



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



EU Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton visits Southern Africa

EU Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton travelled to Southern Africa from the 9th to 12th of February, visiting South Africa and Botswana. She held talks with key government leaders with a view to moving forward the bilateral and region-to-region trade relationships. A key goal of the visit was to discuss the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Southern African countries. Aside from meeting government leaders from South Africa and Botswana, Commissioner Ashton also held a joint meeting with Angolan, Namibian and SA (ANSA) ministers while in South Africa and a meeting with ministers from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) while in Botswana. Speaking ahead of the trip, Commissioner Ashton said: "I want to engage with Southern African countries so that we can all gain more from our economic relationship. I am particularly committed to discussing SA's concerns over our Economic Partnership Agreement while in Cape Town. I am keen to express our commitment to regional integration."



L to R: acting Minister of Trade & Industry I Ngatjizeko (Namibia), EU Trade Commissioner C Ashton, Minister of Trade and Industry M Mphahlele (South Africa), Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry R Davies (South Africa), Deputy Minister of Industry K Gabriel (Angola)

European Commissioner Louis Michel welcomes Zimbabwe power-sharing government

European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, welcomed the inauguration of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai as Prime Minister of Zimbabwe as part of the power-sharing agreement entered into with President Mugabe. Commissioner Michel stated: "I welcome today's inauguration of Morgan Tsvangirai as Prime Minister of Zimbabwe. All parties within this power-sharing government must now work, without delay, to immediately improve the social and economic conditions for the people of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's journey towards recovery will be long and difficult. The new power-sharing government has a heavy responsibility to ensure positive change for its citizens. I can reassure the people of Zimbabwe that Europe will continue to offer its support to them as we have consistently done over many years." The European Commission is the main donor to the vulnerable populations of Zimbabwe having provided €572m in both humanitarian and essential development aid to the population since 2002.

Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the recent development in Zimbabwe

"The EU welcomes that under the guidance of SADC an agreement has been reached in Zimbabwe between the parties. It hopes that the political solution reached will lead to the immediate end to political violence and intimidation and the immediate release of all political prisoners. It further hopes that the new government will demonstrate its commitment to reform, including by repealing repressive legislation, appointing a credible finance team and creating the conditions for economic stabilization".

Launch of the new phase of Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013

Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013 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 2009-13, the EU will continue to support joint programmes in Europe with grants to the most highly-talented students and professors from countries outside the EU, but will also extend the scope of the programme to the doctoral level. Moreover, the former 'Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Windows' will be fully integrated into the Erasmus Mundus programme, continuing to support partnerships between EU and non-EU higher education institutions as a basis for mobility among students and academics. The expected budget for the new phase of Erasmus Mundus will be €950 million.

Other News

Commission announces assistance of €149 million to Egypt for education, transport and public services

The European Commission announced a package worth €149 million to Egypt within the 2008 Annual Action Programme under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner made the announcement in the presence of the Egyptian Minister of Health and Population, Prof. Dr. Hatem El-Gabaly on the occasion of his visit to Brussels. The focus of the programmes financed under this package will be on education, reforms in the transport sector, improvement of the water and waste water services and support for civil society. Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner underlined: "This financial package clearly underscores the Commission's strong support for Egypt's social, political and economic reform agenda". The Commissioner added: "We have also discussed the difficult situation in Gaza. I welcomed the swift action taken by Egypt to help the injured from the recent hostilities, as well as their efficiency in helping to coordinate the international humanitarian effort. At the same time I express again my full support for the valuable Egyptian efforts to achieve inner-Palestinian reconciliation. I am looking forward to the conference on Gaza which Egypt has taken the initiative to host in Cairo on 2 March."

Louis Michel inaugurates humanitarian office in Haiti and supports the country's development efforts

Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, went on a two-day visit to Haiti. He began by inaugurating the European Commission's new humanitarian office in Port-au-Prince before going on to meet the Prime Minister and to address the Haitian Parliament. This was Louis Michel's third visit to Haiti since 2005, during which he reiterated the EU's solidarity with the Haitian people and saw at first hand the progress made in the projects financed by the European Development Fund (EDF). On his arrival at Port-au-Prince, Commissioner Michel said: "Europe has an important commitment to Haiti that takes account of all aspects of the country's difficult situation. We wish to show our sustained support for the most vulnerable sections of the population by setting up a humanitarian aid office, while reaffirming our support for the national authorities in their efforts to stabilise and develop the country in the long term."

Commission adopts €27 million humanitarian preparedness capacity-building programme

The European Commission has adopted a new funding decision for €27 million to strengthen global humanitarian preparedness and the response capacity of international organisations. Daily experience confirms the view of the Commission's humanitarian partner organisations that there are still significant gaps to be filled, notably in respect of logistics, pre-positioning and disaster-preparedness in sectors such as health, water/sanitation, shelter, food assistance and protection. The Commission, through its Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO), will continue to respond to capacity-building needs with targeted support for improved international coordination; integrated logistics; common approaches to rapid, multi-sectoral assessment to boost effective, evidence-based humanitarian decision-making; promotion of food security response options; strengthened capacity and advocacy for disaster risk reduction.

Commission welcomes EP recommendations on future EU climate policy

The European Commission welcomed the report adopted by the European Parliament setting out recommendations for future EU policy on climate change. "This very comprehensive report further demonstrates the European Parliament's clear commitment both to an ambitious EU climate policy and to contributing actively to its development," Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said. "This commonality of views between the institutions is essential to maintain Europe's leadership in the international negotiations on a new global climate deal. We need to work together and mobilise all our resources to ensure a strong and effective agreement is reached at the Copenhagen climate conference in December." The report highlights that tackling climate change will create new jobs and industries, reduce Europe's dependency on imports of fossil fuels and bring social benefits for citizens.

European Urban Day: Commissioner Hübner highlights €30 billion boost for cities

Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner addressed the "European Urban Day" conference in Prague. The event, backed by the Czech Presidency of the European Union, was an opportunity to evaluate the crucial urban dimension of the EU's Cohesion Policy, which provides €30 billion in support for European cities to invest in innovation, competitiveness and sustainable development. Ahead of the event, Commissioner Hübner stated: "Investment from the European Union's Cohesion Policy is crucial for boosting economic growth and job creation in cities. The urban dimension is especially important in the current downturn because the policies developed by cities have consequences for surrounding areas, the region and often the entire Member State. Cities need to be encouraged to take the lead in this process of making the Union more competitive, more innovative and more ecologically and economically sustainable."

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