

# Policy and Management Report 19

## Global changes, emerging players and evolving ACP-EU relations

### Towards a common agenda for action?

Edited by James Mackie, Bruce Byiers, Sonia Niznik and Geert Laporte



**ECDPM 25th  
Anniversary Seminar**



**ECDPM works to improve relations between Europe and its partners in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific L'ECDPM œuvre à l'amélioration des relations entre l'Europe et ses partenaires d'Afrique, des Caraïbes et du Pacifique**



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## Disclaimer

This report is based on discussions that took place during the ECDPM 25th Anniversary seminar on *Global Changes, Emerging Players and Evolving ACP-EU Relations: Towards a common agenda for action?* Complemented with ongoing reflections by ACP and EU stakeholders.

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# List of acronyms

ACP Group	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
AU	African Union
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CARIFORUM	Caribbean Forum
COP17	17th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEC	European Economic Community
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
G20	Group of 20 finance ministers and central bank governors
G77	Group of 77 developing countries established 15 June 1964
JAES	Joint Africa-EU Strategy
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIF	Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
OUA	Organisation of African Unity
REC	regional economic community
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USA	United States of America

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# Foreword

The European Centre for Development Policy Management is delighted to present this publication on the occasion of its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In 1986 ECDPM was established in Maastricht by the Dutch government and ACP representatives. Today ECDPM has become a well-known and respected independent foundation that is deeply rooted in Europe, the ACP and other parts of the world. Already in the mid 1990s ECDPM had built a tradition of organising multi-stakeholder dialogue and analysis on new directions of ACP-EC relations post Lomé IV. In 2006-2007, after one third of its projected life span, the Centre was the first to produce an in-depth analysis of the Cotonou Agreement. Today ECDPM continues its tradition of stimulating independent debate on different aspects of ACP-EU relations in a context of increasing globalisation.

It is against this background that ECDPM convened a high-level seminar in Maastricht entitled *Global changes, emerging players and evolving ACP-EU relations: towards a common agenda for action?* on 30 June and 1 July 2011. The event aimed to produce specific insights into the future of ACP-EU relations and assess possible scenarios for ACP-EU relations beyond 2020. About 70 participants from different institutions and interest groups from the European Union and Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, as well as from emerging economies, attended the seminar.

A public opening session with a high-level panel discussion was organised on the first day. Speakers, representing different stakeholders, provided their views on the key questions of the seminar, namely:

- What impact do the expanding global agenda and the emerging economies have on ACP-EU relations?
- What common interests could ensure an effective partnership between the EU and the ACP as a group and as separate regions?
- Can the ACP Group reinvent itself to have an impact on the new global landscape?

On the second day, each of the key questions was discussed in more detail – and under the Chatham House Rule – in panel sessions, which included a mix of policymakers, practitioners, researchers, civil society organisations and eminent persons. The full programme of the seminar as well as a list of participants can be found in the annexes to this report. More information is also available on [www.ecdpm.org/25years](http://www.ecdpm.org/25years).



To stimulate reflection, analysis and debate on the future of ACP-EU relations in the run up to the meeting, ECDPM published a special background paper. The Centre also launched an online discussion on its Talking Points blog ([www.ecdpm-talkingpoints.org/the-acp-and-europe/](http://www.ecdpm-talkingpoints.org/the-acp-and-europe/)). With over 60 thought-provoking reactions from different institutional players and individuals, the blog generated vigorous debate.

This report, which is organised around the three key questions listed above, builds on the background paper, conveys the key points of the discussions at the seminar and incorporates some of the contributions from the online debate. This is supplemented by an ECDPM assessment of future prospects and scenarios for the ACP.

I would like to thank all colleagues at ECDPM and our partner institutes who have contributed to this report. I do hope that this report will contribute to an open and constructive debate on the future of ACP-EU relations and the future of the ACP Group in the challenging years ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Engel', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Paul Engel

Director of the ECDPM

# Executive summary

## *Global changes and emerging players: what impact on the ACP and on ACP-EU relations?*

1. Relations between the European Union (EU) and the African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) Group of states began in 1975. Four successive Lome Conventions were followed in 2000 by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, due to expire in 2020. In a rapidly changing global context and with major internal changes in the EU and the ACP Group, the various parties have begun to re-examine the future of this longstanding partnership and, perhaps more importantly, that of the ACP Group itself. It is against this background that ECDPM organised a multi-stakeholder seminar on 30 June and 1 July 2011. The seminar aimed (1) to assess the impact of the new global changes and the increased role of emerging players on ACP-EU relations, (2) to identify new common interests on the basis of which an effective ACP-EU partnership could be built beyond 2020, and (3) to explore how the ACP Group could reinvent itself, create value added and have an impact on the new global landscape with the ultimate goal of promoting economic development.
2. There are internal and external factors which affect ACP-EU relations. Key among the external factors is **the increasing role of the emerging economies** on the global stage and within individual ACP states. This provides significant value added and new opportunities for ACP countries in terms of trade, investment, aid and technical assistance. While the EU still remains the dominant trading partner of the ACP Group of countries the share of China, India, Brazil and other emerging powers has substantially increased in recent years. Several of the new global players also have a fresh and pragmatic perspective on development. They are perceived to deliver high-speed assistance and, contrary to the EU, also have the ability 'to speak with one voice'. In addition, emerging players are perceived to have a more positive and optimistic attitude towards the ACP and particularly African development potential. They look at Africa in particular, as a continent of opportunity rather than a continent of misery. As a result, many ACP countries see the emergence of these new players as a potential development opportunity. Other ACP actors, however, regard the role of these emerging players with suspicion given the tendency to support undemocratic leadership and an apparent lack of a sustainable development vision.

3. The rise of the emerging players and changes in the global landscape come at a time when the **influence of the EU in the world seems to be declining**, including in parts of the ACP. Nonetheless, many still continue to see the EU as an important partner, defending sound values and principles such as inclusive and equitable growth, corporate social responsibility, the rule of law and respect for human rights and democratisation. Providing 60% of all international development assistance, the EU continues to be the champion of 'soft power'. However, the values that are ostensibly promoted by the EU and that are perceived by some as a clear comparative advantage vis-à-vis the emerging players are not always put into practice in a consistent manner. At times the EU has become unpopular because of its unwillingness to reveal its genuine interests. A case in point are the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) negotiations which have tarnished the EU's reputation in the ACP. Further, the EU's complex decision-making processes and slow implementation of development cooperation have created frustration in the ACP, further heightened by the absence of a reference to the ACP in the Lisbon Treaty and of ACP institutional arrangements in the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Directorate General Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO).
4. The challenge for the EU is **to reconcile its values and principles with its commercial and political interests** and to find more coherent approaches which balance development cooperation with the other objectives of EU external relations. The Lisbon Treaty should help to realise that ambition. But in the context of the current financial, economic and monetary crisis in the EU there may be a danger of a 'distracted' Europe. The economic difficulties that the EU is currently facing may have negative implications on its development agenda.

### ***What common interests for an effective ACP-EU Partnership?***

5. Against the background described above, the question arises whether or not there remains enough common ground between the ACP group and the EU to justify continuation of the partnership beyond 2020? What common challenges bind Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific beyond the challenges that can be tackled at sub-regional and continental levels? What global challenges can the ACP Group also address in partnership with the EU and vice versa?

6. The predominant focus on **aid** during more than 35 years of ACP-EU relations is widely recognised as insufficient as a rationale if the ACP Group truly wants to play its role in the rapidly changing global order. The prospects of the ACP becoming an influential player seem rather limited at first sight. In the area of **trade**, EPAs are negotiated with sub-regions and the ACP Group and its Secretariat do not have a mandate to speak on behalf of the Group. The **political dialogue** that is a key component of the Cotonou Agreement is largely conducted at a national and, to some extent, regional level. Few substantive issues are addressed in the overall ACP-EU dialogue. Regional organisations with more political authority, legitimacy and political traction, such as the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have started to play a more prominent role in the political dialogue. While still confronted with implementation problems, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) has the stated ambition of providing an overarching framework for EU relations with Africa as a whole. This suggests that other mechanisms are gaining more relevance in terms of how ACP countries engage with each other and with the EU.
7. Based on these considerations, some believe that the ACP configuration and the Cotonou Agreement might not provide the most adequate policy and institutional framework to effectively deal with today's global challenges. Challenges like climate change and environmental protection, the promotion of good political and economic governance, the fight against terrorism and organised crime and the management of global public goods may become increasingly important. But is the current ACP-EU framework fit to address these issues?
8. Furthermore, there have been a number of tensions between the ACP and the EU in recent years. The EPAs are one example, but there have also been frictions at the global level, with the ACP hesitant or unwilling to support EU positions in international fora. Examples mentioned by the EU include: the continued support to Sudan's President despite an International Criminal Court warrant for his arrest, the delayed support from the ACP to give the EU a voice at the UN General Assembly, the lack of robust implementation of article 13 of the Cotonou Agreement on migration, the lack of collaboration from certain ACP/African countries for combating piracy in the Horn of Africa. On the other hand, the ACP has pointed to the lack of adequate and timely consultation by the EU on many of these important matters. The ACP Group has also expressed serious concerns with regard to Europe's engagement in Libya and the use of 'double standards' by the EU in supporting African leadership.

9. Despite divergent interests and a strained relationship on a number of global and ACP-EU related issues, stakeholders on both sides insist that particular features of the partnership remain valid today. The so-called '*acquis*' of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement refers to its legally binding character and contractual nature, the common values, and the joint institutional framework. But it is not enough to rest on the laurels of the special relationship of the past. More than ever it is crucial to identify concrete areas of common interest in the present and for the future and to translate the potential value of the Cotonou Agreement in practice. This will be the only way to justify a future for an ACP-EU relationship beyond 2020. Potentially common interests between the ACP and the EU that have been identified include: trade, raw materials, migration, climate change, energy, food security, innovative financing, the realisation of the MDGs and tourism. However, a long list of broad potential common interests is not enough. The underlying question remains whether or not the ACP-EU Cotonou framework provides the best institutional framework for addressing these issues. This question is particularly acute as ACP countries increasingly seek to pursue their interests through other regional and continental frameworks. It has been argued that regional organisations are the real emerging players. The ACP configuration will need to address upfront the apparent contradiction between regionalism and multilateralism and redefine its added value in that context.

### ***Reinventing the ACP Group for new global challenges***

10. The continuation of the ACP Group in its current form beyond 2020 without significant changes is unlikely to satisfy the ACP members and the EU as key partner. To remain relevant in a multi-polar world, the ACP Group will therefore need to fundamentally rethink its future. This raises several questions: What identity should the ACP adopt and what strategic orientation should it take in a multi-polar world? What should be the specific nature of the ACP Group and its added value? Is the ACP Group the right actor for its members or would ACP countries be better off in other groupings to defend their interests? What would be the institutional setup of the ACP Group most apt to take up the challenges and seize the opportunities of a changing global order?
11. Beyond the status quo several scenarios could be considered: A *first* scenario relates to **engaging with new strategic partners beyond the EU**. In this scenario, the ACP Group would get more bargaining power. In addition, the ACP would send

a strong message to the EU and the rest of the world that the ACP Group should be taken seriously. The potential for this scenario looks rather grim because of the lack of internal coherence of the ACP. Questions can also be raised as to whether new players, including the emerging economies, are interested in engaging with the ACP as a Group.

12. In a ***second*** scenario, **the ACP Group would open up to new members** and seek to reaffirm itself as the voice of the world's least developed and the small and vulnerable economies. The ACP could expand its membership to most or all non G-20 developing countries and aim to have a larger say in the new global governance. This scenario would require a reassessment of the Georgetown Agreement that serves as the basis of the ACP constitution in 1975. Apart from this, the feasibility of this scenario is questionable given the risk of a potential duplication of roles with similar groupings, such as the G77 in the United Nations. Further, in the absence of an agreed-upon definition of vulnerability, which countries should be included or excluded from such a group? What would happen with ACP countries like South Africa, a new member of the BRICS, which do not fit into the category of least-developed or small and vulnerable countries? How could an enlarged ACP Group ensure more cohesiveness if it is already difficult to ensure such coherence among the current 79 member countries? Finally, the most difficult question might be what incentives are there for other developing countries currently outside to join the ACP?
13. In a ***third*** scenario **the ACP Group could be enlarged with the inclusion of the North African countries**. An ACP Group that includes the whole of Africa would ensure a more coherent geographic approach. By taking the stronger economies of North Africa on board, the ACP would strengthen its bargaining power at the global level. However this would raise the question how different the ACP would be from the African Union (AU) and what its specific value added would be vis-à-vis the AU. Some might argue that the AU would continue to play a more political role while the ACP could play a lead role in the economic and trade spheres. This division of roles would not be easy to put into practice as the AU also has a lead role in economic and trade matters. In a context where the AU and the sub-regional groupings increasingly take the lead in the areas of trade and economic cooperation, it could be asked whether the ACP Group would still fit into the picture. Finally, again the question could be raised about the incentives for North African countries to join the ACP.

14. A **fourth “regionalisation” scenario would consider the ACP Group as an umbrella grouping** that would be based on regional ‘A’, ‘C’ and ‘P’ groupings, or on the six current EPA configurations and RECs. Such an ACP construct would continue to take into consideration the needs and interests of the various regions and would strengthen the ties between the ‘A’, the ‘C’ and the ‘P’. According to some, the ACP has the potential to be the biggest (cultural) grouping of African descent in the world. However, although a common history, such as a shared identity built after colonialism, is still relevant, for the new generation of Africans it is increasingly less important. There is therefore a need to look beyond the historical and cultural ties and explore new areas of common interest such as economic opportunities. In that respect, the ACP group could in the future constitute a big market for ACP countries themselves. The feasibility of this scenario is not evident. It will not be easy for the ACP Group to define its value added as an umbrella of the various regions. Questions can also be raised why such a scenario would work now if it did not work well in the past 36 years.
15. In addition to these ambitious scenarios for the future, several less ambitious options could be considered. One of these refers to turning the ACP into a knowledge centre or network aiming to promote expertise and knowledge among countries that share a common history and similarities in their path to development in a globalised world. Such a model could be based on the example of the Commonwealth or the Organisation internationale de la francophonie. However, here also questions might be raised as to whether there is a real need for this at this moment. Obviously such an option would also require ‘drivers’ within the ACP Group who could provide leadership and support to such an initiative.

### ***The way forward: some crucial messages for the future***

16. Reflections on future perspectives for the ACP-EU relations and for the ACP group have only just begun. In less than 10 years it will become clear whether there is still a future for a ‘Post Cotonou Agreement’ and for the ACP Group. In political terms, this timeframe may seem an eternity but in practice, time may be much shorter. There is a need now for planning for post 2020. In other words, it is important to be ambitious, farsighted and to move fast. In that context, it is encouraging to see that the ACP Secretariat and the ACP Committee of Ambassadors have taken the lead in this debate. Clearly the ball is now in the court of the ACP Group and **the ACP will have to take its destiny in its own hands**. Now is the time to broaden and

deepen the debate. There is a need to extend the reflection on the future of the ACP Group beyond the Brussels-based institutions. Constituencies at the regional and national levels need to be involved, including civil society organisations, the private sector and youth. At the highest levels, a well prepared ACP Summit could be dedicated to identifying and supporting possible future options for the ACP. The ACP will need to do considerable work reflecting with its member states on a future role. It will have to invest in defining new common interests with the EU and other partners on new global challenges beyond aid. Last but not least, it will have to find ways to empower the Group by decreasing its dependency on the EU and by making the Group financially sustainable. This will be critical for its continuing relevance and legitimacy.

17. **The EU must also do its homework**, and here, there is also a need for a sense of urgency. The various EU institutions and member states are now picking up the challenge to reflect on their vision for a future relationship. Does the EU continue to see the ACP just as a case for development cooperation and as an open market for EU products? Or does it see a genuine interest in keeping up a privileged relationship with a group of almost 80 countries with whom it could work on an equal footing on a wide range of global challenges? Obviously, the only way EU governments will be able to convince their constituencies of the added value of ACP-EU cooperation is by showing the impact and results of the partnership.
18. **Practical ways to accelerate the debate on the future of ACP-EU cooperation and the future of the ACP Group must be found.** One way of doing so is to make a clear political economy analysis of the interests and incentives that exist (on both sides) to continue using the ACP-EU partnership as the most suitable framework (among many competing other fora) to move forward specific priorities. Another one consists in clarifying the optimal role division between the ACP, the AU and regional bodies by applying more forcefully the principles of subsidiarity and comparative advantage. So far, the various actors involved have been rather reluctant to open this box, yet it seems a key component of any meaningful reform of the ACP. The future of the ACP-EU relations and of the ACP Group will depend on strong political leadership, in-depth political analysis of common interests and on possible divisions of roles based on the comparative advantage of all the key players that are directly or indirectly concerned with this debate.



# Introduction

The Cotonou Agreement governing relations between the EU and 79-member Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group will expire in 2020. While this may be reason enough to reconsider the present and future relevance of the ACP Group and its relations with the EU, a range of other important changes also point to the need for reflection. The world today is vastly different from 1975, when the first agreement on trade and development cooperation between Europe and the ACP was signed. While successive agreements have replaced the Lomé Convention, questions about the future of ACP-EU relations beyond 2020 must start by examining the past, the objectives of continuing such a partnership, what the two groups of countries can offer each other, what they stand to gain from future relations, and the best mechanisms for achieving these objectives. While 2020 serves as an important milestone, the sooner we can address the issues, the better.

In its current form, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement has the three objectives: poverty eradication, sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy. Implementation of the Agreement also focuses on three areas: development cooperation, economic and trade cooperation and political aspects. While there have been many positive aspects to such an approach and the broad objectives remain relevant, there are nonetheless questions about whether the institutional mechanisms for implementation might be re-balanced or improved to reflect the changing context.

Underlying the need to re-examine ACP-EU relations beyond 2020 is the concern that the ACP Group is losing importance in the eyes of the EU. Further, rapid and fundamental changes at the global level have the potential to reduce the importance of the EU for ACP countries in their economic and political relations. The rise of emerging players in the global economy and the increase of South-South cooperation are cases in point. The global financial crisis, climate change, environmental concerns and the volatility of world food prices also present challenges to the way international and development relations are handled. The rise in power of many of the ACP member countries themselves gives further reason to reflect on the current configuration of ACP-EU relations.

The question for the future of ACP-EU relations is whether there is still a genuine interest and commitment from all members to uphold the long-term partnership beyond 2020, and the form such relations might take. This requires an examination

of both the relevance and suitability of the ACP Group and of EU-ACP relations, raising a host of important questions: To what degree does the ACP Group remain relevant to its members and the EU? What value-added does the ACP Group provide to its members? What are the overriding objectives and expectations from ACP Group membership? Is the current configuration best suited to meet these? To what degree have EU and ACP country interests changed? To what degree must EU-ACP relations therefore change?

This report examines these issues with a view to highlighting priority questions for future reflection as well as some broader issues which must be kept in mind during this reflection process. In doing so it draws on a range of background materials from ECDPM and from the ACP Group itself, which has begun its own internal reflection on EU-ACP relations. It also draws heavily on discussions which took place during ECDPM's 25th anniversary seminar - in line with its mandate to promote dialogue between the EU and the ACP Group, ECDPM took the opportunity of its anniversary to provide a platform to different stakeholders to discuss the future of the ACP Group and its relations with the EU. This debate, conducted under the Chatham House Rule, served as an important opportunity to voice genuine concerns and options for the future in an open manner, at the same time widening the discussion beyond the ACP internal reflection.

In organising that debate, three groups of key questions were addressed. These also form the organisational framework for this report:

1. What is the impact of the new global challenges and the increased role of emerging players on ACP-EU relations? What lessons can the ACP-EU partnership learn from the emerging players?
2. What common interests could ensure an effective partnership between the ACP and the EU beyond 2020?
3. Can the ACP Group reinvent itself and have an impact on the new global landscape? What should be its identity in a multi-polar world and in multilateral fora? Where can the ACP have added value and make a difference?

The remainder of this report is organised around these questions. As such, Section 1 examines the current context and what this implies for analysing the ACP Group and ACP-EU relations. One of the conclusions is that the changing context demands reconsideration of what common interests there are across ACP and EU countries which might therefore be served by maintaining some form of partnership

agreement. Some of these potential common interests are addressed in Section 2. On the assumption that these might indeed come to represent points around which the ACP and EU might rally, and that these are considered best addressed through ACP-EU relations rather than other mechanisms, Section 3 discusses how the ACP Group in particular might change in order to better address the challenges brought by the changing global environment. The last section suggests next steps in the process towards redefining the future of ACP-EU relations and of the ACP Group.



# 1 Re-examining ACP-EU relations in a changing global context: Why now?

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While the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020 serves as a rallying point for re-examining ACP-EU relations, the changing dynamics within each group and at a global level also heighten the urgency of critical reflection. The rapidly expanding global agenda has had a major impact on ACP-EU relations, while changing dynamics in the world economy are forcing countries to reassess their historical diplomatic relations and strategic choices. Although the ACP Group and EU have not necessarily been centre stage in the on-going global changes, member states, the EU and ACP groups, and the relations between the two are inevitably affected, demanding recognition of a new reality, and adaptation to this.

## *The changes within*

Prior to looking at the implications of external factors on ACP-EU relations, it is important to highlight some of the internal changes within the ACP and EU groups of countries. Over the years, the ACP Group membership has grown from 46 member states in 1975, to 79 in 2011, with the membership of Timor-Leste in 2003. However, although there has been further integration within the separate ACP sub-regions, the ACP Group as a whole has not further integrated nor established any relations beyond the EU. Perhaps as a consequence, the current political environment surrounding the three focus areas of the Cotonou Agreement is changing.

ACP countries are also becoming increasingly organised around regional organisations, with the African Union, the Pacific Islands Forum and CARIFORUM strengthening their roles. Moreover, the broader economic context that saw the birth of ACP-EU relations more than 35 years ago has changed dramatically. As such, there is a growing number of alternative and, to some extent, competing policy frameworks to address the common interests of the EU and countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The ACP can therefore no longer claim to provide the only suitable framework for addressing issues of political and economic cooperation without some additional reflection and justification. Thus, there are moves to rethink the future of the ACP in general with a process of internal reflection to redefine the place and role of the

Group in a multi-polar world, and an Ambassadorial Working Group on the Future Perspectives for the ACP Group has been established.

With respect to the EU, significant changes have also occurred since the ACP-EU partnership was established. There has been further integration, symbolised by the change from a Community to a Union, with successive rounds of enlargement also affecting its nature and outlook. Of potential significance for ACP-EU relations, the Eastern European countries which joined the Union in the latest accession rounds do not have a history of cooperation with most ACP states. Moreover, in a context of economic and financial crisis and rapidly emerging new global players, the EU itself must ask questions of its role as a credible, effective and visible actor in the world, working to underpin its political role on the world stage.

Recent institutional changes in the EU have further potential implications for ACP-EU relations. The Treaty of the EU (the Treaty of Lisbon) which came into force in 2009, and the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS), headed by a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy one year later, has raised concerns among the ACP countries on their future relations with the EU. This is particularly so as the latest version of the Lisbon Treaty no longer contains a reference to the ACP, a reference that had been present since the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. This has been interpreted as a shift in EU relations with the ACP in line with the EU's increasing 'regionalisation' of relations, developing separate strategies with the more geographically homogenous groupings of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. To add to this, the recently established EEAS does not have an ACP unit but, rather, is organised on a geographic basis with three different directorates for Africa, Asia and America managing relations with the ACP. The internal structure of the Directorate General for Development of the European Commission has also been radically reorganised along geographic lines. All of this has led to fears that these changes may herald 'the beginning of the end' of the privileged partnership that has existed between the ACP and the EU since 1975.

In addition to these more internal factors, the external context also highlights the need to re-examine ACP-EU relations.

## ***New winds of change?***

There is a range of external factors relating to the changing global context which impact on ACP-EU relations. Whereas Europe was experiencing significant economic growth when ACP-EU relations were formalised and ACP countries were still finding their feet following independence, today the situation is quite different: Europe has suffered deeply from a global financial crisis, while many ACP countries are experiencing strong economic growth.

The repercussions of the global financial crisis are leading to increasing aid scepticism in EU countries and questioning of the financing of governments in far-off countries. At a minimum this is increasing pressure on donor governments to show 'value for money' and tangible results from aid. Moreover, while the world is moving towards greater interdependency, many EU member states are becoming more inward-looking, not only with regards development cooperation. European governments are accountable to their constituencies on their aid spending and as such are required to present them with the orientation, the results and the common interests that motivate this support. However, as has been expressed, Europe will not achieve its internal security objectives by looking inwards or in isolation from the world and, in particular, from partners in the ACP.

Further, the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, with the result that development has become more globalised. The consequence of this is twofold: on one side, development has to be increasingly addressed in the global governance systems (e.g. emerging countries joining the group of G20, the private sector joining through corporate social responsibility), while on the other side, the interactions and strong ties among different policy areas (such as those between development and food security, energy and raw materials) are increasing.

Other important issues include the increasing urgency of global issues such as the volatility in food prices, efforts to coordinate efforts to minimise climate change, and migration issues. Although most of the debates on issues such as climate change, migration, peace and security tend to take place in international fora and institutions outside the ACP-EU framework, they nonetheless affect ACP-EU relations. Moreover, they may also represent opportunities on which to build in the future, something discussed below.

## ***Building BRICS?***

Perhaps most prominent among external factors affecting ACP-EU relations, is the rise in political and economic importance of the emerging economies on the global stage, and within ACP member states. This has a variety of impacts. At one level, their spectacular economic growth and development over the last two decades serves as a source of inspiration for African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. It provides a

*'The EU side needs to urgently reflect on the role of emerging donors in the ACP and on its comparative advantage towards the ACP group.'*

*Frank de Wispelaere  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium*

good example to the ACP that fast progress can be achieved, not only in economic growth but also in tackling poverty. But the bilateral nature of these relations puts into question the role and the relevance of the ACP Group, while also lowering the relative importance of the EU as a partner.

Aside from this demonstration effect, the ACP-EU relationship will be affected by the growing economic clout of these countries. According to the World Bank's Global Development Horizons, six emerging players (Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia, China and South Korea) will account for more than 50% of the growth in the world economy by 2025. The volume of outward foreign direct investment from China-India-Brazil to low-income countries reached approximately US\$ 2.2 billion in 2009, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 40% of this total.<sup>1</sup> As such, the influence of Chinese and other emerging players is here to stay and will continue to grow.

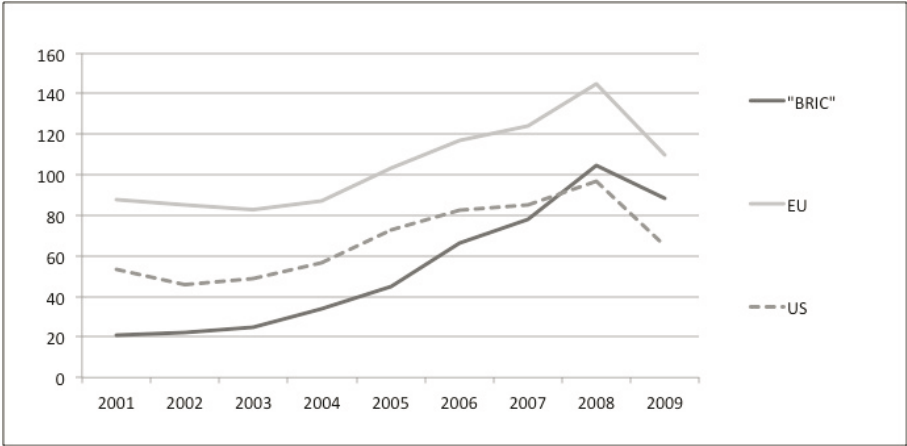
Emerging countries, such as Brazil and Chile also seem to be in a stronger financial situation than some European states. They can borrow at comparatively better terms and rates while also being able to draw on a massive foreign-exchange reserve. Against this background, the growing political and economic clout of emerging economies in ACP countries has been highlighted as one of the development policy challenges deserving specific attention.

The relationship between ACP countries and these emerging players is not new, but what is striking is the ever-increasing engagement of these emerging economies in individual ACP countries. This is providing significant new opportunities for ACP

<sup>1</sup> S.K. Mohanty (2011) Is the economic cooperation of emerging countries with Africa a win-win situation? Trade Negotiations Insights Vol. 10. no.3.

countries in terms of trade, investment, increased development aid and technical assistance. While the EU is still by far the major trading partner with ACP countries, China, India and Brazil have substantially increased their share in recent years as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: ACP countries main trading partners: total trade ('billions)**



Source: ITC trade map

In addition, South-South cooperation is growing due to more pragmatic, practical and seemingly unconditional approaches to doing business in ACP countries. Development finance from large emerging economies has increased significantly over the past decade, despite its relatively small share compared to what countries receive under the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The increasing ties between emerging partners and African ACP countries in particular, is generating significant new opportunities. Given the high investments that are needed in ACP countries (in the area of infrastructure, for instance), investments by emerging players are often welcomed. Indeed, it has been said that sub-Saharan Africa would need US\$ 100 billion a year to maintain the existing infrastructure and promote growth, while nowhere near this amount is currently being invested.

As both donors and recipients of aid, the emerging economies also have a unique perspective on the development process. They are also positively associated with the high-speed delivery and effectiveness of the assistance. Each of them is appreciated for the ability to ‘speak with one voice’ and their positive and optimistic attitude towards Africa’s development potential. Countries like China are perceived as offering Africa quick and easy solutions to many of its problems, with a strong emphasis on



infrastructure. Many ACP government officials, notably in Africa, seem particularly sceptical about the role of traditional partners like the EU, naturally comparing the project-based assistance of emerging players with the perceived lack of progress in international development programmes for many years.

*'The EPA is so weak, fragile and ill-conceived in Africa that other rising powers will be able to have much better access than the EU to Africa's resources.'*

*Professor Roman Grynberg  
Senior Research Fellow, BIDPA, Botswana*

As a result, in Africa, for instance, it is clear that the Africa-China partnership – and increasingly that with India and Brazil – has become firmly established as a real development opportunity in the minds of many Africans, including governments, RECs, the AU, the private sector and other non-state

actors as an important political evolution and a potential development opportunity. This comes at a time when the EU, as the traditional partner, has lost much credibility, not least because of the tense process of arriving at the EPAs, which, in the eyes of many, has tarnished the EU's reputation.

### ***What about the 'old' partners?***

If current trends in African trade with countries like China, India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Turkey continue, the EU might conceivably lose its place as Africa's largest trading partner. Nonetheless, some suggest that much of the optimism about the potential for inclusive growth offered by the emerging powers may be misplaced. The public debt of some ACP countries may increase as a result of the increased investments financed by concessional loans, which can often be arranged in contractual agreements that are not accessible beyond those directly involved. More fundamentally, traditional partners, such as the EU, may still offer interesting perspectives for development if they can be translated into sound principles that are then put into practice, such as inclusive and equitable growth, corporate social responsibility and respect for human rights and democratisation.

As such, although the dominance of EU relations is increasingly being challenged in ACP countries, it is neither irrelevant nor unwanted as a partner. The situation in the Caribbean is particularly telling in this respect. Historically, the USA has been a much more important player than the EU. However, the existing political momentum in the

Joint Caribbean-EU Partnership clearly shows that the EU does not have to be a lead partner to play a pertinent role. It could even be argued that the relative decline of Europe as a partner, to the benefit of the emerging players, does not undermine the relevance of the EU as a privileged partner in the Caribbean and the ACP as a whole.

Further, although the role of the emerging economies is gaining prominence in policy circles, the EU remains the largest investor, trading partner and donor in most ACP countries, and this is unlikely to change in the short term. Even if EU influence is declining relatively vis-à-vis the increasing influence of emerging players in Africa, perceptions of many observers that the EU has become obsolete or insignificant does not match the reality of the volume of trade, services and investment. With 60% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) currently coming from the EU, the EU continues to be a champion of 'soft power'. Although it would therefore be a mistake to conclude that the EU has become irrelevant to ACP countries, changing relations between Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific may require a more balanced relationship of peers rather than a 'donor-recipient' relationship.

### ***Reality or mere perceptions?***

All of this then underlines the importance of distinguishing between perceptions and reality. While recognising the importance of the changing environment for ACP-EU relations, perceptions of declining EU influence and predatory behaviour by the BRICS, exemplified by China in Africa, must be weighed against the evidence, which is considerably more nuanced. A common perception is that while the EU aims to balance development and economic concerns with key values such as human rights, rule of law, and reducing corruption, the BRICS, and China in particular, follow only their own narrow economic interests.

The emerging players are therefore often considered more able to operate freely while the EU asks more difficult questions when giving aid. As a result, the BRICS may be preferred by some members of the ACP. Even taking into account the potential for inaccurate perceptions, individuals from both the EU and ACP express concerns about the possible detrimental effects of Chinese involvement on African economies and the motives underpinning their presence in ACP/African countries. An oft-cited example, referred to as the 'Angola model', characterises Chinese involvement as trading infrastructure development for access to natural resources (such as oil and minerals). There are calls, therefore, for China to take responsibility for local employment/

unemployment by developing a model of engagement that might return the benefits to local communities.

However, while some EU stakeholders may feel that the EU approach to cooperation is morally superior, or based on a longer term development vision, this is by no means certain or always correct. Similarly, there is a great deal of heterogeneity in terms of BRICS cooperation, implying that broad generalisations can be misleading. Indeed, as referred to above, assistance and cooperation with the BRICS is often viewed positively

*There is much excitement in some quarters of the prospect of trade agreements with the BRIC countries by way of a replacement of Cotonou. The prospect seems especially attractive given their above average growth and their role as drivers of global change. Their willingness to entertain trade arrangements married to major infrastructure projects in the social or productive sector is a great attraction [...] but the real danger is that in economies with weak political systems and autocratic Governments, the seizure and re-allocation of resources such as land used by smallholders to production by commercial companies for export, may create hardship and destroy the livelihoods of these vulnerable groups without giving the victims a claim on the resource flows from the deal itself.*

*Carl B. Greenidge  
former acting Secretary General  
of the ACP Group, Guyana*

by the recipients themselves. The type and quality of support from the emerging players varies strongly from country to country and from sector to sector, as it also does for the EU's engagement. In addition, much of what is referred to as 'development cooperation' when referring to China, also includes foreign investment and concessional loans, and is therefore not directly comparable with EU development aid. Fruitful discussions must compare like with like. Moreover, like the EU, the Chinese and others are also engaged in continuously seeking to learn how to adapt policies and practices based on challenges encountered on the ground. There are thus also good examples of efforts to return part of the profits made on investment projects, for example, to local communities.

Related to the issue of perceptions, while the term 'emerging' players suggests a recent phenomenon, most of the BRICS have been engaged in cooperation with ACP and Africa for decades and, in some cases, were engaging in commerce in these regions long before the colonial powers arrived. Some even suggest that while ACP-EU relations continue to be marked by the stigma attached to colonialism, the emerging

powers have an advantage due to a lack of colonial ‘baggage’. In this context, and although language can be hard to change, it might also be argued that the BRICS have already clearly ‘emerged’ – as opposed to being in the process of emerging.

Relating to the colonial experience, some suggest that an important problem with the EU approach towards Africa lies in an outdated image it has of Africa as a continent only of poverty and a problem to solve. While Africa and the ACP countries may sometimes be seen as a potential burden and source of migration problems in the EU, emerging players may be more prone to look at Africa as a land of opportunity. This may also have an impact on the nature of relations.

### ***Reconciling values and interests***

The strong criticisms faced by the BRICS, and particularly Chinese businesses in ACP countries might be taken as signs that the debate on aid effectiveness remains important, even if not sufficient to address the new context. There is apparently agreement that the principles at the heart of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, such as ownership and transparency, remain critical for emerging players to abide by, even if they do not refer to their activities as ‘aid’.

*‘The emerging economies are competing with the EU for both resources and markets and at the end of the day it is the ACP countries that remain at the losing end.’*

*Edmund Paul Kalekyezi  
Trade Policy Analyst, Guyana*

The values ostensibly promoted by the EU, such as human rights, democracy and transparency, are described by some as a clear comparative advantage of the EU vis-à-vis the emerging players such as China. This objective, however, does not mean that the EU is always effective, or even consistent, with this in practice. Indeed, there is a

need to realise that the EU is at times unpopular because of its unwillingness to reveal its genuine interests, not to mention a heavy bureaucracy, which may also count against it when compared with aid from the new players (although the EDF is often perceived more positively).

It is recognised then that the challenge for the EU, underlined by the presence of the emerging players, is to reconcile its altruistic values with its commercial interests

and to find a more balanced approach towards more coordination and coherence between ODA and non-ODA flows. Further, the influence of emerging players in the ACP and its implications for ACP-EU relations should not overlook the engagement of emerging players in Europe and other OECD countries. Although less talked about, the investments of the emerging players are focused not only in Africa and the ACP countries, but the majority of their investment is in OECD countries, with an increasing influence, for instance, on capital markets.

### ***So what does it mean for the ACP and ACP-EU Relations?***

While the emerging players are therefore affecting international relations globally, and individual countries from within the ACP and EU groups are more affected than others, the fundamental question is whether these types of support mechanisms help to promote long-term social, economic and political changes, or whether they perpetuate a situation that is unfavourable to long-term sustainable development.

Africa and other countries have gained confidence through cooperation with the emerging players and are rapidly changing from a spectator into a strong actor in giving shape to its multiple relations. This is particularly the case in Africa. The question of whether this carries over from bilateral engagements to the ACP and regional groupings is highly relevant. Another question then is what this means for the ACP Group, and the implications for its relations with the EU? Importantly, the emerging players have not engaged with the ACP countries as a group thus far, raising the additional questions of whether or not this would be desirable. Do the increasing economic and political ties of some ACP member states with 'new' or emerging partners undermine the relevancy of the ACP configuration, or is it a phenomenon, which can be used to the benefit of the ACP Group as a whole? Is the ACP Group on the radar of the emerging countries, politically or economically, and might it be able to offer some value-added beyond existing bilateral relations with individual member states?

*'Europe cannot see the wind of change blowing over the ACP in particular in Africa which is emerging as an economic powerhouse in the making'*

*Boodhoo Narainduth  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mauritius*

Further, what does this mean for ACP-EU relations? Does the decline in relative importance of the EU imply a need for major changes to how the relationship is structured, or is this simply a contextual issue which does not necessarily affect

the basis of ACP-EU relations? Can or should the BRICS and other emerging countries be brought into a similar framework as ACP-EU relations? What kind of lessons might be learnt, information shared, and benefits had from closer tripartite relations with the BRICS? Would this be a possibility given that the emerging players often overlook the regional level, let alone the ACP Group? Should ACP countries want to engage with emerging players as a group, they might therefore need to reorganise themselves institutionally and overcome their differences in order to agree (at least partly) on the modalities of a common engagement with emerging players. Current bilateral BRIC relationships then raise questions about the relevance of the ACP Group configuration for dealing with the new challenges raised by the increasing influence of the emerging players.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, in the context of the current economic crises in the EU, there may be a danger of a 'distracted Europe'. The economic difficulties the EU is currently facing could have negative implications on its development agenda, with the possibility of European policymakers being diverted away from their traditional development commitments. This is all the more important since EU constituencies tend to cut development aid in times of domestic crisis. This then raises questions about the degree of common interest to be found between the ACP and EU groupings.



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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted, however, that China does have strong links with the AU as an institution.

## 2 What common interests for an effective ACP-EU partnership?

Given the changing context, it is important to reflect on the original purpose of the ACP Group and ACP-EU relations and whether or not this remains valid. Building on the ACP-EU partnership, which has lasted more than 35 years, may still bring significant benefits provided that lessons are drawn from that long experience and that new realities are recognised. Are the objectives of all the parties still the same, are they still well represented through the ACP Group and ACP-EU relations? If there are new specific or common interests, should they and can they be addressed through the current ACP configuration, and what does it mean for any new formulation of ACP-EU relations?

*‘The Cotonou Partnership is not done and old, it is an active and working one. This is why it can be used as a very good model.’*

*Klaus Rudischhauser  
Director ACP  
European Commission DEVCO*

As referred to, the Cotonou Agreement has the three objectives of poverty eradication, sustainable development and the integration of the ACP countries into the world economy. This is to be achieved through development cooperation, economic and trade cooperation and a political dimension. This

cooperation between the ACP and the European Union (EU) is intended to be based on four fundamental principles:

1. equality of the partners, joint management and ownership of development strategies
2. participation by different actors (including non-state actors)
3. dialogue and mutual obligations
4. differentiation and regionalisation

The resources of the European Development Fund (EDF) are jointly managed through the joint ACP-EU institutions provided for under the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. Because of the principles on which it is founded, the partnership has been seen, throughout its history, as a unique model of North-South cooperation.

However, while this has been the basis of existing ACP-EU relations, this section asks to what degree it has met with the aspirations of the two groups of countries. Is there still enough common ground between the ACP Group and the EU to justify continuing the partnership beyond 2020? What common challenges bind Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific beyond the challenges that can best be tackled at

*‘Rather than focusing on the big strategic questions facing future development cooperation much European discussions of the ACP-EU’s future prioritise design over function.’*

*Ola Bello  
FRIDE, Spain*

sub-regional and continental levels? What global challenges can the ACP Group best address that regions cannot do alone? Will common ACP-EU interests be better served on a regional basis and is there still scope for a global ACP-EU approach?

## ***Looking back - a strained relationship?***

Looking back on ACP-EU relations, there are mixed views on how effective these have been. The current ‘traditional’ focus of the ACP Group on EU aid delivery is widely seen as insufficient for the Group to truly seize the opportunities offered by a shifting global order. As the above discussion has perhaps highlighted, the Group may therefore have to conceive its role as more explicitly political and global. There is a rationale for the Group to expand its role in various areas of crucial global importance, but this will depend largely on whether ACP member states and their citizens see added value in such a scenario.

In the area of trade, one area of dissatisfaction is that ACP-EU trade and EPAs are negotiated with sub-regions so that the ACP Secretariat does not have a mandate to speak on behalf of the Group. This is indicative of a wider issue.

The political dialogue that permeates Cotonou is generally seen as progressive, but it is largely conducted at a national and, to some extent, regional level, with few substantive issues in the overall ACP-EU dialogue. Regional organisations with more political authority, legitimacy and political traction, such as the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have started to play a more prominent role in the political dialogue. While still confronted with many problems, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) has the stated ambition of providing an overarching



*'I believe that many of us, so close to the day to day, complex engagements of ACP-EU relations -...-are unable to be consistently conscious of how unique, exceptional and mutually enriching the 'privileged partnership' has been for more than three decades. And although enriching to both partners, it has been undoubtedly skewed in favour of the financially stronger partner - the EU.'*

*Patrick I. Gomes  
Ambassador of Guyana  
to the European Union*

framework for relations between the EU and Africa as a whole. This then suggests that indeed, other mechanisms are gaining more relevance in terms of how ACP countries engage with each other and with the EU. Indeed, some argue that without the funding provided by the EDF, ACP-EU cooperation would have no rationale and added value, which, in turn, could lead to the end of the partnership.

Further, as EU countries face budget cuts, development cooperation has come under pressure in many EU member states. EU governments are having increasing difficulties in meeting the financial commitments made for the Millennium Development Goals and other development initiatives. Perhaps more importantly, governments now face a major challenge in justifying development cooperation and the benefits of an ACP-EU relationship to European taxpayers in the face of tightened national budgets in donor countries. Nonetheless, this is not the case for all donor countries and some governments have maintained their donor commitments.

Nonetheless, some believe that the ACP configuration and Cotonou may not be well placed to deal with today's global challenges. Challenges like climate change and the protection of the environment, the promotion of good political and economic

*'Only if the ACP forges a strong presence in global forums (such as the WTO) AND CAN DELIVER a unified position will it retain more than a formal existence [...] The principal strength is also the main weakness: size and breadth [...] Do less, and choose better.'*

*Chris Stevens  
Associate ODI, United Kingdom*

governance, the fight against the 'dark side of globalisation' (terrorism, organised crime, trafficking of drugs, arms, human beings, etc.) and the management of global public goods are becoming more and more important, while to some, the current ACP-EU framework is not fit to address these issues.

Further, at a political level, some believe that ACP-EU relations have suffered recently. According to some, relations took a wrong turn with the ACP not supporting EU positions in international fora, especially within the last year.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, it has also been argued that the EU did not consult the ACP in a timely and sufficient manner, while the ACP Group also expresses serious concerns with regard to Europe's engagement in Libya. Although this suggests political frictions, it nonetheless highlights that the ACP-EU relationship can be useful and relevant for tackling certain aspects of global governance, if properly used.

Despite divergent interests and recently strained relationships on some specific topics, many objectives of the Cotonou Agreement remain highly relevant to ACP-EU relations. Examples cited include the promotion of democracy and human rights, underlined by recent events in North Africa, poverty eradication, and peace and stability. As such, many stakeholders stress that maintaining the *acquis* of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement is of mutual interest to the ACP and EU, based on the reading that Cotonou epitomises the values of equity, partnership and dialogue, which are instrumental in ensuring that there is collective benefit to all citizens of ACP and EU countries.

More specifically, the richness of the Cotonou Agreement has been said to lie in the following:

- its legally binding character through its ratification by national parliaments
- the common values (ownership of development strategies, openness to civil society and the private sector, political dialogue and respect for mutual commitments, differentiation according to need and performance, and the importance of the regional dimension)
- the contractual nature as enshrined in its articles 8, 9 and 96
- the joint institutions

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3 Cases cited included the following: insufficient support from the ACP countries for the EU at the UN (a vote on Resolution 65/276 on *Strengthening of the United Nations System: Participation of the European Union in the work of the UN*, giving EU representatives a voice at the UN General Assembly, was delayed by the Caribbean regional group Caricom in 2010, although it finally passed in 2011); lack of response from the ACP Group in defence of EU development cooperation after a critical report on the subject was published; continued support to Sudan's president Al-Bashir among African countries, despite an International Criminal Court warrant for his arrest; demand by some European parliaments to cut budget support to ACP countries that do not reflect good governance and the need for ACP countries to show results; lack of robust implementation of article 13 on migration among ACP countries; lack of collaboration from the African side for combating piracy in the Horn of Africa; acrimonious negotiations on the economic partnership agreements; and heated debates on budgetisation of the EDF.

- the emphasis on poverty reduction in the context of sustainable development and the progressive integration of the ACP countries in the global economy
- programming of aid as a vehicle for the aid-effectiveness agenda

Although the Cotonou Agreement was built on the notion of dialogue, as referred to, some suggest that there has been a lack of adequate consultation on many important issues. Notwithstanding what some in the ACP Group have called mixed signals from the EU, there is a general view these are not enough to dismiss the relevance of the Cotonou Partnership; rather, they may even validate the need for intensified collaboration between Europe and ACP countries.

Further, in spite of the commitments made in the Cotonou Agreement, the integration of ACP economies into the world economy remains a relevant objective. As such, according to some viewpoints, an improved future relationship would be possible were the ACP and the EU to re-visit the Cotonou Agreement and reconfirm their interests. There remains room for mutual learning in the framework of a dialogue but this may need to be more owned and driven by ACP actors on their own development priorities.

While there is general consensus that it is important to clarify and justify the value of an ACP-EU relationship to both European and ACP stakeholders, many still view the ACP-EU structure as a relevant framework for addressing the development challenges in the ACP – particularly those challenges that are not necessarily dealt with in other multilateral, continental or regional systems. For some, it also remains an exemplary agreement for influencing the decisions of its members and has shown itself to be remarkably flexible. By way of example, this was evident in the case of Sudan, where the political weight of Cotonou put pressure on the country. In addition, it is believed that fast-tracking South Sudan's accession to the Agreement will assist the newly independent country to achieve a mark of statehood quickly through membership in this multilateral forum.

### ***Towards new common interests?***

If the ACP-EU relationship is to remain relevant in the period post-2020, it will not be enough to rest on the laurels of the special relationship of the past. Instead, it will be important to identify areas of common concern and joint interest for both groups – now and for the future. As such, both the ACP and EU clearly need to think

strategically about what is required to make the partnership effective, which would revolve around identifying common interests. To some, this implies focusing more on finding a new common agenda based on shared values, to promote, for example, the humanisation of the globalisation process.

In addressing this question, there is a view that, rather than only talking about values, the EU should be more forthcoming in defining its interest in ACP countries. By being more open and frank about its own material interests in ACP countries, this may also allow more openness in establishing the basis for a new relationship.

Fundamentally, the ACP and EU are equally interested in achieving the objectives of satisfying their citizens' basic needs and aspirations for a better standard of living, guaranteeing internal and external security, safeguarding the environment, promoting a sustainable society and ensuring that the principles of human rights, good governance and democracy are maintained. Furthermore, there is broad agreement that both the EU and ACP are tasked with the difficulty of dealing with global challenges of poverty eradication, achieving the MDGs, ensuring food security and adapting to and mitigating climate change, migration and global governance.

Some potentially common interests that have been identified include:

- *Market access/trade*: given that the EU is generally the largest market for ACP countries, they want to have better access to the European market (and to those in China and Brazil in the future). Growing ACP countries are also a potential market for Europe.
- *Raw materials*: how can the EU maintain access to raw materials in the face of growing competition? Some participants nonetheless expressed doubts as to whether the ACP could push forward issues such as raw materials and commodities, as these matters are firmly in the hands of national governments. Others suggested that raw materials were exactly the area where the ACP could act as a price setting 'cartel' and could drive forward a bold negotiating agenda.
- *Migration*: as an issue that will 'always be around', the question is how to reduce frictions? There is especially a common interest in fighting criminality, helping to improve documentation and including the issue of migration in development.

- *Climate change, energy and food security*: these are issues of global concern with potential common interests. It is important to launch campaigns to tackle the effect of increases in the price of energy and food and the inequality this creates. Moreover, the financial resources dedicated to climate change should be separated from the ODA.
- *Multilateralism*: Europe has been very much committed to multilateral approaches (e.g., on climate change and how best to work together to tackle it).
- *The Millennium Development Goals*: it was pointed out that although this was mentioned relatively late in the discussions, their achievement was nonetheless an important common interest. Maintaining aid targets and ensuring not only the quantity, but also the quality and effectiveness, of aid in light of the MDGs might be identified as another area of common interest.
- *Innovative financing* (against poverty and to tackle climate change): the need to counter illicit capital flows (including tackling tax havens through country-by-country reporting to stem capital flight) and to improve budget (not only aid) transparency. The financial transactions tax (Tobin Tax) might also represent a potential common interest. Earlier this year, 1000 economists from 53 countries signed an open letter urging the G20 finance ministers to introduce a financial transaction tax to raise revenue for global and domestic public goods such as health, education and water, and to tackle the challenge of climate change. It was noted that the aid given to the banks after the last financial crisis was more money than what is needed to achieve the MDGs.
- *Tourism* is another shared common opportunity for many countries and is of particular importance to small island and landlocked countries.

However, despite this long list of potential common interests, the underlying question remains whether or not ACP-EU relations based on the Cotonou agreement are the best institutional frameworks for addressing these issues. To address this question more thoroughly will require some analysis of the existing frameworks, and how or why we might expect the ACP Group to be a more effective framework for engaging with the EU.

Based on the above, there are a number of common themes around which ACP-EU relations might be framed. But in order to continue the partnership beyond 2020,

these new relations will need to deal with the existing threats to the relationship and counter the degree of frustration on both sides.

### ***An ACP-EU partnership for global challenges?***

Looking at the above list of potential common interests, and as Europe and the ACP adjust to the new challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it may be that the joint approach required for dealing with issues with global implications are best suited to an ACP-EU partnership.

To some, understanding how collective action works is at the core of defining these common global interests and agreeing on future collaboration. This requires trust, discussion and consensus building, raising additional questions to be addressed: Where do true interests lie? Is there internal coherence within each group of countries? Are there enough incentives for a common position on global challenges? Can the EU's internal conflict between public goods and commercial interests be reconciled? How can public discussion on ACP-EU relations be triggered, especially in the EU? Is the ACP able to show positive examples of good governance and progressive development? Is the ACP the right actor for its members or would they be better off in other groupings?

Europe's concerns about energy dependency provide scope for investment in renewable energy production in many ACP countries, which could serve the needs of both parties. Climate change, too, where both the EU and the ACP share concerns about adaptation and mitigation, or migration (the need for skilled workers in Europe versus unemployment in the ACP) could be areas of joint interest and action. It is in the area of these global challenges that there may be potential to build alliances in international fora, but the real question is what added value and comparative advantage will the ACP-EU partnership have in addressing some of these new challenges?

If indeed climate change represents an area where the ACP Group and ACP-EU relations could have substantive value-added, this implies that the ACP and EU might come to an agreement on climate change in preparation for the COP17 in Durban in December 2011. As this is a tough task for 106 countries, they would have to move fast to determine their own positions and then combine them. Civil society could also play a role in creating an environment that enables consensus building and which ensures that both parties are able to establish a common position on shared challenges.

However, again it relies on a common the degree of trust and understanding between the two groups of countries. For example, can there be a common position if there is disagreement on, for example, the definition of additionality of climate funds?

Migration is another proposed area with potential as a focus for ACP-EU relations. Despite popular concerns in some countries, the EU has a clear motive in facilitating legal migration to access cheap labour, which the EU needs in order to survive, given its aging populations. Moreover, it can be expected that African-EU migration will increase over time, since people who are now migrating between African states will, in the future, have increased financial and social capital enabling them to get access to the EU. Again though, what would need to happen to reach agreement on such issues, and is an ACP-EU agreement better placed to reach acceptable conclusions than other existing fora?

Similarly, food security and the issue of the volatility of food and commodity prices, linked to the problem of the dependence of many African countries on trade in agricultural products, are key themes that might be examined in the context of the ACP-EU partnership. With the global stock of agricultural products at its lowest ever recorded, trade distortions may come to have a dramatic impact and create instability. Again, might ACP-EU relations be well-suited to address this? Could the ACP help to frame a European response to the current food crisis? Does the ACP think that market solutions combined with social protection will be enough to manage the current crisis and avoid future crises? What would it like Europe to do – on funding for agriculture and social protection, on trade, possibly on speculation?

In terms of more specific questions that might be addressed immediately, from a European point of view, it might also be useful to have consolidated ACP engagement on the Europe-specific aspects of a series of current issues, which could shape the development debate over the coming months. This includes the revision of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness at the High-Level Forum in Busan. Here, relevant questions might be: Does the ACP have a view on what share of the EU aid budget should be channelled through Brussels? Does it have a plan for phasing out aid to middle-income countries? Does it have a view on how aid should be used, especially the balance between growth and spending on human development? And does it have a view on aid modalities, especially the use of budget support? It would be very positive if the ACP were to engage on these questions.

## ***What framework for a new partnership?***

In as much as the ACP and EU have to define their own interests, and could work together on common challenges, this implies a need for urgency to define the institutional framework within which a future relationship could take place. The question also remains whether or not the ACP-EU partnership still has the comparative advantage to address them, and in what configuration this goal would be best served.

An important issue within the ACP Group is the increasing level of regionalisation. The second revision of the Cotonou Agreement in 2010 emphasised regional integration within the ACP and the role of continental and sub-regional actors, particularly in Africa. The EU has also sought to develop regional strategies with each region of the ACP. These strategies are at different stages of development and, in the Cotonou tradition; two have evolved into joint strategies. The JAES was adopted in 2007 and is the most evolved new partnership, as its ambition is to serve as an 'overarching framework' for relations between the two continents. The Joint Caribbean-EU Strategy is to be adopted in 2011. A unilateral EU strategy for the Pacific was adopted in 2006 but has not, so far, made way for a joint strategy.

These separate regional strategies present both risks and opportunities for the ACP Group. They could potentially strengthen the ACP-EU relationship as a whole if they achieve a closer relationship between the respective parties and take joint interests further than has so far been possible at the ACP-EU level. But this might first require an effort to link the three strategies and see where they might come together in an all-ACP agenda with the EU.

That said, many key areas treated in existing regional partnerships seem to be specific to the regions and have little in the way of an all-ACP dimension. African peace and security challenges, for example, differ drastically from the crime and security challenges in the Caribbean. Climate change, food security and (renewable) energy might be issues where all three regions and the EU's interests converge but, thus far, it is not clear what a joint ACP-EU agenda in these areas would look like. These separate strategies can therefore be seen as setting the stage for three separately managed relationships post-2020. It is this balance between grouping a large number of countries and finding common ground on issues that may be better dealt with at a regional level that is really the crux of the challenge in future ACP-EU relations.



The debate on what framework would be most beneficial for a post-2020 period is particularly acute as the global scene changes. Increasingly, ACP countries are building new partnerships with emerging countries, and sub-regional organisations within the overall ACP area are gaining more prominence. Some stakeholders remark that the regional organisations are the real emerging players because ACP countries are progressively engaging through them. An EU-Africa, EU-Caribbean and EU-Pacific approach is being promoted, moving away from the ACP, and in many ways this is understandable. On the European side, it is difficult to expect new EU countries to defend the status quo, as they do not all have historical ties with the ACP countries. Equally, there is little basis for Brazil, China, the USA, etc., to engage with the ACP as a group.

The ACP configuration must therefore be able to incorporate the apparent contradiction between regionalism and multilateralism. While some issues need to be dealt with regionally (EPAs, for example, rules of origin, etc.), others can be dealt with on an ACP level (e.g., global governance). As such, both the ACP and EU should be open to engaging with new partners, while the ACP Group should not view the EU's engagement with individual ACP regions as competition. However, in order to take advantage of the opportunities available, the ACP Group must work internally at strengthening coherence among its members, particularly as they reflect on restructuring the ACP.

It has been noted that continuing the ACP-EU relationship beyond 2020 and addressing questions of a more global nature would require a more political approach while also maintaining the core principles and *acquis* of Cotonou. They also stressed that a future relationship is, to a significant extent, hinged on the ACP's and the EU's ability to find a compromise on current contentious issues, such as the EPAs, budgetisation of the EDF, etc. Within the EU, efforts must be made not only to ensure policy coherence for development, but also to address policy inconsistencies. The North-South relationship needs to be replaced by a new, multi-polar one in the minds of European constituencies.

However, the issue of common interests also raises questions about the scope of the ACP in its engagements. Should it, in fact, be looking at its interests in potential relationships with other groupings? Whether or not this is the case, even if the EU and ACP continue to join forces under some form of formal agreement, it will inevitably be difficult to get agreement on common interests among 106 different states. This is a lesson learned by the EU as it has grown larger; one of the solutions has been to work

with 'variable geometry' and 'coalitions of the willing'. Flexibility and a willingness to consider new forms of institutional arrangements within the overall partnership may therefore be necessary to ensure that the partnership survives and develops further. Therefore, ACP and EU states should not shy away from considering such changes if it enables them to build a new and stronger partnership for the post-2020 era.

But ultimately, ACP countries will have to decide if the ACP Group is the appropriate platform for their engagement with the rest of the world. ACP countries may have to make a choice between multilateralism, regionalism, bilateralism or a combination of approaches. Regardless of the structure chosen, the core principles of equity, dialogue, coherent policies that promote development and the contractual character of key aspects of the relationship should be replicated in other potential choices.

### ***Can the Cotonou acquis be kept and new issues addressed?***

In sum, while some doubt the value and sustainability of the Partnership beyond EDF funding, particularly in light of changes in the EU internal structure, reduced EU budgets, emerging country actors and alliances, and other global challenges, others argue that the long-standing ACP-EU relationship has inherent value for both partners. This value resides in its representing a comprehensive framework for joint cooperation, which not only addresses the peculiarities and economic challenges of the ACP regions but also allows the EU to collaborate with 79 southern countries.

Although the Cotonou Partnership Agreement treaty is not due to expire until 2020, reflection and negotiation take time. As has been highlighted, there are also some very big questions to be addressed, and some urgent on-going issues that might be addressed at the ACP level if the political will is there. That suggests that 2020 is important, but that reflection and forward thinking should be looking at changes and improving the institutional relations well in advance of that date, and that a key objective will be to inject some urgency into defining the ACP role.

While the shift in global economic relations and political power has an impact on ACP-EU relations, the focus on finding a new common agenda based on shared values and willingness to work with new partners appears to be gravitating towards a role in dealing with those global issues with implications for the government and people in both ACP and EU countries. However, the ACP is often not on the political radar of non-ACP states, even in the EU, only being addressed when EU affairs (mainly aid and

trade) are discussed in various European capitals. This lack of visibility of the ACP, both at home and in the EU, raises questions as to whether the ACP is solely an institutional interface dealing with technical matters a forum for addressing political issues. By making itself more political, and with the numbers to make its voice heard on political matters there might be scope for the ACP Group to be seen as ‘an emerging political force’ on certain specific global issues.

The institutional framework in which a future relationship could take place should not be limited to an either-or approach, but should be one that maintains the acquis of Cotonou (particularly the values of equity, partnership and dialogue) and reflects the positive lessons learned from current ACP-EU engagement while allowing for flexibility.



### 3 Reinventing the ACP Group for new global challenges

The foregoing discussion highlights the need not only to reconsider the common goals of the EU and ACP countries, but also the form that new relations might take, particularly given the changing global circumstances. This calls above all for some reflection on the ACP Group itself, its relevance to its members, its potential impact in a new form, the potential for new members, or whether or not it has served its purpose and is in the process of being replaced by other structures.

It goes without saying that the 106 ACP and EU countries will continue to relate to and cooperate with each other on a range of levels, regardless of whether or not there is a Cotonou Agreement. The question is more what shape or form their relationship should take and if this should be on a collective basis.

Although the ACP as a group might not make much geographical sense, as discussed above, it does appear to offer partnership modalities that would be worthwhile to preserve. Further, although EU policy appears to favour more tidy geographical groupings, geographical neatness can never be, and has never been, an ACP priority.

*'Not enough use has been made of arbitration procedures, or of the moral force, to put it more strongly, of decisions taken by the joint Council of Ministers or the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. It would be a great pity to lose them in a rush to recognise new geographical realities'*

*Simon Maxwell  
Senior Research Associate ODI  
United Kingdom*

Economic bonds, such as shared commodity marketing channels, common trade challenges and potential gains from countervailing power in the market, have been far more important than geography. The ACP states still have common economic interests, many of them listed above, but as the commodity markets evolve and the importance of ACP suppliers in them change, modified or new strategies may need to be devised.

The future of the ACP-EU relationship will depend therefore on its ability to change, to better reflect global realities and, above all, to present itself as the most appropriate institutional framework to address specific global challenges and defend the interests

of the ACP states in global fora. The apparent declining commitment by the EU vis-à-vis the ACP Group in the Lisbon treaty clearly puts the ball in the ACP's court in redefining the basis of a renewed relationship.

Related to this, many anxieties in the ACP today are associated with institutional changes taking place in the EU. If the ACP Group wants to remain relevant in a multi-polar world, it may well need to look beyond the EU and abandon its post-colonial identity. Based on this understanding, what identity should the ACP adopt and what strategic orientation should it take in a multi-polar world and multilateral fora?

*'ACP countries must be convinced that collaboration and solidarity will deliver results that are superior to those from exclusively national or sub-regional approaches.'*

*Edwin Laurent  
Commonwealth Secretariat  
United Kingdom*

What would be the specific nature of the ACP Group and its added value for its member regions and related partnerships with the EU? What options for the future offer the greatest potential in terms of contributing to long-term sustainable development in the ACP?

Seizing the opportunities presented by the changing international context requires the Group to undergo significant changes, a notion that is also clear in the previous discussions. While a sense of urgency is important, there is also a sense that there would be much to lose in forgoing a relationship that has ushered in the most advanced and institutionalised North-South relationship in the world. Some have argued not only the importance of preserving the *acquis*, but also that the ACP-EU relationship has never been a monolith, but a relationship in constant flux.

*'The story of the evolving ACP-EU relationship, shows its capacity for change, adaptation and innovation and, indeed, its pioneering role in EU development cooperation policy. That makes me confident that the partners will be able and imaginative enough to keep this relationship relevant and substantive beyond 2020.'*

*Dieter Frisch  
Former Director General for Development  
at the European Commission*

## **ACP Group: ‘Nobody is going to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves’**

A major point underlying any discussion of reformulating or reinvigorating the ACP Group, is that the impetus must come from within. While external factors such as the rise of the BRICS are important to take into consideration, the major concern must be consideration for genuine concerns within the ACP Group. This means not only finding common interests such as those discussed above, but also agreeing on an underlying approach and actively engaging with or setting the agenda themselves. There

*‘The ACP Group as a whole has suffered from being too passive when confronted by proposed EU institutional changes.’*

*Carl B. Greenidge  
former acting Secretary General  
of the ACP Group, Guyana*

are demands to definitively move out of the donor-recipient logic and beyond the superficial discussion of partnerships of equals. This means leaving behind the colonial character of the partnership, identifying real value added as global player, and identifying areas of core business and of specialisation that others cannot provide.

There is a demand then that ACP stakeholders should therefore take their destiny in their own hands. In view of the expanding global agenda, ACP countries and regions might seek common agendas on a number of key areas, such as duty-free quota-free access in the Doha Round, the push on food security, or aid for trade.

*‘The relationship with the EU has become more emphatically that of a donor and a recipient - a far cry from the partnership of equals so loudly touted at the initial establishment of the Lomé Convention [...]’*

*John Kotsopoulos  
External Expert on EU-Africa Relations  
for the European Policy Centre*

Such a move to a common agenda could best be taken forward at the level of heads of state. Alternatively, countries might start from the RECs as building blocks for further ACP cooperation in this area, although even if common ground can be found, the strategy for taking this forward will still require further discussion with member states.

But what would be the most apt internal institutional setup of the ACP Group to take up the challenges and seize the opportunities of a changing global order? Whether a more flexible ACP, with regions taking the lead role, or a stronger ACP Secretariat would be more effective in capitalising on new opportunities seems to

be an area requiring substantial consultation among ACP countries. The revision of the Georgetown Agreement, and of the joint institutions governing ACP-EU decision making, was therefore put on the table. Some level of institutional adaptation may be required to enable the ACP to function optimally and to deliver on new objectives. As one seminar participant put it, 'Vision without implementation is hallucination!'

### ***Re-examining the ACP Group identity: what future scenarios?***

In looking at the future of the ACP, the origins of the group become important. What gave rise to the ACP's existence was the need for a collective voice. What has kept the ACP together has been the unity and solidarity between Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, despite a lack of coherent geographical, political, cultural and social commonalities. While the *raison d'être* needs to be re-examined in the context of the 21st century and while thinking within the ACP itself has evolved, those who come from smaller countries still value being part of this type of institution, something that might not be fully appreciated by African members. But is it the same for everybody?

Several options for the future of the ACP Group might be considered. Although a status quo, or 'business as usual' could be a theoretical option, it is broadly recognised on all sides that a continuation of the ACP Group in its current form is unlikely to satisfy its members, nor the EU. As has been suggested above, too many feel that it is not well placed to deal with current global challenges. Nonetheless, even without considering altering the structure of the ACP, some stakeholders hold the view that for the ACP Group to act on the international stage more strongly, reinforcement of the Secretariat and a stronger mandate for its Secretary General are an inevitable requirement. Giving the Secretariat political and legal standing may be necessary to make the ACP a more 'political' group and potentially give it a more global outlook, something which will be fundamental if some of the global issues discussed above are to become a focus. Without strong leadership from its Secretary General, the ACP group may never take on a more visible and political international role.

There is a general feeling that if the ACP still wants to play a role in the future beyond 2020 more ambitious options will need to be elaborated. For the time being the following 4 options have been put on the table:

1. Engage with new strategic partners beyond the EU
2. Opening up the ACP Group with all Least Developed Countries and Small and Vulnerable Economies
3. Opening up the Group with the North African countries to include the whole of Africa
4. regional A-C-P pillars under an ACP umbrella that would be used to focus on regional needs while also addressing general issues common to all regions

### Scenario 1: Engage with new strategic partners beyond the EU

Although the EU remains the largest donor and the largest market for the ACP, and Cotonou remains a valuable agreement, the ACP is considered by some to have become a less attractive partner for the EU, which is looking elsewhere and establishing other strategic partnerships. As already mentioned, the Lisbon Treaty no longer includes the ACP and the new EU institutional structures such as the EEAS and the Directorate General Development and Cooperation of the European Commission (DG DEVCO) do not have a unit dealing with the Group. This is seen by some as a 'wake-up call' for the ACP. In addition, the trust between these two privileged partners has been negatively affected by the EPA negotiations, and it seems difficult to get beyond the Lomé trade regime and into a post-EPA mode. This is compounded by the perception that the ACP-EU relationship is not a genuine partnership because of the existing asymmetries.

Given this context, either in addition to or instead of widening its membership, some suggest that the ACP should ask itself whether it wants to take the Group beyond its traditional focus on the European Union, going back to some of the points raised in discussing the emerging players. While clearly this is partly dependent on what the EU wants as well it has been argued that engaging with new partners does not necessarily mean foregoing the privileged relationship with the EU. Yet, the agenda that the Group would seek to push forward would also be dependent to a great extent on the decision on whether or not to widen the group's thematic scope. The idea of 'triangular' cooperation may be a promising avenue needing more investigation by the working group on the future of the ACP.

For the EU, however, it has been said that the fact that the ACP is not mentioned in the Lisbon Treaty is a minor detail and does not reflect a lack of interest in the ACP. Some maintain that from a European perspective, the future of ACP-EU relations should be



strengthened through the three existing mechanisms: political dialogue, aid delivery (on MDGs and by showing the results of what is already achieved) and economic relations (EPAs and aid for trade in relation to the EDF).

Nevertheless, the presence of new competition for the formerly privileged ACP-EU relationship represents both a challenge and an opportunity. According to some ACP representatives, the future of the ACP should not be predicated on their relationship with the EU; the ACP Group needs to find an independent role for itself. There have been changes within the ACP itself, and it wants to become a more valuable and attractive partner not only for the EU, but also for other international partners. Some therefore highlight the need to reflect more on the kind of partnerships that the ACP countries need and to re-think their strategies and approaches.

Other proposals which have been put forward in terms of widening relations include diversifying relationships by opening up to the USA, and Canada. It is proposed by some that the emerging economies might even join the EU-ACP marriage, although this would clearly depend on their willingness to do so. Although attention may be shifting away from the EU towards the BRICS, trilateral cooperation could look into issues of concern to all three parties, such as how to optimally promote development in the ACP, avoid undesirable levels of competition, balance trade and political stability and learn from each other's experiences in public policy making (e.g., protecting the environment and promoting energy efficiency).

The idea of engaging with the emerging players is not entirely new to the Group. From a purely strategic point of view, such a move would increase the relevance of the ACP Group, not least in its relationship with the EU. This could send a strong signal to the EU that it cannot take ACP countries for granted and that it will have to work harder to secure its unique and long-standing sphere of influence. A coherent ACP Group that managed to profile itself better in the world would also be of much greater diplomatic interest to the EU (which might need its long-standing privileged partner to help it realise its ambitions of becoming a more prominent global player).

*"There is potential to build on [the ACP's] numeric strength to promote the collective cause of some of the poorest countries in the world, with opportunity to establish crucial alliances not only with Europe but with some of the emerging global players in the world economy [...]."*

*Obadiah Mailafia  
Chef de Cabinet, ACP Secretariat*

Yet it is also questionable if the ACP Group would be able to present a convincing agenda to the new emerging powers. There is a perception that ‘the ACP continues to be mainly a price taker rather than a price maker’ in its relationship with the EU. If the ACP is a price taker with its established partner, how could it possibly be perceived as a credible price maker with emerging partners? It remains to be seen whether the ACP will be able to formulate an agenda beyond its relations with the EU. The ACP’s exclusively EU focus for over 35 years now makes it difficult for it to engage with new partners.

Another issue is the internal coherence of the ACP Group when engaging with the emerging powers. In the past, various common instruments – such as the EDF, the Lomé trade preferences, STABEX (the export revenue stabilisation system) and the System for Safeguarding and Developing Mineral Production (SYSMIN), as well as various commodity protocols – provided cohesion in the Group’s relationship with the EU. Many of these instruments have disappeared over the years, and the EDF also seems to be systematically questioned. If the ACP Group has difficulties in ensuring cohesiveness with its traditional partner, the EU, what will maintain cohesiveness with new partners and in the global fora where interests might be even more divergent?

Another reality that will not make it easy for the ACP to profile itself more as a Group is the fact that the emerging players, unlike traditional donors, have not shown much interest in engaging with large groups of countries. They tend to prefer to engage with individual ACP states and, at best, with sub-regional organisations. Clearly the emerging players have no specific intention of engaging with a group that is perceived to carry the colonial heritage of the EU.

So far it is unclear whether the emerging economies would be ready to engage with the ACP in its current institutional configuration. One participant remarked that they might prefer a ‘flexible’ ACP in which regions and RECs take centre stage. Furthermore, it was questioned whether the contractual, highly institutionalised and jointly managed structure of the EU-ACP partnership, as reflected in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, could realistically be reproduced in other contexts.

## Scenario 2: Open up the ACP Group to all LDC's and SVE's

*We should be concerned to overcome a rather artificial distinction between ACP countries and other LDCs.*

*Thomas Lawo  
EADI, Germany*

One of the principal options for a future ACP Group is for it to widen its membership. This is an option which is currently being considered by an ACP Committee. But how would this be achieved in a multilateral context and will it make the ACP Group more effective. Would this, for example, require ACP accession criteria to be

based on common values? This will be important for the strategic orientation of the group in terms of membership and of 'who it represents' on the international scene. The ACP could seek to reaffirm itself as the voice of the world's least economically and politically influential nations by expanding its membership to all non-G20 developing countries. Such an enlargement would implicitly entail the ACP Group taking on the kind of global outlook discussed above, and engaging in various international fora as a coherent unit. However, as has been pointed out, this might run the risk of a possible duplication of roles between such a configuration and the G77.

It is therefore important to consider to whom a wider ACP might open up, if this is indeed considered a potential option. One direction would be to include all least-developed countries or all small and vulnerable economies. An enlarged ACP Group, comprising all least-developed countries and small and vulnerable economies in the world could play a useful role in the new global governance system and the multilateral fora in which these countries are dramatically underrepresented (e.g. G20). This would require a reassessment and amendment of the Georgetown Agreement but this is not unfeasible.

However, the feasibility of such a scenario may be questionable from another point of view. Apart from the potential duplication of roles with other similar groupings, such as the G77, in the United Nations, it also raises the question, in the absence of an agreed-upon definition of vulnerability, which

*'The widening of the Group to include all LDCs seems unlikely since an effective political community requires more than similarly low income levels.'*

*Carl. B Greenidge  
former acting Secretary General  
of the ACP Group*

countries should be included or excluded from such a group? What would happen with countries like South Africa, a new member of the BRICS economic grouping, which do not fit into the category of least-developed or small and vulnerable economies? How could an enlarged ACP Group ensure more cohesiveness if it is already difficult to ensure such coherence among 79 countries? Finally, the most difficult question might be what incentives are there for other developing countries currently outside to join the ACP?

### Scenario 3: Open up the ACP Group to the North African countries

Other alternatives for enlarging the ACP Group include enlarging to include the whole of Africa. Obviously an 'all-Africa' ACP would ensure a more coherent geographic approach. The ACP could take the stronger economies of North Africa on board, which

*The challenge is to devise new constellations and perhaps institutions to serve as an interface between the EU and coherent groups of countries in 'the South' that have enough in common to constitute viable (negotiating) partners with the EU.'*

*Rob van Drimmelen  
General Secretary APRODEV, Belgium*

would strengthen its bargaining power at the global level. However, it could then be asked how different the ACP be from the African Union and what its specific added value vis-à-vis the African Union would be. Some might argue that the AU would continue to play a more political role while the ACP could play a lead role in the economic and trade spheres. This division of roles would not be easy to put into

practice as the AU also has a lead role in economic and trade matters. In a context where the AU and the sub-regional groupings increasingly take the lead in the areas of trade and economic cooperation, it could be asked whether the ACP Group would still fit into the picture. It also seems highly unlikely that the North African countries would be interested in the ACP.

## Scenario 4: The ACP as an umbrella for regional groupings in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific

In terms of how to address the changing international environment, global changes do not necessarily call for global solutions, as this would imply a need for all solutions to be found by the UN. Further, although acting locally is good for sensitisation, may not be a solution either because it does not provide the real answers to global problems. Accordingly, global challenges may be best served by regional solutions. Some believe that in addition to the critical mass not available at the local level, the regions provide the level of coherence that the global level cannot provide. However, what that implies for the ACP and its configuration of regional groupings is ambiguous, a point discussed further below.

These remarks tie in to some extent to the question of 'regionalisation' of the ACP, which would see the Secretariat take on a coordinating role among the various regions. The ACP could then be considered as an umbrella grouping based on regional pillars. Various arguments were put forth in support of this scenario, notably that emerging economies might see in this institutional setup a more flexible partner to engage with. Another participant remarked that such an evolution would be in sync with current thinking on the role of regionalism in economic development. The RECs or the current EPA configurations could be a blueprint for future regionalisation.

Others express concern as to whether or not all ACP regions would experience the same level of 'ownership' of the ACP Group. Caribbean and Pacific participants particularly stress the need for an ACP construct that continues to take into consideration the needs and interests of their regions. They emphasise that the Caribbean and Pacific should not be 'left out in the cold', again revealing a sense that smaller countries perhaps feel more of a sense of benefiting from the ACP than other, mostly African, countries do.

Related to this discussion, it has been expressed that more attention should be paid to the links between the 'A', the 'C' and the 'P'. Deeper relations must be built within the ACP to achieve what they want to achieve, rather than creating a multiplicity of non-ACP partnerships. According to some, the ACP has the potential to be the biggest (cultural) grouping of African descent in the world. History, such as a shared identity built after colonialism, is still relevant, but for the new generation of Africans, it is less significant. There is therefore a need to look beyond the 'emotional attachment' to the ACP and explore new areas of common interest such as economic opportunities

(for example, the ACP constitutes a big market for ACP countries themselves). Some of these opportunities may also lie outside traditional EU relationships.

Another proposal might be for the current ACP Group to put more effort into strengthening intra-ACP cooperation between the different regions in areas such as culture, food security, technology transfer, communications, etc. Intra-ACP programmes could further enhance the identity of the Group. Critics might ask why this intra-ACP cooperation would work better now and in the future than it has over the past 36 years. It could also be questioned whether such a scenario would serve to profile the ACP better in the international landscape. And last, but not least, the feasibility of a scenario of enhanced intra-ACP cooperation would depend largely on the commitment and ability of the ACP to mobilise its own funding independently of the EU.

But again, the question of what agenda the ACP might seek to push forward seemed inextricably linked to which interlocutors and partners the ACP might decide to engage. A 'traditional' ACP, centred on its relationship with the EU, would certainly hold a different kind of agenda from an ACP trying to diversify its relationships and look for a new 'niche'. Notwithstanding this observation, a few remarks and initial ideas were advanced.

### ***Continuing the search for a new rationale***

Both ACP and EU stakeholders appear to welcome the ACP Group's initiative in creating the ambassadorial working group that is currently reflecting on the future of the ACP. Such a pro-active approach and clear leadership are considered essential for the Group to persist. At the same time, the EU may also set up a similar mechanism to reflect on the future of ACP-EU relations. This is in line with a call from ACP participants for the EU to reflect on and express its expectations of ACP-EU relations.

The question of ownership of the Group and of financing is also important in the context of the relevance of the ACP in a future configuration. It is hardly conceivable to see the ACP 'get political', with an agenda reflecting strong ownership, if the Group does not achieve financial independence from the EU. The 'culture of dependency' epitomised by the financial dependency of the ACP Secretariat may indeed be a key area requiring immediate action. ACP member states may thus be required to demonstrate their commitment to the ACP Group with financial backing, while the

recent increase in prices of commodities and raw materials may provide a timely opportunity for ACP member states to devise a financial arrangement for the ACP Group.

What agenda could a renewed, vocal ACP take forward? While the Cotonou Partnership Agreement is based on the three pillars of aid, trade and political dialogue, the aid component dominates the ACP-EU relationship, particularly since the trade component has been brought down to sub-regional levels in the context of the negotiations of the EPAs. A large number of EU and ACP participants stressed that a shift away from the current focus on EU aid as the 'core business' of the ACP was desirable.

More radical suggestions were also made. If a future agreement is to be as innovative as past agreements have been, it is necessary to be ambitious. On development finance, the next step beyond joint management might be for the ACP to seek to operate as a channel for disbursing aid to ACP countries itself by establishing an ACP Development Fund to which the EU (and perhaps also other donors) could contribute. Thinking in these terms might help the Group focus on what its future role can and should be, with potentially increasing rather than declining relevance.

*'The ACP remains a useful networking device, coordinating mechanisms and listening post for the exchange of policies and practical experiences between the ACP countries and the EU, and drawing on their rich linkages within the various emerging regions.'*

*Phyllis Johnson  
Executive Director, Southern African  
Research and Documentation Centre  
(SARDC), Zimbabwe*

A less ambitious but potentially interesting way of remaining useful and relevant in today's world, which the ACP Group could explore, might be a Commonwealth type of model or something like the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF). Both groups provide platforms for exchanging knowledge and sharing lessons and practices between countries with a common history. Within the ACP Group, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and

Rural Cooperation (CTA) and the Centre for the Development of Enterprise (CDE) have accumulated a wealth of experience in this way.

Transforming the ACP Secretariat into a type of South-South knowledge institution with a specific mandate to exchange information and lessons learned on key issues of common concern (e.g., climate change, food security, migration, etc.) might be a

*“Intergovernmental organisations such as ours must function at the cutting edge in terms of knowledge capital if they are to be effective in fulfilling their mandates. The ACP Secretariat would have to scale up its act in order to reposition itself as a knowledge institution’*

*Obadiah Mailafia  
Chef de Cabinet, ACP Secretariat*

model worth further exploration. However, it could be asked whether there is a need for such an institution if other well-established institutions already perform that role? What would be the specific niche of the ACP as a South-South network? What would be its added value and complementarity relative to the Commonwealth and the OIF that most ACP countries are already

party to? To what extent would an ACP with an exclusively ‘Southern’ membership be able to mobilise the necessary funding to ensure its viability?

There is general agreement as to the value of organising more debates on the future of the ACP with a broad range of stakeholders. It is suggested that an ACP Summit could be dedicated to the topic while some also emphasise the need to extend the reflection on the future of the ACP Group beyond Brussels. Constituencies at the regional and national levels need to be involved, including civil society organisations, the private sector and youth.

In the medium term, there is a need to make the ACP more visible (by improving communication) and to have real intra-ACP programming to reinforce cooperation among regions and among countries within the regions. In the long term, the Group will have to decide ‘what the future is’. It is important to start discussing this now.

In sum, although there are definitely some common areas of interest that might form the basis of future ACP-EU relations, there are also fundamental questions regarding the nature and scope of the ACP, which need to be addressed first. Clearly, this also depends on the agenda and the themes around which it will be expected to work, but from the discussions there is agreement that the ACP will need to do considerable work reflecting with its member states on a future role, a future form and potentially innovative plans for financing its own activities.



## 4. Concluding remarks: which way forward?

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The presentations, discussions and debate summarised in this report are wide ranging. This is perhaps not surprising, given the ambitious agenda of discussing *Global Changes, Emerging Players and Evolving ACP-EU Relations: Towards a Common Agenda for Action*. It is unanimously agreed that now is the right time to begin reflecting on the form this might take and that an injection of urgency is required.

The questions selected for the seminar were intended to guide a logical process to begin this exercise on reflection. The changing global context and the increasing importance of the 'emerging players' are a reality that has already had an impact on developing countries and ACP member states. So we can assume that it will inevitably also have an impact on a future ACP, its agenda and its relationships at an international level. Clearly, a lot of this is subject to perceptions and misperceptions, generalisations and misrepresentations, but also to elements of genuine concern for the EU, the ACP and ACP member countries. Whether or not the ACP and the EU continue to work together in some form, their relations will be affected by on-going international events and developments.

Having set the scene by discussing context, it is important to attempt to define what common interests there are between the ACP and the EU, and therefore what a common agenda might include. Even if future relationships have to change, it is important to be careful about the *acquis* of the Cotonou Agreement, as some of its features will remain relevant and useful.

Beyond discussion of the *acquis* of the Cotonou Agreement, the need to respond to the threats and opportunities posed by the changing international environment might represent a common interest. As this debate kicks off in earnest, a number of factors have emerged as being of fundamental importance. First of all, it is clear that the ACP Group needs to work out for itself what it wants from any future relationship with the EU; however, the same is also true for the EU, which needs to decide what it wants. While it is useful for each party to raise questions and comment on the other's ideas and positions in this discussion, it is important to remember that progress on clarifying issues needs to be made on both sides, by each party, respectively. Moreover, both parties should also think not only about what they want out of the relationship,

themselves, but also what they can offer. Only such two-way thinking can provide the basis for a solid partnership.

It is also important for this reflective process to be conducted in a forward-looking manner and not only on the basis of where we are now. We must plan for post-2020, and the process should provide a framework that will be relevant for a further 10 or 20 years. In other words, it is important to be ambitious and farsighted and not constrained to simply address today's realities.

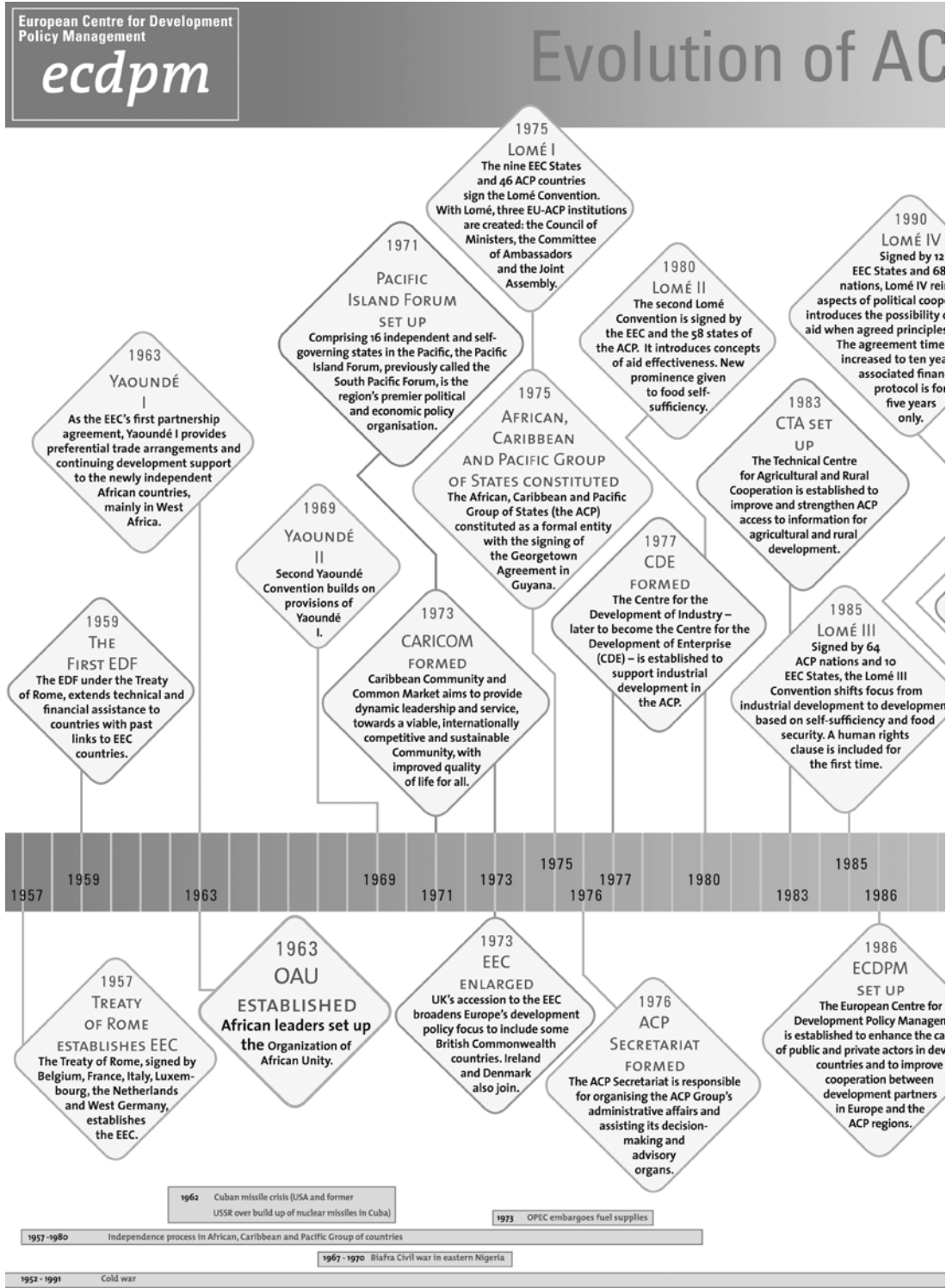
At the same time, there is nothing like success to breed more success. This forward-looking reflection should therefore not be an excuse for inaction but, rather, should invoke a sense of urgency. If the EU and ACP can find new ways of collaborating effectively and dynamically in the immediate future before 2020, that will provide a stronger basis and renewed momentum. Such activities as working together on preparing for the Busan High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness or for the 17th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Durban are therefore also very important in themselves and can provide vital foundations for defining agendas and building future relations.

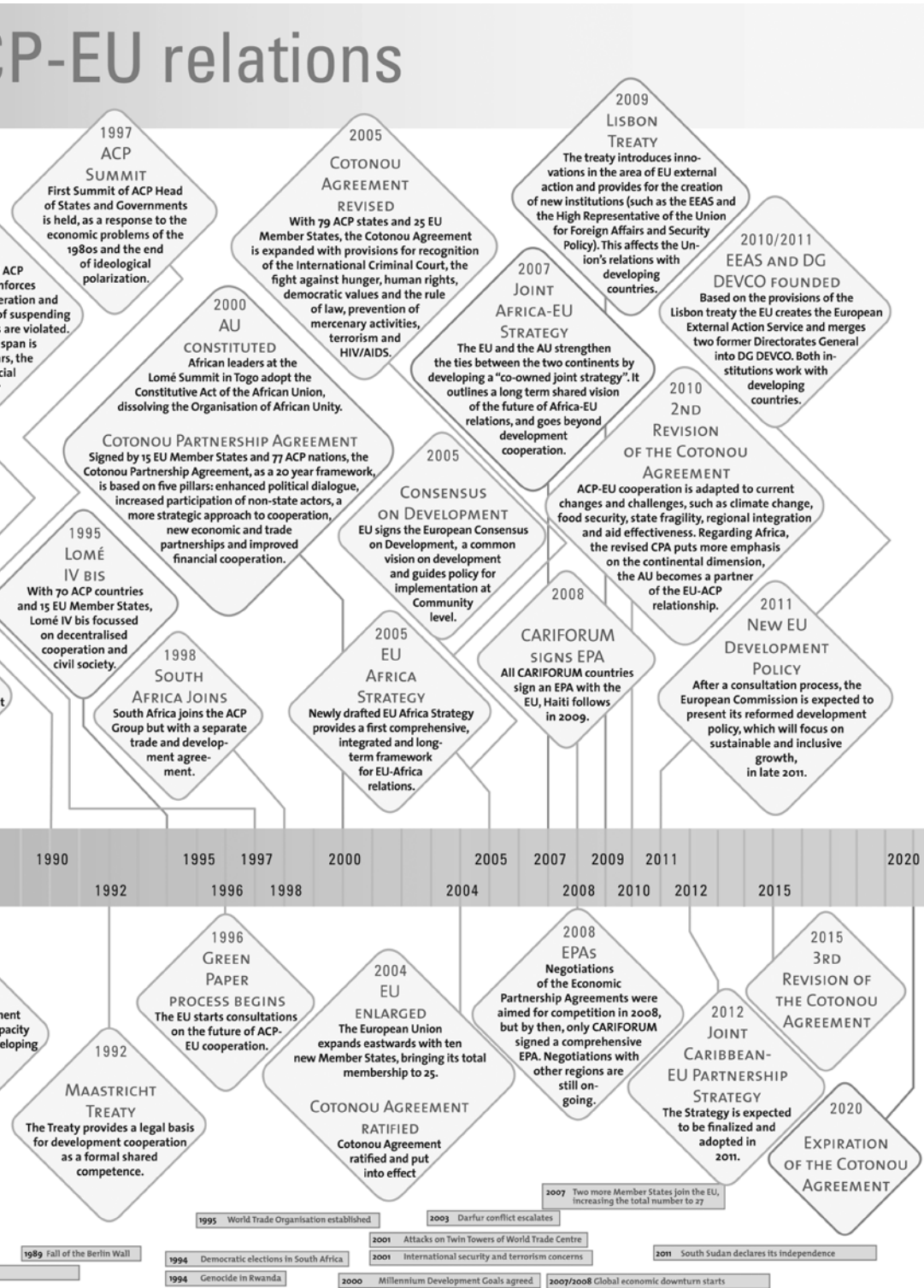
Although the discussions summarised here can only start the ball rolling on defining common ground, it is also important for the ACP to consider in what form it can best address the issues in the current context. Again, this is clearly an area for internal discussion among the ACP countries. There are important decisions to be made regarding the form of a future ACP: how can it best develop a division of labour with continental and regional organisations; how can the Group become financially sustainable and therefore increase ownership and impact; how can it increase its relevance as an organisation – not only in regard to the EU and its member states but also to new partners and, potentially, the emerging economies, and how can the potential combined weight of 79 countries be used on the global stage to benefit member states?

# Annexes



# Annex 1





## ***Further information on timeline***

- **ACP Business Climate** <http://acpbusinessclimate.org/bizclim/>
- **ACP Civil Society Forum** <http://acpcsforum.igloocommunities.com/>
- **ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly**  
[www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp/10\\_01/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp/10_01/default_en.htm)
- **Capacity.org** [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org)
- **Centre for Development of Enterprise** [www.cde.int](http://www.cde.int)
- **Cotonou Infokit** [www.ecdpm.org/infokit](http://www.ecdpm.org/infokit)
- **ECDPM** [www.ecdpm.org](http://www.ecdpm.org)
- **ECDPM's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary seminar information page** [www.ecdpm.org/25years](http://www.ecdpm.org/25years)
- **ECDPM's Talking Points blog debate "The ACP and Europe: What future for a privileged relationship?"** [www.ecdpm-talkingpoints.org/the-acp-and-europe](http://www.ecdpm-talkingpoints.org/the-acp-and-europe)
- **European Commission: The Cotonou Agreement**  
[http://ec.europa.eu/comm/development/body/cotonou/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/development/body/cotonou/index_en.htm)
- **Portal on non-partisan sourcing and knowledge sharing on ACP-EU trade**  
[www.acp-eu-trade.org](http://www.acp-eu-trade.org)
- **Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA)** [www.cta.int/](http://www.cta.int/)
- **The Africa Caribbean Pacific Local Government Platform (ACPLGP)** [www.acplgp.net/](http://www.acplgp.net/)
- **The Cotonou Agreement: A User's Guide for Non-State Actors**  
[www.acpsec.org/en/nsa/nsa\\_users\\_guide\\_en\\_rev1.pdf](http://www.acpsec.org/en/nsa/nsa_users_guide_en_rev1.pdf)
- **The Courier: The magazine of Africa – Caribbean – Pacific & European Union Cooperation and Relations** [www.acp-eucourier.info/](http://www.acp-eucourier.info/)
- **The Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States** [www.acpsec.int](http://www.acpsec.int)
- **Trade Negotiations Insights (TNI)** [www.acp-eu-trade.org/tni](http://www.acp-eu-trade.org/tni)

## Annex 2:

# ECDPM 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Seminar Programme

### Thursday, 30 June

- 12:30      Arrival and registration (*light lunch buffet*)
- 14:30      Welcome by *Lingston Cumberbatch*, Chairperson of the ECDPM Board
- High-level panel, moderated by *Paul Engel*, Director ECDPM  
*Debate on 'Global Changes, emerging players and evolving ACP-EU relations: towards a common agenda for action?'*
- Interventions by:  
*Mohamed Ibn Chambas*, Secretary General of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group  
*Françoise Moreau*, Head of Unit, European Commission, DG Development and Cooperation  
*Sutiawan Gunessee*, Ambassador of Mauritius to the EU and Chairperson of the Ambassadorial Working Group on Future Perspectives of the ACP group  
*Adebayo Olukoshi*, Director of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) and Director of the Africa Governance Institute (AGI)  
*Glenys Kinnock*, Member UK House of Lords, formerly MEP and Co-President of EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly  
*Bram van Ojik*, Director, Department for Social Development, MFA The Netherlands
- 16:30      Group picture of participants / informal networking
- 17:30      Ceremony for the official opening of the renovated ECDPM building and the inauguration of Prince Claus Hall, in the presence of *His Royal Highness Prince Constantijn of The Netherlands*, followed by a cocktail reception
- 19:15      *End of reception*
- 20:00      *Welcome drinks and dinner at Bonnefantenmuseum, restaurant Ipanema*

## Friday, 1 July

- 9:00 *Coffee*
- 9:15 *Welcome*
- 9:30 *Session I - moderated by Geert Laporte, Deputy Director ECDPM*  
*The expanding global agenda and emerging economies: what impact on ACP-EU relations?*
- Panel: *San Bilal*, Head of Programme Economic and Trade Cooperation, ECDPM  
*Cui Hongjian*, Director China Institute of International Studies  
*Carlos Primo Braga*, Special Representative and Director External Affairs, Europe, World Bank
- Open discussion
- 11:00 *Coffee break*
- 11:30 *Session II - moderated by James Mackie, Head of Programme Development Policy and International Relations, ECDPM*  
*What common interests could ensure an effective partnership between the EU and the ACP as a group and as separate regions?*
- Panel: *PI Gomes*, Ambassador of Guyana to the EU  
*Elisabeth Pape*, Advisor ACP-EU relations, European Commission, DG Development and Cooperation  
*Pieter Jan Kleiweg*, Head of External Affairs Division, European Integration Department, MFA, The Netherlands
- Open discussion
- 13:00 *Buffet lunch at ECDPM*
- 14:15 *Session III - moderated by Jean Bossuyt, Head of Strategy ECDPM*  
*Can the ACP Group reinvent itself to impact the new global landscape?*
- Panel: *Roy Mickey Joy*, Ambassador of Vanuatu to the EU  
*Henri Bernard Solignac-Lecomte*, Head of Unit, Europe Middle-East & Africa, OECD Development Centre  
*Vijay Makhan*, former Assistant SG of the Organisation of African Unity
- Open discussion
- 15:45 *Coffee break*
- 16:15 *Closing panel: Concluding remarks and next steps*
- 16:45 *Closure of the meeting*
- Informal drinks at ECDPM*

Conference website: [www.ecdpm.org/25years](http://www.ecdpm.org/25years)

*This seminar benefits from the generous support of ECDPM's core funder, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ECDPM's institutional funders, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom and of project support provided by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs*



# Annex 3: ECDPM 25th Anniversary Seminar list of participants

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In September 2011, the Municipality of Maastricht awarded the ECDPM building in Maastricht, also known as 'The Pelican House', with the Victor de Stuers Prize 2011 for best renovated monument.









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