



**European Union**  
Delegation of the European Commission  
in South Africa

**... this week  
in review**

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



## **30 July – 05 August 2007**

### **Headline News**

#### **EU welcomes Security Council resolution on Darfur (1/8)**

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, welcomed the unanimous adoption by the UN Security Council of resolution 1769, authorising the deployment of a UN/AU Hybrid Mission in Darfur, and called on all parties invited to the Arusha meeting to participate in a constructive way: "This resolution is the result of intense and constructive co-operation, which I salute, between the United Nations and the African Union. I now call on all parties to work for a swift transition from the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to the Hybrid Mission. The European Union stands ready to step up its support to this end".

#### **Death sentences in Iran – Presidency declaration (3/8)**

The EU Presidency expressed deep concern over a series of collective public executions that have taken place recently in several regions of Iran, as well as with the growing number of death sentences passed, both at first level courts and at the Supreme Court, noting in particular the death sentences passed on two Kurdish journalists, Adnan Hassanpour and Abdolwahed Boutimar. The Declaration stated that the EU was also troubled by growing repression against all groups which exercise their right to freely express their opinions, in particular in Kurdish and Arab minority regions and urged Iran to fully respect its Criminal Procedure Code and grant the right to a fair trial to all individuals.

#### **Forest fires: 2007 is worst July on record (2/8)**

With the forest fire season barely started, provisional figures show that 3376 square kilometres of land has already been burned in 2007, compared to a total of 3585 square kilometres in 2006, with July 2007 one of the worst-ever months on record. Following warnings of high fire risk at the end of June in countries such as Greece and Cyprus, the second half of July saw a sharp increase in fires and burnt areas in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Italy. Using satellite images to map all fires affecting an area of more than 50 hectares in these four countries alone showed a total of 2229 square kilometres of burnt land. Figures for some other countries that have experienced major fires, such as Turkey and Albania, have yet to be included in EFFIS, a meteorological and satellite based mapping system developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. Spain has, via the European Commission, activated the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters" that aims at providing a unified system of satellite imagery acquisition and delivery to those affected by natural or man-made disasters.

### **Other News**

#### **Humanitarian Response Depots receive €3m from ECHO (31/7)**

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomed a €3m contribution from the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (DG ECHO), aimed at strengthening the globe-straddling network of five humanitarian response depots (HRDs), which the WFP manages on behalf of the humanitarian community. HRDs are the cornerstones of a worldwide global response system which pre-positions strategic reserves in five key locations: Accra in Ghana, Brindisi in Italy, Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, Panama City in Panama and Subang in Malaysia. The depots hold basic supplies (food, shelter, medical kits) and operational support equipment, including prefabricated offices and living accommodation, communications gear, logistical items etc. "Commission support to the HRDs is a concrete measure to put into action our ambition to reach people in need faster and with the right kind of help in order to save as many lives as possible," said Louis Michel, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid. "It will also strengthen the co-operation between different humanitarian actors such as non-governmental organisations and the United Nations".

**More info:** [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm)

### **Accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the Europol Convention (2/8)**

The EU Council for General Affairs and External Relations adopted a decision concerning the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the Europol Convention. The decision entered into force on 1 August 2007, after having been published in the Official Journal of the European Union. Europol now consists of 27 Member States. "It is a big pleasure for me to welcome Bulgaria and Romania as fully fledged members of Europol. Europol has for years had an excellent co-operation with Bulgaria and Romania, but as full members the level of co-operation will be even better and to our common benefit in the fight against international organised crime and terrorism," says Max-Peter Ratzel, Europol Director.

### **Mushrooms may hold magic solution to environmental woes (3/8)**

European experts are leading a global effort to decode the genetic sequence of the common *Agaricus bisporus*, or button mushroom. The short, white mushroom that dots European fields and features in European meals may possess a range of beneficial qualities capable of remedying many of our environmental woes, including reducing carbon levels and removing heavy metals from the soil. This worldwide project is co-ordinated by the University of Warwick (UK), and includes several partners from across Europe and North America, the two continents where the mushroom is most common. In addition to their influence on carbon in forests, button mushrooms also have the added ability to hyper-accumulate toxic metals in soils much more rapidly than other fungi. If scientists can pinpoint how they accomplish this, they could be better utilised for the bioremediation of contaminated soils. For the project, the University of Warwick is co-ordinating the provision of genetic material analysis of the sequence data, and is acting as curator of the mushroom genome. Other partners include the Joint Genome Institute USA, University of Bristol (UK), Institut für Forstbotanik der Universität Göttingen (DE), Public University of Navarre (ES), Penn State University (US), Plant Research International Wageningen (NL) and Universiteit Utrecht (NL). Project participants expect to have 90% of the mushroom's genome completed by 2010.

### **Ethiopia: Commission provides €5 million in humanitarian aid (30/7)**

The European Commission has allocated €5 million in humanitarian aid to vulnerable people in Ethiopia affected by conflicts, climatic hazards as well as public health hazards. The climatic hazards concern drought followed by floods – the latter aggravating the vulnerability of the population to water borne diseases like acute watery diarrhoea (cholera). In addition, Ethiopia is the most malaria prone country in Africa and also had to deal with measles and meningitis epidemics in 2006. The Commission's aim is to provide humanitarian assistance to around 750,000 vulnerable people – including internally displaced persons – in the sectors of health, water and sanitation and protection. All funds are channelled through the Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO), under the responsibility of the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel. Commissioner Louis Michel said: "Europe cares. The situation in Ethiopia remains fragile. The European Commission is one of the largest donors in the country and we continue responding to emergency humanitarian needs in areas where the national institutions cannot provide sufficient assistance".

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