



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION TO GHANA

EU Press Conference

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International Press Centre

Opening remarks by Ambassador William Hanna

Friends from the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to this Press Conference

I am happy to be joined today by my colleagues Ambassadors from the European Member States represented in Accra. I'll make an opening statement and then we are happy to take some questions.

Today marks the opening of Europe Week in Ghana (#EUWeekGh). At the beginning of May each year we commemorate the 1950 Schuman Declaration – the birth of the idea of the European Union.

2015 is European Year for Development (#EYD2015) promoting cooperation around the world. So the theme for our Europe week in Ghana this year is "EU-Ghana: Partnership for a Better World".

During the week we are organising a wide range of events, including free access to original European film screenings, to illustrate different aspects of EU cooperation with Ghana.

When Ghana became independent in 1957, European integration was beginning to take shape. The EU and Ghana have developed a longstanding relationship over the years, and since 2000 the framework has been the Cotonou Agreement.

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The European Union and Ghana share not only a history of cooperation, but also similar values, such as a deep attachment to democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

In our EU-Ghana partnership, we work together to promote peace and security in the region; to support sustainable economic and social development; to develop trade and investment; to encourage regional integration; and to help preserve and improve the environment and sustainable management of natural resources, including fisheries.

The EU is a major partner for Ghana. We are the most important trading partner accounting for almost half of Ghana's exports, the biggest source of Foreign Direct Investment and the largest provider of development assistance.

In Africa Ghana has become a reference for democratic governance. As current chair of ECOWAS Ghana is championing peace and democracy in West Africa, an important task this year as so many countries in the region go to the polls. The European Union is also committed to support Ghana's democracy ahead of the 2016 elections.

So, building on shared values, and aware of Ghana's key position in West Africa, we believe that a stronger partnership is in our common interests.

I would like to give a few examples of what this partnership means in some of the different areas of cooperation.

A. Political dialogue

We will soon be holding a **Political dialogue between the EU and Ghana at the highest level**. Among the subjects on the agenda will be peace and security in the region including maritime security, governance, support for democracy and migration. Not only will we have a dialogue with the Government but we will also intensify our dialogue with civil society, following the new Road Map we have recently agreed with them.

B. Trade, Business and Investment

We welcomed the initialling of the new **Economic Partnership Agreement** last year. We strongly believe that this new approach to trade between us is in our mutual interests. It is the best way to attract investment, to develop the ECOWAS regional market of 300

million people, to preserve the EU market of 500 million people, and to create jobs. All countries have an interest to complete the procedures allowing it to enter into force.

European Businesses want to do more business with Ghana. On Wednesday we will launch a new **European Business Organisation**. EBO Ghana will be the first of its kind in Africa. It will be an umbrella organisation, complementing the commercial activities of EU Member States and engaged in Joint European Policy Advocacy on issues related to trade and the business climate.

Also this week the **European Investment Bank**, which is the long term lending institution of the EU will be here in Accra to announce a new credit line of € 10 million to Unibank Ghana to improve access to finance for SMEs in the country.

C. Development Cooperation

While the EIB provides loans, at very favourable conditions, most EU aid to Ghana is in the form of grants. These are scarce and valuable resources and have to be spent wisely.

We welcome the recent agreement reached between the Government of Ghana and the IMF for a 3-year extended credit facility programme. A sound implementation of this programme will be important in order to restore macro-economic stability in Ghana with a view to creating an enabling framework for development, investment and job creation.

The EU appreciates the Government's commitment to improve public financial management as part of the IMF programme, with a strong focus on enhancing controls in public payroll management.

We welcome the Government's publication of a comprehensive and time-bound action plan to detect and remove ghost workers, to secure and unify payroll databases and to sanction those responsible for fraud. We are looking forward to the publication of the quarterly progress reports by the inter-ministerial committee on payroll.

The EU stands ready to support Ghana in the implementation of these challenging structural reforms. We are optimistic that EU budget support disbursements will be resumed soon, now that the IMF programme has been adopted.

It is essential that Ghana implements these macro-economic reforms, as sound economic governance; better tax and customs administration and a widening of tax base will all

contribute to a sustainable development of the country and to a better investment climate in Ghana in the future.

Going forward the EU will continue its strong support to Ghana in pursuing its development agenda. We have recently formulated additional support in the areas of social protection, employment and skills development, in order to support job creation and the protection of the most vulnerable in Ghana as well as in the area of anti-corruption and rule of law.

Development cooperation is an area where the EU Delegation works closely with the bilateral missions of the EU Member States. They have signed up with the EU to a Joint Programme for 2013-2016 in cooperation with the government of Ghana and in consultation with Civil Society organisations.