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PERMANENT MISSION IN BRUSSELS

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**Draft Report of the 149th Ordinary Session
of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels,
ACP House,
Wednesday, 12 September 2012**



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1. The 149th Ordinary Session of the Group of African Ambassadors (GAAB) in Brussels was held on Wednesday, 12 September, 2012 at the ACP House, under the chairmanship of H.E. Joel Musa Nhleko, Ambassador of Swaziland, the current President of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels.
2. At the opening session, the President of the African Group requested all participants to observe a minute of silence in memory of Their Excellencies John Atta Mills, President of Ghana who passed away in July 2012, and Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, who died last August.
3. All protocols observed, the President informed the participants of assumption of duty in Brussels of the following new Ambassadors from AU Member States: Comoros, Guinea, Nigeria, Uganda, South-Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia. H.E Félix Kodjo Sagbo, Dean of African Ambassadors in Brussels, conveyed a word of welcome to the newly appointed Ambassadors on behalf of the African Group of Ambassadors in which he assured them of the solidarity and support of all members of the Group, and their readiness to collaborate closely with them in the conduct of their respective missions.
4. The meeting reviewed and adopted the following Draft Agenda:
 1. Adoption of the Minutes of the 148th Ordinary Session.
 2. Briefing on the 19th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly.
 3. Preparation of the Coordination Meeting Between the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels and the African Parliamentarians from the ACP Parliamentary Assembly, 17 September, 2012.
 4. Establishment of a Joint Committee Between African Parliamentarians and Members of the Bureau of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels
 5. Commemoration of the International Day of Peace on 21 September 2012.
 6. Draft Work-Program until December 2012.
 7. Preparation of the 7th ACP Group Summit.
 8. Any Other Business.

I. Participants

5. The meeting was attended by the following Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) representatives :

South Africa, Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Seychelles, Sudan, South-Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe – COMESA

II. Adoption of the Minutes of the 148th Ordinary Session and Matters Arising

6. Minutes of the 148th Ordinary Session was adopted without amendments. No question was raised in Matters Arising.

III. Briefing on the 19th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly

7. The Permanent Representative in Brussels indicated that the documents (Decisions and Declarations) adopted by the 19th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government held on 15 and 16 July 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, were distributed to all Embassies of Member States after the summit meeting. He emphasized that the state of Peace and Security in Africa and AU activities in economic, political and social fields constitute the main issues discussed during this summit. He recalled that the Assembly conducted the election of the new members of the AU Commission, and that preparations for the handover ceremony between the outgoing and incoming members scheduled mid-October 2012 are ongoing. Finally, he referred to the Summit decision granting the African Diaspora the status of observer in the AU, indicating that the proposal to consider the African diaspora as the sixth African region was not addressed during this summit meeting.
8. During the discussion that followed, the following questions were addressed :
- **The need to organize and structure the African diaspora:** the Permanent Representative indicated that following the Summit decision on diaspora, the Commission is working on definition of specific criteria determining the capacity of member of the African diaspora, and on ways to structure the latter. AU Representations outside the African continent are vested with the responsibility to coordinate African Diaspora Associations which will be identified and structured according to the specific criteria to be defined.
 - **Celebration of Africa Day 50th Anniversary:** The Permanent Representative indicated that the AU Summit decided to mark the 50th Africa Day Anniversary in a solemn manner. The Summit decided that the entire celebration activities be financed solely through African public and private partners. Some participants reminded that the Bureau of the Group of African Ambassadors discussed this issue at its level. It was proposed to set up an Organizing Committee, as proposed last June by the coordination committee of the 49th Africa day Celebration held in Brussels. It was also reminded that a budgeted amounting USD 50,000 was allocated by the African Union to that effect. Finally, the meeting agreed to set up an **Organizing Committee** to consider best ways and means to put in place to enable the African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels contribute effectively to this celebration. **To that end, it was requested that each of the**

five African regions conducts consultations to designate two representatives to be members of the Organizing Committee to be set up, and to communicate results of their consultations to the Permanent Mission on Friday, 28 September, at the latest.

IV. Preparation of the Coordination Meeting Between the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels and the African Parliamentarians from the ACP Parliamentary Assembly, 17 September, 2012

9. The Permanent Representative indicated that the convening of a coordination meeting between the African Parliamentarians from the ACP Parliamentary Assembly and the African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels is of utmost importance, as it was the case during the last ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Session. The objective of this meeting is to exchange views on the agenda items of the Joint ACP-EU Parliamentary Session with the aim to identify African common positions on these items. He suggested that this meeting be followed by a reception to be organized by the African Group. But as the ACP meeting room will not be available on Monday, 17 September, he proposed that this reception be organized on Tuesday, 18 September. Finally, the Permanent Representative suggested that the African common positions on the various agenda items be reflected on a paper to be distributed to African MPs prior to ACP-EU sessions, and that the content of this paper be discussed informally between the Ambassadors and the African MPs during the reception to be organized in their honor.
10. During the discussion that followed, the participants welcomed this initiative. However, some delegations were of the view that the exchange with the African parliamentarians should be interactive. They stressed the need for an active participation of the parliamentarians to avoid falling into a monologue whereby only views of Ambassadors will be exposed.
11. **The meeting endorsed the proposal to organize a reception during which a paper reflecting the African common positions on ACP-EU agenda items be circulated to the African parliamentarians. The President of the meeting requested that GAAB Bureau members be involved in the elaboration of this paper.**

V. Establishment of a Joint Committee Between African Parliamentarians and Members of the Bureau of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels

12. This proposal was made by the African Parliamentarians, members of the ACP and ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly, during the coordination meeting held last May in Horsens, Denmark, with members of the African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels. The Permanent Representative recalled on this occasion the proposal made by the GAAB Bureau, to establish a **Contact Group** rather than a Joint Committee, to avoid confusion between executive powers vested in the Ambassadors, and legislative powers vested in the Parliamentarians. He proposed that the Contact Group be composed of **twenty-five (25) members. Ten (10) members from the GAAB and fifteen (15) Parliamentarians to be nominated by their peers.**
13. **This proposal was approved by the meeting.**

VI. Commemoration of the International Day of Peace on 21 September 2012

14. The Permanent Representative informed the meeting that, as it is the case every year, the AU Commission as well as its Regional Offices and Representations are celebrating, on 21 September, the International Peace Day. Given the fact that the date of the ACP-EU session to be held in Brussels is coinciding with the Peace Day date, he proposed that a commemoration ceremony be organized at the premises of the European Parliament on 21 September 2012. He suggested that invitations be extended to the ACP Group of States as well as to others partners (EU Institutions, UN Agencies etc) and that projection of a documentary film on the state of peace in Africa produced by the Peace and Security Department be organized on this occasion.
15. **The meeting welcomed this initiative and approved the commemoration ceremony as proposed.**

VII. Draft Work-Program Until December 2012

16. The Draft Work-Program was reviewed and adopted, subject to revision of some dates of meetings to avoid cross-cutting between dates of meetings or activities of the ACP Group of States and of GAAB, such as the 7th ACP Summit to be held in Malabo.

VIII. Preparation of the 7th ACP Group Summit

17. The Permanent Representative stressed the need for Africa to ensure a large participation of African Heads of State and Government to the 7th Summit of the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP), to be held in November 2012, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. He recalled that previous ACP Group Summit meetings were marked by a very low participation on the African side, as 2 to 4 African Heads of State and Government only attended these summits for the past years. He explained that it is imperative to address the participation issue because the forthcoming summit will be held in Africa on the one hand; and because this will entail heavy costs to be supported by the host country to live up to the African legendary hospitality on the other hand. He added that it is important to ensure that human, material and financial resources to be mobilized for this purpose will not be vain. In the same vein, he stressed the need to address the very reasons of this low participation on the part of African Heads of State and Government. Is it because the issues discussed during the summit meetings are not of great interest for African countries or are other reasons lying behind? He finally invited the African Group Ambassadors to address this matter.
18. During the discussion which followed, a number of delegations supported the arguments developed by the Permanent Representative. Many delegations were of the view that whatever decision to be taken in this regard, this decision must be motivated by an exhaustive report on the current situation.
19. H.E. Yaw Konadu Yiadom, Ambassador of Ghana and Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the Summit established by the ACP Committee of Ambassadors presented a progress report on the execution of the mandate of his Committee, namely the preparation of invitations; adoption of the Summit Logo; elaboration of the

Introductory Remarks on the Summit Goals etc. He indicated that a meeting of the Preparatory Committee will be held on 24 September 2012 and that the Foreign Minister of Equatorial Guinea is envisaging to make a visit to Brussels, *inter alia*, to update the ACP Committee of Ambassadors on the ongoing preparations to the summit meeting. He requested the indulgence of the delegations to enable the Preparatory Committee finalize its report as soon as possible.

20. In conclusion, the President of the meeting thanked the Ambassador of Ghana for the information provided and for the progress made in the execution of the mandate entrusted to him and his Committee. He encouraged him to carry on his task and renewed the confidence of all members of the Africa Group as to the recommendations to be submitted by the Preparatory Committee in its forthcoming Report. He also welcomed the decision of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Equatorial Guinea to update the Committee of Ambassadors on the preparations to the summit.

IX. Any Other Business

21. The following issues were raised under this Agenda Item :

- **H.E Maria Elizabeth SIMBRÃO Augusto DE CARVALHO, Ambassador of Angola** in Brussels, made a presentation on the general elections held on 31 August 2012 in her country. She indicated that these elections were held in a peaceful manner under the supervision of the National Electoral Commission (NEC), and in the presence of many international observers. The elections were declared "free, fair, transparent, credible and democratic" by the international observers. The results were officially announced on 7 September, 2012. MPLA, the ruling party and its President, José Eduardo dos Santos won the elections. The oath of office of the President-elect of the Republic of Angola will take place on 22 September 2012. The tenure of the President of the Republic is five (5) years. (See herewith attached the statement of the Ambassador of Angola).
- **The Chargé d'Affaires *a.i* of the Republic of Mali, M. Mamounou Touré,** made a presentation on the recent developments of the situation in his country :
 - End of June 2012, the Movement for Unicity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) managed to drive out MNLA from Northern Mali after intense fighting;
 - End of July 2012, the Acting President of the Republic, Professor Dioncounda Traore returned to Mali after several days of treatment in Paris further to the aggression of which he was victim on 21 May, 2012;
 - 20 August, 2012, a National Unity Government was formed with Dr. Cheick Modibo Diarra as Prime Minister;
 - 1st September, 2012, President Traore Dioncounda formally requested for a military intervention of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to liberate northern Mali form Islamist's rebels occupation. A Special ECOWAS Summit is expected to be held on 17 September, 2012 to consider this request.

- **H.E. Yaw Konadu Yiadom, Ambassador of the Republic of Ghana in Brussels**, thanked all Members States of the African Group for their solidarity and sympathy with Ghana and its People further to the death of President John Atta Mills. He informed the meeting that on 6 August, 2012, the Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana, H. E. John Dramani Mahama, made oath of office as new President of the Republic of Ghana, in conformity with the Ghanaian constitution.
- **H.E Dr. Ousmane Sylla, Ambassador of the Republic of Guinea n Brussels**, expressed his thanks to the African Group members for the warm welcome extended to him on assumption of his duty in Brussels. He seized this opportunity to inform the meeting that the President of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) resigned from his position. He stressed the need that various political actors in his country engage in a peaceful dialogue to move forward in the search for peace and stability in the country.
- **The delegation of Ethiopia** thanked members of the African Group for their eloquent testimony of the personality and the work achieved by late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. He informed the meeting that Deputy Prime Minister, H.E Haile Mariam Desalegn made the oath of office, in his capacity as the new Prime Minister of Ethiopia. He seized this opportunity to renew the commitment of Ethiopia to continue working for peace and development in the sub-region.
- **The Delegation of Egypt** informed the meeting of the evolution of the political situation in his country, including the election of H.E. Mohamed Mosri as new President of the Arab Republic of Egypt. He renewed the determination of his country to continue working for peace and development in the world, and stressed the importance Egypt is attaching to the African solidarity.

22. The meeting was adjourned at 6.30 pm.

H. E. Joel Musa NHLEKO
Ambassador of Swaziland,
President of the African Group

H. E Ajay K. Bramdeo,
Permanent Representative
of the African Union

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