South Africa and the EU

The European Union’s (EU’s) relations with South Africa (SA) focus mainly on respect for human rights, freedom, equality, justice, democracy and the rule of law.

Political relations

South Africa is one of the European Union's 10 Strategic Partners. The SA-EU Strategic Partnership was established in 2006 and followed by a Joint Action Plan in 2007 as a forward looking platform that facilitates the wide ranging cooperation between our two parties. A range of dialogues between the EU and South Africa allow us to share experiences in areas of common interest, or where we face common challenges. In addition to the areas of cooperation mentioned in the following sections, the following are also covered by these dialogues:

- Peace & Security
- Human Rights
- Good Governance
- Migration
- Social Cohesion
- Energy
- Innovation

Our partnership is broad and comprehensive and dominated by mutual political, trade and development interests.

Today regular Presidential summits and Ministerial meetings take place. Regular SA-EU Political and Security Committee meetings allow for discussions on issues including peace and security in Africa, the Middle East and Iran, and on positions in the multilateral arena.

Economic relations

Internationally, South Africa has been a long-standing member of the UN, GATT and WTO. The country has had a prominent role in the IMF and is currently a rotating member of the UN Security Council. Regionally, South Africa is a member of SACU, SADC and the AU. Besides its membership of
the G20 South Africa is also, together with India and Brazil, a member of the development-oriented organisation IBSA and since 2011 it has been a member of BRICS together with those countries, China and Russia. As part of the strategic partnership the EU has a regular macroeconomic dialogue with the South African authorities. The format is a formal dialogue between National Treasury (Economic Policy) and EU's Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs (ECFIN).

Since 2004, the European Investment Bank (EIB) has supported development and economic activity in South Africa with loans and equity investment worth over €2.5bn.

**Trade and Investment**

Since 1999 trade relations between the EU and South Africa have had a solid base under the bilateral Trade Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA). Today the EU is South Africa’s biggest trade and investment partner.

In June 2016 the EU and South Africa, together with Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland, signed the Southern African Economic Partnership Agreement (SADC EPA) that regulates trade in goods between the two regions. Under the so-called 'SADC EPA', the EU has fully or partially removed customs duties on 98.7% of imports from South Africa while guaranteeing full free access to the rest of the signing countries. Due to the importance given to developmental priorities, the asymmetric nature of the EPA means that the African signatories will not be required to respond with the same level of market openness as the EU will provide. The EPA will contribute to improve business climate between the partners by providing companies with a stable and forward looking framework, not only in South Africa but in the whole Southern African region. Further, it is expected to boost bilateral and regional trade, thereby providing new opportunities to fulfil the objectives of the SA-EU Strategic Partnership.

The EU also represents the most significant source of foreign direct investment (FDI) into South Africa. EU-based companies invest in a wide range of economic activities in the country and have been a major contributor to South Africa’s industrialisation and transformation agenda. After most Bilateral Investment Treaties with EU countries were terminated, South Africa has adopted a new Investment Protection Bill (still to be published). The European Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Southern Africa, established in 2015, provides a coherent approach on issues of concern to European businesses invested in the region.

The EU is the world’s largest single market and the Export Helpdesk is your online portal to access tariffs, SPS, environmental or technical requirements and any other issue that applies to your export business.

**Development Cooperation**

Following South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 the EU commenced a comprehensive development assistance programme to the country which was subsequently included in the TDCA. The assistance provided since 1995 amounts to around €2.6bn and covers a wide range of areas. The current Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for South Africa (2014-2020), drawn up jointly by the two parties, details the areas of cooperation covered by a €241mil funding envelope allocated under
the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). EU-South Africa cooperation is focused on three areas:

- Employment creation: the objective is to assist the Government to reduce unemployment notably through improved labour market policy, skills development and competitiveness of SMMEs.
- Education, training and innovation: the objective is to assist the Government in transforming the education, training and innovation system so that it can contribute to improved economic performance.
- Building a capable and developmental state: the objective is to assist the state in fulfilling its developmental and transformative role, notably through improving service delivery.

Important to our cooperation is the crucial role played by civil society in most programmes.

**Education and Culture**

From the very beginning of the EU's engagement in South Africa, education has made up a significant part of the EU programming. It has over time focused on adult literacy, early childhood development, school rehabilitation, tertiary and technical education, "Recognition of Prior Learning" and the establishment of a National Qualifications Framework. Recent EU's support has focused on improving learner performance in literacy and numeracy at primary school level so as to achieve better output to secondary and higher education as well as vocational training. Also, a close collaboration with the Department of Higher Education and Training seeks to improve the quantity and quality of teachers for all education sub-systems.

Culture has become an increasingly important element of EU-South Africa cooperation. It is also an important element of the EU's external relations as developed in the joint communication of 08/06/2016 entitled Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations. Beyond supporting its intrinsic value especially when it comes to cultural and creative industries, the EU Delegation to South Africa promotes culture as a vector to support youth empowerment, human rights and democracy, diversity and multilingualism. Notably South Africa was a significant contributor to the 2007-2013 culture programme of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture with eight projects.

**Health and Social**

A key priority for the South African Government is to provide access to adequate health care for all South Africans. To date the EU has made significant contributions to the Department of Health's efforts to reform the health sector through primary health care provision, the development of a district health policy, the establishment of effective health financing and information systems and
support to planning, reorganisation and refurbishment of health facilities. Significant support has been provided to NGOs to improve primary health care services incl. HIV/Aids prevention and care.

Currently, in addition to the EU's contributions to the Global Fund to fight HIV/Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria and to the European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), current EU financial support to the health sector is focused on improving access to public health services and to increase the quality of service delivery of primary health care through the district health system, in line with key South African health priorities:

- increasing life expectancy
- decreasing maternal and child mortality
- combating HIV/Aids
- decreasing the burden of diseases from Tuberculosis
- strengthening South Africa's health systems' effectiveness

One of the largest EU-funded health programmes accompanies government reforms in the health sector in order to make the health system more equitable, more effective, more efficient, and supports pilot projects in a number of National Health Insurance pilot districts.

Sport too has played role in EU programming in South Africa with a number of programmes since the EU established its office in the country. Most notably a national youth life skills programme, conceived around South Africans' love for football, was initiated at the time of the Fifa World Cup.

**Governance and Justice**

Focussed on consolidating democracy, EU support in these sectors has focused on human rights, good governance and support to civil society. For the past two decades access to, and the promotion of, constitutional rights (incl. socio-economic justice) through the Foundation for Human Rights has been a key element in EU-South Africa relations. Today this relationship is managed through the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and the current support programme, Amarightza is about awareness, participatory democracy through policy dialogues, support to community advice offices, research on socio-economic rights and jurisprudence, sector co-ordination, and engagement and participation of civil society organisations.

As noted above, support to civil society has remained an important component of our cooperation with South Africa, including but not limited to the governance and justice sectors. Areas of gender-based violence, women empowerment and gender equality, LGBTI, child, elderly, migrant and youth rights benefit from financial support to civil society organisations. A roadmap for engagement with civil society has been finalised in 2015 and serves as a broad strategic framework that address capacity issues of CSOs. These include their contribution to a capable and accountable developmental state and to economic policy-making and inclusive growth, as well of their voice in policy areas and processes underpinning the EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership.
Science and Technology

EU-South Africa cooperation in science and technology is based on two main agreements:

- Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (1997)
- The TDCA (2004)

South Africa is also one of the leading non-EU participating countries in the Commission's Horizon 2020 Programme.

For more information please refer to:

[node:5719:link]{Key elements of EU-SA cooperation in Science and Technology as Link}

Environment and Climate

South Africa plays a crucial role in multilateral and regional forums in which rules are established to ensure a high level of environmental protection and action against climate change. South Africa has ratified both the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol, and has signed the Paris Agreement (2016) the latter being the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal. South Africa, as Chair of the G77+China at the time of the Paris Conference, and as an active member of both the Africa Group of Negotiators and the BASIC group showed strong commitment towards addressing environmental challenges while ensuring policy space for developing countries. As part of its strong commitment, South Africa will later this year host the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora COP17 gathering.

South Africa's hosting in December 2011 of the UN climate talks (COP17/CMP7) raised the profile of climate change in EU-South Africa relations. The Department of Environment Affairs and the European Commission recognise the need to develop closer cooperation on environment, climate change and sustainable development, particularly in view of the global commitments on Sustainable Development Goals.

Documents

Presentation by Mr. Bart van Uytem, Head of Section for Economics and Infrastructure on the Gauteng Economic Indaba

See also

An introduction to the European Union’s International Cooperation and Development policy
www.eeas.europa.eu

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