PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE:
An Issues Paper on the Activities of the Ambassadorial
Working Group on Future Perspectives for the ACP Group

ACP Secretariat, Brussels

(May 2013)
1. Introduction

1.1. This paper presents an overview of the issues arising from the ongoing work of the WGFP. We provide the political and international context in which the ACP Group currently operates, including an overview of the changing dynamics of ACP-EU relations. We also consider the emerging substantive issues and challenges that have been identified, as well as further processes to enlarge the debate with a Plan of Action derived from the 2012 Malabo Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government and its outcome, “The Sipopo Declaration”. The paper will hopefully provide a better perspective on how the Working Group will work with the EPG in helping the ACP forge a brave new future.

2. The ACP in a Changing International Order

2.1. The post-Cold War international order has changed in more fundamental ways than anyone would have imagined. Liberalisation and globalization have unleashed immense wealth across the world, aided by the free movement of ideas, capital and technology. The emerging economic powers of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (popularly known as the BRICS) have transformed the structure and anatomy of international economic relations. But globalization has also brought its own attendant challenges. New competitive pressures have surfaced for nations as well as firms. While several developing countries have taken advantage of the new opportunities opened up by the international trading and investment regime, a good number are experiencing worsening poverty indices. Global inequalities are deepening, worsened by the new challenges of Climate Change and increased global vulnerability. The global financial meltdown that began in the autumn of 2008 in Wall Street has shaken the Bretton Woods international architecture to its very foundations. The EU has been badly hit, with countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece facing unprecedented fiscal crises. Europe’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the ACP and other developing countries is being put to the test as never before.

2.2. To adequately grasp the implications of these changes on the ACP and ACP-EU relations, a structured process of deliberations has been undertaken, drawing on a broad range of views and expert opinions. This process included consultations with a well recognized policy “think-tank”, an umbrella civil society organization and WG/Secretariat Management retreat at the holiday resort of Limelette, on the outskirts of Brussels. Consultations also took place under the auspices of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London and at a conference organized in Cape Town, South Africa, by the Centre for Conflict Resolution. The study commissioned by the UNDP also formed an important input into the process of rethinking the future.
2.3. The insights and limited empirical data derived from this process is grounded in a political economy understanding of concrete and emerging interests, ideas and values that shape the environment in which the ACP Group is constructed. This concrete social entity called the “ACP Group” functions through components interacting on the three pillars of “trade-aid-political dialogue” with its products and services delivered by thematic departments of the Secretariat. The task of the WG, through a phased process, is to provide at the end of its mandate in 2014 what a “re-invented ACP” could and should look like.

2.4. Major social and political tensions of the new century, in the view of many commentators, can be traced to increasingly dominant paradigm of a neo-liberal world order driven by the spread and unregulated operation of market capitalism with its drive for control of natural resources and reckless speculation on commodity exchanges.

2.5. This has brought in its wake the dire consequences of food, fuel, finance, ecological and climatic crises and their combined effect. Such consequences have had, and continue to have, disruptive effects on the economies and social structures of ACP Member States, many of which had in the last decade begun to realize improved standards of living among their populations.

2.6. These and related factors also bear on the “privileged” partnership of the ACP and the EU. Mixed signals and already disturbing impacts have suggested a downgrading and partial discarding of traditional relations that provided for preferential trading arrangements by the CPA that enabled ACP countries to negotiate as a unified bloc for trade and economic cooperation through Commodity Protocols. These have since been incorporated into the Economic Partnerships Agreements (EPAs).

2.7. Moreover, the European Commission’s initiative for “joint” strategies first with Africa, then later with the Caribbean and the ongoing discussions with the Pacific seem to convey a “divide and rule” approach directed at separate continental or regional processes. The 2007 Lisbon Summit and political endorsement of an elaborate 8-point Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) appeared as promoting exclusive treatment for Africa, to be both reassurance to Africa that longstanding ties were “indispensable” while probably also serving as a warning signal to new competitors for Africa’s strategic mineral resources.

2.8. The insistence by the European Commission for “regional negotiations” of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) was a rather harsh fragmentary blow to ACP solidarity. In the EPAs with their continuing contentious tensions in pursuit of a questionable “trade liberalisation” model for ACP’s development, disturbing questions arose, in some quarters, on the future of ACP-EU relations beyond Cotonou.
2.9. Concerns have been raised regarding the establishment of the European External Action Services (EEAS) which divides the ACP Group across separate geographic Directorates. There is evidence that the EU no longer views the ACP as a strategic partner of first choice among developing countries. Changing global geopolitical alignments and Europe’s changing strategic priorities compel the ACP to greater introspection regarding where they stand with Europe and on the imperatives of diversifying their global linkages while repositioning themselves to more effectively confront the imperatives of poverty eradication and sustainable and equitable development.

2.10. New emphasis given to the G20 and the growing prominence of the BRICS, in which India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) have demonstrated tangible initiatives of South-South Cooperation in the struggle against poverty of other developing countries were additional factors that informed the decision of the ACP Group to pursue a comprehensive stock-taking.

2.11. This would entail a multi-dimensional task to deepen and strengthen the unity and solidarity of the ACP Group as aspects of internal self-reflection, prepare itself to engage with its long standing partners of the North in seeking to ascertain what exists as a commonality of interests and to diversify into stronger South-South collaborative arrangements. This is the overarching context by which the Ambassadorial Working Group of the ACP has set about “re-inventing” and “transforming” the ACP Group.

2.12. The ACP has also sought to engage with its EU partners as they re-prioritize their approach to international development. In October 2011, the Commission released a policy paper articulating its development thinking within the context of the mid-term assessment of the MDGs development compact. Titled, An Agenda for Change, the document placed renewed emphasis on more concerted action by the international development community in accelerating the process of poverty reduction through refocusing on issues such as energy, food Security, infrastructure development, climate change and good governance.¹ The more recent enunciation of a new statement on EU development policy, “A Decent Life for All”, provides additional impetus for intensified dialogue on ACP future perspectives.² Under the latest approach, the EU seeks a post-MDGs development agenda anchored on improved living standards, sustainable development and reduction of socio-economic inequities within and between nations. The new post-2015 global development compact has to be anchored on the foundations of peace and security and sustainable use of natural resources,

¹ European Commission, Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: An Agenda for Change, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 13 October 2011.
² European Commission, A Decent Life All: Ending Poverty and Giving the World a Sustainable Future, Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 27 February 2013.
with a focus on priority areas of energy, water and sanitation, urban infrastructures, food security, climate, human, employment and science, technology and innovation. In thinking about the future, the ACP has to articulate its own voice on the post-2015 development debate even as it repositions itself to be an effective global actor.

3. **The Policy Context**

3.1. By Decision No 4/XC11/10 of the 92nd Session of the Council of Ministers of the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group on 10 November 2010, the Ambassadorial Working Group on Future Perspectives (WGFP) was established. The mandate, for a period until 2014, was concisely expressed as a process of reflection “to maintain and strengthen unity and solidarity within the ACP Group” \(^3\).

3.2. The finalization of the work of the WGFP scheduled for the coming year 2014 prepares the ground for the third and final 5-year review of the 20-year Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) in 2015. By that time, it is intended that the ACP Group would not only have crafted the strategic priorities and actions to be undertaken for a “re-invented” ACP Group in the third decade of this century, but also would have determined what shape and form to be given to its privileged partnership with the European Union (EU).

3.3. It is evident that several crucial questions will have to be addressed as we prepare for a “successor agreement” in terms of the following: What are the strategic alternatives? What issues are to be addressed to enhance “continuity” and build on the “acquis” of the CPA? Will there be “fundamentally different” dimensions or pillars on which to base the partnership? And what are the strategic, economic, political and moral bases for the continuing existence of the ACP Group?

3.4. The WGFP has pursued its task with great assiduity under the leadership of H. E. Dr. Patrick Gomes, Ambassador of Guyana. Apart from its regular working sessions, the group has participated in various conferences and events, including delivery of formal papers, exchange of views and hearings. There have been hearings from the Deputy Director of a think-tank, widely recognized as an honest broker in analyzing ACP-EU relations; the UNDP Director, Brussels Office; the *Organisation Internationale de Francophonie (OIF)*; the Centre for the Use of the Portuguese Language (CPLP); an umbrella Civil Society Organization, and a representative of a Regional Economic Community (REC), based in

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\(^3\) Important background documentation includes “Draft Concept Note on the Future Perspectives of the ACP Group” (ACP/27/006/11EOA/mgfRev2, 29 April 2011); see also Report to 93rd Session of Council of Ministers, June 2011 (ACP/27/020/11 EOA/mgf Rev1, 10 May 2011). The First Meeting of the WG was held on 9 February 2011 under Chairmanship of H.E. S. Genesée. Subsequent Reports to Council have been made on December 2011 (94th Session), June 2012 (95th Session-Vanuatu) and December 2012 (96th Session-Equatorial Guinea). Presentations by the current Chairman have been given to the ACP Parliamentary Assembly in March 2011 and 2012.
Brussels. Some members of the WG also participated in a 2-day Consultation hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat with more than 20 participants that included academia, consulting services, specialized staff of the COMSEC, government officials, a former Trade Minister, and private sector managerial personnel. In addition, the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) of Cape Town, South Africa, hosted a Policy Research Seminar on: “The African, Caribbean and Pacific Group and the European Union”. This was attended by members of the WG along with three Brussels-based Ambassadors of whom two were from the Caribbean and one from the Pacific.

3.5. During the December 2012 Seventh Summit of the Heads of State and Government in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, ACP leaders also approved the setting up of an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to examine the overall framework of ACP-EU cooperation in general and to offer, more specifically, a new course for the ACP as an intergovernmental body in a world in constant and rapid evolution.

3.6. Issues have been raised regarding how the Working Group on the Future will work with the EPG and, whether, indeed, the two mandates do not constitute a duplication of each other. We would recall that the WGFP was an initiative of the Committee of Ambassadors (CoA) to reposition and reinvigorate the ACP to cope with the challenges of the twenty-first century. The EPG, on the other hand, was an initiative of the Secretary-General. Its aim is to infuse independent thinking, guidance and wisdom on how to steer the ACP family of nations in the years ahead. The EPG comprises some of the most eminent leaders of the ACP, with considerable experience in government and international development. They will be taking a fresh look at the ACP’s aims, goals, structure, working methods and long-term partnership with Europe. They will also explore alternative models for the reinvention of the ACP and its strategic repositioning as an actor in international economic relations. The mandates of both the EPG and the WGFP are therefore mutually complimentary.

4. Fundamental Principles and General Approach

4.1. The guiding theme of the WGFP has been “transforming the ACP Group while managing change and continuity in a spirit of unity and solidarity”. This implies the recognition by the ACP Group that it needs and intends to critically identify and assess its geo-strategic relevance in the contemporary and rapidly changing global economy. On this basis, formulate a coherent political and economic response by which a “re-invented” ACP can effectively achieve its objectives of “reducing, and eventually eradicating poverty consistent with

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sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the global economy” (CPA, Ch1 Art 1). The objective basis of the Group stems from the continuing need to address poverty eradication through solidarity and unified action as a collective entity.

4.2. The foundation principles of “unity and solidarity” are embedded in the 1975 Georgetown Agreement by which the ACP Group was established. Amended in 2003, following the signing of the CPA in 2000 by 77 ACP\(^5\) and 15 European countries, the Preamble of the Georgetown Agreement is explicit in stating: Desireous of contributing through continuous and concerted endeavours to the reinforcement of the process of solidarity of developing countries; the founding Member States “resolved to establish the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States to achieve common objectives so as to contribute towards the realization of a new, fairer and equitable world order” (emphasis added).

4.3. Unity and solidarity of the ACP Group are thereby seen as the raison d’être for their collective and trans-continental actions to fulfill its global role. Moreover, the fulfillment of such a role as expressed within the Georgetown Agreement is, inter alia, intrinsically linked to “the objectives of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreements.” These objectives are clear, straightforward and complementary with the three pillars of “trade”, “aid” and “political dialogue” on which the ACP-EU Partnership has been built. To achieve those objectives require a commitment and firm resolve that Heads of State and Government of the ACP Group have restated from 1975 and in seven subsequent Summits from 1997 to 2012. However, the translation of those principles into practice may vary in their relevance and effectiveness, depending on concrete historical circumstances of the external environment and the institutions within which the principles are supposedly embedded for action in specific areas. (e.g. trade, political dialogue, cultural expressions or access to development finance).

4.4. With the looming third and final 5-year review of the Cotonou Partnership expected to take place in 2015, it is both reasonable and forward-looking that the ACP Group has chosen to embark on a comprehensive process of reflection. This will be the means to gauge the extent of its relevance and effectiveness and define the options by which to shape the future of ACP-EU relations come 2015 and beyond.

4.5. But such a reflection must also critically examine the prospects and opportunities, as well as the challenges that may have arisen in attempting to realize the objective of poverty eradication, sustainable and equitable development of her Member States in a world vastly different than at its origin almost four decades ago. While the fundamental basis for the existence of the ACP Group is as valid as it was in 1975, unprecedented changes in the political,

\(^5\)Of the current 79 member states of the ACP Group, Cuba and Sudan are not signatories of the CPA. While South Africa is a signatory, it does not benefit from European Development Fund (EDF) resources given, its TDCA with the EU.
economic and social realities of the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century necessitate a radical and systemic transformation of the ACP Group. It is on this premise the Working Group on Future Perspectives (WGFP) has set about its task to craft a more relevant, effective and enduring future for the Group.

5. Perceptions and Perspectives from the Consultative Process

5.1. Awareness building, critical exchanges and an empirical soliciting of views have provided the WGFP with contrasting perceptions on relevance and effectiveness of the ACP and a preferred option in which to shape its future. Wide-ranging discussions and hearings have been undertaken among the representatives of the WGFP themselves to encourage serious questioning of how the ACP sees itself, in living up to the objectives of the Georgetown Agreement on which it was founded and how it leverages on the rights, obligations and benefits of the CPA.\textsuperscript{6} Of greater importance, perhaps, have been the views on how the ACP Group is perceived by others in terms of its relevance, achievements, shortcomings and areas for greater effectiveness. In this regard, outside of Brussels, extensive and intense exchanges took place on various substantive issues of the ACP's current areas of concentration on trade, development cooperation and political issues in two major Consultations. One was hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat, London (April 2012) and the other at the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) of Cape Town, South Africa (29-30 October, 2012).

5.2. The multiple sources of information included formal presentations by experts, civil society organizations, development agencies and a representative of an African Regional Economic Community (REC). In addition to the above activities, a Management/Working Group Retreat and the Stakeholders’ Workshop on the UNDP Study provided main insights on the proposed option for the framework of a ‘transformed ACP’.

The Limelette Retreat

5.3. Senior Management Staff of the ACP Secretariat and core-members of the Working Group participated in a retreat from the weekend of 30 – 31 March at the small holiday resort of Limelette, outside Brussels. The objective was to brainstorm and reflect on Future Perspectives and on the way forward. Several recommendations came out of that exercise.

\textsuperscript{6} See in Annex 1 a chronology of deliberations by the WG and with various persons and organizations from June 8 2011.
5.4. The focus of the retreat was the Report of the UNDP-sponsored study prepared by Professor Dr. Mirjam Van Reisen. (cf. Executive Summary in Doc. ACP/27/017/12). The main findings of the study pointed out to the numeric strength of the ACP, comprising 80 member countries and nearly a billion people. The ACP has successfully engaged with Europe for several decades in negotiating agreements on trade, finance and development cooperation that have been regarded as a as a model for North-South cooperation in a divided world.

5.5. However, several weaknesses have been pointed out. First, the numeric strength of ACP States which was both an asset and a weakness. The ACP Group could have a political voice if it spoke with one voice. Secondly, the formulation of the Georgetown Agreement that did not give a formal political mandate to the Committee of Ambassadors, outside the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement. Thirdly, the bureaucratic character of the structure and functions of principal Organs, including the Secretariat, with bias towards Brussels rather than focusing on issues in the regions remains a major weakness. Fourthly, inability of the Secretariat to serve as a knowledge institution and to be more effective in setting agendas that would attract a higher number of dignitaries to ACP meetings (Council, Summit).

5.6. Despite the evident weaknesses within the ACP, the van Riesen Report points to several opportunities for the Group that could be further leveraged upon:

- Taking advantage of the high profile meetings it is engaged in (4-HLF, COP 17, Istanbul Conference on LDCs, UN, collaboration on South-South Cooperation etc) to give it greater voice and visibility;
- Nurturing alliance with G77 to tackle the issue of climate change and natural disasters;
- Consolidating the comparative advantages in trade negotiations and international finance and strengthening the Geneva Office to enable it to foster stronger linkages with the WTO;
- Considering affiliation with the G20. ACP has excellent links with the Ministries of Finance, Trade, and Foreign Affairs in almost all countries and could use that nexus to carve out a place for developing countries in the G20;
- Setting the pace on specific issues that hinged on the survival of some regions e.g. the economic impact of climate change on the Pacific islands.

Revisiting the Mandate of the ACP
5.7. The mandate of the Group should neither be too broad to render it ambiguous nor too specific to limit the effectiveness. Among key considerations in the formulation of the mandate are the following:

- Need to avoid duplication with the mandates of the ACP, UN and other international organisations’ mandates;
- Mandate should be anchored on the principles of complementarities and subsidiarity with the ACP organisations and other international organisations;
- Mandate should be premised on tested “niche” or the value addition vis-à-vis mandates of other international organisations to which the ACP Member States are members.
- The revised ACP mandate should be a result of the ACP Group’s internal reflection on the extent to which the current mandate has been implemented and why.

5.8. In order to establish what could constitute its core business, there is a need to conduct an internal assessment in the context of the Georgetown Agreement and the ACP-EU Partnership Agreements from Yaoundé to the current Cotonou Partnership Agreement to answer the key question: “To what extent has the group achieved the goals it has set itself in the context of the agreements?”. Such assessment should clearly bring out evidence of successes and weaknesses in the context of intra-ACP cooperation as well as the ACP-EU cooperation. Lessons from the ACP cooperation with other international groupings and organisations and non-ACP countries should also be taken into consideration in the formulation of the core business of the Group. We also need to address the question as to what constitutes the best institutional arrangement to execute the core, subsidiary, and the global mandates of the Group.

5.9. In line with option 5, the ACP-EU Cooperation will remain part of the core mandate. Linked to this is the question of enhancing visibility. Literature shows that being known to exist is not sufficient for an organisation’s ownership by its members. It is always a question of the value addition that the organisation make in the context of competing organisations in which the ACP Member States are members. Visibility should be mainstreamed under the three identified categories of the substantive mandate. For instance, the role of the Group in the context of the ACP-EU cooperation should be visible on all common actions including programmes irrespective of their mode of implementation. Under Global mandate, the President-in-Office could represent the Group in high level presentations such as at UN level as well as in meeting the authorities in the ACP Member States.
Pace of Change: Short-term vis-à-vis long term perspectives

5.10. Existing literature confirms that for any change to take roots in an organisation there is a dire need to strike the balance between the evolutionary and revolutionary leverages. While the pace should not be too fast to leave others behind, it should also not be too slow to lose the momentum. The sense of urgency to change should not only be felt only in Brussels, but should be marketed across the ACP regions and states. An Action Plan following the analysis in the previous headings would need to be drawn identifying actions that could be executed in the short-term such as the following: (i) redefining of the Group’s mandate, vision and mission; (ii) re-orientation of the organs and structures to reflect the new mandate; (iii) recruitment of the required expertise not currently available; and (iv) re-orientation and training of the current human resource base to fit the required focus. Five scenarios and options on the future were suggested:

1) Keeping the status quo;
2) Closure of the establishment (a possibility not widely entertained);
3) Splitting the Organisation along regional groupings (considered a logical outcome of the ongoing EPA configurations);
4) Decreasing the membership to only LDCs; and
5) Nurturing an “independent” ACP with multiple sets of partners of which the EU would be one.

Outcome of the Stakeholders’ Workshop

5.11. Elaboration and debate on the above findings was the subject of the Stakeholders’ Workshop on Monday 21 May, 2012. On options (1) and (2) above, the very basis and rationale that informed the establishment of the Working Group was the acceptance that the “status quo” or “termination” of the ACP Group did not consideration. In the course of deliberations and as indicated by the great majority of the sample interviewed by Professor Van Reisen, (95% of interviewees) the overriding concern was how to make the ACP more relevant and effective in a changing global environment and on account of the ambivalent signals that that been issued about the privileged partnership the Group had enjoyed with the EU under the Cotonou Agreement, due to terminate in 2020.

5.12. Among the views that had been distilled from the various sources of reflection, the following issues were repeatedly noted by a growing consensus of what may be called the principal stakeholders (Brussels-based Ambassadors, Secretariat Management & staff, EU officials, collaborating institutions and agencies, etc):
• a strong desire for the ACP Group to exist with its own identity and not, as often perceived, “in the shadow” of the EU;
• to negotiate on behalf of one’s own interests can best be done by not being financed from the source with which one is involved in negotiating;
• the track record and ability to effectively manage or supervise development funds should be an asset by which to mobilize funds;
• the option to disband the permanent Secretariat of the ACP Group, the only of its kind representing developing countries, could be justified at the termination of the Cotonou Agreement, if there were in existence another Group or Groups capable of better performing the functions now undertaken by the ACP Group.

5.14. Regarding option 3, the idea of splitting the organization and getting it absorbed into existing regional economic communities, was also not considered a very viable option. It has been argued that that the EU’s insistence on EPA negotiations along regional lines had terribly divisive consequences on historic regional relations. Indeed, one of the consequences of the Lisbon Treaty 2008 was the tendency for a balkanisation of the ACP that was strongly resisted on the fundamental principle of ACP Unity and solidarity. On the part of the ACP, the importance of complementarity with the RECs/RIOs has been duly recognized and has been characterized by a significant institutional mechanism by the creation of the ACP Inter-Regional Organisations’ Coordinating Committee (ACP-IROCC cf. ACP61/060/11 Rev 2 October 2011). This mechanism evolved out of meeting of EPA Negotiators and NAOs/RAOs concerned to optimize negotiating strength on “EPAs contentious issues and resist loss of EDF allocations on grounds such as “lack of absorptive capacity” advanced by the EC. The evolution of this “formal mechanism” also reveals concern to promote a mature regionalism in the wider configuration of the ACP as a Group with inter- and intra-regional scope to advance trade and development cooperation.

5.15. Option 4 is premised on the notion of a future ACP membership that would be restricted to membership of LDCs alone and having the core function of a “dispenser of aid” mainly on behalf of the EU. Neither in the survey nor at Stakeholder discussions was this regarded as of any merit. It was not seen as beneficial to the 50 LDCs globally, of whom 41 are already members of the ACP Group. The numerical strength of the Group in exercising bargaining power in negotiations on trade matters, development cooperation and the “aid effectiveness” debate, for good governance, strengthening or restoring democracy as in Cotonou’s Article 96 provisions, all these areas provided a

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7 A very informed analysis of the complex relations and incremental process in regional integration, with most African States belonging to more than one regional grouping is the excellent study by C. Saunders, G A Dzinesa and D. Nagar (ed.) Region-Building in Southern Africa, CCR/Zed, 2012.
comparative advantage to LDCs as members of the larger ACP Group of 79. A reduction to LDC membership alone offered no additional advantage.

5.16. The emerging consensus is that the ACP needs to be reinvented as an ‘independent’ international organisation with diversified partnerships (Option 5). This option has been the underlying framework within which activities of the WGFP have been pursued. As a result of extensive exchanges at the 96th Session of the Council of Ministers and the Meeting of Foreign Ministers preceding the Malabo Summit, which endorsed the Progress to date of the WG, a strong call was made for an analysis of Major Factors associated with the Structural Transformation of ACP Economies and Measures to ensure Financial Sustainability of the ACP Group come 2020. Attention has been drawn to the unique importance of the rich cultural heritage of ACP societies which ought to be leveraged upon as a vector of achieving long-term sustainable development.

6. **The Sipopo Declaration and Beyond**

6.1. The 2013 Sipopo Declaration reaffirms the unity and solidarity of the ACP and commits its member states to work together to strengthen their collective aims and ambitions on the world stage. Sipopo underlines the fact that, for the ACP at its current historic juncture, “the demands for fundamental renewal and transformation are no longer mere options but unavoidable imperatives for strategic change”. The Declaration commits member states to strengthening intra-ACP cooperation and solidarity, promote South-South and triangular cooperation and strengthening the institutional effectiveness of the ACP as an intergovernmental body. It is well understood that the way forward for the ACP post-2020 is twofold. The first priority is to safeguard the current and mutually beneficial ACP-EU status quo; the second is to diversify the scope of its engagements by brokering new partnerships, particularly with the emerging economic powers. However, this should be reinforced with the ACP Group’s institutional global structure being held in tact. This will ensure a more sustainable approach to maintaining the merits of ACP South-South dialogue as well as reaping the benefits of an extended exchange of experiences with the emerging nations.

6.2. At the international level, the ACP group is now cognizant of the fact that the era of EU and America being the major political players and centres of world economic gravity is now over. Political and economic engagement with the BRICS has become more attractive as BRICS are more open to negotiating and collaborating with countries of the South on the basis of equality. The ACP has to actively explore, with concrete proposals, new partnerships and complementary sources of financing from the ASEAN as well as the BRICS states. This will form

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the basis for increased intra-ACP and South-South exchange, particularly in the areas of Culture, Services, Trade, Climate Change and Natural Disasters and Global Peace and Security. In turn this will cement the relevance of the ACP Group, and its post 2020 enhanced and consolidated cooperation with the EU Member States and its joint institutions.

6.3. Taking into account the Sipopo Declaration, particularly paragraphs 64-72, the progress to date of the WG, as in the recent submission to Council (ACP/27/042/12) and the scope of work to be undertaken by the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), the main elements of a Plan of Action could, inter alia, include the following:

1. A re-statement of the Vision, Mission and Values of the ACP Group. This could serve as « working definition » subject to comments by regional consultations and insights of the EPG.

2. Reform of the governance architecture, building on the progress to date by the Ad Hoc Group on the Structure and Legal Changes of the Organs of decision-making and policy implementation.

3. Enhanced image and visibility of the ACP, including acquisition of new building, Flag and Anthem as cultural symbols of group identity and values.


5. Major factors in the structural transformation of ACP economies as raised in deliberations at the Malabo Summit.


7. Consolidate the ACP Secretariat as a knowledge institution that proactively explores the scope for the promotion of enhanced North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

7. Summary and Conclusions

7.1. The elaboration of the above elements should take account of relevant activities, mechanisms and time lines so that specific outcomes and milestones are complimentary to and enriched by the deliberations of the EPG and regional consultations.

7.2. Appendix I presents the latest restatement of ACP Vision, Mission and Values which was refined by the Working Group at its meeting of 3rd April 2013 following the submission agreed by the Special Session of the Committee of
Ambassadors on 14th March 2013 in which reference to “transcontinental” was cited as a distinctive feature of the Group.

7.3. The Special Session of the Committee of Ambassadors during its meeting on 14th March 2013 stated, moreover, that any effort to define a future for the Organization must be based on a clear, coherent and forward-looking political vision. A vision which should not only resonate with the political leadership but must also be embraced and committed to in tangible ways such as ownership and responsibility for the reinvented institution to benefit from consistent financial contributions.

7.4 The “special session” called into question the nature of the privileged relationship and concluded that the future evolution of the ACP-EU relations should cease to be viewed in neo-colonial terms. Since the ACP aspires to be seen as a distinct and unique transcontinental organization, it must be visible with its own identity clearly defined without necessarily severing ties with Europe.

7.5. On issues related to the reform of the Organs and Structures of the ACP Group, it was agreed to see these logically aligned to and derived from how best the Vision and Mission will be realized. It is envisaged that the organizational structures will be the means and mechanisms to fulfill the purpose and objectives of the reinvented Group.

7.6. The meeting reiterated the need to give special attention to how Intra ACP Cooperation would work to the benefit of member states and what strategic areas require attention to translate the political vision and solidarity of the Group into poverty eradication and wealth creation for its members.

8. **Considerations by the 97th Session of Council**

Council is invited to reflect on the foregoing issues and, in particular, to make substantial inputs into the work of the WG with a focus, inter alia, on the following:

- Restatement of Vision, Mission and Values
- Reform of the structure and functioning of the Organs of the ACP Group
- Deepening intra-ACP cooperation: Concept Note and key issues; Consultants report on feasibility of Trade Financing Facility –ACP Bank/Fund),
- Exploring measures for Financial Sustainability
- Enhanced image identity and visibility: ACP House –Rebuild or relocate; anthem and flag):
- South-South and Triangular Cooperation(sector specific case-studies and lessons learned on transaction costs, impact, etc)
APPENDIX 1: ACP VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

At the 86th Council of Ministers meeting of December 2007, a Mission and Vision Statement was adopted. Following internal consultations, and as part of the preparations for the Strategic Plan covering the period 2011—2014 with the theme of ‘Renewal and Transformation’, a restatement of the Vision, Mission and Values was undertaken.

The retreat organised under the auspices of the Working Group on the Future Perspectives on 30-31 March 2012 at Château Limelette further provided ideas and principles for refining the Vision, Mission and Values. That ‘restatement’ was subject to further discussion by the Committee of Ambassadors on 14th March 2013. It was agreed that a small group comprising the Ambassadors of Guinea, Swaziland and Malawi, working with the Chef de Cabinet, should come up with a revised Statement of Vision, Mission and Values.

The Box below sums up the latest rendition of the ACP Statement of Vision, Mission and Core Values following the Special Session of the Committee of Ambassadors on 14 March 2013 and the discussion by the Working Group on 3rd April 2013.
APPENDIX II: ENHANCED IMAGE, IDENTITY & VISIBILITY:

A Flag and Anthem.

The critical importance and need to improve the identity and visibility of the ACP Group as a unique intergovernmental and trans-continental organization has been long recognized but has not received systematic attention resulting in approval of Council.

The normal cultural symbols of a Flag and Anthem will portray a sense of identity as a Group, instill pride, a sense of belonging and commitment to what the ACP Group stands for and on whose behalf it engages to improve livelihoods of millions in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific. These sentiments deserve to be expressed in colour, music and language.

A flag consisting purely of the ACP logo on a white background was presented to the ACP Council of Ministers at its 95th session in Port Villa, Vanuatu in June.

BOX 1: RESTATEMENT OF ACP VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

VISION

“To be the leading transcontinental organisation advancing, in solidarity, South-South and North-South Cooperation to improve the living standards of our peoples.”

MISSION

To accelerate the political, economic and social advancement of our peoples through good governance, poverty eradication, trade, sustainable development and equitable integration into the global economy”.

CORE VALUES

- Solidarity
- Peace and security
- Good Governance and the Rule of Law
- Social justice
- Diversity

A flag consisting purely of the ACP logo on a white background was presented to the ACP Council of Ministers at its 95th session in Port Villa, Vanuatu in June.
2012. The Council requested that a flag be developed with the ACP logo but on a coloured background.

An exercise was undertaken by the ACP Secretariat in conjunction with the Working Group on Future Perspectives and a professional graphic artist and a large number of samples were examined. In the end, the sample that is being presented on the following page is the one that was retained by the Committee of Ambassadors on 14th March 2013.

The Committee is invited to consider the proposed flag as described on the following page.
The lyrics and a recording of the proposed anthem will be also be rendered for the consideration of Council.