

**Speech by Amb L Briët at a dinner  
hosted by eThekweni Mayor, Obed Mlaba**  
(Durban, Wednesday 5 November 2008)

**His Worship the Mayor of eThekweni, Councillor Obed Mlaba  
Michael Sutcliffe, City Manager  
Distinguished guests,  
Programme Director,  
Members of the media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

- Today is a special day as the US elects Barack Obama to be their next President – the first African-American to achieve this.
  
- What a pleasure it is to be here this evening and to share this platform with you, Mayor, and you, Mr Sutcliffe. Support to eThekweni has been an important part of the EC's support programme to South Africa since 1996.
  
- It has been fourteen years since democratic rule commenced in South Africa. Despite considerable and ongoing challenges you have managed to set up the institutions essential to a democracy, have developed policies to improve the quality of life of many, and have initiated countless programmes to aggressively address issues of poverty. We salute your success and are privileged to have been a partner to democratic South Africa since its beginning in 1994.
  
- While in many areas these policies have yet to be implemented, eThekweni has set a benchmark for local government throughout South Africa.
  
- Our partnership has matured and deepened over the years. It will continue to require great coherence, clear objectives, and a shared political vision

to strengthen our joint political action. We have to do justice to South Africa's and the EU's unique positions in our ever-globalising world.

- I want to give credit to EU Commissioner Louis Michel (Development & Humanitarian Aid) for having laid the foundation "Towards an EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership" - a comprehensive, coherent and coordinated long-term strategy for political cooperation.
- During 2007 South Africa and the European Union embraced the notion of a Strategic Partnership and adopted a Joint Action Plan to implement and give it substance. This 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 to be pursued on the basis of mutual understanding and ownership of the process ... moving from political dialogue to shared objectives and strategic political cooperation on regional, African and global issues.
- Earlier this week, on 3 and 4 November, we had a so-called Joint Cooperation Council ... sounds bureaucratic, but it is not: open discussions on Zimbabwe, the DRC, and how we can do better to help these countries ... exchanges on trade, development, science and technology, and environment ... and in-depth dialogue on health, energy, migration, transport, customs, space, ICT and statistics.
- The strategic partnership enhances South Africa's national, regional and continental responsibilities – it is a key component of the EU's strategy for Africa as a whole.
- We have set an example of cooperation and in line with the Paris Declaration and the subsequent Accra Action Agenda, the European Commission, together with the South African Government and 10 EU

Member States, jointly drafted the 2007–2013 Country Strategy. It is premised on development cooperation being about a reduction in poverty and inequality and emphasises three main areas:

- **Promotion of pro-poor, sustainable economic growth;**
  - **Improvement of the capacity and provision of basic services to the poor; and**
  - **Promotion of good governance.**
- Back to the reason of why we are here tonight – the European Commission's support to the eThekweni Municipality. Our partnership with eThekweni started in 1996 with the Cato Manor Development Programme. The programme ran until 2003 with a budget of €22 million – one of our most successful programmes and a real best-practice "flagship" in South Africa.
  - In June 2003 we embarked on a **Support Programme to Area-Based Management** in eThekweni, its budget: some €35 million. The Programme supports Area Based Management in five areas of the municipality - Cato Manor, South Durban Basin, Inner City (ITRUMP), Rural (covering the rural component of the Municipality) and INK (Inanda, Kwamashu and Ntuzuma). It is particularly gratifying that our original focus on Cato Manor could be refocused and expanded to the entire city.
  - The Support Programme to Area-Based Management in eThekweni is a so-called budget support programme. This means that the European Commission provides development aid directly to the municipality's budget and that the Programme is run and managed by the municipality itself

using its procedures (in line with the Paris Declaration and Accra Action Agenda). In South Africa it was a first for us to provide budget support at municipal level.

- The programme came to an end in June 2008. But the municipality decided to extend the programme to 2009 at its own cost. This is important as it demonstrates the viability and sustainability of the programme over time ... so, Mayor, we are grateful to you and eThekwini. A final evaluation of the Programme is currently under way.
- The work done, and the lessons learnt, have been duplicated in the support to other municipalities and a National Urban Renewal Programme, e.g. we now provide support in Motherwell (Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, Port Elizabeth) and Mdantsane (Buffalo City Municipality, East London).
- Mr Mayor, Mr City manager, I must praise the efforts of all those involved in our support to eThekwini. Mayor, the support that the staff of the Municipality has given to this Programme is exemplary. The Commission does not always make an easy partner and I must appreciate publicly the maturity with which the municipality has dealt with our peculiarities.
- Finally, may I admit to having a lurking suspicion that, somehow, eThekwini would wish to continue our cooperation. Let me simply make the point in reply that we remain strongly committed to South Africa.

Thank you