



European Union

Delegation to South Africa
Head of Delegation

EU Perspectives

*Regular publication that seeks to provide information
on EU-related activities of interest to SA readers*



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Headline News

Commissioner De Gucht briefs MEPs on Haiti

After his visit to Haiti last week, Development and Humanitarian Aid Commissioner Karel De Gucht briefed MEPs on rescue and reconstruction efforts after the recent earthquake. After paying a message of deep sympathy to the people of Haiti, MEPs quizzed him about the EU's visibility on the ground, the medium and long-term challenges of the reconstruction process and the possibility of establishing an EU rapid reaction capacity. "Given the scope of the catastrophe, the situation is satisfactory (...). All those that need to receive care have received it so far", said Commissioner De Gucht. An urgent problem to come in the rainy season will be to shelter about two million people who now live on the streets and in informal camps that have been precariously built. Development Committee Chair Eva Joly (Greens/EFA, FR), welcomed the EU's rapid response, but noted that "the deployment of this aid has been slowed down by problems linked to logistics co-ordination and the lack of security on the ground."

EU assistance for victims of Haiti's earthquake

The first Council meeting chaired by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton took place on 18 January. Development ministers were convened to an extraordinary session to co-ordinate the EU's humanitarian aid to Haiti following the recent devastating earthquake. The Council welcomed the European Commission's commitment of a total of €30m in humanitarian assistance, and that of the Member States who have pledged a further €92m. In time, an additional financial contribution from the EU would amount to at least €200m.

[Council conclusions](#)
[Factsheet on Haiti](#)

Spain takes over post-Lisbon Treaty Council Presidency

As Spain takes over the new post-Lisbon Council Presidency, it has identified economic issues, supervision of financial markets and energy policy as its key priorities. In terms of the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force on 1 December 2009, Herman Van Rompuy is now the President of the European Council. Catherine Ashton is the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and will chair foreign ministers' meetings. Other priorities of the Spanish Presidency will be ensuring the EU works well under the new Lisbon rules, progressing on the "Stockholm" programme for justice and citizenship and combating violence against women. In addition Madrid will help co-ordinate the setting up of the EU's new External Action Service, a diplomatic corps under the aegis of Ms Ashton (HR/VP Ashton will hereafter chair the Foreign Affairs Council. While Spain will represent the EU in 62 third countries, EU Delegations will represent the EU in 56 countries, including SA).

Spanish Presidency website: <http://www.eu2010.es/en/index.html>

Parliamentary hearings for new European Commission completed

On 21 January, the leaders of Parliament's political groups gave their approval to the 25 Commissioners who have been before the Parliament's Committees. The Bulgarian candidate, Rumiana Jeleva, was forced to withdraw. She will now be replaced by her compatriot Kristalina Georgieva who is currently Vice-President of the World Bank. Her hearing with MEPs will be on Wednesday 3 February.

[Hearings website](#)

Other News

[Erasmus Mundus Programme: 2010 Call for Proposals](#)

Erasmus Mundus is a cooperation and mobility programme in the field of higher education that aims to enhance the quality of European higher education and to promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through cooperation with Third-Countries. In addition, it contributes to the development of human resources and the international cooperation capacity of Higher education institutions in third countries by increasing mobility between the European Union and these countries.

[Revised framework for relations with ACP countries](#)

The second revision of the Cotonou Agreement governing relations between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries should be finalised in March 2010. Progress in the negotiations is assessed in a report by European Parliament Development Committee Chair Eva Joly (Greens/EFA, FR). The report proposes improvements to tackle climate change, tax havens, migration, agriculture and "land-grabbing" (government-backed foreign investors buying up arable land in developing countries), mostly on the African continent. "EU policy towards developing countries must be coherent and consistent. Policy in areas such as trade, fisheries and agriculture must be designed to have sustainable development in the ACP countries in order to fight poverty, and guarantee decent income and livelihood, which is not the case now" said rapporteur Eva Joly in the debate preceding the vote.

[EU Declaration on the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for Sudan](#)

"On the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Sudan, the EU wants to highlight the importance of the full implementation of the CPA for a peaceful relationship between the North and the South, and for peace and stability in Sudan as a whole and in the region. The European Union is strongly committed to support the development of a democratic, peaceful and prosperous Sudan. Only through an all Sudan approach can these objectives be met. Taking into account the interlocked and complex nature of the conflicts in Sudan, be it North/South, Darfur or the East, the European Union will remain engaged".

[Statement by High Representative / Vice President Catherine Ashton on Guinea](#)

"The High Representative welcomes the agreement reached under the auspices of President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso in Ouagadougou on the process of democratic transition in Guinea. The agreement is consistent with the framework suggested by the International Contact Group in which the European Union participates and it is a crucial step towards the establishment of constitutional order, peace, security and stability in Guinea and the entire region."

[EU launches 2010 European Year: Stop poverty now!](#)

The European Commission and the Spanish Presidency of the EU launched the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Under the slogan "Stop Poverty Now!", the campaign aims to put the fight against poverty, which directly affects one in six Europeans, centre stage across the EU during 2010. Commission President José Manuel Durão Barroso said: "Combating poverty and social exclusion is an integral part of getting out of the crisis. It is too often the vulnerable in society who end up being hardest hit by the impacts of a recession. That is why the European Year 2010 should act as a catalyst to raise awareness and build momentum for a more inclusive society which is part and parcel of the EU's future 2020 strategy that I have proposed". Vladimír Špidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities added: "One in six people in Europe face a daily struggle to make ends meet, but poverty can also affect the rest of us – and our societies as a whole. While most of the tools for tackling poverty are at national level, three-quarters of Europeans also expect the EU to help. The European Year puts this issue at the top of the agenda so that Europe as a whole can join forces to fight poverty and social exclusion."

[Essen, Germany, becomes European Capital of Culture 2010](#)

European Commission President Barroso was in Essen on 9 January 2010 for the inauguration of "Essen for the Ruhr", European Capital of Culture 2010. German President Horst Köhler also attended the event. "Essen for the Ruhr" is one of the three European Capitals of Culture in 2010, together with the cities of Istanbul (Turkey) and Pécs (Hungary). President Barroso said: "The European Capital of Culture title acts as a catalyst for change, not only in Essen, but also in Pécs and Istanbul. Without culture, Europe and its citizens would lack the inspiration, creativity and spirit of innovation they need for their joint project. I wish to congratulate all those who contribute their vision and energy to the European Capitals of Culture. The European Capital of Culture, which started 25 years ago, is still a flagship initiative of the European Union which succeeds thanks to the commitment of citizens."

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