

Speech by
Glenys Kinnock, MEP,
Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,
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Excellencies,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be here at the invitation of President Kufour and representing as I do the ACP–EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

Ours is a contractual and binding relationship under Cotonou which provides for a parliamentary dimension to our partnership.

Indeed, it is the duty of parliaments in Europe - and in the ACP - to hold governments to account and to scrutinise legislation and budgets.

That is our task. And I believe that the Joint Parliamentary Assembly's influence and authority has grown substantially and has energised our joint endeavours, as Sir John Kaputin so eloquently outlined.

MDGs

Excellencies, many of us here today have come hot foot from the High Level summit in New York on the MDGs. And I am certain that financial turmoil, soaring food and energy prices, and accelerating climate change, gives every one of us deep concern about where we go from here.

Especially when we know that increased prices have pushed a further **100m** people into poverty – 40m of them in Africa.

We face stark conditions, which in New York last week my Prime Minister Gordon Brown called a '**Development Emergency**'.

And we face multiple challenges - '**a perfect storm**' of ecological, financial and social pressures.

Against a background of that tumult one reality is **crystal clear**:

Now is **not the time** to continue with the guessing game about whether aid is rebadged or whether money is recycled or funds predictable.

Let us be absolutely clear on the current global turmoil. If the strongest economies in the world need economic stability – and they do – the weaker economies of the world need economic **dependability**.

The terrible truth is, of course, that instead of such equilibrium we have **dysfunctionality**.

In 2008 ours is a world where we know more than we ever did about the technology needed to provide food – and yet **every evening** we allow **820m** people to go to sleep hungry.

Ours is a world where mothers in hurricane-devastated Haiti are feeding **mud cakes** to their children - so **desperate** are they to provide something to fill their stomachs.

Ours is a world where the poor are being left to endure the **worst of the ravages** inflicted by the turmoil in global markets and spiralling prices.

Ours is a world where **10 million** children die every year of preventable poverty-related diseases and where **70 million** primary school aged children are out of school.

And this, when we know that 300 billion dollars a year – a **third** of annual global military spending - would lift **everyone** in the world out of poverty.

Now is **not the time** to turn our backs, or put the MDGs on hold.

It would be wrong not to recognise, of course, that the UN summit last week was encouraging. There **is** a willingness to continue to work for the fulfilment of the MDG targets.

16 billion dollars has been pledged. But we will need to scrutinise this in the context of the food crisis and we will have to bear in mind that in 2005 the G8 promised to donate more than **25 billion** dollars to Africa by 2010 - but figures released last week show that **only 4 billion** dollars has actually been delivered.

Does anyone **seriously** think that the 21 billion dollar gap is going to be filled in less than two years?

Many of you in this room today will know that **aid works**:

That it gets children into school.

That it means that millions with AIDS are still living.

That it means fewer children are dying from Malaria.

This is proof, if it were needed, that promises **must** be kept and the efforts on behalf of ACP citizens must be supported.

As it stands, most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa will not reach MDG1 to halve poverty.

MDG5 - maternal mortality – which was a major focus in New York, is well off track and we won't meet the targets set. Not in 2015. Not in 2020. Not in 2030. **Not until 2050.**

And so the carnage caused by the lack of simple affordable assistance for women continues.

A lack of thread for stitching, of anaesthetic to blunt the pain and shock, of 3 cents worth of magnesium sulphate to stop haemorrhaging.

In ACP countries millions of women and newborns can be saved - if investment is made in the **health and the rights** of women.

But this will not happen simply by osmosis. It can only come as a result of **strong political policies** and **effective choices** made by governments.

There is no silver bullet. No miraculous vaccine. No magic cure.

It will take steady and sustained **political will** to globalise social justice.

And that must extend to the trade strategies of the most prosperous and powerful.

Trade

As everyone here knows, trade and world trading rules are central to efforts to meet the MDGs.

Following the collapse of the Doha talks we can expect more bilateral negotiations and, frankly, if what we have seen in relation to EPAs is anything to go by, we should be **deeply concerned**.

The Financial Times has famously described the EPA interim agreements as “a tangled cats cradle, if not a mangled dog's breakfast.”

That is a fair description of a process which is messy, confused and contradictory to the numerous commitments to trade justice made by the EU.

From the outset the European Commission approached EPAs as if they were conventional free trade area agreements focusing on market opening rather than **tools for development**.

Several years later there is still the relentless repetition of the **mantra of reciprocity** - as if that were a word which automatically denoted fairness.

It only denotes fairness when the reciprocity is between **equals**.

In fact in other circumstances it can mean the opposite of justice – the **contradiction of equity**.

Excellencies, I make no semantic point when I say that that is the case now.

There are also concerns about the process – concerns which you expressed most clearly through your Council of Ministers in Brussels in December last year.

And in addition, there are serious anxieties about the implications for your infant industries as well as for regional integration and agriculture.

Even in the midst of the global financial maelstrom, civilised facilitating treatment of the poor by the super-rich poses **no additional threat to them**.

In the words of the African proverb; **'if the mouse eats, the elephant still won't starve'**.

The ACP has in its ranks the most vulnerable Least Developed, landlocked and small island countries, and that is why the call for **special and differential treatment** is absolutely justified.

It is significant that the June EU Council of Ministers has said 'there is a need to take account of the needs and levels of development of the ACP countries and regions.'

We are at this time aware of the proposed signing of the Cariform EPA - and of the specific case of Guyana - which is causing some disagreement.

It illustrates the fact that ACP countries need to be engaged throughout the negotiation process. And to be alert and active on issues of concern as early as possible.

That being said, the EU should show flexibility and not insist on comprehensive EPA agreements when individual countries believe they would be better served by simple free trade area agreements.

This is on the cards in the Pacific and in other regions. So why not in the Caribbean?

Excellencies, one thing is certainly clear: **global regulation needs to be strengthened.**

That is why the ACP needs Aid For Trade and EPA related development support in order that countries can withstand the effects of external shocks.

Excellencies, that surely means the addition of further provision of development support which is adequate and actually arrives **before** the onset of liberalisation.

That is the least the ACP have the right to expect.

Conclusion

These are testing times for ACP-EU relations – but times when we must confirm our commitment to a partnership based on mutual respect. From Georgetown to Lome to Cotonou it has been about cross-continent solidarity – and that has to be nurtured and cherished. President Kufuor, Excellencies, our citizens deserve no less! ENDS