



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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3 – 16 March 2008



Headline News

EU Trade Commissioner visits southern Africa



Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson commenced a visit to southern Africa in Lesotho by attending a meeting of trade Ministers from Least Developed Countries on the Doha Round of world trade talks (29 Feb), where he warned that a [Doha failure would hurt the poorest](#). Over the weekend Mandelson then met with President Thabo Mbeki (image, left) and his Minister for Trade and Industry, Mandisi Mpahlwa, to discuss concerns regarding the SADC EPA ([Economic Partnership Agreement](#)) negotiations and the WTO Doha Development Agenda. The Commissioner continued his visit with an EU-ESA (Eastern and Southern Africa) EPA Ministerial Meeting in Zambia (3rd March), and an EU-SADC EPA Ministerial Meeting in Botswana (4th March).

See also: [ACP-EU Economic and Social Interest Groups call for EPA negotiations to continue](#)

Louis Michel condemns renewed violence in Darfur

Louis Michel, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid strongly condemned the recent violence in the northern corridor of West Darfur that has forced thousands to flee their homes. "The Darfur story is one of tragedy piled upon tragedy," said Commissioner Michel. "Every day, more lives are shattered in a vicious cycle of futile conflict. Our humanitarian aid helps to keep millions alive in this crisis zone and we are doing all we can to keep the aid flowing. But the operation is on a constant knife-edge while the fighting rages." Commissioner Michel highlighted "the international legal duty of governments to protect their citizens" and called on the Sudanese authorities "to meet this obligation immediately." He continued: "It is imperative that all parties work together to let the UNAMID peacekeepers deploy speedily on the ground. With looming food shortages, the aid agencies must be given the space to relieve the suffering."

Other News

Online consultation on Regional Integration for Development in ACP Countries

DG Development has launched an online public consultation in view of the adoption of a Communication on Regional Integration for Development in ACP countries, which should be published in September this year. The purpose of the consultation is to gather views from all stakeholders on regional integration in ACP countries and on possible actions that the EU, its Member States and other relevant actors should take to support it. The form can be filled in online on the DG Development website <http://ec.europa.eu/development/about/consultation/index.cfm?action=viewcons&id=3135>, as well as on the European Commission's main site for consultation: http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/index_en.htm. The deadline for filling in the form is 9 May 2008.

Gender Equality Drawing Competition

To celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March 2008, the European Commission Delegation to SA announces a 2nd international drawing competition under the theme "Gender Equality". The competition is open to all school-going children from ages 8-10. SA entries will compete with submissions from the rest of Africa and two drawings will finally be selected from the African continent by a peer group jury. A prize of a total value of €1.000 for each region will be awarded to the two winners from each region participating in the competition. The deadline is 1st May 2008. For more information, consult the following website:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/worldwide/gender/index_en.htm



[50th anniversary of the European Parliament celebrated in Strasbourg](#)

To celebrate the European Parliament's 50th anniversary on 19 March 2008, the presidents of the EP, the Council and the Commission each addressed the House in a special sitting in Strasbourg. The speeches were preceded and followed by performances by the European Youth Orchestra. In his opening address, European Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering, stressed that "step by step, the European Parliament has fought to secure more and more rights and has become ever more aware of its responsibility and of what it can do; and today it does credit to its name". Talking about the Reform Treaty President Pöttering said "The Treaty of Lisbon will further strengthen our rights. In future, decisions on important issues now of concern to citizens in the European Union can be taken only if the European Parliament gives its consent".

[Debate on positive and negative aspects of globalisation](#)

European Parliament MEPs, experts and representatives of the EU's Foundation for Living and Working Conditions, debated the positive and negative aspects of globalisation. The need to tackle inequality, invest in human capital and a call for a realistic approach were among the themes raised during the hearing. A speaker for the Dublin-based Foundation for Living and Working Conditions drew some historical parallels with what was currently happening to the world economy. He told them "to remember that we have been in a similar situation before 1914". Referring to recent turbulence and insecurity in the international credit market he went on to warn that "free financial markets are the Achilles heel of the globalisation process". Many at the hearing stressed the need for Europe to invest in training and gearing itself towards a more flexible workforce that embraced a form of "flexicurity" (flexibility with high levels of social security protection). Also under discussion was the European Globalisation adjustment Fund (EGF) set up in early 2007 to fund measures to keep people in employment.

[EU supports capacity building for developing countries in WTO](#)

The European Commission agreed to contribute a further €1 million to the WTO's DDA (Doha Development Agenda) Global Trust Fund as part of its ongoing support for the institution's work. This contribution will support the implementation of the WTO's Technical Assistance and Training Plan for Developing Countries in 2008. The funding underscores the EU's commitment to helping developing countries overcome capacity constraints, acquire a better understanding of WTO rules and procedures and, consequently, better integrate into the global trading system. Overall, EU Member States and the European Commission have contributed around two thirds of the total funding for the DDA Global Trust Fund since it was first set up in 2002. EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson said: "The EU has always pledged to put trade at the service of development; and today's contribution again shows that the EC is putting its money where its mouth is. The funds will allow developing countries to continue capacity-building in order to take advantage of the multilateral trading system. Of course, the most important result for developing countries remains a successful conclusion to the Doha round".

[EU congratulates Medvedev on the victory in the Presidential elections in Russia](#)

Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy congratulated Dmitriy Anatolyevich Medvedev on his election as President of Russia. Solana expressed his belief that his Presidency will see a further broadening and strengthening of the strategic partnership between Russia and the European Union.

[European Parliament MEPs debate rising food prices and biofuels with World Food Programme](#)

European Parliament MEPs debated the impact of soaring food prices on development, and of biofuel production on food supply, with Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme, at an extraordinary meeting of the Development Committee on Thursday. Ms Sheeran said the Programme's operational costs have increased 40% since June 2007. Among factors driving food price rises, she cited the rise in oil and energy prices, economic booms in India and China, weather-related events impacting on harvests and "competition" between food and fuel. Ms Sheeran called for a solution to be found to the WFP's funding gap of 500 million US dollars in 2008, to avoid a cut in food rations or in the number of people to whom aid can be delivered.



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