



ACP Private Sector Development Symposium in session in Brussels, Belgium – 10 to 11 November 2014 Photo Source: CCTV Africa

MSG CONTRIBUTES TO ACP PRIVATE SECTOR STRATEGY

A High-Level Symposium on Private Sector Development in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States held in Brussels on 10-11 November 2014, brought together ACP private sector representatives, diplomats and government officials, development partners, international organisations and representatives of regional economic communities. The Symposium was funded by the European Union (EU) through the ACP Business Climate Facility (BizClim) which provides technical assistance aimed at improving business and investment climates within the ACP regions.

The Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Mr Peter Forau, welcomed the opportunity to

contribute to the review of the Draft ACP Private Sector Development (PSD) Strategy. “Our inputs harmonize with the formulation next year of a PSD Strategy for the MSG, which is being funded also by the EU but through the Pacific Integrated Technical Assistance Program,” Mr Forau noted.

The main objective of the Symposium was for participants to agree on a common “All-ACP” platform for action to stimulate the growth and expansion of the private sector in ACP countries and regions. This objective follows the increasing consensus on the crucial role that the private sector plays in creating jobs, promoting economic development and combating poverty.

BizClim engaged the services of Munich-based BKP Development Research & Consulting to develop a Draft ACP PSD Strategy on the basis of consultations with ACP private sector stakeholders including those in the Pacific Region.

The Draft ACP PSD Strategy covered four priority areas of intervention, which are as follows:

- a) Improving the investment climate for private sector development;
- b) Developing and strengthening entrepreneurship and micro-enterprises;
- c) Increasing access to finance for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); and
- d) Strengthening competitiveness and access for MSMEs to regional and global markets.

Following the presentation of the Draft ACP PSD Strategy by the BKP consultants, participants from each of the three ACP regions were given the opportunity to review and make additional contributions to the Draft Strategy based on the special circumstances of their respective regions. The Pacific delegation, led by the Ambassador of the Republic of Vanuatu to the Kingdom of Belgium and the European Union, His Excellency Mr Roy Mickey Joy, comprised private sector representatives from Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and

Vanuatu as well as senior officials from the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat was represented by its newly appointed Private Sector Development Adviser, Mr Henry Sanday. Also present were Brussels-based diplomatic officials from Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu.

The key messages put forward by the Pacific delegation included the need for the Draft ACP PSD Strategy to be inclusive in nature, thus addressing the specific needs of particularly women and youth, whose participation is to be considered for its untapped potential rather than a mere social obligation. Affirmative support for indigenous entrepreneurs and people with disabilities were also highlighted, together with the need to maximize local content in all private sector-related activities such as through the provisions for local MSME engagement in procurement contracts. Assistance should also be targeted at progressing entrepreneurs from the informal to formal sectors, from micro to small, from small to medium, and from medium to large. Business mentoring processes were recognized as the vital tool for advancing entrepreneurship from the lower to higher levels. The Draft Strategy is to be cognizant of the specificities of the Pacific, particularly during the implementation phase since the real impact of the Strategy would be reliant on how interventions are undertaken. The Pacific delegation also stressed the importance of ownership of the Strategy at both the national and regional levels.

“Inclusivity in terms of not just the formal sector but also the informal operators, as well as women, youth and indigenous entrepreneurship are vital elements of the proposed MSG PSD Strategy that our team is already working on,” Mr Forau said.

BKP Development has been incorporating contributions made by the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions at the Symposium into a revised Draft ACP PSD Strategy for consideration by the ACP Sub-committee on Investment and Private Sector. The Strategy will then be approved firstly by the ACP Committee of Ambassadors, and then by the ACP Council of Ministers at their 100th session on 09-12 December 2014. In this regard, a significant development for the Pacific was the assumption of the Chair of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors by the Ambassador of Vanuatu, His Excellency Joy, at the conclusion of the Symposium.

For further information, please contact Mr Henry Sanday, Private Sector Development Adviser at the MSG Secretariat at h.sanday@msg.int