



European Union

Delegation of the European Commission
to South Africa

**... this week
in review**

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

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28 January – 3 February 2008

Headline News

[Trade Commissioner wants full Economic Partnership Agreements in 2008](#)

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson said that he wants to use 2008 to transform the interim Economic Partnership Agreements initialled by the EU and African and Pacific countries in December 2007 into full trade and development agreements. Speaking in the Development Committee of the European Parliament, Commissioner Mandelson said that the interim agreements were a significant achievement in difficult circumstances and showed the "ACP and EU working together can make policy and build partnerships as equals". The EU and the Caribbean region signed a full EPA in December 2007. The agreements open the EU market fully to these countries and allow for gradual liberalisation over many years on the ACP side. They also include chapters on development cooperation, revised rules of origin to make it easier to trade with the EU and other issues.

[Read the full transcript of Mandelson's remarks to the Development Committee](#)

[EU Military Operation in Eastern Chad and North Eastern Central African Republic](#)

On 28 January 2008, the EU launched a bridging military operation in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) in accordance with the mandate set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1778 (2007). This operation comes within the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). In deciding to conduct this operation the EU is stepping up its longstanding action in support of efforts to tackle the crisis in Darfur as part of a regional approach to that crisis. The operation will include around 3,700 troops and is the most multinational military operation conducted in Africa by the EU so far: 14 EU Member States will be present in the field (Chad/CAR); 22 EU Member States are present at the Operations Headquarters (OHQ). The budget for the military operation stands at EUR 119,6 million. These measures will be continued within the strategic framework of the 10th European Development Fund, which will allocate €299 million to Chad and €137 million to CAR over a five-year period.

[10-year anniversary of the euro](#)

To celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the launch of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the creation of the euro, a commemorative €2 coin will be issued in all euro area countries at the beginning of 2009. Five designs have been pre-selected, but the final choice will be for the citizens and residents of the EU. The winner will get a set of gold euro collector coins with a value of several thousand euros. Voting has started on a website designed for this purpose and will close on 22 February. The winner will be announced on 25 February. To see the five pre-selected designs and to vote click here : <http://www.eurodesigncontest.eu>

Other News

["Europe – the Time has come for dynamic consolidation" – speech by Commission President Barroso](#)

"We are here today at a very important time for Europe. We have just recently presented a package of proposals on energy and climate of historic importance. This comes only a few days after Malta and Cyprus joined the euro zone, Slovenia took up the Presidency of the Council of the EU, and the Schengen area was extended to nine "new" Member States. These three events are of enormous political significance because they are symbolic and political confirmation that the 2004 enlargement was an undoubted success. There was also another important event, which was, of course, the signing in December of the Lisbon Treaty. At this time of globalisation we need a strong Europe more than ever. By this I mean a united Europe – of large and small, central and peripheral, rich and poor Member States. We need a Europe of solidarity. A Europe that has the will to act. A Europe of leadership".

[EC group of intellectuals report on multilingualism](#)

The Group of Intellectuals set up to advise the Commission on the contribution of multilingualism to Intercultural Dialogue delivered its report, entitled 'A rewarding challenge', to Multilingualism Commissioner Leonard Orban. The group, chaired by Amin Maalouf, in the context of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008, makes proposals on how languages can foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, establishing a clear link between linguistic diversity and European integration. These findings should fuel the discussion at the first-ever Ministerial Conference on multilingualism, scheduled for 15 February. Commissioner Orban said "The proposals submitted are in tune with the wish expressed by EU heads of state and government in Barcelona in 2002 to include 'mother tongue plus two' languages in EU education. A good knowledge of other languages builds bridges and promotes understanding between cultures."

For more information on the languages in the EU: <http://europa.eu/languages/>

[European Commission launches the Covenant of Mayors](#)

The European Commission launched the Covenant of Mayors, the most ambitious initiative to date involving citizens in the fight against global warming. Almost 100 cities throughout Europe, including 15 capital cities, have expressed their early support for the Covenant. The adhering cities and regions will formally commit to reduce their CO₂ emission by more than 20% by 2020, by developing Sustainable Energy Action Plans. Elected representatives from London, Helsinki, Riga, Berlin, Bonn, Milan, Venezia, Nantes, Ljubljana, Warsaw and other cities attended the launch, together with Energy Commissioner Piebalgs and President of the Committee of the Regions Michel Delebarre. "Cities are becoming the places to deliver new ideas and innovative projects against global warming. The approach to tackle the climate crisis challenge can only be holistic, integrated, long-term and, most of all, based on the participation of citizens. Cities must therefore become leading actors for implementing sustainable energy policies, and must be supported in their effort", said Commissioner Piebalgs.

[European Parliament MEPs discuss global warming and water shortages](#)

The European Parliament's Climate Change Committee held a hearing on climate change and water, looking at future scarcity of water for drinking and agriculture, and the effect of rising sea levels on islands and coastal areas. The UN reports that a further 3°C rise in temperature could see the Alps lose 80% of their snow, and estimates that 40% of the world's population could be affected by the melting of snow and glaciers in Asia. The UN's Habitat Agency has predicted that by 2032, 60% of the world's population will live in areas of water scarcity. One of the worst affected places could be Sub-Saharan Africa, where water shortages could devastate food supplies and any chance of economic progress. In Europe the picture is also bleak. A consultative Green Paper prepared for the European Commission has predicted that by 2080 rainfall in the Iberian Peninsula - Spain and Portugal - could be less than half of current levels.

[Radical simplification of EU law: 5000 pages of Official Journal removed](#)

300 legal acts representing about 5000 pages of the Official Journal have been removed from the roughly 95,000 pages of the Community acquis as a result of the legislative simplification process under way since October 2005. The European Commission's "Second progress report on the strategy for the simplification of the regulatory environment" shows that citizens and companies, in particular small and medium sized enterprises have already seen tangible results. Further improvements will come when the large number of initiatives currently pending before the Council and the European Parliament are adopted. The simplification rolling programme is now composed of about 164 initiatives covering all policy areas. The programme uses legislative techniques such as repeal, codification and recasting.

[Commission proposal to overhaul EU food labelling rules](#)

The European Commission adopted a proposal to make food labels clearer and more relevant to the needs of EU consumers. The aim of the draft Regulation is to modernise and improve EU food labelling rules, so that consumers have the essential information they need to make informed purchasing choices. Under the proposal, pre-packaged food will have to display key nutritional information on the front of the package. General requirements on how nutrition information should be displayed on food labels are also set out. Commissioner for Health, Markos Kyprianou, said: "Food labels can have a huge influence on consumers' purchasing decisions. Confusing, overloaded or misleading labels can be more of a hindrance than a help to the consumer. Today's proposal aims to ensure that food labels carry the essential information in a clear and legible way, so that EU citizens are empowered to make balanced dietary choices."

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