



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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14 – 20 January 2008

Headline News

[Declaration by the Presidency concerning the AU mediation efforts in Kenya](#)

"Recalling its declaration of 8 January 2008, the EU commends President Kufuor, President of the African Union (AU), for his efforts to resolve the serious crisis arising from the recent Presidential elections in the country. The EU urges all parties to build on these efforts and to jointly work towards a lasting political solution to the crisis, under the auspices of the AU. The EU expresses its full support for the Panel of Eminent African Personalities, headed by Mr Kofi Annan, which will work with the Kenyan parties to resolve their differences and all other outstanding issues, including constitutional and electoral reforms. In order to ensure the restoration of peace, stability, democracy and the rule of law in Kenya, the EU stands ready to support a process of dialogue and reconciliation in Kenya and to complement the efforts of the AU".

[€5.5 million in humanitarian aid for victims of post-election violence in Kenya](#)

The European Commission launched an emergency decision to provide relief assistance to vulnerable groups affected by the crisis in Kenya. Louis Michel, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, expressed his concern over the plight of people driven from their homes in recent weeks. "More than a quarter of million people are displaced and a similar number already living a precarious existence in the shanty towns, have been badly affected. The EU stands by those suffering as a result of the post-electoral violence and we will provide them the necessary emergency assistance." The funds, channelled through the Commission's humanitarian aid department (ECHO), will target key essentials for displaced people and refugees including tents, clean water, sanitation, emergency health care, basic household equipment, hygiene products, food and logistics.

[Commission launches sector inquiry into pharmaceuticals with unannounced inspections](#)

The European Commission launched a sector inquiry into competition in the pharmaceuticals sector (under Article 17 of Regulation 1/2003), and conducted inspections at the premises of a number of innovative and generic pharmaceutical companies. The inquiry is a response to indications that competition in pharmaceutical markets in Europe may not be working well: fewer new pharmaceuticals are being brought to market, and the entry of generic pharmaceuticals sometimes seems to be delayed. The inquiry will therefore look at the reasons for this. Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes said: "Individuals and governments want a strong pharmaceuticals sector that delivers better products and value for money. But if innovative products are not being produced, and cheaper generic alternatives to existing products are in some cases being delayed, then we need to find out why and, if necessary, take action."

[Declaration by the Presidency on closure of the British Council offices in the Russian Federation](#)

"The EU is very concerned at Russia's continued demand to close the regional offices of the British Council in St Petersburg and Yekaterinburg, and recalls its statement of 21 December 2007 on this issue. The EU deeply regrets in particular the harassment of British Council staff, as well as the administrative and other measures announced by the Russian authorities. These actions are contrary to the spirit of the cultural cooperation Russia agreed to pursue at the first EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council on Culture on 25 October 2007 in Lisbon. The EU again underlines the valuable and important role that the British Council, as well as all other cultural institutes of EU Member States in Russia, play in fostering cooperation between the Russian Federation and the EU. The EU urges the Russian Federation to allow the British Council to operate freely and effectively in Russia and to take no further actions that might hinder its activities".

Other News

[European Parliament resolution on democracy and human rights in Egypt](#)

In a resolution adopted on Egypt, European Parliament MEPs called on the Egyptian government to take a range of measures to improve democracy and human rights, such as ending the harassment of journalists and human rights

defenders, lifting the state of emergency, investigating suspected cases of torture and guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary. Parliament first of all "recognises the role that Egypt plays in the Middle East peace process and the importance that EU-Egypt relations have for the entire Euro-Mediterranean area and in the fight against international terrorism and fundamentalism". It also points out that "respect for human rights is a fundamental value of the EU-Egypt Association Agreement and reaffirms the importance of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership for promoting the rule of law and fundamental freedoms". The resolution was adopted by 52 votes to 0, with 7 abstentions.

European Parliament set out its strategy on children's rights

An EU strategy on the rights of the child won Parliament's backing with 630 votes in favour, 26 against and 62 abstentions. MEPs called for the strategy to include tougher measures to combat paedophilia on the internet, as well as steps to counter child sex tourism. The report is Parliament's response to a Commission communication of 4 July 2006 titled "[Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child](#)". The report restates Parliament's opposition to all forms of violence against children and calls for a specific budget heading for their rights, with which to fund work required by the strategy.

90% of Europeans believe biodiversity loss is a problem

An overwhelming majority of Europeans believe that the loss of biological diversity is a serious problem, according to a Eurobarometer survey on attitudes to biodiversity. The survey highlights the concerns of Europeans regarding the decline and extinction of animal and plant species, natural habitats and ecosystems. Concern is greatest in Greece, Portugal and Romania. The survey also reveals that Europeans are more worried about biodiversity loss globally than in their own country. Commissioner Dimas said: "Biodiversity loss is irreversible. Since the 1970s, the EU has been committed to protecting nature, and we are working hard to realise our target of halting biodiversity loss on our continent by 2010. Achieving this target requires everyone across the Union to work together to ensure that our ecosystems are sustainable and healthy. Complacency is not an option. " A major communications campaign will be launched this year to engage Europeans in protecting biodiversity, and to help channel the concerns revealed by this survey.

[Eurobarometer Report](#)

Two new research agencies launched

The EU's 7th Research Framework Programme (FP7) €50 billion budget marks a significant increase on the previous programme. To help manage this, the European Commission has created two executive agencies to manage the R&D project proposals and evaluation process, which will lead to increased efficiency of research management, as well as liberate the Commission's resources for policy-making. The "European Research Council Executive Agency" will be dedicated to the management of basic research projects funded by the European Research Council and will support the implementation of the Ideas Programme of the 7th Research Framework Programme (FP7), which deals with frontier research. The other body, the Research Executive Agency, will administer the Marie Curie fellowships schemes, research for the benefit of SMEs and parts of the Space and Security research themes. It will also provide evaluation and support services to all other parts of FP7.

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