



European Union
Delegation of the European Commission
to South Africa

EU Perspectives

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



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Headline News

[European Parliament elections to be held on 4-7 June 2009](#)

The first direct elections to the European Parliament took place in June 1979. Since then there have been elections every five years. Between 4-7 June 2009, people across Europe will elect 736 members of the European Parliament. While citizens of most EU Member States will vote on 7 June, the UK and Netherlands for example, will vote on 4 June, Ireland on 5 June, Malta on 6 June and so on. For further information, visit:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2009/default.htm?language=en>

[European Development Commissioner Louis Michel awarded African Peace Prize](#)

European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, is to receive the "African Time for Peace Prize". This is the first edition of the prize, which will be awarded every year to three personalities and/or institutions, two from Africa and one from abroad, recognized for their achievements in the fields of peace promotion in Africa and global solidarity. Commissioner Michel said, "I am truly honoured to have been awarded this prize and to be part of such a distinguished group of winners. Africa and its entire people from across the continent deserve to live in peace and prosperity. I will continue to work, with all my energy and determination, to ensure that the winner of the ultimate prize of peace and greater prosperity is indeed Africa and its many nations and peoples." This year's winners are the African Union, Nelson Mandela and Louis Michel. Commissioner Michel will receive his prize in recognition of his life-time's work for the promotion of peace in Africa as a politician, former Belgian Foreign Minister and now European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid.

[IDC Concludes €60m loan with European Investment Bank](#)

The Industrial Development Corporation received a €60m credit line from the European Investment Bank (EIB) to finance private sector small and medium sized enterprises. The funds will support viable projects undertaken by small and medium enterprises businesses in the industrial, resources and services sectors. EIB Vice President Plutarchos Sakellaris, who is responsible for lending operations in South Africa, said: "This loan is a strong signal of the EIB's commitment to supporting the private sector and encouraging the creation of employment in South Africa. Moreover, the Bank is confident that by working in partnership with the Industrial Development Corporation we can help to stimulate the South African financial markets by diversifying IDC's funding base and enhancing the provision of finance to SMEs."

Other News

[EU €1bn "Food Facility": Commission signs the first contribution agreements with UN partner agencies](#)

Koos Richelle, Director-General of EuropeAid Co-operation Office, signed on behalf of the European Commission the first contribution agreements of the Food Facility with three UN implementing partners: FAO (€106m), UNRWA (€ 39.6m) and UNICEF (€8.2m). Similar contribution agreements with the World Food Programme (€38.7m), and UNOPS (€10m) are expected to be finalised shortly, to be followed by agreements with the World Bank, IFAD and UNDP. These agreements are financed under the €1bn Food Facility, which will support actions implemented by International Organisations, recipient governments and regional organisations. The signature of these agreements underlines the importance of the European Union as the world's first donor in improving food security across the globe. Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid stressed that: "At a time when the combined effects of the financial and food crises negatively impact developing countries, it is crucial for the EU to match its words with concrete action: that is exactly what

the European Commission is doing today. The projects to be funded will impact positively on the lives of millions of the poorest people in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East".

Joint Statement by the African Development Bank, European Commission, and World Bank Support to Africa Infrastructure in Times of Crisis

"The African Development Bank, the European Commission and the World Bank work to align support to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis. The crisis calls for more coordination of infrastructure development in Africa. This statement outlines the concerns shared by the three institutions and highlights the priority interventions required at this time".

EU supports the efforts of Sierra Leone and Liberia to save one of the last rain forests in West Africa

The European Union is providing €5.5m to Sierra Leone and Liberia to establish a new Trans-boundary Peace Park and to save the last intact rainforest in the Upper Guinea Area: the Gola Forest. At a ceremony in Lalehun in Southern Sierra Leone, the President of Sierra Leone, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, and the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, jointly launched the "Trans-boundary Peace Park Project" and laid the foundation of the new Gola Forest project management office. Louis Michel, the EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, said: "I am convinced that this kind of joint action will help to foster peace, stability and reconciliation in a region that witnessed long and brutal civil wars. Therefore I warmly welcome the intentions of the Presidents of Liberia and Sierra Leone to work together to fight against climate change and to promote peace in the Mano River region. The joint project will secure the long-term conservation of the rain forest, its biodiversity and global carbon storage benefits and will contribute to improved cross-border forest governance between Sierra Leone and Liberia".

Greater Horn of Africa: Commission allocates €54m to address major humanitarian needs in five countries

With five new financial decisions, the European Commission is providing a total of €54m in humanitarian aid to vulnerable people in Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya and Uganda. The funds will be channelled through the Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department, under the direct responsibility of Commissioner Louis Michel. "The Greater Horn of Africa faces humanitarian threats on a lot of fronts" said Louis Michel. "In this region ravaged by extreme weather conditions, chronic conflict and deep poverty, millions of people are now on the brink of collapse. Our help is crucial in saving lives and tackling misery. The complementary decisions we have just adopted reflect our global approach in this region, which is designed to address these difficult humanitarian challenges consistently and effectively."

The best European cultural heritage projects 2009

The EU and Europa Nostra have selected 28 candidates for the annual "European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards". The seven Grand Prizes and 21 Awards will be presented by Mr Ján Figel', the European Commissioner responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Youth and Her Royal Highness The Infanta Doña Pilar de Borbón, President of Europa Nostra, during the official European Heritage Awards Ceremony in the Teatro Antico of Taormina, Sicily (Italy) on 5 June. The Awards highlight exceptional conservation, research and education achievements, as well as dedicated service to heritage conservation. Each Grand Prize winner will receive an amount of €10,000. The EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards were jointly launched in 2002 by the European Commission and Europa Nostra to celebrate outstanding initiatives within the European cultural heritage sector in categories ranging from the restoration of buildings and their adaptation to new uses, to urban and rural landscape rehabilitation, archaeological site interpretations, and care for art collections. Also awarded are prizes for research, for education and awareness-raising projects related to cultural heritage, and for dedicated service to heritage conservation by individuals or organisations.

Launch of PRESSEUROP.EU, the first multilingual website compiling press articles on EU affairs

The European Commission and a consortium led by Courier International (with Internazionale in Italy, Forum Polityka in Poland and Courier Internacional in Portugal, with the support of Cafebabel) launched PRESSEUROP.EU, the first multilingual website containing press articles on EU affairs. PRESSEUROP will offer, in at least 10 languages (up to 23), a multilingual selection of articles published on the same day or the day before. These articles will be complemented with analyses, comments and illustrations. The website will be fully interactive, with thematic forums, online surveys and the possibility for visitors to comment on published articles.

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