

Brussels, 23 May 2008

## **Louis Michel welcomes agreement on humanitarian aid worker access to Myanmar**

***Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, welcomed today's announcement that the Myanmar authorities plan to allow international humanitarian workers into the country.***

Commissioner Michel stated, "I am relieved by this decision from the Myanmar authorities. It is now clear that our joint diplomatic efforts have delivered concrete results. This means that the international humanitarian aid community can finally provide the relief and assistance so badly needed to the hundreds of thousands of people affected by the devastating Cyclone Nargis."

Louis Michel, on behalf of the European Union, undertook the first high-level international mission to Myanmar on 14th to 16<sup>th</sup> May. His visit, based upon strictly humanitarian values, helped pave the way for diplomatic efforts to convince the authorities there of the need to create a humanitarian gateway into the country.

"Despite the inevitable frustrations, I always believed that an open dialogue offered the best chance of gaining access for the international humanitarian community. I'm delighted that our efforts and especially the efforts of United Nation's Secretary General Ban Ki-moon have finally paid off. Of course, we have no more time to lose so it's imperative that the Myanmar authorities immediately provide the international community with the practical details of the agreement. The real work of providing life-saving assistance starts now."

The European Commission, which currently has five of its humanitarian experts in the country, has boosted its humanitarian funding to €17 million to help victims of Cyclone Nargis. In addition to the €2 million in fast track assistance announced immediately after the cyclone, the European Commission has released €5 million from its food aid budget to support the work of the World Food Programme in Myanmar and has adopted a €10 million emergency decision for other relief activities by its partners covering sectors such as shelter, water/sanitation and health.