

Building Strong Ties for Prosperity and Stability

Egypt is a key partner for the European Union. Because of its history, geographical location, its political and economic weight and constructive international engagement, Egypt is a major partner for the EU in the context of the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Africa. I value the engagement of Egypt in being one of the first Co-chairs of the Union for the Mediterranean, thus building a framework for active cooperation between the EU and our southern neighbours. I see Egypt as a strong partner, as a force for peace in the Middle East as well as in addressing issues concerning the African continent.

As the European Union's Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy **I see as one of my key objectives the intensification of the partnership between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the European Union.** Europe's relations with Egypt go back centuries. Our close geographic proximity and our strong cultural ties make us natural partners. We can learn a great deal from each other. We both stand to gain considerably from an even closer relationship.

I am committed to working together for the prosperity of both our regions. The Association Agreement signed between Egypt and the EU in 2001 paved the way for intensified political dialogue, trade liberalisation and economic and cultural cooperation. Since its entry into force in 2004, trade volumes have increased substantially and Egyptian enterprises are gaining ready access to the vast European single market.

The European Union will continue to be a strong partner to Egypt in its reform agenda. We applaud the efforts that Egypt has made in reforming and diversifying its economy. Their impact was proven in the context of the global financial crisis, which Egypt has come through with only a moderate decrease in economic growth.

Over the period 2011 to 2013 **the EU will support Egypt's reforms** with a significant financial package of 449 million EUR to help improve the competitiveness of the Egyptian economy, to bolster human rights and good governance and to shore up the sustainability of the development process.

In 2007 Egypt and the EU agreed a joint Action Plan in the framework of our European Neighbourhood Policy. Going beyond commitments taken in this Plan will provide us with a solid base for enhancing our relations further in coming years. At the same time, we are reviewing our neighbourhood policy, through a public consultation process involving senior officials, experts, and representatives of civil society. I count on the knowhow and the imagination of all the participants in this process, to make our future strategic elements of the EU's neighbourhood policy mutually beneficial for the EU and its partners.

Egypt and the EU have a great deal to offer each other. I look forward to building even closer ties with Egypt over my five-year mandate.

Štefan FÜLE

EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy