

LOUIS MICHEL

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, **25 JUN 2009**  
HD/fb – D(09)660 – A(09)1624

Dear Dr Lucas,

*Throughout my tenure as Commissioner I have engaged with countries like Eritrea, which are confronted with a particularly challenging internal and external situation, through constructive dialogue. At times it is frustrating that this dialogue does not more rapidly yield tangible results, but I feel that it would be unhelpful to abandon efforts to engage.*

*The cases of Helen Berhane as well as other prisoners of conscience are tragic and I have appealed to President Isaias for their release.*

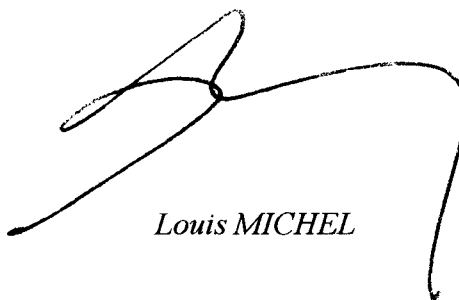
*I understand your concern over EU aid to the Eritrean people but I maintain my conviction that EU aid plays a positive role, both in relation to the welfare of the people and to the continuation of the dialogue in pursuit of our interests and values. It is important to have an opportunity to dialogue with Eritrean authorities if the EU wishes to have a chance to influence the situation.*

*The main aim of the development cooperation with Eritrea proposed by the Commission and unanimously supported by the EU Member States is to alleviate the poverty of a suffering population. Our assistance targets the people of Eritrea, especially those who are most affected, and has, first of all a human development component.*

*Let me assure you that the Commission continues to monitor the situation closely and that levels and instruments of our engagement are ultimately guided by the results that our policy generates. The Commission therefore continues to keep its policy vis-à-vis Eritrea under review.*

*Meanwhile I very much look forward to working together with you as colleagues in the European Parliament.*

*Yours sincerely,*



Louis MICHEL

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