the NSAs view on the ACP goal to mobilise resources to consolidate industrialisation efforts, particularly for agro-industries; identify new partners; and address the current high costs of remittances, particularly for the ACP diaspora?
19. Since 2015, the ACP Group through its ACP Private Sector Development Strategy, (ACP/85/070/14) has prioritized the role to be played by the private sector in ACP states' social and economic development. The Strategy aims at:
- i. Improving the business climate for private sector development;
 - ii. Developing and strengthening entrepreneurship and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); and
 - iii. Increasing access to financing for MSMEs; and strengthening competitiveness and access for MSMEs to the national, regional and global markets.
20. NSA representatives discussed proposals on the following issues:
- (a) Creation of networks of ACP Private Sector Stakeholders at the national and regional levels;
 - (b) How to better support for private sector institutional capacity building; and
 - (c) Identification of new financial tools and streamlining of instruments for supporting investment, and enhancing access to finance for SMEs.

Summary Discussions on Pillar 1 – Trade, Investment, Industrialisation & Services:

- The need to leverage the synergies of each other within the private sector and the wider NSAs of the ACP; including having seamless interaction amongst labour, capital and the social constructs
- Encourage the Private Sector in the production and creation of more durable, high quality, and service-value goods as well as services that are environmentally friendly , which actively takes into consideration depleting natural resources, whilst eliminating waste
- Encourage more intra-ACP trade by targeted facilitation of South-South trade and through the establishment of an ACP NSA repository (which lists the different actors, including private sector) to stimulate information sharing;

- Promote the lessons learnt and sharing of experiences on the EPAs - both negotiation and implementation - between the ACP regions, including the documentation, publication and dissemination of these experiences, inter alia, with specific reference to the Cariforum groups as the first ACP region to sign the only 'comprehensive EPA', which also includes the important sector of trade in services;
- Investment in research activities on trade in services specific to the ACP region and enhanced intra-ACP trade;
- Harness the role of local NSAs, especially to foster 'business continuity', as vital actors in post-disaster re-construction, as well as disaster risk reduction in order to mitigate the negative impact of natural disasters and crisis by ensuring continuity and community-holistic responses
- Promote the enabling regulatory and legislative environment for local SMEs participation in sustainable industrialization process through targeted funding to these local SMEs, in an effective cycle of inclusion in consultation and monitoring in a transparent manner

ii. Development Cooperation, Technology, Science and Innovation and Research

21. Science, technology and innovation are fundamental tools for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Science and technology are cross-cutting means to achieve Goals 4 (quality education); 6 (clean water and sanitation); 7 (affordable and clean energy); 8 (decent work and economic growth); 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure); 11 (sustainable cities and communities); and 13 (climate action). The objective of the ACP Group under this pillar is to improve efficiency in both economic and environmental areas, developing new and more sustainable ways to respond to fundamental needs, and empowering people to drive their own future.

22. NSA participants addressed the following questions:

- (a) What is the NSA view on the further improvement and strengthening of ACP Research and innovation organisations to better serve the needs of the industrial sector?; and
- (b) What are NSAs' proposals to further improve the services sector, particularly in the areas of tourism, remittances, maritime transport and infrastructural development?

Summary Discussions on Pillar 2 – Development Cooperation, Technology, Science and Innovation and Research:

- Financing of research and development and initiatives; including private sector through public-private academic partnership via an ACP Research Centre

- Harness technology (agriculture, commodity exchange, TVET, via scientific laboratories, as well as harnessing the role of the diaspora in the process in order to curb issues of brain drain
- Invest in mechanisms to maintain the human resources of ACP countries;
- Take stock of innovations in ACP countries, especially in the context of creating new commercial opportunities and products
- Active promotion of intra-ACP development cooperation

iii. Political Dialogue and Advocacy

23. The SDGs 16 and 17 are particularly relevant for this pillar on political dialogue and advocacy. Goal 16 speaks to the mutually re-enforcing link between peace and security on the one hand and development on the other which was acknowledged in the Sipopo and Port Moresby Declarations of ACP Heads of State and Government. Additionally, Target 16.7 (SDG16) specifically refers to ensuring 'responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels'.
24. Goal 17 on partnerships for the goals emphasises the importance of pooling international efforts and resources to work together for the realisation of the goals. This Goal is also about enhancing North-South and South-South cooperation by supporting national plans to achieve all the targets, through inter-alia, promoting international trade, and helping developing countries increase their exports as part of achieving a rules-based and equitable trading system that is fair and open and benefits all.
25. Participants provided input on the following questions:
- (a) How can ACP NSAs become more involved in Intra-ACP political dialogue?
 - (b) How can NSAs positively contribute to policy dialogue on peace and security, the challenges of migration, the fight against terrorism and other crimes against humanity?
 - (c) What role can NSAs play in the promotion of social and economic rights as well as on governance issues, such as transparency, accountability, human rights, rule of law, civil and political liberties; and
 - (d) How can the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly be reformed as an instrument of proper ACP-EU dialogue to demonstrate equality in partnership?

Summary Discussions on Pillar 3 – Political dialogue and advocacy

- To strengthen NSA engagement with the ACP group especially in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of cooperation programs, there is a need for a clear mechanism or policy for NSA participation at the ACP level in general but also at the level of each of our Member States (JPA)
- At the regional and global ACP national level, it is necessary to ensure an enabling environment for NSAs to engage freely and effectively in this dialogue.
- Think about creating an NSA advisory group to assess the work of the ACP
- NSAs recognized that no development without peace and no peace without development , and recommended for the ACP to coordinate with AU and other relevant regional bodies to encourage peace and security through moderation and coalitions, as well as binding treaties in order to prioritise peace and mitigate the military and violent escalations;
- ACP to consult with NSAs, in particular with youth organisations as unique contributors, as well as the development of projects specifically dealing with Counter-Violence and Extremism;
- ACP to formally consult with NSA in monitoring and evaluation, on post Cotonou
- Establish formal ACP internships for ACP youth;
- Recognise the unique role of diaspora and remittances, as a counter balance to reliance upon development aid through the establishment of national diaspora desks and coordination at the level of the ACP Secretariat;
- Trade union representation in political dialogue processes, Decent Work, in order to have coherence amongst the regions, especially vis-à-vis international companies in ACP contexts;
- Sharing of information on access to inclusion in political dialogue, for example, for ACP election observation missions
- Calls on the ACP lead negotiator to enter into structured consultations with NSAs, whereby NSAs will be informed and invited, to the negotiations of the Post-Cotonou Agreement

V. CONCLUSION

26. The assembly of NSAs request that the **ACP Secretariat recognise that the NSAs have an important role to play in development at national and international levels as advocates for the poor and marginalised by their active engagements with communities and knowledge of local issues.**

NSAs are also important agents for transparency, accountability and good governance. They also complement government work in service delivery and are development agents through their cross-cutting approach to identifying practical creative solutions on the ground.

27. At this 1st ACP Meeting of NSA there was a platform for exchanges of relevant experiences and other information that will be translated into meaningful vehicles for the implementation of the SDGs, as well as other important issues of interest to the ACP Group post-2020. Accordingly, the NSAs will seek to organise an institutional mechanism to ensure sustainability through the **establishment of an ACP Non State Actors Network (ANSA)**, *which will serve as a Consultative Group to the ACP Committee of Ambassadors and ACP–EU institutions.*

28. The structure and follow-up work of the ACP NSA Network will be developed (post the meeting) through **an ad hoc working group coordinated by the team of representatives** chosen at this 1st NSA meeting with their base country of origin as follows:

Central Africa	Cameroon ; Democratic Republic of Congo
East Africa	Ethiopia; Mauritius
Southern Africa	Namibia; Zimbabwe, South Africa
Western Africa	Cote D'Ivoire
Caribbean	Trinidad and Tobago; Dominican Republic
Pacific	Cook Islands; Vanuatu

29. There will also be **established working sub-committees** on the three Pillars. The ACP NSA Network will also require the hosting of an annual face to face meeting and will agree its rules of procedure accordingly.

30. The **first mandate for ad hoc working group is to develop a draft of mechanism of NSA participation with the ACP Secretariat**, in order to effectively monitor, which shall be presented to the Network, and thereafter to the ACP Secretariat.

31. The NSAs call for the **establishment of a fully funded permanent office for Non State Actors at the ACP Secretariat** (Brussels), which will give support to the ACP NSA Network established at its first meeting, in line with Article 4 Cotonou Partnership Agreement. This will assist with the work of the ANSA between meetings and will be the implementation arm between meetings. It shall also address the capacity building of NSAs in the ACP region, especially with regards to intra-ACP funding. Bearing in mind the provisions of the Cotonou Agreement, this office shall coordinate the commitments to NSAs under the different sectors of the ACP Secretariat.

32. The NSAs call for the **admittance of a representative of the ACP NSA Network** to the Council of Ministers, Council of Ambassadors and major arms of the ACP.
33. The ANSA will **focus on reducing causes of poverty and conflict**, and ensure the inclusion of women and youth and cross cutting themes.
34. The NSAs recognise **the importance of Special and Differentiated Treatment (SDT) at the level of the WTO**, and in international trade agreements
35. ACP NSA adoption of a **'sustainable development' principle** and in the context
36. ACP NSA's adoption of **clear principles of development**
37. ACP NSA's call for their **formal inclusion in all areas where ACP** is solicited to participate in structured dialogue
38. ACP NSAs to work with ACP **to harness the role of local financing** and banking solutions, including micro-finance
39. **ACP Research Centre can be established** and this Centre can also have a 'training' arm
40. ACP NSAs must be included in a **mapping to fully grasp the diversity of NSAs** in the ACP region
41. ACP NSAs formal inclusion in **supporting the implementation of national action plans** in various sectors
42. Consider the **establishment of 'ACP NSA Values'**.

Three Main Points:

1. Formal and sustainable inclusion of NSAs;
2. Guaranteed financial support for capacity building at the intra-ACP level;
3. Structured NSA consultation.

Recommendations

- Establishment of an ACP Non State Actors Network (ANSA);
- Structured consultation with the ACP departments and steering Committees (sub-Committees on the relevant sections) on all EDF requirements, including on the monitoring and evaluation, in line with Art.4 Cotonou Partnership Agreement
- Leverage the expertise of ACP NSAs.
