



European Union
Delegation of the European Commission
to South Africa

EU Perspectives

Regular publication
on EU-related activities of interest to SA readers



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Headline News

[Sweden takes over EU Presidency](#)

On 1 July 2009, Sweden took over the Presidency of the Council of the EU. Visit the Presidency website to find information on the programme, calendar and priorities of the Presidency.

[Jerzy Buzek elected new President of the European Parliament](#)

Polish MEP Jerzy Buzek (EPP) was elected Parliament's President on 14 July 2009. "It is both an enormous challenge and a great honour" President Buzek said, mentioning the importance of understanding the needs of citizens, in order to "carry out our work properly". President Buzek began his political career as an activist for the "Solidarity" trade union movement in Poland and later become Prime Minister of his country between 1997 and 2001. After thanking his rival candidate, the leftist Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE), for taking part in the election, President Buzek spoke about the importance of developing international alliances, namely with emerging global powers. He also mentioned as key tasks the need to highlight human rights and make the EU Institutions more comprehensible to ordinary people.

[EIB supports upgrade of SA roads with €120m loan](#)

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has loaned €120m to the SA National Roads Agency Ltd (Sanral) for the upgrade and extension of two key toll roads in SA. The funding will be used to support the upgrade and widening of 30km of the R21 linking Pretoria and the O.R. Tambo International Airport near Johannesburg, as well as improvements to over 160km between Springs and Ermelo on the N17 which links Johannesburg and Swaziland. The projects are of strategic importance to SA's transport infrastructure, and are part of an ongoing programme by the national authorities to upgrade and extend the road network. EIB Vice President responsible for lending activity in SA, VP Sakellaris, welcomed the third loan which the Bank has signed in the country so far in 2009. "The EIB is delighted to support the upgrade of these key toll roads; a project which is exactly in line with our objective of supporting economic growth in SA through the promotion of improved public infrastructure. I am convinced that this project will fulfill these goals and am confident that it will be well implemented and managed."

[Louis Michel calls for renewed efforts from EU Member States to meet aid targets following G8](#)

European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel, speaking at a farewell meeting with ACP ambassadors in Brussels, once again called upon EU countries to stick to their development aid targets despite the global economic downturn. At the latest G8 Summit in L'Aquila, leaders pledged US\$20bn to tackle food insecurity and boost agricultural production in poor countries in a bid to tackle hunger. Last year, the Commission pioneered a truly European and internationally coordinated response to the food crisis through its €1bn Food Facility, 80% of which will be committed by the end of 2009. Its food security contribution over the next three years amounts to US\$ 3.1bn. Welcoming the G8 outcome, Commissioner Michel said, "I have spent the five years of my mandate working to step up our aid policy several notches higher and to make the EU the world's leading and most effective donor in the fight against global poverty. We are seeing progress but we are still €20bn short of our development aid targets for 2010. I have said it before, now is not the time to hide behind a global recession, but to dig even deeper than ever to close the gap."

Statement of President Barroso on the world economy following the G8 first working session in L'Aquila

Coming out of the first working session of G8 leaders in L'Aquila, José Manuel Barroso stated: "We need to continue the global response to a global crisis and we then need to carry that through and ensure a coordinated recovery. Today's session provided further impetus to that. There are signs that the strong policy action taken so far is beginning to work, at both European and global level. But economic activity remains very weak and the full effects of the crisis on employment are still to come. This is a matter of great global concern, and I am happy that today's G8 statement addresses this".
[Full Text of statement](#)

Other News

The European Union confirmed its position as the world's leading development aid donor in 2008

The newly published 2009 annual report on the European Community's development and external assistance policies and their implementation in 2008 shows that the EU continues to be the world's leading development aid donor, accounting for 60% of world aid in 2008. The Commission alone committed €12bn, more than a fifth of the EU total. At the same time the quality and effectiveness of aid are improving, as are transparency and the monitoring of results. In 2008 soaring food and energy prices and the global financial crisis tested the EU's ability to meet ongoing development aid commitments and deal with new needs. Despite these challenges, the 2009 annual report shows that EU aid has helped reduce poverty and promote economic development and democracy in the developing countries.

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multimedia/publications/publications/annual-reports/2009_en.htm

Donor drive to boost infrastructure in developing countries

The European Commission, the World Bank, and many of their development partners held meetings in Brussels, under the umbrella of INFRA, the Infrastructure Recovery and Assets platform, to increase their coordination, and support to critical infrastructure initiatives in developing countries hard hit by the global economic downturn. Stefano Manservigi, Director General for Development and Relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific States in the European Commission said: "As we did in Europe, we should invest in infrastructure as a means to create growth and jobs in developing countries. If development policy is going to help tackle poverty, aid needs to become much better at leveraging other sources of finance. Europe accounts for almost 60% of official development aid worldwide and the World Bank is one of the largest sources of financial and technical assistance. Organising this seminar together is another example of how we can help developing countries cope with the current economic crisis."

Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton says post-Doha trade policy is about non-tariff barriers

EU Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton told the British Bankers Association that the future of trade policy for the EU and others would be more and more focused on breaking down non-tariff barriers to trade. In a speech to the Annual Banking Conference in London, she said that finding new opportunities for trade and resisting protectionism would be key to economic recovery and future growth. Commissioner Ashton said that completing the Doha Round of world trade talks would be the most important boost for the world economy at this time. However, with tariffs on many products almost eliminated between major economies, the "orange is almost squeezed dry." Therefore future trade discussions would require a new approach. Commissioner Ashton said: "Today, building a strengthened open trade system for the 21st century is as much a political challenge as a technical one. It requires different skills to deliver results."

[Read the speech](#)

10,000 Erasmus Mundus scholarships for 2009-2010

The European Commission has awarded almost 10,000 new grants to be funded by the Erasmus Mundus programme for the academic year 2009-2010. Erasmus Mundus is a co-operation and mobility programme in the field of higher education that aims to enhance the quality of European higher education and to promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through co-operation with countries outside the EU. Ján Figel, the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, said "Erasmus Mundus is going from strength to strength. In the years since 2004, when it began, the programme has been able to establish itself as one of the world's foremost international mobility programmes. With its emphasis on quality and excellence, it is doing an outstanding job of promoting European higher education on the world stage." Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, said: "Education plays a crucial role in the development of countries and for providing younger generations with perspectives. By promoting academic exchanges between Europe and the rest of the world we are giving university students the means to better shape their own futures and to understand and respect each other".

European Commission overhauls its website for developing countries' exporters

The European Commission Export Helpdesk launched its revamped website to facilitate market access from developing countries to the EU. Besides information on import tariffs, import requirements and trade statistics, the site now offers more information on the preferential arrangements in place between the EU and developing countries.

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