



Donor Coordination Conference
Brussels, 23 – 24 October 2008

Opening address: Michael Leigh
Director General – DG Enlargement
European Commission

I would like to thank you for attending our Donor Coordination Conference. It is a great pleasure to see you so numerous this morning. Today we have around 170 representatives, from the Member States, the Commission, the International Financial Institutions (IFI), non-EU donors, the OECD, the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey.

This meeting is very timely – the Commission will present its Enlargement Strategy and Progress Reports on 5 November. As a result of the annual Progress Reports each year we are able to address priorities which are important to the development of the candidate and potential candidate countries. The Enlargement Strategy presents the broad political priorities for IPA assistance in the enlargement region and gives a framework for the programming. The IPA support is focused on state-building, rule of law, reconciliation, administrative and judicial reform, the fight against corruption and organised crime, strengthening support for economic reforms and the development of civil society.

Our conference is very timely as we are in the process of revising the IPA Multi-annual Programming Documents for the period 2009 - 2011. Therefore, it is useful for us to gather and exchange information about our common objectives, activities and priorities in the candidate and potential candidate countries.

We had a useful meeting nearly one year ago. Today I hope that we will build on the conclusions of that meeting to further strengthen donor coordination. There are two main objectives of today's meeting. First, this is an opportunity for us to present the priorities for assistance in the enlargement region and the challenges that the region will face in 2009. Secondly, we would like to hear from you about your priorities and your activities in order to get the maximum value for money and to agree on better mechanisms of donor coordination.

We are conscious that the broader environment in which we are working has changed. The turbulent times of the financial market will influence our donors and the Commission is trying to find solutions how to tackle this problem. Particular fragility of the financial markets and the question how to use the limited resources could be also a light motive in some of our discussions during the conference.

During the 2007 Donor coordination meeting it also became evident that all donors share the same objective – to increase ownership on the part of the beneficiary governments. This principle is at the core of the IPA Regulation and of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. We believe coordination of our activities is important on three levels: through broad consultation when establishing the strategic priorities. In our case, this takes the form of consultation with Member States, IFIs and non-EU donors in the preparation of the multi-annual programming documents. We work closely on developing networks with national authorities to work at sector level which helps to increase the beneficiary ownership. Third, we also attach particular importance to maintaining a high level of coordination on the ground through our EC Delegations. They organise regular debriefings with the EU Member States, IFIs and other donors.

In order to further advance donor coordination we need to have a clear and reliable overview of donor activities in the region. Sharing information is essential for assessing complementarity of our actions, and ensuring proper division of labour among donors. During the 2007 Donor coordination meeting, we agreed to have regular follow-up and to facilitate a better exchange of information on programmes and priorities. In this regard, the Joint WB/EC office has distributed a questionnaire to all donors which participated in the meeting. Many thanks to those of you who have completed this questionnaire. I would strongly encourage those who have not yet done so to complete the forms and return them to us at the latest by the end of this month so that we can have a full picture of where we stand collectively.

This year's conference aims to address again the challenges of donor coordination in a very practical and operational manner. We will identify concrete measures to increase effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of the assistance, create synergies and avoid duplication of efforts in key sectors. We will focus on three sectors: the Rule of Law, Civil society, and Economic and social development.

I wish you a successful meeting and look forward to working with you to implement the agreed follow-up. I suggest that we meet again in 2009 to review the progress made.