

***SPEECH BY HONORABLE BALEDZI GAOLATHE***

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***ON 'AN IMPROVED PARTNERSHIP FOR A BETTER  
DEVELOPMENT: THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE  
COTONOU AGREEMENT AND PERSPECTIVE AFTER  
2010'***

***presented***

***AT THE 10<sup>TH</sup> REGIONAL SEMINAR OF ACP-EU  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTEREST GROUPS***

***Grand Palm***

***Gaborone***

***Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2009***

Director of Ceremonies,  
Honorable Ministers,  
Distinguished Delegates from the European Commission,  
Your Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Corps here present,  
Permanent Secretaries here present,  
Non State Actors representatives here present,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Good Morning,

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to the ACP-EU Joint Parliament Assembly's decision to hold the regional seminar of ACP-EU European Economic and Social Interest Group in Gaborone, Botswana. I am happy that following the 9<sup>th</sup> European Economic and Social Committee Regional Seminar, which was held in Barbados in May 2007, Botswana has been chosen to host this 10<sup>th</sup> Regional Seminar.

Distinguished guests, I would like to look back with appreciation at the fruitful relations that the ACP Member States had over the years with the European Union. We look forward to continuing our relationship with the EU and also

to taking the opportunity of contributing to the upcoming amendments to the Cotonou Agreement scheduled for adoption in 2010. The African Caribbean Pacific – European Union (ACP-EU) Partnership Agreement was signed in Cotonou on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2000 and was revised on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2005. Its Articles 1, 2, and 25 underline the objective to eradicate poverty through, among others the promotion of social development, the equitable distribution of the fruits of growth, building capacity of actors in development, and ensuring ownership of development strategies.

Director of Ceremonies, at this point, I think it is important to remind ourselves of the key objectives of the Cotonou Agreement or more specifically the concept of “partnership”, as defined in ARTICLE 1 of the Agreement. As most of you are aware, the objectives of the Cotonou partnership Agreement amongst others are:

- ✓ to promote and expedite the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States;

- ✓ to integrate ACP countries into the world economy;
- ✓ to sustain economic growth by developing the private sector, increasing employment and improving access to productive resources;
- ✓ to promote social development and equitable distribution of economic resources,
- ✓ to build the capacity of the actors by developing and improving their institutional framework and
- ✓ to promote the status of women and gender issues in all areas i.e. political, economic and social;.

Director of Ceremonies, this seminar therefore seeks to explore the challenges that face us and more importantly to make us understand and take advantage of the opportunities that are before us to achieve and maintain the Cotonou objectives. One of the greatest challenges that face all ACP nations is the production of food to support and sustain our populations. Agriculture and agricultural processing are key industries for every nation, particularly

those like Botswana that are net importers of food. We need to develop policies and programmes for the development of agriculture to move away from reliance on the efficiencies of other countries, and rely on our own economies, with the aim of becoming net food exporters in the years to come. In order to achieve this, we will need support from our own populations, and more importantly from Development Partners like the European Union, World Bank and UNDP to name but a few. The development of Economic Partnerships with our neighbors in the SADC region and other ACP countries is essential to share the burden of feeding hungry and developing nations, both in terms of food production and technology.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there are a number of “actors” within our nations and these are composed of the Public and Private Sectors, together with our Civil Society. Sometimes the Civil Society is not always recognised for what it can offer. The contribution of Civil Society to development can be enhanced by strengthening community

organisations and non-profit non-governmental organisations as stated in the Cotonou Agreement. The Civil Society therefore plays an important role in the development of every country.

Director of Ceremonies, in terms of policy dialogue and access to funding, it is important for Non State Actors to have clearly defined interests, to be transparent and accountable within the broader framework of national and regional programmes. The Non State Actors interventions must promote poverty reduction and sustainable development in the ACP States, complementary to the national and regional programmes. Non State Actors should be able to prove that their competencies in working towards the key objectives of the Cotonou Agreement address the priorities of vulnerable social groups with inter alia gender specific needs, human rights and democracy, promoting good governance, enhancing economic and social development as well as promoting and strengthening social and political dialogue. Special attention should be given to

small and grass root organizations which have the capacity to reach and represent isolated and excluded parts of the population. The 2010 Review therefore should strongly acknowledge the complementary role and potential for contribution by Non State Actorss to the national development process of ACP Member States. The review should emphasise the Agreement's commitment to consult Non State Actors in areas relating to political dialogue, development policies and strategies. It should further emphasise that provisions for financial resources in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement, need to be made to enable the consultations to take place. In order to further improve partnerships, the revised Agreement should emphasise that Civil Society Organisations in all forms require special capacity building support from EDF resources at the national, regional and all ACP levels, if they are to address the requirements of their members.

Ladies and Gentlemen, for the partnership to improve for better development, it is important that the Economic

Partnership Agreements (EPAs) should become instruments of development that consolidate and promote regional integration to ensure that ACP Member States are gradually integrated into the multilateral trading systems. Efforts to continue with the EPAs negotiations in the present form must take cognizance of the provision of increased financial resources to facilitate the participation of more representatives of national and regional Civil Society Organisations. It is important and necessary that increased and specific provisions should be made for the participation of Non State Actors in the ACP/EU Energy, ACP/EU Water and ACP/EU Natural Disaster Facilities. The perspective of the Cotonou Agreement after 2010 should be such that it encourages the ACP/EU partnership to adopt a holistic and participatory approach in the administration of the Natural Disaster Facility to address challenges of disaster risk reduction and management, through the promotion of policy dialogue between ACP States, the private sector and Civil Society. Due to their rich diversity, ACP Non State Actors possess a vast knowledge of the importance of



protecting the environment, cultural heritage, including languages, knowledge and values in ACP States and regions. The EPA negotiations are to be transparent and tools of development to address specific requirements of the Non State Actors.. All Non State Actors are to be routinely informed, consulted and allowed to express their views on the promotion of long-term development priorities throughout the course of the EPA negotiations.

Director of Ceremonies, in order to take advantage of the opportunities of the Cotonou Agreement, appropriate measures should be taken to build capacity of NSAs in order to encourage an active policy discourse with the public, private sector, non governmental organizations and community based, regional and international actors.. There is need to build capacity of NSAs to enable .an active participation in reproductive health programmes and the fight against HIV AIDS, in particulatr in the areas of pre-natal and post-natal care, safe delivery care, child survival and development services, family planning services,

counseling, prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS particularly among the youth. There should be continued promotion of Non State Actors' involvement under the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF in capacity development programmes. The effective participation of NSAs is an indispensable and necessary condition to develop and entrench respect to fundamental human rights in the democratic process.. Non State Actors are to continue their engagement and policy dialogue with Governments of ACP States and the European Commission.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the promotion of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) development in ACP States will significantly contribute to the Cotonou Agreement's global objective to improve the institutional framework of Non State Actors. The revised Cotonou Agreement should therefore urge the ACP States to recognize ICT's positive role in enhancing a culture of participatory democracy and to develop the administrative capacity required to deliver public services and basic needs

of Non State Actors representatives. The Agreement should encourage the consolidation of ICT programmes that support rural development and productivity by facilitating solution sharing between local communities providing access to practical information on financial services, small business accounting, weather trends and best practices in agriculture. The new Cotonou should underscore the fundamental importance of developing national and regional strategies, including cultural policies to enhance the utilization of ICTs in ACP States and improve access to ICTs by Non State Actors, particularly for Community Based Civil Society Organisations in the most disadvantaged areas and urge ACP States to support and promote the concept of digital solidarity.

Director of Ceremonies, the new Cotonou should call for the promotion of financial assistance for the preservation and protection of intellectual property rights of ACP cultural heritage and industries. It should call for the provision of financial assistance to strengthen ACP Civil Society

Platforms at national, regional and all-ACP levels. The Non State Actors will only be able to take advantage of the opportunities of the Cotonou if ACP Ministers of Finance, ACP and EU Councils of Ministers could reaffirm a commitment to provide access of up to between 15% and 20 % of EDF resources for Non State Actors and also call for timely disbursement of funds.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude by thanking the European Commission Delegation in Botswana for assisting our country to take advantage of the opportunities of the Cotonou by working with us to put up a Non State Actors Programme in Botswana. This Programme is a classical case of the opportunities available under the Cotonou Agreement and it is supported by the European Union with funding to the tune of €6 million from EDF9 envelope. This Programme aims at providing Non State Actors in Botswana with skills, capacity and financial resources to enhance their meaningful and effective contribution to development processes of the country. The Capacity Building

concentrates on networking, policy analysis, management, resource mobilization, and accountability.

Finally, I will like to confirm that the Government of Botswana is currently experiencing the benefits of the Cotonou Agreement and as such it is my wish and hope that after 2010, the revised Cotonou will come up with more tangible opportunities for improved development in all ACP Member States.

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