



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

[France takes over rotating EU presidency from Slovenia](#)

The EU's blue flag with gold stars was flying high in Paris and the Eiffel Tower was lit up with the EU colours for the first day of France's EU Presidency. France had planned to concentrate on four main areas after it took over from Slovenia on 1 July, namely energy and climate change, the crafting of a pact on migration policy, security and fighting terrorism, and agriculture. However, Ireland's no vote to the Lisbon Treaty in June has presented a new challenge. At their summit in June, EU leaders agreed to give Ireland time to reflect and to explore possible solutions at their next meeting in October. On climate change, France wants to ensure the EU is driving global efforts, and is keen to conclude an ambitious energy-efficiency package ahead of international talks next year on minimising climate change. France is also pressing for measures to cushion the impact of surging oil and gas prices, which have prompted protests around the EU.

French presidency website:

http://www.ue2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/presidence_du_conseil/message_de_bienvenue_du_president

[Declaration by the EU Presidency on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture](#)

"On the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (26th June), the European Union underlines again the priority which it attaches to the global eradication of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and to the full rehabilitation of torture victims. In this year of celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the EU recalls the absolute prohibition placed on the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. All States need to take persistent, determined and effective measures to eradicate these practices".

[Development aid: spending better and spending more](#)

Improvements in the use of official development aid must not serve as an excuse for Member States to reduce the level of aid they give, argued European Parliament MEPs and national MPs at a joint meeting on cooperation policy at the Parliament. The food crisis and the impact of EU enlargement on its development policy were also discussed. In 2007, European official development aid declined to 0.38% of GDP, after reaching 0.41% in 2006. Yet Member States undertook in 2005 to allocate 0.56% of GDP by 2010 and 0.7% by 2015. An increase of this order is needed to reach the Millennium Development Goals. "Budgetary aid is not a blank cheque", stressed Development Commissioner Louis Michel, pointing to the governance standards required of countries that receive such aid. In his speech, Louis Michel stated that he would propose to the Council and the European Parliament that the budgetary margins of the common agriculture policy - the funds not spent in 2008 as export subsidies because of the rise in food prices - be used "to prevent food insecurity leading sooner or later to insecurity, full stop".

[EU-ESA EPA negotiations](#)

The technical negotiating teams of the Eastern and Southern Africa Group (ESA) and the European Commission met in Brussels to exchange information on the state of play of their internal procedures regarding the signature and the ratification of the ESA Interim EPA. The meeting was held in a very good and cooperative atmosphere. The agenda was very complete covering a wide range of issues, such as market access, services, investments and trade related issues. Discussions on the Development chapter focused on the need to link the region's Development Cooperation Strategy with the 10th EDF Regional Strategy Paper and Regional Indicative Programme and to refine the Development Matrix so that it becomes a

useful tool for defining an investment plan. Both Parties agreed to meet at technical, senior official and possibly ministerial levels in ESA region in the second half of September 2008.

Other News

Environment: Policy Review shows achievements, and challenges ahead

The European Commission adopted its 2007 Environment Policy Review, which reports on EU policy developments from last year, focuses on the key challenges ahead and looks in detail at EU and Member States' environmental trends and policy performance. Presenting the Environment Policy Review 2007, Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said: "The year 2007 was a turning point in EU environment policy. The main commitments under the 6th Environment Action Programme have been delivered. Environment issues are now firmly at the top of the political agenda, and command the attention of decision-makers, the media and the public. But there are also reasons for concern. Implementation of EU environment legislation is lagging behind. We also need to prepare for the major challenges ahead: defining a long-term strategic vision for sustainable consumption and production, adaptation to the inevitable climatic changes, and the protection of biodiversity. We should take advantage of the relatively light legislative calendar in 2009 to advance on these issues. "

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson on the Doha development Agenda

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson warned a meeting of Civil Society that if the current round of world trade talks did not succeed, the loss of the benefits to the world economy would be profound. The status quo in the global economy would not be maintained if DDA negotiations collapsed, as we would risk rising protectionism and increased tariffs in developed and developing countries. The poorest countries would stand to lose the most, as they are most dependent on access to other developing and larger markets. But the EU would also suffer, as lost trade opportunities amounting to billions of Euros per year could be lost. Mandelson argued that prosperity in Europe is down to business certainty, tariff predictability, economic stability, and, crucially, access to fast-growing markets. In the event of a DDA failure, Europe would be less able to anchor these growing markets in the rules-based trading system.

2007 Annual Report on Competition Policy

The European Commission has adopted its 2007 Annual Report on Competition Policy, which gives an overview of the main developments in competition policy. It outlines key changes to competition rules and policy as well as major enforcement actions. Using concrete examples it demonstrates how the tools of competition policy were used to reinforce Europe's competitiveness and to protect consumers and businesses from anticompetitive conduct. Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes said "Improving the functioning of markets for the benefit of European consumers and businesses remains at the heart of the European project. In 2007, the Commission made a significant contribution to consumer welfare by tackling hard-core cartels."

Please see this link for the full report:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/annual_reports/

Common principles for EU immigration and asylum

Immigration is a major challenge for the European Union. The EU has absorbed between 1.5m and 2m immigrants a year since 2002. Most of the recent newcomers have settled in Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Greece. Even with this influx, the working-age population in Europe is expected to decline by almost 50 million by 2060, raising concern that without immigration, EU countries could face severe labour shortages. The EU strategy lays out 10 principles to serve as the basis for integrating national policies, grouping them under the issues of prosperity, solidarity and security. They include efforts to step up the fight against illegal immigration and match skills of immigrant workers with the needs of the EU's labour market. Other goals include enhancing security through visa policy, developing effective return policies, integrating border management and working more closely with countries of origin and transit. The commission also recognised integration as key to successful immigration and called for zero tolerance of human trafficking.

Joint statement of the EU-Russia summit for a new EU-Russia agreement

"The leaders of the European Union and the Russian Federation launched the negotiations for a New EU/Russia Agreement to replace the current Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which entered into force on 1 December 1997. We have agreed that the existing Agreement will remain in force until replaced by the New Agreement. We agreed that the aim is to conclude a strategic agreement that will provide a comprehensive framework for EU/Russia relations for the foreseeable future and help to develop the potential of our relationship. It should provide for a strengthened legal basis and legally binding commitments covering all main areas of the relationship, as included in the four EU/Russia common spaces and their road maps which were agreed at the Moscow Summit in May 2005" .

For further information please contact Frank Oberholzer on 012-452-5200

