



**European Economic and Social Committee**  
**Section for External Relations**

*Brussels, 18-20 June 2018*

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*Speech by*

**Mrs Brenda King**

*EESC Member of the*

*ACP-EU Follow-up Committee*

*On behalf of*

**Mr Jaroslaw Mulewicz**

*President of the ACP-EU Follow-Up Committee*

***MAXIMUM ALLOCATED TIME:***

***10 MINUTES (speech)***

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***2-5 MINUTES (answer)***

Dear Co-presidents,  
Members of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me thank you for the invitation to attend this plenary session and convey apologies from Mr Jaroslaw Mulewicz, President of the EU-ACP Follow-up Committee, who was not able to join us on this occasion. On behalf of my colleagues, I will give a brief overview of our recent activities. With me today is Mr. Greene, an agricultural representative from the Caribbean and representatives from the social partners in West Africa, Ms Coly a trade unionist from Senegal, Mr Diallo representing employers/private sector from Cote d'Ivoire and Mr Yves Somville, colleague and EESC Member.

**In the first part of my intervention**, I will recall our recent legislative work on topics related to ACP.

First of all, I wish to mention the adoption, at the end of 2017, of our **Opinion** on the Commission's Communication **A renewed partnership with the ACP countries**. As I was rapporteur of this text myself, let me summarize the main conclusions of this important Opinion.

The EESC believes that an updated agreement is needed, based on a political dialogue, and a real partnership. We welcome the Commission's preferred option of a legally binding umbrella agreement with specific separate regional priorities, although we strongly believe that **the fight against climate change should be one of the key priorities for each of the ACP regions, as climate disruption is a main factor for global migration flows, and it is predicted that this will get worse.** We strongly recommend that the UN 2030 Agenda, the European Consensus on Development, Africa's

2063 Agenda should be placed at the core of the future Agreement, reinforcing key principles such as universality, peace, democracy and good governance, as these are the basis of prosperous societies.

A key point in our opinion is that socio-economic stakeholders and organized civil society, including representatives of the private sector, workers, farmers, women and youth should be better integrated in the next framework and provided with a stronger role that goes beyond consultation. What we recommend is **a formal mechanism to include these stakeholders in the design, implementation, monitoring and review as well as during the upcoming post-Cotonou negotiation stage**. The EESC stands ready to play a central role in this process and takes this opportunity to congratulate the JPA on its women and youth forums.

We welcome that trade and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) will be fully integrated into the new partnership, and **call for all EPAs to contain an enforceable sustainable development chapter with civil society actively involved in the implementation, monitoring and review**. This is vital if fair and equitable trade, the social aspects of the EPAs as well as moving ACP countries up the value added chain are to be achieved. In the specific case of the SADC region, we regret that the EPA contains no provisions on civil society or parliamentary participation, like the ones in the Cariforum EPA. We are currently working with Commissioner Malmström, and MEP Joachim Schuster, in order to fill that gap through practical solutions.

Moving to the topic of migration, the EESC is of the opinion that the **European Agenda on Migration should be designed so as to take into full consideration the humanitarian dimension** and the EU should not forget its fundamental commitments and legally

**binding rules to protect lives and human rights, especially of people in danger.**

The EESC supports the vision to provide a long-term response to migration, **addressing the root causes of migration** and creating a dialogue with third countries based on cooperation and shared responsibility.

My colleagues and I want to give an example of a long-term response by highlighting the importance of small agriculture clusters to reverse the exodus from rural areas that is currently challenging many ACP countries. In this context, agriculture and local farmers can play a key role, by mitigating migration flows fuelled by the desperation of young people to fulfil their economic, social and cultural aspirations. In this sense, it is important to facilitate the activities of small and medium sized farmers, through the development of clustering activities and cooperatives where farmers are sharing equipment, sustainable input, knowledge and new market opportunities.

We want to use the opportunity to ask for the support of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly with regards the implementation of the **External Investment Plan** agreed at the EU-Africa Summit in Abidjan. This Plan will support CSO's and local actors to tackle some of the root causes of migration, by encouraging investments projects in the partner countries.

**Now let me turn to our specific activities:** the **Third Meeting of the Cariforum-EU Consultative Committee** that took place on 6-7 November in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The task of this

Consultative Committee is to assist the Joint Council in monitoring the implementation of all economic, social and environmental aspects of the EPA and to strengthen dialogue between representatives of civil society.

This was the first time that the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) was held in the Caribbean region and took place immediately after the CF-EU Parliamentary Assembly.

The issues that were discussed were trade in services, youth development and entrepreneurship, building resilience against climate change, as well as the social and environmental aspects of the EPA. Concerns were raised regarding the non-ratification of the agreement by some Cariforum and EU countries, as well as to the impact that non-ratification might have on certain sectors. Furthermore, the Consultative Committee called for, in its tenth year of implementation since this EPA's signature, to adopt and implement a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, reiterating the need for the Parties to involve us in the setting up of such a mechanism, as well as in the discussions on monitoring indicators. Finally, we stressed once more the importance for the Consultative Committee to be in receipt of an adequate and transparent budget for the implementation of its work plan.

The **4th meeting of African and EU economic and social stakeholders** took place on 16 and 17 November in Abidjan, organised by the European Economic and Social Committee in cooperation with the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural Council of Côte d'Ivoire, just ahead of the successful Summit of Heads of State and Government from the EU and the African Union. Over 200 representatives of economic and social stakeholders, civil society consultative assemblies and international organisations attended this meeting from both continents. The participants focused

on several issues, particularly **the future of Africa-EU relations and on the youth.**

As regards the **future of Africa-EU relations**, the participants called for the strategic partnership to be strengthened, and for the shared interests of the two continents to be secured through mutual respect. The meeting also provided an opportunity to reaffirm that **the contribution of economic and social stakeholders is essential in addressing the many current challenges** such as migration, the fight against terrorism, climate change, the preservation of peace or conflict prevention.

**The 5<sup>th</sup> meeting in preparation** will take place in Brussels next month. The annual meeting will specifically address migration and economic issues, focusing on the implications for young people.

I would like to thank you once again for giving us the opportunity to talk about our work, concerns and hopes as economic and social stakeholders, and to put our expertise and network at your disposal. We are always happy to contribute to the discussions of this Parliamentary Assembly.

Thank you for your attention.

Mrs Brenda King

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