

AC. 17/11/89

EC-ACP: SECRETARY GENERAL

Almost unnoticed, the African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) group has chosen a new secretary-general. He is **Ghebray Berhane, Ethiopian** minister of planning, former ambassador to Brussels and, more recently, co-chair of the European Community (EC)-ACP joint assembly.

The unseating of the **Trinidadian** secretary-general, **Edwin Carrington**, came as no surprise as it had been clear on his election in 1984 that the ACP's African majority would not allow a non-African more than one term in office. It nevertheless took an all-night session and four rounds of voting for Berhane to be elected at the end of October. This means some of the 45 African members did not initially vote for him, despite his official endorsement by the Organisation of African Unity summit in July.

The election has strained ACP solidarity and Berhane has much fence-mending to do. Preoccupation with the election also led to a lack of preparedness for the crucial joint council meeting the next day. This broke up in disarray. Disagreement was ostensibly about the package offered by the EC involving concessions on trade terms and the stabex system. But observers believe this was a means of buying time. There was also still a gap on the question of the financial tag to be attached to Lomé IV. European Commission officials have proposed 12,000 million European Currency Units (Ecus) as against 8,500 mn. currently. But EC member states are unwilling to go beyond 9,500 mn. Ecus, while the ACP is pressing for 15,000 mn.

France, which now holds the EC Council presidency, is still hoping to sign Lomé before its position expires on 31 December.
