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On 3 May 2022, the Republic of Vanuatu (Vanuatu) and the European Union (EU) held their 7th Enhanced Political Dialogue under article 8 of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) - EU Partnership (Cotonou) Agreement. The dialogue was held virtually. The EU and Vanuatu took stock of bilateral cooperation since the last Political Dialogue meeting, held in April 2021, and updated each other on key developments. Participants underlined their firm commitment to the further deepening and strengthening of their partnership in upholding the rules-based international order with the UN at its core and ensuring that multilateralism is effective and inclusive, including in addressing the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and promoting climate action.

As regards the COVID-19 pandemic, Vanuatu appreciated EU's recent emergency assistance consisting of COVID-related equipment. The EU and Vanuatu also reviewed the support provided by the EU to strengthen Pacific health systems through assistance valued at €22 million (VUV 2.87 billion) and to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 crisis through assistance valued at €11.5 million (VUV 1.5 billion). The EU and Vanuatu called for continued multilateral efforts to address this global challenge, including through the provision of COVID-19 vaccines to ensure fair and equitable access for every country in the world.

The EU referred to ongoing work to realise the priorities of the European Commission with a focus on the 'European Green Deal' and climate change. Both Vanuatu and the EU underlined the urgency of a green transition and more climate and environmental ambition globally. In this context, both agreed it is vital to implement the pledges and commitments by Parties as made at the COP26 in Glasgow and whilst working towards COP27, to call for a further increase of global ambition on all fronts: emission reduction, adaptation and climate finance.

The EU also presented its new initiatives, such as the Global Gateway and an update on its Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The EU also presented the Strategic Compass, its security and defence strategy.

Taking stock of the Post-Cotonou negotiation process, the EU and Vanuatu looked forward to the signing of the agreement. The EU gave an overview of the planned implementation of Global Europe external assistance in the financial period 2021-2027 and perspectives for development cooperation more generally.

The Political Dialogue fully reflected the importance that the EU and Vanuatu attach to their shared values, including the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. Vanuatu presented latest progress it made in the fields of good governance, the fight against corruption, promotion of gender equality, tackling gender-based violence and human trafficking. Vanuatu also informed about the ongoing ratification of international Human Rights instruments, and the prospect of establishing a fully-fledged National Human Rights institution.

With regards to trade, the EU and Vanuatu discussed the potential that the interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA) between the EU and the Pacific States offers for Vanuatu to increase its trade with the EU. The EU reaffirmed its support to Vanuatu's accession to the EPA for which Vanuatu has expressed interest but has yet to notify the Parties.

Discussions also focused on the need to make progress on common priorities, in particular on taxation and financial governance, including the fight against money laundering and terrorism financing, and the visa issues related to Vanuatu's investor citizenship schemes. On ocean governance, the EU and Vanuatu looked forward to achieving decisive progress towards reaching an ambitious Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) agreement at the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Conference in August 2022, to strengthening regional fisheries governance, to fighting against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing as well as to monitoring the progress of the 7th 'Our Ocean' Conference.

The meeting was co-chaired by Mr Johnny Koanapo Rasou, Minister of Finance & Economic Management and Ms Paola Pampaloni, Deputy Managing Director Asia and Pacific, European External Action Service.

Background

The Cotonou Agreement constitutes the framework for collaboration between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) in a broad range of areas, including the economy and the environment, the fight against poverty and peace and security as well as democracy and political stability. Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement provides for a regular and comprehensive political dialogue to exchange information, foster mutual understanding and facilitate the establishment of agreed priorities and shared agendas.

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