



Joint Press Release

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EU & SA step up co-operation

The European Commission (EC) and the South African (SA) Government have just completed a round of consultations in Pretoria aimed at reviewing the European Programme for Reconstruction and Development (EPRD) in SA. The programme, made up of EC grants in excess of R1 billion annually, is the largest programme of its kind in SA. It is complemented by a similar amount available in European Investment Bank (EIB) loans for infrastructure and industrial development.

Poverty reduction is the overall objective of the EPRD. On a broader canvas, the integration of South Africa into the global economy is an important objective, while the strategic role SA plays on the continent, and beyond, is recognised and appreciated.

South Africa's Deputy National Authorising Officer, Mr Shaheed Rajie, welcomed the close co-operation with the European Commission and EU Member States. According to Mr Rajie there is increasing alignment with, and reflection on, South African policies and priorities designed to leverage effective and efficient delivery of services through innovative approaches and best practice application, including ASGISA and JIPSA.

EU Ambassador Lodewijk Briët adds that: "The EU and South Africa are working towards a Strategic Partnership, through which our two sides will work together to address peace, security and development in Southern Africa and beyond". Amb Briët says that "the results of EU co-operation on the ground are clearly visible" and cites some examples: "A significant number of people now have access to improved water and sanitation facilities in poor communities across the country. In the health field, in the Western Cape alone, some 70,000 people benefit from home-based medical treatment and care provided through civil society partners working with the Provincial Department of Health." Further afield the EC and South Africa are committing considerable resources to restore peace and security in the Darfur region of Sudan.

A key focus of this year's discussion was the work in progress on an innovative joint Country Strategy for future development co-operation involving the EC, EU Member States and South Africa. This strategy, focusing on employment creation, social service delivery as well as governance – all key priority areas of SA policy - will closely guide the EC development programme for the next 7 years (2007-2013). The new strategy will provide an umbrella for future European economic and development co-operation with South Africa and is a first, but significant, step towards the achievement of the objectives of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness.

Looking at the current programming period 2003-2006, targets for commitments of funds to South Africa have been met. Total funds allocated to SA during this period are close to R5bn (€510 million). A similar annual envelope is in the process of being finalised and approved for the period 2007-2013. Both parties expressed their overall satisfaction with the EPRD progress and implementation.

With regard to EIB funding, it was noted that the bank has provided complementary on-lending support aligned to national priorities in South Africa. Mr Rajie expressed the hope that the EIB would increase its support in line with the development challenges as stipulated in the Government Programme of Action.

The two sides expressed satisfaction that this review of the implementation of the development co-operation partnership, and the EPRD Mid-term Review completed earlier this year, will be an important point for the Ministerial level Joint Co-operation Council set to meet in Brussels in November.

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