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A new and ambitious European Neighbourhood Policy

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Joint press conference on the adoption of the joint communication on the European Neighbourhood Policy Review (ENP)

Bruxelles, 25 May 2011

To the east and the south of the European Union lie sixteen countries whose hopes and future make a direct and significant difference to us." I am quoting the opening line of the new document that you will be receiving today. Štefan Füle and I are putting forward a new and an ambitious European Union Neighbourhood Policy. In the document, we describe how the European Union will work with our neighbourhood with the principles of mutual accountability - recognising responsibilities to deliver for the people of the region and to use our resources on behalf of the European taxpayer effectively, and recognising the ambitions and the expectations we have for our partners to respond to that.

It's not a "one size fits all" approach. Rather, it's a recognition that each of our neighbours are different and that we want to offer support that's tailor-made to each. Those countries who choose to move faster and further to reform will be able to draw on resources to help them to achieve that goal. I've talked before about the 3 M's, and that was for part of the communication that you saw recently.

The first of the M's was money – money resources. We're allocating up to €1.2bn in addition to the €5.7bn already allocated over the next three years in grants to support change. I know that we're operating against a backdrop of a tough economic climate, so I took the initiative to secure additional finance from the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and I want to thank them both for their response.

The European Council agreed with my proposal to increase European Investment Bank lending to the Southern Mediterranean by €1bn over the next three years. And the EBRD have backed my request to extend their operations to the Middle East and North Africa, beginning with Egypt.

That means that the European Investment Bank will make up to €6bn available for the Southern neighbourhood, and around €3bn for the Eastern neighbourhood between now and the end of 2013. And the EBRD, in addition to the €5bn available in our Eastern neighbourhood for that same period, has now agreed to release resources to the South, which by the time we get to 2013 should reach about €2.5bn a year.

The second M was market access. It's in our interest, we believe, to promote lasting economic growth based on trade. Access to trade is not just about opening markets. It's also about

ensuring that countries can take advantage of those markets being opened. So it's also about working with them to reach the standards that we require for goods, making sure that we have the "level playing field", if you like, in terms of ability to trade across countries.

And third, mobility. I think especially of the young people I've met across the region in my visits there, and I think about the business people. For the young people, their ability to access educational opportunities is really important, not just for them, but also for us. And for business people, especially small and medium size enterprises, who are the backbone of economies, we need to think about how to ensure that they have access to our markets and access to the opportunities to take advantage of those markets.

I've talked about deep democracy a number of times. Actually, it was put very well to me in Benghazi on Sunday by a young woman who was for the very first time getting involved in politics. And she said: "What we want is democracy as a lifestyle." What she meant was of course, that you need to build the institutions around a democratic framework, an independent judiciary, an administration that delivers impartially, voluntary organisations thriving and supporting people, the building of political parties, support for human rights and of course the rule of law. In Benghazi we only now see the first opportunity for NGOs to come together - over 200 new organisations appeared, eager to help transform that society.

In this document, we herald the idea of the endowment for democracy. I'm particularly interested in how we use social media, new media; something that I talked about with Hilary Clinton in Washington last week, and maybe something that we can collaborate with them on helping young people talk to each other, not just across the region, but also with people in the European Union.

Above everything what we describe is - partnership. We have a lot to offer and we will benefit a great deal from thriving societies and economies in our neighbourhood. The investment that we make now is to the people striving for democracy, freedom and a better life, and investment for the people of Europe too, in a strong neighbourhood with whom we can work. Thank you.