

**Statement of H.E. Mme Kapinga Yvette Ngandu,  
ECCAS Commissioner for the Promotion of  
Gender, Human and Social Development  
30th Anniversary of ACCORD  
Durban, RSA  
November 13, 2022**

**Excellency the Premier of Kwazulu-Natal,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the ACCORD Board of Trustees,**

**Excellencies Former Presidents and Honorable Speaker of the Parliament of  
South Africa,**

**Founder and Executive Director of ACCORD, Dear Vasu Gounden (My boss, as I like  
to call him),**

**Distinguished Participants,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**All Protocol Observed,**

It is an honor for me to be part of this small group invited to **celebrate the 30th anniversary of ACCORD**; an event that cannot leave indifferent the Pan-African that I am.

My ties with ACCORD go back almost 20 years (to be exact in 2003), in New York when I was still a young(er) researcher at IPI/A), even before meeting the colleagues of ACCORD in person in 2008.

Since that time I have had the privilege of being edified, nurtured, taught, trained, and above all I have had the chance of collaborating very closely with ACCORD on a number of “not insignificant” projects, but which have contributed somehow to the professionalization of the practice of Mediation at the AU and the level of the RECs, towards the enrichment/the growth of this very noble practice, or some would say “the art of mediation”.

Since its inception, ACCORD and the AU have pushed for greater involvement of non-state actors in peaceful conflict resolution actions, and helped institutionalize better informed, better coordinated, multi-stakeholders, multitrack mediation processes at the AU.

Some of our common projects, born oftentimes very timidly in our hands, have survived the test of time and have ended up becoming **flagship mediation projects and instruments of the Continent and the various sub-regional spaces**, such as:

- The AU Panel of the Wise, of which ACCORD helped manage the first 11 years from its birth to its operationalization, under the leadership of Salim Salim, Alpha Konare, Jean Ping, Mme Zuma, Moussa Faki, Said Djinnit, Ramtane Lamamra, Smail Chergui and ElGhassim Wane. I am happy that some of the current members of the Panel of the Wise are with us today;

- Furthermore, in 2003, in Ouagadougou, ACCORD was again at the AU the table alongside former President Blaise Compaore and Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra for the creation of PanWise (the Panafrican Network of the Wise), which is the network of the wisest men and women of the continent, which have offered the AU in 2010 the highly coveted annual Retreat of AU special envoys, also coined “the annual pilgrimage of Special Envoys”, which I think is in its 12th edition this year. This unique platform continues to bring together annually +200 mediation practitioners of all levels to consolidate our collective aspirations to find **“African solutions for African problems”**;

- Later, in 2016/2017, ACCORD played a key role again in Constantine, Algeria, for the creation of the African Network of Women Mediators (known as FemWise-Africa) headed by Catherine Samba Panza, with an army strong of +300 women trained in mediation from all walks of life, working at the forefront of conflict prevention efforts at the local level;

More recently, at the RECs level (that is ECCAS), ACCORD has also planted its roots to consolidate mediation approaches and tools. ECCAS and ACCORD have, over time, developed a strong professional bond, dynamic functional and operational mechanisms.

We are united with ACCORD around a common concern, the issues of peace, human security and development, reinforcing a culture of peace, governance, and encouraging non-governmental organizations to participate actively in efforts to promote peace and social development in Central Africa.

Since 2015, ACCORD and ECCAS have convened several Capacity Building Workshops on Mediation and Reconciliation; multiple “Trainings of trainers” in mediation and negotiation techniques; and have been involved together in numerous mediation processes in DRC, Burundi, CAR, and the list goes on...

And more recently we are collaborating with ACCORD to operationalize the regional Networks of Women Mediators as well as the ECCAS Peace Youth Coalition;

More importantly, ACCORD answered yet again favorably when ECCAS called for its support to kick off the **First ECCAS High Level Retreat of Special Envoys of our region** held in Kinshasa last month, and which has produced the ECCAS Silencing the Guns Roadmap (in alignment with the AU Roadmap);

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It must be recognized that through these examples, ACCORD has, on each occasion, made use of its solid expertise, as well as its great capacity for analysis, research and practical experience, to support the efforts of the AU and ECCAS, **always promoting AFRICANS SOLUTIONS TO AFRICAN PROBLEMS**, investing in a culture of peace and promoting early comprehensive conflict prevention actions.

In this regard, our thanks are matched only by our deep gratitude for this partnership, which stems from a long-established tradition and the benefit of which we appreciate at its fair value.

In the common understanding, at **30 YEARS OF AGE**, one is almost invincible. This is, it seems, the age from which one can embark on all the projects that one wants.

More than a quarter of a century later, ACCORD’s serene, assiduous, diligent, meticulous, hard-working and reliable attitude REMAINS TRUE to its own credo/motto, “**bringing CREATIVE African solutions to the challenges posed by conflict on the continent**”.

What endurance (resilience), what perseverance, what progress!

If it is MEN who make history, in any case, that of ACCORD is the work of a very humble man. If he had not existed, God would have had no trouble creating him since he is fortunately in front of us. We no longer present him since his career merges with that of ACCORD, and of all our organizations (AU, APRM, RECs, ECCAs, etc).

This is why, on behalf of the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States, **H.E. Amb. Gilberto da Piedade Verissimo**, I am pleased to pay a very vibrant tribute to **Mr Vasu Gounden**, whose work will forever bear the imprint of a great man at the service of great causes.

May he find here the expression of the permanent memory that we at ECCAS keep of him  
AND KEEP OF ACCORD!!

I thank you.

Asanteni

SIABONGA !!!!