



EUROPEAN UNION

Pretoria, 12 May 2011

## Press Release

.../for immediate release

### **Jointly working towards a successful outcome of the Durban Climate Change talks**

*(article by Roeland van de Geer, EU Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa)*

The recent UN climate change talks in Bangkok are the latest step in the lengthy process of bringing the international community – developed and developing countries alike – together to fight climate change. The talks agreed a work programme for the coming months, and also helped clarify the issues at stake in the next negotiation rounds and positions regarding a second commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol.

However heavy and complex the UN climate negotiations may seem, there is no option in my view but to pursue and invest in them. Business as usual is simply no longer an option.

Current trends put us firmly on track to exceed 9 billion people on Earth by 2050. To accommodate this massive population increase without causing dangerous climate change, we have no choice but to achieve a transition to a global low-carbon economy.

This year's United Nations' Climate Change Conference will be held in December in Durban, shining the spotlight on South Africa's role as a key player in the fight against climate change.

By hosting the Durban conference, South Africa has taken upon itself the challenging task of facilitating what surely must be the most important ongoing global negotiations of our time. Their ultimate success – failure is too calamitous to contemplate – will be the legacy we bequeath future generations. Quite simply, ensuring that our planet remains suitable for human habitation is what is at stake.

The European Union is ahead of schedule in its undertaking to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 2012 in line with the Kyoto Protocol commitments. For 2020, the EU has inscribed into law its target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions to 20% below their 1990 levels. We are also offering to increase this target to 30% on condition that other major emitting countries in the developed and developing worlds commit to doing their fair share of a global effort.

The aim, as agreed at the Cancún climate conference last December, must be to keep average warming since pre-industrial times to less than 2°C. In the long term, the EU is committed to cutting its emissions to 80%-95% below their 1990 levels by 2050. In March the European Commission issued its 'Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050' which has kick-started the debate on concrete options to achieve these reductions.

The EU is also strongly committed to financially supporting South Africa in its efforts to facilitate the transition to a green economy and fight climate change. Some R8,7 billion worth of EU-funded green projects are currently under implementation or about to be launched in South

Africa. These include EU and Member State projects, as well as initiatives financed through the European Investment Bank. The latter has positioned itself as the single largest financier in the fight against climate change, by providing R88 billion outside the EU in 2010 alone.

In South Africa such funds have for example made possible the "Joint Africa-Europe Cooperation on Carbon Capture and Storage", a R4,2 million project over two years. The project aims to strengthen EU-SA cooperation in the field of clean coal technology and carbon capture and storage (CCS), by focusing on capacity building, knowledge sharing and the implementation of CCS in South Africa.

South Africa has endorsed the 'Copenhagen Accord' and was one of the countries that drafted it. In December 2009 South Africa announced a voluntary commitment to reduce emissions by 34% below business as usual levels by 2020 and by around 42% by 2025 conditional on financial and technological support. This position was recently endorsed by Cabinet's new electricity plan, the Integrated Resource Programme 2020.

We believe that South Africa is well-positioned to make a positive difference - it is a bridge between the first and the developing worlds and stands at the crossroads of the so-called North-South divide. While it is a major producer and consumer of non-renewable energy, it is also forging ahead towards renewable energy and carbon emission reductions. Balancing the need for cheap energy with the need for sustainable and energy-efficient growth puts South Africa in a strong position to chair the global climate change negotiations.

This week the European Union celebrates its establishment some 61 years ago – an ongoing project that has at its heart peace, security and sustainable development. In striving to improve the lives of its own citizens the EU has become a leading force for the improvement living conditions around the globe. As a world leader in the fight against climate change, the European Union clearly has an interest in seeing Durban move the global fight forward. I take this opportunity to express my full confidence in South Africa's ability to make a success of this year's climate change conference - the EU stands ready to do all it can to support South Africa in the challenging tasks that lie ahead.

*For more information please contact Frank Oberholzer at +27(0)12-452-5200*