



## European Security and Defence Assembly Assembly of Western European Union

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### **A strong African Union is as necessary as a strong European Union**

**Brussels, 17 September 2010** – In the framework of the Belgian Presidency of the European Union and Western European Union and with the support of the Belgian Federal Parliament, the European Security and Defence Assembly/WEU Assembly held a high-level conference on “**EU-Africa: Partnership for Development and Security**” on 15 and 16 September in the Belgian House of Representatives in Brussels. A large number of delegates, including Speakers, from the national parliaments of European and African countries debated issues relating to development and security with top-level actors from European Union and African Union institutions.

The conference was opened on 15 September by **Mr Charles MICHEL**, the Belgian Minister for Development Cooperation, **Mr André FLAHAUT**, Speaker of the Belgian House of Representatives, and **Mr Danny PIETERS**, Speaker of the Belgian Senate, representing the Belgian EU/WEU Presidency, alongside **Mr Robert WALTER MP**, President of the ESDA/WEU Assembly, and **Mr Jean PING**, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union. The first session examined the state of play and prospects of the strategic EU-Africa partnership on development (see [Press Release 37/2010](#)).

During the second session on “**UN and EU cooperation with the African Union on Peace and Security**”, **Mr Romano PRODI**, Chairman of the AU-UN Joint Panel on Peacekeeping in Africa, urged that Europe should deal with Africa “as a continent”. Europe-Africa relations should no longer be dominated by bilateral policies. The enemy of Africa was fragmentation. It was therefore necessary to cooperate with the United Nations. As regards peacekeeping in Africa, the African Union (AU) had a key role to play (training, harmonising equipment, exercises, etc). Furthermore, active dialogue between the AU and the UN was essential in order to optimise synergies between the two organisations in the framework of joint operations. Yet some states were considerably reluctant for African countries to have an operational structure that would allow them to pool their military capabilities. Important members of the United Nations Security Council were still too accustomed to bilateral relations and were wary of the political role of the AU. We should put an end to these bilateral relations, as China was doing, Mr PRODI insisted.

**Mr Roeland VAN DE GEER**, EU Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, pointed out that while strong African leadership was essential, support from the international community would equally be needed to resolve the current problems in the Great Lakes Region. The EU in particular was supporting the four main processes in the region (namely the Nairobi process, regarding Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); the Goma process in DRC; the Juba process in Uganda; and the Burundi process). In addition to these four processes, the EU was focused on four action lines: Security Sector Reform (SSR), notably in the DRC, in cooperation with other international partners; the fight against illegal exploitation of and illegal trade of natural resources in the DRC; the fight against genocide suspects and the leaders of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) in Europe; and the fight against sexual violence.

**Mr Jon LOMØY**, Director of the Development Cooperation Directorate, OECD, said that room should be created for African ownership and government leadership, otherwise it would not succeed.

During the debate, **Mr Jean PING**, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, supported Mr PRODI’s analysis and cited the example of Somalia. African states were providing troops to help their fellow country, but they did not have sufficient financial resources or the means of projection.

The third session on 16 September on “**Medical cooperation in EU missions**” was chaired by **Mr Doug HENDERSON**, Chairman of the Defence Committee of the ESDA/WEU Assembly. Speakers included **Mrs Tuija NURMI**, Leader of the Finnish Delegation to the ESDA/WEU Assembly and former Medical Officer, **Captain Jari AUTTI**, MD, Finland, and **Mr Christopher STOKES**, General Director, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). Mrs NURMI presented the report “**Medical cooperation among European armed forces**” ([Document 2076](#)) during the Plenary Session of the Assembly in June 2010.

The fourth session on “**Conflict prevention and crisis management in Africa – selected case studies**” was chaired by **Mrs Marie ARENA**, Vice-Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee of the Belgian Senate.

**Mr Armand DE DECKER**, State Minister and Deputy Speaker of the Belgian Senate, welcomed the ESDA/WEU Assembly’s initiative and its work. He also stressed that the world needed a more united Europe with a greater presence on the international scene which could, through its development aid policy, tackle the root causes of instability in some regions of the world, in particular in Africa. Europe had a duty to fulfil its financial commitments so that the Millennium Development Goals could be achieved. In this regard, he welcomed the fact that Belgium was the sixth donor country to meet the public development aid target of 0.7% of GDP.

According to **Mr Koen VERVAEKE**, EU Representative to the African Union, Addis Ababa, peace was the first condition without which development in Africa was not possible. A multilateral approach was essential. The EU’s “Peace Facility” was an effective tool which enabled the provision of predictable funding for African Union troops deployed in peacekeeping operations.

**Dame Rosalind MARSDEN**, EU Special Representative for Sudan, spoke of the EU’s strong support for the full and timely implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. She expressed concern about delays in preparations for the referendums on the future status of Abyei and on self-determination for South Sudan and called on the parties to accelerate their efforts in this regard and to resolve critical key remaining post-referendum arrangements. She noted that the EU would be sending a Referendum Observation Mission to Sudan to observe all steps of the referendum process as well as providing technical experts to support the work of the South Sudan Referendum Commission and the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel. The security and humanitarian situation in Darfur was still a matter of serious concern. The EU was a major humanitarian donor in Darfur and had helped to save thousands of lives. The EU wanted to see improved security, the protection of civilians, humanitarian access across Darfur, respect for the genuinely voluntary nature of any returns and measures to address justice and reconciliation. The situation in eastern Sudan also deserved attention. Human development indicators there were amongst the worst in the country. The EU had been supporting disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and livelihood programmes in eastern Sudan and looked forward to participating in the conference in Kuwait later in the year. The EU wanted to see humanitarian organisations gain easier access to the region.

**Brigadier-General Jean-Philippe GANASCIA**, Former Commander EUFOR Chad/RCA, recalled that the main objective of the European force was to protect the aid workers on the ground without interfering with their work. The 10 000 European troops who had in turn served in Chad and the Central African Republic had shown “operational coherence” and our countries could be proud of them. But for the future, the EU had to increase its ambitions and its capacities in the area of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

**Mrs Elise FORD**, OXFAM International, acknowledged the value of the EUFOR Chad/RCA mission which had reassured the local population. However she felt that the EU should have adopted a more global approach in order to tackle the root causes of the conflict and established a political process capable of leading to long-term peace, both locally and regionally. It was necessary to undertake joint diplomatic action with the African Union.

**Mr Mohamed Ibn CHAMBAS**, Secretary General, ACP, said he was in favour of enhanced dialogue with the European Union. The IMF and OECD had forecast strong growth for the African continent in the decades to come, which was promising. But the situations were very different from one country to another. As regards Somalia, for example, millions of people had died since 1991 because of the conflict there and food shortages. There were many displaced persons and refugees who had suffered violence and did not benefit from healthcare or have access to education. Piracy was on the increase, which was having a dire effect on neighbouring countries where people made their living from fishing, port activities and tourism.

At the end of two days of fruitful debate, the African parliamentary delegates invited to the high-level conference issued a “[Joint Declaration](#)” expressing the hope that the EU-African partnership should be consolidated and that the interests of both parties should be respected.

**Mr Piero FASSINO** (Italy, Socialist Group), Chairman of the Political Committee of the ESDA/WEU Assembly and Rapporteur on Africa, closed the conference, saying that there were two sides to Africa today: on the one hand it was deemed a “lost continent” yet it was increasingly a “continent of promise”. Africa was at a crossroads in Mr Fassino’s view. It was time to take a leap forward in the relationship between the European Union and Africa. Africa should also be seen as a “single entity” so that it might take its rightful place on the international political and economic stage. It was necessary to have a strong African Union, just as it was necessary to have a strong European Union.

The findings of the conference will provide the basis for a report by the Political Committee of the European Security and Defence Assembly to be submitted by the Committee Chairman and Rapporteur, **Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, Socialist Group)**. The draft political recommendation accompanying the report will be voted on at the next **plenary session** of the Assembly which is to be held from **Tuesday 30 November to Thursday 2 December** at the Palais d'Iéna in **Paris**.

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ESDA - Press and Information Office, 43, avenue du Président Wilson - 75775 Paris Cedex 16 - France  
Tel ++33.1.53.67.22.00 - Fax ++33.1 53.67.22.01 - email: [press@assembly.weu.int](mailto:press@assembly.weu.int)  
(If you wish to amend your entry in our mailing list, call ++33.1.53.67.24.79)