

Kleinmond summit points EU-SA partnership towards future

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I WAS delighted to attend last Friday's European Union (EU)-SA summit in Kleinmond, the first to be held in SA. SA is a vital strategic partner for the EU and it is important that we address challenges together. Though our partnership was only formalised two years ago, our relations have flourished since the birth of democracy in SA in 1994 and have been underpinned for the past decade by the landmark trade, development and co-operation agreement signed in 1999.

Together, we are confronting the pressing issues of climate change and the global economic crisis, which topped the agenda for Friday's talks. We respect SA's commitment to tackling climate change as a member of the Africa Group and the Group of 77, and its role as a major player in the negotiations leading up to the Copenhagen Conference in December. We know SA is looking to us to support developing countries in their efforts to make and meet crucial climate change commitments.

In the EU, we are aware of the negative effects that the global economic crisis has had on Africa and we share SA's commitment to implementing the decisions of the London Group of 20 meeting. We will work together to reform the international financial institutions and ensure that developing countries have a greater say in them. We share an overriding concern that efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals are not hampered by the fallout from the economic crisis.

Central to our relationship is our joint approach to peace and security issues. We share a commitment to conflict resolution and postconflict stabilisation and reconstruction. At this year's summit, we launched an annual political dialogue, dedicated to analysing international political and security developments. SA's role in the Southern African Development Community has been a motor for regional integration and efforts for peace and prosperity in this core region of Africa. It plays an unparalleled role in advancing conflict resolution in Africa. We value its continued engagement in facilitating the Burundi peace process. It is also the main champion of postconflict building efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The EU and SA continue to work together in addressing the crisis in Zimbabwe. SA's role in brokering and guaranteeing the Global Political Agreement has been pivotal. The EU will continue to engage in the dialogue with the inclusive government of Zimbabwe and has just sent a high-level delegation to Harare to discuss progress towards normalising relations. The EU and SA also share concerns over Madagascar, Sudan and Somalia. We are looking at developing our co-operation on the EU's antipiracy operation off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden.

The EU's approach to the challenges facing African nations is multi-pronged, ranging from political dialogue, humanitarian aid and development co-operation, to trade and

investment, including peace operations under the United Nations aegis. We work very closely with the African Union (AU) and together the EU and the African nations are building a new strategic political partnership that supersedes the traditional donor-recipient relationship and builds on our common values and goals.

But our co-operation today with SA goes beyond Africa. A critical item on Friday's agenda was the Middle East peace process. The EU and SA are united in their desire to see a two- state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We also discussed the situation in Iran and the international community's efforts to resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear programme, stressing the importance of Iran engaging with the international community.

These critical international issues illustrate the importance of our partnership with SA. Our relations are not just anchored in the past, they are based on our shared vision of the world today and in the future. Our history, geography and cultural ties give us a special relationship with Africa, and in particular with SA.

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