



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

[Commissioner Louis Michel visit to SA 15-16 January 2008](#)

Commencing his visit to South Africa to attend the SA EU Ministerial Troika meeting, the EU's Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, took the opportunity to meet with the President of the Republic of South Africa, Kgalema Motlanthe. Discussions covered internal developments in South Africa and preparations for the upcoming general elections. Both parties reaffirmed the importance they attach to the EU-SA Strategic Partnership and their willingness to further strengthen it. They welcomed the progress being made to deepen the dialogue to new areas of co-operation, including space, science and technology, environment and health. Commissioner Louis Michel met separately with the President of the African National Congress, Jacob Zuma.

[Joint Communiqué from the Ministerial Troika Meeting, Kleimond, SA](#)

[Louis Michel to undertake humanitarian mission to Gaza and Southern Israel](#)

European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, announced an upcoming visit to Gaza to be undertaken on 25th and 26th January 2009, following a meeting with Israel's Minister of the Interior Meir Sheerit. Commissioner Michel described the meeting as an opportunity for a positive exchange of views between himself and Minister Sheerit. Welcoming the ceasefires currently in place, Commissioner Michel stated, "Getting the humanitarian aid through to the people that need it most remains the top priority. The meeting with Minister Sheerit was very constructive in which there was a recognition that increased humanitarian access and delivery was needed urgently. In this respect, the setting up of fast-track procedures for humanitarian access and delivery should be considered a priority. I also hope my visit to the region can underscore the importance the European Commission gives to meeting the humanitarian needs of the civilian populations there."

[Louis Michel "shocked and dismayed" about the Israeli shelling of UN headquarters in Gaza](#)

European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, expressed his complete "shock and dismay" at the shelling of the United Nations' compound in Gaza (15/01). Commissioner Michel, on behalf of the European Commission, offered his full support for UNRWA's (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) decision to suspend its operations following the incident. Commissioner Michel stated, "I am deeply shocked and dismayed to learn of this incident. Since the outbreak of the fighting I have made it very clear that all sides must respect international humanitarian law. It is unacceptable that the UN headquarters in Gaza has been struck by Israeli artillery fire. UNWRA and its personnel must have their security guaranteed to ensure they can carry out their essential work and assistance to the civilian population in Gaza. This is a very serious incident and there must be a full and independent investigation."

[Louis Michel statement on the involvement of the Rwandan army in disarmament of rebels in DRC](#)

The Rwandan army entered North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in a coordinated operation with the armed forces of the DRC to start tracking down Rwandan rebels of the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR) active in the region. The operation is a tangible sign of the cooperation that has been established between the two countries. For the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, "This action may not amount to an immediate end to all the problems in the region, but it is certainly a start. It is part of a regional commitment to involvement with a view to resolving the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is a decisive response to the initiative which I proposed and which came to fruition at the Nairobi Summit on 7 November last year. I remain convinced that a lasting solution to the continuing crises in Eastern DRC will be possible only within the framework of cooperation at regional level."

Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU concerning the elections in Ghana

"The European Union closely followed the Ghanaian presidential and parliamentary elections held in December 2008 and January 2009. The European Union congratulates the people of Ghana for having expressed their democratic will. Both the EU election observation mission and other international observers were of the opinion that the elections were conducted in a competitive environment with the freedoms of assembly, movement and expression respected across the country. The conduct of the 2008 elections – the second elections bringing a major political change in Ghana – and high voter turnout shows the political maturity of the Ghanaian democracy and proves the firm commitment of Ghana and its people to peace and democratic development".

Other News

EU and Cameroon sign trade agreement

The EU and Cameroon signed a 'stepping stone' Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), the first of its kind between the EU and a Central African trade partner. The agreement combines the benefits of a trade agreement with development assistance targeted at accelerating growth and development in Cameroon. The final goal remains to conclude a full EPA with all the members of the Central African region that will promote competitiveness, growth and investment while accelerating regional integration. EU Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton said: "I am strongly committed to pursuing and concluding regional negotiations in Central Africa and this agreement should be seen as a milestone on the path to the successful conclusion of a regional Economic Partnership Agreement with Central Africa." EU Development Commissioner Louis Michel said: "Economic Partnership Agreements encourage developing countries to benefit from global trade, while maintaining a certain level of protection for some of their key interests. I trust that this agreement with Cameroon will pave the way for the regional integration sought after by Central African countries. It has a very strong development element that will support the implementation of reforms necessary for this regional integration."

New fact-sheets on interim Economic Partnership Agreements

New fact-sheets, presenting an overview of interim (goods-only) Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are now available. They detail the state of play and include main features of each interim EPA, and present the way ahead.

European Commission adopts new international audiovisual programme

The European Commission adopted a new MEDIA MUNDUS programme, a broad international co-operation programme for the audiovisual industry, to strengthen cultural and commercial relations between Europe's film industry and film-makers of third countries. The EU will provide €15 million from 2011-2013 for projects submitted by audiovisual professionals from the EU and third countries and will capitalise on the growing interest and opportunities offered by global co-operation in the audiovisual industry. "The international audiovisual landscape has changed significantly over the last two decades, notably through the impact of technological developments like video on demand, internet TV or multi-channel digital television. This has created growing demand for more audiovisual content, and we need to 'fill' all these new technologies with new and exciting content," said Viviane Reding, EU Media Commissioner. "I think MEDIA MUNDUS is the right cultural answer to this global technological challenge". For more information, visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media/mundus/index_en.htm

European Parliament marks 10 years of the euro

In his opening speech, EP President Hans-Gert Pöttering called the common currency "a bastion of economic stability", saying that "the creation of the euro was a logical development for a growing economic community". "Today, in the European Parliament we are celebrating one of the most important historical decisions made in the European Union," he said. In spite of scepticism surrounding the planned common currency, after ten years "we can see that the euro has created a lot of trust, and has offered a lot of benefits for EU citizens and companies", he said, adding that with the majority of trade being internal to the euro areas, it "is better prepared to protect Member States from external shocks".

European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009

The Czech Presidency of the EU and the European Commission launched the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 in Prague with the slogan "Imagine. Create. Innovate". The aim of the Year is to promote creative and innovative approaches in different sectors and help equip the EU for the challenges ahead in a globalised world. Innovation is at the heart of the EU's flagship Lisbon Strategy to foster growth and job creation by transforming Europe into a knowledge-based economy. The Year aims to ensure that the European Union continues to make progress towards these aims.

.eu domain passes the 3 million mark

The third million .eu domain name was registered on 11 January by a German citizen. "The three million .eu domains reflect the confidence of European internet users in .eu," said Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media. "This achievement, just a few months before its third anniversary, indicates how .eu has clearly won public favour: a growing number of internet users are embracing the opportunity to express their European character online. In particular, I am glad to see that an increasing number of small and medium-sized companies have adopted .eu as an integral part of their corporate identity and I am looking forward to seeing more companies taking advantage of .eu in the future."

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