

Ambassador Briët - Speaking Points
Speakers' Forum Induction Meeting
Camps Bay – 9 July 2009
08:45 – 09:15

The Role and Support of the European Commission

Honourable Speaker of Parliament and Chairperson of the Speakers' Forum, Mr Max Sisulu,
Honourable Chair of the National Council of Provinces, Mr Mninwa Mahlangu,
Honourable Members of the new and former Speakers' Forum,
Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries of Legislatures,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

- It is a privilege and a pleasure to be able to address you here today as you embark upon a new journey as South Africa's Fourth Parliament and as we together enter a new phase of the European Union's commitment to (support) democracy in South Africa. Successful democracies are about real service delivery ... taking democracy to the people. This was recognised by post-Apartheid South Africa's first Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr Frene Ginwala, when she laid the foundations for our ongoing collaboration which started as long ago as 1996.

- It has been some fifteen years since democratic rule took root in the southern tip of Africa. Over this period (and against a backdrop of considerable challenges) you have managed to set up the institutions essential to a democracy, including representative legislatures, you have developed policies and adopted legislation to improve the quality of life of most, and you have initiated countless programmes in pursuit of that better life for all. I take this opportunity to salute your success. Having witnessed the April 22 elections here – and the 4 - 7 June European Parliamentary elections in the EU, I can truly say that South Africa can teach us (EU) a lesson about democracy!

- Our partnership has matured and deepened over the years and we find that relations between South Africa and the EU require increasing coherence, clearer objectives, and a shared forward-looking political vision with a view to strengthening joint political action. Our partnership needs to clearly spell out what each one of us can expect from the other on the domestic, regional, continental and global fronts, and do justice to South Africa's and the EU's positions in a rapidly changing and globalised world.
- In response the European Commission in mid-2006 published a communication entitled "*Towards an EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership*". It proposed a comprehensive, coherent and coordinated long-term strategy for political cooperation with South Africa.
- It laid the foundation for the adoption in 2007 of a Joint Action Plan to give substance to our Strategic Partnership. The Strategic Partnership and Joint Action Plan constitute a mutual recognition of the importance we each attach to our relations. It does not mean, of course, that we must agree on everything. But it does mean that we agree to engage in an ever more open, concrete and transparent dialogue. The objective is to strengthen and add value to our relations in a mutually beneficial way, further enhancing cooperation between South Africa and the EU, by moving from political dialogue to shared objectives and strategic cooperation on regional, African and global issues.
- In fact, the global financial and economic crises have added a new dimension and greater urgency to many of our interactions and I am pleased to say that the European Union has been responsive by putting into place a range of measures to support developing countries to cope with the deteriorating economic climate. The Communication adopted by the European Commission in April, and the Council Conclusions adopted in May include:
 1. First, keeping our promises - already the largest donor in the world, EU aid rose to €49 billion in 2008, representing 0,40% of GNI. Aid volumes would need to increase to an estimated €69 billion in 2010 to meet the collective

promise of 0,56% of EU GNI made at the G8 Gleneagles Summit in 2005, thus requiring the release of an additional €20 billion.

2. Second: Frontload and refocus existing commitments for the most vulnerable. The Commission is frontloading €3 billion, or 72% of its foreseen budget support to African, Pacific and Caribbean nations, thereby ensuring that social spending is not forsaken when most needed. An *ad hoc* "FLEX" instrument will act counter-cyclically to assist those developing countries worst hit by falling export revenues as world trade contracts. This facility will be on stream before the end of this year, directing at least €500 million to allow developing countries to continue social safety net spending. This is in addition to the already adopted €1 billion "food facility" (prior to the G20), €800 million of which is being made available this year. Overall, frontloading by the European Commission should bring forward an estimated €4.3 billion of resources in 2009.
 3. Third, the EU has taken the lead in making existing aid more effective. Working together, the 27 Member States and the Commission can make real efficiency gains, making every aid Euro count and serving as a model for others across the world. First estimates, according to a study commissioned by the European Commission, are that we could free up as much as €7 billion per year by making aid more effective, implementing principles already agreed in 2008.
- Despite the current crisis, the EU strongly reaffirmed most recently in June its commitment to achieve its ODA targets, and further reaffirmed its commitment to channel at least 50% of collective aid increases to Africa. However, the improvement of aid effectiveness is and remains a matter of urgency. Tools such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the subsequent Accra Agenda for Action are essential. Three major challenges need to be addressed to accelerate progress on aid effectiveness: i.e. country ownership, the building of more effective and inclusive partnerships, and achieving (development) results.

1. County-level dialogue on development has to be broadened, including Parliamentary oversight of aid (a topic dear to Prof. Ben Turok). This means that developing country governments need to work more closely with their parliaments and civil society.
 2. Developing countries will have to strengthen their capacity to lead and manage development. This means that they will have to systematically identify areas where service delivery capacity needs to be strengthened. Donors' support for capacity development must be demand driven and designed to support country ownership.
 3. Developing countries' systems must be used to the maximum extent possible, and this in turn requires developing countries to be fully committed to strengthening their relevant systems.
- This brings me back to the relationship between the EU and South Africa.
 - The EU-SA strategic partnership translates into various forms and forums of cooperation and dialogue, including an annual EU-SA Summit – this year's summit will take place here in the Western Cape on 11 September, and including a so-called Joint Cooperation Council, to be held in Brussels in two weeks time, on 23 July. The European Parliament and South African Parliament have also engaged in numerous inter-parliamentary dialogue sessions over the past few years, most recently during a visit to South Africa in February this year of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with South Africa.
 - We are particularly proud that we remain South Africa's largest development partner, by far the largest when we include the support programmes of our Member States. The European Commission, from 2000 – 2006 had set aside €900 million in grants for the country. In 2007 we were able to announce that for the 2007 – 2013 funding period our commitment would rise to €980 million, or more than R10 bn. To increase the effectiveness of these funds, the

European Commission, together with the South African Government and 10 EU Member States, jointly drafted the 2007 – 2013 Country Strategy.

- The Country Strategy defines that the goal of our development cooperation is to reduce poverty and inequality, in line with Government's policies and targets.

- Three focal areas exist:
 1. The promotion of pro-poor, sustainable economic growth, including in the second economy, i.e. economic growth that focuses on generating employment, reducing inequality, developing skills and tackling social exclusion.

 2. The improvement of the capacity and provision of basic services for the poor at provincial and municipal level and the promotion of equitable access to social services. These services mainly relate to health, HIV/AIDS, education, housing, and the infrastructure to provide basics such as water, sanitation, access to sustainable energy services, waste management and communication.

 3. The promotion of good governance. In the public domain the focus will be on fighting crime, including corruption, and promoting safety, security and the rule of law. In the non-public domain the focus will be on strengthening civil society - especially NGOs, including social partners, and community-based organisations (CBOs).

- Other areas for development cooperation are science and technology, regional and continent-wide cooperation (involving bodies such as SADC, NEPAD and the AU), sustainable resource management, environmental protection including meeting the challenge of climate change and sound management of chemicals, and TDCA-related support to provide seed money for activities related to politics, culture, the economy and trade, among others.

- Some issues cut across, or can be addressed by, many different programmes. These cross-cutting issues include gender, the environment, HIV/AIDS, capacity building including private-public partnerships, good governance and innovation.
- In the Multi-annual Indicative Programme these areas of focus are categorised into focal areas on employment creation and capacity development for service delivery and social cohesion and non-focal areas on governance, Regional and Pan-African support and a TDCA facility.
- You will appreciate that with the wide focus of our support to South Africa, we also are keen observers of developments in South Africa and the region. Most recently we followed the run-up to as well as your general elections with some interest.
- I said that we could learn a few lessons from you. In the European Parliament elections roughly a month ago, the voter turnout was 43.1%, in South Africa it was 77.3%. In Europe, many have expressed concern that the EP elections are regarded as being of secondary importance to those held on local and national levels. Parliamentary President Pöttering conceded that "reporting on parliamentary activities has to improve." Parliaments – as representatives of the citizenry - need to stay vigilant in this regard. We applaud the initiative of the 3rd Parliament to request an independent panel – of which Honourable Speaker Sisulu was a member - to undertake an assessment of Parliament.
- The report revealed some challenges to realise Parliament's vision of becoming a people's Parliament. This remains work in progress.
- To return to the purpose of our gathering here, we are about to embark on a new programme with Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures, in the form of the Legislative Sector Policy Support Programme (LSPSP).

- This new programme will bring to €41 million, the monetary value of our 13-year relationship with South Africa's legislative institutions.
- As mentioned, the first of the three programmes, the Parliamentary Support Programme (PSP) started in 1996 and provided a €16 million grant, funded by the European Programme for Reconstruction and Development.
- The EC provided a second grant of €10 million in 2003 in the form of the EU Legislatures Support Programme (LSP).
- The current LSPSP programme provides a third grant to the legislative sector. But, this programme differs from the previous two. In line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Accra Agenda for Action, the European Union has agreed through the modality of sector budget support to provide €15 million (approximately R160 million) to the legislative sector to support the implementation of its policy and strategic framework. With these funds, our aim is not to support specific activities that we have a particular interest in; it is to support the implementation of the policy and strategy of the SA legislative sector. In doing so, we respect the principle of SA ownership that is at the heart of our cooperation with the South African Government and beneficiaries such as this sector.
- Sector Budget Support respects the principles of country ownership, division of labour, use of country systems, predictability of aid and mutual accountability for results, including less conditionality, as well as the building of more effective and inclusive partnerships, and achieving (sustainable development) results.
- This programme will be the first sector budget support programme to a legislative sector supported by the European Commission worldwide, and I can tell you that it is thus followed with great interest. Some of you were interviewed recently by consultants appointed by the EC to assess the support of the EC to parliamentary development in ACP countries. This programme

was examined due to its size, but also its unique nature, and could be used as model for other countries. Here, we particularly support South-South learning, and hope that you will share your experiences with other Parliaments.

- The programme involves some new elements in the Legislatures-EC relationship, including "sector dialogue". What does sector dialogue involve?
- First, what is it not? It is not a mechanism to interfere with politics or with the policies of the Legislatures, but rather to discuss the implementation of these policies. We respect the autonomy of the Legislatures. And
- Sector dialogue:
 1. It is a tool to consult each other, to keep abreast of developments within the sector, and as such takes place right from the start of a programme and is maintained throughout.
 2. Sector dialogue supports the process of implementation of sector programmes.
 3. Dialogue should be regular but it needs also to be effective, meaning that real debate takes place from the broader policy issues down through to public participation.
 4. It is also a mechanism to involve stakeholders and to encourage learning – for example the South-South exchange I referred to earlier.
- In conclusion, I want to salute the ground-breaking work of the Speakers' Forum of the 3rd Parliament. I am obviously pleased that the EU could contribute in some ways and support activities and projects through the EULSP, including providing video-conferencing facilities to the sector – to name but one initiative. I believe that our cooperation and relationship with Parliament and the legislatures has contributed to the strengthening of the sector, and that the Speakers' Forum has left a rich legacy. To quote Ms

Yvonne Phosa, former Speaker of Mpumalanga: "*The Speakers' Forum in the third Parliament was a necessary catalyst for spearheading efforts towards the formalisation of the legislative sector. This strategic endeavour ensured that the entire sector is strategically and politically positioned, more than ever before, to better fulfil its constitutional mandate with people in mind. We are hopeful that as we go forward we will remain in his path of success, for the benefit of our provinces and the country in general.*"¹"

- The EC looks forward to remaining a development partner of the legislative sector and support the new Speakers' Forum to assist the legislatures to achieve its constitutional mandate.
- Finally, Honourable Speaker, Chairperson and Members, let me re-emphasize that the EC is keen to continue its support to the SA-Legislatures. That implies, among other things, that a so-called "Policy Dialogue" takes place – it is a consultative forum, a tool to talk about implementation of the LSPSP. It is not to be confused with "Political Dialogue" → that is a dialogue which you, as elected Members conduct, as and when appropriate, with the elected members of the European Parliament.

I thank you so much.

¹ In Session. Vol 9, Issue 3. March 2009, pp 18-23.