

# **OPENING STATEMENT**

**BY COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE**

**NEVEN MIMICA**

**at**

**the European Parliament hearing**

**29 September 2014**

Madam Chair, Honourable Members,

I am honoured to be appearing before you as Commissioner-designate for International Cooperation and Development.

Development policy forms an **integral part** of the Union's **external policy** and **external action**. Its primary objective is to reduce and, in the long term, to eradicate poverty.

It is a policy for the people, building on **solidarity** as one of the core European values. Solidarity with people living on less than a euro per day and with those who risk their lives to reach European coasts in boats that often become their coffins. Solidarity with women victims of sexual violence, with individuals persecuted because they are part of minorities, and with child soldiers.

Development policy aims for **partnership based on mutual interests**. When fragile states collapse or when terrorism expands in Africa, it is a direct threat to Europe. When trade flows increase and business environments improve, it is an opportunity for Europe as well.

The European Union has an **outstanding track record** in development policy. It is, together with its Member States, the world's largest donor, providing more than a half of all development aid. The Union is the most significant trading partner for developing countries, as well as a key source of technology, innovation, investment and entrepreneurship. It is a leading player in aid effectiveness and policy coherence for development.

If confirmed as a Commissioner, I commit myself to applying all my experience and my dedication to ensure that the **Union upholds its leading role as a global champion on sustainable development**. Such leadership is critical for the forthcoming two strategic processes that will shape the development policy for the next decade: the post-2015 agenda, and the negotiations for a post-Cotonou framework.

This leads me to my first priority, an **ambitious post-2015 framework**.

The current Millennium Development Goals have delivered **encouraging progress in reducing poverty**. They have stimulated action by the international community, and global poverty has been halved in 10 years.

Today fewer people go to sleep hungry, fewer children are dying from preventable diseases; and an increasing number of children, particularly girls, have been enrolled in school.

We can be proud of these achievements. But we must **not be complacent**.

A woman in Africa is 29 times more likely to die as a result of childbirth than a mother in Europe. Around 750 million people around the world do not have access to safe drinking water. And hunger is still a shocking reality, with over 3 million children a year dying from under-nutrition.

Even more worrying are the rising inequalities and geographical gaps: while Asia and Latin America are on a more promising path, Sub-Saharan Africa is

lagging behind, with 120 million more people living in absolute poverty than 20 years ago.

The post-2015 framework must help to **eradicate poverty through inclusive and sustainable development**. We must stop poverty before it starts.

The new framework must fully address the **social, economic and environmental** dimensions and achieve the optimal balance between them. Equally, it must integrate full respect for **human rights, equality, democratic values** and the **rule of law**, as well as **peace and security**.

It will be a tremendous challenge to bring all these aspects together under one **single, universal, and comprehensive** framework which would apply to **all countries**, rich and poor alike. But it is a challenge we have to succeed in.

The new framework offers us a unique opportunity to redesign global efforts to better assist developing countries in building sustainable and inclusive societies, in **taking responsibility and ownership** for their own development. As a wise quote puts it: *The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own.*

A core element of the post-2015 process will be development **finance** and, more broadly, the **means of implementation**.

I fully agree with President-elect Juncker that all Member States should step up their efforts to meet the UN Millennium Goals and invest **at least 0.7%** of their gross national income in development aid. Member States have committed to

meet this target by 2015 which unfortunately remains out of reach. While recognising the economic problems of Europe in the last years, I would urge Member States to honour this commitment within the new framework.

In order to maximise aid's impact, we will have to fully harness the potential of improved **aid effectiveness**, **donor coordination** and **blending**. Not to compensate for official aid, but to complement it.

In addition, we need to help our partners to increase their national resources - including through **good governance**, better **financial management**, **fighting tax evasion** and fair and effective taxation systems.

We will also have to further exploit **innovative financing tools** and involve **other potential development partners** in creating lasting growth and decent work.

The new framework must include **business**, **civil society**, and **people**. Only by establishing a global partnership where all players play their part will we succeed.

Ultimately, the Union has to maintain its leading role in defining an ambitious and truly transformative agenda for global solidarity and responsibility to ensure an inclusive and sustainable future for everyone.

My second priority would be to launch and negotiate a **post-Cotonou** framework and to strengthen the Union's strategic partnership with **Africa**.

The **current Cotonou** agreement is the most comprehensive North-South agreement in the world. It has been a **success** on which we need to build.

The question is not *whether* the ACP countries are still important to us. They are, more than ever. The question is *how* to best design our cooperation in the future.

The **new framework** will have to adapt to the new realities, and reflect the outcome of the post-2015 process. It cannot be a simple continuation of the past.

The ACP group is already reflecting on the way forward. Europe has to do the same. We need an **enhanced approach** that builds on **strong partnership** with the ACP countries, incorporates **overarching principles** such as respect of fundamental values, and takes account of **specific realities** in countries and regions.

We need to discuss together how to take forward our partnership. As a first step, I will launch a **broad consultation and dialogue process** in the coming year.

My third priority would be to contribute towards significantly enhanced **policy coherence**.

The world is increasingly interlinked and interdependent, from peace and security, via energy and climate change, to agriculture and trade. Greater coherence between our internal and external policies is therefore a must. And the cooperation we offer our partners can and must extend far beyond pure aid to include science, health, education, gender and youth issues, labour mobility and much more.

Within the Union, we have to reflect this in the way we design and pursue our policies. President-elect Juncker has put a strong emphasis on reinforced policy coherence inside the Commission. The structure of the **new Commission** and the agreement on working methods with the High Representative/Vice-President and fellow Commissioners offer great potential to improve synergies and effectiveness across our policies.

I will **personally contribute** to these efforts. Development policy must work seamlessly together with the common foreign and security policy, with humanitarian aid, trade and migration policies, just to name a few.

If confirmed as a Commissioner, I will strive to further improve policy coherence for development under the overall guidance of and in close collaboration with the High Representative/Vice-President. I would insist on **forward-looking monitoring** of relevant initiatives, engage in **early discussion** and close dialogue with my fellow Commissioners, and make an **in-depth analysis** of and contribution to individual initiatives when they take shape.

Madam Chair, Honourable Members,

83% of Europeans think that it is important to help people in developing countries. 61% even believe that aid should be increased. And 70% of Europeans consider that helping developing countries benefits them too.

To maintain this strong support of our public, we need to **continuously show that development policy works** and make our collective achievements more visible. This is why I am committed to a results-oriented approach, showing that every euro is worth investing. Next year is the **European Year for Development**. It is the ideal opportunity to engage with our citizens and explain how our development policy helps us all.

Madam Chair, Honourable Members,

If confirmed as a Commissioner, I would seek ongoing and **close cooperation with Parliament**: both by honouring the commitment to Strategic and Structured Dialogue and by seeking regular and reinforced informal dialogue with you.

Such dialogue will be essential for Europe to successfully influence the shape of the new global post-2015 development framework, and for the **Union to speak with one voice** and to **defend one vision**.

I look forward to working with you to achieve these ambitious goals. Thank you.



(1.450 words)