

**ENHANCING EUROPE-AFRICA UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP:
A CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR. PETER MOORS
AT THE DISSEMINATION CONFERENCE OF THE
ACCESS TO SUCCESS PROJECT**

28 September 2010, Belgian Senate, Brussels

Dear Madam Senator,

Dear Mr. President of the European University Association,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a distinct pleasure for me to open, together with Senator Temmerman and Professor Rapp, this conference on the Europe-Africa University Partnership. I am happy that this important conference is organized in the capital of Europe, and that one of the main non governmental actors of Belgian Development Cooperation, VLIR-UOS, is a partner in the *Access to Success* project. As Director General for Belgian Development Cooperation, I would like to briefly introduce our development policies and focus on the active role universities have in those policies. During the first semester of this year, Belgium was subjected to a peer review by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. The results of this peer review were presented in Brussels just a

couple of weeks ago. Overall, according to OECD Development Assistance Committee, Belgium has made good progress and has performed well over the last five years. Our development aid has become more effective and predictable. We have been successful in tackling dispersion of effort. And we have continued scaling-up our official development aid, even through the financial and economic crisis. Indeed, between 2007 and 2010, the budget of the Directorate which I lead, increased by nearly 75 percent. We plan to be very near the mythical 0,7 percent threshold at the end of this year. That would make Belgium the sixth donor country to reach this target.

The peer review paid particular attention to the fact that Belgium is one of the few countries that continued to support fragile states at a time when other donors were pulling out. The university cooperation, for instance, with countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda was maintained, even in difficult times. The peer review also finds it encouraging that Belgium devotes over 50 percent of its bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa and the least developed countries. This particular interest for Africa also applies to university cooperation.

Over the past few years, Belgian Development Cooperation has been considerably transformed. Belgium has signed the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. We have put a lot of effort in applying the basic principles of the Paris Declaration on Belgian Development Cooperation. As part of this process, we concluded agreements both with NGOs and universities, aiming at greater coherence and complementarity, increased geographical concentration, improved donor coordination and further ownership for partner countries. Such agreements are rare amongst DAC members. The DAC peer review identified those agreements as best practices in making aid more effective.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Universities are indeed crucial partners in Belgian Development Cooperation. Our cooperation with universities is governed by two agreements with two university umbrella organisations for development cooperation; one agreement between the Belgian state and the Flemish universities represented by the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR), and one between the Belgian state and the francophone universities represented by the Interuniversity Council of the French Community (CIUF). The total university Development Cooperation represents about three percent of the Belgian official development assistance, or an annual budget of approximately sixty million euro.

I don't have to convince you of the importance of universities for the development of a country. Both in Europe and in developing countries universities are catalysts for innovation and development, as well as critical watchdogs in society. Through the two university umbrella organizations for development cooperation, we support universities in Africa, Asia and Latin America so that they can produce and exchange knowledge, share it and use it to create sustainable social development. Through this cooperation model with the university umbrella organisations, Belgian academics are mobilised to get involved into sustainable international academic partnerships, based on solidarity and joint academic interests. This model is a catalyst for two-way knowledge and expertise sharing.

In doing so, the Belgian Development Cooperation supports a wide range of instruments for university cooperation, most of them focussing on capacity building in the South. Let me mention four of these instruments.

The flagship of the university Development Cooperation is the institutional university cooperation. It stands for long-term, multidisciplinary, institutional cooperation between Belgian academics and a selective number of universities in the South, lasting ten years or more. The objective is to consolidate the educational, research and administrative capacities of a limited number of institutions in the South.

A second type of cooperation instruments are the Own Initiative projects with a maximum duration of five years. They aim at strengthening the educational and research capacities of the Southern countries, with particular attention being given to strategic research projects, focussing on a precise, well-defined problem.

A third kind of activities are organised at Belgian universities: policy-preparing research; educational programmes (international master programmes and traineeships); international congresses; study trips by university students to partner countries.

And finally, the Belgian Development Cooperation also offers scholarships to students in the South. These scholarships are granted in the context of international master programmes and traineeships and Ph D programmes.

But, apart from these two umbrella organizations for university cooperation, both the Belgian governmental cooperation and other non governmental actors also offer scholarships. Belgian Development Cooperation attempts to align these scholarships to the partner countries' priorities and explores how to coordinate with other Belgian actors granting scholarships. These scholarship programmes are useful tools in supporting and developing partners' capacity and must be continued.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two of the biggest challenges for Belgian Development Cooperation are to increase the coherency of its Development Cooperation policies and to get its different partners, including universities, fully involved in such coherent policies. In April of this year, the Belgian Minister for Development Cooperation signed an agreement on the reform of university cooperation for development, with both the Flemish Interuniversity Council and the Interuniversity Council of the French Community. The agreement favours an approach that is more aligned with the partner country's policies and procedures and more harmonised with Belgian governmental cooperation. Still, at the same time, the agreement fully respects the specificity of universities and their academic freedom of initiative. As you all know, science is to be allowed a considerable margin of freedom, since science cannot be controlled, or guided, especially not fundamental research. Universities have the task to innovate, to experiment, to question and to reform. This also applies to Development Cooperation.

The most important change introduced by the agreement, is the introduction of geographic concentration. University cooperation must be based on a country strategy. Only then will university cooperation be highly beneficial and produce clear impact. As of 2013, the country list for university cooperation will be restricted to 20 partner countries, compared with the current 41. The Belgian university umbrella organisations for cooperation for development will develop a country strategy for each partner country. This strategy will be based on the role of universities in the development of the country or the region. This country strategy will allow for increased synergy and complementarity with other actors in the field, in the very first place Belgian governmental cooperation. In order

to increase synergy and complementarity with our governmental programmes, all non governmental actors, including universities, are participating in the preparation of the four year cooperation programmes that the Belgian governmental cooperation has with each of its eighteen partner countries.

Initiatives such as the *Access to Success* project are very important for Development Cooperation. In the first place because Africa is a priority region both for European and Belgian Development Cooperation. And secondly because it brings together policy and higher education. For we have all learnt that development is a joint project and universities play an essential role in it. The *Access to success* project truly is an extremely important initiative of the European University Association in the context of Development Cooperation with Africa and with African universities in particular. I would like to thank you for this valuable initiative.