

# **SPEECH**

**BY COMMISSIONER NEVEN MIMICA**

**at**

**the Policy Forum on Development**

**Brussels, 23 March 2017**

Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am very happy to be with you once again for the closing of the fifth Policy Forum on Development. I am also well aware of the very **lively and fruitful** discussions you have had on many important issues over the last three days.

Since we last met, we witnessed a year of **remarkable achievements** on the global level – with the agreements in Addis, New York and Paris in 2015.

Last year we started to translate this new global framework into the European context with the **Global Strategy** on Foreign and Security Policy. We also put forward proposals on the next steps and actions for a **Sustainable European Future**, both within Europe and beyond.

At the same time, we have also seen the rise of **increasingly complex challenges** across every sphere – economic, social and political. So now more than ever we will need integrated and long-term responses, placing **partnerships at the forefront**.

This Forum, with its depth and breadth of representation - from across civil society, local government and the private sector, from the grassroots to the global level – is **exactly** the sort of successful partnership needed to help deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As you know, a few years back the European Union committed to **stepping up** its long-standing support to civil society and local authorities even further, through a number of key policy documents which you significantly helped to frame. We also committed to a **stronger role** for the private sector in delivering sustainable growth in our partner countries.

Today, our support to civil society organisations and local authorities has **massively increased**, and we are now one of the leading donors. I recently signed Framework Partnership Agreements with a number of your organisations, endorsing your strategies and further strengthening our ties.

We have adapted our support to cover new challenges. You are now, more than ever, involved in developing key projects dealing with new crises and conflicts, promoting and defending gender equality, addressing the root causes of migration, and mitigating and adapting to climate change. For all of this you have **our full support**.

Effective multi-stakeholder partnerships, such as yours, will be **essential** in helping us to ensure that Europe maintains a **leadership role** in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. And 2017 will be an important year in defining precisely what this role looks like.

At the very highest level President Juncker has stimulated the debate with a White Paper on the Future of Europe. This is not just a reflection on our internal priorities and processes, but also about **what role** we want to play in the world.

And within my own remit, we are working on a **number of opportunities** to realign our external and development priorities to the new global framework.

These are precisely the issues which you have been discussing here in Brussels over the last days:

- the revised European **Consensus** on Development;
- the **new partnership** with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries; and
- the **mid-term review** of our external financing instruments.

Let me turn briefly to each of these, **starting with the Consensus**. In preparing the Commission's proposal we paid close attention to the many inputs we received from all stakeholders. As a result, the text reflects the important role that **all partners** and partnerships play in sustainable development. This is an element we will insist on seeing retained – and strengthened – in the final Consensus

In particular, the Commission recognises the challenge posed by the shrinking space in many partner countries. Let me assure you that the proposal for a new Consensus puts forward a number of commitments for the European Union and its Member States on promoting an **open and enabling space** for all actors.

I take on board your message about the need to recognise the **diversity and specificity** of actors. You raised a number of essential points aimed at making the Consensus on development a truly effective, forward thinking development policy; one which is grounded in the Lisbon Treaty and which is focused on improving the lives of individuals and achieving

the ambitious vision outlined in the 2030 Agenda. I have taken good note of your request also to improve policy coherence in the EU, particularly in regards to trade and investment.

I would also like to underline the central importance we place on the **role of the private sector**. For me it is clear that we will only achieve our ambitions, if we constructively and effectively engage the private sector in our efforts, as responsible partners. Firmly framed by development criteria and our prime objective to eradicate poverty and leave no one behind – the private sector can be an important ally. They can make a significant contribution, in mobilising additional resources for development, on top of the more 'traditional' development assistance. Private investment can be a significant driver of sustainable development, helping to diversify developing country economies, creating growth and decent jobs, linking in particular their small and medium enterprises to regional and global value chains and improving social cohesion.

The proposed **European External Investment Plan** is a good example of how we can achieve that. This plan is geared towards unleashing the potential of entrepreneurship and investment for development in Africa and Neighbourhood countries. It has the potential to generate at least EUR 44 billion in additional investment from an initial injection of just over EUR 4 billion of EU funds.

However, this **goes beyond** finance and investment – which is clearly also an important part. It is also about the contribution entrepreneurs and businesses can make - at home and abroad - in terms of creating high-quality employment – especially for young people, corporate social

responsibility and changing cultures, both within their organisations and local communities.

We will also continue to pay due attention to the social dialogue where trade unions and private sector organisations are **meaningfully engaged** in constructive debates on the creation of decent jobs.

Discussions on the new European Consensus on Development between the Commission, the European Parliament and the Member States are advancing well.

Last week we had a **very extensive and constructive** debate at the informal meeting of EU Development Ministers'. The European Parliament is also fully engaged and I hope that with such a high level of commitment on all sides, we will be able to sign the Consensus document at this year's European Development Days in June.

As I have said, since the beginning of this process, I wish for it to be a **genuine consensus**. Our message would be even stronger if, alongside the EU Institutions and the Member States, our Consensus would be actively supported also by the European Civil Society. We will maintain an open dialogue with you, as inter-institutional discussions progress.

On our relations with our **African, Caribbean and Pacific** partners after 2020, we are accelerating our work towards the adoption of a negotiating mandate.

We are also exploring the possibility to organise a **local authorities' summit** ahead of the Africa-EU Summit that will take place in November

in Abidjan. This proposal will of course have to be discussed with our African counterparts as well as local authorities.

Again, I want to ensure that you, and the organisations you represent, are **more strategically and structurally** involved at every stage, from setting the priorities, through to implementing and monitoring the new arrangements.

We need to **modernise** our partnership with our African, Caribbean and Pacific partners, while building on the **strengths** of the current relationship. This is why we are proposing a global umbrella agreement with three strengthened regional partnerships.

For many reasons it is important that the agreement remains **legally binding**, including the strong support and level playing field it provides for your organisations in partner countries.

I am grateful for all your suggestions therefore on how we can **truly strengthen** this partnership - in the broadest sense.

The mid-term review of the European Union's external financing instruments is **the key opportunity** to translate the political priorities identified in the new European and global frameworks into our thematic and geographical programming.

Finally, you also discussed how we can better support **truly inclusive** multi-stakeholder partnerships to help deliver our commitments. We need to **empower participants** in local communities to act. And for this

to happen we must continue to fight for **effective and democratic** governance at every level.

From our side, you have my **unwavering commitment** that we will continue to engage partners and partnerships such as yours, in the development, evolution and implementation of our European development policy.

This week's discussions have provided **invaluable inputs** into our thinking. Let's make sure that the debate does not end here. Let us keep the lines of communication open and ensure that your **ideas and inputs** keep coming.

Thank you very much.