



European Union

Delegation to the Republic of South Africa  
Head of Delegation

# EU Perspectives

*Regular publication that seeks to provide information  
on EU-related activities of interest to SA readers*



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## Headline News

### [Speech by European Commission President José Manuel Durão Barroso - State of the Union 2010](#)

President Barroso's address to the European Parliament: 'It is a great privilege to deliver the first State of the Union address before this House. From now on the State of the Union address will be the occasion when we will chart our work for the next 12 months. Many of the decisions we will take this year will have long-term implications. They will define the kind of Europe we want. They will define a Europe of opportunity where those that aspire are elevated and those in need are not neglected. A Europe that is open to the world and open to its people. A Europe which delivers economic, social and territorial cohesion'. In his speech, President Barroso outlined a number of major challenges for the EU: dealing with the economic crisis and governance; restoring growth for jobs by accelerating the Europe 2020 reform agenda; building an area of freedom, justice and security; launching negotiations for a modern EU budget and pulling the EU's weight on the global stage.

### [Jobs growth top of President Barroso's agenda](#)

In setting out his strategic plans for the EU over the next year, in his State of the Union speech to the European Parliament, Commission President José Manuel Barroso said the EU's economic outlook was better than a year ago and was improving. Growth would be higher than forecast and unemployment was no longer increasing. "But our work is not finished" he added. "We must accelerate our reform agenda." Over the next 12 months, the Commission plans to bring forward new legislation on improved economic governance in the EU, job skills, tackling poverty and exclusion, cutting red tape for small businesses and removing obstacles to trading on the EU's single market.

### [EU approves €264m to help 19 ACP States face the consequences of the global economic crisis](#)

The European Commission approved the first financing decisions under the €264m 2010 allocation for the so-called Vulnerability FLEX mechanism, to help the most vulnerable African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries cope with the impact of the global financial crisis and economic downturn. The V-FLEX mechanism is a short-term instrument, which provides for €500m over two years (2009-2010). "Developing countries continue to face important difficulties, including funding gaps in their government's budgets, as a direct consequence of the global financial crisis. This year, this EU mechanism will help 19 ACP countries maintain their level of public spending in priority areas, and therefore mitigate the social impact of the economic downturn," said Andris Piebalgs, Commissioner for Development. In 2010, the mechanism will provide, upon their request, support to: Antigua & Barbuda, Benin, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Grenada, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Togo, Tonga, Tuvalu and Zimbabwe. The financing decisions in favour of Burkina Faso (€ 14m) and Grenada (€ 3,5 m) have already been adopted. Financing decisions in favour of other countries will follow during the course of autumn 2010.

## Other News

### [9 out of 10 Europeans express steadfast support for development aid, says a special Eurobarometer](#)

A Eurobarometer survey showed that European citizens continue to show resolute support to aid provided to developing countries. Ahead of a UN High Level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, the survey shows that 89% of

respondents consider development aid is important or very important. Two in three Europeans believe that the EU should honour, or even improve, on its promises to increase development aid to 0.7% of GNI by 2015, the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This support, shared by a vast majority of citizens regardless of their nationality, has remained consistently high, despite the financial crisis and the economic situation in Europe. European Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs said: "European citizens sent a very clear message to all of us: despite the economic slowdown, EU's solidarity and responsibility towards those in need must be pursued. I personally see this as a mandate to remain relentlessly determined in attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Clearly, we need to ensure the highest impact of EU aid, which is the biggest in the world."

#### **EU Trade Commissioner welcomes successful meeting of Trade Ministers**

EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht welcomed the first EU Trade Ministers meeting under the Lisbon Treaty. "Today's meeting highlights the way trade policy can help the economic recovery", said Commissioner De Gucht. The Ministers met in the setting of a Foreign Affairs Council, which discussed, amongst other things, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, negotiations towards a Free Trade Agreement with Malaysia and the beginning of negotiations with China on the protection of geographical indications for wines, spirits, agricultural products and foodstuffs. Commissioner De Gucht also took the opportunity to present to Ministers the Commission's proposal towards a common international investment policy. He laid out how the new EU competence on foreign direct investment could be used to boost competitiveness and trade, resulting in growth and jobs.

#### **EU Conference on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women's Participation in Peace and Security**

An EU High-level Conference called for renewed efforts to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women's Participation in Peace and Security. Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission, and Steven Vanackere, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, co-hosted a high-level conference at the Palais d'Egmont in Brussels to mark the tenth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women's Participation in Peace and Security and called for its full and speedy implementation. HR/VP Ashton said: "UN Security Council Resolution 1325 underlined the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. However, 10 years down the road, this commitment has not yet been fulfilled". HR/VP Ashton promised determined action, particularly within the European External Action Service, and described the EU's comprehensive approach to implementing Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security, in which gender equality and women's rights are central to its crisis management missions and development cooperation.

#### **EU High Representative/Commission Vice-President Catherine Ashton visits China for first "Partnership" Dialogue**

EU High Representative/Commission Vice-President Catherine Ashton travelled to China to attend the first ever EU-China High Level "Partnership" Dialogue, a key staging post ahead of the upcoming Gymnich informal Foreign Ministers meeting and summit of EU leaders, where China will take centre stage, as part of a wider discussion on strategic partnerships. Last May, HR/VP Ashton and State Councillor Dai Bingguo, China's most senior interlocutor on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, agreed to co-chair the EU-China High-Level Strategic Dialogue, which is designed to address issues of concern and mutual interest, through frank and constructive engagement at the highest level. The EU and China have shown a common will to deepen bilateral relations on foreign and security matters such as the Korean Peninsula, Iran, Africa and piracy in the Gulf of Aden. HR/VP Ashton believes a strong EU-China cooperation could bring concrete solutions in these areas. "The EU and China face common challenges and share similar goals. I look forward to working together with State Councillor Dai Bingguo in order to advance a constructive and cooperative relationship with China, a key strategic partner for Europe in a globalised world" she said.

#### **Biodiversity: Powering up local authorities around the globe**

How can local authorities save money while boosting economies, enhancing quality of life and generating employment? By factoring ecosystem services into policy-making, according to a new report. The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) for Local and Regional Policy Makers report shows local policy makers how to improve their understanding of the value and services provided by natural capital like woodlands, parks and waterways, and to reap benefits in local policy areas such as urban management, spatial planning and protected areas management. European Commissioner for the Environment, Janez Potočnik, said: "Local and regional planning authorities wield enormous power, and can be a tremendous force for good. This report showcases numerous examples of the successful integration of biodiversity-friendly thinking into local planning decisions around the world, with detailed benefits for local citizens. In many cases, it's a roadmap to environmental success."

#### **Marie Curie Actions: Record number of applications for EU research grants**

Nearly 5,000 researchers have applied for EU-funded Marie Curie fellowship grants in 2010, an increase of 20% on last year. Around 800 fellowships worth a total of €150m will be granted to researchers working on projects of up to three years in another country. Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, said: "The EU's investment in higher education and research is crucial, because it helps Europe to compete on the global stage. It also contributes to the Europe 2020 targets by making it easier for common research projects across the EU." Support is available for researchers moving within Europe, as well as to other parts of the world. The fellowships are also open to top researchers from outside the EU, who want to carry out research in Europe.

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