

MEDIA STATEMENT

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MEC FOR FINANCE, BELINDA SCOTT, TALKS ECONOMY WITH EU MEMBERS IN DURBAN

Last night's Europe Day which marked the importance of partnership between South Africa and the European Union, saw various international heavyweights descend on Durban's Killebrew Campbell Museum in Berea.

Hosted by the Ambassador of the European Union, Roeland van der Geer, the Europe Day was attended by Consul Generals of Denmark, USA, Finland, Portugal, Netherlands, delegation from the European Union and various local partners.

Addressing the guests, Scott, representing KwaZulu-Natal Government, said 65 years ago in 1950, the then French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, presented a proposal on the creation of an organised Europe, to help maintain peaceful relations between European countries. She said that this proposal was considered to be the initiative that led to the creation of what is now known as the European Union with its motto: "*United in diversity*", signifying how Europeans have come together, in the form of the EU, to work for peace and prosperity, not only on the European continent but across the globe, including South Africa.

"It is from within this spirit "*United in diversity*" that South Africa has had a cordial and stable partnership with the EU since the advent of democracy in 1994. The European Union –South African Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement of 1999 created a comprehensive political and development partnership, as well as a free trade area. It is through this Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement that South Africa was able to accelerate its integration into the global economy and lay the foundation for comprehensive and solid relations with the EU. The relationship was further consolidated with the establishment of a Strategic Partnership in 2007," said Scott.

Scott said South Africa has been a beneficiary of generous development assistance from the EU through the Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI), whose objective is to bring added value through innovation, pilot programmes, capacity development, and the sharing of skills and knowledge.

“Following discussions during the Summit held in July 2013, we agreed to focus the Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) on employment creation, education, training, and innovation and building a capable and developmental state. In support of this programme, the EU has formally committed €241 million for the period 2014 to 2020 under the DCI to help South Africa address the eradication of poverty. In line with this programme, KZN receives R120 million from the EU through the General Budget Support (GBS) initiative over the period 2014/15 to 2016/17. We, as KZN Provincial Treasury, partnering with institutions of higher learning, plan to establish four science parks in the province with this funding. These parks will be located in Pietermaritzburg, Newcastle, Port Shepstone and Richards Bay,” concluded Scott.

Concluding the celebrations, van der Geer, said the regional co-operation, working together and not war, is the way to economic growth.

“After a period of economic meltdown which ravaged many economies in the world, I want to assure you that Europe is recovering. Africa is a continent that is close to our hearts and we need to continue to make exciting partnerships together,” he said.

Issued by the Office of the MEC for Finance, Ms Belinda Scott. For more information, contact Musa Cebisa on 071 6878 777.