



*EUROPEAN UNION*

Delegation of the European Commission  
to South Africa

Pretoria, 21/05/2009

**Speech on the occasion of the launch of the  
Project to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development  
(Ambassador Lodewijk Briët)**

**21 May 2009**

Mr Alan Hirsch (Deputy Head: Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services)  
Programme Director  
Distinguished Guests  
Members of the Media  
Ladies and Gentlemen ...

- Since my arrival to head up the EC Delegation to South Africa some five years ago I have often been asked what the European Union was doing in South Africa – what we hoped to achieve with development support and what our motive was in supporting a middle income country at the levels that we do in South Africa.
- I can tell you that the answer for me has always been clear and unambiguous – we are committed to assist South Africa in its fight against poverty.
- I believe that the European Union has contributed in a truly meaningful way to this battle, despite South Africa being a medium income country and arguably having the capacity to carry on quite ably without foreign support. But this latter argument masks the reality that most South Africans live modestly, many in abject poverty.
- I never cease to be struck by the extraordinary contrast between the frenetic densely populated and dusty streets of Alexandra and the extreme, in some cases offensively opulent character of its park-like and tranquil neighbour,

Sandton. But, you will agree, while perhaps not so extreme, this contrast is evident throughout South Africa.

- Mahatma Gandhi said “Poverty is the worst form of violence” and in South Africa, like elsewhere across the globe, there can be little doubt that poverty manifests itself as social unrest, crime (including widespread rape and child abuse), the spread of disease, xenophobia and increasingly as protest action against real or perceived lack of service delivery. Poverty in South Africa remains one of the biggest development challenges facing the Government.
- It is in this light that I am particularly pleased to be able to launch here tonight, jointly with the Presidency, the **Project to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development**.
- It has been sixteen years since democratic rule commenced in South Africa. You, South Africa, despite considerable and ongoing challenges, have been able to "maak 'n plan" (as South Africans appear so fond of saying) ... you have managed to set up the institutions essential to a democracy, you have developed policies to improve the quality of life of the vast majority, and you have initiated countless programmes in pursuit of that better life for all. We salute your success and are privileged to have been able to partner democratic South Africa since its beginning in 1994.
- Today we can take great pride in our now firmly established Strategic Partnership that has allowed us to move from political dialogue to shared objectives and strategic political cooperation on regional, African and global issues.
- 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 announced that for the 2007 – 2013 funding period our commitment would rise to €980 million, or more than R12 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.

- Our Country Strategy Paper clearly documents my earlier point – that the goal of **development cooperation with South Africa is and will be to reduce poverty and inequality, in line with the government’s policies and targets.**
  
- Four focal areas exist:
  - **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.
  
  - **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.
  
  - **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).
  
  - **Support for regional and pan-African initiatives** - The EC will work with South Africa in the wider African region to promote both economic as well as political integration. I think here of peace-keeping, the development of a SADC Common Market and so on.
  
- We are encouraged that the **Project to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development** has been placed within the Presidency alongside the new

National Planning Commission, headed up by Minister Manuel, and the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation portfolio of Minister Chabane. We believe that the Presidency is better equipped than ever before to steer South Africa towards a more equitable, peaceful and democratic society.

- With a programme budget in excess of R50 mil we feel that the **Project to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development** can make a significant contribution, especially at a time of global economic hardship, to the lives of most ordinary South Africans. We expect this programme to profoundly impact upon numerous other poverty alleviation commitments we have within South Africa including:
  - The €107 mil Masibambane Water for Growth and Development Programme;
  - The recent €105 mil Employment Creation Programme, and most notably;
  - A €120 mil education programme, currently being developed, which is set to become the largest of its kind globally.
- But back to the purpose of us gathering here tonight. Alan, you have an unenviable, but surely also one of South Africa's most rewarding challenges ahead of you ... I wish you well in this endeavour and assure you of our strong commitment to continue supporting poverty alleviation in South Africa.

Thank you