

EU info

Brussels greets Minister Mackay on his first overseas visit

Peter Mackay, Canada's new Minister for Foreign Affairs, visited Brussels on 27 February during his first overseas trip since his appointment.

While in Brussels, Mr Mackay met the European Commissioner for External Relations, Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and Vice-President of the Commission Ms Margot Wallström, as well as Javier Solana, the EU's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the Austrian Foreign Minister, Ms Ursula Plassnik, representing the Presidency. Mr Mackay also met several other EU Foreign Ministers in town for a meeting of the EU's General Affairs and External Relations Council.

The meetings were an opportunity for a first exchange of views with Mr Mackay on a range of current issues and on the state of relations between the EU and Canada. Both sides stressed the traditionally close, multi-faceted nature of EU-Canada relations.

Ms Ferrero-Waldner and Mr Mackay discussed financial support for the Palestinian Authority in the light of the recent elections. They also exchanged views on fisheries issues and on visa reciprocity. In their meeting, Ms Wallström and Mr Mackay discussed climate change, gender equality, youth exchanges and the future of the EU.

Commission announces interim package for Palestinians



On 27 February the European Commission unveiled a package worth more than \$167 million (€120 million) to meet the basic needs of the Palestinian population and to help stabilise the finances of the current caretaker government.

€40 million will be earmarked to ensure the continued and uninterrupted supply of essential public services such as electricity

and water. €64 million will be allocated to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

This emergency relief will help alleviate the hardships of the most vulnerable people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In addition, the European Commission is supporting the release of some of the money held over from 2005 in the World Bank Reform Trust Fund, in order to help the caretaker government meet obligations including salary payments. This package is independent from any future decisions on support for the incoming Palestinian Authority, which will be reviewed once the new government is in place, in the light of the prin-

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← ciples set out in the Quartet statement of 30 January.

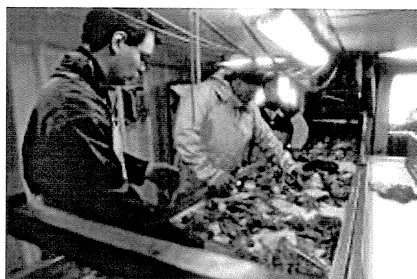
Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy, said the €120 million package "will help both to alleviate hardship, and relieve the pressure on the caretaker government's finances."

She added, "We are watching political developments in the Palestinian Territories very closely. How we are able to help the Palestinians in the future will depend to a large ex-

tent on the decisions taken by their newly elected government; whether its members support non violence, recognise Israel and stand by existing agreements."

On 30 January, the Quartet (EU,US, UN and Russia) "expressed concern over the fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority and urged measures to facilitate the work of the caretaker government to stabilise public finances, taking into account fiscal accountability and reform benchmarks."

 http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/gaza/intro/index.htm



Fisheries Commissioner meets Canadian counterpart

European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, Joe Borg, was in Paris on 3 March for the launch of the Report prepared by the High Seas Task Force (HSTF) on Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing. At that time he also had his first bilateral meetings with Canadian Fisheries Minister Loyola Hearn to discuss possible approaches to the follow up on the work of the Task Force, as well as matters of bilateral interest.

"The European Union has repeatedly led the way in international fora in terms both of developing the law of the sea so that it is able to effectively meet the challenge of IUU fishing, and of reinforcing practical deterrents such as monitoring, control and sanctions," Commissioner Borg said.

The Report includes nine concrete proposals intended to make a major contribution to curtailing illegal practices that undermine fish stocks, damage the environment, and penalise the vast majority of honest fishers who work within the law. These proposals include measures to reinforce the International Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Network, and to establish a global information system on high seas fishing vessels.

The EU has always placed a high priority on cooperation with all concerned parties, including Canada, to advance joint actions and common advocacy in the relevant international organisations, in particular in the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), which are the essential backbone of the international community's fight against IUU fishing activity.


At the meeting between Commissioner Borg and Minister Hearn, issues discussed included follow up to the HSTF's proposals, continuing efforts to strengthen RFMOs, and the Commission's forthcoming Green Paper on an integrated EU Maritime Policy.

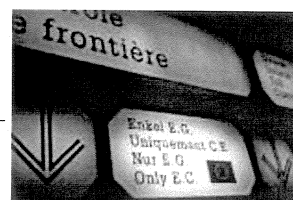
 http://www.delcan.cec.eu.int/en/press_and_information/press_releases/2006/06PR010.shtml

Canadian visa restrictions on EU Member States

On 20 February the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on the failure of several non-EU countries to extend reciprocal visa-free travel rights to all EU Member States.


The text of the Council's conclusions may be found at the following site:

 http://ue.eu.int/cms3_Applications/applications/search/newsDocDetails.asp?cmsid=650&dockey=88467

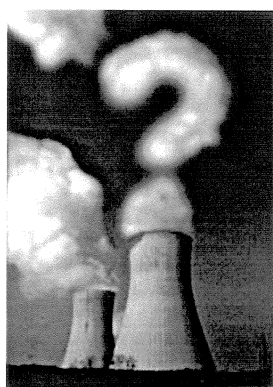




When they joined the European Union in 2004, the ten new Member States joined the EU's common visa policy. This obliged them to lift visa requirements for countries on the EU's waiver list (which includes Canada). However, these waivers are conditional upon full reciprocity. As Canada still imposes a visa requirement for seven of the ten new Member States, under EU law the European Commission is obliged to take action to resolve this state of non-reciprocity.

As a first step in this direction, after consulting the countries concerned the European Commission published a report on 11 January  <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/37> which identified countries where a non-reciprocal visa requirement exists. The Council's conclusions of 20 February welcomed that report. In particular, the Council noted that no progress has been made yet on establishing full reciprocity with three countries: the United States, Canada and Australia. The Council asked the Commission to strengthen its efforts with these three countries, and to report back on progress made by the end of June, if necessary with proposals for further measures to be taken to ensure that full visa reciprocity is achieved.

The European Commission, together with the seven Member States affected, is continuing to pursue the Canadian authorities with a view to taking this issue forward.



Fuelling our future: European Commission launches Energy Strategy for Europe

On 8 March 2006, the European Commission set out the basis for a European Energy Policy in a major new Green Paper, which invites comments on six specific priority areas.

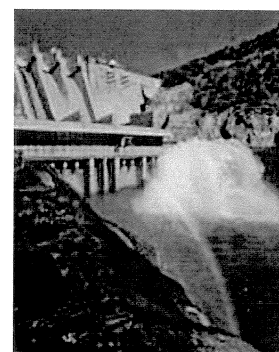
In order to complete the internal energy market the Green paper considers new measures such as: a European energy grid code, a priority European interconnection plan, a European Energy Regulator and new initiatives to ensure a level playing field, particularly regarding the unbundling of networks from competitive activities.

The second priority area concerns security of supply in the internal energy market, ensuring solidarity among EU Member States. Among the possible measures proposed is the establishment of a European Energy Supply Observatory and a revision of the existing Community legislation on oil and gas stocks to ensure they can deal with potential supply disruptions. A more sustainable, efficient and diverse energy mix is identified as the third priority area. In its fourth priority area, the Commission suggests a series of measures to address the challenges of global warming. In particular, it puts forward possible contents for an Action Plan on energy efficiency to be adopted by the Commission later this year.

Energy efficient and low carbon technologies constitute a rapidly growing international market that will be worth billions of Euros in the coming years. A strategic energy technology plan, as proposed in the fifth priority area, will ensure that European industries are world leaders in this new generation of technologies and processes. Finally, the Green Paper stresses the need for a common external energy policy. In order to react to the challenges of growing demand, high and volatile energy prices, increasing import dependency and climate change, Europe needs to speak with a single voice in the international arena.



http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/green-paper-energy/index_en.htm



Record turnout for EU-Canada Ski Fiesta

The 2006 EU-Canada Cross Country Ski Fiesta was held at Camp Fortune in Quebec on Sunday, 5 February. A record 140 people took part in this annual event which the Delegation has organized since 1997, with participants from the Canadian Parliament, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the EU Member State missions and the Delegation.

The ski race featured four categories: Mens, Ladies, Children and Teams. The Embassy of Estonia took home most of the prizes, winning the Mens, the Ladies and the Team prizes. The Children category was won by the Embassy of Germany.



http://www.delcan.cec.eu.int/en/about_us/about_town/2006/




The European Digital Library

The European Commission's plan to promote digital access to Europe's heritage is rapidly taking shape. Over the next five years at least six million books, documents and other cultural works will be made available to anyone with an Internet connection through the European Digital Library.

In order to boost European digitisation efforts, the Commission will co-fund the creation of a Europe-wide network of digitisation centres. The Commission will also address, in a series of policy documents, the issue of the appropriate framework for intellectual property rights protection in the context of digital libraries.

By the end of 2006, the European Digital Library should encompass full collaboration among the national libraries in the EU. In the years thereafter, this collaboration is to be expanded to archives and museums. By 2010 potentially every library, archive and museum in Europe will be able to link its digital content to the European Digital Library.

This European Digital Library is a flagship project of the Commission's overall strategy to boost the digital economy, the i2010 strategy (see [â](#) _____). The main elements of this flagship project, which is meant to promote getting Europe's cultural and scientific heritage digitised and available online, was unveiled in the "i2010: Digital Libraries Communication (see [â](#) _____).

The Commission intends to present a proposal by mid-2006 to tackle, together with Member States and with the European  Parliament, barriers to digitisation and online accessibility.

<http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/index.htm>



EU shines at Turin

EU Member States won 116 medals at the 20th Winter Olympics held in Turin from 10 – 26 February, ahead of the United States with 25 medals and Canada with 24.

