

CELEBRATION OF EUROPE DAY 2011
PRETORIA, MAY 11, 2011
ADDRESS BY THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
ROELAND VAN DE GEER

Minister Shabangu, Minister of Mineral Resources,
Deputy Minister Bapela, Deputy Minister of Communications,
Deputy Minister Hanekom, Deputy Minister of Science and Technology,
Representatives of the Government of South Africa, of independent institutions and of civil
society,
Dear Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

INTRODUCTION

A very warm welcome to all of you, thank you very much for having come to the celebration of Europe Day 2011, here today in the magnificent setting of the International Conference Centre of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. A Europe Day here in South Africa, ladies and gentlemen, that also marks the launch of the South Africa European Union Dialogue Facility and we, the Ambassadors of the member states of the European Union, my team and myself are very proud to welcome so many of you to this commemoration.

As we stand here together, in peace in Pretoria, in the far south of the beautiful African continent, we look back at a 12 month period, since the previous Europe Day, that is marked by events all over the world, but certainly also on the African continent, that will have far reaching consequences for the lives of the next generations, of our children and our grandchildren.

THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union itself is the product of such far reaching events that have shaped the lives of hundreds of millions of people of the generations since 1945. The European Union itself is, first and foremost and this is all too often forgotten, the strongest possible expression of the people of Europe that war, with its widespread death and destruction, with its untold human suffering should never, never occur again and that regional cooperation is the way forward. The Lisbon Treaty constitutes an important step to the further strengthening of the EU and new building blocks are now being added, including the recent adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations, almost unanimous, to grant the EU certain rights in the framework of the United Nations.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND SOUTH AFRICA

It is against this background that the European Union is fully committed to close cooperation with countries that play an active role in the promotion of peace, security, development and democracy, and in the case of South Africa, that has resulted in rapidly increased cooperation since the early 1990's, culminating in the establishment in 2007 of the Strategic Partnership, which has grown stronger ever since. On the basis of this Strategic Partnership, the European

Union and South Africa do cooperate in a wide variety of areas; political, both bilateral and multilateral, trade, development, security and climate change. On these issues, Europe and South Africa are in a constant and intensive dialogue on these issues, which is well structured and includes annual summits, with the 2011 summit taking place in September here in South Africa.

Our dialogue does of course cover African and European issues, but it is much wider and reflects how the European Union values South Africa's active international role; in the southern African region, on the African continent, but also in the global context, notably now as a member of the Security Council, as a member of the BRICS group and as an active member of the world community on key issues, such as climate change, which is also a main theme on this Europe Day. The EU considers South Africa ideally placed to host COP 17; South Africa is a dynamic and highly respected bridge builder and the EU is committed to support South Africa's leadership in the run-up to Durban.

SOUTH AFRICA AND AFRICA

We are living in a world of intense political conflict. Africa is receiving its full share: Zimbabwe, Sudan, Ivory Coast, Somalia, Egypt, Libya to name just a few countries that have seen violence, in many cases even civil war, in the immediate past. The European Union's very existence makes it imperative for us to support and encourage the African Union to play an active role in conflict prevention and resolution and again here, we consider South Africa a key factor in addressing the continent's crises.

SOUTH AFRICA

While the European Union sees South Africa as one of its main international partners, let me underline that the European Union fully recognises that South Africa itself is facing very considerable challenges. Poverty reduction and job creation, as President Zuma underlined in his State of the Nation Address, should be given full priority; education requires constant investment; service delivery in general will need to be further improved and the social fabric of the rainbow nation needs full commitment, restraint, wisdom and determined action by all stakeholders. While we need to look ahead and address the future, we should be aware of the legacy of the immediate past and remind ourselves that the legacy of apartheid can only be overcome if we all, South Africans and the international community, continue to live up to the example set by Madiba, who is the symbol of what South Africa has achieved so far.

It is against this background that the European Union is also prepared to assist South Africa in facing its own challenges. For the seven year period 2007–2013, the EU has made available an amount of R10 bn to assist South Africa in addressing its key problems. For roughly the same period, a further R10 bn has been foreseen by the European Investment Bank, in the form of highly concessional loans intended to be of direct relevance to social economic development. These European efforts do by no means constitute a conventional development assistance programme. Our assistance is aiming at innovation, new approaches, risks, and activities that challenge conventional wisdom. Development cooperation with South Africa is about formulating new ways of combating poverty, of addressing the isolation that poverty implies, of developing new techniques that enable the poor to prepare a quantum leap out of that poverty. Of course, we do not claim to have the recipe for miracles; our programmes require hard work, investment, inspiration and above all perspiration; but we do advance and I

feel very strongly that our South African counterparts are using the European contribution in a very effective way, building a better future for all South Africans.

However, important as aid may be, trade is a main channel towards a better future. Europe's own economy is largely built on trade: on trade within Europe, with the Americas, with Asia, with Oceania and with Africa. Europe believes strongly in the promotion of inter-African trade, but is also fully committed to assist Africa in adding value to its exports. It is therefore with pride that I underline that almost a third of South Africa's exports has the European Union as its destination and that our trade has also a very balanced character, with South Africa exporting a wide variety of manufactured goods to Europe. In fact, South Africa exports more manufactured products to the European Union than it exports basic commodities, which makes our trading relationship sustainable in the long term. This is important in view of the ongoing negotiations on a new trade agreement with the southern partners of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude by stressing that Europe sees South Africa as a main partner in the struggle of mankind to further peace, security, development and democracy. More and more, we all realise that mother earth cannot be exploited as it is exploited now. Either we adopt green as the colour of our economies or we perish. It is that simple. Therefore, COP 17 is possibly the most important event of 2011 and South Africa is chairing that event.

It is a great privilege, ladies and gentlemen, to live and work in this beautiful country, in this fascinating period of its history.

I once more thank you all for being here with us to celebrate Europe Day and to launch the TDCA Facility. In particular, I would like to thank Minister Shabangu, Deputy Minister Bapela, and Deputy Minister Hanekom for being with us, just before the local elections of 18 May.

It is now a great honour to invite Minister Shabangu to address us on this beautiful sunny Europe Day and on the formal launch of the TDCA Facility.

Thank you very much.