



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.



9 - 15 July 2007

Headline News

Treaty reform: European Parliament gives green light to Intergovernmental Conference (10/7)

Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee favours giving a green light to an intergovernmental conference (IGC) on EU treaty reform. The report said that although the proposed new EU treaty would incorporate the bulk of the draft constitution, EU cohesion could nonetheless be weakened by the exemptions granted to Member States. MEPs regretted the increased number of exemptions granted to Member States in important areas, and were particularly disapproving of any derogation granted to Member States on the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The committee also deplored the loss of parts of the draft Constitution, including symbols such as flag and anthem.

Commission adopts its formal opinion before the Intergovernmental Conference (10/7)

The European Commission has issued its formal opinion before the opening of the Intergovernmental Conference. Entitled "Reforming Europe for the 21st Century" the Commission looks at how a Reform Treaty respecting the mandate agreed at the last European Council will answer the strategic political demands facing Europe and sets out the benefits that such a Treaty will bring to citizens. The Commission opinion states that the test for Europe is the delivery of policies which meet the expectations and aspirations of citizens: a vision of a Europe ready to work together to realise a common future. To realise its potential, the European Union needs modernisation and reform.

Mandelson warns EU-China trade relationship "at a crossroads" (10/7)

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson warned that the trading relationship between the EU and China is at "a crossroads". Speaking in a debate with the European Parliament in Strasbourg, Mandelson warned that a backlash in Europe against open trade with China was likely if China did not act faster to meet its WTO obligations and remove unfair barriers to EU exports. He said that the growing EU-China trade deficit reflected serious market access problems for EU companies. Mandelson said that Europe expected China to address barriers to trade, poor protection of intellectual property rights and the potential for overproduction and dumping in key products like steel and textiles.

Other News

Declaration by the Presidency on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire (13/7)

The European Union reiterated its full support for the Ivorian authorities in continuing their efforts to successfully complete the peace process as established by Ivorians in Ouagadougou. The EU called on the parties who signed that agreement and on all other Ivorian forces to engage resolutely in fully implementing it and in particular to make progress on the crucial issues of identifying the population, DDR (demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration) and holding free, democratic and transparent elections certified by the international community.

Meeting between EU High Representative Javier Solana and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (10/7)

Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) met UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Tuesday, 10 July 2007. They discussed a number of major international issues on which the EU and the UN are co-operating closely, in particular the Middle-East Peace Process, Sudan/Darfur, Somalia, Kosovo, Iran and non-proliferation. After the meeting, Mr Solana told reporters that for the EU, co-operation with the United Nations was fundamental and that this second visit of Mr Ban Ki-moon in the first six months of his tenure reflected the deep co-operation between the EU and the UN. "We believe in multilateralism and we believe that the UN is the heart of the multilateral system" Javier Solana said.

EU-Egypt sign EUR 11m funding agreement (11/7)

A landmark funding agreement totalling EUR 11 million has been reached between the EU and Egypt, signalling the first-ever grant of its kind offered by the EU to an Arab country. The funding will support a four-year technology and knowledge exchange between science researchers and institutions, focusing on development in areas such as biotechnology, information technology, renewable energy and health. In addition to supporting research and development, over half of the grant (almost EUR 7 million) has been allocated to an innovation fund, which will finance joint projects to help commercialise new technology-based products and processes.

Commission adopts White Paper on Sport (11/7)

The European Commission has adopted its first comprehensive initiative on sport. The White Paper aims at providing strategic orientation on the role of sport in the EU, and recognises the important social and economic roles sport plays. The White Paper is the result of extensive consultations over the past two years with organisations such as the Olympic Committees and sport federations, as well as with Member States and other stakeholders. Ján Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture & Youth, including Sport, said: "This White Paper enhances the visibility of sport in EU policy-making, raises awareness of the needs and specificities of the sport sector, and identifies appropriate further action at EU level." The White Paper is available at http://ec.europa.eu/sport/index_en.html

Proposal to renew the Erasmus Mundus programme for the period 2009-2020 (12/7)

The European Commission adopted a proposal to renew the Erasmus Mundus programme for the period 2009-20. The programme supports high-quality European masters courses, providing high-calibre students and visiting academics from around the world with scholarships to engage in postgraduate study in Europe, as well as encouraging the outgoing mobility of European students and academics towards third countries.

Commission hails approval of the adoption of the euro in Cyprus and Malta (10/7)

The European Commission welcomed the final and formal decision by the Ecofin Council allowing Cyprus and Malta to adopt the euro as from 1 January 2008. On a proposal by the Commission, the Council fixed the rate at which the Cypriot pound will be converted into euro at 0.585274. The equivalent rate for the Maltese lira will be 0.429300 for one euro. In the coming 5½ months, both countries will have to complete and finalise their crucial practical preparations to ensure that the changeover to the euro takes place smoothly. "I am happy that Cyprus and Malta will adopt the euro bringing to 15 countries and nearly 320 million the number of people who share the currency that has the vocation to be, one day, the sole currency of the European Union", said Joaquín Almunia, European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs.

Human rights: Iraq, Transnistria, Vietnam (12/7)

European Parliament MEPs called for action to help the growing wave of Iraqi refugees. Citing a wealth of statistics, the resolution says that violence, unemployment and poverty are causing many Iraqis to flee, primarily to Jordan and Syria, but also to Egypt and Lebanon. MEPs also condemned the abuses of the breakaway regime in Transnistria, Moldova, and voiced concern at a new round of persecution of dissidents in Vietnam. The resolution on Moldova, involving the breakaway region of Transnistria, highlighted the human rights abuses in Transnistria. In a resolution on Vietnam Parliament voiced disappointment at the government's apparent retreat from the policy of tolerance and openness which had seemed to be taking shape last year. It urged the government to change tack and called on the EU institutions to apply some pressure.

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