



**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**

### **[Women's Day: Europe keeps women's empowerment high on its global agenda](#)**

On the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March, which this year carries the theme 'Women and men united to end violence against women and girls', European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner reaffirmed the Commission's continuing political and financial commitment to fight for women rights. Empowerment of women is a topic which continues to be high on the EU's global agenda. Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner said: "I am well aware that the full empowerment of women is still a distant call for many women around the world. Therefore, I remain strongly committed to maintaining our steady level of engagement and to ensuring that we keep our promises of fully mobilising our policy and financial tools to enhance UN Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security. We cannot step down our game until each and every woman's rights are respected and protected throughout the world".

### **[EU launches campaign to tackle gender pay gap](#)**

The European Commission launched an EU-wide campaign to help tackle the gender pay gap. Across the EU economy, women earn on average 17.4% less than men. The simple concept of 'equal pay for work of equal value' is at the heart of the campaign being launched in the context of International Women's Day on 8 March to raise awareness of the pay gap, its causes, and how to tackle it. "The gender pay gap has multiple causes and needs multiple solutions. Tackling it requires action at all levels and a commitment from everyone concerned, from employers and trade unions to national authorities and every citizen. Our campaign will make people more aware of why women in Europe still earn so much less than men and what we can do about it," said EU Equal Opportunities Commissioner Vladimír Špidla. "In today's economic climate, equality between women and men is more important than ever. Only by reaping the potential of all our talents can we face up to the crisis" he added.

### **[European Commission allocates nearly a quarter of a billion euro in humanitarian aid to African countries](#)**

The European Commission will provide a total of €247 million in humanitarian aid to vulnerable people in twelve African countries. The following allocations are to be made: Sudan €110m; Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) €45m; Chad €30m; Burundi and refugees in Tanzania €20m; the Sahel region (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger) €13m; Uganda €12m; Zimbabwe €5.5m and Kenya €3m. All funds are channelled through the Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) under the direct responsibility of Commissioner Louis Michel. Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, said: "Our help is crucial to saving lives and reducing suffering in the humanitarian hotspots on the African continent. This is the case in Zimbabwe, where there is almost no local capacity left to cope with the cholera epidemic. It is also the case in Sudan's Darfur region. These are just two of the many humanitarian crises in which millions could not survive without support from outside. More than half of the European Commission's relief aid budget goes to Africa."

### **[Commission signs first MDG Contract with Zambia worth €25 million](#)**

The European Commission has committed €25 million to the Government of Zambia for a 6 year period (2009-2014) to support the country's efforts to improve the efficiency of its poverty-focused public programmes and to accelerate progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Zambia is the first country to sign this form of enhanced general budget support called "MDG Contract" to highlight the contractual nature of this predictable, long-term financial

commitment and its focus on MDG-related results, most notably in health and education. Louis Michel, Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, emphasised the significance of this new way of providing general budget support: "In the present financial and economic crisis it is even more important for developing countries to receive predictable, long-term aid that is aligned with their own procedures and policy priorities. I have made faster, better and more effective aid my top priority and I'm glad to see the people of Zambia are now seeing the benefits of this action" he said. The Commission support to Zambia will contribute to improved public finance management, enhanced service delivery in the social sectors and the promotion of structural reforms that enable job creation and pro-poor growth.

### **Other News**

#### **[The European Commission hosts key international meeting on Somalia](#)**

The European Commission, together with the United Nations, hosted a two-day high level meeting in Brussels which aimed to boost support for the peace process in Somalia. The European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, said: "The meeting will provide the international community with the possibility to help the new Somali government to bring stability to the country at this very crucial time. I believe that, with our support, the new leadership can bring about the peace that the Somali people so desperately need. The European Commission is strongly committed to supporting the Somali peace process. It believes that the new Government, through its inclusiveness, offers the best hope for ending the suffering of the Somali people and for restoring the rule of law in the country".

#### **[Declaration by the EU Presidency on the current situation in Province Orientale, DRC \(LRA\)](#)**

"The EU takes note of the agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda to extend the joint military action against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which started on December 14. The EU is appalled by the brutal killing by the LRA of more than 800 Congolese civilians, including numerous women and children in Province Orientale, DRC. The EU urges the LRA to cease its attacks on civilians, disarm immediately and unconditionally. The EU calls on the countries involved in the military operation against the LRA to protect the civilian population and to cooperate closely with the MONUC allowing it to fully implement its mandate in particular with respects to the protection of the population. The EU furthermore takes note of the large number of IDP's, some 160 000 people in the region as a consequence of the fighting and urges the countries to cooperate with humanitarian organisations to minimise suffering".

#### **[Commission announces €436 million \(\\$554 million\) to the Palestinians for 2009](#)**

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy, pledged €436m to the Palestinian people for 2009 at the "Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza". The Commission's pledge will be dedicated to humanitarian aid and early recovery of the Gaza Strip. It will also continue supporting the Palestinian Authority in the implementation of the overall Palestinian Reform and Development Plan, as well as UNRWA's programmes for the benefit of the Palestine Refugees. Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner said: "Our priority is to adequately respond to the disastrous humanitarian situation in Gaza. By offering a substantial aid package we confirm our generosity and commitment towards the Palestinians. In Gaza, we will dedicate part of our assistance to early recovery after the conflict at the beginning of the year, notably for urgently needed removal of rubble and unexploded ordinance and for providing assistance for traumatised children. It will also support a "cash for work" scheme, as well as small repairs of those shelters that were damaged during the military attack."

#### **[Awards for green urban living](#)**

With 74% of the EU population now living in cities and towns of more than 5 000 inhabitants, the need for clean, sustainable urban development has never been greater. The EU is seeking to encourage just that with the European green capitals award. The accolade, to hold the title of 'green capital' for a year, promotes environmentally friendly urban living and recognises local authorities' efforts to solve environmental problems. Stockholm and Hamburg are the first cities to claim the title. The Swedish capital will be European Green Capital in 2010, while Hamburg will take over the reins in 2011. The jury was particularly impressed with Stockholm's extensive programme for improving quality of life through water purification, noise reduction, an integrated waste system, a congestion charging system and more recreational areas, such as bathing beaches. Hamburg, home to 1.8 million people, boasts excellent air quality. But on this occasion it was the city's energy-saving measures in public buildings that won the award.

#### **[New online platform presenting results of EU-funded projects launched](#)**

The European Commission presented a new online tool for easy access to the results and details of EU-funded projects in the fields of education, culture, youth and citizenship. Cutting the virtual ribbon at the launch of EVE (Espace Virtuel d'Échange), Ján Figel', the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, said: "With EVE, it will be easier for project managers to learn from the successes of the past. The information is structured in such a way that the results can be adapted and transferred to new contexts. EVE will allow project promoters to establish networks and will give their projects more visibility".

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