

# Global Changes, emerging players and evolving ACP-EU relations: towards a common agenda for action?

Background paper

ECDPM 25th Anniversary Seminar  
Maastricht, 30 June – 1 July 2011

European Centre for Development  
Policy Management

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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

# 1. Introduction

Rapid and fundamental changes are taking place worldwide. The multitude of global challenges and the rapid rise of emerging players in the global economy are affecting international relations. New modes of South-South partnership are emerging, prompting a major rethink of current development strategies. At the same time, changes are also taking place in the European Union (EU) and the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. The enlargement of the EU to include countries without a colonial past, the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the development of several regional strategies have brought about major shifts in the EU with the aim of reinforcing its role as a global player. As a result, growing doubts have been expressed in relation to the continuing relevance of the ACP-EU framework and its capacity to accommodate new global challenges. On the ACP side, a process of internal reflection has also begun to redefine the place and role of the ACP Group in a multi-polar world and with regard to a Post Lisbon EU. The key question for the future is: what will ACP-EU relations look like beyond 2020, when the current Cotonou Partnership Agreement ends?

Against this background and on the occasion of its 25th anniversary, on 30th June and 1st July 2011 the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) is organising a High-level Panel and international seminar in Maastricht that will assess the future of the ACP-EU partnership in the light of the new global challenges, the growing role and impact of emerging economies and the ongoing change processes within both the ACP Group and the EU. The High-level panel will focus on one main issue: given the manifest global changes, the emerging players and the evolution in ACP-EU relations so far, is there a route towards a common agenda for future action? The International Seminar will then take a further in-depth look at the various ingredients for change and adjustment, to arrive at specific insights and suggestions:

1. What are the impacts of the expanding global agenda and emerging economies on the continuity of ACP-EU relations?
2. What new common interests may be envisaged to ensure an effective future partnership between the EU and the ACP as a group and/or as separate regions?
3. In the face of these global changes, can the ACP Group reinvent or transform itself to ensure impact in the new global political landscape?

The High-level Panel and Seminar aim to produce specific insights regarding the future of ACP-EU relations and assess alternative scenarios for ACP-EU relations beyond 2020. In so doing, ECDPM hopes to make a useful contribution to the debate that has now also begun within the ACP Group and the EU. Chatham House rule applies. Participants are encouraged to introduce fresh perspectives that may help take the process forward. This paper introduces the background to the debate and formulates some of the key questions that may help to guide it.

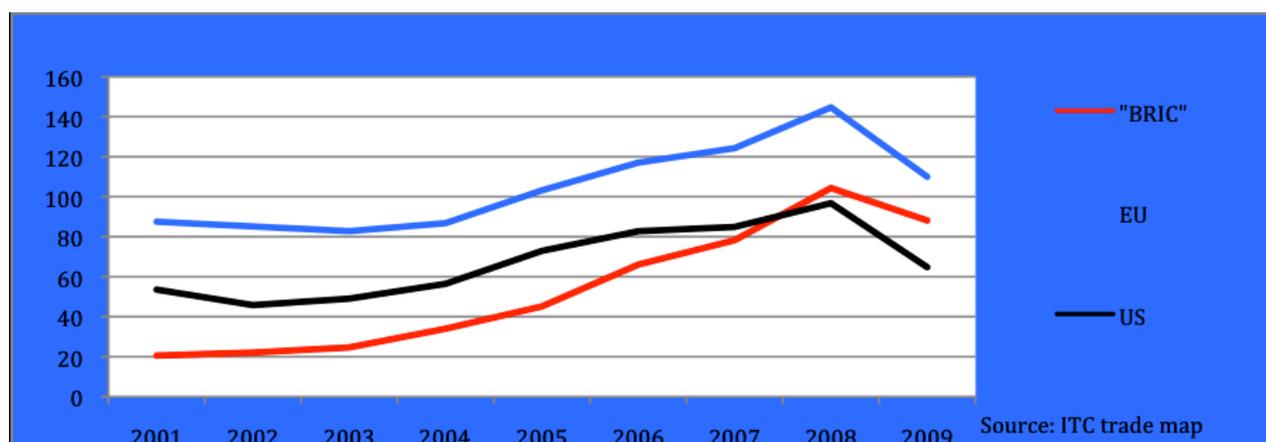
## 2. The expanding global agenda and emerging economies: what impact on ACP-EU relations?

### New global challenges and emerging players in the ACP

Over the last decade the rapidly expanding global agenda has had a major impact on ACP-EU relations. 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. The growing intensity of the relationship between individual ACP countries and emerging players such as China, India and Brazil (as well as Venezuela, in the Caribbean) has also been marked by growing political engagement and strengthened economic and strategic ties affecting the privileged ACP-EU partnership. The spectacular economic growth and development of these emerging players over the last two decades definitely serves as a source of inspiration for African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. It provides a good example to the ACP that fast progress can be achieved, not only in economic growth but also in tackling poverty

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



In terms of investment, ACP countries have also received increasing inward flows from emerging players. The size of outward FDI from China-India-Brazil to low-income countries reached about US\$ 2.2 billion in 2009, with SSA accounting for 40% of this total<sup>1</sup>. Similar to trade and investment, development finance from large emerging economies has increased significantly over the past decade, despite its relatively small share compared to OECD DAC countries.

This shift in the global balance of power and the growing economic influence of emerging players in ACP countries is turning the tables, with emerging players increasingly being perceived in ACP countries as a welcome alternative to the EU, as the ACP's traditional major economic partner and donor.

In addition, South-South cooperation is growing among ACP/African governments due to more pragmatic, practical and seemingly unconditional approaches to doing business in ACP countries. Emerging economies are both donors and recipients of aid, giving them a unique perspective on the development

<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.

process. They are also positively associated with high-speed delivery and effectiveness of the assistance. Each of them is also appreciated for the ability to 'speak with one voice' and a positive and optimistic attitude towards Africa's development potential. Countries like China are perceived to be 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.

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 set in the minds of many Africans, including governments, regional economic communities (RECs), the African Union (AU), the private sector and other non-state actors (NSA). This comes at a time when the EU, as the traditional partner, seems to have lost a lot of credibility, not least because of the tense process of arriving at the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which in the eyes of many has tarnished the EU's reputation.

**Some striking quotes from ECDPM's Talking Points blog discussion on 'The ACP and Europe: What future for a privileged relationship?'**

'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.

The sooner the ACP Group realizes that development can never be achieved through aid and preferences, the better!!'

*Edmund Paul Kalekyezi, Trade Policy Analyst*

'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*

'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*

'Both the EU and the ACP states have themselves invested little practical effort in clarifying the unique value of their partnership in a transformed development context, what value added and attractions it may or may not retain (...) and what remains in it for both sides'

*Ola Bello, FRIDE, Spain*

'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. The prospect of policy coherence for development and of joining forces with the ACP in international fora towards common objectives seems to represent two examples of EU added value'

*Frank de Wispelaere, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium*

## How will the ACP-EU partnership be affected?

It would be a mistake to conclude from the above that the EU has become irrelevant to ACP countries. Clearly, the traditional relationship is now faced with a completely different international context that is changing relations between Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. It could become a more balanced relationship of peers rather than a 'donor-recipient' relationship. Now is not the time for 'business as usual'. The key question is what will the countries of the ACP decide on for their ACP Group? What relationship will they build with the EU and the emerging powers? There are indeed four types of arguments, which can be put forward in favour of a careful and balanced approach to the debate.

Firstly, the engagement of new players presents not only opportunities but also risks. Some in ACP circles have indeed often criticized the fact that emerging economies' assistance is delivered not via a cooperation agency but through concessional loans from the public banking system. In the case of China this approach is known as 'the Angola mode', and is basically a risk management tool: packaging infrastructure development with arrangements to access natural resources as a guarantee in countries with bad credit and stability records. These same negative past history records keep other investors away despite the abundant resources. By the same token, many ACP Non-State Actors have denounced the one-sided impact of these arrangements on human rights, local labour conditions, the environment and governance. The fundamental question that could be raised is whether these types of support mechanisms help to nudge forward long-term social, economic and political changes, or rather perpetuate a situation that is unfavourable to long-term sustainable development.

Secondly, from a purely economic point of view, there also remain some concerns about the long-term development impact, which investments from emerging economies could have on ACP economies in terms of indebtedness and their particular focus on raw materials. With most trade and investment flows to ACP countries being directed to primary industries, this follows the trend already set by major traditional donors. As a consequence, there is a real risk of seeing ACP (notably African) countries remaining locked into the cycle of raw material exports.

Thirdly, although the EU is increasingly being challenged in ACP countries, it is becoming neither irrelevant nor unwanted. The situation in the Caribbean is particularly telling in this respect. Historically, the US 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.

Finally, it could be contended that building on the ACP-EU partnership, which has lasted more than 35 years, could still bring significant benefits provided that lessons are drawn from that long experience and the new realities are recognized in the relationship. If emerging players are seen as a welcome alternative to the EU in ACP countries, this does not mean that they can replace the EU anytime soon. If current trends in African trade with countries like China, India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Turkey continue, the EU will not remain Africa's largest trading partner. But too much optimism about the potential for inclusive growth offered by the emerging powers may be misplaced. Traditional partners, such as the EU, may still offer interesting perspectives for development if they can be translated into sound principles, which are then put into practice; such as inclusive and equitable growth, corporate social responsibility and respect for human rights and democratization. The debate in the ACP-EU partnership again needs to concentrate on the effective contribution to sustainable societies.

## Questions for further reflection in Session I:

1. What is the impact of the new global challenges and the increased role of emerging economies on ACP-EU relations? To what extent is the ACP-EU configuration a suitable framework to address the new global challenges?
2. What are the consequences of the EU having a less dominant position in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific?
3. What lessons can the ACP Group learn from its long-term collaboration with the EU that may be useful in forging its partnership with emerging players? What lessons can the ACP-EU partnership learn from the emerging players?

## 3. What are the common interests for an effective ACP-EU partnership?

### A historic overview of the ACP-EU partnership

The ACP-EU partnership began 1975 when the ACP Group was established following the Georgetown Agreement, and the Lomé Convention I was signed. The Lomé Conventions were preceded by the Yaoundé Conventions between the EU and 18 African countries. Since 2000 the ACP-EU partnership has been governed by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA).

The joint objectives of this agreement are eradicating poverty, sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy. For its implementation the CPA focuses on three areas: development cooperation, economic and trade cooperation and a political dimension. ACP-EU cooperation is based on four fundamental principles:

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

The resources of the European Development Fund are jointly managed through the joint ACP-EU institutions provided for under the CPA. Because of the principles on which it is founded, throughout its history the partnership has been seen as a unique model of North-South cooperation. A thorough re-assessment of the practical application of the principles of this agreement could help to highlight the lessons learned.

### Changing EU and ACP partners

Both parties have evolved in recent years. The European Union especially has undergone significant changes since the ACP-EU partnership came into being. There has been considerable progress with integration in particular, symbolised by the change from a Community to a Union. Successive rounds of enlargement have also changed its nature and outlook. The Eastern European countries, which joined the Union in the latest accession rounds, do not have a history of cooperation with most ACP states. The latest version of the Treaty of the EU, the Lisbon Treaty, no longer contains a reference to the ACP, a reference that had been there since the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). In the area of external relations, the Treaty seeks to promote more coordinated EU external action and provides for the creation of a European

External Action Service (EEAS) headed by a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The recently established EEAS does not have an ACP unit; rather it 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.

The ACP Group has equally undergone change: over the years its membership has grown with Timor-Leste being the last country to join in 2003. While there has been further integration at the level of the separate ACP sub-regions, the ACP Group as a whole has not further integrated nor established any relations beyond the EU. In the current context, the sustainability of the ACP-EU partnership is increasingly being questioned. The political environment surrounding the three focus areas of the Cotonou Agreement is changing. There is a growing number of alternative and, to some extent, competing policy frameworks to address the common interests between the EU and countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Clearly, the ACP can no longer claim to provide the most suitable framework for addressing issues of political and economic cooperation.

Indeed, some would even argue that without the funding provided by the European Development Fund (EDF), ACP-EU cooperation would have no rationale and added value which could lead to the end of the partnership. To date, ACP-EU trade and EPAs are negotiated with sub-regions and the ACP Secretariat does not have a mandate to speak on behalf of the group. 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 and there are few substantial issues in the overall ACP-EU dialogue. Regional organisations with more political authority, legitimacy and political traction, such as the AU and 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 framework for relations between the EU and Africa as a whole.

In the context of increasing competition with other policy frameworks, such as the JAES, there is a need to reassess common interests and clearly link them to the added value of the ACP-EU framework. Obviously, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement will still be in place and the contractual commitments will be observed until 2020, but what will come after that? For the partnership to be viable in the longer term a persuasive vision on future common interests is what is needed. This will require fresh thinking, particularly by the ACP Group, who would tend to lose the most if the partnership were to disappear.

**Some striking quotes from ECDPM's Talking Points blog discussion on 'The ACP and Europe: What future for a privileged relationship?'**

'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 in European Commission DEVCO*

'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 [...] The EU must also clarify what it wants from its relationship with the ACP. While the EU has embarked in recent years on highly ambitious regional partnership agreements — the highlight being the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) — it continues to draw on funds from the Cotonou framework to support them.'

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

'The ACP-EU relationship has always shown its capacity to change, to adapt and to innovate and that capacity will help to keep the relationship relevant and substantive beyond 2020". As long as there is no other and better - and politically feasible - model there is no use predicting the end of a privileged relationship.'

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

'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*

'If the ACP Group did not exist, it would have been necessary to invent it [...] the EU-ACP partnership stands for much more than what some may perceive as a post-colonial relationship. It represents for many a symbol of hope in a divided world.'

*Obadiah Mailafia, Chef de Cabinet, ACP Secretariat*

'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*

### Three separate EU strategies for Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific - what are the common interests?

One way to look at future common interests and the prospects for adequate policy and an institutional framework to address them is to examine what new developments have taken place in EU relations with the countries of the ACP. The second revision of the Cotonou Agreement emphasised regional integration within the ACP and the role of continental and sub-regional actors, particularly in Africa. In recent years the EU has sought to develop regional strategies with each region of the ACP. These strategies are at different stages of development and, continuing the Cotonou tradition, two have evolved into joint strategies. The Joint Africa-EU Strategy 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 is not, so far, a joint strategy. These separate strategies present both risks and opportunities. 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. An effort probably also needs to be made to link the three strategies and see where they might come together in an all-ACP agenda with the EU.

The key areas of interest treated in these regional partnerships, however, mostly seem to be specific to the region 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 areas 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.

## How to identify new common ACP-EU interests?

If the ACP-EU relationship is to remain relevant, it will not be enough to rest on the laurels of the special relationship in the past. What are the areas of common concern and joint interest for both groups now and in the future? Energy might be such an area of common interest, since Europe's concerns about energy dependency provide scope for investment in renewable energy production in many ACP countries. Climate change too, where both the EU and the ACP share concerns about adaptation, mitigation and 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 is 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.

To be able to mobilise the regions and capitals in some of these new global areas, ACP political leadership and the authority and ability of a strong Secretariat to achieve tangible outcomes in these and other areas is equally important. With an overly strong focus on EU aid alone this does not seem to be viable.

It is clear that to revitalise EU-ACP relations a new rationale needs to be found. This is an exercise which should be led not only by the ACP Group and the EU, but also by the regions within the ACP.

It must be recognised that it will 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, and 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. ACP and EU states therefore should not shy away from considering such changes if it enables them to build a new and stronger partnership for the post-2020 era.

## Questions for further reflection in Session II:

1. Is there still enough common ground between the ACP Group and the EU to justify continuation of the partnership beyond 2020? What would a common future look like?
2. What common challenges bind Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific beyond the challenges that can best be tackled at sub-regional and continental levels? What global challenges can the ACP Group best address that regions cannot do alone?
3. Will common ACP-EU interests be better served on a regional basis and is there still scope for a global ACP-EU approach?

## 4. What kind of ACP for a changing world?

### Quo Vadis the ACP Group?

The future of the ACP-EU Group will depend on its ability to change, to better reflect global realities and, above all, to present itself as the most adequate institutional framework to address specific global challenges and defend the interests of the ACP states in global fora. The visible signs of a declining commitment by the EU *vis-à-vis* the ACP Group clearly puts the ball in the ACP's court. Many anxieties in the ACP today are linked to the institutional changes taking place in the EU. If the ACP Group wants to remain relevant in a multi-polar world it may well be necessary to look beyond the EU and abandon its postcolonial identity.

This section of the background paper presents some initial elements on which future scenarios for the future of the ACP could be developed and will hopefully encourage an open debate on the key question of whether there is a rationale to be found for a different ACP in a changing world in the 21st century? This analysis is not complete, of course, but it is hoped that the seminar will contribute to more sophisticated analysis of future scenarios.

Some of the following options could help to guide further reflections.

#### (1) Reinforcing intra-ACP cooperation

This would be a rather 'minimalist' scenario in which the current ACP Group would 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 of 79 ACP countries. Critics might ask why this intra-ACP cooperation would work better now and in the future than it has over the past 36 years of the ACP. It could also be questioned whether such a scenario would serve to profile the ACP better in the international landscape. Last, but not least, the viability of a scenario of enhanced intra-ACP cooperation will largely depend on the commitment and ability of the ACP to mobilise its own funding independently of the EU.

#### (2) Keep the partnership model even if the ACP-EU framework were to disappear

As Europe enlarges to include member states that do not share the colonial legacy of older members, and as the ACP itself seeks to engage with new emerging partners, the ACP-EU framework could become increasingly irrelevant. Nevertheless, both the EU and the ACP can look back on some remarkable achievements. The innovations in Lomé I, for example, at the time shook the foundations of North-South cooperation.

To date the ACP-EU partnership model still maintains considerable support because of its contractual partnership model with institutionalised dialogue between equals at various levels. The lessons learned during so many years of principled partnership could provide a fruitful basis for developing and continuing a strong bond in the future. Recent EU Court of Auditor's reports and the UK Aid Review were also positive about ACP-EU cooperation and EDF implementation. This is what makes ACP-EU cooperation special and these foundations could be built on, even as part of another type of framework.

### (3) Diversifying partners beyond the EU

With the emergence of new global players, the rapidly changing global power relations are already having an impact on ACP countries.

The idea of engaging with the emerging players is not entirely new to the group. From a purely strategic point of view it 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 manages to profile itself better in the world would also be of much greater diplomatic interest to the EU that could need its long-standing privileged partner to realize its ambitions of becoming a more prominent global player.

Yet it could also be asked whether the ACP Group will be able to present a convincing agenda to the new emerging powers. There is the 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 matter concerns the internal coherence of the ACP Group when engaging with the emerging powers. It was various common instruments, such as the European Development Fund (EDF), the Lomé trade preferences, STABEX and SYSMIN and the commodity protocols, which provided strong cohesive factors 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 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 be the colonial heritage of the EU.

#### **Some striking quotes from ECDPM’s Talking Points blog discussion on ‘The ACP and Europe: What future for a privileged relationship?’**

‘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*

‘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 principle strength is also the main weakness: size and breadth [...] Do less, and choose better.’

*Chris Stevens, Associate ODI, United Kingdom*

'The ACP does not need to reinvent itself and seek added value at all costs but accept that it is a relic of a historical (neo-colonial) past without any particular legitimacy, which has past its time. The ACP states should seek to integrate other, more coherent, geographic groups and other like-minded groups.'

*Anonymous European Union Delegation official*

'S'il veut survivre, le groupe ACP doit se renforcer autour de ce qui fait son unité et utiliser à bon escient son poids dans les négociations internationales: dans un monde multipolaire, 78 pays représentent une très importante minorité de blocage.'

['If it wants to survive, the ACP Group must reinforce its unity and make better use of its weight in international negotiations: in a multi-polar world, 78 countries represent a very important blocking minority.']

*Louis Michel, Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly*

'The ACP must decide whether they want to stay together. If this is the case, they must make it clearly known at the highest political level, in particular to the EU (it seems to me unlikely that the Group could survive without a strong link with the EU).'

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

'The ACP Group is the largest trans-regional intergovernmental organisation of developing countries in the international system. There is potential to build on this 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 [...] We believe that the ACP can be a catalyst for ensuring a fairer and more equitable international trading system while contributing to more effective global economic governance.'

*Obadiah Mailafia, Chef de Cabinet, ACP Secretariat*

'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*

'Could the ACP play a future role as a slimmed down 'niche entity', perhaps without the Caribbean and Pacific members, and functioning as a trade arm of the AU?'

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

#### (4) Enlarging the ACP Group

A membership based on a shared colonial past no longer offers a strong *raison d'être*. To what extent would an enlargement of the ACP help it to become more relevant? On the basis of what criteria would enlargement be seen as a valid alternative to the current ACP makeup? How would this enlargement influence the group's identity?

Two major options could be put on the table such as:

##### a. Enlarging the ACP to include all SVEs and LDCs

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 under-represented (e.g. G20). This would require a reassessment and amendment of the Georgetown Agreement. However, the feasibility of such a scenario may be questionable. To what extent will a redefined ACP duplicate the role of other similar groupings such as the

G77 in the United Nations? In the absence of an agreed definition of vulnerability, which 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 (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), 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 was 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 the ACP to join it?

#### b. Enlarging the ACP 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 would strengthen its bargaining power at global level. However, it could then be asked how different would the ACP be from the African Union and what would be its specific value added *vis-à-vis* the African Union. 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 formally 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 a lead role in the areas of trade and economic cooperation it could be asked where would the ACP Group still fit into the picture? It also seems highly unlikely that the North African countries would take an interest in the ACP.

#### (5) ACP Group as a knowledge network for exchange and learning

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 the 'Organisation internationale de la francophonie'. Both groups provide platforms for the exchange of knowledge and sharing lessons and practices between countries with a common history. Within the ACP Group, CTA and 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 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?

## Conclusion

The future looks uncertain for the ACP Group and for the relations with the EU as its key partner. Yet there are still nine years to go until the Cotonou Agreement ends, which gives the ACP some time to reflect on its future and possible options it could pursue to give the group a new mandate and more legitimacy.

Obviously, the proposed options that have been identified on the basis of consultations and ECDPM's discussion blog will require far more in-depth analysis. Neither should future scenarios be limited to the options that have been set out above. However, some of the key principles and provisos that could help guide discussions on the future of the ACP are becoming increasingly apparent. Any transformation of the ACP Group will have to take it beyond the post-colonial character of the current Group. It also needs to break with the past in terms of the donor-recipient dependency and be based on the principles of a coherent vision, added value and specialisation, along with strengthened capacity of the Secretariat and ACP institutions to fully engage in this debate that should lead to setting out a new vision for the ACP. Last, but not least, this will require strong political traction at the highest political levels of the ACP.

## Questions for further reflection in Session III

1. What identity should the ACP adopt and what strategic orientation should it take in a multi-polar world and multilateral fora?
2. What would be the specific nature of the ACP Group and its added value for its member regions and related partnerships with the EU? Where can the ACP make a difference?
3. What options for the future offer the greatest potential in terms of contributing to long-term sustainable development in the ACP?

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