



**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**

### **[European Parliament visit to SA and Ethiopia](#)**

EP President Hans-Gert Pöttering paid an official visit to South Africa and Ethiopia to participate in meetings with the African Union. He had been invited by Gertrude Mongella, the President of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), with a view to strengthening institutional links and promoting parliamentary democracy, as the best means to achieve peace and prosperity on the African continent.

[EP President speech to Pan-African Parliament](#)

### **[Javier Solana congratulates Barack Obama on his election as President of the US](#)**

Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, made the following statement following the Presidential elections in the United States of America : "I want to congratulate Barack Obama on his impressive election victory. Elections are about political renewal. The campaign has been exciting and uplifting and the turnout impressive. The sense of renewal also applies to the transatlantic relations. Europeans and Americans are keen to open a new chapter in their relations. President-elect Obama personifies what is good and impressive about America. He also personifies today's complex and globalized world where change is a constant. As we grapple with these problems, it is good to have someone who put change, empathy and good judgement at the heart of his campaign. I am looking forward to working with President Obama and his administration".

### **[Democratic Republic of Congo: Commissioner Michel proposes peace summit](#)**

European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, launched a call for a new 'Nairobi' Peace Summit to bring together all regional leaders and international bodies in a bid to secure an agreement to end the conflict and bring lasting stability for the Kivus region. The 'Nairobi 2' summit, which would be held in the Kenyan capital under the auspices of the United Nations, would unite leaders from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi as well as the EU, the US and all regional bodies including the African Union, SADC, COMESA and EAC. Commissioner Michel believes that any future 'Nairobi 2' summit is essential to bring both leaders, as well as other key regional leaders and international representatives, to negotiations at the same table. Only a political solution that deals with the root causes of the crisis can bring stability.

## **Other News**

### **[Council adopts joint action on an EU operation against acts of piracy off the Somali coast](#)**

The Council of the European Union adopted a joint action concerning the EU military operation in order to contribute to the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast. The action aims to contribute to the protection of vessels of the World Food Programme (WFP) delivering food aid to displaced persons in Somalia, the protection of vulnerable vessels cruising off the Somali coast, as well as the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast.

### **[EU Commissioner Louis Michel expresses concern over aid workers seized in Somalia](#)**

Louis Michel, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, expressed his deep concern about the seizure of four aid workers from Action Against Hunger and the two pilots of a European Commission chartered aircraft, near the Somali town of Dhusa Mareb. Commissioner Michel said: "I urge the captors to release these people without delay. The

assistance provided by the Commission and its partners in Somalia is solely aimed at relieving the suffering of people who are in desperate need. The only goal of our humanitarian assistance is to save lives and provide relief in an impartial and non-discriminatory way. "

#### **[New Commission report assesses European trade strengths in a changing global economy](#)**

A new report by the European Commission has assessed the competitiveness of the European Union in the global economy at the end of a decade of rapid economic change. Since the mid-1990s, there has been a major redistribution of market share between emerging and developed countries and among developed countries themselves. In this highly competitive environment, the EU has broadly maintained its world market share, while the US and Japan have lost ground. The EU remains the world's biggest exporter of manufactured goods, and dominates markets for high-quality products. The report warns, however, that the EU must focus on investment in its high-technology manufacturing and continue to improve its market share in the fast growing economies of Asia. The report reinforces the economic arguments behind the launch of the European Commission's Global Europe trade policy framework in 2006.

#### **[European Court of Auditors 2007 report on EU funds](#)**

The European Court of Auditors presented its report on how EU funds were spent in 2007 at a meeting of the European Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee. Expenditure on administration and for economic and financial affairs (enterprise, internal market, etc.) received a clean bill of health, as did the revenue side of the EU budget. Although there were improvements in internal policies and external actions, the policy areas of agriculture, research, energy and transport, external aid, development and enlargement, education and citizenship were still "affected by material levels of error"

#### **[EU Enlargement updated strategy and progress reports](#)**

The Commission's annual strategy document explaining its policy on EU enlargement was adopted. The document includes a summary of the progress made over the last twelve months by each candidate and potential candidate: Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (under UN Security Council Resolution 1244). In addition, the 2008 progress reports were published, where the Commission services monitor and assess the achievements of each of the candidate and potential candidates over the last year.

#### **[European Parliament approves new pesticide legislation](#)**

The European Parliament's Environment Committee voted on new legislation governing the production, licensing and use of pesticides. MEPs confirmed that certain toxic chemicals will be banned, except where there is a serious danger to plant health. They also argued that the EU should not be divided into three pesticide licensing zones. In addition, Member States will have to meet quantitative targets for reducing the volume of pesticides used. The European Commission has rejected widely publicised claims that the tough new rules on pesticides would cause a large number of pesticides to be removed from the market, thereby seriously affecting farmers and food prices. It argues that only 4% of substances would disappear because they are endocrine disruptors and only 2% because they are carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction.

#### **[European Youth Week 2008: The future challenges for youth](#)**

The future challenges for young people were at the top of the agenda during the fourth edition of the European Youth Week, held from 2-9 November 2008. An Political debates, cultural and other activities were organised in all corners of Europe, with numerous activities taking place in Brussels for some 200 selected young participants. European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel' said: " I am impressed with the unprecedented number of activities being organised all over Europe. These activities will ensure that the voice of young people is heard, before we embark upon reviewing the framework of co-operation for young people at European level. The Youth Week is also an occasion to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the EU's programmes in support of youth, in which more than one and half million young people have already participated. I am glad that through our youth programmes these young people have gained new competences and invaluable intercultural experiences."

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