

## Interview with Pierre Bernard-Reymond (31 October 1979)

**Caption:** On 31 October 1979, Pierre Bernard-Reymond, French Secretary of State to the Minister for Foreign Affairs (European Affairs), agrees to be interviewed by the French Catholic daily newspaper Le Figaro on the subject of the second Lomé Convention, of 31 October 1979, which defines, for a five-year period, trade relations between the nine Member States of the European Economic Community (EEC) and 57 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States.

**Source:** La politique étrangère de la France. Textes et documents. dir. de publ. Ministère des Affaires étrangères. 4e trimestre 1979. Paris: La Documentation Française. "Interview accordée par M. Pierre Bernard-Reymond, secrétaire d'Etat auprès du ministre des Affaires étrangères, au "Figaro" (31 octobre 1979)", p. 63-64.

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## Interview given by Pierre Bernard-Reymond, State Secretary in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to *Le Figaro*

31 October 1979

Today, 57 ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries and the nine Member States of the European Economic Community will sign the Second Lomé Convention.

The fact that such a large number of states' representatives will be meeting in the Togolese capital highlights the significance of the event. The ceremony will mark the sanctioning of continued special relations between the Community and countries which are, in many cases, among the most impoverished in the world. The fact that it is taking place, as it did in 1975, in Lomé emphasises that continuity and the interest that the partners are continuing to show in it.

The success of the talks that have been going on for over a year and the willingness shown by the two sides to overcome the difficulties inherent in an inevitably complex discussion demonstrate the partners' commitment to a tried and tested framework of cooperation and highlight the exemplary relations that, on a gradual basis, were able to be established and fostered within that framework.

The First Lomé Convention will still be renowned for establishing a system to stabilise export earnings (Stabex) which, by giving developing countries a guarantee against sharp price fluctuations on the agricultural raw materials markets and against unforeseen events in the production sector, thereby giving assurances with regard to their foreign exchange earnings, enabled those countries to improve their economic development planning.

The new Lomé Convention, on the other hand, is distinguished by the consolidation and amendment of the provisions of the original Convention and by the drafting of new provisions in response to particular concerns expressed by the ACP states which, in their view, significantly improve their association arrangements with the European Community.

Those new measures should be considered in greater detail.

First, as regards finance, the overall amount of aid to be granted by the European Community to the ACP states over the five years in which the future Convention will be in force has been fixed at 5 600 million European Units of Account, or some FRF 33 billion, which represents a 72 % increase; we need only compare those sums with their equivalent in US dollars.

Throughout these ongoing economic difficulties which almost all the Member States are experiencing, commendable efforts are being made to express solidarity which, together with national programmes set up by its Member States, make the EEC the world's leading contributor to development.

The trade aspect of the Convention is also very important, inasmuch as the emerging industries in the ACP states will benefit in future from increased access to the Community's markets and, therefore, from better opportunities for growth. However, precautions had to be taken so as to ensure that those new provisions would not have too detrimental an effect on the competing European industries. To that specific end, a safeguard clause has been included so as to facilitate the adoption of any protective measures that might become necessary if a particular sector of the market in Europe were to suffer excessively as a result of the borders being opened up in that way.

The ACP states would have liked to extend the scope of Stabex, an effective and accepted mechanism, to mineral ores. However, a straightforward extension of that kind was out of the question: given that Stabex was designed to deal with problems in the agricultural products markets, it was by no means equipped to deal with the very different features of the production and marketing of mineral products.

As a result, difficulties have been encountered in establishing a mechanism by which it will be possible to

maintain the ACP states' potential for ore extraction through financial assistance to support the restoration or development of production facilities. This is a major innovation of the new Convention in an area exclusively dominated hitherto by market forces and the business strategy of the major international mining companies. The need for the countries of Europe to secure for themselves a steady supply of the raw materials essential for their industry and the parallel need for the ACP states to promote their natural resources should be resolved, now that investment in Africa in this area is extremely low.

In the end, it was decided that major cooperation measures would be taken in the areas of agriculture and industry with a view to establishing structures that would be effective but also as flexible as possible.

In this nervous climate, today's event in Lomé takes on even greater significance.

Ever since the EEC was created, France has had its heart set on associating its European partners with the long-term development project, especially in Africa. Today, it welcomes the continuation of that commitment.

In providing this assistance, we are fulfilling an essential duty of human solidarity. By promoting growth in the economies of the ACP states, we are also providing our undertakings with access to more substantial export markets and to sources of raw materials that are vital to our industry.

Finally, we must not overlook the fact that the signing ceremony will provide the opportunity for the Chairmen of the Community and ACP delegations solemnly to reassert the commitment of the parties to the Convention to respect for human rights, thereby bringing to the fore the promotion of human dignity which, over and above the financial, trade or technical clauses, constitutes the very essence of the Lomé Convention.

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