



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Commission  
To South Africa

## SPEAKING POINTS

**Event: Ceremonial hand-over of the SISP at Sefoto Primary School, Limpopo on 17 October 2008**

**Project: Schools Infrastructure Support Programme (SISP)**

Honourable Minister of Education, **Ms Naledi Pandor**;

MEC for Education, **Dr Motsoaledi**;

Deputy Director-General, national Department of Education, **Mr Patel**;

Limpopo Superintendent-General, **Rev Nevhutalu**;

Sefoto Principal, **Mr Maruapula**;

Ladies and gentlemen,

and most importantly, **learners** of Sefoto Primary School, *Dumelang!* (Good day!)

- I am delighted to be in Limpopo to celebrate with you the culmination of nearly 6 years of dedication and hard work by **all** on the EC funded Schools Infrastructure Support Programme. I trust that it has indeed improved the teaching and learning conditions in some of the most needy communities in South Africa.
- The EC has supported education and training in South Africa since 1994 and has contributed an estimated R2.2 billion (in today's terms) to the country's education sector during these fourteen years.
- We recognise that education is critical for reducing poverty and for the development of individuals, communities and countries, and therefore we support education in the vast majority of countries throughout the world. Cooperation in the field of education is a priority in our relations with Africa and with South Africa.

- South Africa and the European Union today are joined in a Strategic Partnership, making us close allies in a whole range of issues internationally, and for the fight against poverty here in the country.
- The recently released report of the highly reputable Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, reviewing education policies for South Africa, has generated wide and renewed discussion on the challenges in education. It clearly identifies the still significant infrastructural backlogs and inequalities. In this regard we are very happy to have been able to make a modest contribution to eradicating some of these backlogs and inequalities.
- I am proud that the EU logo is displayed on the improved school facilities which I see are of very high quality: additional classrooms, new ablution facilities, nutrition centres and, at some schools, administration facilities. I am especially proud of the nutrition centres, which address very real need, and which are the truly innovative aspect of this programme. I am also pleased with the "soft" aspects of the programme: the training of School Management Teams and School Governing Bodies on the utilisation and maintenance of school facilities, for which basic tools and materials have been provided, and which is vital for sustainability. Related to this, the assistance rendered with the development of Facilities Management Systems for use at national and provincial level are sure also to make a notable difference.
- Yet, at the same time, I must express sincere regret that we were only able to do this for 27 schools, and not for the 150 originally planned. On the upside, the materials developed, from technical drawings and specifications to other products developed, as well as the lessons learned in this programme, will, I am certain, assist with the Government's ongoing service delivery in the education sector. I encourage you to use them as you see fit to continue improving teaching and learning conditions in South Africa.
- Let me assure you that the EC will continue to support education in South Africa. Together with the national Department of Education, we have started preparing a new budget support programme to the value of approximately ZAR 1.2 billion (in today's

terms) to improve learner performance in literacy and numeracy, in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases (primary education), to start in 2010.

- We recognise that many individuals and contractors contributed in their own unique way to delivering the SISP, but we wish to recognise the pivotal role played by the Department of Education's Programme Manager, Mr Mthobeli Dintsi, in coordinating individual efforts and keeping the programme on track, as well as the active participation in, and commitment to, the implementation of the programme by the Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape Provincial Education Departments.
- My message to those who are benefitting directly from the EC's contribution to education under this programme - learners, teachers, School Management Teams, School Governing Bodies, district officials, and school communities – is that I trust these improved school facilities will inspire you to do with renewed enthusiasm what **you** need to do: learn, teach, lead, govern, support, encourage...
- Finally, I wish to give the learners of Sefoto Primary School this soccer ball. The other 26 schools included in the SISP will also receive a soccer ball each. While we don't realistically expect to see any of the learners presently enrolled in these schools to be included in the 2010 Bafana Bafana squad, I do hope that these schools will produce some players for future World Cup Teams.
- *Shalang gabotse!* (Stay well!)