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speech to the

**Pacific members of the Africa,
Caribbean and Pacific (P-ACP) Group**

Taking our Partnership into the future

Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting,

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Vanuatu

Speech to P-ACP Leaders
Taking our Partnership to the future

I am very happy to be coming to the Pacific as my first mission in an A.C.P. region, since taking up this post and to represent the European Commission at a time of vast changes and developments in the EU, following the entry into force of our new basic treaty, the Lisbon treaty.

The EU is reorganising itself to raise its ambitions and become more effective in Foreign Affairs. The nomination of a new Vice-President of the Commission, Baroness Ashton, who will also act as EU High Representative for Foreign Relations, and the creation of a new European External Action Service are the most visible of these changes.

This reform will allow us to better articulate our action with the EU Member States and to ensure a joined up policy, overall drawing on all the expertise and instruments at our disposal. I hope and expect that this will also result in the EU becoming more efficient also in the Pacific.

As part of the new team that the EU has put in place to deal with this invigorated new external action, I am genuinely honoured to be given this opportunity to speak at the Forum testifying to the very close and constructive relationship we have developed since your nations became independent and decided as Vanuatu did 30 years ago, to join Lome and Cotonou.

We may be at opposite sides of the globe, but in today's world, more than ever we have common concerns, interests and responsibilities.

So the EU is keen to deepen its engagement in the Pacific and I would like to discuss with you today some possible ways to continue reinforcing our partnership.

In this perspective, **before referring to our future challenges, allow me to look back briefly and recall some of our achievements during the last few years.**

First, development funds allocated to the Pacific have increased substantially.

The 10th EDF Regional and Country Programmes, signed in 2008, mobilised €475,3 million, an increase of 60% compared to the 9th EDF. In addition, another € 120 million have been made available to support your efforts to address the emerging and growing challenges of the Global Economic Crisis, Climate Change, Disaster Risk reduction and infrastructure.

Second, we have made together substantial progress in delivering better these funds.

Together we have responded to new challenges (financial crisis, climate change) and expanded the possibility of transferring more of this money directly through your budget ensuring that our support is better tailored to your priorities and as a reflection of our mutual trust. By the end of 2010, five countries (Vanuatu, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and hopefully Tonga as well as Tuvalu) will be eligible to receive direct Budget support and more will come in the next 24-36 months.

Third, better preparedness for natural disasters as well as investment on sustainable management of fishery resources, on solar and renewable energy or on water and sanitation have led to improvements in health, education and environment related development targets. There is still much to be done to reduce the incidence of poverty in the Region and to bring the Pacific to the pace of equitable and sustained growth. The EU is ready to continue supporting your efforts.

Fourth, the political dimension of our partnership has been enhanced, through deeper and broader dialogue.

At regional level, dialogue in the Forum is followed annually at Senior Official level and every three years at Ministerial level (next in 2011). At country level, we began special political dialogues with smaller Islands States, where the Commission has not an office, while we continued to develop successful dialogues with Vanuatu and Solomon Islands and kept our permanent engagement with Fiji. These dialogues allow us to better understand your challenges and priorities and therefore also to improve the focus of our cooperation programmes. This is particularly relevant in the context of budget support.

Through this combination of increased financial assistance, better delivery methods and mutual political understanding, we trust we contributed to your achievements in form of tangible development outcomes.

I would like now to turn to the future, and share with you our views on challenges ahead of us.

Long term engagement, development cooperation, political dialogue and the privileged role you Leaders gave to the EU in the Pacific Islands Forum push us naturally to deepen our 35-year relations towards a global partnership, with a strong policy component while keeping development objectives and aid effectiveness at the forefront.

In the short term MDGs should be at the top of our agenda.

We need to make a **revitalised and concerted effort** to accelerate progress towards **attaining MDGs**. This effort is necessary **with respect to all**

MDGs in all countries. Aggregated results and figures sometimes hide inequalities.

In September, you will gather with other world leaders, at the UN in New York to review MDG progress, best practices and lessons learned, to analyse remaining obstacles and deficiencies, and to decide on the way forward. The EU is determined, despite the difficulties generated by the current global economic context, to support the achievement of the MDGs by 2015. Our Member States have reconfirmed their commitment to fully meet the 0.7 ODA target by 2015. But we must make a real step forward in terms of quality of policies and aid effectiveness. This can only be done if there is a parallel revitalised effort and a renewed commitment also by partner countries.

Attaining MDGs and succeeding in sustainable development depend also on achieving good levels of stability in the broad sense and security.

Pacific ACP Ambassadors in Brussels drew our attention on the importance for our Partnership to look at the key area of Regional Stability and Security, and to examine ways for all Pacific Islands Countries to build their own regional response capacities to prevent conflicts and to address situations of crisis and instability.

In this sensitive area, the Commission has no other interest than offer support to a genuine Pacific approach, response and initiative to consolidate Regional peace, security, stability and governance. This means that the Commission is ready to enhance cooperation in these areas, in line with your efforts over the recent years and to offer financial support, experience and lessons learned in other parts of the world.

Attaining MDGs also requires effective and result-oriented responses to climate change, in the Pacific and elsewhere.

Our dialogue and cooperation on climate change is an example of the type of cooperation we should collectively aim at in the coming future.

Climate Change is a serious issues for all countries and peoples of the world. We recognise that **Climate Change is an existential matter for the Pacific**. Addressing climate change goes beyond development cooperation and funding climate change goes beyond ODA. Addressing climate change is first of all a political choice for all countries. It is not an exclusively "technical" or a purely "environmental" issue, but cuts across all development sectors and policies. It requires decisions that concern all citizens in both developed and developing countries. We therefore must go beyond the "donor-recipient" relationship to engage in a truly global partnership.

Pacific Islands Countries are **the most vulnerable in the world to climate change impact, without a direct responsibility for it**. Pacific islands are therefore entitled to a fair share of climate funds, starting with the ones already committed in Copenhagen.

The EU is determined to enhance its support to Pacific responses to climate change challenges through working better together and ensuring increased financial flows. The Pacific will be a priority for the EU to deliver on its Copenhagen commitment to provide €2.4 billion annually in 2010-2012 in 'fast start' financial assistance to developing countries.

Against this background, the Commission and Regional Organizations, spearheaded by PIF Secretariat are shaping a "Joint initiative on Climate change". The objectives are to give more visibility to the Pacific, to attract international climate change funds to the Region, to make EU cooperation with the Pacific more effective and to progressively integrate other donors and partners.

The "Joint Initiative" will also contribute to improving absorption capacities by proposing the use of adapted aid delivery modalities to channel international climate change funds to Pacific countries. In this respect, as adaptation to climate change impacts on the whole country's development strategy and needs to be integrated and prioritized in the budgetary process, in our view this is best addressed through direct budget support. It is therefore important that work towards eligibility to budget support continues across the Region.

Through the "Joint Initiative", that could be formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding, we can address together the climate change challenge and set the foundations of a global partnership, join forces to drive the international debate which, for climate change, will enter the most decisive phase in the coming months and that needs our collective support to deliver solutions to the most pressing global problem we all have ever faced.

Our partnership is not a one-way contract.

Our ambition is to help and support you in this endeavour. Our cooperation policies aim to contribute to the development of the Pacific islands, but Pacific ACP governments, parliaments, local authorities and civil society have both the first and the last word: it is your vision and your development. We can unlock doors, but you have to open them. We can pave the way but only you can tread it.

Distinguished Leaders, allow me to conclude this presentation on a more **personal note**, with a tribute to the uniqueness of the Pacific in another area: that of art and culture. Epeli Hau'ofa, the founder of the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture, spent his life explaining the ability of Pacific art to bridge and to unify the different peoples of the Pacific. I admire the remarkable ability of Pacific islanders that makes art and culture a factor of regional integration, cohesion and peace. Instead of separating you, 'the

Ocean in you' helps to bring out the best in Pacific people, while allowing you to remain true to yourselves.