



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Remarks by President of the European Council  
Herman Van Rompuy  
following the 6th EU-South Africa Summit**

It is a great pleasure to be a guest today here in South Africa - a day of international celebrations to honour former South African President Nelson Mandela. Nelson Mandela is very much in our thoughts today. I would like to quote one of my favourite sentences from his autobiography: *"I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward."* Very beautiful quotation.

We are all continuously inspired by former President Nelson Mandela's vision and this morning it was moving to be in Freedom Park and participate in the traditional community service in order to pay tribute to him.

South Africa is one of only ten countries in the world with whom the European Union has a formal strategic partnership. We cooperate as partners to pursue objectives bilaterally, in our respective regions and globally. This works well because our relationship is based on common values. Our strategic partnership evolved from a focus on trade to ties that span all aspects of our societies – from science and education, to climate change, energy and many more issues.

This sixth summit between the European Union and South Africa has been an occasion to take stock of our joint work in the past twelve months. Let me thank again President Zuma for the opportunity to engage frankly on a range of issues of direct importance for the people in our countries.

**P R E S S**

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During our Summit we have discussed thoroughly how to stimulate growth and employment through our partnership, thus contributing to global economic recovery. We have exchanged views on our respective experiences. And we agreed to work together more closely on these issues.

European economies are gradually emerging from the recession. The headwinds continue to be there, but in the second half of this year, our economy should stabilise and return to growth albeit moderate.

Considerable progress has been made in restoring financial stability of the euro area. European leaders are committed to continue working to stimulate structural economic growth, and employment via structural reforms of labour and product markets and via a deepened Economic and Monetary Union. On the short term, we decided in the Union on measures with immediate impact on tackling high youth unemployment.

We also have a joint responsibility, the European Union and South Africa, to continue to address international imbalances and challenges, including those affecting the African continent.

The EU and South Africa have similar views on a broad range of issues. This is true for Zimbabwe. The European Union supports the efforts of the political parties in Zimbabwe, of South Africa and of the Southern African Development Community in ensuring that the forthcoming elections are peaceful, transparent and credible. Our joint objective is contributing to a peaceful and stable Zimbabwe based on democratic legitimacy.

In this context, the European Union welcomes the sustained efforts by the South African Facilitation Team, and of President Zuma, to forge agreement among the political parties on the specific conditions under which elections are to be held. The EU will respond to the outcome of the elections on the basis of all the evidence available. If they are indeed peaceful, transparent and credible, with a result accepted by all, we look forward to a full normalisation of relations and a deepening of our partnership with Zimbabwe.

Our joint responsibility is also true for the Sahel-Mali region. Comprehensiveness remains the key word for the Sahel. Mali remains high on the EU agenda. Its stability is of paramount importance for Europe and for the Sahel region. We very much welcome the deployment of the UN-mission [MINUSMA], on 1 July 2013. The fight against extremism and drug trafficking requires that we tackle their roots. We are using all the instruments at our disposal to provide humanitarian aid and to promote sustainable development, change and security.

I have expressed to President Zuma the Union's willingness to continue playing an active and supportive role in the political transition in Mali. I am convinced that South Africa can also contribute significantly to this process both at the developmental and political level.

A few words on the European Union's cooperation with the African Union. Today we had fruitful discussions on the upcoming Africa-EU summit at the level of Heads of State or Government, which will be held in Brussels on 2-3 April 2014, the first one in Europe since Lisbon 2007. As a theme we would propose: "Investing for Prosperity and Peace". This would allow us to address our joint engagement for economic progress and for stability and peace.

On the one hand, we will discuss the framework for investment, jobs and growth. On the other hand we suggested to look at strengthening conflict prevention and crisis management where cooperation between the EU and Africa is already helping to establish stability and security as indispensable prerequisites for development and growth.

For us in Europe, the summit should be an opportunity to take a fresh look at our strategic partnership with Africa. Together we can revisit immediate priorities and the way they are implemented. We both agree that the Joint Africa-EU Strategy should continue to guide the continent-to-continent relations.

As regards Syria, we deplored the unfolding human tragedy and agreed on the importance of backing the planned Geneva Conference on Syria (Geneva II). There is no military solution. The only way forward is a political process. In the meantime, the EU will maintain its strong support of humanitarian assistance. We had a good exchange on the need to address today more than ever the Middle East Peace Process.

Finally, on Egypt, together with South Africa we reiterated firmly our joint call for an immediate end to violence. Egypt has to return rapidly to a legitimate government and democratic structures responding to the democratic and socio-economic aspirations of the Egyptian people. To achieve this, the EU calls for a broad-based and substantial dialogue, inclusive of all those political forces committed to democratic principles. National reconciliation including the Freedom and Justice Party is paramount. EU High Representative Ashton has just visited Egypt to send all these messages clearly, both to the interim authorities and to the political and social forces. She has also called, *inter alia*, for the release of Morsi.

Let me conclude by reiterating what a pleasure it is to be here on this day, the 95th birthday of former President Nelson Mandela who was instrumental in establishing South Africa's friendship and cooperation with the world. Now we have the task to take this further into the future.

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