

Mandelson in Southern Africa to deepen trade and development ties - Brussels, 28 February 2008

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson will today begin a five day, four country trip to Southern Africa that will include attend a meeting in Lesotho of trade Ministers from Least Developed Countries on the Doha Round of world trade talks. Mandelson will also visit South Africa, Botswana and Zambia where he will meet with leaders and representatives of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) region for talks on the Economic Partnership Agreements currently being negotiated by the EU and these regions. He will meet, amongst others, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Zambian Minister of Commerce Felix Mutati, Erastus Mwencha, Secretary General of COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa), and Botswanan Minister for Trade and Industry Neo Moroka.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Commissioner Mandelson said: "The interim Economic Partnership Agreement signed between the EU and Southern African countries in 2007 is amongst the first of a new generation of trade and development agreements. The Economic Partnership Agreements put our relationship with Africa on a strong new economic footing, and strengthen regional integration in Africa. In both the Economic Partnership agreements and the Doha Round, the EU's goal in Africa remains using trade to promote economic development, build regional markets and help lift people out of poverty".

Least Developed Countries and Doha

On Friday February 29 Commissioner Mandelson will participate in a Ministerial meeting of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) on the Doha Round of world trade talks in Lesotho. Commissioner Mandelson will throw the weight of the EU behind the demands of Least Developed Countries for a Doha deal that ambitiously cuts trade-distorting farm subsidies, includes special treatment and duty-free quota-free market access for least developed countries and includes serious action to address the distortion of the global cotton trade by payments to farmers in the developed world.

Economic Partnership Agreements

At the end of 2007 the EU and Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique signed interim Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) that aim at progressively removing barriers to trade and enhancing cooperation in all areas related to trade. In 2008 the goal is to turn these interim agreements into a full EPA similar to that signed between the EU and the Caribbean in 2007. South Africa chose not to sign an agreement with the EU in 2007 but the option remains open for it to join negotiations in 2008. Although South Africa already has an FTA with the EU, the Commission has said that an EPA could improve further on that access – especially in vital areas for South Africa like fisheries, agricultural products and industrial goods. The revised rules of origin in the EPAs will also improve the terms on which countries in the region can trade important exports like textiles to Europe.

[EU-Africa trade statistics](#)