

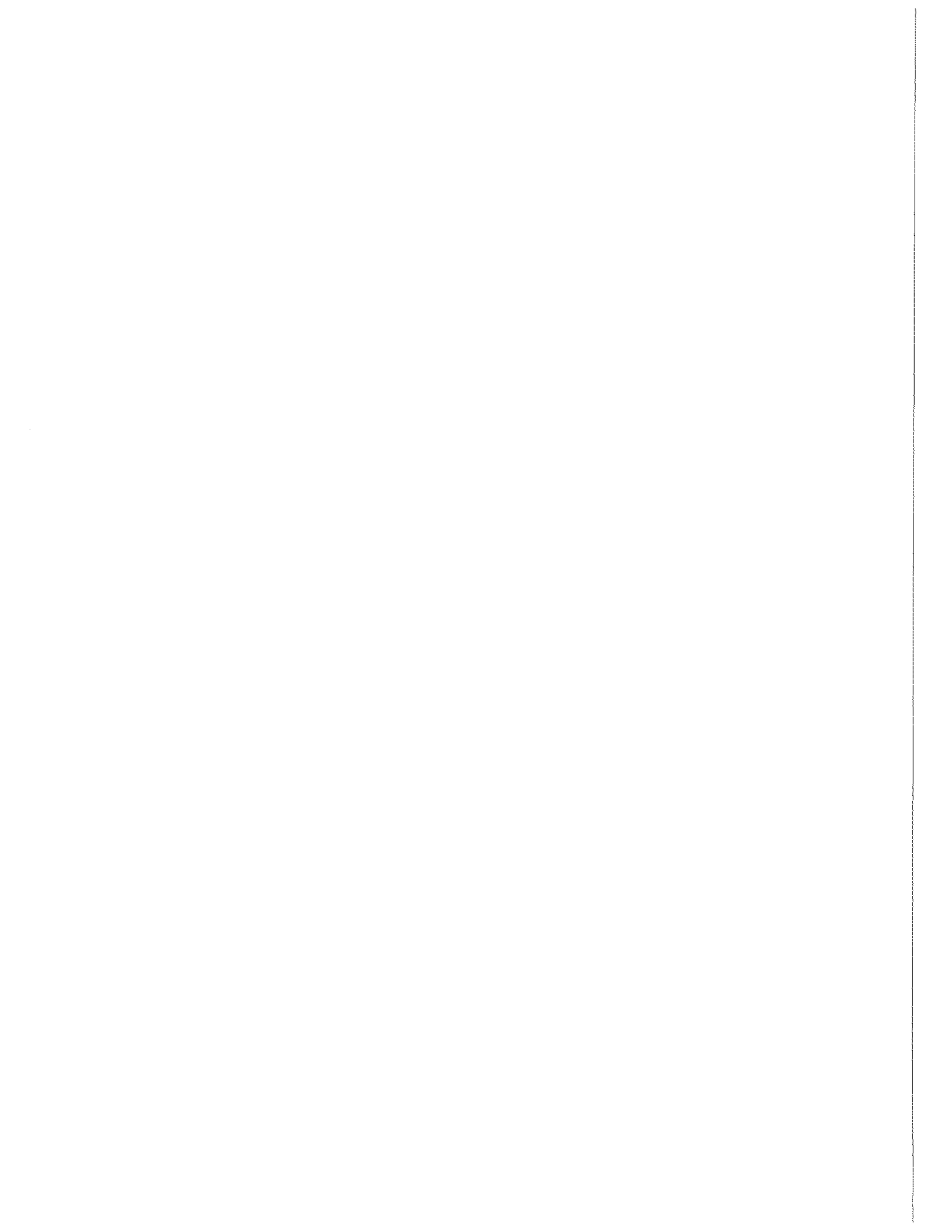


THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF SEYCHELLES

**REPORT ON THE 62ND SESSION OF THE OACPS PARLIAMENTARY
ASSEMBLY AND THE ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS**

BRUSSELS – BELGIUM

25 FEBRUARY TO 02 MARCH 2023



Attended by:

Hon. Clifford Andre – Head of Delegation
Hon. Churchill Gill
Ms. Shannon Surman

Accompanied by the Embassy of Seychelles to the Kingdom of Belgium:

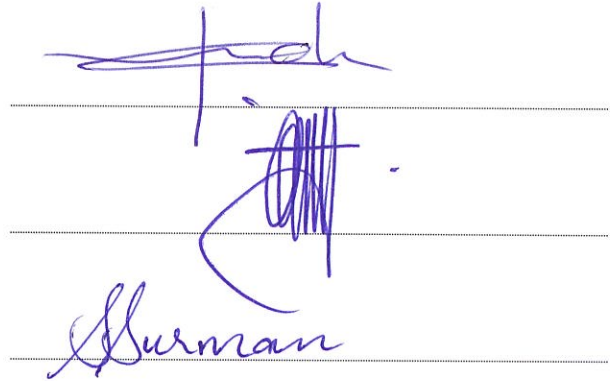
Ambassador Beryl Samson
Diplomat Rodney Sinon

The National Assembly delegation composed of the Members as listed below, submits its report:

Hon. Clifford Andre
Head of Delegation

Hon. Churchill Gill
Member

Ms. Shannon Surman
Parliamentary Researcher



Three horizontal lines with handwritten signatures in blue ink. The top signature is 'Andre', the middle is 'Gill', and the bottom is 'Surman'.

Table of Contents

Acronyms.....	4
Introduction.....	5
The Post-Cotonou Agreement.....	6
The Program of the 62 nd Session of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly.....	7
The Special Session of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly.....	7
Presentation of the New Agreement	8
Exchange of Views on the Presentation of the New Agreement.....	9
Meeting of the Committee on Economic Development, Finance, and Trade – Committee II .	11
Amendments of the draft on the EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes and the list of third countries regarding anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing (AML/CFT)	11
Sustainability Vis a Vis Trade Regimes	11
Exchange of Views	12
The OACPS Endowment Trust Fund	12
The 62 nd Session of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly.....	13
Exchange of Views	13
Exchange of Views on Committee Reports.....	13
Communication from the Bureau of the OACPS PA	14
Vanuatu’s Request for An Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Climate Change.....	14
Other Pertinent Matters Discussed.....	14
Special Meeting on the ‘Draft Rules of Procedure’	15
Concerns Raised by Seychelles	15
Steps Forward	15
The Program of the ACP-Eu Intersessional Meetings.....	16
Meeting of the ACP-EU Committee on Economic Development, Finance, and Trade – Committee II.....	16
Voting on Committee Reports	17
Conclusion	18
Further Steps.....	18
Annex.....	19

Acronyms

ACP-EU JPA – African Caribbean and Pacific States – European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly

AML-CFT – Anti Money Laundering / Counter Terrorism Financing

ETF – Endowment Trust Fund

OACPS – Organization of African Caribbean and Pacific States

OACPS PA – Organization of African Caribbean and Pacific States Parliamentary Assembly

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SIDS – Small Island Developing States

Introduction

The Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific states¹ (OACPS), comprises of 79 Member states, all aiming to achieve sustainable development and integration into the world economy. The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (ACP-EU JPA), draws together an equal number of elected Members of Parliament from the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states and Members of the European Union. Under the Cotonou Agreement, the representatives of the Members of the OACPS meet their European Counterparts in plenary session for one week twice a year. The JPA meets alternatively in an OACPS or EU Member state.

Hon. Clifford Andre – Elected Member for the Anse Aux Pins district and Chairperson of both the Bills Committee and the Defense and Security Committee headed a delegation to the 62nd Session of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly and ACP-EU JPA held in Brussels, Belgium from the 25th of February to the 02nd of March 2023. The delegation comprised of Hon. Churchill Gill, Elected Member for the Baie Ste. Anne district and Ms. Shannon Surman, parliamentary researcher. The meetings were also attended by H.E Ambassador Ms. Beryl Samson and Diplomat Mr. Rodney Sinon.



The delegation at the European Parliament

¹ <https://www.oacps.org/>

The Post-Cotonou Agreement

The Cotonou Agreement, which currently governs ACP-EU relations, is the most comprehensive partnership signed between the EU and third countries. The Cotonou Agreement is built on the following principles²:

- ❖ Regional integration
- ❖ Security and political stability
- ❖ The growing challenge of climate change
- ❖ Inclusiveness and sustainability
- ❖ Aid effectiveness

The process of drawing up a new Agreement was necessitated by the end-term of the Cotonou Agreement on February 29th 2020, which has been extended to June 2023, when it is expected that the signing of a new agreement would occur.

In 2018, the ACP Ministerial Central Negotiating Group was established to draft the new Agreement, under the Chairmanship of H.E. Prof Robert Dussey, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of the Togolese Republic. Round 1 of negotiations began in October of 2018 in Brussels, Belgium, as the ACP-EU negotiators at the ACP Ambassadorial level/EU Senior Officials met. Drafting of strategic priorities of the main agreement, regional protocols and drafting of the other parts of the main agreement occurred from 2018 to 2019. In September 2020, the launch of the Final Verification occurred, involving negotiations on outstanding issues, legal scrubbing and proof reading for consistency and coherency, language and grammar. In 2021, the new Agreement was initialed.

² ACP-EU, European Commission, Accessed at: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/european-development-policy/acp-eu-partnership_en

The Program of the 62nd Session of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly

The Special Session of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly



On Saturday 25th of February 2023, a special session of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly was held, where the Members of the OACPS were briefed on the new ACP-EU partnership agreement. Following the adoption of the agenda, the session started with a statement by the President, the Hon. Ana Rita Sithole who was elected during the 61st session of the ACP-EU joint parliamentary assembly held in Maputo, Mozambique on the 26th of October 2022. The opening statement was followed by the presentation of the new ACP-EU partnership. The presentation was delivered by Hon. Joseph Owona Kono, the Former President of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly and Chair of the ACP Parliamentary Assembly Working Group on Post Cotonou, and H.E. Mr. Robert Dussey, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Togolese Abroad – OACPS Chief Negotiator of the New ACP-EU Partnership Agreement.

Presentation of the New Agreement

The delegates were provided a background of the agreement negotiations (See Annex 2), and priorities in an ever-evolving global context. The following was proposed:

- The need to maintain the unity and solidarity of the ACP group, following a proposal by the African Union to negotiate the agreement under a different framework. The working group highlighted the importance of working together for the new agreement.
- The working group noted that the stronger parliamentary dimension in the post Cotonou agreement requires an equally strong parliamentary dimension in the Georgetown Agreement.

Mr. Dussey stressed the importance of strengthening multilateral agreements and the strategic importance of international cooperation. Mr. Dussey also affirmed that the OACPS should become a strong organization working for the common good, guided by its own vision.

Hon. Kono informed the delegates that, in his capacity as President of the Assembly, he attended some key meetings, particularly, the central negotiations ministerial session. This was a key ministerial meeting that took place specifically to agree on the structure of the new agreement. The bureau of the OACPS PA regularly received updates from the Chair of the Ambassadorial central negotiating group on the negotiating process. Hon. Kono further stated that the OACPS PA remained engaged with the negotiators at all levels and that the Assembly managed to achieve the following:

- Retaining of the JPA in the new agreement
- Institutionalizing the OACPS PA in the revised Georgetown Agreement
- Funding commitment of the work of the JPA under the declaration of the EU promise to fund the work of the Assembly

Mr. Dussey then provided the delegates with information about the three separate regional protocols as per the new agreement:

	Strategic Priorities	Governance Structure	Additional Information
The Africa Regional Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development• Human and social development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Africa-EU council of ministers• The Africa-EU Joint Committee	The aim is to foster a common approach for Africa towards the EU and vice versa. The EU has indicated that the protocol will act as

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment, natural resource management and climate change • Peace and security • Human rights, democracy and governance • Migration and mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Africa-EU Parliamentary Assembly 	the legal basis on the association agreement similar to the ones concluded between the EU and the North African countries.
The Caribbean Regional Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development • Environmental sustainability, climate change and sustainable management of natural resources • Human rights, governance, peace and security • Human development and social cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Caribbean-EU Council of ministers • The Caribbean-EU Joint Committee • The Caribbean-EU Parliamentary Assembly 	
The Pacific Regional Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental sustainability and climate change • Inclusive and sustainable economic development • Ocean, seas and fisheries • Security, human rights democracy and governance • Human and social development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pacific-EU Council of ministers • The Pacific-EU Joint Committee • The Pacific-EU Parliamentary Assembly 	

Exchange of Views on the Presentation of the New Agreement

The delegates of the ACP countries were given the opportunity to participate in an exchange of views following the presentation. The Hon. Delegates expressed differing views regarding the signing of the agreement which is meant to take place in June 2023. Non-consensus among the ACP states was evident, meaning the signing of the agreement is unlikely to take place as scheduled. Several Members expressed concerns that the new agreement would not benefit the ACP states. Members also expressed concern over the separation of the ACP, questioning the necessity for such a separation given that the strategic priorities for each region are shared. Other

Members, by contrast stated that it would be better to sign the agreement and improve it during its course. Several Members also stressed the importance of signing the agreement, expressing concern at what would become of the OACPS should the agreement not be signed. Given that the Heads of state of the CAP countries support the new agreement, certain delegates posed concerns of whether there could be a compromise reached and changes made as the executive of ACP countries have already initialed the document. The Liberian delegate, in discussion of this same point, stated, “to reject [the agreement] is to reject the decision of the executive”.

Intervention of Seychelles:

Hon. Andre expressed concerns over the separation of the ACP and the increased strength that the EU may have over the ACP as a result of the divide. Hon. Andre also enquired about the opportunities for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) from the different regions (Africa/Caribbean/Pacific) to group together, under the new agreement, given their similar specificities. Hon. Andre also spoke on the wealth of resources in the ACP which the EU states use, add value and then sell back to ACP states. Hon. Andre also stressed on the importance of being kept informed when the executives of ACP countries are discussing matters so that Members of the OACPS PA are aware of what is happening.



Meeting of the Committee on Economic Development, Finance, and Trade – Committee II

The Committee on Economic Development, Finance, and Trade, of Which Seychelles is a member³ met on Monday 27th of February 2023. The Committee was chaired by the Hon. Delegate from Zambia. Hon. Sibeso Sefulo Kambafwile.

Amendments of the draft on the EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes and the list of third countries regarding anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing (AML/CFT)

The Committee was led through the 71 amendments on the draft motion (See Annex 3) by the Co-Rapporteur, Barbados delegate, Hon. Edmund Hinkson. The Committee examined the amendments in efforts to establish a common ACP voting position prior to the session of Votes on Committee Reports held on Thursday 02nd of March 2023 (See Annex 9). There were several points of contention on the amendments during this exercise, where the Co-Rapporteur and OACPS secretariat officials provided clarifications.

Intervention of Seychelles:

Hon. Andre intervened on Amendment 21⁴ for instance, where the main point of contention was the word 'automatic' as it related to the exchange of information. Hon. Andre and other delegates raised a point of concern stating that the amendment would compel even those countries who do not have the capacity to have an 'automatic exchange of information', to do so. Additionally, Hon. Andre stated that, should the amendment be rejected, this does not stop countries from implementing an 'automatic exchange of information' should they have the capacity to do so.

Sustainability Vis a Vis Trade Regimes

In preparation for the Committee on Economic Development, Finance, and Trade JPA (See Annex --), the Committee discussed the topic 'Sustainability Vis a Vis Trade'. A Presentation was given on the topic by Mr. Escipion Oliviera Gomez, Assistant Secretary General, Macroeconomic Development Finance and Programming, OACPS Secretariat (See Annex 3) after which the delegates participated in an 'Exchange of Views' session. The presentation was made in the

³ Members of the Committee:

Southern Africa: Zambia (Chair), Angola, Eswatini, Namibia

East Africa: Comoros (2nd Vice-Chair), Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Tanzania

Caribbean: Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago

Central Africa: Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea

Pacific: Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga

West Africa: Cape Verde (1st Chair), Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Senegal

⁴ **Amendment 21:** Michele Rivasi, Caroline, Roose, Motion for Resolution, Recital G c (new) "*Whereas automatic exchange of information is an effective tool to tackle tax evasion and other IFFs*"

context of new EU trade regulations⁵ and the impacts they will likely have on the economies of ACP countries.

Exchange of Views

Interventions following the presentation were those of concern about the new EU regulations and their potential impact on ACP countries. Honourable delegates highlighted the challenges that the EU regulations will have on vanilla production and the coffee trade for instance. One delegate expressed that the OACPS should explore deeper inter-regional trade so as to reduce reliance on EU Trade.

The OACPS Endowment Trust Fund

Mrs. Banata Tchale Sow, Assistant secretary General, Macroeconomic Development Finance and Programming from the OACPS Secretariat, delivered a presentation on the Endowment Trust Fund (ETF). Mrs. Sow provided an overview of the financial situation of the ETF, and as of the 31st of December 2022, the secretariat recorded contributions from four member states in the form of grants totalling approximately 1,279,123.04 Euros for the ETF (See Annex 3). These states are Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania. Other states including Papua New Guinea, Senegal, and Nigeria have made pledges of 1,100,000 Euros. The presenter made a plea to the member states to pay their contributions, reiterated by the delegates who intervened in the subsequent exchange of views session on the ETF.

⁵ The new EU trade Regulations specifically mentioned were:

- Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)
- The Deforestation Regulation
- The Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence

The 62nd Session of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly

The 62nd Session of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly occurred on Tuesday 28th of February 2023. Statements were made by President Hon. Ana Rita Sithole and the OACPS Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Georges Rebelo Pinot Chikoti (*See Annex 6*). President Sithole presented her 4 priority areas which will inform her mandate:

- a) Visibility for the OACPS PA and the ACP-EU JPA
- b) Strengthening of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly
- c) Engagement with Key Strategic Assemblies
- d) Financial Stability of the OACPS PA

Mr. Chikoti presented the key focus areas of the OACPS Secretariat for the year 2023:

- a) To provide value for membership
- b) To develop partnerships
- c) To succeed with resource mobilization
- d) To ensure a presence and relevance on the international scene
- e) To improve service delivery and excellence
- f) To focus on intra-OACPS cooperation/collaboration

Exchange of Views

Following statements by President Sithole and Mr. Chikoti, the delegates expressed their views. On the President's strategic priorities, delegates affirmed their support especially in terms of the visibility strategic priority. Delegates also highlighted the importance of collaborating with other global parliamentary organizations and incorporating the formalisation of the youth and women's structure within the OACPS. Climate justice was also emphasised as a priority area, as an Hon. Member stated that the OACPS should be a driver of climate justice given that ACP countries are the non-polluters but are the most affected by climate change.

On H.E Mr. Chikoti's presentation, the delegates expressed several views. Members highlighted the issue of contributions and appealed to Member states to fulfil their obligations in a timely manner. The Members also highlighted the withdrawal of South Africa from the OACPS and what will happen if other states were to withdraw from the organization.

Following the exchange of views, Mr. Chikoti spoke on the signing of the new Agreement and its unlikely signing in June 2023. The Secretary General stated that, as a way forward, the Council of Ambassadors will have to meet to discuss issues and call an early meeting of the Council of Ministers to discuss the new agreement.

Exchange of Views on Committee Reports

The Committee Chairpersons presented their report on the Committee's meetings and provided a summary of the deliberations of Committee meetings. Hon. Kambafwile of Zambia, the Chair of the OACPS Committee on Economic Development, Finance, and Trade presented her report of the Committee's meeting. The Chairperson provided a summary of the deliberations of the

committee which included the discussions on the EU trade regulations, the sustainability vis a vis trade regime and the EFT. The Chairperson spoke of the recommendations of the Committee following their deliberations, which include:

- The new EU trade regulations not resulting in trade barriers
- Delivering financial support for MSMEs

Communication from the Bureau of the OACPS PA

President Sithole delivered the communications from the Bureau. The President spoke on development finance which is aimed at assisting developing countries to cope with and adapt to climate change. President Sithole presented the decisions of the Bureau regarding the concerns about the new Agreement:

- The Bureau was informed about the concerns about the new Agreement and they proposed the suspension of its signature until a satisfactory outcome is found.
- The President further stated that Minister Dussey was clear in stating that the document will not be re-opened and agreement on sensitive issues was reached. The Bureau, having discussed the issue, approved of the following way forward:
 - The countries with specific concerns about particular provisions of the new Agreement should present their issues to their respective Executives, who will be in a position to address the issue of concern with the ACP Council of Ministers.
 - Utilise the Rules of Procedure to address some of the challenges some may have about the processes. The new JPA rules should close the gaps found in processes in a way which will lead to coherence between the work of the Executive and the Legislative.

Vanuatu's Request for An Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Climate Change
The Hon. Delegate of Vanuatu provided the Members an update of its request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of states in respect of climate change (*See Annex 7*). Several countries including Seychelles had co-sponsored the resolution at the time of this meeting. Hon. Andre, along with other intervenors highlighted the importance of support for this request. Hon. Andre expressed the importance of speaking with one voice in pursuit of such actions for due consideration as SIDS are all suffering from the same fate regarding climate change.

Other Pertinent Matters Discussed

Intervention of Seychelles: Hon. Andre proposed to have a joint AML/CFT Parliamentary forum that would solely address this issue.

Special Meeting on the 'Draft Rules of Procedure'

A special meeting on the 'Draft Rules of Procedure' (See Annex 8), was held on Wednesday 01st of March 2023. The Hon. Delegates were given the opportunity to seek clarifications on the rules and raise their concerns.

Concerns Raised by Seychelles

- Rule 4 was a significant point of contention among delegates:

"Composition of the Bureau

The Bureau of the Assembly ("the Bureau") shall consist of:

- *Two Co-Presidents of equal status, one from the OACPS house and one from the EU house, nominated in accordance with the practices and rules of their respective house;*
- *The 10 Members of the Bureau of the Africa-EU RPA as Vice-Presidents;*
- *The 6 Members of the Bureau of the Caribbean-EU RPA as Vice-Presidents;*
- *The 6 Members of the Bureau of the Pacific-EU RPA as Vice-presidents."*

Hon. Andre intervened on Rule 4 expressing the importance of having specificity in determining the equal sides as regards composition (i.e., clearly stating that 5 members will be from African Member states and 5 will be EU).

- Rule 8, point 4 was also a point of concern raised by Hon Andre:

"Conduct of Plenary Sessions

4. Failing timely confirmation, the annual plenary session shall be held at any places of work of the European Parliament for the European Union side, and in South Africa or Ethiopia for the OACPS side."

Hon. Andre's concern was regarding the venue being South Africa, since it is no longer a member of the OACPS.

Steps Forward

Given the time constraints and the number of concerns raised regarding the document by several delegates, the proposal was made to hold an in person meeting to specifically consider the draft rules of procedures.

The Program of the ACP-EU Intersessional Meetings

Meeting of the ACP-EU Committee on Economic Development, Finance, and Trade – Committee II

The ACP-EU Committee on Economic Development, Finance, and Trade met on Thursday 02nd of March 2023. The discussion was heavily focused on the ‘Sustainability vis a vis trade Regimes’ topic. Hon. delegates were able to comment and express views regarding the new EU Trade Regulations as previously discussed (*see page 11*), with representatives of the European Council present. The delegates expressed their concerns regarding the impacts of the new regulations on their economies and costs of compliance with the regulations.

Intervention of Seychelles: Hon. Andre expressed his views on the Climate Adaptation Fund in relation to climate finance and funding of climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. On the subject of EU trade and the new regulations, Hon. Andre stated the unfairness of having the EU come to ACP states with the upper hand on regulations which have already been negotiated. Hon. Andre stressed the importance of ACP states having a joint union, with shared resources to enable fishing, for instance, to occur in their own waters under their own conditions. Hon. Andre further stated that there needs to be a balanced and fair deal when negotiating states.



Voting on Committee Reports



Voting on Committee reports marked the last of the meetings attended by the Seychelles delegation. The ACP-EU Committee on Economic Development Finance and Trade voted on the amendments of the draft motion on the EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes (See Annex 3 and Annex 9) and the list of third countries regarding AML/CFT. The voting took place at the European Parliament on the afternoon of Thursday 02nd of March 2023.



Conclusion

The sharing of Seychelles' experiences and perspectives as an East African Small Island Developing State, remains ever-significant in forums like the ACP-EU JPA. The delegation of the National Assembly of Seychelles plays a crucial role in enriching debates and making enlightening contributions to the OACPS and the ACP-EU JPA. The Head of Delegation, Hon. Andre has at many times, during the sessions, articulated the needs of Seychelles and championed its causes, one such cause being climate justice and climate adaptation. Hon. Andre has also proposed a parliamentary forum to address AML/CFT, a topic in which many states have a vested interest.

Further Steps

- Meetings will be organized with the following entities:
 - The Foreign Affairs Department
 - Ministry for Fisheries
 - Ministry for Trade
- Steps will be taken for organizing a Parliamentary forum on AML/CFT – to be hosted at one of the ACP countries – with the support of the OACPS secretariat.

Annex

Annex List

Annex 1: Member's Guide

Annex 2: Special Session of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly

Annex 3: Committee II – Committee on Economic Development Finance and Trade

Annex 4: Presentation Slides on 'Sustainability Vis a Vis Trade Regimes

Annex 5: 62nd Session of the OACPS Parliamentary Assembly

Annex 6: Statements Delivered During the 62nd Session of the OACPS PA and the ACP-EU JPA

Annex 7: Vanuatu Request for an Advisory Opinion on Climate Change from the International Court of Justice

Annex 8: OACPS-EU JPA 'Draft Rules of Procedure'

Annex 9: Voting List – Committee on Economic Development, Finance and Trade

