



European Union
Delegation of the European Commission
in South Africa

**... this week
in review**

This publication seeks to provide information on EU activities of interest to SA readers.



23 - 29 July 2007

Headline News

Inaugural meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference (24/7)

The Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) which is to draw up changes to the EU Treaties must result in a European Union which is able to act efficiently and decisively and should therefore adhere strictly to the political agreement reached by the EU Heads of State at their June summit, said Elmar Brok on behalf of the European Parliament, at the opening session of the IGC. Parliament will see to it that the final IGC text will correspond precisely to the mandate given by the EU government leaders. Mr Brok, who is one of three MEPs who participate in the IGC and who represented EP President Hans-Gert Pöttering at the opening, said that the EU must have the capacity to reform and to act globally. He said "Parliament itself will also abstain from making any proposals to change the mandate, which must be non-negotiable".

EIB signs loan agreement with Eskom (25/7)

The European Investment Bank (EIB), the EU's long-term finance institution, signed an €88m (R830m) loan agreement with Eskom, South Africa's state-owned electricity utility, to part-finance the construction of a new high voltage transmission interconnection between Johannesburg and Cape Town. The loan is the second tranche of a €300m (R2.8bn) facility for the project; a first tranche of €80m was signed in December 2006. Both loans were signed for a term of 25 years. The main objective of the 765 kV transmission backbone link is to secure the electricity supply of the Western Cape region, to meet growing electricity demand and reduce transmission losses. The two finance contracts between the EIB and ESKOM were concluded within the framework of the EU-RSA co-operation agreement whereby the EIB provides long-term finance for public and private investment supporting economic development in South Africa.

Proposal to end the EU-ACP Sugar Protocol (25/7)

Commissioners Peter Mandelson (Trade), Louis Michel (Development) and Mariann Fischer Boel (Agriculture), writing in the Guyana Chronicle, commented on the EU's proposal to end the EU-ACP Sugar Protocol, an agreement which for many years has set the guaranteed import prices and import levels for sugar between Caribbean countries and the EU. Once the new Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and ACP regions are signed in 2008, the Protocol will end. The Commissioners stated that "For seven years we have been working on a new trade agreement that builds a regional market, widens access to the EU market for Caribbean exports and helps Caribbean economies adapt to competing in a global market. The decision to end the Sugar Protocol is not an easy one, but it is necessary to allow an enhanced trading relationship between the Caribbean and Europe to take shape. One that seeks to extend the benefits of trade to all, and replaces an economic relationship based on dependency with one built on new economic diversification and growth".

Other News

European Commission responds to natural disasters (24/7)

In the past month the Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) has received a total of 8 requests for assistance from Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Bulgaria and, most recently the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to help combat forest fires raging across Southern Europe. All Southern EU Member States and most neighbouring countries battled major fires on their own territory. The MIC also monitored the exceptional flood weather situation in the United Kingdom.

External Relations Council Conclusions on Darfur, Sudan (23/7)

The Council welcomed the renewed momentum of efforts to resolve the Darfur conflict through a negotiated political settlement and the deployment of the AU-UN Hybrid Operation. The Council said it was essential that the strengthening of peacekeeping in Darfur be backed up by strong and coherent international support.

The EU and the United States reach agreement on Passenger Name Record data (23/7)

The EU and the United States successfully completed negotiations on an Agreement on the processing and transfer of passenger name record (PNR) data by air carriers to the US Administration. A joint press release by the EU Presidency, Council of the EU and the Commission welcomed the new Agreement, which is aimed at helping to prevent and combat terrorism and other serious transnational crime, whilst ensuring an adequate level of protection of passengers' personal data, in line with European standards on fundamental rights and privacy. The Agreement aims to provide a long-term solution for the processing and transfer of PNR data and will be valid for a period of seven years, thus ensuring legal certainty for a considerable period.

Abolition of the death penalty in Rwanda – EU Presidency declaration (26/7)

The European Union welcomed the formal abolition of the death penalty in Rwanda and congratulated the Rwandan government and people on this important decision. The Presidency stated that this decision constituted a fundamental advance in the promotion of human rights and a solid commitment to ensure justice and reconciliation in Rwanda, 13 years after the genocide. The EU re-affirmed its objective of working towards universal abolition of the death penalty and stated it believed that abolition by Rwanda was an important step towards that aim and hoped that this decision will encourage other countries in the region to follow suit.

Javier Solana congratulates Prime Minister of Turkey on his election victory (24/7)

Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), congratulated the Prime Minister of Turkey, Tayyip Erdogan, on his victory in the parliamentary election: "I should like to congratulate you on the remarkable electoral victory that the AK Party has achieved under your leadership. The results of this crucial election are a resounding vote of confidence in the path of political and economic reform and ever-closer relations with the European Union that your government has followed".

EIB provides €14.3m for upgrading of wastewater and sanitation facilities in Lesotho (26/7)

The European Investment Bank (EIB) signed a loan with Lesotho's Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) for the expansion and rehabilitation of wastewater and sanitation facilities in Maseru, Lesotho's capital. The EIB's loan will cover 50% of the total project cost of €28.6m, while the European Commission under the EU Water Facility will provide a €10m grant and the Government of Lesotho the balance of €4.3m. The project will contribute significantly to Lesotho's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for sanitation. Mr. Jean-Louis Biancarelli, Director General for Operations outside the European Union, on behalf of EIB, welcomed "the successful co-operation with the European Commission on this project which demonstrates the Bank's role as a key partner in implementing the EU development policy agenda".

Commission provides €5 million in humanitarian aid to Kenya (23/7)

The European Commission has allocated €5m in humanitarian aid to areas of Northern Kenyan affected by drought. Beneficiaries include up to 3.5 million pastoralists who can no longer survive pursuing a rural way of life and are in need of nutritional, health, water and sanitation, public health and hygiene aid. This new fund is in addition to Commission food aid – worth €4m this year alone – and the aid that the Commission provides to improve drought preparedness in the whole region of the Horn of Africa, covering seven countries, including Kenya. All relief funds are channelled through the Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO).

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