



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 2004

Headline News

WTO: EU committed to progress in WTO negotiations (26/07/2004)



EU Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels have sent a strong message of the EU's commitment to conclude a framework commitment in the on-going WTO negotiations under the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) by the end of July. Speaking from Brussels EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy (right) and EU Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler (left) said: "The message coming out of Brussels today is loud and clear: the EU is working full steam ahead to make the WTO talks in Geneva a success. Be it agriculture, industrial tariffs, services or development issues, we want results which are both balanced and ambitious. In



the days to come we will negotiate constructively. But it is not only up to the EU to make the running. Now it is also up to others to finally show the colour of their money."

See: <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/04/996&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

The humanitarian crisis in Greater Darfur, Sudan – response of the European Commission (30/07/2004)

The European Commission is extremely concerned about the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis in the Greater Darfur region of Sudan, where a violent conflict has been raging since early 2003. The cease-fire signed in N'Djamena on 8 April is clearly a welcome development, particularly insofar as it commits the parties to allow fast and unrestricted humanitarian access and to facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistance in accordance with international humanitarian law and principles. However, there is a long way to go before durable stability and, eventually, peace can be re-established. In the meantime, protection remains a top priority and daunting humanitarian needs in all sectors will have to be addressed.

See: <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/04/203&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Other News

Aid to the Palestinians in 2004 (29/07/2004)

This year, assistance to the Palestinians from the European Community Budget is set to amount to around €250 million. This includes a package for the West Bank and Gaza just approved by the European Commission for €124.25 million. Today's announcement will be followed by the immediate release of a first contribution of €26m to the new Public Financial Management Reform Trust Fund established by the World Bank. The West Bank and Gaza Strip continue to suffer from a severe economic recession and income levels have dropped severely. In response to this, the 2004 programme pursues two objectives: addressing urgent needs and contributing to the creation of a viable and democratic Palestinian state.

See: <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/04/1001&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

European Commission supports Afghan elections with an additional €9 million (29/07/2004)

The Commission has approved a further €9 million package to support the elections in Afghanistan. The funding will support the Elections Project managed by the United Nations (UN), to which the European Union (EU) is the biggest single donor. Taken with previous contributions donated towards the preparation of these elections (voters' registration) today's announcement brings the European Commission contribution to €24 million, and when Member States' donations are added, the total EU funding for the entire elections process reaches almost €80 million.

See: <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/04/1000&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

EU Descartes Prize's fifth anniversary: eight research teams competing for the 2004 award (23/07/2004)

This year, the EU Descartes Prize for outstanding research through transnational co-operation is celebrating its fifth anniversary. The 2004 short-listed teams come from 20 countries and display scientific excellence in the fields of life sciences, engineering, information technologies, chemistry and physics. The two winners of this year's award – which is worth €1 million, with €500 000 for each winner – will be announced on 2 December in Prague.

See: <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/04/991&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

See also: **The EU Descartes Prize Finalists 2004 (23/07/2004)**

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/04/196&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

A promise of half a million years: EU research provides new insight into climate change (22/07/2004)

Within the €3.6 million EU research project PROMESS1 (PROfiles across MEditerranean Sedimentary Systems), with an EU contribution of €2.7 million, European scientists have collected 500 000 year-old sediment cores from the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea. These samples will allow researchers to reconstruct climate variations since pre-historic times, thus providing keys for understanding what is happening to Earth's climate now. Ocean drilling is crucial in understanding changes in climate, as the sediments hold archives of past developments.

See: <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/04/987&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

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Some of the key elements of the new European Constitution

- Europe has been built in stages and is based on different Treaties that have been concluded over time. From now on the EU and EC Treaties, as well as all the treaties amending and supplementing them, will be replaced by the "Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe". Thus, in legal terms the Constitution remains a treaty. Therefore, it will enter into force only when all Member States have ratified it. Modifications at a later date, with the exception of a few instances, will require the unanimous agreement of the Member States and, in principle, ratification by all. The integration of the Charter for Fundamental Rights into the text, the clear acknowledgement of the Union's values and objectives as well as the principles underlying the relationship between the Union and its Member States, allow us to call this basic text our "Constitution".
- The Constitution clarifies the respective roles of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. In particular, it recognises the different missions of the Commission, including its near monopoly of legislative initiative, its executive function and its function of representing the Union externally, except in the field of common foreign and security policy. The Constitution devotes the principle of inter-institutional programming to the Commission's initiative. It extends very substantially the scope of the co-decision procedure, which, significantly, will henceforth be called the legislative procedure (95% of European laws will be adopted jointly by the Parliament and the Council).
- The main institutional innovation is the creation of the post of Union Minister of Foreign Affairs, who will be responsible for the representation of the Union on the international scene. This function will merge the present tasks of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy with those of the Commissioner for external relations. The Union's newly acquired single legal personality will enable it to play a more visible role in world affairs.
- The Constitution establishes the European Council as an institution, distinct from the Council. The European Council will be chaired by a President, with limited powers, appointed for a period of two and a half years. The system of twice-yearly rotation among the Member States of the presidency of the different Council formations (with the exception of the External Relations Council) will be maintained, although within a "team presidency" of three countries. This system will be able to evolve in the future since it can be altered by the European Council acting by qualified majority.
- With regard to the composition of the institutions, the maximum number of seats in the European Parliament is raised to 750. These seats will be allocated to the Member States according to the principle of "degressive proportionality", with a minimum of six and a maximum of ninety-six seats. The precise number of seats attributed to each Member State will be decided before the European elections in 2009. It was decided to maintain the current composition of the Commission – one Commissioner per Member State – until 2014. From then on, the Commission will comprise a number of Commissioners corresponding to two thirds of the number of Member States. The members of the Commission will be chosen according to a system based on equal rotation among the Member States.
- The Constitution significantly updates provisions in the field of Justice and Home Affairs, in order to facilitate and improve the establishment of the area of freedom, security and justice. The provisions regarding external relations have been re-written, but in essence, the distinction between common foreign and security policy and the other aspects of EU external action still determines the respective roles of the institutions and the procedures that apply. The possibility of providing more ways for the Member States to co-operate more closely in the field of defence will underpin the credibility of the Union's foreign policy.
- The Constitution introduces, or confirms in a fundamental text, an important number of provisions aimed at greater democratic, transparent and controllable EU institutions that are closer to the citizen. The proceedings of the Council, when exercising its legislative function, are to be open to the public. New provisions on participatory democracy and good governance have acquired constitutional status. The Charter will guarantee better protection of fundamental rights.

This is extracted from a provisional document - a non-paper prepared by the Commission in order to provide prompt information. It has no legal status and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European institutions. see: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/press_room/presspacks/constit/oth250604_2_en.pdf

