



EUROPEAN UNION

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Press Release

.../for immediate release

No development without women's empowerment

To mark International Women's Day, the EU Commissioner for development Andris Piebalgs will tomorrow launch, for the 5th year in a row, a Gender drawing contest designed to raise awareness on women's conditions and rights in developing countries, through the involvement of children. He will also inaugurate a joint EU/UN photo exhibition in East Timor with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Ms Ameerah Haq. Commissioner Piebalgs will reaffirm the European Commission's steadfast commitment to improve the rights and chances for women, as well as the representation of women in developing countries to speed up progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Commissioner Piebalgs said: "Women comprise more than half the world's population, but they constitute 70% of the world's poor, and two-thirds of those who are not taught to read and write. As a Commissioner for Development I am trying to take into account women's interests in all the aspects of development policies. Any project we conduct, be it in agriculture, education or health should have a clear objective to enhance women's engagement and empower them to further actions.

As I am travelling around the world, I can see that if women are healthy, educated, have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, their communities and nations will flourish.

With this in mind the EU launched the Millennium Development Goals initiative. It is designed to reward progress of the countries that are most advanced in developing effective strategies to meet the MDGs, and to support efforts of the others to bridge the gap of the most off track MDGs, notably related to women.

Finally, the EU is making stronger efforts to combat victimization of women in conflict situations. At the moment, and for already several years, some of the most unacceptable abuses in the world are the repeated acts of sexual violence taking place in the conflict zone in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Each day, women and girls are victims of the cruellest acts of brutality. We have to act to stop impunity and support the Congolese authorities in their efforts to raise awareness and bring criminals to justice.

On this special day, I want to make it clear: there will be no human and economic development without a sound respect of women's rights and conditions. This is a fundamental part of the development policy that I wish to champion, providing rights and security to these women. It will be one of my priorities in the coming months and years".

The Gender Drawing Competition

The European Union's sponsored Gender Drawing Competition is launched for the 5th year in a row to invite children across the world to present their vision of gender equality in a drawing. The objectives of the drawing competition are to promote creativity and reflection on what "gender equality" means, and to raise awareness of gender issues amongst children, as well as the adults close to them. The competition also aims to open-up debate within civil society and to involve national and local authorities in the countries where it is taking place.

The competition is open to children between the ages of eight and ten years of age in six regions that span the globe: Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Pacific, Latin America, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and non-EU Countries in Europe including the Eastern Neighbours of the EU. In 2010, 61 countries, 48,709 children and 1,641 schools participated in the competition. The winners in each region will be awarded a prize of €1,000 which can be used to buy books, computers or other education materials.

Actions from the European Commission to support Women and gender equality

The European Commission constantly works to promote women's rights in all of its work with governments and civil society, both in its political dialogues as well as in its projects on the ground.

The European Commission is the second largest donor in the world. It brings a particular support to the women-related Millennium Development Goals – Maternal Health and Children mortality – through different programmes in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Central Asia.

In the DRC, the European Commission provides support to authorities, and partners on the ground to address both the social and human immediate impact of sexual violence and the fight against impunity over the long term. An €18 million programme will be launched in the coming weeks, jointly with Sweden and Belgium.

Additional information:

Gender Drawing Competition:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/gender/drawing-competition-2011_en.htm

Examples of EU funded projects

http://www.cc.cec/dgintranet/europeaid/tools/csse/index_en.cfm

EU actions on gender equality:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/gender/index_en.htm