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EU partnership with South Africa

The European Union is committed to pursuing its engagement with South Africa and to strengthening the strategic partnership with its largest trading partner in Africa.

The fourth EU-South Africa Summit, to take place in the Kruger National Park, South Africa on 15 September, will be an excellent opportunity to demonstrate this commitment. The EU will be represented by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council and José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission. In addition, Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs and Commissioner for Trade Karel De Gucht will be present.

The Republic of South Africa will be represented by President Jacob Zuma, accompanied by Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister for National Planning Trevor Manuel, Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, Minister for Science and Technology Naledi Pandor, Minister for Trade Rob Davies, and Minister for Water and Environmental Affairs Edna Molewa.

The following issues will be discussed:

- Global issues: South Africa will preside the UN climate conference (COP 17) in Durban on 28 November to 9 December 2011. Climate change will therefore be a key issue on the agenda, together with the preparations for the "Rio+20" conference on global sustainable development in 2012. In addition, topics relating to the G20 and global economic governance will be discussed.
- Regional issues: The Presidents will have an exchange of views on the situation in Sudan and South Sudan, Zimbabwe and in North Africa and the Middle East following the "Arab Spring". The negotiations for an economic partnership agreement between the EU and the Southern African Development Community EPA negotiations' group will also be raised.
- Bilateral cooperation and the EU-South Africa strategic partnership, notably coordination in the area of development cooperation, given that South Africa intends to become active as a donor itself.

Progress on negotiations on an agreement on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy between the EU and South Africa should be welcomed at the summit (Euratom-South Africa agreement). This would create a long-term and stable framework for cooperation as well as strengthen cooperation in research and development, transfer of materials and equipment as well as concerning nuclear safety.

Background

South Africa, with approximately 49 million inhabitants, has the 25th largest population in the world, and occupies a position of geo-strategic importance in the Southern hemisphere. It is the only African member of the G20 and the BRICS, and a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2011-2012.

The EU-South Africa strategic partnership

A strong relationship has evolved between the European Union and South Africa since the birth of South African democracy in 1994.

This relationship is underpinned by the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA) signed in 1999, which provides the legal basis for close relations on trade, development, economic cooperation and political dialogue.

The significance of South Africa for the EU was consolidated with the establishment of a Strategic Partnership in 2007. The Strategic Partnership has two main pillars: (i) enhanced political dialogue on issues of shared interest like climate change, the global economy, bilateral trade, and peace and security matters and (ii) policy dialogues and sectoral cooperation on a broad range of areas (environment, science & technology, transport, space, etc.).

The three previous EU-South Africa summits were held in Bordeaux in 2008, in Kleinmond, South Africa in 2009 and in Brussels in 2010.

EU-South Africa Joint Cooperation Council

The EU-South Africa Joint Cooperation Council is the body that oversees the overall implementation of the Trade and Development Cooperation Agreement (TDCA). It meets on an annual basis, in order to take stock of progress in implementing the TDCA and also to discuss the way forward on the wide range of areas where policy dialogues and cooperation have been established in the context of the EU-South Africa strategic partnership.

Development cooperation

EU development cooperation with South Africa is financed from the EU budget (Development Cooperation Instrument). It has been operational since 1995, and since then yearly financial commitments have averaged €125 million.

For the years 2007-2013, the indicative amount assigned by the EU to co-operation with South Africa is €980 million, i.e. €140 million a year. This is the largest EU bilateral envelope worldwide. Its main objective is the reduction of poverty and inequality in South Africa.

The EU is the most important donor to South Africa by far: the Commission and the EU member states together provide approximately 70% of the total cooperation funds received by South Africa.

Trade cooperation

The EU as a whole is by far South Africa's largest trading partner: it accounted for 23% of South African trade flows in 2010.

EU-South African trade flows represented more than €38.5 billion in 2010, topping the pre-crisis total of €36 billion in 2008. Largely due to the global economic downturn, the trade volume had decreased to around €25 billion in 2009.

The EU is South Africa's main destination for exports, with a share of 23% of total South African exports in 2009. The EU is also the main source of South Africa's imports, with a share of 32% of total South African imports in 2009.