

Ambassador Briët

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Representatives of the South African Government,
Development Counsellors of EU Member States,
Members of Civil Society Organisations.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Commission has a long history of working with civil society in this country. Through the European Special Programme for victims of Apartheid, the EC supported a wide range of non-governmental organisations from 1986-1994.

In 1994 the Delegation hosted a conference with civil society organisations to discuss relations with donors, with then civil society members such as Barbara Hogan, Mbhazima Silowa and Jay Naidoo as presenters. The EC has worked with civil society ever since. Civil society has proved to be a very reliable partner in delivery to the poor, providing services, access to justice, advocacy in many areas etc.

Today the EC has close to a billion (ZAR) Rand of support with and through civil society organisations.

The EC has a new financial framework for South Africa for the 2007-2013 period. Next year a mid term review will be conducted of the Country Strategy Paper for this period. We want civil society to be part of this review process. We want to further strengthen and expand our relations with civil society in South Africa. In this regard, there is also an evaluation sheet in your conference pack to be completed at the end of the day. Please express your views frankly regarding the type of interaction, the frequency and the content.

I want to leave you with three ideas:

1. In terms of Aid Effectiveness, the EC fully supports and actively pushes the Accra Agenda.
2. MDGs: The European Commission has been and remains fully committed to achieving the MDGs.

3. Civil Society: the involvement of civil society remains crucial as far as the EU is concerned.

Aid Effectiveness

On the eve of the High Level Ministerial Meeting in Accra, Ghana, in early September, the European Commission called on donor and developing countries to use development aid more effectively. Louis Michel, EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, urged governments to commit themselves to concrete and ambitious actions. Since the 2005 Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, three years have passed and some progress has been made, yet much more needs to be done if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In the words of Commissioner Michel: 'It is now or never. Since Paris, in a way, the easier parts of the Paris Agenda have been implemented. Now the challenge is to ensure this rhetoric is translated into practice on a wide scale.'

The Accra Agenda for Action was adopted in Ghana by developing and donor countries. I would like to highlight some critical aspects:

- While there has been progress in eradicating poverty and promoting peace and prosperity, we have some way to go to meet the MDGs. This year three international conferences, (Accra, New York and Doha) will help to stimulate the pace of working towards the MDGs.
- Three major challenges need to be addressed to accelerate progress on aid effectiveness:
 - country ownership,
 - the building of more effective and inclusive partnerships, and
 - achieving (development) results.
- County-level dialogue on development has to be broadened. This means that developing country governments need to work more closely with their parliaments and civil society.

- Developing countries will have to strengthen their capacity to lead and manage development. This means that they will have to systematically identify areas where service delivery capacity needs to be strengthened. Donors' support for capacity development must be demand driven and designed to support country ownership.
- Developing countries' systems must be used to the maximum extent possible, and this in turn requires developing countries to be fully committed to strengthening their relevant systems.
- Donors reaffirmed their (Paris Declaration) commitment to provide 66% of aid as programme-based approaches and in addition, undertook to channel 50% or more of government-to-government assistance through country fiduciary systems (including by increasing the percentage of assistance provided through programme based approaches)
- The costly fragmentation of aid has to be reduced. To this end donors and developing countries must work together with the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness to complete good practice principles on country-led divisions of labour. Dialogue on an agreed international division of labour should start by June 2009.
- 'More bang for our buck ... or euro in our case': OECD-DAC donors plan to extend coverage of the 2001 DAC Recommendation on Untying Aid to non-LCD Heavily Indebted Poor Countries. Donors must promote the use of local and regional procurement. (LB: caveat!)
- Engagement with civil society organisations needs to deepen: this includes inviting CSOs to reflect on how they can apply the Paris principles of aid effectiveness; we would welcome engagement with a CSO-led multi-

stakeholder process to promote CSO development effectiveness, thereby maximising CSO contributions to development.

- You will appreciate that delivery and accountability are critical – greater transparency in this regard would include **parliamentary oversight**, mutual assessment reviews, peer reviews and actively fighting corruption.
- Finally, in order to increase ownership, the nature of conditionality will continue to change. Conditions should be drawn from developing countries' own development policies and should lead to greater predictability of funding.

Millennium Development Goals

To reach the MDGs, more aid is needed, and specifically more effective aid. As agreed in Accra, this means:

- (1) predictability of aid: for example, more direct budget support;
- (2) it means better division of labour amongst donors to be more effective in responding to partners;
- (3) and it means better alignment to national priorities and rules, meaning more output and less bureaucracy.

Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, the international community has taken great strides towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action on Aid Effectiveness and, at EU level, the commitments made under the 2005 European Consensus on Development and most recently the EU Agenda for Action on MDGs are some of the key drivers underpinning our collective efforts.

The MDGs have drawn world attention to the plight of the poorest and have provided a political framework for synergies. Unfortunately, the level of achievement of the

MDGs is remains below expectation. Economic prospects have become less favourable even if we seem to be getting out of the serious financial crisis, thanks to major and unprecedented interventions and coordination between governments and national banks. In the long run climate change will compound the challenges. The European Union is highly concerned about this, but is also determined to play a leading role.

According to a South African Government Mid-term report on MDGs, published in 2007 South Africa (SA) had already met some of the MDGs targets and that for those that had not yet been achieved the country was well on course to achieve them. In fact in most cases, SA has set earlier deadlines than those of the MDGs, including close monitoring of progress.

For Goal 2, i.e. to achieve universal primary education, the target is to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. According to the report, over 98% of seven to 13 year old children attended education institutions in 2006. The report also states that 98% of 18 year old children had completed Grade 7 and above in 2006.

Goal 6, i.e. to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases good progress has been made in terms of reversing the incidence of malaria. According to the SAG mid-term report, the management and control of malaria is one of the key areas of success of the public health sector in SA. The number of malaria cases declined over a five year period, from 51 444 cases in 1999 to 12 098 cases in 2006. The malaria case fatality rate fluctuated during this period, from a peak of 0.8 in 1999, to a lowest level of 0.4 in 2001, and to 0.7 at the end of 2006.

In terms of Goal 7, i.e. to ensure environmental sustainability, achievement has been very good. Regarding water, between 1994 and 2007 access increased from 61.7% to 84.7% of households – MDG target met. In terms of sanitation, between 1994 and 2006 access increased from 50% to 71% of households.

The EU shares the UN Secretary General's views on MDGs: they are *ambitious* but *feasible*. But for the MDGs to be achieved a (radical) shift in global and national policies is required.

Following the Accra Forum on aid effectiveness and ahead of the Doha Conference on financing for development, the UN High-Level event took place in New York on 25 September. Together these events must mark a decisive turning-point. It is part of a process to mobilise the global community around development and the achievement of the MDGs.

Accra has set the tone. The European Union took ambitious positions on aid effectiveness and our expectations were met for the most part. It is in this spirit that we intend to work towards Doha.

As already noted, to achieve the MDGs, the first step is to deliver more aid, and more effective aid. To that end, we have set out our commitments in the EU Agenda for Action, adopted unanimously by EU Heads of State and Government in June this year. We must - and we will - follow through and deliver on the Agenda for Action. EU Member States have also confirmed their commitment to increase aid flows in line with our target, which is to reach, collectively as the European Union, 0,56 % GNP by 2010 and 0,7% GNP by 2015.

We want concrete results. For this to happen we need an ambitious plan, a clear calendar and incentives to act. Therefore the agenda identifies a number of milestones that we need to have met by 2010 if we are to have any possibility of achieving the MDGs by 2015. It gives examples of sectoral measures that the EU intends to take to achieve the milestones. By respecting its commitment to double its ODA effort, the EU could increase its yearly support to education by 4.3 billion euros and to health by 8 billion euros.

If we keep to our aid pledges, we can cover a large part of the estimated financing gaps and together with our partner countries can get 25 million more young children

into primary school, cut by a fifth the proportion of children under five who are under weight, and save an additional four million lives annually through universal access to reproductive health.

This EU initiative is in line with the recommendations we issued as members of the Steering Group set up by the UN Secretary General for the MDGs in Africa and represents a collective European offer to our partners. It is intended to trigger concrete new and better coordinated initiatives in support of the MDGs.

As part of the European Union collective effort, the Commission has a particularly important set of programmes in support of the MDGs. Currently some 2 billion euros are committed to education between 2007 and 2013. Another 2.6 billion is set aside for support to health. And 900 million Euros will be spent in support to access to water and sanitation.

In addition to this direct support to sectors, the Commission, in line with the agreed principles of aid effectiveness, is providing a large part of its support in the form of General Budget support. The 3,4 billion Euros provided to Sub Saharan African countries contributes to health and education outcomes. The new MDG Contract, in terms of which the European Commission will provide longer term and more predictable budget support, is another important step forward to improve the prospects for faster achievement of stated development goals. At least 15% of the total commitments within the MDG Contract will be used specifically to encourage and reward increased national budget allocations to social sectors and positive performance against MDG-related outcome indicators.

In South Africa, the European Commission had committed €980 over a six year period to assist in achieving the MDGs. Numerous programmes, either in traditional projects or through budget support, which will be discussed in the panels this afternoon, contribute to fighting poverty, improving health services, strengthen primary education programmes and numerous other activities and interventions.

Recent increases in commodity prices have raised both opportunities and challenges for developing countries. Negative effects on the countries affected threaten to reverse the progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This is a major cause of concern. The European Union has put in place some 550 million Euros of additional short term measures for 2008. Also, we have set aside 2.5 billion Euros to support agriculture in Africa over the next five years. But of course we need to do more. And we will do more.

The European Commission recently proposed the creation of a new 'Food Facility' for developing countries. Worth 1 billion Euros (and taken from the EU's internal agricultural budget), the facility aims to create a positive agricultural supply response in developing countries. This means promoting agricultural production by improving poor farmers' access to inputs such as fertilizers and seeds.

The EU's commitment to development is clear. Europe, a political actor, with its own particular experience and a set of common values, has a lot to offer. Beyond aid, we are committed to improve the coherence of our policies to support progress towards the MDGs.

Civil Society

The EU supports the broad participation of all stakeholders in countries' development and encourages the involvement of all parts of society. All Non-State actors, including of our partner countries in particular, play a vital role as promoters of democracy, social justice and human rights. The EU will enhance its support for building capacity of non-state actors in order to strengthen their voice in the development process and to advance political, social and economic dialogue. The important role of European civil society will be recognised as well; to that end, the EU will pay particular attention to development education and raising awareness among EU citizens.

The European Union – and its Delegation to South Africa – is committed to working with civil society. The Cotonou Partnership Agreement recognises the essential role that non state actors can play, alongside governments, in fighting poverty, promoting growth, delivering social services and fostering democracy and good governance. For the first time, the ACP countries and the European community have legally committed themselves to involving non-state actors in all phases of our co-operation process.

The 2007-2013 EU-SA Country Strategy Paper attaches high importance to the role of civil society *“in tackling poverty, unemployment and social exclusion and delivering social services as well as monitoring good governance and human rights, including empowering the victims of poverty and violence”*.

The EC Delegation to South Africa has a long history of partnerships with civil society, which started with its support for a programme for the Victims of Apartheid, and which has now finds expression in direct and indirect support for many Civil Society Organisations. The EC's engagement with civil society in South Africa has been consistent and important both in terms of financial support and in terms of dialogue. Regular interactions exist between the various civil society interlocutors (NGOs, research structures, universities, think tanks, private sector, media etc) and the Delegation.

Despite our good track record in this regard, today's event is about further strengthening our engagement with civil society and we hope to discuss with you how the European Commission and CSOs could work better, together. We want to explore options for future engagements, be it in terms of dialogue, establishing successful partnerships, or supporting civil society interventions to achieve, amongst other priorities, the MDGs.

I want to thank you for participating today, for your contribution to the discussion both here, in plenary and on the panels later in the afternoon. Thank you also for the

work that you do in the many areas critical for South Africa in pursuit of that better life for all.

I thank you.