



European Union

Delegation to 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**

### **[Eurogroup countries give their support to the aid mechanism for Greece](#)**

At a meeting of EU Heads of State and Government, the sixteen leaders of the euro area countries (the Eurogroup) pledged their support to a financial aid mechanism for Greece, which will involve the participation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and of the euro area countries through bilateral loans. According to the joint statement of the Heads of State and Government of the euro area countries, each country will contribute an amount proportional to its gross domestic product and its total population. The European Commission and the European Central Bank will be responsible for monitoring Greece's compliance with all the conditions imposed for the different loans it receives. Ahead of the meeting, European Commission President, José Manuel Durao Barroso, called upon European leaders' spirit of responsibility and solidarity, and backed the creation of an action instrument for coordinated loans, which would be deployed only if all other options are exhausted.

### **[EIB and National Treasury to strengthen relations for infrastructure and private sector projects across South Africa](#)**

SA and the European Investment Bank (EIB) reaffirmed their mutual commitment to a continued close partnership and co-operation, following a meeting between SA Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan and EIB Vice President Plutarchos Sakellaris, who was on a four day visit to SA. The EIB has been supporting priority infrastructure projects of public interest and private sector initiatives across South Africa. ESKOM, EThekweni Metro, SANRAL, Umgeni Water, Transnet, Tshwane Metro and ACSA are among those to have benefited from EIB loans. Following the meeting, Minister Gordhan expressed his appreciation of EIB's commitment to SA and noted opportunities for this relationship to be strengthened further by complementing government's investments in public entities. Plutarchos Sakellaris said: "The EIB looks forward to further close co-operation with ministries, government agencies and the private sector to ensure a strong contribution to infrastructure and economic development. We look forward to seeing the true benefit of the record number of projects approved last year in improving the quality of life of South Africans across the country".

### **[EU Declaration on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)**

Declaration by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the EU on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2010: "The European Union strongly condemns all forms of intolerance, racism, racial and other types of discrimination. Based on the principles that all humans are born equal in dignity and rights, the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights explicitly prohibits discrimination based on any grounds, whether they be race or colour, sex, origin, religion or belief, or on the grounds of a person's opinion or sexual orientation. The European Union continues to demonstrate its unwavering commitment to the international human rights standards underpinning the fight against racism and once again calls on all states that have not yet signed, ratified or implemented the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination to do so".

### **[International Women's Day: action plan puts equality and empowerment high on the development agenda](#)**

On the occasion of International Women's Day (8 March) and of the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, the European Commission services outlined an EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development for the period 2010-2015. This Action Plan aims to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular on gender equality and maternal health, as well as to contribute to attaining other international development goals related to gender equality. "Improving women's daily lives in the world will be one of my priorities" stated

Andris Piebalgs, European Commissioner for Development. "The EU is the world's biggest donor, so we have to show leadership to put gender equality high on the political agenda. This is all the more urgent since the two Millennium Development Goals dedicated to women and maternal health are lagging behind the most. We have to enhance our ability to assist countries to implement their gender commitments and to support the efforts women's groups and networks in their fight for greater equality".

## **Other News**

### **[Commission consults stakeholders over trade policy towards developing countries](#)**

European Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht opened a conference in Brussels focused on the EU's trade policy towards developing countries. The objective of the conference was to discuss publicly how to maintain the effectiveness of the EU's General System of Preferences (GSP) in promoting development, how to make the most of regional trade agreements with developing countries, and how to encourage sustainable development. Commissioner De Gucht also announced the launch of a public consultation to support the review of the EU's GSP scheme in the coming month. "In formulating its trade policy towards developing countries, the EU needs to take into account recent changes in the global economic landscape, with emerging economies playing an increasingly important role. However, more vulnerable developing countries are still facing challenges in exploiting the full potential of trade. But ultimately everybody on the planet should be better off from trade. We have five years to translate good intentions into good results" said Commissioner De Gucht.

[Conference page](#)

### **[EU and ACP states initial the revised Cotonou Partnership Agreement](#)**

The European Commission and the African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) group of 79 States concluded the second revision of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. As a result of fruitful dialogue since mid-2009, ACP-EU cooperation will be adapted to today's challenges, such as climate change, food security, regional integration, and aid effectiveness. This agreement will be reviewed every five years until 2020. European Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs said: "The Cotonou Partnership Agreement is our key instrument in the fight against poverty in the ACP States. The revised agreement promotes an open dialogue and a flexible and participatory approach to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty. It aims to foster regional integration, to address global challenges such as climate change and supports ACP countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. With this new agreement, the EU and ACP States are geared up to better deliver to the poor and to strengthen their political relations."

### **[Climate change: European Commission sets out strategy to reinvigorate global action after Copenhagen](#)**

The European Commission set out a strategy to help maintain the momentum of global efforts to tackle climate change. The Communication proposed that the EU swiftly begin implementing last December's Copenhagen Accord, in particular 'fast start' financial assistance to developing countries. In parallel the EU should continue to press for a robust and legally binding global agreement that involves all countries in real climate action. Commission President José Manuel Barroso said: "The Commission is determined to keep up the momentum for global action on climate change; Today's communication sets out a clear strategy on the next steps needed to reinvigorate the international negotiations and engage our partners in this path." Connie Hedegaard, Commissioner for Climate Action, said: "The most convincing leadership Europe can show is to take tangible and determined action to become the most climate friendly region in the world, which will also strengthen our energy security, stimulate greener economic growth and create new jobs".

### **[Sudan: EU to observe the April general elections](#)**

The European Commission will deploy an EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) to the general elections in Sudan, scheduled to take place between 11 and 18 April 2010. Led by Véronique de Keyser, Member of the European Parliament, the 130 EU observers will assess pre-election preparations and campaign all over Sudan, voting, counting and tabulation of the results of the Election Days, as well as the post-election period. In addition, the mission will be reinforced by a delegation of Members of the European Parliament for the election period. Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/ Commission Vice-President said: "The forthcoming elections are an important milestone in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and for the political future of Sudan to which the EU is fully committed. I strongly hope that the Sudanese people will be able to express themselves freely in these elections".

### **[Haiti's reconstruction: Commissioner Piebalgs hosts a one-day conference with NGOs](#)**

Development Commissioner Andris Piebalgs hosted a one-day conference to discuss the reconstruction process in Haiti. The event brought together around 50 NGOs from Haiti, Europe and the US, as well as representatives of the Haitian government, with the aim is of identifying joint priorities and discussing how best to combine NGO activities in Haiti, with the government's overall national recovery and development strategy. Commissioner Piebalgs said: "The reconstruction of Haiti must be a joint effort by all actors at all levels. It will not be solely solved by aid coming from the official authorities and the international institutions; the role of NGOs which bring their resources and expertise is also instrumental. The conference made it possible to define priorities in order to align the initiatives of NGOs with the Haitian government's strategy".

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