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**Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy – Speaking Points**

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

Press Conference

**Brussels, 4 December 2006**

- Two years ago we launched the European Neighbourhood Policy to spread **stability and prosperity** beyond the EU's borders, and **work together** to **support our partners' own reform programmes**.
- Look at the progress reports we are publishing today, and you will see that **ENP is working**. The Action Plans that we have agreed jointly with our neighbours are beginning to bear fruit in ways that bring **concrete benefits to our partners and ourselves**.
- Take Morocco, where we have supported a national action plan on human rights, given technical support to train border forces to for better control of illegal immigration, and where our work together on aviation, ports, road transport and fisheries means better conditions for travel and trade for those on both sides of the Mediterranean.
- Or Ukraine, where we have seen the fairest elections ever held in the country with freedom of the media transformed, where we have deepened co operation on energy and negotiated agreements on visa facilitation and readmission to the benefit of both Ukraine and the EU.
- BUT two years on, experience shows there is scope to increase the impact of this policy. **We can do more. We have listened to our partners** and today I am making proposals responding to what they have told us.
- The Action Plans ask our partners to make demanding and costly reforms right now – but the advantages we propose in return are often for the medium or longer term.
- The **German presidency** aims to make ENP a key **priority** and this gives us an opportunity to **strengthen ENP**
- So we need to improve our offer – and to make it as attractive and relevant to their concerns as we can -
- First we want to step up our offer of **economic and trade integration** , and ensure that **East and the South enjoy equal chances**
  - The countries of the south are already working towards free trade areas with us. Now we want to work towards **deep and comprehensive FTAs** with all our neighbours, **going beyond free trade in goods and services** to address non-tariff barriers and move towards comprehensive regulatory convergence
  - Countries will move at different speeds, of course. But in the longer term, I hope we can work towards a broad **Neighbourhood economic community**.
- The EU's trade offer will include the products of most interest to ENP Partners. The additional effort that this entails for the EU will be outweighed by the political benefits
- It is hard to make the advantages of the Neighbourhood feel real to people who find it hard even to get a visa to travel to Europe.
  - We need to examine how visa procedures can be substantially improved to make travel easier for certain categories of passenger – like **students, researchers, businessmen, government officials, NGOs** and – very importantly – **journalists**.
  - This will of course need to go hand in hand with co operation on illegal migration, and border management.

- I also want to offer a new **scholarship scheme** for the region, as well as **exchanges** to build contacts between civil society, university researchers, business people, local authorities and so on, and more **cross border co operation**.
- This is how we will give the Neighbourhood **a human face**.
- The ENP is a bilateral policy, but in the **south** it is supported by a regional dimension through the **Euro Mediterranean partnership**. The east would also benefit from strengthened **regional co-operation** approach, but we can't simply copy the Barcelona model.
  - What I am proposing is enhanced co operation in the Black Sea region, - **Black Sea Synergy**, if you like - to promote dialogue on the whole range of ENP concerns.
  - We don't have to reinvent the wheel. We should consider holding back to back meetings with the existing organisation Black Sea Economic Co operation Organisation to promote ministerial level dialogue between ministers of the EU and Eastern ENP countries on political issues, and the whole range of ENP concerns.
  - A separate communication next year will look at this issue in more detail.
- Some of our strongest achievements under the ENP are not individual to one country, but are themes relevant to all our partners, like **Energy, Transport, the Environment, Migration, and Public Health**.
  - So I am also proposing today that we build a **thematic dimension** to ENP, holding ad hoc, or regular ministerial or expert meetings with ENP partners or a more institutionalised set up if appropriate.
  - This multilateral approach can usefully complement the bilateral work on which the ENP is based.
- An important step in thematic co operation is our offer to open up certain **Community programmes and agencies** to our neighbours, such as the environment agency and the space agency, and programmes such as research or media. The College has approved a separate Communication on this today.
- We have undertaken a comprehensive review of existing agencies and programmes to assess the scope for progress – and in the course of next year we will be work with partners on setting up the logistics for them to participate more in EU activities.
- I want to see **more political co-operation** with our Neighbours – that could mean a more systematic association of ENP partners with EU initiatives, such as **CFSP declarations**, co ordination of positions in international fora and, more parliamentary co operation.
- And I believe it should mean a **more active role** for the EU in **conflict settlement** in the region
- Between **2007-13** we have **€12 billion** to devote to the ENP countries: over 30% more than in the last budget period. Not bad! But this is still a modest sum given our ambitions to support reform in the Neighbourhood.
- We need to make our money work harder. That is why I am setting aside €1 billion (out of the €12 billion) to create two special funds.

- I propose that the EU set up a **Neighbourhood Investment Fund**, to which Member States could also contribute, which should be used to leverage additional lending by the International Financial Institutions. We would contribute **€700 million from the Community budget**. It is estimated that such a fund could leverage several times the amount of grant money in it. If Member States were to match our contribution, the Fund could therefore generate substantial new lending to the ENP countries – to fund infrastructure projects in areas like energy or transport, or to support SMEs.
- I should just make clear this is in addition to FEMIP – the Facility for the Euro-Mediterranean Investment Partnership, the existing funding instrument in the Mediterranean region.
- Secondly, building on the experience of a kind of pilot that we have operated for the southern neighbours, I propose a **Governance Facility** for the whole ENP region. **€300 million** will be set aside to give a top-up to those partners who have made most progress in implementing their Action Plan.
- This is an ambitious agenda. It will require political will and effort on the EU side. But the potential cost of *not* supporting reform on our borders would be very great. I look forward to discussing today's Communication with colleagues in the Council and Parliament, and, of course, our partners themselves.