

The Millennium Development Goals EUROPE CARES ...



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Focus on Africa

... The background:

In September 2005, the UN General Assembly will review progress towards achieving the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**, agreed by the world community in 2000. As reports show, progress to date is insufficient to reach the MDGs by the target date of 2015. The situation is particularly difficult in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, the continent also shows signs of progress towards democracy, higher growth rates over the last three years (4.5 % on average in 2004), real growth per capita (2 %) and improving fiscal balances.

Sub-Saharan Africa, most dramatically, has been in a downward spiral of AIDS, resurgent malaria, falling food output per person, deteriorating shelter conditions, and environmental degradation, so that most countries in Africa are far off track to achieve most of the goals'. [The region] 'has the highest rate of undernourishment, (...) the lowest primary enrolment rates, (...) [with the highest] gender disparity (...). The HIV/AIDS crisis is devastating much of the continent (...). The region also has the highest TB incidence in the world and the highest

maternal and child mortality ratios. (...) Progress in access to safe drinking water, though more promising, is still too slow to achieve the MDG targets. Without sustained support, sub-Saharan Africa is unlikely to meet any of the goals. **UN Millennium Project Report, January 2005.**

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The European Union has a particular role and responsibility in development cooperation, in particular concerning Africa. The Union is the largest global donor of development aid with 55 % of ODA (Official development aid) in terms of aid volume and the largest donor in Africa. The EU is also the most important economic and trade partner of the African continent.

In the light of this responsibility, the European Council seized the issue in December 2004 and invited the Commission 'to prepare specific and ambitious proposals for action, in particular in the areas of finance for development, coherence for development and **focus on Africa**'. The Council endorsed these proposals on 24 May 2005 and made them EU policy.



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...What are the EU's suggestions for African development?

To make a concrete difference, the European Union proposes to accelerate the EU's actions in a **limited number of selected areas** in view of reaching the MDGs. The Union proposes key commitments for action that represent a qualitative jump on three key multipliers for development: 'Elements decisive for development if they are met and if progress is made, but without which a lasting development is not possible: **governance, interconnection and equity**'. Within these areas, the Union proposes clear commitments to fill existing gaps and catalyse activities of other partners:

The improvement of Africa's governance. In order to give a decisive incentive for the reform of Africa's governance, the European Union proposes to support the implementation of reforms following recommendations of the African peer review

mechanism (APRM). The EU also proposes a replenishment of the peace facility so as to provide the African Union and the sub-regional organisations with the necessary financial muscle to cope with Africa's conflicts.

The interconnection of Africa's networks and trade. The European Union proposes a Europe-Africa partnership on infrastructure. The partnership, based on strategies elaborated by the African Union and NEPAD, will support the establishment of sustainable cross-border infrastructure which is essential for the interconnectivity of the continent. The assistance provided by the European Union will leverage private sector investments.

The strive towards equitable societies and access to services. The European Union proposes the introduction of a covenant for equity as part of the criteria to determine the aid allocations of countries. This will ensure the availability of additional resources for countries willing and able to address issues of inequality and marginalisation.

...What should be done to improve Africa's governance:

The EU is ready to support African efforts in building more effective States in Africa. Consequently, in order to give a decisive incentive to the reform of governance in Africa, the EU, the Commission and the Member States will put into place a joint financial mechanism with the African Union and NEPAD to support the implementation of reforms that the **Africa peer review mechanism (APRM)** will trigger. Through the African peer review process, African countries will undergo a comprehensive review of the human-, economic- and social rights in the country. The EU will support concrete proposals in all areas of this review, for example on judicial reform, the fight against corruption, public service or social reforms.



... What should be done to create and sustain regional infrastructure networks and services:

High transport costs handicap Africa's capacities to compete within a global market, inland transport costs are twice as high in sub-Saharan Africa than in Asia, international maritime costs are three times higher. These higher costs are due to a combination of factors such as lower road quality, outdated port facilities, time-consuming administrative procedures and — in some countries — insufficient competition between service providers. Responding to these challenges, the European Union will focus on improving trade facilitation, including the development of transparent and simplified import, export and transition procedures and statistical services. The EU will also address the missing regional and intra-regional links for a trans-African network and proposes a Europe-Africa partnership on infrastructure, including research and statistical infrastructures, sustainable transport, information and communication technologies, satellites, water and sanitation to fill the existing gap. This partnership, based on the strategies developed by the African Union and NEPAD, would support the establishment of sustainable cross-border infrastructure essential for the interconnectivity of the continent. The Union proposes to agree on a map of strategic African networks to which priority will be given.



... What should be done to promote equitable societies with access to services, and employment:

Undoubtedly, sustained growth is an essential but not sufficient condition for poverty eradication. In addition, access to sustainable basic services and to full and productive employment are a necessary condition for any long-term sustainable development and is key in all strategies to reach the MDGs. Poverty eradication, gender equality, improving the health of mothers and children and better access to education all show strong links with environmental protection and the sustainable management of natural resources. Most Africans strongly depend on the environment for their livelihoods. To ensure progress, capacity for the management of natural resources needs to be strengthened and the costs of unsustainable development must be factored into policy decisions.

The European Union will provide incentives to the promotion of equitable and sustainable societies in Africa. To this effect, the EU could for example take account of concrete policy measures to improve equity and environmental sustainability in its development policy with African countries.



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... Where can I read more?

All documents that suggest the Union's joint undertakings for the MDG progress review at the UN's General Assembly in New York in September this year can be consulted at the following website:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/communications/communications_en.htm



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