

Commission guide: EU ready to play 'key role' in post- 2015 development framework

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Feature

Neven Mimica says that more work remains to be done despite progress on the millennium development goals.



In his own words, Neven Mimica is "delighted" to be in charge of Europe's international cooperation and development brief. Hailing from the EU's newest member state, the Croatian official is already a veteran of the Barroso II commission and was his country's deputy prime minister for internal, foreign and European policy. Mimica is fully aware, however, of the challenging nature of his portfolio, "particularly at this crucial point in time, when the world's spotlight will fall on the future of our development policy more than ever before".

A "clear sign" of this increased focus, he says, is the advent of the European year for development and the "ongoing discussion on the post-2015 development framework after we reach the deadline for achieving the millennium development goals (MDGs) in 2015". The goals are a set of eight quantified targets for tackling extreme poverty and Mimica stresses that, "Overall the world has achieved good

progress on many of them, but some work is still to be done and the new goals will need to be universal and go beyond the scope of the current MDGs."

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The commissioner also points to his plans to "prepare and launch negotiations for a revised Cotonou agreement - the long-standing agreement on EU relations and cooperation with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries". He says the commission and the external action service will conduct a "broad public consultation on the future of this partnership". "I am also determined," he adds, "to make real progress in gender equality, since the empowerment of women and girls in developing countries is crucial for sustainable development. This year, the commission will come up with a new action plan on gender to make sure that women's rights and needs are particularly considered in our development programmes."

Mimica is keen to emphasise Europe's leading role in international development, stressing that, "It's important to remember that the EU and its member states are the world's biggest donor, and in 2013 we provided some €56.5bn in official development assistance - more than half of global official aid."

"We can take pride in these numbers," he says, adding that, "Europe has helped make a difference to the lives of millions. For instance, since 2004, we've immunised more than 18 million children against measles and got almost 14 million new pupils into primary education."

The Croatian official also underlines the "very difficult time" that development and foreign affairs are experiencing. Sadly the world is facing an unprecedented amount of conflicts and crises at the moment. "The current Ebola epidemic or the ongoing conflicts in the Central African Republic or South Sudan show very clearly how much there is still to do to support people living in some of the world's poorest countries and fragile environments."

Turning to the commission's new working structure, Mimica says that he and his colleagues will "work together as a united and collaborative team" and "ensure that every possible synergy is exploited to its maximum and that we produce integrated, well-grounded and well-explained initiatives that lead to clear results". "As well as foreign affairs, it's also important that I liaise closely with the commissioners responsible for other cross-cutting policies, such as migration or fisheries, to help ensure that our policies are consistent with and support our development goals."

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He also expects to continue working "hand in hand" with MEPs, an aspect he considers "essential for the success of the EU's development policy" and praises parliament's "key role in making 2015 the European year for development".

Turning again to the MDGs, Mimica says the commission has recently "published a communication to help inform negotiations on the global partnership for poverty eradication and sustainable development after 2015". "This communication presents our vision for the new global partnership, outlining a set of principles and proposing policy measures to be pursued by all countries, according

to their respective capabilities."

"The main point," he says, "is that we can no longer focus only on poverty eradication; the world is a very different place in 2015 to what it was in 2000 and we now need to simultaneously address poverty eradication and sustainable development in its three dimensions - economic, social and environmental. In fact not only this, the new goals must also address issues such as governance, human rights, and peaceful societies. It's just as relevant to note that this post 2015 agenda will be universal, meaning that the goals and targets will apply to all countries, while taking into account their different circumstances and levels of development."

"The discussions on a global agenda are currently ongoing, but the EU is ready to play a key role in the process," stresses Mimica. "Achieving an ambitious and universal post-2015 development agenda, backed up with credible and proportionate means of implementation, is one of my top priorities for the coming months."

Neven Mimica is European international cooperation and development commissioner

About the author

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