



TELEGRAMS: DEFA  
TELEPHONE : 3600700  
TELEX : 2414 BD  
Fax : 3913366

MINISTRY OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
AND COOPERATION  
PRIVATE BAG 00368  
Gaborone

## PRESS STATEMENT

**GABORONE, 4 June 2018:** The Ministry of International Affairs and Cooperation wishes to inform that, Hon. Minister Vincent T. Seretse participated in the 107<sup>th</sup> Session of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States Council of Ministers held in Lomé, Togo from 27<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018.

The purpose of the ACP Council of Ministers meeting was to prepare for the negotiations of a successor Cooperation Agreement between the ACP Group of States and the European Union (EU). The current Agreement (Cotonou Agreement) expires on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

The major outcome of the ACP Council of Ministers' meeting was the adoption of a Negotiating Mandate for a Post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement with the EU. The adopted Mandate has three Pillars, namely:

1. Trade, Investment, Industrialisation and Services
2. Development Cooperation, Technology, Science Innovation and Research
3. Political Dialogue and Advocacy.

The primary objective of the ACP Group of States is to negotiate a new Agreement with the EU that can help them address the challenges of under-development, poverty, inequality and vulnerability. The negotiations with the EU are scheduled to begin in August 2018.

Botswana will actively participate in the negotiations as a Member of the Central Negotiating Group. As an Upper Middle Income economy, Botswana will advocate for an inclusion in the new Agreement of a provision for assistance to Middle Income Countries to address the Middle Income trap.

Another important milestone of the meeting was the decision to establish an Ad Hoc Ministerial Contact Group on tax matters to engage in dialogue with the EU, concerning the EU List of Non-Cooperative Jurisdictions for Tax Purposes. From the ACP's perspective, the dialogue should be comprehensive in relation to taxation issues, including compliance challenges and capacity constraints faced by developing countries in implementing tax policy.

The 79-Member ACP Group has a long-standing historic and mutually beneficial partnership with the EU dating back to 1975 with the signing of the Lomé I





Republic of Botswana

Convention. It should be noted that the First Lomé Convention facilitated the on-going exportation of Botswana beef to the lucrative European market.

The Lomé I Convention was followed by successive Agreements in the form of Lomé II, Lomé III, Lomé IV and the current Cotonou Agreement of 2000. It should be recalled that the EU is the world's largest contributor to Official Development Assistance.

Hon. Minister Seretse also held bilateral meetings on matters of mutual interest with the Secretary of State for Foreign Trade of the Kingdom of Belgium, Mr. Pieter De Crem; Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Mr. Vaino Reinart; Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, Ms. Teresa Ribeiro; Secretary General/Permanent Secretary Foreign Affairs of Romania, Mr. Cosmin Dinescu; and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu, Hon. Ralph Regenvanu.

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**Contact - Public Relations, Research and Information Department**  
**Tel: (267) 3600700 Fax: (267) 3959685**  
**E-Mail: [mofaic\\_prri@gov.bw](mailto:mofaic_prri@gov.bw)**  
**Website: [www.mofaic.gov.bw](http://www.mofaic.gov.bw)**

