

The 2012 Nobel Peace Prize for the European Union: an award for the past, a commitment to the future

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Today the European Union (EU) will receive the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize is a strong reminder of what makes the EU so special. The Prize is a source of pride, responsibility and inspiration. We see the award as a timely reminder of what our Union stands for and the fundamental principle it was built around – the transformation of a war-torn continent into a union of democracies. For those who rebuilt Europe from the rubble of war, it remains a miracle that the wounds of such conflict could be overcome to give former enemies a common future. Since then, the EU has offered membership to country after country, bolstering their democracies and including them in the world's largest internal market. Today the EU continues to exude its drawing power and serves as a stabilising force beyond its borders.

The EU, despite caveats, remains one of the most successful global peace building projects, and could serve as a source of inspiration for countries in the Horn of Africa that are yearning for stability, peace and prosperity for its people. For decades, the EU has been deeply engaged in Kenya and Somalia through its long standing political commitment, trade relations, development cooperation, the provision of humanitarian aid, support to (maritime) security and through its support to regional bodies like the AU, COMESA, IGAD and the EAC.

With their prestigious recognition, the Nobel committee has also sent a clear message to the EU: we must protect a Union built on six decades spent in the pursuit of peace from disintegration and resurgent nationalisms. Rather than rest on its laurels, the EU accepts the award as an encouragement to step up and intensify our engagement for lasting peace and prosperity. As EU Ambassadors to Kenya and Somalia, we need to make Europe's mission for peace a forward-looking one.

Today we also celebrate International Human Rights Day. In Kenya and Somalia, the adoption of new Constitutions has established a foundation for the protection and promotion of human rights. In Kenya, progress has been achieved in many fields, notably in the Judiciary, where ongoing reforms have strengthened inherent trust. In Somalia, the new Government has, for instance, committed to fight impunity against the killing of journalists. Whilst celebrating progress is justified, the protection of human rights warrants continued attention, and there is a need to further strengthen the rule of law as well as to face down impunity and corruption which obstruct access to civil and political rights. The EU stands ready to continue to work tirelessly to ensure that people in Kenya and Somalia can count on the EU to give them a helping hand. In Kenya the EU as the biggest donor, with its Member States, has fully supported Kenya's reform process which will culminate in General Elections in March 2013. Public expectations are justifiably high. The EU is committed to helping all Kenyans in delivering peaceful, credible and free and fair elections. In Somalia, the EU supported a 'people want change' Somali process. This has generated a new political dispensation and renewed optimism on Somalia's future. The EU will strive to do its utmost to help the institutions respond to these expectations by reinvigorating its partnership and by

helping to re-establish Somalia's statehood and the people's ownership of their future. In a volatile regional and international environment, the EU will deploy its political, security and development instruments in a comprehensive manner to support the multiple challenges facing both the countries and the region.

Finally, we both hope and trust that the ability to support people across the globe in their struggle for democracy and freedom will inspire and encourage them to continue to work together. This will enable more generations in both this region, in Europe and beyond to enjoy what we cherish every day: peace, democracy and the guarantee of fundamental freedoms.