



European Union
Delegation of the European Commission
in South Africa

**... this week
in review**

media briefing



28 February – 6 March 2003

EU will observe Parliamentary, Presidential and States' Elections in Nigeria (05/03/03)

The EU will deploy an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Nigeria, which will follow the preparations and conduct of the Parliamentary (12 April), Presidential (19 April, possible runoffs 26-29 April,) and States' Elections (Governors, 19 April and States' Houses of Assembly 3 May). After the establishment of civilian rule in 1999, these elections are an important test for the state of democracy in Africa's most populous country. Commissioner for External Relations Christopher Patten has appointed as Chief Observer, Max van den Berg, MEP, Vice Chairman of the EP Committee on Development and Co-operation. The deployment of the EOM follows an invitation from the Nigerian Foreign Minister, H.E. Sule Lamido. For more information please refer to the following web address:

http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/327|0|RAPID&lg=EN;

EU and Mercosur accelerate negotiations towards free trade (05/03/03)

In the current negotiations for a Association Agreement between the EU and Mercosur, both parties exchanged their offers for market opening, as foreseen in the work program agreed at the EU-Mercosur ministerial meeting in Rio de Janeiro on 23 July 2002. This move paves the way for the next negotiating round, which will take place in Brussels between 17-21 March 2003. For more information please refer to the following web address:

http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/329|0|RAPID&lg=EN;

Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the release of 100 Moroccan prisoners of war by the Polisario Front (05/03/03)

The EU welcomes the release on 26 February of 100 Moroccan prisoners of war by the Polisario Front. The humanitarian aspects that stem from the problem of Western Sahara have been a source of constant concern for the EU, which has carried out repeated demarches in this respect to the parties involved, underlining the need to improve the humanitarian situation of the persons and populations affected by this continuing crisis. (Press 65, Nr: 6963/03) For more information please refer to the following web address: <http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/NewMain.asp?LANG=1>

GMOs: Commission addresses GM crop co-existence (05/03/03)

On 5/3/03 the European Commission held a policy discussion about co-existence of genetically modified (GM), conventional, and organic crops. The Commissioners addressed the concept of co-existence, preparatory work carried out so far, possible farm management measures, the feasibility of GM-free zones and liability for adventitious presence. The Commission noted that co-existence concerns the economic consequences of adventitious presence of genetically modified (GM) crops in non-GM crops. The issue has its origin in the principle that farmers should be able to cultivate freely the agricultural crops they choose, be it GM, conventional or organic. No form of agriculture should be excluded in the EU. For more information please refer to the following web address:

http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/314|0|RAPID&lg=EN;

The EU appeals to Russia to ratify the Kyoto Protocol (05/03/03)

EU Environment Commissioner Margot Wallström, together with Environment Ministers Vasso Papatreou of Greece - President-in-office of the EU Environment Council - and Altero Matteoli of Italy, will travel to Moscow today to encourage Russia to complete ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and discuss a strengthening of co-operation in the fight against climate change. Russia's ratification is necessary to enable the Kyoto Protocol to enter into force. The Troika visit to Russia is the latest initiative in the EU's ongoing efforts to secure the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and effective multilateral action to combat climate change. The Troika will be in Moscow from 5-7 March 2003. For more information please refer to the following web address:

http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/3220|RAPID&lg=EN:

European Commission to assist African Union in launching a Cease-fire Observer Mission in Burundi (04/03/03)

The European Commission decided to contribute to the establishment of an African Union (AU) Cease-fire Observer Mission in Burundi with a grant of €1.23m, which will contribute to the establishment and operation of the Mission for a period of six months. The Mission will monitor the implementation of the Cease-fire Agreements signed at the end of 2002 between the transitional Government of Burundi and several major rebel groups. Given recent events in Burundi, it has become urgent to deploy the AU observers as quickly as possible and in that context the European Commission calls on all Burundians parties to respect the Cease-fire Agreements and to resume dialogue without delay. This contribution is an expression of support for the peace process in Burundi and of the priority which the European Commission attaches to the restoration of peace and security in Burundi and the Great Lakes Region in general. For more information please refer to the following web address:

http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/3080|RAPID&lg=EN:

EU-Lebanon : entry into force of the Interim Agreement (01/03/03)

Chris Patten, European Commissioner for External Relations, speaking on the eve of the entry into force of the EU-Lebanon Interim Agreement, said : "Tomorrow is an important day for the European Union's relations with Lebanon, the day on which the trade measures we have negotiated with Lebanon enter into force as an Interim Agreement. This brings Lebanon and Europe closer together as part of the wider Euro-Mediterranean area". Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy also expressed his satisfaction : "I am particularly pleased that Lebanon has opted for the fast track by seeking through this Interim Agreement an early start to the transition to free trade. This demonstrates that Lebanon is determined to meet, sooner rather than later, its commitments on approximating its trade and economic legislation with that of the European Union." For more information please refer to the following web address:

http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/3000|RAPID&lg=EN&display=

Pascal Lamy in St Lucia for Africa Caribbean Pacific Trade Ministerial (28/02/03)

European Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy spends 1-2 March on the Caribbean island of St Lucia to chair the ACP-EU Ministerial Trade Committee and give an impetus to the ACP-EU negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and the on-going negotiations under the WTO's Doha Development Agenda. On the eve of his departure, Pascal Lamy said : "This is my first working visit to the Caribbean since taking office as Trade Commissioner. St Lucia will provide an excellent setting for examining the specific constraints facing small island countries as well as the Caribbean as a whole. I want to discuss how the Doha Development Agenda and the Economic Partnership Agreements can contribute to sustainable development through regional integration. We have a tremendous challenge ahead of us but I am confident that our joint work will assist in these efforts." For more information please refer to the following web address:

http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/2980|RAPID&lg=EN&display=

Flash estimate - February 2003 Euro-zone inflation estimated at 2.3% (28/02/03)

Euro-zone annual inflation is expected to be 2.3% in February 2003 according to a flash estimate issued by Eurostat - the Statistical Office of the European Communities in Luxembourg. It was 2.2% in January. For more information please refer to the following web address:

http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=STAT/03/210|RAPID&lg=EN&display=

AHEAD

Council and Commission statements on Iraq - Debate : 12.03.2003

The Council and Commission will be making statements on the latest developments in the Iraq crisis. The statement follows the extraordinary European Council of 17th February. The EU's objective for Iraq "remains full and effective disarmament in accordance with the relevant UNSC resolutions, in particular resolution 1441". Parliament will have a chance to debate the so-called "second UN resolution". For approval, any resolution needs the backing of nine of the 15 Council members and must not be vetoed by any of the five permanent members. The conclusions of the Summit can be found at: <http://www.ue2003.gr/en/articles/2003/2/18/1945/>

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