EU/Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) Partnership Agreement

2023/0464(NLE) - 19/12/2023 - Preparatory document

PURPOSE: to conclude, on behalf of the European Union, the Partnership Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, of the other part.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: in accordance with a Council Decision, the Partnership Agreement between the European Union and its Member States and the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) formerly known as the 'ACP Group of States (ACP), was signed on 15 November 2023, subject to its conclusion at a later date. Its provisional application will start on the first day of the second month after the signature. To avoid a legal vacuum in the EU-ACP relations, the current Agreement will be subject to a renewal of its extension until 31 December 2023.

The Agreement reflects both the historically close relationship and increasingly strong links developing between the European Union and its Member States and the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), and their desire to further strengthen and extend their relations in an ambitious and innovative way.

A modernised agreement is needed to upgrade the EU-ACP relationship to mirror the new ambition stemming from emerging needs and challenges. More interconnected than ever before, the world has changed considerably since the Cotonou Agreement was adopted, and so have the EU, its partners and their joint aspirations.

It is now necessary to approve the Agreement on behalf of the European Union.

CONTENT: the purpose of the draft Council Decision is to approve on behalf of the Union, the Partnership Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, of the other part.

The renewed Agreement establishes an **ambitious and strengthened political partnership** between the EU and the members of the OACPS, with the objective of generating mutually beneficial outcomes on common interests. It will take the form of an association agreement and be concluded for a period of **twenty years**.

More strategically, the Agreement extends the scope and scale of partners' cooperation, with the overarching aim of building stronger societies. This renewed partnership is a political achievement and marks a turning point. It shifts dynamics and upgrades partners' relations to tackle the most pressing challenges faced in each region specifically. The Agreement is in tune with the regional and global contexts, but also the latest internationally agreed laws, standards, advances and, most importantly, with peoples' needs. It aims to create a coherent framework with partner countries at all political levels, be it

national, (sub)-regional or at partnership level with a global dimension. The Agreement advocates effective multilateralism and sets the scene for more political and coordinated actions on the world stage where the partnership's impact can be significant.

The specific objectives of the new Agreement are to:

- promote, protect and fulfil **human rights**, democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance, paying particular attention to **gender equality**;

- build peaceful and resilient states and societies, tackling ongoing and emerging threats to **peace and security**;

- foster human and social development, and in particular to **eradicate poverty** and address inequalities, ensuring that everyone enjoys a life of dignity and that no one is left behind, with special attention paid to women and girls;

- mobilise investment, support **trade** and foster private-sector development, with a view to achieving sustainable and inclusive growth and creating decent jobs for all;

- combat **climate change**, protect the environment and ensure the sustainable management of natural resources; and

- implement a comprehensive and balanced approach to **migration**, so as to reap the benefits of safe, orderly and regular migration and **mobility**, stem irregular migration while addressing its root causes, in full respect of international law and in accordance with the Parties' respective competences.

The Agreement also fosters strengthened cooperation, both sectoral and political, including on **foreign policy issues** of common interest. These include peacekeeping, terrorism, situations of fragility, death penalty with unprecedented provisions.