



European Union

Delegation of the European Commission
to South Africa

... **this week**
in review

*This publication seeks
to provide information
on EU activities of
interest to SA readers.*

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01-13 January 2008

Headline News

[Economic Partnership Agreements – addressing the misconceptions](#)

At the end of 2007 the European Commission initialled interim Economic Partnership Agreements with a large number of African and Pacific countries. It also initialled a full Economic Partnership Agreement with the Caribbean region. Here the Commission addresses some of the most common misconceptions about Economic Partnership Agreements and sets out some of the key benefits of the new arrangements.

[Update of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreements](#)

[Six common misconceptions about Economic Partnership Agreements \(EPAs\)](#)

[Welcome message by the Slovenian Prime Minister to the Slovenian Council Presidency](#)

"It is my pleasure to welcome you to the website of our Presidency. We have behind us three years of intensive preparations and before us a major challenge – one of the greatest Slovenia has faced since its independence. Slovenia is assuming the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first time, and it is the first new Member State to do so. Welcome to eu2008.si – the site where you will find all the information, subject areas, events, background details and results of the Slovenian Presidency".

[Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU concerning Presidential elections in Kenya](#)

The EU Presidency issued a statement condemning the violence in Kenya following the recent general election and urged political leaders on both sides to refrain from any action which could provoke further violence. The declaration called on Kenya's leaders to address concerns raised by observers about the validity and integrity of the election process and offered support to African Union and other efforts to find solutions to the political crisis.

Other News

[Treaty of Lisbon](#)

The Lisbon Treaty, signed by the Heads of State or Government of the 27 Member States in Lisbon in December 2007, will provide the EU with modern institutions and optimised working methods to tackle both efficiently and effectively today's challenges in today's world. In a rapidly changing world, Europeans look to the EU to address issues such as globalisation, climatic and demographic changes, security and energy. The Treaty of Lisbon will reinforce democracy in the EU and its capacity to promote the interests of its citizens on a day-to-day basis.

[European Commission strengthens co-operation with China on employment and social affairs](#)

Vladimír Špidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, travelled to China for a three-day visit to strengthen co-operation on employment and social affairs issues. The EU and China will sign an agreement to promote policy dialogue on issues of common interest and on long-term challenges in employment and social policy, such as demographic ageing. "The EU and China face a number of very similar challenges in the fields of employment and social policy, from creating safe workplaces to adapting our societies to an ageing population," said Commissioner Špidla. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will establish a structured dialogue with China's top think tank, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, on future policy challenges in areas such as employment, social security, demography, social dialogue and labour relations. For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/world/where/china/index_en.htm

[Cyprus and Malta adopt the euro](#)

Cyprus and Malta adopted the euro on 1 January 2008 and euro banknotes and coins are now legal tender on both islands. To date, the changeover has proceeded smoothly. The Cypriot government has established a toll-free telephone line for

questions on the euro: 8000 2008; e-mail: info@euro.cy; website <http://www.euro.cy> The Maltese government has set up a national euro helpline: Linja Ewro 154; e-mail: euro@gov.mt; website: <http://www.euro.gov.mt/>

Official Launch of the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 was launched in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 8 January by the Commission President José Manuel Barroso and the Slovene Prime Minister Janez Janša. The events in Ljubljana begin a multitude of activities across Europe throughout the year, which will emphasise interaction of cultures, a deepening of relations between nationalities and religions, and promote through dialogue a strengthening of understanding, tolerance, solidarity and a sense of common destiny among EU citizens from all walks of life. In preparing the media launch, Ján Figel, the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth said: "In the 21st century, Europe faces a new challenge: how to become an inter-cultural society, based on a respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different cultural backgrounds, on an equal basis.."

For more information: <http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/>

Revisiting EU-India relations - prospects for a deepened strategic partnership to face global challenges

European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, addressed the Indian Council for World Affairs on the prospects for a deepened strategic partnership between the EU and India. Ferrero-Waldner emphasised in the speech that although the EU's principal strength lies in its economic power, it is increasingly wielding the political weight necessary to protect its interests on the world stage. The Commissioner outlined a number of challenges for the EU-India partnership in the year ahead: effective multilateralism, energy security, climate change and security. She said that "As global powers, the EU and India both have a responsibility to take the lead in the international effort to tackle pressing global challenges such as addressing climate change and global poverty; guaranteeing energy security; fighting terrorism and organised crime; dealing with mass migration; and succeeding in a more competitive economic environment".

EU earmarks more humanitarian aid for disaster victims in 2008

The EU has earmarked €370m to help the world's victims of disasters in 2008, from natural disasters to armed conflicts. The funds will be used to provide food, clothing, health care and water and sanitation. Over 18.5m people are expected to benefit from the food security budget alone this year.

Review of the European Parliament in 2007

2007 started with the enlargement of the EU to include Romania and Bulgaria, increasing the size of the EU to 27 Member States and the European Parliament to 785 MEPs. Germany held the six month rotating EU Presidency from January to June. In March, European Parliament MEPs marked the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome and welcomed the Berlin Declaration signed by the European Parliament, Council and Commission. Portugal took over the rotating Presidency at the beginning of July with Prime Minister José Sócrates setting out the Presidency's priorities to the European Parliament. In November, the European Parliament adopted a report approving the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The new Treaty of Lisbon was signed by EU heads of state and government on 13 December. The Treaty, once ratified, will lead to greater and wider powers for the European Parliament.

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