



## 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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## 21 – 27 January 2008

### Headline News

#### [Directive on Landmark Renewable Energy and Climate Change Package](#)

In order to achieve its renewable energy policy goals, first set out in January 2007, the European Commission recently proposed a Directive, to be achieved by each Member State, which sets out national renewable energy targets. These targets aim to result in an overall binding target of a 20% share of renewable energy sources in energy consumption in 2020 and a binding 10% minimum target for biofuels in transport. In addition, the Directive contains specific measures to remove barriers to renewable energy's development, such as excessive administrative controls and to encourage greater use of better-performing types of renewable energy.

[European Parliament President Pötering welcomes legislative proposals on Climate Change and Energy](#)

#### [European Commission President Barroso welcomes Davos statement on Millennium Development Goals](#)

European Commission President José Manuel Barroso welcomed the World Economic Forum (WEF) Davos statement on the drive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Noting that the EU had provided global leadership by substantially strengthening its development efforts, he said that the international community must use 2008 to review progress achieved, and decide where to apply pressure for results to keep the goals on track. He also called for a more active involvement of the business community and private funding for development, to go hand in hand with Official Development Assistance.

#### [Development Commissioner Louis Michel announced €10m for stabilisation of Chad](#)

The European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, on a visit to Chad from 20 to 22 January 2008, signed a €10m support programme for the stabilisation of Eastern Chad. The aim of this programme is to create conditions for restoring peace, preventing future conflict and developing the region socially and economically (building of schools, hospitals, boreholes, etc.). By financing such rehabilitation, reconciliation and reconstruction measures, the programme hopes to make it possible for displaced persons to voluntarily return to their areas of origin. Commissioner Michel declared: "I want to send a message of hope. Europe is mobilising in support of peace and development. Europe's solidarity with Africa is clear and tangible. Our stabilisation programme will help Chadians in their daily lives. And I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the progress made on the comprehensive political agreement inside Chad, which is essential to bring about stabilisation and reconciliation before transparent and free elections in 2009."

#### [EU and US discuss bilateral trade, Doha trade talks](#)

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson and US Trade Representative Susan Schwab met in Brussels to discuss a wide range of bilateral trade issues, as well as progress in the WTO Doha trade talks. The two sides also discussed relations with major emerging economies, as well as the contribution of trade policy to mitigation of climate change. On moving forward in multilateral trade talks, Mandelson said: "USTR Schwab and I agreed that both sides are committed to fully concluding the Doha Round by the end of this year". The two sides also agreed that the EU and US needed to continue to work on relations with major emerging markets, including the shared view that Russia should join the WTO. Asked about climate change and the question of possible trade measures, both Mandelson and Schwab voiced concerns about protectionist tendencies. Mandelson noted: "Clearly trade restrictions are not the way forward - they are not cost-efficient, there is risk of retaliation, and increasing costs for European industry at large". He added that international negotiation was the right way forward to combat climate change.

## **Other News**

### **Romania and Bulgaria mark 1 year as EU Member States**

After their first year as the EU's 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Member States, Bulgarian and Romanian MEPS noted that membership of the EU had resulted in improved national self-confidence and economic stability. Other advantages included benefitting from EU structural and cohesion funds and the chance to live and work in other EU member state countries.

### **Ratification of the Lisbon Treaty**

The European Parliament Constitutional Committee said EU Member States should ratify the Treaty by the end of this year, as this would better protect citizens' rights and improve the functioning of EU institutions. The Treaty would give the European and national parliaments a bigger role in the decision-making process, and thus raise the EU's democratic profile, says the report. Some Member States nonetheless voiced concerns about the new Treaty. First, they regretted that the "constitutional approach" had been abandoned, whilst acknowledging that this had been necessary to secure agreement among all Member States. They also criticised the special arrangements made for some Member States in the field of police co-operation and criminal law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

### **Preparing the European economy for challenging times ahead**

The annual meeting of European Parliament MEPS from the Economics Committee with their counterparts from national parliaments discussed the European economy and how to help it deal with immediate and longer term challenges. Participants included Žiga Turk, Slovenian Minister for Growth, ex-Commissioner Mario Monti and current Economics Commissioner Joaquín Almunia. The main topic of the day's debate was how to update the EU's Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, the EU's main instrument for coordinating economic policy in the context of the Lisbon Strategy. Although the next Commission economic forecasts were a month away, Mr Almunia said: "We can already observe that growth in 2008 will be lower than we expected a few months ago and inflation higher. This is a difficult situation for policymakers: an economic slowdown at the same time as increased inflationary pressure".

### **EU Ombudsman: NGOs can help EU institutions do their job better**

The European Ombudsman, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, has underlined the importance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in pointing out possible instances of maladministration in the EU institutions. Over the past ten years, the Ombudsman's office has received almost 1 000 complaints from NGOs and associations. They included alleged maladministration concerning environmental projects, late payment for EU contracts, and lack of transparency in the EU institutions. Mr Diamandouros commented: "The Ombudsman relies on complaints from NGOs to help him uncover possible instances of maladministration in the EU institutions. The institutions, in turn, profit from the active involvement of NGOs to help them rectify problems in the system."

For more information: <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu>

### **Young journalist competition to focus on EU expansion**

The EU is giving journalists aged 17 to 35, from the EU Member States, as well as from some other European countries, the chance to make a name for themselves through its [enlarge your vision](#) award. Organised jointly by the Commission and the European youth press association, the award encourages young journalists to express their views on the expansion of Europe. To [enter the competition](#), applicants are being invited to register and submit an article by 15 March. winners will get the chance to go on a special fact-finding tour of the Balkans in June this year, the region most likely to be next up for EU membership.

### **Key facts and figures about Europe and the Europeans**

Using charts, graphs and illustrations, this website sets out basic facts and figures about the EU and its member states. Topics covered include: size and population, economic activity and trade, education, research, the information society and the EU candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

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