

WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2010

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting was opened at 09.35)

2. Announcement by the President

President. – I would like to inform the House that I have received a letter from the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, in which he informs me of the European Council's decision to consult the European Parliament on the proposal by the Spanish Government concerning the composition of the European Parliament and to seek Parliament's consent not to convene a Convention on this matter. It concerns the 18 additional Members of the European Parliament. I have handed the proposal to the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, which has just begun work on this matter and will shortly appoint a rapporteur. Work on this will continue.

I would also like to tell you that, following the Bulgarian Government's decision to withdraw its candidate for Commissioner-designate, it has put forward a new candidate. The Conference of Presidents will decide tomorrow on the final timetable, but the most likely date for the hearing of the new Commissioner-designate is 3 February, with the vote on 9 February. This, of course, also depends on a decision from Mr Barroso and on his talks with the Bulgarian Government's newly appointed candidate. Nothing has yet been established, but I wanted the House to have this general information about what our next steps will be. At all events, the European Parliament is in full control of the situation. There are no exceptional situations here, and we are acting in accordance with democratic procedures. These procedures are of fundamental significance to us and this is how the European Parliament will always work under my Presidency.

I would also like to tell you about how the European Parliament envisages working with the two-and-a-half-year permanent Presidency of the European Union and the European Council and how it will work with the rotating Presidency. The rotating Presidency, in this case the Spanish Presidency, will always present its six-month plan of action at the beginning of the six-month period and will then present a report of its work at the end of the period. The permanent Presidency of the European Council will present the results of its work at European summits. As you know, in every six-month period, there are two summits, and the President of the European Council will present the results of the summit twice in each period, hence, four times a year.

3. Presentation of the programme of the Spanish Presidency (debate)

President. – The next item is the statement by the Council on presentation of the programme of the Spanish Presidency.

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Mr President, Mr Barroso, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to address my first few words to a country that is suffering pain and tragedy: Haiti.

I know that we all share the concern, solidarity and commitment of all the institutions of the European Union, starting with the rotating Presidency, the Commission, the Council and Parliament, for a country that is suffering, for a people that is being torn apart by death, destruction and violence, following on from a history of poverty and also conflict.

There are few occasions where we can show what we can do as Europeans in the manner in which we are going to do in response to the tragedy in Haiti. We are going to demonstrate our commitment to what is happening in the world and to the countries that are suffering most.

Right from the very first moment, holding the rotating Presidency, and in coordination with the Commission and the High Representative, we have sought to respond to the tragedy in Haiti. Last Monday, the Council of Ministers on Development met, and next Monday the Council on European Affairs will meet in order to plan a rapid response in terms of aid and humanitarian cooperation on all fronts, for the future of Haiti. I

am entirely convinced that the response of the international community is a strong, joint response, and that the European Union is going to rise to the occasion. In response to the tragedy in Haiti, the only protagonists should be the people suffering there, and I hope and trust that we will do everything we can to help set in motion a complete recovery. Both European society and, above all, our deep-seated convictions, demand it.

Mr President, it is an honour for me to appear here before you in order to explain the main priorities of the Spanish rotating Presidency over the next six months. It is more than an honour, it is a great honour. It is a great honour because I am speaking on behalf of a country which, in the next six months, will be celebrating its 25th anniversary of joining what was then the European Communities.

I am speaking on behalf of a European and pro-Europe country, a country which, in the last 25 years, has experienced a major transformation in terms of progress and welfare, largely due to being part of the European Union. Europe was the dream of generations, of many generations of Spaniards. It was the dream of democracy, of opening up to the world, of progress, of welfare, of the welfare state, of freedom. This is what we have seen in Europe, what has been brought to us by Europe, and what we have brought to Europe.

Twenty-five years later, we feel loyal to Europe and committed to the Union, and there is no more powerful way to be loyal and committed to Europe than to exercise the responsibility of making commitments, taking the initiative and putting forward proposals. This is what we want to do during the next six months.

These will be six months of change because we are taking on the rotating Presidency at a time of economic change, as a result of the most serious financial crisis for eighty years. It is a time of political change because of the Treaty of Lisbon, which is changing the way that the European Union is governed. It is a time of change in terms of foreign relations, because the phenomenon of globalisation is growing and there are new emerging countries. It is also a time of change in terms of the relationship that Europe needs to have with European citizens in order to give effect to everything set out by the Treaty of Lisbon. It will therefore be a time of change in two circumstances in particular: firstly, the serious economic crisis that we are experiencing, and secondly, the Treaty of Lisbon and its new institutional relationships.

Regarding the economic crisis, I would like to say the following. We are aware that it is a much more serious crisis than we have experienced for eighty years, and we know that, as was the case then, there has never been such a huge decline in global production and international trade. We are aware of the serious effects that it has caused in the world and in the European Union. The number of unemployed has increased by eight million, many of whom are indeed in my country. There has been an effect on public finances, and therefore on the prospects for financial stability, which has impelled and is still impelling us to take urgent cooperative measures. It has also driven us to look towards making changes to the European economy and to its production capacity, and towards improving competitiveness in the whole of the Union.

We need to continue maintaining the fiscal stimuli until the recovery is a reality. We need to commit ourselves to maintaining the Stability Pact and fulfil the Commission's indications for 2013. We also need to set out an economic strategy for 2020, which the Commission is drawing up and which, in the view of the Spanish rotating Presidency, must be a key matter in the next six months.

We know what the European Union's strengths and weaknesses are. We know that since the mid-1990s, we have been losing our capacity for economic growth, our potential for economic growth. We know that since the mid-1990s, we have been losing productivity relative to the big economies that we compete with. We also know that we have difficulties in some specific areas that will determine the future of our growth, competitiveness and innovation in a globalised world.

We do, however, also have strengths, and we should remember them. Our strengths are clear: we represent almost a third of global GDP. We are undoubtedly the leading exporting power and the second most important, behind the United States in terms of research, development and innovation. We represent almost 60% of global development aid, which is a great strength for the European Union.

What does Spain see as the fundamental priorities for renewing Europe's economic strength, for creating a sustainable economy from a competitive, environmental and social point of view? I will mention four main themes that I want to promote, which should be included in the 2020 Strategy. I would summarise these by saying that, in terms of the economy, the European Union needs to bet on itself. It needs to move forward with economic union and cooperation, starting with the sense of responsibility of the Member States, but also ensuring that the Community institutions, specifically the Commission, have new powers to lead and achieve objectives.

Ladies and gentlemen, in the last ten years, our energy dependency has increased by nine percentage points, and this is one of the primary areas in which we must take steps and make changes. Energy dependency has increased from 44% to 53% in the whole of the European Union. These nine percentage points amount to exactly EUR 64 million that we send to other countries as the European Union. Do you know what this amount represents? It represents practically the same amount that all the countries of the European Union spend on public investment in research, development and innovation. We need to change our energy dependency and reduce it, because otherwise, our economic fragility will increase.

What do we need to do? Progress has been made in the field of energy, but not the progress that we want. We need to permanently create an energy common market that will strengthen the whole of the Union and the Union's economy. There are two key elements that we need in order to do this: energy interconnections, as the expectations set out in 2002 have not been met, and a common regulatory framework to consolidate an energy common market.

If we achieve energy interconnections in the South, East and North of Europe, if we put it forward as a major priority, giving authority to the Commission, we will see our energy dependency reduce, and we will encourage the development of renewable energy sources which, by their nature, require versatility in energy distribution.

Ladies and gentlemen, Europe will not become a leading player in terms of economic competitiveness until it takes definite steps to tackle all the decisive aspects of energy interconnections and the issue of a common market.

The second main objective: in a modern society, what brings the most growth and innovation? Investment in the information society and in the new technologies that have changed almost everything in the world. Forty per cent of the increase in productivity in the European economy is due to information and communication technologies, ICTs. We are leaders in this field as Europeans, because we have leading companies, but we do not have a digital internal market. We want to take steps to establish a digital market. What does this involve? It involves removing barriers, it means committing to new-generation networks and facilitating e-commerce, which is growing every day in every country, but which is not making progress in terms of being possible between several countries.

If we make progress on a digital market, we will facilitate the creation of content and strengthen intellectual property. We will also ensure that, thanks to the innovation that information and communication technologies bring to all areas of the economy, we will see results in terms of productivity within a very short period. I would like to point out that this is the sector that currently has the greatest capacity for innovation, for increasing productivity and creating stable employment.

The third area is the economy or sustainable industry. I will only give you one example of what we see as a priority in the context of combating climate change. We want to launch and promote, along with the Commission, a plan to develop electric vehicles. The vehicle industry is going to undergo a major transformation, which has already begun. If we make an integrated commitment in this area of industry, as Europeans, to a common, shared vision and a common strategy for electric cars, we will help to reduce our energy dependency. We will also contribute to combating climate change and to the technological innovation that is undoubtedly going to be opened up by electric cars and will also be directly associated with the information and communication technologies industry.

The fourth central element of this sustainable economy and economic regeneration that the European Union needs is education, especially university education, which is the forum for research.

In the last ten years, Europe has not made progress in terms of the number of universities of excellence in the ranking of the top 100 universities. We need to conclude the Bologna Process. We need to promote, facilitate and open up expectations for increasingly European universities and increasingly European research, because they are undoubtedly the impetus for the future. We are no longer competing country against country, but as Europeans, as Europe, because the other players are the size of China, India, the United States and the emerging countries.

If we do not make the most of the synergy represented by the 500 million citizens in the economy, which means tens of thousands of enterprises with huge capacity and millions of workers, who need to be provided with increasingly better training, we will not be the real leading players of the future, in terms of economic prosperity through innovation and technology, in this scenario of globalisation. We will be spectators, not leading players. The way forward is the Union: more common economic policy, more integration, more

shared vision, more Europe. Not putting up more barriers, but removing barriers, not dividing but bringing together, having a vision of the Union that promotes competitiveness, integration and innovation.

We have confidence in the Commission regarding this 2020 Strategy, which must also incorporate a discussion about the future of the Common Agricultural Policy, which is a fundamental policy in terms of environmental protection, food safety and the incomes of many European citizens. We are convinced that the debate that is going to take place in the European Council and the Commission and, of course, the dialogue with the European Parliament, must bring about a 2020 Strategy that involves serious governance and is demanding in its objectives and focused on the areas that I have just mentioned.

Economic change and political change, and change in the government of the Union. The Treaty of Lisbon establishes new institutions: the permanent President of the Council and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs. It strengthens Parliament, the heart of European democracy, and also strengthens the Commission.

I can make a commitment before Parliament, which represents all European citizens, that the Spanish rotating Presidency will be loyal to, and will cooperate with, the new institutions. We want those institutions to have the meaning established in the treaty: namely, the need for the European Union to function so that the permanent President of the Council can represent the European Union and carry out all his functions, along with the High Representative.

We are aware that this six-month period will be the first proof of how the new institutional structure works, and we will also support a strengthened Commission and Parliament, which is increasingly the political centre of the European Union. We are going to do this, and I hope that we will be judged satisfactorily at the end of this period, because our commitment is very firm. There are various powers governing the European Union, and they need to have a common thread, which is cooperative loyalty. That is how we shall work.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we are also experiencing changes in the area of external relations, not only because of the existence of the High Representative and the launch of the European External Action Service. There will also be changes because in this context of globalisation and change, we have a decisive six-month agenda. I will tell you what our objectives are in terms of external relations for all the summits that we are going to hold.

Firstly, shared security, secondly, energy, thirdly, promoting and extending the opening up of trade and technology transfer, and fourthly, development cooperation aid, in which the European Union is a major ethical leader in the world.

Over the next six months, we will hold a dialogue on these objectives with North and South America, in the Mediterranean, in Africa and Asia and with the other European countries that are not part of the Union. We will be holding a dialogue with a large proportion of the continents and areas through an intense calendar of international summits in which we will, of course, be working in full cooperation with the President of the Council and with the Commission – because we will be making important agreements during the next six months – and also with Parliament.

Economic changes, political changes and changes in vision, in our external outlook, as a result of new players and globalisation. In addition to the economy, I said a few minutes ago that Europe also needs to bet on itself in the area of external policy. I must say that Europe needs to bet on itself, that external policy needs to take into account European interests and how to defend them. The matter of neighbourhood relations must be a priority. In my opinion, we must establish more ambitious objectives and more intense relations, because that is undoubtedly where a large proportion of European interests are going to be settled.

The changes that we are experiencing and that we want to drive forward through reform and renewal also have a bearing upon European citizens. The Treaty of Lisbon, in line with the will of Europeans, wants citizens to feel closer to the European institutions. It wants them to see the Union as being 'their Union' and Europe as a government that is closer to them. In order to achieve this, there are new instruments that we are going to launch and promote in the next six months.

The first of these is the people's legislative initiative, which is so important to Parliament. The second is that we want to make it a priority during this period, in cooperation with the Commission, to make progress on the most important citizens' right that the European Union can focus on, which is equality between men and women. The most advanced, perfect societies in which human rights and prosperity are best realised are those that achieve greater equality between men and women. They are the societies that are most active and committed to fighting what is represented by gender violence and mistreatment of women, which is improper and unacceptable in an advanced society such as the European Union. We therefore propose

launching new judicial protection systems through a European protection order and maximum extension of protection against the scourge of gender violence that a large proportion of European societies suffer from.

European citizens also need to know, based on our deliberations, our proposals and our initiatives, that social cohesion and social inclusion in response to poverty in Europe are inalienable aspects of the Union, and that, along with democracy, the most important elements of Europe's identity are welfare and social cohesion. The 2020 Strategy for the economy will therefore, as I said before, have to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

In order to achieve this social sustainability, I propose that we make a major new social pact in Europe between enterprises and workers, a major social pact in the development of the 2020 Strategy. Social dialogue and social agreement made Europe strong when it first came to be, in periods of weakness and now, in this period of renewal and change, after a serious economic crisis; social agreement – namely the social pact – could be a major driving force behind the objectives that we are setting ourselves for effective governance.

Mr President – I am finishing now – ladies and gentlemen, I would once again like to express Spain's thanks to all the countries of the European Union, especially those that promoted our integration and contributed to our development. I would like to reiterate our commitment to Europe and to the European Union, our commitment to a way of life, but also to a way of thinking and feeling. This involves thinking that favours democracy, equality, human rights, peace, and the sense that living together, uniting our peoples, uniting our aspirations and uniting our history has enabled us to live in peace with ourselves, and today and tomorrow, it can enable us to continue to live in the great region of prosperity, welfare and ideals.

José Manuel Barroso, *President of the Commission*. – (ES) Mr President of the Spanish Government, over the next six months, Spain will assume the rotating Presidency of the Council. It is a country with a great European tradition and great European commitment, in its government as well as in all its political forces and in public opinion, and a President, José-Luis Rodríguez-Zapatero, whose European credentials are unquestionable.

The institutional engines of European integration will be operating at full power once Parliament's vote of confidence in the new Commission gives these two institutions a strong, solid basis in order to move forward with an ambitious political agenda. I hope that the vote will take place very soon.

First of all, at this very tragic time for Haiti, I would like to reaffirm our complete solidarity and desire to help its people and all the victims of the earthquake. The devastating earthquake has been at the forefront of our minds since 12 January, and efforts began straight away to provide all the assistance we can. The Commission is currently in a position to mobilise EUR 130 million, and the total European Union effort in terms of immediate assistance, including that of the Member States, is more than EUR 222 million, not counting civil protection assistance. The Commission could mobilise a further EUR 200 million in longer-term aid. I can assure you that the Commission and the European Union are demonstrating the values and principles of solidarity through action.

Haiti is a Caribbean country. I would therefore like to highlight the fact that there is a very ambitious external relations programme for the six-month Spanish Presidency of the Council. I would particularly like to note that Latin America and the Caribbean are a priority for the Spanish Presidency. I am sure that we can count on Spain's special vocation to ensure that the summit to be held with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in Madrid in May will be a success for Latin America and for Europe.

Let me now turn to the policy priorities for the weeks and months ahead.

Everything points in the direction of determined and united European action. The failed attack on the aircraft at Detroit was a reminder that we need to act together if we are to face up to the threats to security. Copenhagen was a reminder that the global community does not automatically share Europe's level of ambition: as we have been doing in the G20 discussions, we need to keep driving a positive and forward-looking international process. Only with a united Europe can we shape globalisation.

But we have to look at the situation of our economy. We all know that the European economy is at a delicate moment. Determined action has succeeded in preventing the worst. But we still face the risk that unemployment will continue to rise, and we need to make a judgment about when to switch the focus to restoring our public finances.

At the same time, we must learn from the crisis. We fully realised that globalisation is a reality and that we need to use it to our advantage. We have demonstrated that our social protection systems have been able to

respond to exceptional circumstances and by providing new safety nets. But we also saw the clear limits for Member States acting alone and we saw that coordinated European Union action not only brought results for Europe, but also triggered an unprecedented global response by the G20.

Now we have to shape the right future for Europe, its economy and its society. The challenges we were facing before the crisis are still there, if anything, they were reinforced: how to cope with the consequences of ageing, of our demographics, how to remain competitive in a global world, how to secure the transition to a more sustainable economy, to mention just a few.

However, I am confident in the capacities of Europe. I believe that an economy rebuilding its strengths has a real chance to redirect its energies. A society which has proved robust in the face of economic crisis is one that can build for the future with confidence. And a European economic system whose resilience flows from its single market, its competition rules and the euro will now need these assets as the drivers for recovery.

I see the next six months as a springboard to set ambitious goals, goals I have presented in my political guidelines and which we debated last autumn here in the European Parliament.

This will constitute the 'Europe 2020' strategy. We need a fundamental reworking of our economy to meet the challenges of the future. To agree on a transformation agenda, with the European Parliament, with Member States, with social partners, with societies at large. To offer a clear direction towards a competitive, innovative, sustainable, socially inclusive market economy, able to prosper in the global marketplace.

Europe 2020 must offer both a mid-term vision and short-term action. The more we can shape our immediate measures to put us on the road to our longer-term objectives, the more we will have a head start to future growth and employment, our number one priority.

The renewed Lisbon Strategy was able to build an understanding of how structural reform feeds directly into growth and jobs. But let us be frank about it: the crisis has wiped out many of the gains and there were also some shortcomings. The truth is that we still lag well behind our competitors on our research effort, our investment in education, our share of high tech.

We must now use the Europe 2020 strategy to create new sources of growth, to unleash the potential of the internal market to drive our economy forward. That means using knowledge and creativity to generate real value in our economies, unlocking innovation and promoting its market uptake from ICTs to new energy, clean technologies, for instance. It means empowering people for the future with the right skills and with a labour market ready to seize the opportunities for job creation; and targeting action on the big problems, like youth unemployment.

It is obvious that we are now facing an emergency situation from a social and unemployment point of view. This requires a strong focus from the European Union. We need to define together actions at European Union level to complement national actions with positive social impact.

It also means an economy shaped for the future – a sustainable and resource-efficient economy – that is also productive and innovative. Europe's huge industrial assets need to be re-directed to seizing the first-mover advantage in tomorrow's markets. But Europe must be able to retain a solid, modern and competitive industrial base. The crisis means that, more than ever, we must use every euro of investment to best effect. And, of course, we must complete our reform of financial markets to put them back at the service of the economy, and not the opposite.

This also includes our SME-friendly approach. SMEs are the sector which can create more jobs in the European Union and we will be doing them, and their workers, a good service if we reduce administrative burdens and apply a better and smart regulation approach.

In our interconnected economies, we all have an interest in what is happening – at national and European Union level, from one Member State to the next. The present crisis shows us not only the consequences of global interdependence but also the negative effects that a specific situation in one country may have in the whole euro area.

So, Europe 2020 must bring with it stronger coordination mechanisms, a common vision and an effective European leadership. I want to thank Prime Minister Zapatero for his clear commitment to this European approach when discussing economic policies, his commitment to Community matters and his commitment to the role of the European Commission in this vision and in implementation of this vision. Only with a

European approach, a European vision and European instruments can we deliver results for our European citizens.

This will be one of the distinctive features of Europe 2020: reinforced coordination of economic policies, in which the Commission will make full use of the new possibilities given by the treaty, including those concerning the euro area.

This is the vision I would like to debate with you in the coming weeks, because one thing we have learnt from the Lisbon Strategy is that a European economic strategy needs the full commitment of the European political community and the social partners. Let us be clear: in the past, some national politicians have resisted stronger mechanisms of governance within the Lisbon Strategy. I hope that, following the lessons of interdependence not only at global but also at European level – all the lessons that were given to us by the crisis – all EU governments will now recognise the need for full ownership of Europe 2020 and for a truly coordinated and coherent action in economic policy, as foreseen in Articles 120 and 121 of the Lisbon Treaty.

Finally, let me add that I see Europe 2020 also as the way to bring confidence and hope for our citizens. We must not hide the fact that Europe, like most of the developed world, will go through a long period of slow growth if we remain inactive. The phase of 'getting worse before getting better' is probably behind us, but the getting better will be slow. We will have to address the real problem of the economy, that the potential growth of Europe may be reduced if we do not act now in a coherent and effective manner. Our citizens, be they households or entrepreneurs, should feel that the European Union is part of the solution to their difficulties and anxieties. Europe 2020 is, for me, above all, also a response to this. It is to connect the European project to the concrete needs of our citizens.

This is why I also welcome the initiative to hold an informal European Council on 11 February to have a first discussion at Head of State or Government level. I also think it is crucial to find opportunities to discuss these issues with this House – with Parliament – both before and after the Commission presents its outline for Europe 2020. That is why I have discussed this with the Council and with the President of the European Council. I think we should have at least a three-step approach: the informal European Council for Heads of State or Government to discuss the issue, the Spring European Council for the first important proposals and the June European Council for the approval of the guidelines, so that we will have the time to discuss this issue broadly and with a very active contribution from the European Parliament.

I have focused today on economic policy because I see this as our number one priority in terms of urgency. But, of course, this does not exhaust our agenda. The challenges of the coming weeks and months are manifold. Let me just mention one of many examples: the follow-up to the Copenhagen conference on climate change. While we need some time to collectively reflect on the right strategic orientations for the future of the international process, we should not lower our ambition regarding commitments already made by the European Union.

We should also intensify our efforts namely through our internal policies of promoting the upgrading and modernisation of the industrial base of our economy, the innovation and the development of new clean technologies, energy efficiency and the energy security agenda, also by putting this matter at the top of the transformational agenda for Europe.

This is how to make the best case for the European Union on the global stage: a European Union ready for action, with a clear vision for the future and a determination to get there. The more we are united and effective at home, the more our case will win through internationally.

I am very much looking forward to working with this Parliament to help make the Spanish Presidency of the Council a success and to ensure that the next six months put us on the road to realising our common ambitions for Europe, a European Union that is closer to our citizens and that is focused on clear results for our Europe.

(Applause)

President. – Thank you, Mr Barroso. Before I ask the leaders of the parliamentary political groups to speak, I would like, once again, to emphasise the importance of the vision presented by Mr Rodríguez Zapatero. It is a vision of development of the European Union, based on the Community method. Thank you, Mr Zapatero, too, for stressing the role of the European Parliament, a role which has grown significantly with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, and it is that cooperation between the European Council, the Council of

Ministers and the European Parliament which will be the basis of future interinstitutional structure and balance in the European Union.

Today, we are forecasting our role for many years to come. Not everything is found in the treaties. Therefore, what happens during the Spanish Presidency is very important, because it will establish the political customs which determine the way we work, as well as the effectiveness of the European Union. The Spanish Presidency is of special significance, here, and I am grateful for the presentation of a vision which concurs to a large extent with that of the European Parliament.

I would like to thank Mr Barroso for presenting the point of view of the European Commission. The Commission is still working with the same composition as before, but I would like to stress very strongly here: we do have a European Commission, it still is not the new Commission, but work on this is going on all the time. I would like especially to thank Mr Barroso for presenting the 2020 Strategy and the way it will be coordinated. This is a fundamental matter: how we are going to coordinate the 2020 Strategy in the future – this, too, needs to be based on the Community method. Thank you very much.

Now I would like to ask the leaders of the political groups for their comments and remarks.

Joseph Daul, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the economy, the social field, climate and energy are the major priorities of the Spanish Presidency and they will rightly be the focus of Europe's attention. That is why Mr Van Rompuy's first decision, namely to convene a European Council dedicated to the economy and to climate change and now also, of course, to the Haiti strategy – you spoke about this issue and it is one on which I believe that Europe has to show both its heart and its know-how and you must intervene to ensure that the Council has a greater presence in Haiti – is, in my view, a positive position.

This is why the debate that you yourself, Mr Rodríguez Zapatero, launched on a possible European economic government is also welcome, despite and maybe even because of the fact that opinions currently differ on this matter. That is normal; we should not be frightened, ladies and gentlemen, to speak at European level of politics with a capital P, and we have to be honest with ourselves.

We should not fear major debates, and I wish to thank you, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, for having made your contribution, because economic and social policy is the major debate, the one that is of most concern to our citizens, the one that demands our response in the short, medium and long term. As Mr Barroso said, this is the right time to raise the question of the economic objectives of the countries of the Union. It is, in fact, a matter of survival for Europe and its social model.

Mr Rodríguez Zapatero, you know what economic difficulties are. They are the record unemployment of almost 20% and a public deficit of almost 11% in Spain. It has to be said, yours is a country that is experiencing problems. I therefore welcome your will to restore growth and to create employment as the be-all and end-all of your Presidency. To be honest though, Mr Zapatero – I said that we have to tell the truth – I am not sure that the solutions that you and the political family to which you belong are proposing in order to end the crisis and to make social Europe a reality are the most suitable.

For the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), an end to the crisis and the creation of jobs cannot be achieved by more public spending but by an economic, fiscal and environmental regime that is favourable to enterprises, especially small and medium-sized enterprises. I am specifically thinking of small and medium-sized enterprises where employment in our countries and in our regions is concerned. Social cohesion, which has been greatly tested by the crisis and by the scandals of the bonuses and rewards for the incompetence of some managers, cannot be built on small crafts, but on lasting growth that benefits the greatest number of people.

To conclude, I wish to address the Council, whether the rotating Presidency or the permanent Presidency, to say to you formally that, with the Treaty of Lisbon, times have changed. The Council and Parliament must now work in close cooperation and as equals. This new relationship obviously requires legal standards – and for this, I put my faith in our legal experts zealously to apply the new treaty – but it also requires mutual political trust and symbolic gestures. In this connection, I repeat my wish for the Presidency of the Council to regularly participate in the interplay of spontaneous questions and answers with the Members of the European Parliament, as the President of the Commission, Mr Barroso, has been doing for several months, and as you yourself have done this morning, Mr Rodríguez Zapatero. You have six months to establish this principle.

I therefore offer my best wishes to the President-in-Office of the Council for the coming six months and hope that, together, we can succeed in moving Europe forward during this time. The best of luck to you.

Martin Schulz, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, the Spanish Presidency has an ambitious programme, which you have described to us, Mr Zapatero. You mentioned the four major priorities of greater energy security, more investment in information technology, more education and training and the creation of a form of European economic governance that is to ensure that these priorities can also be implemented. That is the right approach and it will take Europe into a new phase.

The challenges faced by this continent are not to do with holding parliamentary sittings or arranging one summit after another. We have held many summits in the past. The summits do not solve the problems, they delineate them. What we need is for the solutions to the problems to actually be implemented in the Member States.

(Applause)

The reactions to your proposal for economic governance indicate that this is exactly where the problem lies. Where did the Lisbon strategy fail? It was not that it would not have been possible to implement it. No, it was possible to implement it. The Lisbon strategy failed due to the reluctance of the Member States to keep their own promises. This new approach, this breath of fresh air that you want to bring into European policy with this ambitious programme, is therefore the right one.

The old structures that we have had up to now remind me somewhat of Don Quixote's beautiful horse, Rosinante, which thought it was a racehorse. In reality, it was an old nag. We will not make it into the 21st century on Rosinante. For this, we need new approaches and, therefore, you are on the right path.

What Europe needs is to adopt some aspects of the Spanish model. The reason why – and I am saying this only once – we as Socialists specifically support you is that we believe that your government in Spain is a forward-thinking government. You have succeeded, in the face of a lot of opposition and with a great deal of courage, in giving your country an enormous push towards modernisation. You have our greatest respect for that.

(Applause)

If you act at European level with the same energy and the same determination, you will also bring this modernisation drive to Europe. I think it is courageous for a Head of Government to say, for example, that marital violence is not a national problem but a problem that affects the whole of society everywhere and that we in Europe, in our highly developed, civilised society, must not regard violence against women as a minor offence, but as a violation of human rights, and that is what it is.

(Applause)

The political re-energising that we need in Europe is tied in very strongly with our expectations of your Presidency, Mr Rodríguez Zapatero. I would therefore like to add that we also need more economic control in Europe. I will give you an example to illustrate the fact that social cohesion gets destroyed in society because there is not enough control or not enough courage to exert control.

When we talk about regulation of the financial markets and regulation of the banking system, we also need to mention the fact that the same banks that, a year ago, received hundreds of billions of euros in government money in order to ensure their survival, are not using this money today to give credit, but to speculate, using taxpayers' money, in order to generate soaring profits. That is destroying people's trust in the economic system. It is destroying social cohesion. The part of your programme that involves finally implementing the control of the financial markets is therefore an important element that we Socialists fully support.

(Applause)

The Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament will give its support to your Presidency, Mr Zapatero. I believe that what you have presented here is an approach that brings genuine reason for hope. I also hope that the Commission will act with the same intensity and the same political direction as your Presidency. We will do whatever we can to put the Commission on the right path in the next six months and beyond, because we hope that, as a result of the 18-month long triple-shared presidencies, there will not be a completely different programme every six months, but that we will instead have continuity.

Therefore, over the next six and the subsequent twelve months of this trio of presidencies, you will be able to count on the support of the Socialists and Democrats. So, I wish you good luck, Mr Zapatero.

(Applause)

Guy Verhofstadt, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we have, in fact, two priorities for the Spanish Presidency. I believe you also have, in fact, two priorities. However many issues are raised to be solved in the coming six months, there are, we believe, two main issues.

First of all, there is the post-Lisbon EU 2020 Strategy. I believe, in any case, that this name is more appropriate as, at the end of the day, the population had ceased to differentiate between the Treaty of Lisbon and the Lisbon strategies. This is, therefore, already a major advance. However we, in this House, have to be serious.

The fundamental question is not about knowing whether there is a desire to reduce unemployment or to increase spending on innovation. We all agree on this. We agreed in 2000, we will agree in 2010, and we will agree again in 2020 and 2030. No, the question concerns a different issue: in short, are the Council and the Member States ready to change the method that failed in the Lisbon Strategy? I am referring here to the open method of coordination, a wonderful expression, meaning that it is the Member States, not the Union, that decides, and that all that one does is compare results from the various Member States.

It is as if the Union has become the OECD. That is the reality: publishing one document after another, after another.

(Applause)

Already, Mr President, your initial declarations have encouraged me greatly: 'yes, we are going to change', you say. Things must change; we need sticks, we need carrots. Where needed, we must have sanctions. Above all, though, do not let yourself be discouraged – I say this frankly, both to you and to Mr Moratinos – by the German Minister for Economic Affairs, who did not hesitate for one second to criticise your proposals.

It must be a good omen, though! One cannot, on the one hand, say, for example, that Greece is not making enough effort, that other countries are not making enough effort and, at the same time, fail to provide the Commission and the European Union with the resources and the instruments that they need to intervene. It is either one thing or the other. One cannot have it both ways.

I encourage you therefore to continue on this path, and I can tell you that the whole of this Parliament supports you, together with the Commission, as you confront those who continue to dismiss the need to intensify this Lisbon method.

Well, as for my second priority, it is to attempt to find another strategy for the issue of climate change, post-Copenhagen. We must acknowledge that our approach failed. We must say it, we must recognise it. There is no sense in saying 'yes, but we were right, it was the right method', and so on. No, it was not the right method. The strategy was bad, because the result is bad. Therefore, the strategy has to change.

I myself suggest that we adopt a strategy based on three components. The first of these components is for the European Union to appoint a climate change 'tsar' with a mandate to negotiate on behalf of the 27 Member States, unlike what happened in Copenhagen, where we had the Danish Prime Minister, the Swedish Prime Minister, the President of the Commission, Mr Sarkozy, Mrs Merkel, yourself, Mr Brown.

That meant that there were at least eight European political leaders who wanted to negotiate. There was not enough room around the table though! There was scarcely room for Mr Obama even. There was the South African, the Brazilian, the Indian, the Chinese, then Mr Obama, and on top of that, the eight Europeans. How do you expect to agree a position and be heard by others in such circumstances?

Let us do like the WTO then; it works for the WTO. There, there is someone who is in charge, who negotiates for the whole of the European Union, and who produces results. We need the same thing at European level if we are to avoid a repeat of what happened in Copenhagen.

(Applause)

Moreover, we must, I believe, be realistic. We must be realistic on this matter. We need a trilateral agreement between the United States, Europe and China. That must be the aim. All of those strategies that consist of saying 'yes, we will see', which have no allies in the United Nations, will count for nothing in tomorrow's world. Tomorrow's world is one of empires, and we must be an empire.

This means that we must be at the table. With whom? With the United States and with China. It is we three who need to reach an agreement; let us not start dreaming about rallying I know not how many countries around a programme. At the end of the day, we have to create an alliance with the United States. It is with the United States that we must find common ground. Such common ground can be found, in my view, in the emissions trading mechanism. We have that, and they will follow us if we can reach an agreement on it. That will give us common ground in order, together, to negotiate with the Chinese.

Those, Mr President, are my two major priorities for the Spanish Presidency, and I am convinced that, with his tenacity, Mr Rodríguez Zapatero will make this a very important and very effective Presidency.

(Applause)

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr Rodríguez Zapatero, Mr Barroso, I would like first to reply to your remark about Haiti. I remember that, in 2006, a European commissioner by the name of Michel Barnier proposed the creation of a European social protection force, which was to have been known as EuropeAid. This was during Mr Barroso's Commission. If we had had EuropeAid today, Europeans would already have a greater presence in Haiti. Mr President, take up Michel Barnier's proposal. You see, I am no sectarian.

I would like now to turn to what you said about Europe's future. I would like to continue with another theme, which Mr Verhofstadt discussed. You talk of growth, but what growth? What type of growth? Because one of the reasons for the crises, for the environmental crisis – because there are various crises and not just one – was growth in production, which was, at the same time, destructive. Therefore if, at European level, we do not discuss the quality and content of growth, we will merely repeat the errors of the past. That is already one issue for consideration.

The second issue we must deal with concerns what you said about growth and a pact, for example, against energy dependence. One of the pillars of the fight against energy dependence is energy saving. We in Europe must develop a major pact for European investment in energy saving. The environment is about energy savings, it is about billions in investment and, at the same time, it is about creating jobs. So do not forget: renewables, yes, but renewables with energy savings. And on this matter, I ask that the European Union decides now, not to make 20%, but rather 30% in energy savings by 2020. We can do it, if we want to.

Now to the second issue; you spoke about electric cars. Very well! However, there is another consideration. Mobility is not just about cars. There is a major project that could be developed in Europe. You had Airbus, you have the TGVs. Why not develop a major European tramways project? Throughout Europe, there is a need for renovation and modernisation of tramways, in central Europe, in the south, in Latin America, everywhere in fact. This is a source of employment, and there is a part of the car industry that you will be unable to save. In this way, you will be able to give it another mobility-related function. A European tramways project is also a solution to the climate problems linked to traffic.

On a different note, you rightly spoke of education and the Bologna process. Fine! The problem with the Bologna process, though, is that it has been diverted from its original purpose. Instead of making a Europe of equal higher education, higher education in Europe has been turned into school education, where universities are no longer places of research and reflection, but learning factories. Curricula have been created that students are unable to follow. If, therefore, you wish to pursue the Bologna process, we first need to take a step back and call into question all of the curricula which are linked to the Bologna process. The response can be seen on the streets of university cities throughout Europe, where students are protesting not against the idea of a European education, but against the deterioration in higher education ostensibly in the name of a European idea.

I would like to end on your European social pact. A European social pact and a social and environmental pact. Bring the companies, bring the unions and bring the major environmental associations around a table. Social protection will not work without environmental protection. That is the new idea, and, for the Members on the right, this is one of the good ideas that Mr Sarkozy in France had; it was called the *Grenelle*, or round table, on the environment. I believe it is time to have a Brussels for the environment, bringing all of the social partners and the major representatives of the environmental organisations together around one table. If you go down that path, we will be in agreement, and Europe is the solution. As for the instruments, we shall have to develop them together.

Timothy Kirkhope, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, I am happy at this crucial time in the work of the European Union that Spain takes on the Presidency of the Council.

Along with Greece and Portugal, Spain's membership of the European Community was an early example of the way in which Europe could help encourage and support a new democracy – a path followed successfully by many others since 1989.

Spanish Members from all parties have made important contributions to the work of this House, holding distinguished office in both Parliament and in our groups. Their impact has been substantial and, in this context, I would like to pay particular tribute to our friend, Jaime Mayor Oreja, one of Parliament's most influential personalities.

The Presidency starts at a critical time for the European Union and I wish it well, but I confess I have misgivings. It stumbled in its first few days in office. The suggestion that, rather than simply coordinating plans for economic development, the European Union should be able to establish compulsory economic policies with sanctions or corrective action against Member States who do not comply is deeply disturbing.

It reflects a very old-fashioned socialist command-and-control approach to economic policy which is not relevant to solving the problems of the 21st century. Without interfering in the politics of Spain, there is a saying in the United Kingdom which suggests that you put your own house in order first. Socialism does not do that.

What we do need are economic policies that respect the rights of our Member States, stimulate the sharing of best practice and focus on delivering EU added value; policies which defend the benefits of the internal market and extend them further; policies which provide a climate in which entrepreneurs and businesses can thrive in order to create jobs, raise our standard of living and contribute to a stronger society.

We in the ECR Group have high hopes of the Europe 2020 initiative as a framework for a sustainable, competitive European economy, and we have drafted our own additional proposals which we hope will help to take this debate forward.

I would like to touch on foreign policy. I know that this has been given some prominence in the Presidency's programme, but I must speak about one issue which is mentioned, but without enough emphasis in my view. That issue is Iran. Its illegitimate, brutal and dangerous government must be dealt with firmly. If we are serious about nuclear non-proliferation, the Iranian Government must understand that, whilst Iran has the right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, it will not be allowed to deceive the world in pursuing its ambition of having nuclear weapons. A regime which resorts to murder and violence to oppress its own people, a people cheated of a government of their choice, simply cannot be trusted, and we must take action.

The Spanish Presidency takes office with a full agenda. Our group will judge its proposals and initiatives on their merits. If it proposes progressive policies to stimulate economic growth, to deal with climate change, to strengthen individual freedom and responsibility, and to encourage cooperation on the world stage where we share common interests, all of these are areas where Europe can offer a benefit rather than impose a burden.

If it does that, then it will have our support.

Willy Meyer, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group. – (ES) Welcome, Mr Rodríguez Zapatero. Unfortunately, my group feels that your programme does not resolve the fundamental problems. In our view, the fundamental requirement of this Presidency would have been to rectify the current economic policy, through public intervention in the economy and, of course, by regulating the market through progressive fiscal policies.

The recession in Spain and in Europe, and the unemployment figures, the like of which have not been seen since the 1930s, are the consequence of not intervening in the market and not intervening in strategic production sectors, including the financial sector. From this perspective, unfortunately, there is nothing new in your programme. Income from employment is being punished and capital gains income is being favoured, because there is no harmonisation in fiscal policies and, as part of what is meant by the liberalisation of services, the European social model is being dismantled.

Articles 43 and 49 of the treaty protect a model that favours the market and the freedom of the market as opposed to workers' rights and, as you are well aware, we already have European Court judgments legalising social dumping. This is the actual reality. Therefore, unfortunately this part of your programme, which for us is substantial, does not change or alter anything and does not introduce anything new. In other words, it contradicts the slogan that you have used for the Spanish Presidency: 'Innovating Europe'.

On this specific point, there is no innovation. There is continuity, due to the election of Mr Barroso, which we opposed – although you, of course, gave him your support – and we think that this continuity is damaging to the European model.

On foreign policy, we do not agree that we need to increase military capacity. The images of the disaster in Haiti where combat helicopters and marines are being deployed are damaging to us. They are damaging! This is not what is needed when there are disasters such as the one in Haiti. We need civil protection. We need doctors, architects and people to relieve the pain of the tragedy.

Finally, Mr Zapatero, the summit with Morocco. We do not agree with the advanced status of Morocco while the Saharan people are not allowed to exercise their right to self-determination and they are permanently under persecution, I repeat, permanently under persecution from the Moroccan authorities. We do not agree with this summit. We believe that there should be a European summit regarding the right to self-determination of the Saharan people.

With regard to the State of Israel, we need to be much stricter in the Neighbourhood Policy and ensure that Article 2 of this Association Agreement as part of the Neighbourhood Policy is complied with, because Israel is systematically failing to comply with international law.

Marta Andreasen, on behalf of the EFD Group. – Mr President, thank you. Mr Rodríguez Zapatero, I have listened with attention to your proposals for the Spanish Presidency, and I can only wish you luck. I will now refer to a reality.

I represent the south-east of England, and many of my constituents – together with other European citizens – have been suffering urbanisation abuses on the Mediterranean coast and in other parts of Spain for a long time now. Three reports have been adopted by this Parliament urging the Spanish authorities to take action but, other than the conviction of a few politicians and the passing of a new Land Law, no specific action has been taken to defend the people who are suffering prejudice.

The problems my constituents face range from the dramatic situation of Len and Helen Prior of Berkshire, who saw their house being demolished because the authorities said it was built in breach of coastal law, to cases like that of Doreen Snook, also from Berkshire, in Alicante, and Mr Lohmann in Lanzarote, who cannot actually live in the houses they have purchased because of the lack of proper infrastructure and services.

As a national of Spain, I am ashamed to see what is going on in my country. I have big concerns for the future of the Spanish tourism business now that the press is writing about the bad fortune of these people.

(ES) Mr Zapatero, I will now address you in your mother tongue, which is also my own.

The people affected are not people of great wealth, they are simply people who have used the fruits of their labours to buy a house in this country with its mild climate and good people, a place to live when they retire. These people are unfairly having to pay fees to lawyers and other experts in order to defend themselves in the courts, without much chance of success.

The European Union has been convincing its population that it is there to maintain peace in Europe. Is this situation I describe going to bring peace to Europe?

You are telling us that you are going to get Europe out of the crisis. If you cannot solve the problem I am referring to, how much credibility can you have in solving Europe's financial crisis? Mr Zapatero, we want a solution now. We want the people to be able to live in the houses they bought. If this is not possible, they need to be granted a fair compensation that allows them to buy a similar property.

This Parliament has only threatened to block payments of subsidies to Spain, but I can assure you that, if this situation is not resolved during the Spanish Presidency, I will do everything I can to turn this threat into action.

Francisco Sosa Wagner (NI). – (ES) I am delighted to be in this very special forum with the President of the Spanish Government, someone whom I have valued very highly since the time when he was a strong law student.

I think that by chance, the rotating Presidency of the European Union has given my country the best possible opportunity to demonstrate once again that Spain wants to play a decisive role in Europe.

As the President said, joining Europe was a dream for the people of Spain during the long years of the dictatorship. We are therefore especially happy to be here and we relish the experience, because we know, ladies and gentlemen, that this Union of Member States which we represent here is the only answer to the problems that the world faces, since traditional States are incapable of finding effective solutions.

It is very important for Europe to find its place by defining itself and defending the values that it created in the cradle of revolutions, in the books written by its brilliant minds, and in the cries of its peoples. Those values are freedom, the rule of reason, laicism and solidarity. I therefore know, Mr President, that you want to make the most of this opportunity to put the Treaty of Lisbon into practice.

I agree with the objectives that you have proposed, although some of them are vague and also do not manage to distinguish matters which are incidental from those which are fundamental. One of the objectives, which concerns climate change, makes me think that the European policy implemented by the Commission is the right one, even though it failed in Copenhagen. What is important is that the waste of so many nations has to stop, because billions of earth's inhabitants should not have to suffer the consequences of the selfishness of rich societies.

I would also place more emphasis on defending human rights in the world. When the European Union is accused of being a bureaucratic organisation with no soul, people forget that its soul is our Charter of Fundamental Rights. In this respect, I believe that the Spanish Presidency should involve itself in the following matters: it should not hold the Morocco Summit until Morocco commits to complying with the resolutions made regarding the Sahara by the United Nations, a body that you have invoked on other occasions.

In Cuba and Iran, you should promote joint action for the recognition of the organisations that oppose the governments, in line with the debate that took place here yesterday. If rights are our soul, the soul of Europe, I will venture to remind you that you place a great emphasis, as you rightly said in your speech, on the backbone of Europe being a common energy policy. Without this, everything is held back and even international policy runs the risk of evaporating like smoke.

Finally, I would like to remind you not to forget your commitment to giving the cities of Ceuta and Melilla status similar to that of the most remote regions.

I will conclude: esteemed President Zapatero, my dear friend José Luis, I wish you every success for the good of this strong, federal Europe in which we both believe.

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) Mr President, I would first of all like to express my thanks for the tone and content of the speeches that have been made on behalf of the various parliamentary groups this morning.

I will talk about the most important matters, starting with Mr Daul. Thank you for your words regarding this positive drive for economic governance, the common economic policy. You raised the question as to what is the objective of such economic governance, of such an economic policy, or, if you will pardon the expression, offered an ideological foray into the possible postulates of a social democratic idea or project. In particular, I heard you express your reticence regarding indiscriminate increases in public spending and your preference for an environment that is favourable to enterprises.

I would like to clarify something. It has little to do with my speech, but a great deal to do with my political convictions. I am a strong supporter of the Stability Pact. I am a strong supporter of fiscal balance throughout the cycle. This is so much the case that in its first four years, before the economic and financial crisis, the government of which I was and still am the President had a surplus in its public accounts and decreased its deficit to 32% of GDP. I am therefore a convert. Deficit and surplus are tools, depending on the economic cycle. Now I, like the majority of European governments, have been in favour of responding with a fiscal stimulus that results in a public deficit, and public spending has increased slightly because private investment slowed down. This is not an ideological problem. It is a problem of reality. The financial crisis meant that private investment and private credit froze and was halted. It seems reasonable that the only way to compensate in some way for this slowdown in the economy was through public stimulus. This needs to be corrected, as far as circumstances allow, and we need to return to the Stability Pact.

Like other countries, my country is going to have, and in fact it does have, a large public deficit. I can also assure you, however, that my country is going to fulfil its commitment to the Commission for 2013 and return to the path of stability implied by a 3% deficit. In order to achieve this, as the Commission knows, we have an austerity plan, a strict fiscal consolidation plan. It is strict in terms of our public accounts, and we will put it into practice.

I agree that we need to create an environment that is favourable to enterprises, economic activity, initiative and competition. In fact, in my speech, I strongly advocated a common energy market and a European digital market. This means nothing more than promoting economic freedom, initiative and trade between Europeans in the field of energy and promoting competition because it reduces prices and promotes technological innovation. In the digital field, which I have focused on a great deal here today, we are largely betting on the future, insofar as we promote e-commerce and the transfer of all the products being generated currently in communication technologies, which represent a growing percentage of gross domestic product.

Our proposal, and our plan, therefore, is for the 2020 Strategy to favour a Europe without trade barriers, to favour competition, innovation and an entrepreneurial environment in Europe. What governments also need to do, as far as possible, is not to correct the environments behind business activity, but they do need to intervene in order to correct the environments that have favoured speculation, either financial speculation or property speculation. This is something different. Sometimes, due to particular ideas, speculation is promoted, intentionally or unintentionally, in the financial field or the property field. Spain has been a victim of this, as have some citizens, not only British citizens. This is the will of the government, within its scope of competence. You should be aware that in Spain, there is a distribution of competence, which lies not only with the central government, but also with the autonomous communities and the councils. There are, of course, laws and judicial proceedings, but I am very aware of what you have said, and we will therefore act.

Therefore: an economic environment that is favourable to business activity, initiative and innovation, but which is not favourable to financial and property speculation.

Of course, I am in favour of reasonable fiscal pressure, and I do not represent any opposing model, because while I have been in government, I have reduced tax on businesses, income tax on workers and personal taxation. I am in favour, on the basis of an interventionist perspective, of what is represented by its philosophy on taxation and the fiscal position.

Finally, I want to say to Mr Daul that I note the position of his group, which is the majority group in this House, regarding the role of the President of the Council – the permanent President – and of Parliament. I think this is an important matter. I am in favour of all the European institutions, the great European institutions, having a fluid relationship with Parliament. Of course, insofar as we want to make Europe bigger, we need to move towards a more powerful Parliament. That is my opinion.

Mr Schulz, thank you for your words. I am convinced that the principles of the European Union have a great deal to do with the principles of social democracy, and that social democracy has been a major lever behind the construction of the European idea and European ideals. I would like to affirm – despite the force of other ideas, which have had many problems in terms of application – our commitment to a vision of social cohesion, a vision in which it is essential for democracy to be social in nature.

Mr Verhofstadt, I am extremely grateful for your words. I agree with practically everything you said. With regard to coordination and the failure of Lisbon, open coordination failed. We are aware of this. We revised it in 2004, and now either we take it seriously or, in 2020, we will once again be saying that it did not work. Government requires a Community method. I do not know why some of you are surprised by the words ‘sanctions’ or ‘requirements’. There are many decisions in the workings of the European Union that involve sanctions. If directives are not complied with, if the Stability Pact is not complied with, it is natural that there should be sanctions. Also, it works. What Parliament needs to be clear about, because the European Union needs to be clear about it, is that the things that we have done together are producing good results. These are things such as the euro, the Stability Pact and the internal market, which needs to be developed and deepened, because it is one of the major levers for growth and competitiveness.

I completely agree with what you proposed regarding Copenhagen and the subsequent strategy, the new strategy. I think that it is an interesting initiative for there to be a High Authority for this issue, and it is true that Copenhagen did not produce the results that we would have wanted. It is true that Europe held a positive position, but that was not the result.

Mr Meyer, with all due respect, there are some things that we do not agree on. Of course, aside from the fact that the European Union does not have competence, for example, in fiscal policy, I did not present a conservative programme, but rather a programme of reforms. It is, above all, a programme to save time in the future, to anticipate the future, which, in my view, is the best way to move forward with a progressive programme. A progressive programme is one which sees changes, one which anticipates them and is capable of innovating. I hope and trust that the European Union will keep in step with this.

I respect your position on Morocco, but I do not share it. North Africa, especially Morocco, is of strategic importance to the European Union. Let us ensure that its modernisation process moves forward through dialogue and cooperation, and let us leave the arbitration of the Sahara conflict to the right body, which is the United Nations, which is taking steps which Spain naturally supports and respects.

Regarding Haiti, it is true that we frequently see helicopters or fighter planes promoting conflicts and bombarding areas of the planet, and they have a difficult place in our conscience. It is often difficult for our conscience and our convictions, but I must say that for me personally, seeing helicopters and marines bringing food, bringing order and saving lives is something worthy of applause.

(Applause)

For me personally, it is something worthy of applause. If Europe does have a rapid action force, as I hope we shall, I would be in support of Mr Barnier's proposal. As has been said here, it will have to have civil and military components, to enable us to take effective action in the shortest possible time, with the resources that we have available.

I have taken note of your suggestions, Mrs Andreasen. Of course, I would like to confirm to the representative of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance that I agree with many of the suggestions that you made in your speech. In the whole of my speech, I talked about sustainable growth, environmentally sustainable growth. I agree with you that the electric vehicle is, or should be, something that promotes another mode of transport. I note your suggestion that in the Social Pact, the dimension of environmental sustainability should be an essential dimension, and I do, of course, have a deeply-held conviction that the future of innovation, competitiveness and productivity lies in the so-called 'green economy'. It also lies in the potential of communication technologies and, of course, in a common or single vision of energy, as Mr Sosa Wagner said, as this is central to the future of the European Union's existence.

Mr Kirkhope, I agree with what you said about the relevance of the personality of my compatriot, Mr Mayor Oreja, but I do not agree with you that there was any suggestion whatsoever of more control or of more centralisation in what is represented by the ideas, the initiatives and the political proposal that I put forward in this House. No, it is a political initiative so that the internal market might be bigger and cover more fields, and for there to be more competitiveness and more innovation. It is for us to join forces. Joining forces does not mean controlling, uniting does not mean leading. On the contrary, joining forces is more democratic, uniting promotes cooperation.

What I think would be even more negative would be for us to continue operating 27 small, centralised control systems since, in a globalised world, this would mean that the players competing with us that have internal markets and common policies, such as the United States, China and India, would have us at a disadvantage. We will see that, in a very short space of time, if we do not make this major change as Europeans, and implement this new, more Community-oriented economic policy, India or China will catch up with us in terms of production and innovation.

No, we have no interest – if you will allow me to say so, with all due respect – no interest in control or interventionism. That is not what we are debating. When we talk about 2020 and government, we are talking about our collective capacities, the sum of the synergies represented by 500 million citizens on a continent that has succeeded in generating and launching the industrial revolution, the best use of energy and the greatest scientific advances. If all these forces are joined, we will have the capacity to play a leading role, to maintain our economic model, our prosperity model and our welfare model. These are the objectives.

Of course – I completely agree – I believe that the European Union has a clear position regarding Iran. Iran must comply with international rules and the international community – and, of course, the European Union needs to assert the requirement for Iran to comply with international rules regarding nuclear proliferation. I share your concern and your feelings on this subject.

Mr Sosa Wagner, I am happy to be here with you in this forum, in this great institution, at this time and in this debate. I have taken note of your suggestions. I fully agree with what you said about energy, which was largely the focus of my speech. It is largely energy that is going to define the European Union's capacity to be a great continent, both politically and economically. Undoubtedly, insofar as we have more energy interconnections and less energy dependency, we will be stronger economically and politically.

As we are well aware, energy has determined the course of history. It has determined how certain powers have dominated other countries. This has been through the control and use of energy but, of course, now it is also about saving energy.

The European Union promotes a policy, just as it will continue to promote for the next six months, of defending fundamental rights. It does so intelligently and by seeking to ensure progress is made where we have the expectation and the hope that it is possible. It does so where we feel that offering our hand is better than closing the door. We will therefore maintain the summit with our neighbour, Morocco. We will, at all times, promote the defence of human rights.

All in all, Mr President, I am extremely grateful for what has been said by all the spokespeople for the different parliamentary groups. I would like to express my respect for all their positions. I am taking note of the more direct, specific issues that have been raised in relation to my country, which I represent with the utmost pride given what we have achieved in the 25 years during which we have been part of the European Union. I also represent my country with the utmost humility, because we are here to share, and I think that the best way of sharing is to come with humility, to come prepared to unite, to join together and to defend the great ideal of the European Union together.

(Applause)

José Manuel Barroso, *President of the Commission*. – (FR) Mr President, I believe that there has been general consensus on the priorities of the Spanish Presidency of the Council, with, of course, some nuances depending on the stance of the various political groups, but there is one issue which has figured in several speeches and to which I wish to refer, namely the question of European coordination, or consistency, whether it be in our response to natural disasters outside Europe, or in our response within the framework of external relations, for example post-Copenhagen, or in relation to economic policy. And on that matter, I believe that we have a solution, which is to apply the Treaty of Lisbon. We do not have to go very far.

As for our response to humanitarian crises, we have the famous Barnier report, which has already been mentioned today. This is a report that I and the rotating Presidency at the time, the Austrian Presidency, requested from your fellow Member of Parliament and my good friend, Michel Barnier. He was not a commissioner at that time, and it was on my own initiative that I asked him to draft this report.

We received this report, which had my support and that of the then Presidency of the Council. Thereafter, it was not applied because the Council did not wish to apply it; let us be clear on that. This is why we must do more on the issue of consistency in the European Union's external humanitarian action.

Now, I believe that the answer lies in the Treaty of Lisbon. We have a High Representative who is the Vice-President of the Commission and, at the same time, Chair of the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers.

This is why, in the new Commission, I have created a new 'International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response' portfolio. This will be a commissioner, in this case, probably a female commissioner, for whom this will be the first task and who will need to work in tandem with the High Representative and with the Council so that we may, one day, I trust, have a true external service, but also competences in the area of crisis response and civil protection. That is all on the first question.

The second question concerns international negotiations, for example, in the wake of Copenhagen. Here again, I have to read out the Treaty of Lisbon, because I believe many people have not read it. Article 17: 'With the exception of the common foreign and security policy, and other cases provided for in the treaties, it shall ensure the Union's external representation'.

It is henceforth the Commission that represents the Union in foreign affairs, not the European Council. Without doubt, there will be Heads of State or Government who will represent their own countries. Who, though, represents the Union in foreign affairs, except for the CFSP? The Commission.

This is why I created a climate agenda portfolio and thus hope that the commissioner, in this case, a female commissioner, will, in future, have all the support required to represent the Union in the post-Copenhagen negotiations. Let us be clear on this point too.

The third question concerns economic policy. Here, too, the Treaty of Lisbon has to be read. There are those who think that economic policy is a purely national matter. That is not the case. Article 120: 'The Member States regard their economic policies as a matter of common interest and coordinate them in the Council'. Article 121(2): 'The Council shall, on a recommendation from the Commission, formulate a draft for the broad guidelines of the economic policies of the Member States and of the Union, and shall report its findings to the European Council', and, further on – you have to read the full article – 'In order to ensure closer coordination of economic policies and sustained convergence of the economic performances of the Member

States, the Council shall, on the basis of reports submitted by the Commission, monitor economic developments in each of the Member States and in the Union'.

There is, therefore, joint monitoring. Beyond that, and this is something new in the Treaty of Lisbon, the Commission may now make concrete recommendations, especially, and I quote: 'Where it is established that the policies of a Member State are not consistent with the broad guidelines or that they risk jeopardising the proper functioning of economic and monetary union, the Commission may address a warning to the Member State concerned'. And further on: 'The Council, on a recommendation from the Commission, may address the necessary recommendations to the Member State concerned'.

This is very interesting, though, because Parliament, too, will have powers in this context: 'The President of the Council and the Commission shall report to the European Parliament on the results of multilateral surveillance'. In other words, henceforth, we have the mechanisms in the Treaty of Lisbon – there is no need to invent anything new ...

(Comment made off-microphone)

No, yes, of course, I have already done it. I do not need to have your support to say it ...

And the truth is that we have, in the Treaty of Lisbon, if we truly wish to apply it, the instruments that we need to guarantee coordination and consistency, with no need for political or ideological divisions on this issue. This is my point – and this is why I must stress it here today: this is the first time that we have had a new rotating Presidency of the Council at the European Parliament.

The Spanish Presidency has a great responsibility. This is the first time since the Treaty of Lisbon came into force that we have had a rotating Presidency. Furthermore, as Mr Zapatero has said – and he has my full confidence because of his commitment to Europe – I believe that we have a responsibility to apply the treaty in both letter and spirit. Both the letter and the spirit of the Treaty of Lisbon are very clear.

A stronger Europe! A stronger Europe, not for the sake of the institutions, but so that the institutions are better able to serve the real interests of our citizens.

(Applause)

President. – Thank you, Mr Barroso. We have all read the Treaty of Lisbon, and we know it does not say everything. This is why it is so important that, working together, we establish an interpretation of what the Treaty of Lisbon does say, and that, together, we plan our work in the European Union for many years to come.

Jaime Mayor Oreja (PPE). – (ES) Mr President of the Spanish Government, I would like to say to you that we are not living in just another period, we are not living in just any moment in and for the European Union.

What you and Chair Daul said is true: the European Union and the European people know that their main concern is the crisis. It also needs to be pointed out here today, however, that before the economic crisis, in various elections in which there was a low turnout, Europeans were also showing signs of a growing disinterest and distance from the European institutions.

Therefore, the crisis of values has manifested itself before and also during the European integration project. I want to say this to you because, in view of the obvious impetus which will be provided by the Treaty of Lisbon, we have our first opportunity to reduce this rift between the European people and the European institutions.

We are therefore living – or at least we should be living – in a period of transition and of change, which you referred to. I would like to say, however, that the first challenge that we have ahead of us is to be able to find the turning point in the process of Europeans becoming distanced from European policy.

Transitions are always an opportunity. They are also a risk, but I obviously encourage you to have a small number of clear ideas that can always be communicated to all Europeans. I would therefore like to say that a change in attitude in all the European institutions, in all of us and in the national governments and parliaments, in politicians, is undoubtedly much more important than the Treaty of Lisbon itself. It is not enough for the Treaty of Lisbon to enter into force in order for us to be able to talk about transition and change in the European Union and ambition in the European project.

I therefore want to say to you that the prime ambition is for Europeans to understand us better, as they do not understand us. Our language is unintelligible and, at times, incomprehensible, and we therefore have to know how to say that this is a problem in itself and a challenge in itself, so that we can move closer to the European people. We need to devote much more time, much more political energy and much more political impetus to ensuring that Europeans can understand us.

Ladies and gentlemen, due to the Treaty of Lisbon, all the presidencies are going to be distinct, different and more demanding, and they are going to demand more sacrifice and more generosity from us than ever. I therefore would like to say that I am very pleased to say here today that the Spanish *Partido Popular* has supported the objectives of the Spanish Government in the European Presidency at such an important time for the European Union.

What we need to do now is to apply them in the right way. I am going to tell you how the Spanish Presidency should not be measured. It is not going to be measured by the number of meetings that we hold. The measure of a good Presidency is not conventional speeches or great words, or common places. It will be measured by the results, the realities, our capacity to change our attitude – in all the European institutions – and our capacity to prioritise the real problems that Europeans have. This will be the only way that we will truly move closer to all Europeans.

(Applause)

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – (ES) On behalf of the Socialist delegation in this European Parliament, which, as you said, is the European parliament with the most extensive representation and democratically the strongest in the whole history of the European Union, I would like to join in extending an extremely warm welcome to the Spanish President of the European Union, and express my best wishes for success at such a crucial time.

It is a crucial time owing to the entry into force, finally, of the Treaty of Lisbon. It is also crucial given the launch of the new institutions: the new Commission, the permanent President of the Council and the High Representative of the European Union. Above all, however, it is crucial because it gives us an opportunity to do what needs to be done by means of the Treaty of Lisbon and the new institutions, which is to respond to the most serious and most severe crisis that we have seen for 80 years, which has had a serious economic, financial but also social impact.

For 10 years, European citizens have been watching an institutional debate, and on 7 June, citizens elected this Parliament, which represents 500 million people. Those people are watching us, they have expectations of us and they are demanding answers from us. They want coordination and monitoring where there was a lack of governance and, in response to a lack of transparency and greed, they want the ethics of responsibility to be restored. What they therefore want is for us to emerge from the crisis and to emerge better, but true to our model.

I therefore believe that the Spanish Presidency is right to start by reaffirming values: the importance of equality. The European Union is built on equality, equality before the law, but also equality as the backbone of the social model, combating exclusion and discrimination, protecting the weakest in society, a commitment to combating gender violence and to the European protection order. It is also built on quality as a lever for the future in innovation, education and training, which have always been a way of opening up new opportunities for those who do not currently have them.

In addition to this, the Presidency is right in terms of content, and it has referred to the importance of the 2020 Strategy, which recognises that the Lisbon Strategy did not work, and therefore we are not happy or satisfied and that we need to commit to more innovation and better energy sources. There is also the European External Action Service, to make a difference in Haiti, and the action plan for the area of freedom, security and justice.

If you will allow me, I would like to say that it is also right in its attitude and in having the courage to promote change in the face of national prejudices and in the face of the decline or the resignation...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE). – (ES) President of the rotating Presidency, Mr Zapatero, I sincerely wish you luck and success, as this will be good for Europe and for its citizens.

The crisis necessitates global thinking and local action, but you need to join forces with everyone. Make use of successful local and regional models, those based on the real economy, collaboration between the public and private sectors and proximity to the people. Include the regions, build decision-making processes with them. This also means applying the Treaty of Lisbon, which gives them a role for the first time.

Your programme forgets the regions and does not clarify how the subsidiarity protocol will be applied. Take risks, innovate, but earn some credibility, because no one here believes what you say after Spain reduced its budgets for innovation.

I am pleased that you back equality between men and women, but your programme is written in a masculine form, the language does not even address the perspective of gender. Does this not seem a bad symptom?

As far as the Basque Country is concerned, work for peace, give support to the productive economy, push forward the Basque high speed train, and integrate our fiscal system, our police and our language into the European institutions. Europe will be built by bringing together people, knowledge, will and political reality. That means Parliament, to which, if I may say, you have brought your programme and timetable poorly and too late, and which merits a level of respect which I have not seen, even at the Official Opening on 8 January.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE). - (ES) Prime Minister, welcome. I fear, however, that your Presidency runs the risk of being regarded as a political crocodile, that is to say, with a big mouth, expressing big ideas, but which ultimately has no ears to listen with.

Nothing would please me more, I promise you, than to be able to congratulate you in six months time for having put in place measures which enable us to emerge from the crisis – something which effectively implies greater and better economic government – and for having reorganised the European Union from a social, ecological and democratic point of view.

However, today I must confess my concern about the fact that in the Presidency Programme, the aims for stimulation plans, for example, are uncertain and references to economic government of the Union are marginal.

Furthermore, in order to tackle a real fiscal reform, which includes European resources in order to form social policy and which clearly has a green, ecological dimension, we need to make it very clear that those who pollute must pay, and that this also applies to those who behave in a fraudulent and irresponsible manner, whether they are a bank, a multinational or a tax evader. However, I also see timidity in your proposals and too many concessions to those who shamelessly mortgage our social and environmental present and future.

Nevertheless, it is certain that there are many summits planned during your Presidency, be they with Latin America or the Mediterranean, but I also wish to show my concern on two aspects. The first is your decision to revise universal jurisdiction, since this weakens us when faced with genocide and universal criminals, whether they be in Israel, China or Guatemala, and the second is where, in cases such as the Sahara or Columbia, for example, among many others, trade agreements take precedence over the defence of human rights.

I wish to finish, however, by congratulating you and giving you my support on one particular matter, that of equality between men and women. Yes, there, I give you credibility, there, I see potential, there, I believe you can do fundamental work, because you have earned it in many areas. I hope and I trust – and you will have the support of this Chamber in continuing to do so – that you continue to set an example to many other countries which are very behind in this respect.

Adam Bielan (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, Mr Rodríguez Zapatero, your country has taken over the Presidency at an exceptionally difficult time – the last, I hope, phase of the worst economic crisis to hit our continent for 80 years. Therefore, it is fully understandable that you have made returning to a path of economic development and the fight against unemployment your main priorities for the next six months. However, if you are talking about a growth in competitiveness of the European economy, we must remember that this cannot be achieved without reform of the economy and without completion, for example, of building the common market, or without fighting against the revival, for example in France, of economic nationalism.

I am glad that the matter of energy security has also been included in Spain's priorities. Mr Zapatero, I come from Poland, which understands better than most countries the need to diversify the supply of materials used for power generation, and that means diversification of the sources of supply and not only the channels

of distribution, as lobbyists working for the Russian firm Gazprom are trying to convince us. I hope that in six months' time, you will be able to show some real successes in this area, too.

Finally, the matter of EU enlargement, which Mr Moratinos rightly recognised recently as a matter of fundamental importance. We are debating, today, at a moment when our important neighbour, Ukraine, which is also an important neighbour from the point of view of energy security, has just passed its next examination in democracy. I hope that in six months' time, we will be able to say that Ukraine is closer to membership of the European Union.

Kyriacos Triantaphyllides (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, the Spanish Presidency, in describing the priorities for consumers, devotes a total of two lines to the governance programme. That is illustrative of the importance which it ascribes to consumer protection. We therefore wonder what the Presidency is intending to do about the rights of its citizens. Does it intend to safeguard them by revising the proposed full harmonisation downwards or to restrict the commitments announced?

The lack of vision in the social sector is not limited solely to consumers. Unemployment as a consequence of the recent crisis is hitting citizens of the Union hard and they are waiting for action to be taken. Young people in particular are in a quagmire. In response, the Presidency is promoting the employability of young people through apprenticeship schemes, thereby exacerbating their exploitation and the excessive profits of undertakings. We call on the Spanish Presidency to revise its programme so as to safeguard permanent jobs for its citizens.

Rolandas Paksas (EFD). – (LT) I also hope that the Spanish Presidency will be a success and that, in addition to the priorities laid out, Spain will also devote attention to a problem that is particularly relevant these days, that of human rights and freedoms. Following an investigation carried out by the Lithuanian Parliament into CIA prisons, it came to light that in another state, a European state, the infrastructure had been established for the illegal imprisonment of people. The European Union and the United States of America are like two cornerstones of global politics and economics, allies and partners enjoying equal rights, but this does not mean that CIA agents are entitled to play the master in sovereign states in our own backyard. I think that the European Parliament should renew its investigation into the illegal rendition of people and their imprisonment in European states. The conclusions of this investigation should crown a document obliging Member States to ensure the rights and freedoms of every citizen without condition.

Frank Vanhecke (NI). – (NL) The Spanish Presidency's statements on immigration policy, and border controls in particular, blow hot and cold very curiously. In particular, Spain's creed that such matters should be regulated at European level rings very hollow in view of the country's recent mass legalisation of illegal immigrants; of which the – shall we say – more northerly European countries, too, will soon pay the price without ever having a say in the matter. It also struck me that the Spanish Presidency is continuing to advocate an active immigration policy at a time of very serious economic crisis, when no one knows how many million Europeans are unemployed. What we really need is to close our borders, put a real stop to immigration and, of course, provide economic support to countries that need it. The further large-scale immigration you are advocating can only lead to large-scale problems.

Werner Langen (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, Mr Rodríguez Zapatero, I must compliment you on your eloquence. However, what do you really have to say? What is your message to us? What is the substance of what you said? I have heard many speeches – you are the 32nd Head of Government that I have witnessed – but I have rarely heard anything so non-committal in content. In view of the crisis, the forthcoming summit, the necessary stringency of financial market regulation and the fact that the Council has left the Commission to its own devices over the last few months, where is your strategy?

Mr Schulz must have been in a different room if he is recommending that we adopt your Spanish Government model here. I would like to make one thing clear: Europe cannot afford a 20% unemployment rate. What is so good about this Spanish model then? How have you responded to the crisis? How can you coordinate things here? We call for your leadership. Then we will support you. However, what can we do with something so non-committal? Of course we are opposed to marital violence, who would not be? Your only concrete proposal was the electric car – and with the crisis and the summit in mind – is that all you can come up with, Mr Zapatero? I am also amazed by the fact that the President of the Commission had to read the Treaty to you with regard to economic policy coordination, and you listened very attentively because it was clearly the first time that you had heard it!

All I can say to you is that you should follow the recommendations of your fellow party member, Mr Almunia. He resisted the opposition of the Council to the Stability and Growth Pact. He is the example you should

follow. Help him to secure the Stability and Growth Pact. Help him to do this and you will have us on your side. However, with this non-committal pie-in-the-sky approach, we will not make any headway in Europe.

Hannes Swoboda (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, I do not think that Mr Langen was listening very closely, because otherwise he would have heard a clear modernisation strategy and a social pact mentioned. I am not surprised that you did not hear the social pact mentioned, because it is an important part of this strategy. Mr Zapatero most definitely mentioned unemployment, including unemployment in his own country. Unemployment as a whole is something that worries us. However, he is not the one responsible for this; it is those who, in the last few years, have pursued a policy of maximum deregulation who are responsible. Those in your ranks who played their part in causing this bear the responsibility.

This social pact is needed now in particular, because we know – and this is the point on which you are right, although only partly – that we must consolidate the budgets. However, we also know that this must not be at the expense of the vulnerable members of society, as there are currently many – you only need to read today's newspapers – who, for example, do not have unemployment insurance. It is not only a tragic fate for these individuals, it is also something that affects economic growth, because we know very well that people in the lower levels of society tend to cut their consumer cloth accordingly, and one of the reasons that economic development and economic growth is at risk is because there is not enough consumer spending. If we do not protect the vulnerable members of society by means of a social pact, it will not only be humanity that we will be failing, but we will also have failed to bring about economic development. Therefore, this social pact is very important.

Mr Zapatero, with regard to the social pact in particular, you have our full support.

Ramon Tremosa i Balcells (ALDE). – (ES) Mr Rodríguez Zapatero, last September, the Commissioner, Joaquín Almunia, appeared in Parliament before the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs. After reporting on the recovery of German exports and the growth in French consumption, Mr Almunia said that the crisis would be much longer and deeper in Spain.

In fact, the European Commission foresaw a continued increase in unemployment and a large deterioration in public finances for Spain in the next few years, and this year it is very probable that we will see a reduction in bank credit for families and businesses.

I asked Commissioner Almunia in September why Europe was already recovering and why Spain would continue to fall into the mire and he replied literally 'because the Spanish Government is not carrying out the reforms that you and I agree on'. The crisis is global, but the solutions are local. Many European countries quickly acknowledged the crisis, acted quickly and are already recovering. You have wasted two years and are still not providing concrete solutions.

Mr Zapatero, you have broken the fine tradition of the PSOE in Europe. Felipe González had the European social-democrat reformists as a reference point, but you are much nearer to revolutionary South American populist policies. Reforms help nations to progress more than revolutions and Europe is a model of good practice in this regard. Come here with humility and learn, do not seek to lecture.

Two specific questions: when will we be able to speak Catalan in this Chamber? And, finally, when will the Spanish state revoke the international treaties which prohibit flights from twenty three countries into Barcelona airport?

IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

Vice-President

Oriol Junqueras Vies (Verts/ALE). – (ES) Hello, Mr Rodríguez Zapatero. A couple of years ago, you assured us that Spain had exceeded Italy's per capita production and that it would soon surpass that of France. However, at present, according to international rating agencies, Spain heads the European Union poverty index, with 20% unemployment and a deficit of EUR 78 billion.

What has happened, Mr Zapatero? Will your economic prescriptions for Europe be the same as those you have applied in Spain?

Furthermore, this deficit has not been used to build extensive communication infrastructures. When will we, the citizens of Europe, benefit from a rail freight axis uniting the north and south of the continent which passes along the Mediterranean coast?

It is a deficit that has not been used to propel change in the productive model, either. How can we Europeans have confidence in your will to implement the European Digital Agenda when you have just halved the budget for research.

Finally, in contrast to your fellow European members represented here, Spain still refuses to recognise Kosovo. For how long will you continue to take advantage of the international community's patience, refusing to accept referenda on self-determination as the democratic expression of the will of the people?

Lajos Bokros (ECR). – (ES) It is quite significant, and also symbolic, that the Prime Minister of a country which now has the highest rate of unemployment in the European Union should be speaking about the importance of creating employment. For this reason, I would like to ask the Prime Minister of the Spanish Government what, specifically, are the most important measures to achieve the objective of reducing unemployment, not just in Spain, but also in Europe.

The Spanish Government's programme is extremely ambitious. It wishes to adopt a new strategy of growth and employment. At the same time, it is forgetting the Community Lisbon Programme, which had forecast the transformation of Europe into the most competitive region in the world. How can one envisage a new strategy and prepare it within a month, without first analysing the reasons for the failure of the previous programme?

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, this period should herald a sea change in European Union policies and priorities.

Unemployment has reached alarming levels, with more than 24 million unemployed and an increase of over 5 million in the last year alone, a situation that has also exacerbated poverty, which now affects more than 80 million people. We need a social development and progress pact that aims at production, particularly in the fields of agriculture and industry, at employment with rights and social inclusion, instead of coming back to insist upon the Stability Pact, with its liberalisations and neoliberal diktats, as the President of the Council has done.

As we have already seen, they were the ones who contributed to the rise in inequality, to the prioritisation of greater profits and gains for the main economic and financial players. At the same time, an average of more than 21% of young people cannot find a job in the European Union, one in five children lives in poverty and discrimination against women is on the rise once again. In view of all this, the challenge now is to make a break with these current policies ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Mario Borghesio (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, according to the Eurobarometer indicators, Spain has the fourth highest percentage of people – 21% – who live on the poverty line, after Latvia, Romania and Bulgaria.

Under these circumstances, and with the data that has been brought to light on several occasions, not least regarding unemployment, what kind of immigration policy does the Spanish Presidency propose? The Spanish Presidency says it wishes to increase immigration.

At present, all this appears to me to be clearly contradictory. From Madrid's point of view, why does Spain and why do European countries – Spain is not the only one to have this unemployment situation – need to import a new workforce? Do we want new immigrants who have no homes or jobs? Do we want to increase this already worrying number of people who are living on the poverty line?

I believe that we must focus, instead, on a fundamental objective in the field of immigration, that of integrating the immigrants that we already have in our country and stopping ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Mario Mauro (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, welcome, Mr Rodríguez Zapatero. I confess that as a dyed-in-the-wool conservative, I had prepared myself for this debate as if it were a bullfight; however, you have spoken of equality and human rights in such a way that I can now recognise what unites us, not what divides us. You have been a cautious matador; I will be a cautious bull and I will remain in my enclosure.

However, please allow me to return to two extremely tiresome questions on the contribution that you can make to the interpretation of the Treaty of Lisbon's implementation. You have laid down in your country various policies based on the principle of subsidiarity, thus supporting the identity-related demands of many communities, from the Catalans to the Basques, from the Valencians to the Galicians, and not without controversy.

How do you now intend to defend the principle of subsidiarity in the relationship between the Member States and the European Union, in other words, the Member States' request to have their own traditions, their own identities, their own values recognised, so that the founding principle of the European Union – 'United in diversity' – is affirmed?

My second question concerns the role of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs: after Lisbon, who among yourself, President Van Rompuy and President Barroso, is responsible for explaining to Baroness Ashton that perhaps after 12 days, it is time to get on an aeroplane and fly to Haiti? That it is time that the European Union's foreign policy had not only a budget but also a face and a human capacity to support, just as the other leaders of international organisations have done? Unless, of course, we are confusing Haiti with Tahiti.

Adrian Severin (S&D). – Mr President, the Spanish Presidency is the first to take place under the new Lisbon Treaty.

Here is the first challenge. We have the treaty, but we need its proper enhancement and even more than that. The European Social Pact and European economic governance might be part of this 'more', but all these parts require more European financial resources and harmonisation of Member State tax policies. Unfortunately, such endeavours have always been undermined by national governments.

I hope that the Spanish Presidency will be able to bring them together more than in the past.

The Spanish Presidency should cope with the two main contradictions of the European Union: the contradiction between pan-European needs and European national egoists, and the contradiction between the level of development in the western territories of the Union and that in the eastern territories, with their consequences in terms of political sensitivity. There is a political sensitivity which is different in the two parts. There is a sense of the need for more Europe, which is slightly different in the two parts following social and economic cleavages. I hope that the Spanish Presidency will be able to cope with this.

These really are challenges which again require more common resources and better political coherence. I therefore think that we not only need to read the Treaty, which is very right and gives us possibilities for more coherence, but also to provide...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Silvana Koch-Mehrin (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, Mr Barroso, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, Spain is now taking on the Presidency of the European Union for the fourth time. You know what it is to cooperate with the European Parliament in a very wide range of situations.

We now have the Treaty of Lisbon, which means that the European Parliament is now your key contact partner. In your programme, you say that you want the EU to take root in the will of those who render it legitimate, namely European citizens. That is a very ambitious aim. The path to achieving it can only be found via the representatives of European citizens, in other words the parliaments. I am therefore very pleased to hear you say that cooperation between the national parliaments, the parliaments of the EU Member States, and the European Parliament is the cornerstone of such a path. You want to bring the parliaments closer together in order to bring citizens closer together. That is a good thing.

You have a great responsibility in this regard, as you are the first Presidency following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. Other Presidencies will use you as an example. You are therefore creating the blueprint, so to speak. I would like subsequent presidencies to have to measure themselves against you where cooperation structures are concerned. I wish you much success!

Peter van Dalen (ECR). – (NL) The Presidency wishes to accelerate accession negotiations, including with Iceland. My group does not oppose that country's accession per se, but the uncertainty about the repayment of the Icesave loans to the United Kingdom and the Netherlands is too great at present. Iceland and Icesave have been taking great risks for many years. The sky seemed to be the limit, and the consumption and granting of loans just kept on going. International bodies such as the International Monetary Fund warned against

these risks but, no, this behaviour continued unhindered until the recession struck. Curious, then, that the government in Reykjavik is now shedding crocodile tears. The writing had been on the wall for a long time that things would go seriously wrong. Forewarned is forearmed. In short, Iceland can join the EU if it meets its international obligations, and it has been laid down clearly how and when the Icesave loans are to be repaid. That is the only way of building the confidence required for accession.

Miguel Portas (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr Rodríguez Zapatero, you know as well as I do that growth of production in Europe will be slow and lacklustre over the coming years. Given this, I fail to understand why you are insisting on the withdrawal of the Stability Pact in its original form, or with the shrinking of public investment and social spending.

I would also like to ask you about what you omitted from your speech. Why was nothing said about tax havens? Why was nothing said about the opposition to banking secrecy by certain Member States? Why was nothing said about a real European initiative for the taxation of financial transactions?

In short, the question that I would like to put to you is this: why do your commitments always fall short of justice in the economy, a modicum of justice in economic matters?

Enikő Győri (PPE). – (HU) Among the joint objectives, I would like to highlight overcoming the economic crisis and the creation of new jobs. We are all aware that there are signs of recovery appearing in some countries, but this is not reflected in the overall employment situation. What the citizens of the European Union really need is jobs. This is the only acceptable basis for renewing the Lisbon Strategy. We have to make sure that the new EU 2020 programme does not repeat the mistakes of the Lisbon Strategy. For now, we cannot see the factors that will make it different and more credible than its predecessor. So far, we have heard only about slogan-like targets, and an extremely tight schedule for adopting it.

If the European Parliament is involved in the process in a way that is commensurate with its significance, it is impossible to finish the process before the end of the second quarter. We need a mature and harmonised programme instead of a hastily mounted communication campaign. Let us consider the following. How to share responsibility between the Member States and the Union? How to control the implementation of the strategy? Whom do we want to benefit with the new strategy? How will the Union represent the interests of all its regions, not only of certain industries, companies, or countries? How to harmonise the cohesion and the structural policies? When working under pressure there will be no time to answer all these questions. Haste comes at the expense of quality.

I draw your attention to two European-level issues included in the targets of the future Hungarian Presidency. The first one is to establish a common water management strategy, as water is our common treasure. The concept of the Danube as a green corridor is related to this. Our other aim is to lend a hand to the European regions. We have to take advantage of the strength of these communities.

Marita Ulvskog (S&D). – (SV) Thank you for a strong social agenda – you have our full support on that. I have two questions. The first concerns the Copenhagen Summit. It was a failure and the question now is how can we regain the initiative as regards the fight against climate change? Can Spain pave the way for a binding climate agreement in Mexico in which we do not increase the gap between the poor countries of the world and the richer countries of the world? Is it possible, for example, to attempt to secure financing of climate initiatives that does not take funds from regular EU aid for fighting poverty? That would be an important matter for the Spanish Presidency to address.

As far as the social pact is concerned, it sounds very interesting. However, there is a serious problem: there is no longer a reasonable balance between Europe's employees and Europe's employers. We have a Posting of Workers Directive that has upset that balance and which puts such a social pact at risk. There is too much wage dumping and too much crude exploitation.

Diana Wallis (ALDE). – Mr President, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for his very sincere and European speech at the opening of Spain's Presidency. This is normally a moment to be polite, and my colleagues know I am always very polite, but I have to return to the issue of the many British citizens and other European citizens who are having problems with losing their homes in Spain.

I approach it not like the former speaker from an anti-European perspective. I approach it from a pro-European perspective, where this Parliament has, time and time again, done reports and had hearings through our Petitions Committee. It is a European problem. It is a problem of free movement. It is a problem of European citizenship. It is a problem of European justice, access to civil justice.

I am sorry, Prime Minister. You made many wonderful comments about European citizenship and fairness and honesty. I do hope, Prime Minister, that you will be able to translate those comments to those European citizens who face homelessness and the loss of their savings in your country because, I am sorry to say, of what appears to this Parliament to have been administrative abuse.

Evžen Tošenovský (ECR). – (CS) Mr Prime Minister, in the programme of priorities for your Presidency, you also mentioned, in the chapter on transport, the Galileo project. The Galileo project ranks among the European Union's biggest and most complex projects. During the Spanish Presidency, this project should already be scheduled into its implementation phase. I would like to ask you to devote more attention to this project, which is complex not only in technical but also in economic terms, since its funding has not been completely clarified. I believe that thanks to the Spanish Presidency, this programme will be successfully fulfilled and the entire project launched. This is a huge task for the Spanish Presidency, since it is to be followed by other highly significant projects in the sphere of innovation, telecommunications and other related matters.

Corien Wortmann-Kool (PPE). – (NL) Mr President, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, President Barroso, Commissioner Almunia, I, too, wish to focus on the EU 2020 strategy, as the need for Europe to work for its citizens and their jobs is greater than ever in these times of crisis. You have announced that EU 2020 is an important priority area, but at the inauguration of your Presidency in Madrid, you made some controversial political statements and received a great deal of criticism, even though it is actually an important responsibility to get Member States singing from the same song sheet, and one that requires diplomacy. Are you, the Spanish Presidency, perhaps hampering President Van Rompuy with these statements? Under the Treaty of Lisbon, as colegislator and important partner for the European Parliament, should you perhaps now be working towards the legislative programme? Is it not in fact your job – and this is also in your programme – to ensure decisive financial market regulation? After all, in that regard, Parliament was disappointed in the compromise on financial supervision reached by the Council last December. Should you perhaps be focusing your energy much more on this, and also on the internal market, where there is much room for improvement? This is important for our small and medium-sized enterprises, our driving force for jobs.

Where EU 2020 is concerned, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) also wants to see an end to the free-for-all for Member States, of course, and instead specific proposals – here I am also looking at President Barroso – for a solid, transparent governance structure, one that also respects subsidiarity. Brussels' remit does not cover the retirement age, for example. Should Brussels be taking decisions on reforms of labour markets or education systems in Member States? Let us be decisive, but let us also respect subsidiarity.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D). – (SK) The programme you have presented is very ambitious – it may allow the European Union to make quite a lot of progress and, since I have had the opportunity to meet several members of your government, I know that they are professionally very capable and well-prepared to implement this programme – my congratulations.

I am particularly looking forward to cooperating with the Minister for Justice and the Minister for the Interior, because this is the area I focus on as the Vice-Chair of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. We have before us a large amount of work and an array of measures, including those mentioned at our session yesterday evening, mainly relating to the fields of justice and internal affairs, which the Spanish Presidency has decided to deal with courageously.

There are many questions and many solutions are needed in the area of fundamental rights of European Union citizens, including material and procedural rights of participants in civil and criminal proceedings and the issue of protection with respect to the reintroduction of the social dimension of European policy. We have to pay attention to issues relating to immigration and asylum, and I believe we will ...

Marian Harkin (ALDE). – Mr President, one of the changes the Prime Minister spoke of this morning is the Citizens' Initiative. Indeed, I think it is fitting that one of the countries whose citizens voted 'yes' to the constitution is the country that will start the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. Indeed, many times when I was canvassing for a 'yes' vote in Ireland on the Lisbon Treaty, I quoted Spain and the Spanish people.

But we as politicians have a responsibility to ensure that, while citizens are aware of the real potential of the Citizens' Initiative, they are also aware of its limitations. We know that it is not just a question of one million signatures on any issue. The issue must come within the competence of the Union and we must not promise more than we can deliver.

Secondly, this morning, you mentioned food security, Prime Minister. I am pleased to see that in the Agriculture Council, you are making progress with the issue of improving the functioning of the food supply chain. Food security cannot – and will not – be guaranteed unless our farmers can earn a fair and reasonably stable income.

Finally, Prime Minister, well done on your initiative to stamp out gender violence; I look forward to hearing the details.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE). – (RO) Let me begin by expressing the hope that, in spite of the fairly general nature of the programme, the Spanish Presidency will achieve concrete results by the end of June.

I welcome the fact that the Presidency is concerned with developing the European Research Area and ensuring mobility for researchers. However, at a time when there are labour market restrictions, this task is going to be difficult to achieve. I hope that the informal meeting of employment ministers at the end of this month will end with specific results in this area.

The programme also includes the review of the TEN-T action guidelines. It would be desirable for the review also to take into account the Danube Strategy which, although not mentioned directly in the Presidency's programme, is a European Commission commitment for 2010.

In the energy sector, it would be desirable to improve the European Action Plan for Energy Efficiency and adopt the 2010-2014 Action Plan for Energy. With regard to the former, I believe that its revision should also include a proposal on financial resources, especially with a view to making buildings energy efficient. The European Economic Recovery Plan has included the European Union's involvement in funding the Nabucco gas pipeline. It is in the European Union's interest for this funding to continue in the 2010-2014 Action Plan for Energy as well.

As far as the Eastern Partnership is concerned, it is worth stating that the European Union's relations with Ukraine are extremely important. I would also take this opportunity to ask you not to forget the Southern Caucasus region, which is an important alternative energy resource for the European Union, or the Republic of Moldova, which is in great need of EU assistance during this period of transition to democracy.

Gianluca Susta (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Zapatero, thank you for the great commitment you are making during this parliamentary term regarding the items you have announced, even though this is no longer the time to list all the useful items, but to make practical efforts to revive Europe.

We need to end this period of defining institutional structures and to face the major issues which still prevent Europe from being able to compete on an equal footing with its international partners. We need to know whether the European Union will be able, one day very soon, to have a seat in the United Nations, whether it will be able to have a seat, as the European Union, at the G20, whether it wants greater fiscal and social harmonisation, and what resources it wants to put into the European economic circuit so that it can truly do what its other international competitors have done.

We need to come here – and I say this also to President Barroso – with concrete measures to revive Europe, because, in six months' time, we will not see the same results as we have seen previously with other previous experiences. We would also like to know whether the time has finally come when, as Kissinger would say 30 years ago, the major world leaders know which telephone number to call when they need to speak to someone in Europe, and do not just contact the Member States.

At stake is Europe's dignity as it emerges from the Treaty of Lisbon, but also the European social model, that fundamental democracy which we Members of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament strongly demand and on which we want the future well-being of our citizens to be based.

Paulo Rangel (PPE). – (PT) Mr President, Mr Rodríguez Zapatero, Mr Barroso, I would like to make it clear that there are certain ambiguities in the speech that we have heard here, particularly with regard to economic matters. The aims and stated aims are sound, but certain ambiguities remain. Specifically, there are no concrete measure to combat unemployment. However, despite this reservation, I would like to focus my speech on institutional matters.

The Spanish Presidency talks a lot about the issue of the Citizens' Initiative, and about the swift and rapid installation of the system for the External Action Service. At present, on an institutional level, I think that

some statement about the relationship with the remaining institutions would also be important, since we are in the initial stages of the Treaty of Lisbon.

I also believe that it is important that the Council and the Spanish Presidency clearly demonstrate a willingness to collaborate with the Commission and Parliament, so as to clarify how relations between the Commission and Parliament will play out in the context of the Treaty of Lisbon, as the Spanish Presidency now has a unique opportunity to set precedents.

Whatever the Spanish Presidency does in terms of the aforementioned relations with the Commission, on the one hand, and with Parliament, on the other, and with the President of the European Council himself, clearly attests to what will come to be seen as the success of the Treaty of Lisbon.

In view of this, I would like to be given clearer information about how you view the structure of relations between the rotating Presidency, the Commission, Parliament and the Presidency of the Council.

Alejandro Cercas (S&D). – (ES) Dear Prime Minister Zapatero, welcome, good luck and thank you for your speech. Thank you, above all, for that reference to the European Social Charter. Finally, somebody in the Council understands that Europe cannot be formed without workers, and much less so against workers.

Finally, somebody in the Council is beginning to understand that we have a very serious problem, with millions of disillusioned people, with trade organisations which feel they are being kept out of the process of European integration, which only looks at the business aspect, has lost its political ambitions and has little social ambition.

Two actions have poisoned this relationship with the Parliament and with the trade union movement. One is the movement of workers throughout Europe, which creates a threat to national social models, and the other is the Working Time Directive, which threatens historical achievements and the conciliation of professional and working life.

Prime Minister, you have spoken of six months of change. Change the procedures, change the course. You will not be able to change everything, but set off on a new route, a route which Europe needs, because Europe needs workers and it will not be possible to construct just an economic Europe; it needs to be a political and social Europe, too.

4. Welcome

President. – Ladies and gentlemen, I have been told that there is a delegation from the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea in the gallery to whom we extend a warm welcome. We wish to welcome them and the leader of the delegation, Lee Kang Rae, on the occasion of the twelfth inter-parliamentary meeting between our Parliament and their country's Parliament.

The European Parliament has always supported peace and stability and the defence of human rights in the Korean Peninsula. Naturally, we welcome the increasingly active role of the Republic of Korea on the international stage and we also wish them all the best when they chair the G20 this year.

We are aware of the broad association agreement between the Republic of Korea and the European Union which will shortly enter the ratification process. We congratulate our Korean colleagues, therefore. We hope that their attendance is successful and, above all, that they enjoy the privilege of following a debate as fundamental as the one currently taking place in our Chamber.

5. Presentation of the programme of the Spanish Presidency (continuation of debate)

President. – Ladies and gentlemen, let us continue with the debate on the presentation of the programme of the Spanish Presidency.

Carlo Casini (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs for this Parliament, I am pleased that the Spanish Presidency attaches importance to the fulfilment of the structural reforms provided for by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular, with regard to the European External Action Service, to the Citizens' Initiative, and to the European Union's adherence to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, for which my committee has already appointed a rapporteur, the Spaniard, Mr Jáuregui Atondo, whom you already know.

However, in an interview published in the Spanish newspaper, *El País*, last Sunday, you expressed the wish, Mr Zapatero, that the law on religious freedom might result in Spain taking steps towards normalisation within all its public institutions.

Thus, I would like, in this respect, to suggest that we reflect very briefly on the fact that Europe's structures are a means of achieving an objective, and the European Union's objective is confirmed in Article 2 of the Treaty of Lisbon: the promotion of dignity, equality, freedom and solidarity. I must therefore voice some concern about the direction in which this debate on values is heading.

Cultural unity comes before economic unity. Europe's spirit is stronger than the public – excuse me, judicial – structure. Europe's spirit is rooted in the instinct for truth and beauty belonging to ancient Greece, in the cult of justice belonging to Rome, and on the basis of this extraordinarily great heritage it is Christianity that has added the value of human beings, always as equals from conception to natural death.

Today, it is in the name of the Cross of Christ that we ask to go to Haiti, to be present in Haiti, because all human beings, and the poorest in particular, are at the heart of this.

And so I ask you: what does 'normalisation' mean with regard to religious freedom? Does it mean perhaps preventing all citizens from publicly expressing their religion? Does it mean forgetting the roots, including the Christian roots, of our countries?

Kader Arif (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, Mr Zapatero, Mr Buzek, ladies and gentlemen, in this period of crisis, trade policy occupies an ever more important place in public debate, as Europeans are increasingly finding that the trade strategy introduced at Union level has a direct impact on growth and employment.

Against a background of increased international competition, the race for reduced costs has led to too many job losses or relocations. In the face of this situation, our group considers that trade must be a tool to serve objectives such as job creation, the reduction of inequalities and sustainable development. During his hearing, the Commissioner for Trade, Mr De Gucht, appeared to agree that trade could not be an end in itself.

I should therefore like to know if, in the course of your Presidency, you will support a reform of European trade policy to ensure that it creates more jobs and is linked more closely to a true industrial policy. Will you also take action to support fair trade at world level, fair trade that is capable of promoting development, decent work and respect for human rights? In other words, will you introduce binding social and environmental standards into our agreements?

Luis de Grandes Pascual (PPE). – (ES) Mr Zapatero, for a Spaniard, such as I am, it is an honour to greet you here, as you take your turn as the President of the European Union. This is a period of many expectations and challenges and, of course, we must not fail to live up to those expectations. It is important that our citizens see that our updated institutions are capable of providing solutions to real problems.

You know that we agree with the programme you have put forward. You know that, for the Spanish *Partido Popular*, this is a question of state and that we will be behind you in everything that we regard as being in the common interests of Europe and that is important to Spain. It is an ambitious programme and, hopefully, a programme full of content.

I hope that in this album of the Spanish Presidency – since it will surely be colourful and varied – people can see every event as a milestone in the very real problems that affect them.

The crisis is hitting economies and unemployment seems like the fifth horse of the Apocalypse. You have had the honesty to recognise that there is 20% unemployment in Spain, but that does not curtail you. I believe that it obliges us all to come up with a solution to a problem that we must solve together. It is a real problem.

The time available does not allow me to say too much, Prime Minister. However, I do want to tell you that Spain faces many challenges ahead, that I am certain of Spain's capability as a nation and that I want to believe and am sure that you will rise to the challenge. At this time in Europe, we must not fail to live up to these expectations

On the other hand, the globalised world – and you have referred to it with intelligence – means that new centres of power are emerging and it is necessary for the European Union to take a more active and coherent role in defence of its values and interests. Otherwise, we run the risk of becoming irrelevant.

Finally, Prime Minister, we Spanish will not accept being denied the ability to make proposals. We have that right. We must also have the humility to accept the advice that Don Quixote gave to Sancho Panza when he recommended humility in his fantasy about governing the Isle of Barataria.

(The President cut off the speaker)

Glenis Willmott (S&D). – Mr President, I welcome the Prime Minister's very positive and ambitious programme for the Spanish Presidency. His emphasis on jobs and growth is vital to us all as we come out of the financial downturn, and I very much look forward to working with a fellow socialist government.

The next six months are crucial for the EU's economic and environmental future, and we look forward to the February Council for ambitious leadership in reforming the financial sector.

In the wake of the failed climate change negotiations at Copenhagen, I am keen to hear how the Presidency will work with the Commission to put forward a common EU target for emissions reductions for the 31 January target. It has already been mentioned, but I urge, finally, that, during your Presidency, Prime Minister, you will take the opportunity to resolve the issue of land grab and other issues which cause such distress and heartache to tens of thousands of law-abiding property owners across southern Spain. We really do need action now.

Mr Zapatero, it is good to see you here, and I wish you a very successful term in office.

Tunne Kelam (PPE). – Mr President, the Spanish Presidency will be judged on the basis of its institutional implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. Prime Minister, I wish you every success.

To stimulate economic recovery and the creation of new jobs, your challenge is to bring about the completion of the EU's internal market, including opening up services markets in areas that are still treated as exceptions. Until this has been achieved, the success of any EU strategy will have a limited effect.

I support your commitment to the creation of a common energy market, interconnecting energy grids all around Europe. I wish you would use to this end Parliament's position on external energy security and solidarity that was adopted back in 2007 and is awaiting implementation.

Agenda 2020 means introducing information and communication technologies into everyday practice, making use of the best practices of Member States that have already made progress in this field. I hope that your Presidency can decide about starting a central agency for administration of IT systems that Europe clearly needs. What we also urgently need is to work out a reliable European cyber defence security strategy.

I hope that the EU will play a more active role in stabilising the situation in the South Caucasus, too, within the framework of the new Eastern Partnership strategy.

Last but not least, I suggest that you remain committed to the EU's common position on Cuba until real changes there can be confirmed. Sadly, the refusal of the regime to allow our socialist colleague to enter Cuba because he wanted to contact the opposition is not a sign of real change.

Catherine Trautmann (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, Mr Barroso, Mr Zapatero, thank you first of all, Mr Zapatero, for reintroducing ambition, political perspective and also energy, at a time when the European Union has to bounce back from the crisis and in the wake of the failure in Copenhagen.

I expect the Commission and the Presidency to enable us to put the creation of more and higher quality jobs, the fight against social exclusion, and sustainable development at the heart of the 2020 strategy. This is true in particular for the agriculture budget, and also for the fisheries budget. You have committed yourself to this.

Mr Zapatero, we are counting on you to provide the resources for this policy, to associate the decontamination of soil with food security, to create the conditions for green jobs and for the preservation of fisheries resources, to ensure food security and to create fairer trading conditions for the countries of the South.

We need an ambitious agriculture budget, and I would also ask you to link the fisheries budget with this budget. On these points, our jobs, but also our policy, will be judged on the basis of the results achieved.

Jan Olbrycht (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Mr Zapatero, among the matters which were presented today by the Prime Minister in a somewhat general and broad fashion, there are many matters which require elaboration and the presentation of specific proposals.

These matters will fall into two categories – those which, objectively speaking, the Spanish Presidency will have to deal with, and those it will want to deal with because it will be trying to achieve its objectives. Among those which must be acted upon are questions of the relations between European institutions, and here, I would like to draw Mr Zapatero's attention to the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon which, in the protocol on subsidiarity, talk about the necessity of defining the roles of regional and local authorities within Member States, too. Spain's experience, if we are talking about regionalisation, suggests that perhaps it is the Spanish Presidency which will try to clarify the wording on the roles of regional and local authorities. This is particularly significant when Mr Zapatero talks about how one of his objectives is the matter of developing innovativeness and education, which, as we know, is, in large measure, achieved with European funds at regional and local level.

The European Parliament awaits with great interest the elaboration of certain matters, the resolution of institutional matters and proposals concerning the future of the cohesion policy, which, as we know, will be forthcoming first in Saragossa, and then at the Week of Innovative Regions in Europe. We are waiting with great interest for decisions and specific proposals.

Anni Podimata (S&D). – (EL) Mr President, Prime Minister, the fact that Spain is taking over the Presidency of the European Union at this difficult juncture is a huge challenge and a huge opportunity for those of us who maintain that the European recipe to date for dealing with the crisis has been unilateral and has not done enough to limit the impact on the real economy and employment, for those of us who maintain that the recovery strategy should also have been a strategy to change the development model, thereby safeguarding the economic, social and environmental welfare of the citizens of Europe. The Spanish Presidency is a huge challenge for those of us who believe that European economic governance is needed, alongside democratisation of the economic policy instruments that will safeguard financial prudence and the required solidarity, where deemed necessary, in order to protect the interests of European citizens.

Edite Estrela (S&D). – (ES) I am pleased to have the opportunity to say that José Luis Zapatero has not failed to surprise European women with highly innovative and progressive measures. He has, of course, done so by forming a truly equal government and through the brave manner in which he has brought the matters of gender equality and mutual respect to the national and European agendas.

Prime Minister, I warmly congratulate you on your ambitious programme of action against gender violence, which is a social scourge. The creation of a European watchdog on gender violence is an avant-garde proposal which the women of Europe support and applaud.

Prime Minister, on behalf of the Portuguese socialists, I wish you luck. You can count on our solidarity. Women for Zapatero!

Ramón Jáuregui Atondo (S&D). – (ES) I would like to tell you most sincerely, Prime Minister, that you have given a magnificent presentation of what form the Spanish Presidency will take. I think it was an exceptional speech.

I wanted to ask you about Latin America, Prime Minister. I think it is very important for Europe and, of course, Europe is also important to Latin America. There are many human links, many business interests and many emerging nations in Latin America, such as Argentina, Brazil or Mexico, which form part of that new world governance, and which must form an alliance with Europe.

I wish to ask you, Mr President, what are the plans of the European Union and your Presidency with regard to Latin America, what is expected from the summit with Latin America and what plans does the European Union and your Presidency have with Latin America?

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE). – (ES) As I only have a minute to speak, I will concentrate on citizens' rights.

The Spanish Presidency is an opportunity for us to put our house in order. One example is the Canary Islands and the people who live there.

Last year, I was there to take a course in Spanish. To my surprise, I discovered that, if I take a Spanish course at a school on the mainland or in the Balearic Islands, costs are reimbursed, but not if the school is in the Canary Islands, as it is not part of Europe. It is part of the European Union, but not part of Europe, with the consequence that language schools in these islands, even where the quality of the courses is excellent, are deprived of the opportunity...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Chris Davies (ALDE). – Mr President, the Prime Minister spoke in his opening remarks about the need for Europe to develop a more effective foreign policy, especially with regard to its near neighbours, amongst which we must include Israel.

Here we have a country which is in military occupation of another people's territory, which infringes human rights, which maintains the blockade of Gaza and applies collective punishment to one and a half million people, and yet we regard it as a normal trading partner. Our principles and our policies are clear: they were restated by foreign ministers just last month, but our words do not seem to be backed up by any deeds.

I think the true test of this Presidency over the next few months will be whether we start to apply some independence in our relations with Israel, and whether we start to demonstrate that our principles mean something and that we will apply them.

Kinga Gőncz (S&D). – (HU) I also wish the Spanish Presidency, which is the first Trio Presidency in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty, a lot of success. Regarding the 2020 strategy, it has been repeatedly mentioned that it would play a key role in recovering from the crisis. However, those Member States who are competent for the policies in this area have a major responsibility. Please let me draw your attention to the fact that we have Community policies and Community budgets which can work as a tool in reducing the effects of the crisis. From this point of view, it is extremely important that the negotiations on the new budget period should start at the beginning of 2011, and that the Commission should submit its budget proposal at that time, allowing us to elaborate these policies. I would like to ask the Commission to do so in time.

Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE). – (ES) Prime Minister, I hope that you, as the Prime Minister of the Spanish Government, really have the courage and the ability to put into practice and implement your very ambitious programme, especially the programme on violence against women.

I have two questions. One relates to foreign policy. You have said that Europe must bet on foreign policy but also on the defence of European interests. I wish to ask you, what are European interests? Are they the interests of large, transnational companies which want to make profits without regard to social or environmental agreements? Or are they the interests that are enshrined in European values, in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, such as human rights, democratisation, strengthening of civil society and the rights of minorities? To what interests do you refer?

Another question. You have not said a single word about the subject of migration, which is so important in Europe. We need a programme...

(The President cut off the speaker)

John Bufton (EFD). – Mr President, you started off today, Prime Minister, with a very pro-European agenda. What I would like to tell you is that this agenda is not working. The euro at this moment in time is in dire straits in certain countries. Greece is on its backside; Spain, your country, is in dire straits as well. You have got a country of your own making with unemployment for 18- to 24-year olds currently running at 40%.

The Spanish people can speak for themselves. In your role now for the next six months, you are also speaking on behalf of people from my country. Initially you mentioned further integration. I ask you, before you bring more integration in, that you go back to the people of my country, the United Kingdom, and give them the choice of a referendum.

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – (HU) Mr President, you have mentioned the importance of change, invoking as justification the global economic crisis, which has been the gravest one in the last 80 years, causing the loss of 8 million jobs. The tools listed are worth supporting, but do not mean a real turn for the better. After drawing a lesson from the crisis, we need real economic revolution. Do you agree that the liberalised market is unable to self-regulate? Do you agree that the liberal dogmas should be reviewed? Do you agree that it is necessary to increase the regulatory role of the Community, and that government interference is indispensable in a market economy? Your response would be most welcome.

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) Mr President, I note with satisfaction that the European Parliament has more strength and vitality behind it than ever. There have been a very high number of interventions, specific questions, which would be impossible to deal with completely in my response, without prolonging this session entirely unacceptably.

Allow me to make a compromise and to refer in my intervention to certain questions which I think are most relevant and must be clarified. My compromise is that each and every one of the specific questions which have been raised by members will get a response at the final sitting that I attend at the end of the six-month period, when Spain's rotating Presidency will be assessed and judged. I therefore hope to satisfy all Members on certain specific matters, which I have taken note of.

Allow me to say a few words about the interventions of my compatriots, the Spanish MEPs. I wish to thank the Spanish *Partido Popular* for the support it has shown at this sitting, which was confirmed in the national political debate and endorsed through a motion. This is undoubtedly an extraordinarily positive factor for the job in hand, and highlights our shared European desire, the combined effort and the work that we are prepared to continue to do focused on the very difficult times we are living through as we confront the economic crisis.

I wish to refer to immigration. One of the honourable Members highlighted the question of what our immigration policy is and even said that no reference had been made to it. It is true that there was no reference to it in my speech but, in short, one has to prioritise. It has been expressly stated that I am in favour of mass immigration and that is categorically not true. What I am in favour of is respecting the human rights of all, of every single person, wherever they may come from.

(Applause)

We have a European pact on immigration, promoted and endorsed during the French Presidency. We must abide by that pact and, of course, that pact includes border controls, cooperation and political dialogue with the countries the immigrants come from, as the best way of avoiding a massive flow of immigrants. However, I must add that integration forms part of the policy of the European immigration pact, integration in respect of the human rights of immigrants. I speak on behalf of a country which has, in the last few years, experienced very intense levels of immigration, but not in vain, as, since the year 2000, the Spanish population has increased by six million people. It has also had experience of emigration since, at the time of the dictatorship, there was economic emigration to many European countries.

We well know, through experience, what it is to have to leave your own country in search of a future or some shred of economic dignity. We know that it is difficult to swallow and we know that countries and nations are not measured purely by their political, military or economic power. Nations, along with Europe, are also measured by their treatment of and respect for human rights and for the people who come to work in our lands in search of a future which they cannot have in their own.

(Applause)

Furthermore, the European Union must be aware – as indeed it is – that by 2025, 30% of its population will be over 65 years of age. This will not occur in any other area or region of the world. We will be the area, the continent with the greatest number of people over 65, and this will result in a decline in our capacity to produce, a decline in the active population and in labour capacity, and this will put pressure on our social protection systems. In the medium term, Europe needs workers. Beyond the crisis, it will need workers, it needs to get women into the jobs market and it needs that increase in the active population in order to maintain social protection. This is a fundamental conclusion.

Secondly, subsidiarity and languages. Of course, we will be faithful in our application of the Lisbon Treaty, and I would like to point out that it was my government that promoted the use of Spanish co-official languages in the European institutions. There is no doubt, however, that at the moment, balance between the institutions is highlighted in the application of the Treaty of Lisbon. There has been some comment, which I believe to be unfair, although I must admit that it has been very isolated in nature. As the President of the rotating Presidency, I have expressed, declared and supported the institutional role of the permanent President of the Council, of course, the High Representative, and the full collaboration of the Commission, and I will continue to do so.

The new powers of the European Parliament will be set in motion by the rotating Spanish Presidency, in full collaboration with the President of the Commission, who has always demonstrated his continuous working relationship with Parliament. I refer to the work carried out by Mr Durão Barroso. I have been criticised for

giving him my support. Yes, I have supported him and I do support him, because I have seen him work in favour of a strong and united Europe, and that is very important, over and above ideological positioning.

Thirdly, the financial system, tax havens and new regulation and supervision. I did not refer to this so as not to exhaust all subjects, but I fully agree with the application of the rules on new financial supervision and regulation. As for the requirement to put an end to tax havens, the rotating Presidency will be firm and strict.

(Applause)

It will, of course, promote, encourage and demand all countries to push forward with the necessary agreements for fiscal transparency and for the provision of information in the context of the international community.

On the subject of climate change, on 11 February the Council will carry out an analysis of the Copenhagen Summit, with the help of the Commission. Of course, the European Union should continue to take steps in favour of a strategy which will bring us to a progressive agreement to promote the reduction of climate change. I am in favour of the European Union knowing how to intelligently align its own ambition, which it has laid down for 2020 or for the period 2020-2030, with the demands of other players with regard to reducing their emissions. In support of European unity and a common strategy, we must entrust this task to the European Commission. I also fully agree that the United States and China are the two lead players for whom we can see a much more active role.

Of course, I am fully convinced that the common agriculture policy should include fisheries and that the social pact which was referred to by some Members needs revision, a change to incorporate the interests, legitimate representation and the constructive position of a large proportion of those who represent workers in Europe. They represent the workers, the unions that are the expression of the European social pact which, in the last few decades, has made us the region with the greatest social welfare and the greatest prosperity since the Second World War.

(Applause)

The future of the European Union and European prosperity cannot be written down without the workers, without social rights and without social welfare policies and therefore, we must actively incorporate them.

There was a question concerning the area of foreign policy. The Middle East, Latin America in particular, and an allusion to Israel. We hope in the next six months to push forward an agreement on the Middle East. We know that peace in the Middle East is a necessary, fundamental condition for peace in other regions, where terror and conflict have spread, driven by radicalism and ideological and religious fanaticism. The European Union will fulfil its role by contributing to that peace process through a commitment to take up talks again. We know what the aims and the conditions are. We know that that dialogue must include the recognition of the Palestinian State as one of its fundamental conditions.

(Applause)

To work with Israel is to work for peace. If we do not work with Israel, in spite of the criticisms that it deserves for many of its actions, we will not be able to see peace on the horizon. To work with Palestine is to work for its right to a state, a territory, to be able to see prosperity on the horizon and to deal with all the outstanding issues. We will do this in a determined manner and, of course, with the collaboration of other major international players.

Regarding Latin America. Latin America is a young, immensely vital continent, with a great future. It has a population of 500 million people and has a great European imprint, not just a great Spanish imprint, but a great European imprint because, over there, democratic values and progressive values now exist, after a long time, and some difficulties consolidating what its stability and its consolidation as a group of nations mean. At the Latin American Summit, we wish to achieve or make progress towards trade agreements with Mercosur, with Central America and with the Andean Community. This is all in the interests of development and progress, for Latin America as much as for European economic interests, which, in my opinion should also be defended.

European interests. When reference was made, and agreed on by other Members, to Union policies on equality between men and women, I considered this to be a very good example and a policy of citizenship. Those are European interests. The European interests I uphold in foreign policy action are the interests involving the values of what Europe represents, which has its origins in the Enlightenment and in all the cultural, religious and civic traditions that have flourished and developed in Europe. To standardise is to tolerate, to standardise

is to respect European tradition, the best of European tradition, which means that this land is the land of religious, ideological, political and cultural freedom. That freedom demands tolerance and equality of treatment between all faiths and beliefs, so that democracy can be complete democracy.

(Applause)

Mr President, I basically wanted to refer to some isolated interventions, about my country, about Spain, from other countries, and particularly Mr Langen's reference, a particular reference to Spain, about our economic characteristics, which I feel obliged to answer. I must say that when I began my speech this morning, I spoke as a European country, as a pro-European country, thankful to be in the European Union, thankful to those countries who encouraged our entry into the European Union, and having experienced a great transformation and great progress in these past 25 years. So much so, that since we entered the European Union, we have reduced the difference in per capita income by 15 points, exceeding the current European average. This has been thanks to the efforts of many Spaniards, of its workers and its enterprises.

Currently, after making such significant progress, we are experiencing the economic crisis, which is affecting employment. It is true that we have a high level of unemployment, as happened during the crises of the 70s and 90s. This has been a characteristic of our country, just as when there is growth, we create more employment than other countries. However, I can assure Mr Langen, if the rate of unemployment should increase in his country tomorrow, whoever may be governing it, my response as a political leader, as Prime Minister and as a pro-European, would be one of support and solidarity, and not one of recrimination, which was your response in this House this morning.

(Applause)

It would be a response of support and solidarity. That is my way of feeling and being European, with the admiration I hold for your country, and I hope this does not happen.

In short, Mr President, we will work during this Presidency towards a European project of solidarity, of cooperation, of more economic union, of reforms and of convictions. I thank you for your references to Mr Almunia, amongst other reasons, because he was proposed by me for the responsibilities he undertakes. We also know that in the next six months, Parliament can count on the collaboration, respect and appreciation of my country and my government and that, at the end of this Presidency, I will be here, I will be held to account exhaustively and I will answer any questions that may come up with respect and solidarity.

(Applause)

President. – Thank you, Mr Zapatero, for your speech. Our cooperation, cooperation between the European Parliament and the Spanish Presidency, is very important. We work in the area of making law, which is why the governments of successive presidencies are essential for us to be able to carry out the legislative process.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I enjoyed the speech by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Spain, especially the balance between economics, social issues and the environment. I support the idea of a social pact based on the social partners because, besides it being a condition for the achievement of a major social ambition, I am convinced that it is a factor in Europe's economic performance. At a time when the Iberian peninsula holds two important presidencies (the Council of the European Union via the Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, and the European Commission via Portugal's José Manuel Barroso), I regret that the Spanish Presidency has not demonstrated its capacity to bring added political value to relations with the continent of America outside the United States and Canada. It is regrettable because the sixth European Union-Latin America/Caribbean (EU-LAC) Summit is scheduled to take place in the first half of 2010, whilst the EU-Mexico and EU-Brazil Summits are to be held in the first and second halves of 2010, respectively. I would like to take advantage of this speech to express my regret, once again, that the new President of the European Council, who was elected in mid-November and took office on 1 December 2009, has still not been to greet the Members of the European Parliament or even sent them a simple message.

Elena Băsescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I would like to point out that I was a member of the AFET delegation which prepared the priorities for the Spanish Presidency in Madrid, in October 2009. Based on my knowledge of these objectives, I have noted points in common with those of Romania.

The Spanish Presidency's main interest is the Mediterranean area, which can bring major benefits to Romania as well. Romanian companies will have the opportunity to return to markets in the Mediterranean area (in countries such as Algeria, Turkey, Syria and Egypt). The major common objective is to ensure the European Union's energy security, with Romania entering on the agenda in this area: Nabucco, the Constanța-Trieste pan-European oil pipeline and the interconnection of gas networks in neighbouring states: Romania-Hungary (Arad-Szeged), Romania-Bulgaria (Giurgiu-Ruse) Isaccea and Negru Vodă.

At the same time, I feel that the Spanish Presidency must focus particular attention on the Eastern Partnership countries. Romania has a major political objective, which is that the Republic of Moldova should be included, from the point of view of its prospective accession, in the group of Western Balkan countries. The negotiations on signing the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova started in Chișinău on 12 January 2008. Moldova is in need of financial and political support at the moment. This should be a priority for both the current Presidency and subsequent presidencies.

Dominique Baudis (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Mr President, for the next six months, you will hold the rotating Presidency of the European Union. Many challenges await you in the field of foreign policy, especially as regards the southern shore of the Mediterranean. What do you intend to do to relaunch the Union for the Mediterranean, the headquarters of which are located in Barcelona? The Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean has recently been appointed. How do you envisage your collaboration with the Union for the Mediterranean's first ever Secretary General? We need an ambitious policy for the Mediterranean that goes beyond economic partnerships to make way for real political partnerships.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) Spain is picking up the baton of the Presidency of the European Union, just as the Treaty of Lisbon has entered into force. This means that the presiding state will be able to cooperate more closely with the European Parliament in implementing its ambitious programme. I support the most important priorities provided for in Spain's agenda on the EU 2020 strategy, the safeguarding of employment and social progress, on initiatives in the areas of education and innovation and matters of energy security. As a Lithuanian MEP, to me it is very important that the presiding country should also further continue the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, adopted during the Swedish Presidency. These years are the years of Europe's struggle with poverty and social isolation. I would like to ask Spain to take the necessary measures during its Presidency for the struggle with poverty and the safeguarding of minimum social guarantees. Sweden, a country in the north of the EU, had a successful Presidency, and I wish the southern state of Spain useful work for the good of EU citizens.

Cristian Silviu Bușoi (ALDE), *in writing*. – (RO) I would like to draw the Spanish Presidency's attention to a number of matters which I regard as priorities and for which I believe that we need to find solutions in the coming months. Patients' rights in cross-border health care must be treated as a priority as all patients in Europe must enjoy equality of rights. I call on the Presidency to make efforts to unblock the situation at Council level on this dossier. I also ask the Presidency to give its support to the directive regarding informing the general public on medicinal products subject to medical prescriptions, which the Council is opposed to. Maintaining the status quo in this area is of no benefit to patients or the pharmaceutical industry. The business sector requires support so that we can emerge from the economic crisis, particularly in new Member States which have severe problems in this area. In this respect, I believe that support for SMEs is absolutely imperative. The Spanish Presidency must show strong support for the directive on combating late payment in commercial transactions, which is vital to SMEs. I wish the Spanish Presidency every success in achieving its priorities and in finding solutions to the challenges which the European Union is currently facing.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), *in writing*. – Europe's objective is a comprehensive peace agreement in the Middle East with a two-state solution at its heart. We want a secure state for Israelis and a viable democratic state for Palestinians, based on the pre-1967 borders. But we are at one minute to midnight for such a solution. The clear Council statement of December 8 needs to be driven forward with vigour and determination by you. Creating conditions for early Palestinian elections is a key to progress. Europe should make it clear that it will deal with those elected in new elections regardless of their political affiliation, on the basis of a commitment to implementing agreements accepted by the Palestinian people. European policy from now on concerning Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas must be predicated on the movement by them without delay into serious final status negotiations based on the Quartets Roadmap and the Arab Peace Initiative. We must insist that the Israeli siege of Gaza and the appalling human suffering that it is causing for the 1.5 million inhabitants should be lifted immediately and without preconditions. Unless Europe takes courageous steps now and encourages the USA to do likewise, the situation could very quickly become irretrievable.

Ioan Enciu (S&D), in writing. – (RO) The current Spanish Presidency has been entrusted with the important task of drafting an action plan for implementing the Stockholm Programme. This plan must include among its most important objectives the whole package of issues dealing with immigration and asylum, border controls and security, as well as the fight against organised crime and terrorism. In a nutshell, guaranteeing EU citizens' security.

Achieving these objectives will require, in the future, an even wider exchange of information between institutions and specialist agencies, as well as a consolidation of the EU database, therefore, the ongoing collection of citizens' personal data. However, a stable balance must be maintained between the provision of security and respect for the citizen's right to privacy. Consensus must be promoted between Member States with regard to finding a reasonable correlation between the two objectives mentioned.

Respect for fundamental human rights must be the key objective of all European policies and must be given the most attention by the three countries which are going to hold the EU Presidency during the next 18 months.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I wish the Spanish Presidency the greatest success. Spain is the first Member State to actually give life to the new institutional model that has come into force with the Treaty of Lisbon.

We hope that the priority already stated by Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero – to pull Europe out of the crisis and consolidate the resumption of economic growth – will be realised, and that we can continue to combat climate change and defend energy security. It is also important to adopt an integrated forestry policy and pursue greater efficiency in water management.

In this European Year for Combating Poverty and at this time of economic crisis, we hope that there will be consolidated policies for the most vulnerable in society. I hope that the Member States and the European institutions will cooperate so that the EU will become more prosperous and united, and will have a greater presence on the international stage.

I also hope that relations between Portugal and Spain will be strengthened through this Presidency. Everyone is aware of the interdependence and interconnectivity between our respective economies. A good example of unity of effort is the Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory, in Braga, which will allow the development of scientific research, innovation and knowledge, leading to greater competitiveness for our companies.

Carlo Fidanza (PPE), in writing. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the President-in-Office has put forward his priorities. They are all important matters, but the deafening silence regarding the fight against illegal immigration, defined as a non priority, is unmistakeable.

No reference is made to strengthening the FRONTEX programme, or to the need to make the agreements on the allocation of refugees more binding; no commitment has been made to increase our cooperation with the countries of departure of illegal migrants, or to support, within the UN, the need to establish in-situ identification centres for asylum seekers, which will verify who is really eligible for asylum.

This shortcoming is a very serious indication that we are diverging from the positions recently reaffirmed by the European Council and from the position of the Italian Government, which has always fought to put matters relating to immigration control at the top of the European agenda.

I hope that the Spanish Presidency, beyond making general appeals regarding human rights, can review its priorities and act on the immigration-related commitments made by previous Presidencies-in-Office. We will continue to put pressure on Mr Zapatero and his government until this occurs.

Livia Járóka (PPE), in writing. – (HU) I welcome the fact that the programme of the Spanish Presidency lists ensuring equal opportunities for women and men as a priority regarding the European labour market, along with agricultural development and relations with third countries. It is also welcome that the programme lays emphasis on the fight against gender-based violence and the protection of victims of such crimes, while also stressing among the general goals the role gender equality plays in the growth of the European Union. It is an extremely important development that, in the chapter on anti-discrimination, the Presidency commits to reducing the existing wage gap between men and women, promoting the gender equality roadmap 2011-2015, establishing a European Monitoring Centre on Gender Based Violence, and organising a forum assessing the result to date and future challenges of the UN's 'Beijing Platform for Action'. Although the programme does not mention its plans for the social integration of the Roma people, I truly hope the Presidency will continue the work started by its predecessors and, in light of the European Year for Combating

Poverty and Social Exclusion, will use all means to support the social and economic integration of the Roma people, the largest and most vulnerable minority in Europe. I further hope that at the summit to take place on International Roma Day in Córdoba, the Spanish Presidency will also contribute greatly to the rapid finalisation of the European Roma Strategy currently being shaped.

Ádám Kósa (PPE), in writing. – (HU) I am glad to hear about the 'Innovating Europe' programme introduced by the Spanish Presidency, because it has set the acceleration of developing a policy on tourism as a priority, including giving consideration to the viewpoints of tourists regarding the EU policies related to the industry. To this end, the Presidency is focusing on creating a European model of tourism, taking into account group tourism as well. I call your attention to the fact that the interests of persons with disabilities should also be given maximum consideration. Furthermore, in the field of transport, the Presidency proposes to support intelligent transport systems, which I fully agree with, and I take the opportunity here to repeat: the European Union should discontinue the legal practice of adopting and keeping in force as many regulations as there are means of transport. At present, people with different transport needs are not provided with the same level of transport services, in spite of all having the same passengers' rights. I suggest the Presidency take into consideration the statement made by Siim Kallas, Commissioner-designate, in which he referred to free movement as one of the most fundamental freedoms of European citizens, manifested in modern transport. The Commissioner-designate agreed with the initiative, and promised to create a uniform Code of Conduct pertaining to all sectors of transport. By doing so, he can ensure during his mandate that all European citizens have clear and transparent rights, and the Spanish Presidency could and should play an important role in this.

Krzysztof Lisek (PPE), in writing. – (PL) I am very pleased that the Neighbourhood Policy is among the priorities of the Spanish Presidency. I know how important it is to Spain to develop cooperation with the countries of the Mediterranean Basin, and the importance Spain attaches to the concept of the Union for the Mediterranean region. I understand, of course, that this concerns many countries which are neighbours of the EU and important economic partners of the Union. I was even more pleased to hear the declarations of Mr Zapatero and other representatives of the Spanish Presidency that they want to continue the efforts of their predecessors, especially the Czechs and the Swedes, to develop cooperation with the EU's eastern neighbours, in particular, the states included in the Eastern Partnership programme proposed by Poland and Sweden. In this context, I would like to appeal to the Presidency, and personally to Mr Zapatero, to take a special interest in the situation in Belarus. It is extremely important to rethink strategy towards Belarus and to monitor the country's internal politics. The EU should demand that the Belarusian authorities respect human rights and change their attitude to the institution of civil society. Mr Zapatero emphasised the importance of human rights. Unfortunately, prisoners of conscience are still being held in Belarus, and the attitude of the authorities to the democratic opposition, free media and non-governmental organisations, including ethnic minority organisations, falls far short of European standards. Democratisation and respect for basic civil rights is a factor which should be a condition for the development of cooperation between the EU and Belarus in the Eastern Partnership.

Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska (PPE), in writing. – (PL) One of the priorities of the Spanish Presidency is stimulation of the EU economy, which is to be achieved by approval and realisation of the European strategy for sustainable development by 2020. The document presented by the Commission shows that this mainly concerns promoting a knowledge-based and more environmentally friendly economy. Another idea put forward by Spain was a system of financial penalties, consisting, for example, of a reduction in subsidies from the EU budget for countries which do not achieve the objectives contained in the strategy. Spain is now going back on this idea, in response to resistance from many countries and interest groups.

I have, however, a question: why were consultations not carried out before announcing such a revolutionary idea? Does Spain not realise, bearing in mind its own experience, that poorer countries might have problems meeting such ambitious conditions, not because of a lack of will, but because they are not able? Do you not think, Mr Zapatero, that the introduction of additional penalties will cause an effect opposite to the one intended, that it will lead to the appearance of still greater disproportions in the development of particular regions, and that this will weaken the entire Union? We all want a strong Union, and a strong Union means a Union of strong parts. The policy of evening out the differences between regions is working, so let us not squander its results with drastic measures.

Iosif Matula (PPE), in writing. – (RO) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to welcome the fact that the Spanish Presidency has assumed the task of guaranteeing the European Union's energy security as a priority. With this in mind, diversification of gas supply sources is vital by completing the Nabucco Project in good time. After signing the Intergovernmental Agreement on Nabucco, the European Union must take action.

I would like to emphasise that the Spanish Presidency's priorities must also include relations with the Eastern Partnership states. In this regard, I believe it is important for us to give powerful political support to the successful completion of the negotiations which started recently between the EU and the Republic of Moldova. These negotiations must lead to the signing of an Association Agreement, marking a significant step in the implementation of European values in this European state in the EU's immediate vicinity. I think that it is vital for us to send out a positive signal to the Republic of Moldova's citizens, the majority of whom declared themselves in favour of the Coalition for European Integration at the 2009 elections.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) It seems rather strange that the Spanish Presidency is calling for us to combat the economic crisis and wants to make implementation of the economic policy objectives mandatory. Coming from a country whose unemployment rate, at almost 20%, is twice the European average, this sounds absurd. What is even worse is that it is promoting the old idea of European economic governance. Such violation of the principle of subsidiarity must be rejected in the strongest possible terms. The EU must remain a union of diversity and of nation states – it owes that to its citizens.

It also owes it to its citizens to finally do some plain talking in the negotiations with Turkey. The Spanish Presidency is shutting its eyes to reality, in other words, to the fact that Turkey is not part of Europe, either geographically or from a spiritual and cultural point of view. Ethnic and religious minorities are still being discriminated against in this Anatolian country and Ankara stubbornly refuses to recognise Cyprus, which is an EU Member State. To say here that the conflict that has been going on for decades will shortly bring 'positive results' is nothing more than a pious wish. For financial reasons alone, the EU could not cope with Turkey's accession. A mass influx of Turks and exploding parallel societies would finally finish the EU off. It is high time that we ceased our accession negotiations with Ankara at once and worked to secure a privileged partnership.

Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I welcome the fact that the Spanish Presidency is assuming in the agricultural sector priorities which are really the most important among the objectives during this period: the continuation of the debates on the future of the common agricultural policy and the adjustment of the common agricultural policy to the ever-changing realities of present-day Europe.

Furthermore, I noticed other important ideas in the Spanish Presidency's programme: guaranteeing sufficient resources for European agriculture and continuing the process of phasing out milk quotas according to the results of the Health Check. Last but not least, I welcome the discussions already under way during the first session of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council on Monday on a better functioning food supply chain in order to control price fluctuations and ensure a fairer distribution of the surplus within this chain. All these are ambitious objectives and, at the same time, of fundamental importance to Europe's citizens.

Ślawomir Witold Nitras (PPE), in writing. – (PL) Thank you, Mr Zapatero, for your inaugural speech. However, it lacked a clear reference to the problem of huge deficits. I cannot imagine that the Spanish Presidency will not take up this problem and make it a priority. Mr Zapatero, the situation not only in Greece, but also in Spain and other countries, would appear to be your most important task. Are you not afraid that, if you do not bring public finances in Spain under control, there will not be any money for the purchase of your 'electric cars'? You must be told that the cavalier policies of some European governments, including the Spanish Government, are reducing Europe's competitiveness, limiting the numbers of jobs available in Europe and putting off enlargement of the euro area with new countries, and all because of Europe's internal instability. Please face up to this challenge very seriously. You are obliged to do so.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), in writing. – (PL) The Spanish Presidency comes just as the Treaty of Lisbon is entering into force. The practices which will be developed in relations between the permanent President of the European Council and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, on the one hand, and other Community institutions and leaders of Member States, on the other, depend in large measure on the Presidency which is just beginning. I would like to appeal, here, for the new institutions to be given the maximum recognition, in accordance with the letter of the treaty and the spirit of the reform being undertaken. It is important that the European Union speak in the international arena with one voice. It is even more important, however, that its voice should not be ignored, but that it should create new trends and have a key influence when decisions are being made. To avoid a repeat of the situation at the COP 15 conference, the Presidency must take action already to create a climate which will make it possible to take decisions at the COP 16 summit which accord with the position of the European Union. The Union must also speak with unanimity about the fight against the crisis and building a new financial order.

It is the role of the Presidency to take an active interest in all kinds of intellectual reflection on changes in the European economic and social model which have resulted from conclusions drawn during the current economic crisis. For my part, however, I am counting on sympathetic support from the Presidency for work on reform of the common agricultural policy. This will soon be one of the most important political questions in the European Union.

Joanna Senyszyn (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) The plan of the Spanish Presidency includes important objectives which must be achieved, thanks to which we will be able to feel secure in a competitive and economically strong Europe. Most important among them, I think, are three matters:

1. Resolute and rapid action to slow down rising unemployment. The creation of new jobs requires much preparatory work and large financial support, including for market research and training. The year 2010 is the best time for people to raise their qualifications and even to retrain, in accordance with the needs of an economy which is coming out of a crisis.
2. The fight against domestic violence, including the proposed draft directive on EU protection for the victims of domestic violence. The scale of this phenomenon in Europe leaves no doubt that many women feel least secure in their own home. This is an absurd situation, and it also compromises the Member States of the EU, because they are not coping with this very important social problem. Politicians are very much at fault here, because they do not sufficiently oppose violence against women and often pretend that it does not exist on such a large scale. The lack of support in the European Parliament for a resolution against violence against women was compromising for the Right. Fortunately, the resolution was passed by votes from the Left.
3. Further action in the fight against discrimination, including progress on a new directive against various forms of discrimination, and severe penalties for countries which delay implementation of EU anti-discrimination legislation.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) Once again, the Spanish Presidency of the EU has come at a crucial time. Eight years ago, in the first half of 2002, Spain had to face up to the challenge of introducing the euro as a common currency. Now, the Spanish Presidency stands before an equally momentous task – implementation of the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon. The division of competences between the Member State Presidency and the President of the European Council will be of great significance. Giving priority to foreign policy which strengthens the Union's position in the world arena is worthy of support. However, will the newly appointed High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy do this? These fears result from Mrs Ashton's statements and her past, but also from her first actions since taking office. I do not suppose we need to convince anyone that the fight against the crisis and its negative economic and social consequences is still necessary. Such action is especially in the interest of Spain, which has been hit by the recession exceptionally hard. How can we return to maintaining the criteria of the Stability and Growth Pact by both large and small Member States? How should the fight against the crisis in Europe and the world be coordinated? An additional challenge resulting from the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon is the necessity to arrange cooperation within the Trio Presidency. Spain is going to have to coordinate its work with Belgium and Hungary. It is especially important to ensure a smooth transition between individual presidencies so that continuity of work is maintained. I wish the Spanish Presidency success.

Bogusław Sonik (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) Mr President, I would like to welcome the Spanish Presidency very warmly. I must admit that I have specific expectations of this Presidency. Firstly, because one of the priorities of the Spanish Presidency is energy security. I am very pleased to note this fact. This is something which should be a priority of each successive Presidency. I would like to stress that the Solidarity Action Plan is a very important element of energy security. Continuation and acceleration of work on its introduction is an absolutely crucial matter.

I agree with the principles of the Spanish Presidency related to measures for controlling climate change. I would like to draw attention to how important it is to coordinate the process of informing European Union citizens of ways in which they can fight climate change themselves. As the recent Copenhagen Summit showed, the will of politicians on its own cannot change much. In connection with this, we must involve Europeans as fully as possible and convince them that climate change is not an abstract process, but is something which, on the contrary, affects everyone individually and all of us together.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D), *in writing*. – (HU) As a representative of Hungary – and part of the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Trio Presidency – I welcome the Spanish Presidency. It is truly rare to hear a visiting prime minister have such a clear vision about the future of the EU and the programme of the Presidency like we did this morning from Mr Zapatero. I agree with the notion that without implementing an economic

union, the global competitiveness of Europe is at risk. The four priorities for the next ten years listed by Mr Zapatero in fact determine the most important strategic targets. It is in the interests of the Union as a whole, but especially of the new Member States, including Hungary, to reduce their dependence on energy. Without 'green economic growth', a digital market, establishing a common innovative capacity and the true development of European education, the Union has no potential for renewal.

I also warmly welcome the decision of the Spanish Presidency to speed up the debate on the future of the common agricultural policy. Time is pressing: first, we need to develop the CAP framework and then use it as a basis for the budget, and not the other way around. Otherwise, the beneficiaries of CAP and the whole Community itself would lose a great deal. The Hungarian Agricultural Academy is an important venue for discussing the future of CAP in Hungary; I hope the Spanish Presidency will be able to attend its 2010 event.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Spanish Presidency comes at a strategically important time for Europe. The fact that it comes just as the Treaty of Lisbon is entering into force increases its accountability for the effective application of the new treaty, which is a prerequisite for the development of its programme.

I am eagerly looking forward to the debate on the future of Cohesion Policy, and trying to make sure it includes the issue of territorial cohesion. As an MEP from one of Europe's outermost regions, my attention is focused on what the new Presidency will do with development policy for island regions.

The EU-Morocco Summit is sure to be an ideal forum for galvanising the Euro-African Atlantic Cooperation Area, particularly through cooperation between Madeira, the Azores, the Canaries and neighbouring countries. It will receive my full commitment.

Because of its geographical and historical proximity, Portugal, and its outermost regions in particular, such as Madeira, are looking forward to seeing how the Spanish Presidency intends to implement and develop a new European strategy for these regions.

Within this context, I will be closely following the actions of the Presidency as it implements the recommendations that the Commission made in *The outermost regions: an asset for Europe*, and the discussion of future financial perspectives.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) The Spanish Presidency must finalise the institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon. Defining the new comitology rules is a key element of the legislative process. There are several dossiers, including the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the Intelligent Transport Systems Directive, whose adoption depends on how quickly these rules for institutional cooperation will be drawn up. In addition, the economic crisis is having a severe impact on European citizens, who are losing their jobs and hoping that measures will be outlined for facilitating economic recovery. The EU 2020 Strategy must find solutions to meet these expectations. This is why the European Union's trio format made up of the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian presidencies must strengthen Social Europe by creating jobs and improving living conditions for European citizens. Last but not least, 2010 marks the mid-term point of the financial outlook for the 2007-2013 period. This year, Member States have a unique opportunity to review the Operational Programmes in order to maximise the absorption of European funds and implement projects which can create jobs and improve European citizens' quality of life. I urge the Spanish Presidency, along with all Member States, to make the most of the mid-term review with the aim of achieving economic recovery in the 2012-2013 period.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The priorities of the Spanish Presidency for the effective application of the reactionary 'Lisbon Treaty' and to promote the continuation of the anti-grassroots Lisbon Strategy with the EU-2020 strategy, strengthen the CDSP, and strike at democratic rights and freedoms under the Stockholm Programme are the priorities of the plutocracy. The Spanish Presidency's programme maps the haste of euro-unifying capital to promote capitalist restructurings and to continue its attack on the rights and standard of living of the working and grassroots classes unabated. This attack has as its focal point wage and pension cuts, the full dismantling of industrial relations, the general application of flexible and temporary forms of employment, the demolition of national insurance systems and farmers' incomes, with drastic cuts in the Community budget for agriculture and livestock farming and cuts in social benefits, as well as the commercialisation of health, welfare and education, by raising the spectre of 'public deficits' and the application of the Stability Pact. The way chosen by euro-unifying monopoly capital is to strengthen the imperialist policy of the EU with new political and strategic intervention mechanisms, such as the 'European External Action Service', to strengthen its militarisation with 'combat groups' and to increase their penetration with NATO.

Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) Ladies and gentlemen, Spain is going to lead the Union for the fourth time. However, it will do so for the first time under new principles, and will, for the first time, carry out its work in connection with the new institutions provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon. These circumstances give particular significance to Spain's role and increase its responsibility, in view of the fact that the financial crisis and changes in Europe coincide with the coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. After a reasonably successful Czech Presidency and the professional Swedes, the eyes of Europe are turned on the Iberian Peninsula. The priorities which have been presented, that is: work on the rights of the European citizen, economic revival and financial control, upholding justice and developing a strategy for the internal security of the states of Europe, and all this when the new treaty is coming into force with full effect, are very ambitious. Spain stands before a huge opportunity and a great challenge, because the new legislation has to be converted into specific action and adapted to the dynamically changing world situation. Leading the European Union at a time of global financial crisis is no easy matter. All the more, I wait impatiently for results, and I wish you success with the introduction of the 'new Europe project'. Thank you.

IN THE CHAIR: MR LAMBRINIDIS

Vice-President

* * *

David-Maria Sassoli (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Italian police force last night arrested five people who were planning a mafia attack on one of our colleagues, Mr Crocetta, a Member of this Parliament and a former mayor of the Sicilian town of Gela.

According to the magistrates, the attack could have taken place on any given day, starting from today, 20 January. I would remind you that the Belgian authorities have yet to provide a suitable escort for Mr Crocetta, who has been under protection in Italy for some time now, as Parliament's Presidency is aware.

I would ask the Presidency to show solidarity with our colleague on behalf of this House and of the European Parliament and to take action to ensure that Mr Crocetta receives adequate protection in his role as an MEP.

6. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

(For details of the outcome of the vote: see Minutes)

6.1. Election of the European Ombudsman (vote)

Margot Wallström, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, first of all, I want to congratulate Nikiforos Diamandouros on being elected European Ombudsman.

As was pointed out in his report from last year, the crucial work is about building citizens' trust in the EU, and we can all subscribe to that. We all have an important role to contribute to that important work, both as institutions and as individuals.

Relations between the Commission and the Ombudsman have always been very good and very constructive. I think our cooperation has become even smoother and more productive.

Through his inquiries, the European Ombudsman and his team have done a lot to help develop and reinforce a culture of service within the Commission. Very important lessons have been drawn from critical remarks made, and we also see an increase in the willingness to achieve friendly solutions. This development should continue, and I know the Commission will continue to follow closely the Ombudsman's activities and welcome his proposals.

The years to come are going to be interesting and challenging for the Ombudsman. I am, of course, thinking about the new possibilities offered by the Treaty of Lisbon. As you all know, the right to good administration is enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

I am in no doubt that the Ombudsman will enhance his contribution to strengthening democracy in Europe. The tools are transparency and service-minded institutions. We all have a responsibility to support him in that work.

So, again, congratulations on your appointment, and I wish you all the best for the very important tasks that lie ahead of all of us.

6.2. Temporary suspension of autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on imports of certain industrial products into Madeira and the Azores (A7-0001/2010, Danuta Maria Hübner) (vote)

6.3. Decision of the European Parliament on the proposal for a member of the panel for the selection of Judges and Advocates-General of the Court of Justice and the General Court (vote)

6.4. Second revision of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement (Cotonou Agreement) (A7-0086/2009, Eva Joly) (vote)

7. Explanations of vote

Oral explanations of vote

Election of the European Ombudsman

Vito Bonsignore (PPE). – *(IT)* With this vote, the European Parliament has expressed its confidence in the European Ombudsman, whose mandate will last until the end of our parliamentary term.

I must point out that this is a positive vote for all of us, for all European citizens. The European Ombudsman will deal with citizens' complaints concerning the maladministration of our institutions. The Ombudsman has responded before Parliament, he has answered questions concerning how to make his own work more transparent, how to improve cooperation between Parliament and the Ombudsman's officers, as well as communication with the public.

His role will be very important in defending European citizens, in helping them in their contacts with public administration, and perhaps also in making European citizens feel they are in a common Europe. Reducing what is, at times, an unproductive burden of bureaucracy is an objective that we must all work towards.

The European Union will be even more political if it is able to put citizens at the heart of its action. This is why I hope that the new Ombudsman will be able to apply past experiences to further improve the positive relationship with European citizens.

- Report: Eva Joly (A7-0086/2010)

Alfredo Antoniozzi (PPE). – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that our rapporteur, Mrs Joly, and all the political groups, have done an excellent job of drafting this report, which I, along with my colleagues from the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), strongly support.

In particular, I would like to express my support for the part of the report in which it is highlighted that negotiations on the revision of the Cotonou Agreement should take account, on the one hand, of the consequences of the financial crisis, and, on the other, of migration and, above all, of the need to curb illegal immigration.

This, in fact, has a very negative impact, both on the economies of the ACP countries, which, as a result of immigration, are losing the labour force and the qualified workers that are necessary for development, and on those EU countries that are the worst hit by illegal immigration, countries such as Italy, whose capacity to absorb immigrants has economic and occupational limits that cannot be exceeded if a social decline is to be avoided.

Frank Vanhecke (NI). – *(NL)* Mr President, I voted against the Joly report even though I believe we all agree on one of its central arguments, namely that we need to conduct a policy that focuses on promoting the economic development of the African countries themselves, in order to combat the brain drain and enable skilled Africans to devote themselves to the development of their own countries at long last. I understand and support this. Why, then, does the same report argue so stubbornly in favour of a policy of new emigration

from African countries and of new immigration to Europe? After all, this actually promotes the brain drain of the most skilled, dynamic and enterprising Africans. I maintain that the 'Blue Card' is disastrous for Europe and particularly harmful to Africa and the African people. The 'circular migration' that is mentioned, last but not least, is a pipe dream, as these immigrants do not return home and a new breeding ground for illegal immigration is created.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, our agenda this week, and today particularly, has been thin, meagre and truncated. We all know why. The week has been given over to backroom manoeuvring. I would say manoeuvring in smoke-filled rooms but, this being Brussels, I will say smoke-free rooms.

We have come through this nonsense of the hearings. It has produced candidates concerning whom I have to say that I have not heard of a single Member of this House who thinks we are now about to appoint the 27 best-qualified men and women in the whole of the European Union to the awesome powers concentrated in the hands of the European Commission. Not only will they be the executive, they will also have the right to initiate law – a concentration of power that is extraordinary in any context, but all the more so when we bear in mind that they are not directly answerable to the electorate. This is the most exclusive electorate in Europe – 736 MEPs get to decide who will run the continent.

You do not have to be a eurosceptic to find that objectionable. It seems to me extraordinary that this continent, which exported the idea of representative government and parliamentary democracy, which carried the seeds of democracy to far continents where they found fertile soil, should now have taken the axe to the ancestral tree here in Europe. All of us are diminished by that process.

- Report: Eva Joly (A7-0086/2009)

Syed Kamall (ECR). – Mr President, when considering EU-ACP relations, surely the first principle should be how we help take people out of poverty in many of these countries.

When I speak to entrepreneurs in these countries, they complain to me about how, even 40 years after independence for many of them, they have suffered from the problems of 40 years of socialism, where they are still dependent on primary economies and also over-dependent on aid.

The entrepreneurs in these countries also tell me how trade barriers actually harm these countries and how it makes imports of food and medicines more expensive for the very poorest citizens. They complain about EU tariff and non-tariff barriers, and I am glad that the EU-ACP goes some way to tackling some of the tariff barriers, if not the non-tariff barriers.

I am also pleased that the Commission has actually set up a unit that helps entrepreneurs in developing countries to export into the EU. We must remember the first principle is that the best way to help the poorest out of poverty is to encourage more trade and to help the entrepreneurs in poorer countries.

Philip Claeys (NI). – (NL) Mr President, paragraph 31 alone, which calls on the Commission to include the principle of circular migration and its facilitation by granting circular visas, was sufficient reason to vote against the Joly report. 'Circular migration' is a mirage. It is something that exists in official EU documents and the like but not – with a few exceptions – in the real world. What circular migration boils down to is that an immigrant is granted a limited residence permit but remains in Europe after its expiry date and goes underground. This is the reality of so-called circular migration. Circular migration is a driving force for illegal immigration; the Commission knows it and Parliament knows it too. Nevertheless, this term is used time and time again to make people believe that many immigrants return to their countries of origin further down the line. We would do well, therefore, to stop covering up reality as soon as possible.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr President, with your permission, I just want to make a point regarding time-keeping because far too often here in this House, too many people are going way over their time – and they are allowed to do so. Some take nearly double the time allotted. I would appeal to the President and Vice-Presidents to use their gavel to effect, so that time-keeping is within the rules and that those who want to come in on catch-the-eye, etc. have an opportunity to do so.

Written explanations of vote**Election of the European Ombudsman**

Alfredo Antoniozzi (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Mr President, the role of the European Ombudsman for the citizens is of vital importance for the proper functioning and the transparency of the European institutions, which represent some 27 Member States and almost 500 million citizens. I would like to focus, in this House, on the importance of the Ombudsman's role in the protection of EU languages, given the numerous complaints received in the past few years concerning linguistic discrimination, complaints which have also concerned the Italian language. I am therefore delighted by the reappointment of the European Ombudsman and, as well as wishing him well in his work, I invite him to pay due attention to linguistic protection.

Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I welcome the re-election of Nikiforos Diamandouros to the office of European Ombudsman for another term until 2014. I also support the Ombudsman in his following primary objectives: to ensure that the European Union's citizens will enjoy the benefits and resources of the Treaty of Lisbon and to achieve better cooperation with national and regional ombudsmen, thereby ensuring greater transparency of activity at European level.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), *in writing*. – I fully support the re-election Mr Nikiforos Diamandouros to the office of European Ombudsman. The European Ombudsman investigates complaints against the institutions and bodies of the European Union. The Ombudsman must be an independent, non-partisan and impartial public servant. Mr Diamandouros has proven himself to be a highly professional and efficient advocate on behalf of the citizen. He has not been fearful of being critical of any European Institution, including the European Parliament, when necessary. Now that the Charter of Fundamental rights has the same legal value as the treaties, I am confident that the charter, and especially, the right to good administration, will be at the heart of Mr Diamandouros' work as Ombudsman.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) In a Europe that wishes to be closer to citizens and more at the service of the people of Europe, it is essential that those people are able to exercise effective control over the institutions and bodies of the EU. This is precisely where the role of the European Ombudsman proves to be indispensable, as the citizens report to him any administrative irregularities, discrimination, abuse of power or absence, or the refusal to answer a specific question put to an EU institution or body.

In this regard, I welcome the election of the new European Ombudsman for the next five years, and hope that in his mandate, he will be guided by the founding values of the European Union – liberty and justice. This will ensure that European citizens have better institutions and effective control over them, making the EU stronger, fairer and more united.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The European Ombudsman acts in order to tackle cases of poor administration by Community institutions and bodies, either on his own initiative, or by following up a complaint. This means that the European Ombudsman is helping to construct a Europe of Citizens just as the Treaty of Lisbon has entered into force and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union has become legally binding. It should be noted that the right to good administration is a fundamental right for European citizens, enshrined in Article 41 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

In 2001, the European Parliament approved a resolution on the Code of Good Administrative Behaviour, which must be respected by the institutions and bodies of the European Union. I would argue that this code should become a European law, which would have legislative coherence in the EU and would be a guarantee that those very basic principles would be adhered to by its institutions when dealing with citizens. It is crucial that European citizens know their rights and how they can go about protecting them and recovering them if they are violated.

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) Mr President, in the European Parliament, we have, in fact, evaluated Mr Diamandouros' work as Ombudsman every year when we debated the annual reports he submitted, and they have always received top marks. In the course of his work during two terms of office, Mr Diamandouros has undertaken numerous initiatives to raise awareness of the office of Ombudsman, which has meant that increasing numbers of citizens have been using his help. The latest figures, which come from 2008, show 3 406 complaints in comparison with 3 211 the year before. It is worth noting the fact that the Ombudsman has not restricted himself just to examining complaints which

are formally admissible, but has also given information about the possibility of claiming rights in the case of complaints which do not, in fact, come within his remit.

In addition, Mr Diamandouros has initiated very valuable cooperation between ombudsmen of the individual Member States, which has enabled exchange of information and good practices. On his initiative, liaison officers have been appointed in the offices of national ombudsmen, and information on the implementation and application of EU law is published in the 'Ombudsman Newsletter'. Therefore, I sincerely congratulate Mr Diamandouros on his achievements and on his re-election as European Ombudsman, and am counting on fruitful cooperation during the current term of the European Parliament.

Alan Kelly (S&D), *in writing*. – Dear colleagues, I rise today in appreciation of the work of our ombudsman, Mr Nikiforos Diamandouros. He has executed his duties in line with all of the rules and he has done so with independence and integrity. He is someone who is championing the principal that EU institutions must be transparent. Let's be frank colleagues; our citizens are not as engaged in European affairs as we would like them to be. Therefore, it is necessary that our EU institutions operate as if from behind a pane of glass. This ombudsman has so far demonstrated an ability to operate with this principal so I welcome his re-appointment. Many thanks.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I am very pleased that Nikiforos Diamandouros has been re-elected as European Ombudsman. He has been a very good champion of citizens' rights, and I am pleased he will continue in this role.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) In the vote to elect the Ombudsman, I voted for Pierre-Yves Monette. He was the only one to take the trouble to introduce himself to the non-attached Members of the European Parliament and to answer their questions.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) We have, today, reached a decision on the election of the European Ombudsman. This election is extremely important for the citizens of the European Union, because the European Ombudsman deals with the protection of human rights. He examines complaints made by EU citizens about improprieties in European institutions. In this way, Europeans have a certain kind of control over every body, office, institution and agency of the Union.

Therefore, it is extremely important that our citizens be aware of their rights. They need to know that, following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, their influence on the functioning of EU institutions has increased. In addition, according to the new ombudsman, the European Ombudsman is going to work more closely with other European institutions. It is also pleasing that citizens of the new Member States are making use of the possibility to lodge a complaint, which is testified by the relatively high number of complaints recorded in previous years. This shows that the residents of the new Member States are interested in issues connected with the European Union and are not indifferent to the EU.

- Report: Danuta Maria Hübner (A7-0001/2010)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on the temporary suspension of the autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on imports of certain industrial products in the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira, as this aims to increase the competitiveness of economic operators from the Azores (manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers and retailers). This would ensure more stable employment in the Azores and thus overcome the economic disadvantages that exist due to the islands' location.

This temporary suspension of taxes, allowing local economic operators in the Azores and Madeira to import a certain amount of raw materials, parts, components and finished products duty-free, covering areas such as fishing, agriculture, industry and services, provides favourable conditions for long-term investment.

These measures will also go some way to helping small and medium-sized enterprises and local farmers, allowing them to create jobs and invest in the outermost regions. Given the current economic crisis, the need for specific measures to stimulate economic activity and stabilise jobs is paramount.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the resolution on the proposal for a Council regulation temporarily suspending autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on imports of certain industrial products into the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores on the basis of the report by my excellent Polish colleague, Mrs Hübner. The regional authorities of Madeira and the Azores, in agreement with the government of their Member State, Portugal, have requested the temporary suspension of Common Customs Tariff duties to promote the competitiveness of local economic operators and to stabilise employment

in these outermost regions of the Union. I am completely in favour of the Union supporting the special features of the outermost territories, provided that such tolerance does not feed speculation or deviate from its intended objective.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I support the Commission's proposal on the temporary suspension of the application of Common Customs Tariff duties, as I believe that the EU must demonstrate, and not just declare its solidarity with regions fighting the consequences of the economic crisis. I believe this measure is coordinated with the European Economic Recovery Plan, because the economic crisis has affected different EU Member States and EU regions in different ways, and therefore we must ensure that there are measures to meet the specific economic needs of each Member State or region.

Since these islands are dependent on tourism, and tourism is in decline, there is a growing threat of unemployment and the collapse of small and medium-sized business and this would hit the inhabitants of these far off islands particularly hard. By applying the customs exemption, the Community must also ensure that this measure ensures the basic objective – to promote local enterprise and help local farmers and small and medium-sized businesses to survive this difficult period – and that these principles are applied to other EU Member States.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The development of the outermost regions is severely hampered by factors such as the structure of society and the economy, extreme remoteness and insularity, their small size, difficult terrain and climate, and their economic dependency. This means that it is vital that the European Union continues to pay special attention to these regions, identifying problems and areas of potential, studying their differences and weaknesses, so that it can implement policies and measures that are suitable for their economic and social development. I welcome the proposal for a Council regulation, as this represents an incentive for sustainable development and the integration of the outermost regions into the world economy. The temporary suspension of the Common Customs Tariff duties will allow the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores to overcome the economic disadvantages that arise from their geographical location, and also tackle the specific effects that they are experiencing due to the economic crisis. I applaud the initiative by the regional authorities of Madeira and the Azores and their commitment in contributing to a development strategy for their regions, which also contributes to the competitiveness of the European Union, and its capacity for sustainable economic development.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on the temporary suspension of autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on imports certain industrial products into the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores. This suspension will help to strengthen the competitiveness of local economic operators and will contribute to creating and maintaining jobs in the outermost regions, acting as a counterbalance to the economic disadvantages arising from their geographical location, without affecting the consolidation of the internal market or the principle of free competition within the EU.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I believe that the temporary suspension of autonomous customs duties is essential in order to strengthen the competitiveness of economic operators in the Portuguese Autonomous Regions of Madeira and the Azores, so as to ensure more stable employment on these islands.

This suspension will allow local economic operators on Madeira and the Azores to import raw materials, parts, components and finished products duty-free, since these products are to be used locally, for processing or manufacturing.

The approval of this exception is crucial for the development of these Portuguese Autonomous Regions, both of which rely heavily on the tourism industry and are consequently highly vulnerable to the volatility of this sector. This means that their full economic development is limited by the characteristics of their local economy and their geographical position.

In the light of this, any incentive for local industry certainly provides support necessary for improving the living conditions for local people, and opens the way for the creation of jobs on the islands, which is essential for retaining people and creating conditions for development.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The temporary suspension of the Common Customs Tariff duties will allow local economic operators in the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores to import a certain quota of raw materials, parts, components and finished products duty-free. These raw materials will have to be used in farming and for industrial processing and maintenance in the autonomous regions.

This suspension will be in force until 31 December 2019, and measures are expected to be put in place to prevent this giving rise to any unfair competition. This strengthens the competitiveness of SMEs and farmers in our autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores.

This measure is tailored to the specific needs of these outermost regions, and will stimulate economic activity, thus helping to stabilise employment. The local economies of Madeira and the Azores largely depend on domestic and international tourism, which have been affected by the current economic crisis. This means that this suspension is completely justified, and it is expected to have a positive impact on the economic development of these regions.

I would like to call for swifter analysis and decision making in these kinds of processes, so that we can respond to them in a more efficient and timely manner.

I therefore voted in favour.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The regional authorities of Madeira and the Azores called for the introduction of the temporary suspension of autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on imports of certain industrial products, with the aim of strengthening and ensuring more stable productivity and employment in these outermost regions.

We agree with the content of the proposals contained in the document. However, we believe that components which fall outside the agricultural purposes stipulated in the regulation could also be considered as components for industrial purposes, particularly in the field of energy and the environment, such as parts and components for the energy industry, especially so-called ‘clean energy’ (wind power, solar power, etc.)

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The suspension of the autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on imports of certain industrial products into the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores until 2019 is very important for these outermost regions of the EU at this time of global economic crisis. It is vital for helping SMEs and local farmers, as it will strengthen the competitiveness of local economic operators and ensure more stable employment in these regions.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) The regional authorities of Madeira and the Azores have requested the temporary suspension of the Common Customs Tariff duties in order to strengthen the competitive position of the local economic operators and stabilise employment in these outermost regions of the Union. In order to ensure that the goods imported, be they raw materials parts or finished products, do not distort competition, they will be subject to controls ensuring their use by local companies on the islands for a period of at least two years before they can be sold freely to companies situated in other parts of the Union. How is that to be implemented in practice? As no plausible clarification can be given, I have abstained from the vote.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I welcome the position that the Commission has taken on the 10-year suspension of autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on imports of certain industrial products into the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores, and the report by Mrs Hübner, which together:

1. Establish positive discrimination in favour of the outermost regions of the Azores and Madeira, acknowledging that the structural limitations that affect these regions are permanent by their very nature;
2. Create conditions for stimulating economic activity and employment in the island groups, thus also contributing to demographic stability in the islands.

This is an example of the cohesion that can be achieved by a European Union built on the principle of solidarity.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The development of the outermost regions is circumscribed by their remoteness, insularity, climate and difficult geographical features, and their economic dependence on a limited number of goods and services.

The regulation that we will vote upon today will allow Madeira and the Azores to import a range of finished products for agricultural, commercial or industrial use, along with raw materials, parts and components for use in agriculture, processing or industrial maintenance, with the benefit of exemption from customs duties until the end of 2019.

Furthermore, this exemption will be extended to the whole territory of both regions, not only their duty-free zones, thus benefiting all types of local economic operators.

I recall that this matter was subject to a simplified legislative procedure so as to speed it up. The Chair of the Committee on Regional Development herself was the rapporteur for the proposal, which has allowed it to be submitted to plenary for voting without it being put to debate.

I am very happy with the final result, which incorporates the amendments that I proposed, covering a range of products to equip the Free Zone of Madeira, contained in a regulation from 2000 but having lapsed in 2008, along with additional requests presented in 2008 and 2009, which were not contained in the initial proposal by the Commission.

Motion for resolution: B7-0042/2010

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The proposal from the European Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs proposing the appointment of Ana Palacio Vallelersundi to the panel set up under Article 255 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union is, in principle, to be welcomed. However, from an institutional point of view, it is incomprehensible why a separate panel of seven people should make binding proposals to the national governments. I therefore voted against this proposal.

Evelyn Regner (S&D), *in writing*. – (DE) In today's vote on the appointment of Ana Palacio Vallelersundi to the panel set up to assess candidates' suitability to perform the duties of judge or advocate-general in the Court of Justice and the General Court, I voted against the proposal, because, in addition to the candidates' first-rate legal knowledge, I expect the person appointed by the European Parliament also to examine their social suitability and competence. In this regard, I have no confidence in Mrs Palacio, because I fear that she would not take account of the possession of social values and an understanding of human nature when assessing the judges and advocates-general. Particularly in view of the stipulation of the goals and values in the Treaty of Lisbon – the social market economy has been mentioned here – and the enshrining of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in primary law, this will be absolutely essential in the selection of judges and advocates-general in future.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) The temporary suspension of autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on imports of certain industrial products into the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores is intended to give a long-term perspective to investors and enable economic operators to reach a certain level of industrial and commercial activities. As a socialist, I believe that these measures should be retained for as long as these regions are facing major economic problems. I welcome the Commission's proposal because the adoption of this measure will bring stability to employment in the medium term and to the economic and social environment in these outermost regions of Europe which are faced with specific problems. However, I cannot but draw your attention to the risks which the temporary suspension of customs duties entails for products which have originated from such countries. This is why we must monitor closely the impact this suspension has on competition.

Róża, Gräfin von Thun Und Hohenstein (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) In accordance with Article 255 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the European Parliament is one of the institutions which proposes candidates to be members of the panel whose task it is to give an opinion on candidates' suitability to perform the duties of Judge and Advocate-General of the European Court of Justice. In view of the fact that there are only seven members of the panel and that their task is a very responsible one, it is important they be persons of impeccable reputation and high ability. As a Member of the European Parliament and thanks to the new powers given by the Treaty of Lisbon, I have an influence on the election of one of the seven people on the panel, and I am pleased with the candidature of Mrs Palacio Vallelersundi. Mrs Palacio Vallelersundi was a Member of the European Parliament for eight years, and was twice elected by fellow Members as a member of the Conference of Committee Chairs.

She was also Chair of the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market and the Committee on Justice and Home Affairs. In addition, her other professional achievements, such as holding the position of Chief Adviser to the World Bank and being Spain's first female Minister for Foreign Affairs, do not leave any doubt that she will be the right person in the right job.

- Report: Eva Joly (A7-0086/2009)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on the revision of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement because I believe that this text contains key elements to be taken into account in the negotiations that are currently under way.

The coherence of different European policies – whether in trade, development or agriculture and fishing – should be the principle foundation for our relations with this bloc of developing countries.

The new situation, represented by strategic partnership agreements, must be taken into account. These agreements, which are essentially trade agreements, create new platforms for parliamentary dialogue and are to be respected. The new challenges that we are facing, such as climate change and the economic crisis, should give rise to responses that will be included in the new Cotonou Agreement, which is expected to be finalised in March.

It is also important that the European strategy for relationships with ACP countries takes account of the closeness and contacts which the outermost regions have with these countries. The outermost regions can act as the prime intermediaries for the EU in economic partnership agreements. The outermost regions give a special dimension to external action by the EU, thus participating in the development of a genuine policy of broader neighbourhood.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by my fellow French Member, Mrs Joly, on the second revision of the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific)-EU Partnership Agreement ('Cotonou Agreement'). I share the positions of this report on the need to adapt the use of this special instrument with the ACP countries in the light of the current crises, such as climate change, soaring food and fuel prices, the financial crisis and extreme poverty in Africa. The ACP countries are partners of the European Union, and we must nurture this partnership with the aim of having allies in the major negotiations on global governance that are due to take place.

Liam Aylward (ALDE), *in writing*. – (GA) I voted in favour of the report on the Second review of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement (the Cotonou Agreement). This is a timely report and it is right and proper that the issue of the Economic Partnership Agreement be discussed on a continuous basis. The primary aims of the Cotonou Agreement are to end poverty, to support sustainable development and to help ACP countries integrate with the global economy.

The agreements and trade talks which are currently taking place, and those which will take place in the future, must move toward fulfilling and strengthening the provisions of the EU and its partners in relation to child labour.

Article 50 of the Cotonou Agreement relates to the promotion of fair working standards and to the improvement of international measures to end child labour. Issues that relate to child labour must be given top priority in EU trade agreements.

As such, I welcome the articles of the report which request that the EU and the ACP start discussions on the future of ACP-EU relations from 2020 onward and which recommend giving a larger role in this process to independent parties, i.e. organisations that are not states or governments.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – The second revision of the Cotonou Agreement is taking place in a very challenging environment when the global economy is facing crisis. I believe that the revision of the agreement will allow the major principles of cooperation between the EU and the ACP countries to be refreshed and reinforced. The situation has changed since the agreement was first signed and new challenges and problems have arisen. The negotiations on the agreement should encompass such extremely important points as the fight against climate change in developing countries, the practical use of immense renewable energy resources, the food crisis and the acquisition of arable land.

A lot of attention should be given to migration problems. In recent years, we have witnessed hundreds of young Africans drowning off the shores of the EU. Massive immigration is a result of failing economies, impoverishment of the people, human rights violations and many other causes. Those things should be addressed clearly in the revised agreement.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – I am voting in favour of the draft report on the second revision of the Cotonou Agreement, which introduces key issues about sustainable development and the gradual integration of ACP countries into the global economy. Issues such as climate change, energy security, training

and cooperation in educational matters are essential for economic and social development in the ACP countries. Global warming, which predominantly affects developing countries, may also present an opportunity for us. The renewable energy resources that these countries have at their disposal are essential for their economic and social development, and allow them to move towards a state of energy independence, thus helping to tackle the global crisis. Likewise, investment in education and training is important in combating poverty, unemployment, illegal immigration and the brain drain, contributing to development in the ACP countries and helping them to build their own economy.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), in writing. – I support this report, which asserts that the second revision of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement must be consistent with the actual global crisis and be carried out in a way that fully respects a partnership of equals. This current second revision of the agreement is a great opportunity to address the root causes of the financial, climate change, food and energy crises, and to learn from past mistakes, bringing meaningful changes to the Cotonou framework, as well as enhancing ACP unity, cohesion and solidarity. The report calls for a stronger reinforcement of the human rights clauses and sanctions. Also the report expresses our regret that parliaments (European Parliament, JPA and national parliaments of the ACP countries) were not consulted by the Member States and had no input in the decision-making process leading to the identification of the areas and articles for revision and to the establishment of the negotiating mandate. The primary objective of the Cotonou Agreement is the reduction and, eventually, the eradication of poverty in a way consistent with the objectives of sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy.

Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on the second revision of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement to defend the need for changes that will allow us to tackle the great challenges that we are currently facing, such as climate change, the financial crisis and the food crisis.

I welcome the support that Parliament has given to the ACP countries, which want to see climate change addressed as a cross-cutting issue in the second revised version of the Cotonou Agreement. However, I regret that the parliaments (the European Parliament, the Pan-African Parliament and the national parliaments of the ACP countries) have not taken the opportunity to contribute with proposals and to participate actively with Member States in the decision-making process for revising this important agreement.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I hope that the second revised version of the Cotonou Agreement will help to promote sustainable development in ACP countries, which will allow social cohesion and facilitate the fight against poverty.

The effects of the crisis, linked to climate change, are severely felt in the ACP countries, and are becoming increasingly worse. In view of this, the issue of food sovereignty is a vital one. Natural resources should be used properly and the development of renewable energy should be encouraged.

We need to guarantee that all the ACP countries will benefit from a commercial framework that is at least equivalent to the situation previously in force. I would also argue that the European Development Fund (EDF), which backs the cooperation policy for development within the scope of this agreement, should incorporate the budgetary powers of Parliament.

I therefore voted in favour.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Like the rapporteur, we also believe that the second revision of the Cotonou Agreement is a good time to make amendments.

The report sets out principles which, if implemented, would be a step towards improving the agreement, as illustrated by the defence of food sovereignty and security for ACP countries, along with the fight against tax havens.

At the same time, I would condemn certain important aspects, such as the attempt to move towards greater regionalisation in ACP-EU relations, due to the threat that this would pose to the coherence and strength of the ACP group of states.

Elsewhere, the report falls short of what is needed. The state of dependency and subordination to which the ACP countries are subject and the role that current policies on cooperation and development aid have played in establishing this state – a key issue – are not adequately addressed. The consequences that may arise from the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreements proposed by the EU within this context are not addressed either.

The reservations and objections raised by several ACP countries should have been welcomed in the report, along with their priorities regarding, for instance, the European Development Fund.

Alan Kelly (S&D), *in writing*. – Dear colleagues, it is with delight today that I address this parliament as we have moved towards a more equal role in the relationship between richer and poorer countries while strengthening human rights. The revision of this agreement must be consistent with the needs of the new world we live in and must be based on a partnership of equals. This is a new world with a new economy where fair distribution of wealth and tackling climate change are new priorities. I wish to commend the work of my own group in the European Parliament who have inserted those principles of eradication of poverty into this revision.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) This report undeniably contains some very valuable suggestions and often laudable intentions. The priority given to renewable energies, the obligation for multinationals operating in ACP countries to declare their profits and taxes, the incorporation of the concept of food sovereignty and the criticism of the externalisation by Europe of the management of migratory flows are all proposals that we support. However, we cannot ignore the fact that this report does not change anything in the Cotonou Agreement.

That agreement is a symbol of the European Union's complete adherence to the ultra-liberal logic of the WTO. We are not taken in: the 'development' referred to is a front for the self-serving motivations which have dominated this dismantling of the Lomé agreements. We denounce the implementation of the European Partnership Agreements set out in that agreement, the Commission's use of blackmail in the form of development aid to ensure their conclusion, and the resultant pillaging of the economies of the ACP countries. We are voting against this text so as not to support the European Union's abandonment of the one economic cooperation instrument that is not governed by the obsession with free and undistorted competition or its bowing to the demands of the United States at the WTO.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The recent tragedy that hit Haiti is proof that partnership agreements are not adequate for resolving problems. Therefore, this second revision of the Cotonou Agreement is an excellent opportunity to make adjustments relating to current challenges such as climate change, the steep increase in the price of food and petrol, the financial crisis, and the extreme deprivation in several ACP countries. This is the time to devise measures that will effectively solve the various problems that continue to affect the great majority of countries involved.

Aldo Patriciello (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur and the various political groups on their excellent work on this report, which I fully support.

Within the report, I would like to focus attention on the negotiations on the revision of the Cotonou Agreement. In fact, such agreements should take account of varied critical aspects, such as the effects of the financial crisis, the increase in migratory flows and, above all, in illegal immigration.

I am convinced that only an adequate assessment of economic cooperation would make it possible to control the negative impact of the crisis and its consequences, both for the economy of ACP countries, which are losing that workforce and that qualified labour that are necessary for development, and for EU countries that are the worst hit by illegal immigration.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D), *in writing*. – It is important that all aspects of the Cotonou Agreement are reviewed in the light of recent developments which are having a significant impact on ACP countries. But I would particularly like to add my voice to the concerns about regional integration, which is relevant not just to ACP countries but also to Latin American countries and particularly the Andean Community. The effect of some trade agreements (agreements which are, according to Commission officials, supposed to promote development) can be to jeopardise trade between countries in a given region and therefore run contrary to the stated development objective of promoting regional integration. The European Union must constantly re-evaluate its trade policies and the impact they have in this regard. Failure to do so, or to act appropriately, risks negative effects on long-term development.

Brian Simpson (S&D), *in writing*. – I will vote for this report but I must make the point that certain organisations supported by the Commission, given the responsibility of delivering projects under EU-ACP partnerships, have been mired in corruption and have orchestrated a campaign of discrimination and victimisation against the members of staff who brought the said corruption to light.

I refer, of course, to the organisation known as CDE, who, with Commission support, have dismissed all whistleblowers from office and have done little to put right failings in the governance and senior management of this organisation.

When the OLAF investigation into CDE found that corruption had taken place and that the Commission had failed to exercise due diligence as members of the management board of the CDE at the time the fraud was taking place, one would have expected action and certainly protection for the whistleblowers concerned. Neither has happened, to the ultimate shame of the European Commission.

Whilst I vote in favour today, I wonder whether there is an urgent need in future to examine in more detail what appears to be the inability of the EU side of these partnerships to exercise proper financial control.

Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), in writing. – (NL) The Cotonou Agreement, dating from 2000, which regulates the cooperation between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, is revised every five years. Its objectives are the eradication of poverty and the gradual integration of ACP countries into the global economy, whilst adhering to the objective of sustainable development. This revision is taking place against the background of a global financial crisis, rapid climate change, strain on food and energy prices, and a discussion on land use and the sustainability of foreign investment.

It is high time we strengthened parliamentary control of the country strategies and the European Development Fund (EDF) and strove for consistency in our trade, foreign and development policies. It is time we took a holistic approach to tackling climate change and put the maximum focus on renewable energy. It is time we combated illicit financial flow from developing countries and reformed European Investment Bank (EIB) policy in the direction of greater transparency with regard to tax havens. It is high time we recognised that land ownership and clean water are fundamental rights. It is time we admitted that fair access to natural resources really can help lift people out of poverty. The report emphasises this, and thus receives my support.

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) I abstained on Mrs Joly's report on the second revision of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement.

This report contains a large number of specific proposals on the renegotiation of this agreement – more commonly known as the Cotonou Agreement – which I support.

For example, the need to take account of the situation of the world's poorest countries, in the light of their particular characteristics with regard to climate change, democracy and human rights, brain drain, corruption, and the particular features of their economy, particularly their agricultural economy.

However, the amendments tabled by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) adopted in plenary alter the report completely. A particular example is Amendment 3, which denies populations the right to define their own agrarian policies.

Iva Zanicchi (PPE), in writing. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of the second revision of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement (the 'Cotonou Agreement'). This agreement, which regulates the political, trade and development cooperation relations between the European Union and the 77 ACP countries, and which relates to the period 2000-2020, was already revised in 2005.

In the provisions forming the subject of the second revision, it is rightly requested that ad hoc provisions relating to climate change be included, that the provisions relating to renewable energy be reviewed, that the provisions relating to rural development and food safety be enhanced, and that greater efforts be made to curb illegal financial flows and tax havens.

I am certain that this revision will be able to strengthen the partnership relations between the EU and ACP countries and to ensure greater synergy and cooperation in view of the common objectives to be achieved.

8. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

(The sitting was suspended at 13:35 and resumed at 15:10)

IN THE CHAIR: MR PITTELLA*Vice-President***9. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting: see Minutes****10. SWIFT (debate)**

President. – The next item is the debate on the Council statement on SWIFT.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Mr President, this is a Council statement on a programme which is an agreement between the European Union and the United States, as you know, for tracking the financing of terrorism and, therefore, with the aim of exchanging and passing on financial data, which I believe everyone agrees upon. This agreement has been in place for the last few months. It has worked well and gives continuity to the flow of information destined for the Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme.

This agreement formally expires on 31 January. Therefore, during the previous term of the Swedish Presidency, the Council thought about the need to sign an agreement to enable the continuation of that Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme. For this reason, on 30 November 2009, the Council adopted a Decision on the signing of that agreement, the TFTP (Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme).

It is a provisional agreement. It is therefore valid for a short period, which, in principal, expires on 31 October 2010. Therefore, the provisional agreement which, as I have said, the Council agreed last year, will in any case will become invalid, unless this European Parliament takes a prior decision, in 2010.

This is the present situation. There has been no communication between then and now on the part of the Commission about the content of that agreement, which is still not known by the European Parliament, but I can tell you now that it will be produced in the next week, on 25 January. It will be known to the European Parliament on 25 January. That agreement will arrive in this Chamber, properly translated and will be passed on in order for it to obtain the approval of the European Parliament.

This has not been done before for the following reason, given to us by the Commission: the Commission has not finished the relevant translations and, therefore, the Council has not received them from the Commission. As I have just told you, these different language versions are still being finished, and as you know, the Council can only pass that document, that agreement, to Parliament, when the different language versions are available, which the Commission has in hand. This is what will be produced on 25 January.

Furthermore, for the future and with a view to an agreement, not provisional, but definitive, the Commission intends to make recommendations in that regard for the formation of a long-term agreement, not an agreement which finishes in October of next year, such as the one we are talking about, but one for the long term. This long-term agreement must be negotiated and entered into according to new legal bases, as provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon, in which the European Parliament has full involvement. The European Parliament already has full involvement in those agreements, and that is how it will be for the forthcoming agreement, upon which the Commission has not yet made any recommendations.

To finish, I want to say that this is a matter of extreme importance. This is a procedure, a programme to combat terrorism. The Detroit incident has shown that there is present danger, that the threat persists and, therefore, the Member States must not allow that continuing flow of financial data to the TFTP to be abandoned. Judge Bruguière explained this in his *in camera* intervention filmed before this Parliament in November. He said that, in his opinion, several Member States had been able to benefit and take advantage of the information which was provided to the United States to uncover and avoid terrorist activities.

This led the Council, during the previous Swedish Presidency, to make a provisional application for a new agreement, to avoid the expiry of the current one on 31 January and, therefore, the cancellation of any possible flow of information. It was the only option that the Council had to do so and, of course, yes, Parliament's position on obtaining information is understandable. This has not been produced, as I have told you, due to the European Commission's delay in producing the relevant translations.

Manfred Weber, on behalf of the PPE Group. – (DE) Mr President, Mr López Garrido, ladies and gentlemen, this whole debate was, of course, initially coloured by the frustration and irritation that many people in the European Parliament felt because we had the impression that, once again, things were being rushed through in the Council before the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. For that reason, I am now thankful that

the Council has realised that it is good to consult Parliament, to now apply the new Treaty of Lisbon in the ratification process and also to give us the opportunity to assess whether this agreement is to be applied or not.

In this legislative process, if we now start it, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) will apply clear decision-making criteria. There are two sides to the coin. On one side, we as the PPE Group hold the clear principle that for European data – wherever this is stored – European data protection standards should apply. We hold the principle that we want a right of appeal for people who feel they have been unfairly treated in being subjected to data checks. We hold the basic principle that data should be passed on only in individual cases and only if the person is suspected of something, not simply as a general rule. These are things that we regard as important.

On the other side of the coin, there is the fact that we, of course, want cooperation with the United States. We want to cooperate with our partners in the fight against terror. We do not want a situation in which individual states – if agreements expire – are put under particular pressure, like Belgium for example, because then states might start to operate on a bilateral basis. Careful consideration is also needed here. As the PPE Group, we will give consideration to this when the legislative proposal is presented.

I would ask the Council and the Commission once again not to play for time, but to send the text now so that we can deal with it. As Parliament, we are capable of working quickly and we will be able to deal with this quickly. Then it will be up to the ministers – and just to make this very clear: the interior ministers – to convince Parliament that these methods that are now being proposed in this agreement really are necessary for the fight against terror.

We are open to this process, but the task of convincing us is still to be done by the executive, in other words the ministers.

Martin Schulz, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, this is a serious law-making process that we are beginning now with the Treaty of Lisbon.

Mr López Garrido, if you are telling us that translations or the lack of translations in such a sensitive area is causing delays that we will just have to accept, then, with the greatest respect, I have to say that that is merely an excuse intended to protect yourself and pacify us here a little. However, we cannot take that seriously. I will simply take note of it now and then overlook it.

The essence of the matter is something else entirely: the lack of involvement of the European Parliament. In the case of international agreements of such far-reaching importance, that is simply impermissible. We want Parliament to be genuinely involved from day one in the implementation of this agreement. Why is that? Mr Buzek, the President of this House, worded it very precisely in his letter, saying that the SWIFT agreement provides for far-reaching infringements of citizens' fundamental freedoms, which are constitutionally guaranteed in most Member States and are also guaranteed by the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

However, if there are to be executive measures on the basis of such an agreement that provide for infringements of citizens' fundamental freedoms, the legal protection of citizens against such infringements must be absolutely guaranteed. That means that data protection must be guaranteed in every respect, the deletion of data after a certain, reasonable period must be guaranteed and appeal facilities must be precisely set out for citizens in the event of the violation of their fundamental rights. One of the constituent elements of the principle of the rule of law is that citizens are able to protect themselves against arbitrary treatment on the part of the State.

The European Union cannot invalidate this legal tradition, which is enshrined in the systems of 27 States, by referring to unavailable translations. If we are serious about wanting to develop the rule of law at European level, we must also transfer to the European level the model of the necessity of intervention on the grounds of security but also the legitimate protection of citizens.

The Council must therefore explain to us where the added value of the SWIFT agreement is if it is now – as the Council desires – provisionally to enter into force. I am not going to talk about the data breaches from the numerous security services in the United States. Someone stuffs some explosives into their underwear and flies over the Atlantic. That is what the intensive security work carried out by the American secret services has so far achieved. That cannot be what it is dependent on, though.

I am wondering why we have to apply this fast-tracked procedure when there has been an agreement in place between the EU and the United States since 1 February on provisional legal assistance, Article 4 of

which describes precisely how bank data is to be passed on where there are justified grounds for suspicion. This means that the entry into force of the SWIFT agreement would not provide any added value in terms of protection.

Therefore, this undue haste, – or a ‘pig’s gallop’, as we would call it in German – this pressure to speed things up, is incomprehensible and so our unanimous request to the Council must be put very precisely: send us the relevant documents! We will debate this matter and conclude the parliamentary procedure with the necessary speed because we want security, but not only for the security bodies; we want security for the citizens who are supposed to be protected by these security bodies, too. I believe that is the purpose of this agreement, but in that case, we also want it to be enacted as an appropriate law.

Guy Verhofstadt, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, let us start with the good news: the Spanish Presidency has announced that the document is due to be submitted on Monday 25 January, in other words, next Monday – I have made a note. This therefore means that we now have one week to discuss it in Parliament; that is the reality.

My request, Mr President – I have already announced this, and I hope that I will have the support of the other groups – is that a decision be taken, at the Conference of Presidents, to hold both a committee meeting and a part-session to examine this interim agreement, because it would be pointless to allow it to enter into force on 1 February without Parliament having discussed it first.

There are therefore two options, Mr Zapatero: yes or no. I can tell you that obtaining a ‘yes’ will depend on a range of conditions; it is important to know that, and we must have an answer on this before 25 January. No response to the conditions laid down by Parliament has been received.

These conditions are as follows: firstly, that Parliament be kept fully informed and receive all the necessary information; secondly, that Parliament be involved in the negotiations on the definitive agreement; and, thirdly, there are the specific conditions, nine in total, set out by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs in its resolution – which has been approved by Parliament – relating to the actual content of the agreement.

Our request to you is very simple: you must not only send us the interim agreement on 25 January; you must also provide your response to Parliament’s three requests. If your response to our three requests is positive, our approval of the agreement might then be a possibility. If it is not positive, I think that the vote is likely to be negative – that is the opinion of my group, in any case.

I have to point out that a negative vote will mean that the interim agreement will not enter into force on 1 February. This is the current situation, and thus tomorrow, I will, in any case, ask the Conference of Presidents both to convene an appropriate committee on the issue and to hold a part-session to discuss this interim agreement.

Rebecca Harms, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, all of Parliament’s frustration is now raining down on the Spanish Presidency, which has only just taken up office. Accept it on behalf of the Council as a whole, but I still consider you, yourselves, to be involved in this. I am annoyed that there are no representatives of the Commission in seats 21 and 22 because, if I understand it correctly, the Commission would have had a duty to expedite this whole matter once Parliament had been asked to set the approval procedure in motion. However, the Commission is avoiding its responsibilities and has stayed away from the debate.

I do not want to repeat what my fellow Members have said, but I would like to say that I think it would be extremely dangerous for the Council to have this provisional SWIFT agreement enter into force without Parliament having first voted on what you intend to present to us. I consider the procedure – if you continue to push this through by 1 February at breakneck speed, or at a pig’s gallop, as Mr Schulz quite rightly described the whole procedure – not only to be a provocation of Parliament, but also a violation of the treaties, a violation of the Treaty of Lisbon, after it has only just entered into force, and that is irresponsible.

In matters of urgency, you have every possibility of exchanging vital information by means of bilateral legal agreements with the US and with any other country in the world with whom such agreements exist. So there is no hurry.

I would like to emphasise once again that the citizens of the EU are watching with interest to see how we respond to the highly acclaimed Treaty of Lisbon. If we do not, at this point, ensure parliamentary control, if we accept this breach of national data protection laws and contravene the Charter of Fundamental Rights,

which was so often cited in the debate about the Treaty of Lisbon, it will, I believe, be a kind of kamikaze action and completely unjustifiable. However, Mr López Garrido, you share the responsibility for this with the Commission.

I would like to ask you one more thing. I have just been informed by text message that some language versions of the SWIFT agreement have already been published. Please could you tell us which language versions have been published in the Official Journal, when this was done and why these versions have not yet been made available to Parliament.

Timothy Kirkhope, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, recent events have once again reminded us all how important it is that we share information in order to ensure the security of EU citizens. SWIFT has been a valuable tool in achieving this. Luckily, having met with US Government officials, particularly Mr David Cohen, the Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing in the US Treasury Department, recently in Washington, I was reassured by the multi-layered control systems and safeguards and independent oversight which I hope will lead to the implementation of this new agreement being beyond reproach.

Where I must express grave concern, as others have done, is in the Council's substandard consultation with Parliament, and alleged Commission delays. It is essential that Parliament and the elected representatives of this House are frequently and properly informed, and parliamentary consent must not be a retrospective tool. For the Council to treat it as such undermines the values and democratic principles that lie at the heart of this Chamber and this Parliament. I do hope that the Council, and indeed the Presidency, will take careful note of these remarks.

Rui Tavares, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (PT) Mr President, this House has been treated in an insulting and almost humiliating way throughout this whole process. To tell us that we have to wait for the language versions is unacceptable when we know that there are several versions circulating in the press, following leaks of information.

Nevertheless, we were presented with an outline of the agreement on a Friday in Brussels, when the MEPs had gone to Strasbourg. Only one MEP was present in Brussels. That MEP happened to be me.

The repeated references to the Bruguière Report, a secret report, are also unacceptable. This is hardly convincing, as anyone who has read the Bruguière Report knows that it contains almost no empirical data.

It is unacceptable to say that this is a provisional report, when the data collected over the next nine months will be in the hands of the US administration within five years, and it might be a Sarah Palin administration, rather than the Obama administration. How can a European citizen feel safe? You clearly give us no alternative but to reject this agreement, and you are not making our life any easier.

In rejecting it, however, we are doing the Commission a favour, as there are two new commissioners, Mrs Malmström and Mrs Reding, who we know will certainly be able to negotiate the best possible agreement from scratch, and we are sure that they are willing to do so.

Martin Ehrenhauser (NI). – (DE) Mr President, very many measures have been adopted under the guise of combating terrorism in recent years, including by the Council. However, very many of these measures are not reasonably proportionate to the actual threat posed by terrorism. On the contrary, they have resulted in unacceptable restrictions of citizens' rights. The systematic exchange of data, unrelated to any grounds for suspicion, provided for in the SWIFT agreement is clearly no exception to this. Even the German Federal Criminal Police Office, which is not really known as a data protection group, had to admit the disproportionate nature of this measure. We must put a stop to these permanent restrictions of citizens' rights and we must not approve the provisional agreement.

With regard to the Council's methods, I would once again like to say quite clearly that the US examined and stored the data of SWIFT users without any form of restriction at all. However, the Council did not sanction this procedure, it legalised it! I would, of course, also like to urge the Council to pass on all of the information relating to this matter to the European Parliament.

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) There was a particular intervention, I think it was Mrs Harms, referring to the possible publication of one of the language versions. Obviously, I do not have that information. I will check it out and let you know the situation in writing. What I have told you is that on 25 January, the agreement which will come into force provisionally on 1 February will be in the hands of the European Parliament. In accordance with European law, in accordance with Article 218 of the

Treaty of Lisbon and in accordance with the Vienna Convention, signed agreements can provisionally come into force. Therefore, it is valid.

For the European Union and, of course, for the Council, it is important that this agreement remains in force. It is important that these agreements on the Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme remain in force. We feel that it is a positive step, that it serves the struggle against terrorism, and that it involves collaboration with the United States, which is a trustworthy country, a partner country, a neighbour, which has the same purpose as ourselves: the fight against terrorism. This has nothing to do with the delay in receiving the language versions, it is definitely not an excuse, Mr Schulz. It is not a matter of gaining time, Mr Weber.

As you know, a few weeks ago, or months even, the Swedish Presidency, the Council, suggested sending this version in a single language to Parliament, from the Council, and the Commission realised that this was not possible, that it had to be the actual Commission which would produce the language versions and send them all on. The Council had good intentions on the part of the Swedish Presidency, but it was not possible either legally or technically. That is the reason it has arrived now. I understand that the European Parliament would have liked to have this version earlier. I agree absolutely. If I had been an MEP, I would think exactly the same and would have wanted to have these versions earlier. It did not happen that way for the reason I told you. It has nothing to do with gaining time, or hiding anything, nor is it an excuse. Absolutely not.

I think this is an agreement where the European Parliament will have the full capacity to take part, because the Lisbon Treaty has come into force and we have – I think a great majority of us – adopted that treaty, and that will give Parliament the capacity to take part in a sovereign way. Parliament will be able to, if it wishes, cut short the validity of this provisional agreement. Parliament will take part in the negotiation of the subsequent long-term agreement. The EP, together with the Council, of course, will have all the authority to influence the SWIFT Agreement which we believe is very important, which deserves to be debated in this Parliament, thoroughly, seriously and without haste or pressure, to use an expression that you, yourselves, have already used.

What is more, we are absolutely agreed, Mr Verhofstadt and other speakers, that here it is necessary to respect people's fundamental rights, the right to privacy and European legislation on data protection. Moreover, now we have another instrument to guarantee these rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which has just come into force because it is linked to the Lisbon Treaty, and that is fully in force. One of the rights that it guarantees is the right to privacy and data protection. Therefore, we have all the conditions to make a good agreement.

As for Mr Verhofstadt's proposal to send a letter or to immediately reach a Council position on the conditions established by Parliament, I believe that the best thing is that when Parliament has that document, we will be at your disposal to debate it in every sense, with all those conditions and, therefore, to come to a serious, rigorous and unpressured agreement in this respect.

Yes, of course, for the moment, we think it is vital to get this provisional agreement in force and, in any case, Parliament will have all the authority accorded it by the Treaty of Lisbon to ultimately decide whether or not the agreement should go ahead. This will depend on you. It will depend on Parliament as a whole.

President. – The debate is closed. I said earlier that it is not possible to give the floor to others. If there is a request on a point of order, I can give the floor. Please proceed.

Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE). – Mr President, I would just like to understand one thing: if only one or a few language versions are available, then I would like to know the language skills of the Members of the Commission and the Council who signed the agreement and who decided on it on 30 November – so it must be available.

President. – That was not a point of order, but we allowed it because Mrs in 't Veld was so polite in her request to take the floor. Please proceed, Minister.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) I repeat what I said. I will check the information given to me by Mrs Harms, I think it was, regarding the document. I am not sure because I do not have it with me, of course, and I will let her know what happened on this matter.

In any case, I repeat, on 25 January, you will have the agreement and we will be able to discuss it as much as you like. The Spanish Presidency, the government and the Council are at your disposal to talk for as long as you like, in depth, about this agreement whose future entry into force will depend on the European Parliament.

President. – One exception soon becomes many, and I cannot deny Mr Schulz the floor. Please proceed, Mr Schulz.

Martin Schulz (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, I apologise for taking the floor once again. It is a rare event in my life, but we are not at a fun fair here. Mr López Garrido, the agreement was published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 13 January. You are not responsible for that, but if you now say to us ‘I need first to find out which language versions are available’ then I have to say again that this is not a recreational event for the mutual enjoyment of MEPs and ministers. This is a legislative chamber in which serious work is required!

I would now like to say something to you – not to the Spanish Presidency, but to the Council – and that is that the way in which the Council has dealt with these matters shows that it has no regard for Parliament whatsoever. The time has now come for us to say to the Council that these little games are finished. There is a serious legislative procedure – in Europe, this, of course, involves all documents and all dossiers being available in all languages at the start of the procedure and does not mean that we have to go in search of the documents with a divining rod after the procedure has supposedly finished. This is not a sound procedure. I ask you now to tell us which language versions were available when the agreement was published in the Official Journal on 13 January. That is something that I am now formally requesting to know on behalf of our group.

President. – Please, ladies and gentlemen, after Mr Schulz has spoken, we will give the floor to the Minister for the final response and we will close the debate.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) We are going to inform Parliament on everything it has requested: on the language versions, on which ones are available and so on. Above all, we will do so thoroughly and seriously.

I do not believe that the Council has treated the European Parliament in a humiliating manner, nor has it in any way denied Parliament information. I am referring to the Swedish Presidency which, at the time, did what it could in order to be able to submit the agreement, but that was not legally possible because some of the language versions had still not been translated. Now that the Treaty of Lisbon has entered into force, the European Parliament will be able to discuss this matter fully, and the Council is ready to provide Parliament with all the information it requires and to establish a dialogue on the matter.

I do not believe that this constitutes treating the European Parliament badly and, therefore, I do not share the sentiments expressed by Mr Schulz on the issue. The facts will show this. A full text will be made available to the European Parliament and Parliament will be able to debate it with the Council for as long and in as much depth as it likes, and the European Parliament will have the final say on the matter.

It is as simple as that. Therefore, I believe there is no need to be concerned that the Council is withholding information on any subject whatsoever. The Council believes wholly in the need to respect the Union's fundamental rights and it believes wholly in the need to respect Parliament, which is the representative of the people of Europe.

President. – The debate is closed. I will not give the floor to anyone else on this matter.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Franz Obermayr (NI), in writing. – (DE) What is being referred to as the SWIFT agreement (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) governs the passing on of data from the global bank network. On a daily basis, 8 000 monetary institutions from 200 countries communicate with each other via the channels of the society, which is based in Belgium, with data centres in the Netherlands and the US. According to the Commission, requests for data can only relate to international transfers and use of the service is strictly limited to terrorism investigations by the secret services. However, both high-ranking politicians and criminal experts doubt that, in the US, the data would be used solely for combating terrorist activities. Data abuse, violations of civil rights and the passing on of data to third parties are all very real dangers that could result from the SWIFT agreement. As Members of the European Parliament, we absolutely must not allow the entry into force of this agreement and the associated data transfer to the US, and certainly not without the approval of the European Parliament. Provisional entry into force of the agreement pending the debate in the European Parliament in February would constitute a huge violation of the fundamental principle of democracy.

11. Outcome of the Copenhagen Summit on climate change (debate)

President. – The next item is the debate on the Council and Commission statements on the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit on climate change.

Elena Espinosa Mangana, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – (ES) Mr President, honourable Members, I stand in Parliament today in order to share with you my views on the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit and the challenges that arise from it, both for the European Union and for the rotating Presidency that Spain holds for the first half of 2010.

The European Union Environment Ministers discussed these matters at length last weekend. I should point out that we broadly agree on our desire to continue moving forward, on three issues in particular: building on the results of the summit, with a view to making them operational as soon as possible; strengthening their elements within the United Nations; and working to fulfil our goals to reduce overall emissions.

We have shared goals and strategies. As a result, our most immediate tasks will be to complete the process of formally announcing our commitment; to consolidate an action framework comparable to that of other industrialised and emerging nations; and to make use of all the tools we have available, both within the European Union and in our relationships with third countries.

The December summit – an extremely complicated conference characterised by arduous discussions on procedure – was brought to a conclusion in the so-called Copenhagen Accord. A large number of Heads of State or Government and leaders of regional groups were personally involved in producing the document that was adopted, which represents the will of countries whose emissions total more than 80% of those produced globally. Participants included all the industrialised countries, major emerging economies, and a significant number of especially vulnerable countries. This should also help us to respond to the many doubts that continue to clog up the formal process which should lead us towards legally binding solutions, within the United Nations framework and preferably in Mexico.

With regard to the content of the Accord, I think it is important to stress that we have clear support for not allowing the temperature to rise by more than two degrees centigrade. This is surely one of its strongest elements with the greatest potential for results: the commitment of all industrialised countries to establish a target for reduction that can be applied right across their economies.

Emerging nations, for their part, will take concrete, verifiable action that will allow them to make a substantial reduction in their emissions growth: financing based on solidarity and aimed at supporting immediate and medium-term action in the fight against climate change; elements intended to steer new models of governance; and mechanisms that foster technological development and a reduction in emissions caused by deforestation.

The Copenhagen Summit has shown that we are moving within a new international context, one that requires improvements if we want to provide solutions to global problems. The decision-making rules in place need to be changed so that they can adapt properly to these new times and necessities.

We do have the tools we need in order to act: a legislative package already in place at Community level; the very highest commitment to furthering a reduction in emissions, international solidarity and technological innovation and cooperation; and the correct institutional structure within the Union, which we must use intelligently, taking full advantage of its complementarity.

We will have to combine the leadership of the Environment Council when negotiating and planning climate change policies with greater capacity for external action. Furthermore, we should link the environmental task ahead with our experts' opinions on policies relating to the economy and innovation; we should also improve consistency between our climate goals and our model of development and well-being. All of this must be done without losing sight of the need – both inside and outside the European Union – to consolidate the role of public opinion and of legislators who are committed to investing in a better future and to protecting public interests.

Let us bring to bear our collective European experience. Firstly, we have to push for a proper response before 31 January. The Copenhagen Accord, by bringing together all those who have to reduce their emissions, thus enables a comparison of efforts to be made, a comparison that the European Union has demanded; yet we are still not sure how strong other countries' commitments really are. If they prove to be insufficient, we must continue working to further our collective reductions.

We will also have to bring about conditions which allow those elements that make up the accord to be applied swiftly. It is vital for the European Union and its Member States to be at the forefront of those countries that keep their promises. For this reason, we will need to carry out the transfer of funds as soon as possible, planned for the period 2010-2012.

We want to develop a financial framework that can sustain our solidarity commitments with third countries in the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund and, at the same time, foster improvements in accounting rules and our response in terms of both reductions in emissions caused by deforestation and technological cooperation. The following elements need to be added to this: our own policies, aimed at fulfilling our emissions reduction targets at both national and Community level; the boost provided by innovation and intelligent energy use; the incorporation of adaptation measures for sectoral policies; and consistent external action.

We want to work closely with the Commission and Parliament on all of this, seeking to establish the world region that stands at the forefront of the fight against climate change, that has the lowest carbon emissions, that is the best prepared to face the challenges presented by climate change and is the most efficient at transforming this into a powerful force for innovation and competitiveness.

Our policy on climate change is one of the key identifying characteristics of the European model. We have been pioneers when integrating that principle into our proposals for a fairer and more sustainable development, not only economic, but also social and environmental, knowing that we are strengthening international security in the process. This fact has enabled major players, such as China and the United States, to come together at the same negotiating table and to identify and share decisive elements for cooperation.

The European Union, a staunch defender of the United Nations' role in resolving global issues, will also have work to do in other areas, both bilateral and multilateral, formal and informal, helping everyone to correctly identify opportunities, listening to our partners, and working on consolidating sectoral responses that are consistent with what is needed to fight climate change.

We must take full advantage of the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon and the entry into force of the new institutions, systematically incorporating the main messages on the fight against climate change into our relations with third countries.

This is no small task we are facing. The government of Spain is aware of the magnitude of the challenge and wishes to show here that it is committed to making as much progress as possible on those elements that may facilitate an ambitious, binding agreement in Mexico.

We cannot waste the political opportunity that was created in Copenhagen, nor lower our expectations or those of the international community. Our credibility is at stake. We have to stand our ground. The new, greater powers of the European Parliament, which bring it even closer to the citizens, will enable closer, more fruitful cooperation.

I want to conclude my speech by congratulating everyone on that point and reminding you all that, now more than ever, we need your hard work and support over the vital six-month period that lies ahead.

Olli Rehn, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, let me thank you on behalf of the Commission for the chance to discuss the outcome of the Copenhagen conference on climate change and the follow-up to the Copenhagen Accord. My colleague, Stavros Dimas, has asked me to apologise on his behalf for not being able to be here himself because he is ill, which is particularly regrettable as this would probably have been his last plenary appearance. I volunteered to substitute for Stavros in this very important debate.

I want to express our appreciation for the active and supportive role the European Parliament played before the conference and at the conference itself. The contacts with your delegation throughout the conference proved most useful. In particular, you have played a crucial role in order to enhance our outreach with key players in other countries and other regions.

I believe we share the view that the result of Copenhagen falls badly short of our goal of an ambitious and legally binding agreement, which would be necessary to limit climate change to below 2° C. This is extremely disappointing for all of us who have fought for years and years for concrete policy decisions to reverse climate change.

The reasons for the failure were many and I will come back to them in a moment. Still, one may also conclude that the Accord is better than no outcome at all, which would have been the worst-case scenario.

On the one hand – to find something positive – the Copenhagen Accord at least recognises the need to limit climate change to below 2° C. It also invites the developed countries to list economy-wide emission targets by 31 January 2010 and calls for the developing countries to list mitigation actions by the same date. Furthermore, the Accord sets the basis for a rather substantial financial package of USD 30 billion for the coming three years and recognises the need for USD 100 billion annually by 2020.

On the other hand, the Accord has serious weaknesses. It contains no reference to mid-term or long-term mitigation targets. The reduction pledges announced so far are not sufficient to stay within the target of 2° C. There is unfortunately, in my view, little cause for optimism that we will see improved offers by 31 January – rather the opposite. Last, but certainly not least, the Accord is not legally binding and, perhaps even more worrying, it does not provide for the conclusion of a legally binding agreement this year, which was one of our key goals.

Looking ahead, the next step will be to ensure that this Accord will at least become operational and will pave the way for a new climate treaty, which must be agreed on urgently in the course of this year. As a very first step, it will be crucial to ensure that all key parties now endorse the Accord and notify their targets or actions by 31 January. Adequate financing also needs to be provided. In this respect, we need to explore ways of setting up a Copenhagen Green Climate Fund. We must also strengthen alliances with countries and regions who share our vision of a successful outcome in the international climate negotiations.

To conclude, we have huge challenges before us to ensure unity at the European level, to engage strategically with key external partners and to maintain our full commitment to multilateral climate action, but there are many lessons to be learned from COP 15. One striking lesson certainly is that we must learn to speak with one voice. In Copenhagen, China, India, the United States and other major powers each spoke with one voice, while Europe spoke with many different voices. The same goes for global economic governance and international security. We are indeed at a crossroads today. Either we take determined and united action for Europe's ecological, economic and political revival, or we risk economic stagnation and political irrelevance.

Let us take Copenhagen as an alarming warning of that scenario. We must do better than that and we can do. Only by standing united can we succeed, and I look forward to working with you to achieve this objective.

Corien Wortmann-Kool, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, first of all, may I ask you to give our regards to Commissioner Dimas and convey the thanks of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) for his efforts over recent years. Naturally, we, too, are disappointed by the results of the climate-change summit, but it is important not to forget that historic steps have indeed been taken with regard to certain elements, for example climate financing, deforestation and the two-degree target; even though this is imperfect, as you rightly pointed out. Naturally, we would have preferred something much more ambitious – see our resolution – but these are initial steps on which we must now build.

It is extremely important that we carry out an in-depth analysis of Europe's contribution to this summit, as Europe was absent at the crucial time. The summit may have been well prepared by Europe from a content and technical point of view, but politically speaking it was a disaster. Europe's political performance was simply poor. You are right in saying that Europe must speak with one voice, but that is easier said than done. We really must now make use of the opportunities offered by the new Treaty of Lisbon, too. Two new women will – we hope – soon be in the front line: Mrs Hedegaard and Mrs Ashton. They must bring in the rest of the world, paving the road to Mexico with strong climate diplomacy. Mr President, the PPE Group sees it as a given that we must retain the 30% target expressed in our November resolution, and must combine this target with not only European but also global ambition. We must revise our strategy, as it was not endorsed; a number of the key players did not endorse a global target. We must revise our strategy, but we must also retain our ambition.

Marita Ulvskog, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (SV) The Copenhagen Summit was a failure. The gap between the world's richer and poorer countries has increased, and neither the Swedish Presidency nor the Danish Prime Minister was able to prevent or avoid that. As a fellow Member said recently, Europe was absent. After this disappointment, it is important to regain the initiative. Naturally, this cannot be achieved by refusing to acknowledge that the Copenhagen conference was a failure – as Mrs Hedegaard, the candidate Commissioner for Climate Action, has done. That only increases the risk of the mistakes being repeated.

How will the Spanish Presidency and the Commission pave the way for a binding climate agreement in Mexico? Will you secure financing for the new climate initiatives in developing countries so that it is not just a repackaging of aid funding that is already intended for fighting poverty, among other things? Will you propose that our own emissions reductions are stepped up from 20 to 30 per cent? That would be regaining

the initiative. Will you eradicate the developing countries' distrust by noting the value of the Kyoto agreement as a basis for continued work on a global climate agreement?

Corinne Lepage, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Minister, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the circumstances which led to 192 Heads of State or Government going to Copenhagen have not changed, and the failure of Copenhagen clearly must not be a reason to lower our ambitions.

However, we definitely need to change our strategy – we need a new strategy. This strategy must be firm, dynamic and innovative.

First of all, it must be firm because it is essential that we not only maintain our targets but increase them, going as far as a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. We must accelerate our industrial switchover to a green economy based on energy efficiency, clean and efficient processes, renewable energies, and new syntheses between information and environmental technologies, because the battle that started in Copenhagen is also that of industry and the industrial leaders of the 21st century.

We have to have a dynamic strategy without in any way delegitimising the UN process. We must take initiatives with regard to the United States and China in order to be able to establish a potential basis for an agreement for Mexico. We must not allow the G2 we saw in operation become a reality but rather, put ourselves at the heart of this process; this will only be possible if we speak with one voice.

We must be innovative: innovative on the carbon markets by imposing an upper price limit, and innovative in terms of financing methods. Personally speaking, and without committing my group, I think the issue of a carbon tax at our borders will have to be addressed. We must then restore confidence with regard to Africa by increasing funding, but not by recycling official aid and renaming it 'carbon' funds.

The bottom line is that we have to make a considerable effort so that we can maintain our resolve to be the world leaders on climate change.

Satu Hassi, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FI) Mr President, the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit is a disappointment, for the reasons already stated. For the first time, the United Nations document mentions a two degree warming limit, but the emission limits stated by various countries at Copenhagen are the equivalent of more than a three degree rise in global warming. The last time it was three degrees warmer than now, the surface of the sea was 10 metres higher.

We have to acknowledge honestly that the EU did not show the sort of leadership it proclaims. The most important way for us to lead would have been, and still is, to aim for a more stringent emission reduction target of at least 30%. Our real target should be a reduction of 40%, if we were to heed the message of the climate scientists, as we quite rightly should. If we now stop short at a 20% reduction in emissions, it will mean that the EU has not meant anything by declaring the two degree warming limit that it has done for more than ten years now.

According to reports commissioned by a large number of governments, including the Dutch Government, a 20% reduction in emissions is a long way from the world's most ambitious target. In the light of the information we have now, a 30% reduction target will cost less than what was estimated to be the cost of cutting emissions by 20% two years ago.

Of course, at Copenhagen there were countries that wanted to torpedo the talks. If the EU had led, it would have made this difficult for them. This time, the EU made it easy for them by blocking the Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period, which is extremely important for the developing countries. It would be constructive to say that we are prepared for Kyoto's second period on certain conditions, and it would be constructive to undertake to support climate action on the part of the economically less developed countries without recycling development cooperation money under a new heading.

From this meagre outcome, we now need to move on towards a proper climate agreement. It can only be internationally legitimate if negotiated via the United Nations. We also need a new form of climate diplomacy. It is not enough that our experts know their way through the technical jungle. We need patient diplomatic efforts to overcome the stumbling blocks and also to make the UN negotiating process a more viable one, so that, for example, it adopts rules on voting.

Martin Callanan, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, I hope that I am proved to be wrong, but it looks to me increasingly unlikely that the talks begun and continued at Copenhagen will, in fact, lead to a legally binding treaty committing all of the major emitters in the world to large emission cuts.

In those circumstances, I believe it would be very foolish for those of us in the EU debating these matters to agree to even further emissions reductions. A figure of 30% has been mentioned. Mrs Hassi just mentioned 40%.

In the absence of a worldwide agreement, I think we would be crazy to agree to further reductions because what we will do is run the risk of saddling our consumers with some of the highest energy bills in the developed world, making European heavy industry and large energy consumers particularly uncompetitive in a worldwide environment.

Already we have seen a lot of industry relocating to outside the EU, simply, of course, transferring emissions from the EU to China, India and elsewhere. This is a crazy economic policy because it has no net benefit for the environment whatsoever. In fact, in some respects, it has a net deleterious effect on the environment as those goods are simply re-imported back into the EU, after all.

What we need is a comprehensive worldwide agreement. I am fully in favour of that. I hope we will work towards achieving it, but in the absence of one, we should be very wary of further unilateral cuts in Europe.

Bairbre de Brún, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (GA) Mr President, an ambitious, legally-binding treaty is needed urgently.

According to the most up-to-date scientific information, the EU must commit to a 40% reduction in emissions by 2020 and to an 80-95% reduction by 2050, and this kind of pledge cannot be made by depending on other people's actions.

Everybody must know what real reductions in emissions will be put in place and we must know that the necessary funding will be provided to developing countries to enable them to combat climate change and its consequences.

Clarity is needed. We all need clarity regarding who exactly will provide this funding, how much each developed country will provide, and how and when it will be provided. The lack of political will demonstrated in Copenhagen cannot be repeated.

And I also wish Commissioner Dimas every success.

Anna Rosbach, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (DA) Mr President, there was a lot of talk about so-called climate refugees in connection with COP 15. People have always fled from natural disasters, poor harvests, drought, floods and famine. The fact is that climate change and its direct impact on people and the environment are problems that we have no choice but to deal with. However, I cannot help asking whether we are going the right way about it. I agree that we need to be more aware of how we use resources in our daily lives and to research new technologies. We must not forget, however, that in fact, we already have ways of alleviating problems that suddenly arise. In connection with COP 15, for example, there was mention of the Cook Islands – an island group in the Pacific. The problem these islands face is that they are under threat from rising water levels. A sea wall could protect the islands, and in fact, a sea wall is a perfectly manageable investment – just not for a poor island group. While we in the West discuss wind power, electric cars, solar energy, biofuels and new ways of sorting waste in the suburbs of Europe, many islands are gradually disappearing. I would therefore ask whether the Western world should be investing billions in climate technology – the effect of which is highly questionable – while millions of people could be helped using already known, low-cost measures. Rather than quarrelling over statistics, evidence and research, now is the time we need to be dealing with the impact of climate change at a global level by means of real action.

Nick Griffin (NI). – Mr President, after Copenhagen, let us reassess the whole global warming story. At Copenhagen, we had the irony of not just 'Climategate II', but also the onset of one of the harshest winters in decades. Since then, we have seen the debunking of the Potsdam sea-level scare; the Goddard Institute has been caught fiddling the temperature records; the vanishing Himalayan glaciers have been exposed as a fantasy; Mr Pachauri has emerged as a climate change profiteer. The world is cooling. Global warming is a fraud.

This is not a victimless crime. Carbon taxes push up fuel prices, killing our old folk as we speak. The billions wasted researching this non-existent problem are billions that cannot be spent defeating real scourges such as Alzheimer's, or ending real environmental disasters such as deforestation. Carbon credit trading makes billions for City sharks at the expense of families in poverty. The loss of agricultural land to biofuels has already doubled world food prices, so millions are starving while greedy corporations make even fatter profits.

Those pushing the unscientific nonsense of man-made climate change – Shell, Monsanto, the international banks, Bilderberg one-worlders, carbon billionaires and their useful idiot allies on the left – are running the biggest fraud in human history. They must and will be called to account, as should their collaborators in places such as this.

Peter Liese (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, in Copenhagen, and following the conference, much has been said about amendments to UN regulations. I suggest that we change the regulations in this House, so that those people in marginal groups, like Mr Griffin, do not speak at the beginning but right at the end, which is their rightful place in this political spectrum, at least in the first round.

Ladies and gentlemen, of course, Copenhagen was disappointing. Many of our demands and the expectations of citizens were definitely not met. I would like to add one thing to what has already been said. We want an international agreement for emissions from aviation and maritime transport. Unfortunately, Copenhagen brought absolutely no progress on this matter. It was not even mentioned in the Copenhagen climate agreement. That is a disappointing outcome, particularly as we know that every year that we lose will, of course, result in us having to raise our efforts even further. The later we start, the bolder and stronger our efforts will need to be, and with every passing year it will, of course, become more difficult. It is like a serious illness, the earlier it is treated, the milder the treatment needs to be. That is why it is a disappointment.

Nevertheless, we should not look at it from a negative, one-sided viewpoint. This morning, I was asked whether the subject of climate change was now politically dead in the water. It is not. It must continue and that is also what the citizens expect from us. We should look for the positive things that actually happened in Copenhagen. I will take two small examples, namely the undertaking by two developing countries, the Maldives and Costa Rica, to become climate-neutral in the next ten years. The whole world – Europe and the rest of the world – can follow their lead. These are small States, but if we look at a large State like Brazil, for example, what is happening there is also remarkable.

Therefore, we should analyse our mistakes and not be so arrogant as simply to carry on as before. However, we should not go round in sackcloth and ashes, either, but join with those in the world who want to make progress in protecting the climate. The game must no longer be industrialised countries against developing countries, but those countries who have understood what it is all about against the rest of the world, where the latter group, it is to be hoped, will increasingly shrink in size.

Jo Leinen (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, Mrs Espinosa, last week I attended the Informal Environment Council meeting in Seville. It was the first Council configuration under the Spanish Presidency. You were, of course, unable to attend due to an unfortunate family matter, but your Secretary of State, Teresa Ribera, did a splendid job of representing you. Throughout the meeting, which was extremely well organised, the commitment of the Spanish Presidency to the matter was evident.

That is all well and good, but the result of this Council meeting was not very satisfactory. The Council of Ministers was divided, with a complete lack of direction. There is absolutely no agreement among Member States about what we should do now. That is not a good sign. It is your job and your responsibility to find the common denominator among the 27 Member States.

In my opinion, we need to do three things in the European Union following Copenhagen. The first is that we must regain the leading role in global climate protection. Secondly, we need to show credibility in the commitments that we have made and, thirdly, we urgently need to gain new partners before we get to Mexico.

With regard to regaining the leading role, I agree with everyone here who said that we should continue to state our promise to reduce carbon emissions by 30%. I would like to see us specify this 30% target to the UN Secretariat in Bonn on 31 January, not the old 20% target. If we make ourselves dependent on comparable efforts by others, it will take forever and Mexico will also come to nothing.

In terms of showing credibility, the EUR 7.2 billion must actually be realised before Mexico. The countries in Africa need to be able to see that the first measures are already in progress.

Finally, with regard to gaining partners, I hope that we will develop climate protection diplomacy and, with the help of the African Union in particular, that we will also find sufficient partners, including in Latin America and Asia, for a global agreement in Mexico.

Chris Davies (ALDE). – Mr President, and fellow collaborators, we need to move on from Copenhagen. The truth is we do not know the way. We are stumbling around in the dark. I think we just simply have to explore every opportunity and hope that one or more of them will take us forward.

But I am sure we have to try to maintain our ambitions and keep our leadership, and on this point there is a crucial decision coming up within the next fortnight and I want to know what the Presidency is going to do to get it right.

Forty per cent of our emissions come from the fossil fuels burnt in our power stations. That is why the development of carbon capture and storage technology is recognised as so important. That is why the Council three years ago agreed that we should try and build up to 12 demonstration projects by 2015. Now, we agreed a year ago a method of financing those projects: to use 300 million in allowances from the emissions trading scheme. It took three months for that idea to come from Parliament, to get approval by the Council to unlock the door, but 12 months later, we still have not agreed how to choose the projects or use the money. The Commission has finally put forward a draft decision. It proposes only eight CCS projects, and the timetable it recommends means that it will be impossible for them all to be built by 2015. Commissioner Rehn has got the hot seat, then; I hope someone will pass him a note between now and the end of the debate so he can explain the lack of ambition in this document.

But it must be agreed: however inadequate, we have got to move forward. It will be debated at a meeting of the Council's Climate Change Committee on 2 February, and there is opposition from some Member States who oppose the Commission having the final say over the selection of projects and the use and distribution of the money.

Now this meeting will be the first opportunity since Copenhagen for the European Union to demonstrate whether it is going forward and taking practical steps or going to slip backwards. It is a crucial test both for the Commission and the Presidency.

So my question to the Minister is: Is the Presidency going to ensure that we get agreement at that meeting, or are you going to drop the ball?

Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE). – (NL) Mr President, let us be quite clear: Copenhagen was a failure. Indeed, there were three real losers from the summit: the United Nations, the European Union and the climate. It is of the utmost importance, then, to turn these three losers into victors in 2010 on the way to Mexico. To achieve this, three things must happen. The first is that the EU must really speak with one voice, as Commissioner Rehn has already said, but – and I should appreciate a specific answer to this – who is it to be? Who will speak on Europe's behalf in Mexico?

Secondly, with regard to the United Nations, Europe must prove its leadership in the negotiations, too, which means no longer looking only to the United States and China, and instead looking mainly to the countries sharing our wish for action on the climate, such as the African Union, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa. We should be widening the group of countries with whom we wish to conclude an agreement.

Thirdly, the climate. It is true that we agreed on two degrees, but this figure also means something. The science says that two degrees means rich countries must reduce their CO₂ emissions by 40%. Therefore, the EU must now promise 30%. On 31 January, it will have another chance to prove its leadership by coming forward with 30%, and I ask that the EU offer that figure. I would appreciate your response to this proposal, as it represents the only way to show leadership and make 2010 the year of the United Nations, the European Union and the climate.

Derk Jan Eppink (ECR). – Mr President, I support the environmental goals for 2020, but I have some serious doubts about some methods. The Copenhagen conference was a good example of a bad method. And what were the lessons?

The conference was too massive to be productive: a rock concert of 50 000 people is possible; a meeting, not. Secondly, Europe was outfoxed by China and India, and the US joined in. Instead of being a decisive player, the EU was a confused spectator.

What should we do? I think we have to reassess the form we used, rather a G20 than an event of Woodstock proportions. Secondly, we have to stop displaying moral arrogance by telling China and India what to do. Important barriers to punish both countries would be disastrous. On the contrary, the EU should re-examine its own stance, which will ultimately undermine our own growth and employment.

Finally, we need serious research on the body of evidence. 'Climategate' was already a reminder, and the claim that the Himalayan glaciers are retreating now seems to be based on speculation. Some members of the IPCC now even predict global cooling.

We need objective, impartial scientific research, and not an agenda-driven political activism. What is true and what is not: at present, we simply do not know, and I think we need to have the facts right, first. Commissioner, Minister, I hope you will look at these questions with an open mind.

IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

Vice-President

Sabine Wils (GUE/NGL). – (DE) Mr President, the United Nations climate conference failed due to the hard-nosed political interests of the industrialised nations. As a result, the basis for existence of billions of people in developing countries and in the island nations at risk of being submerged is in jeopardy.

There is no agreement on how we are to effectively limit the further warming of the planet. The EU played the game in the interests of its national undertakings and the profits of the large concerns. The target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the EU Member States by a total of 30% by 2020 was not brought to the table early enough.

Making better climate protection targets dependent on the prior concessions of other States is playing dice with the future of humanity. The facts are clear: in 2007, CO₂ emissions per person were 4.6 tonnes in China, in Germany they were 9.7 tonnes and in the US 19.1 tonnes. We urgently need climate justice for the whole of humanity. Next year in Mexico City, the industrialised nations and emerging economies must come to a binding agreement with specific and ambitious targets.

Godfrey Bloom (EFD). – Mr President, you can, of course, tell that I am a sceptic because I do not dress like a scarecrow.

I fought my way through the blizzard in Copenhagen, like many of you did. It is interesting, is it not, that we have had the coldest winter so far on record in London for 30 years? It is the same in Poland, Korea and China. We have had the coldest temperatures in Florida, Arizona, Texas – the first snow in Texas, I think, for a hundred years. Of course, as Giles Coren of the *London Times* said, my goodness me, we simply do not get it – of course that is what global warming is all about: we have got to get used to freezing temperatures.

Well, we have seen the Al Gore hockey stick, which is still, I gather, being shown in London state schools – Al Gore, snake oil salesman, crook! We have seen Professor Jones from the University of East Anglia – crook! And now – you will not know about this yet because it has been kept out of the public domain – the New Zealand National Climate Database: I have the figures here – all fraudulent.

When are you all going to wake up? Scam, scam, scam!

(The speaker agreed to take a blue card question under Rule 149(8))

Chris Davies (ALDE). – Mr President, apparently all the science of climate change is nonsense, according to Mr Bloom, because we have had a cold winter.

I wonder if Mr Bloom would like to tell the House the difference between climate and weather.

Godfrey Bloom (EFD). – Climate, Mr Davies, is what we all have to put up with.

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – (HU) Minister, I have surprising news for you. The climate conference in Copenhagen is over. You talk about targets and illusions as if we were still before the event. It ended in failure. No legally binding commitments were signed. The example of Kyoto shows what voluntarism means. We are all aware of the value of the United States' undertakings, but Canada is also worth mentioning. Canada signed the Kyoto Treaty, and then increased its carbon-dioxide emissions by 26% without any consequences. Copenhagen is a clear message about the world we are living in.

The world today is determined by economic fundamentalism. Whenever the interests of society face the interests of the global economy, the latter always wins. Of course, behind the global economy there is a small power elite. In order to stop irreversible climate change, we would need to change another climate. We need to change the political and moral climate. Before doing so, as long as people serve the economy and not the other way around, until the eco-social market economy becomes the guiding principle, all similar conferences are condemned to failure.

Richard Seeber (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, if we can learn anything from Copenhagen, then it is a sense of reality. I still remember the debate we had here in this House before Copenhagen. Everyone was glowing

with optimism, but it came to nothing. It was an international conference with its own rules, and we can achieve little with good will alone. So, let us approach the next negotiations in Mexico with the necessary sense of reality.

If we were to assess Copenhagen, we have to say, to be fair, that it was not so bad, because the result can serve as a basis for the negotiations in Mexico and something, at least, was achieved. The greatest disappointment for us Europeans has to be that we – the EU – were not there when the final document was drawn up. That must give us pause for thought, because we are always emphasising the fact that we are the ones who want to take a leading role in the global fight against climate change.

Why should this be? First of all, probably because, with our 14% CO₂ emissions, we are not among the largest emitters. The US and China together account for almost half. However, in Europe, we do not speak with one voice. The last Environment Council showed very clearly how different the views are there. Many Member States view the problem very differently to the majority in this House, for example.

However, another reason is surely the fact that we Europeans are not as good as we always claim to be. If we take these clean development mechanisms, in other words, these joint implementation measures, and the other measures out of the equation and consider only our own measures for reducing CO₂ emissions, then we can see that our balance sheet is not as good as we maintain.

Thirdly, we also have to say that other countries and other regions of the world have a different approach to this problem. Our big goal is a legally binding agreement. However, China and the US are opting for a different route.

Overall, we need to consider whether we should not be more flexible in our negotiations, because working together to combat the phenomenon of climate change is important, but the methods we employ to achieve this could be quite different.

Dan Jørgensen (S&D). – (DA) Mr President, the question that I would put to the climate sceptics in this House is this: if nine out of ten doctors told you they were more than ninety percent sure that you were seriously ill, but that they had some medicine that could cure your illness – a medicine with no side effects – would you take the medicine? Of course you would. That is how the world should have reacted in Copenhagen. That is how the world should of course react when more than ninety percent of leading researchers in the field say that global warming is real and that it is man-made. The EU should therefore demonstrate leadership. Obviously, we can criticise the US. Obviously, we can criticise China for not having had the political will required in Copenhagen. In this House, however, we must look nearer home – we must be critical of the lack of initiative shown by the EU. The EU could have done two things, and it should do two things before the conference in Mexico. Firstly, we should take the lead as regards committing ourselves to reduction targets. That means moving from the 20 per cent reductions promised by 2020 to 30 per cent. Secondly, we should name the amounts we are willing to contribute to financing long-term adjustment to the climate changes that we know are coming. Finally, it is obvious that we will also have more of an impact if we speak with one voice, because we will then be able to negotiate more rationally and clearly than we were able to in Copenhagen. Mr Callanan of the European Conservatives and Reformists said: It would be crazy to raise our ambitions in the current state. No, Mr Callanan, it would be crazy not to raise our ambitions!

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No, Mr Callanan, it would be crazy not to raise our ambitions!

Lena Ek (ALDE). – (SV) The Copenhagen Summit was, without doubt, a great disappointment, but the important thing now is to look to the future. That is what we liberals are doing, and I hope that we can do so together in Europe. We need a strategy and we need a 'post-Copenhagen agenda'. An important tool for achieving this is continued investment in the emissions trading system. The EU should immediately open negotiations with the US to integrate the emerging American system with the European system. A transatlantic market for carbon emissions could be the start of a global market.

Mr Rehn gave an extremely good introductory address. He is quite right in his conclusion. The EU must speak with one voice in these negotiations. However, it must be borne in mind that under the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Parliament can now influence how these decisions are taken. Parliament has to be involved in the preparatory work, since a final agreement requires our endorsement.

Within Europe, we must, at the same time, continue to strengthen our own carbon market and stop giving away trading rights for free. We need to invest in new technology and thirdly, we need to set a price floor

for carbon dioxide. The climate targets can be reached through the mechanisms of the market, not through more bureaucracy.

If we now put the Copenhagen conference behind us, make a new start and put all our efforts into future measures, then the first thing we need to focus on is EU 2020. The measures are included there and we need to have well-honed proposals as regards energy efficiency and how we invest in new technology. We need a climate jobs strategy. Finally, I would like to say that clearly, we need a 30 per cent reduction in carbon emissions if we want to win not just the battle for the climate, but also the battle for the market.

Yannick Jadot (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, Mrs Espinosa, I have been very surprised at the self-satisfaction you show with regard to EU action in the climate field. It is true that Europe has done more and better work in the last 10 years than most of the other countries in the world, but there was clearly a failure of European leadership in Copenhagen.

In Copenhagen, we also saw Europe become simply the combination of the personal communication strategies of the European Heads of State or Government, and I should like to specifically mention Mr Sarkozy, Mrs Merkel and Mr Brown in this connection. Under these circumstances, it is clearly easy to knock the UN process. It is true that the UN system is complicated, and that a G20, where the agreements are meaningless but there are opportunities for major publicity stunts, is much simpler.

This means that this coming year, Europe must do more and better work. We currently have a 20% target. However, 20% actually means doing less in the next 10 years than we have done in the past 10 years; it means reducing Europe's climate effort. This is not only absurd for the climate, when the scientists are telling us that we have to reach a 40% target, but it is also absurd for our economy and jobs.

Therefore, Mrs Espinosa, please do not reduce Europe's climate ambition to the lowest common denominator, to the objectives voiced by President Barroso, who does not want to budge from the 20% figure, or to those voiced by Italy and Poland, which will soon deny the existence of climate change. Reread Parliament's resolution and immediately opt for an unconditional 30%.

Konrad Szymański (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, we have to accept the fact that no one, with the exception of several European states, wants to pay for restrictions on CO₂ emissions, or to cut back on their energy use. It is even worse than this. Some developing countries, using irritating anti-colonial rhetoric, want to get rich on this, while at the same time being the biggest emitters of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. African countries, China and India want to keep their exemptions not to submit to the international system of monitoring emissions and, at the same time, receive billions of euros for clean technologies. This is a position we cannot justify to our taxpayers. After the Copenhagen conference, we must get it into our heads that Europe cannot bear these costs on its own. Firstly, because acting on our own, we will slow down the growth of our economy even more, and strike at the prosperity of our citizens. Secondly, by acting on our own, we will not change anything connected with emissions, because we have already managed to limit our own emissions.

Elie Hoarau (GUE/NGL). – (FR) Mr President, Minister, ladies and gentlemen, although Copenhagen was a failure, the mobilisation of non-governmental actors was exceptional and revealed that there is true international support for climate justice.

From now on, it will be a given that the continuing negotiation process will have to take into account, as a matter of priority, the interests of the small vulnerable island states and of Africa. It will also be crucial to ensure that the USD 100 billion announced in Copenhagen is indeed in addition to the commitments made in the area of official development assistance.

Finally, we must bear in mind the fact that we have very little time in which to act before the consequences of climate change become irreversible. The year 2010 represents our last chance if we want to ensure real success in Mexico City.

Oreste Rossi (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, do not say that we did not warn you about this. The resolution on COP 15 passed by this Parliament was all smoke and no fire.

We asked for too much and we have achieved nothing. Those are not the words of the *Lega Nord* but of Ivo de Boer, secretary of the UN climate change conference. It has not really been a disaster, even if the agreement is merely a letter of intent. The text which prevented COP 15 from drawing a complete blank, agreed at the end of a marathon of negotiations of a truly unprecedented duration and intensity, contains very little substance.

The Copenhagen Accord, agreed by US President Obama, Brazilian President Lula, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Indian Prime Minister Singh and South African President Zuma, and imposed on all the remaining countries, has not even been formally adopted. Following its rejection by eight countries, which prevented its adoption, the Accord was merely taken note of by the plenary of the 192 participating states.

Ladies and gentlemen, the global warming story is a waste of time. Since December, newspapers and television news programmes have been reporting that Europe is in the grip of freezing cold weather. Let us avoid useless and costly speculation about the climate.

Angelika Werthmann (NI). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the only concrete result of the climate summit in Copenhagen was the limiting of global warming to two degrees Celsius. The measures needed for this, however, have remained a mystery. This minimal compromise is disappointing for us, particularly since it is now up to each individual State to decide whether or not to accept the agreement on climate protection goals. Time really is running out. It is up to us to now decide what happens next. We should promote sustainable, climate-protecting development, which allows us to use the resources of our planet in a responsible way, for us and for future generations. The EU and its Member States should develop their world-leading role in green technologies. Then we will at least have made a start.

Rachida Dati (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Minister, Commissioner, nobody could have failed to notice that Copenhagen was a wasted opportunity. However – and, yes, I am echoing your words here, Commissioner – this summit still had two virtues. The first was that it mobilised many more Heads of State or Government than the Kyoto Summit did. The second is that it enabled emerging countries to benefit from financial commitments aimed specifically at helping them to combat global warming.

So what should Europe do now? Of course, it should continue its excellent work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, because the truth is that Europe has already been extremely virtuous. With regard to the Kyoto target, which was an 8% reduction, European companies have achieved a reduction of just under 13%. The latter have therefore shown themselves to be extremely virtuous and very committed to the protection of the environment. However, this fight and this virtuous attitude absolutely must not be situated in a context of unfair competition. As I told you at the hearings, Mr Rehn, all this can be situated only in a context of completely fair competition. Indeed, we must consider implementing a carbon tax at the borders of the European Union, because we cannot abandon our businesses and thus our jobs to completely unfair competition, to the advantage of countries that show no respect for, or do not apply the same standards regarding, environmental protection and greenhouse gas reduction. I therefore think it is absolutely essential – and I echo my fellow Member Mrs Lepage here – that, at some time in the future, we give thought to implementing a carbon tax at the borders of the European Union.

Secondly, I was rather delighted to learn at the hearings that Commissioner Tajani has not ruled out the undertaking of an impact study on the possibility of imposing this carbon tax at the borders of the European Union. Therefore, little by little, I think that we are going to win this battle, because it is important to protect our European companies and jobs.

Anni Podimata (S&D). – (EL) Mr President, Mrs Espinosa, we would certainly have preferred today's debate to be held under different circumstances, where we would be called upon to evaluate a global, legally binding agreement and to decide, as the European Union, on what to do next. Unfortunately, the results from Copenhagen were well below par in the circumstances. That is the first main reason we are expressing our disappointment.

The second reason we are expressing our disappointment and which particularly concerns us as the European Parliament is the poor figure cut by the European Union at the Copenhagen Summit. While one would have expected that, at the first global summit following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union would have spearheaded an effort to achieve a new, ambitious, substantial, global agreement on combating climate change, we and the European citizens witnessed a show of fragmentation, with some European leaders playing their own game and the European Union playing the role of sidekick and spectator. This is not the role we would wish for or the role which befits us.

So what needs to be done? We call on the European Commission and the Council to show that it is up to the job and to safeguard a leading role for Europe in this new endeavour. May I remind you that it is not merely a question of restricting the repercussions of climate change. It is a much broader challenge; the challenge of changing to a new development model, a green development model which will be Europe's answer to the need to create new jobs, to support the competitiveness of the European economy and to consolidate the leading role of the European Union in the new order.

Fiona Hall (ALDE). – The outcome of Copenhagen was deeply disappointing, but we must now move forward. The EU needs to commit itself now to a 30% cut in emissions for three reasons.

The first is simply that a 30% cut requires barely more effort now than the original 20% cut, simply because of the fall in economic activity due to the recession.

Secondly, to rein back now would be to lose the momentum which has been built up in the new green industries. We cannot 'half-commit' to investment in renewable energy sources and low-carbon transport. There is massive infrastructure which needs to be put in place, whether it is a North Sea supergrid or, on a smaller scale, plug-in charging points for electric cars. Hundreds and thousands of new jobs are at stake, potentially 70 000 jobs relating to offshore wind in the UK alone, but these jobs, which are so necessary for economic recovery, will only be realised if there is a clear roadmap towards a zero-carbon Europe by 2050.

Investment has to have certainty, and we need to be aware that Europe is in danger of losing its place as leader on renewable technology. Both the US and China are growing their renewables industries very rapidly. If we hesitate now, those new green jobs will move to other continents.

Finally, we need that 30% cut because most of the extra commitment can easily be realised by increased energy efficiency. Not to do more on energy efficiency would, in any case, be crazy. Energy efficiency means economic efficiency. It means lower energy bills, not higher ones, and it improves energy security. So, whatever figures are put on the table by the other parties on 31 January – and maybe we will be pleasantly surprised – the EU must commit now to a 30% cut.

Ivo Strejček (ECR). – (CS) When reviewing the Copenhagen Summit and its results, one should employ common sense and look through the prism of the multitude of available environmental and economic data confirming that there is no such thing as global warming, and if it does exist, it is totally beyond human control, being caused purely by natural forces. By the way, we learnt last week that a significant portion of the environmental data used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was either knowingly falsified or misinterpreted. Seen in this light, it is good to see that the Copenhagen Summit has failed. I do hope that this failure will, first of all, bring a departure from the aggressive so-called 'green' politics. Secondly, politics will get back to genuine topics that really concern people in today's economic recession. Thirdly, it will prevent the waste of taxpayers' money on controversial green projects. Fourthly, it will create space for a matter-of-fact debate on the rational, efficient and cheaper provision of energy, and we will see the renaissance of nuclear energy. Ladies and gentlemen, when I meet my constituents, they shake their heads with incredulity over the topics we discuss here, failing as we do to deal with their real problems.

Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, despite its urgency, what we saw in Copenhagen was several steps backwards. Copenhagen did indeed mobilise more heads of state than Kyoto, but it also created more divisions and, as a result, it turned into a scenario of 'every man for himself', where every state can set out their goals and, moreover, do so on a voluntary basis.

We should note that we have a target reduction of 2 degree Celsius and goals for funding without any explanation whatsoever. These cannot be seen as a consolation. However, I believe that we have to act with an eye to the future, and this means moving from words to actions.

The European Union always wants to be a leader, and always has. However, when we arrived in Copenhagen, it faltered, failing to define or defend the goals that it had stated here, and which it said that it would never give up.

My question here, then, is whether in the future we will not act more fairly, whether we will continue to allow a situation where the poorest people go on paying the heaviest price due to our weakness and the decisions of some people over others.

Timo Soini (EFD). – (FI) Mr President, the Copenhagen climate summit was a complete flop. I voted against the resolution here in December. I was right, like 92 others here.

The European Union very arrogantly endeavoured to offer the entire world its own solution. A few days before it began, emissions trading fraud worth EUR 5 billion was exposed. This must have been embarrassing just before the meeting was due to start, with the EU offering a way out and facing abuses of funds worth EUR 5 billion. This was shameful, and is the EU now at all worried that these abuses will be investigated? If we are to impose restrictions on emissions, let us introduce a specific emissions system, as we have with cars. It works, although there is never a case for winding down our steel, metal or wood processing industries, in Finland or in the EU countries. That is to no avail: workers and employees should not be made to suffer.

(Applause)

Romana Jordan Cizelj (PPE). – (SL) I, too, am disappointed with the outcome of the Copenhagen conference, but let us stop bemoaning the poor results and let us instead think where we go from here, so that we do not meet with further disappointment. Telling ourselves ‘Let us build upon the work we have done because we just need to make some changes’ is not enough.

The first question I wish to ask myself in this respect is what COP conferences are in the first place? Are they real conferences or just a display for the public? They are both, of course. However, we need to ensure that experts can get on with their jobs and that the public is informed, not only about the informal events which take place on the fringes of conferences, but also about the actual work we are doing. Europe should, therefore, reconsider the organisational aspects of such conferences.

My second question is: What is the role of world leaders at such conferences? Do they come to these conferences in order to pursue their domestic political campaigns or do they come to help participants reach a compromise? I think we also need to reconsider the working methods of such conferences and the roles of the world leaders who attend them.

My third question concerns the leading role of the European Union. Yes, we *have* taken many good measures to ensure that Europe can maintain its leading role in developing environmentally friendly technologies, but we have lost our leading role in the negotiating process. In my opinion, we should not settle for playing merely a coordinating role in the negotiating process, because we have to be an active negotiator ourselves. That is why we should not lay all our cards on the table before negotiations begin and trumpet the goals we are after. We should also be trying to bring ourselves closer to third countries, not distance ourselves from them.

The final point I wish to make is that we must include in our international meetings the issue of climate change as a matter of urgency and here, of course, I expect close cooperation by both of the commissioners in charge of these two areas.

Enrique Guerrero Salom (S&D). – (ES) Today, at the start of 2010, we are not where we would have hoped to be in the fight against climate change. We are not there because right now, we should be at the stage of moving towards the adoption of legislative changes brought about by an agreement reached in Copenhagen.

We are not at that stage, and we should be sorry. We should regret the fact that, in Copenhagen, ambitions were lowered in the fight against climate change, that a binding agreement was not signed and that the procedure lacked transparency. Consequently, we do not have the sufficient legal base or means to cater for people's needs, especially in developing countries.

However, nor are we at the stage we were at before Copenhagen, because in Copenhagen, we did reach a targeted agreement with the United States, China, India, South Africa and Brazil, to which other countries later signed up, such as Russia, Australia, Norway, Sweden and Spain. We should not forget that, together, those countries are responsible for three-quarters of carbon dioxide emissions; nor should we forget that many of those countries were previously outside the Kyoto Protocol.

Therefore, the step we have taken is not enough, but it is significant. We should take advantage of that significant step in order to push forward from within the European Union. The European Union has been the driving force for all the progress that has been made. However, that progress will not continue unless the European Union keeps pushing.

With a view to Germany and Mexico, we have to work to reach binding agreements and to obtain resources that can help developing countries to mitigate their emissions, to adapt and to update their technology. We have to do this for reasons of efficiency, fairness and because we are in need of more partners.

I am sure that the Spanish Presidency will work towards that end.

Roger Helmer (ECR). – Mr President, I have good news for the House: in common with many scientists, I personally have concluded that there is no climate crisis! Global sea levels are not rising significantly and, as the IPCC has been forced to admit, Himalayan glaciers are not in rapid retreat. The small increase in mean global temperatures over the last hundred years is entirely consistent with well-established, long-term, natural climate changes.

Copenhagen showed that many nations, especially China and India, are simply not prepared to sacrifice economic performance to solve an entirely speculative problem. In Britain, a majority of voters no longer believe in man-made climate change and they will not pay for futile and pointless attempts at mitigation. The recent leaked CRU memos show that even the high priests of climate alarmism are in despair at the failure of nature to follow their forecasts, so they are falsifying the figures to sustain their fantasy.

We must now demand a full public inquiry into the suspect data before we spend another penny on mitigation.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, the United States and the European Union, the first and second largest emitters in the world per capita respectively, have a definite and unavoidable responsibility for the failure of Copenhagen, which no amount of passing the buck can diminish.

Among other aspects mentioned here, the summit failed as regards funding for the so-called 'adaptation' for developing countries, due to the insufficient number of those who made commitments. At the same time, the burdens on these countries continue to be hypocritically ignored. These include their enormous foreign debt, an amount that is truly astronomical when compared with the level of funding announced, and which severely limits any real possibility of sustainable economic and social development.

The summit foundered on the serious discussion of the perverse results of the market-based instruments and the flexible mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol. Among other problems, the summit failed to address the causes of climate change beyond its effects. This is an irrational way of approaching economic and social issues, and it precludes any solution for this or any other problems that humanity ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Herbert Reul (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, in this Copenhagen agreement, a two percent goal was accepted by 180 member countries, but it is still not legally binding. Not much came of all of the plans that we made here. It all went wrong in Copenhagen. It could also be called a defeat. It is important to describe the situation accurately in order to have the opportunity to think carefully about why this happened, so that we can then make some progress on this matter.

I am slightly shocked by some of the speeches I have heard here. People are saying 'we need to fight harder', 'let us continue to do what we have been doing', 'we need a higher percentage', 'more money', 'the problem was simply not enough unity in Europe' – I think these statements are too casual, too superficial in their analysis of the situation. Simply carrying on and marching forward is not the solution. These were not the reasons for this outcome. Have we actually considered and discussed with one another all of the essential issues in a fair and objective way? How have we dealt with the questions of fellow Members, whether justified or not, who said 'we have questions about issues that we are critical of, climate-sceptical questions'? How did we respond in the Committee on Climate Change when fellow Members said 'we also want to hear the other point of view – the opposing position of some scientists'? What opportunity did we actually have to present that? Moreover, regardless of which position we take, we need to discuss calmly how we should deal with the recent information that fellow Members have also just mentioned that the IPCC made a mistake with regard to the melting of glaciers?

A second set of questions also needs answers. Are we using the right instruments to tackle this? There are always new timetables, more percentages, new regulations and stipulations. This is a rather bureaucratic approach. Is Mrs Ek not right to emphasise so strongly that technology, innovation and market mechanisms are the way forward here? Other states are taking different approaches, but it is not the case that they are doing nothing. Perhaps a bit more openness and a bit more reflection will give us a chance to be more effective in this matter. This is what I would like to see, rather than the method of 'shut your eyes and advance'.

Judith A. Merkies (S&D). – Mr President, I do not want to depict a doom scenario, as has been done here. I do not want to depict a doom scenario for the future, nor do I want to look back in anger about the failure of Copenhagen – although I am angry.

Therefore, the resolution is to do far better in the future, the next opportunity being Mexico this year. Firstly, do not walk alone next time. In Copenhagen, we looked back and we stood alone in our ambitions. We must be able to convince others to be as ambitious as we are. How can we claim to be in the driver's seat if we fail to convince others of our ambitions and of the destination?

Secondly, no one size fits all. As sometimes was proudly said during the run-up to the climate summit, there is no plan 'B'. Well, we certainly know it: there is nothing right now. We have nothing. So we had better have a plan 'B' next time.

Last, but not least, how can we win in diversity if our slogan is, I mean, unity. We had better unite next time, and that means one voice. We need a univocal mandate. Europe really needs one voice. So, President-in-Office, are you willing to commit yourselves to obtaining an exclusive – and not a shared – mandate? It would be an exclusive competence for the European Union in climate policy and climate agreements.

Mirosław Piotrowski (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, the climate, and nature itself, which is all around us, belong to all people, including future generations, and that is why we must feel responsible for their protection. During the recent climate summit, world leaders did not manage to come to an understanding on a common strategy or instruments to help reach this objective. Paradoxically, I do not think this is bad news, in view of the disturbing information which is coming from, among others, Great Britain and the United States, about an attempt at manipulation by certain lobbies, using scientific data to achieve a specific result.

We need a reliable diagnosis of the situation. Therefore, I appeal for the appointment of an independent, international expert group, which will compile a thorough report stating whether human activity really does affect climate change and if data has been falsified. When establishing a common strategy for protecting the climate, EU politicians should also take into account the economic disproportions between the countries of Western and Eastern Europe. In view of the crisis, the measures which have been proposed could lead to the ruin of many economies.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE). – Mr President, Minister, the Copenhagen conference ended with a result that was a long way from what was expected. The countries took note of a document whose objectives were unclear and not binding. Copenhagen stood for much more than a climate summit. There was a new correlation between prominent players on the world stage and the proper role of multilateralism in the UN system. The growing influence of the emerging countries was evident. Copenhagen showed that we need to rethink the role of Europe on the world stage. We will need to make the most of the possibilities offered by the Treaty of Lisbon in order to prepare the way for the next COP. We need to be ambitious, united with one voice and forging strategic alliances.

The result of Copenhagen forms a foundation for us to build on with further work. The EU should try to ensure that the next stages in the negotiations will further develop the Copenhagen Agreement, with a view to reaching a legally binding agreement by the end of this year. It should also contribute to the implementation of provisions for giving funding to developing countries, and with regard to forests, technology transfer and adaptation measures.

Internally, Europe has a big task ahead: it needs to implement the energy and climate package, to invest in clean technologies, scientific research and energy efficiency, to invest in a new industrial policy based on innovation and the efficiency of natural resources, to promote policies on low-carbon cities and sustainable transport and mobility. This is the only way that we can lead, but real leadership is based on providing a good example.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) Mr President, Copenhagen showed us that the EU failed to find partners for its far-reaching ideas. In the future, the EU must not give up its targets, the commitment of three times 20% but, at the same time, it should reconsider its negotiating position and mandate, because we cannot pursue an ostrich policy. The lessons from Copenhagen should be learnt. That mandate was not successful. We failed to understand the commitment of China and other developing countries. We failed to understand the room Mr Obama had to manoeuvre and we were unable to speak with a common voice. As part of the debate of the Spanish Presidency, the President, Mr Verhofstadt, rightly stated that Europe had no common voice.

We cannot pursue an ostrich policy. After Copenhagen, we cannot behave and we cannot do politics the same way as we did before Copenhagen. The EU should reposition itself and set a new mandate by the time of the negotiating round in Mexico. First of all, we should investigate how to achieve the 2^o C target, which is the result of Copenhagen. During the next period, European policy should be aimed at establishing a flexible position in order to achieve success. Thank you for your attention.

Esther de Lange (PPE). – (NL) Mr President, Mrs Espinosa, this morning, the *Nationale Voorleesontbijt* (national reading-aloud breakfast) was held in Dutch schools. In my constituency, in Noordwijk aan Zee, which lies just behind the North Sea dunes in an area that will be first in the firing line if the sea level rises, the schoolchildren were told a story entitled 'A meeting', about snowmen deliberating how to keep the warmth at bay. They talk and talk until they have all melted. To be frank, on a bad day, this debate does remind me a little of that.

It is true that Copenhagen was not a success. Now we could continue to point to other countries or individual sectors; these one-liners have occasionally cropped up in the present debate, too. Yet it strikes me as a better idea to look ahead to what Europe can, and, more importantly, must do in order to shoulder its responsibility and ensure that an international agreement is still reached. Hence, in my opinion, the option of a 30% reduction must be kept expressly on the table. In addition, Europe must look at ways of promoting new technologies, including with European funds, for example, by promoting the construction of CO₂-neutral greenhouses that are also capable of producing energy, instead of us always viewing agriculture as a problem. Moreover, we must base our approach on science, knowledge and skills and not on emotions, however much we all care about this debate.

Finally, as many of my fellow Members have already said, we must speak with one voice. There should be only one seat for Europe in Mexico rather than the eight that were apparently needed in Copenhagen. President-in-Office, how do you plan to achieve this together with the Commissioners with responsibility in this field?

Nessa Childers (S&D). – Mr President, the hope generated by years of preparation descended into despondency and despair as it became increasingly clear that the deal we had come to agree in Copenhagen was slipping from our grasp as each day passed.

We must be concerned about how easy it was for the US, China and others to circumvent the UN structures, sideline the EU and agree an arrangement which fell far short of global expectations.

One thing is clear. The UN climate talks system needs life-saving surgery before Mexico at the end of this year. As it stands, President Obama is a prisoner of his political system, for he needs 67 votes in the Senate.

China refuses all measures which would be binding and open to international scrutiny. The irony of the situation is that, the longer the US, China and others frustrate, delay and prevaricate on a deal, the tougher the targets for reduction will, of necessity, become.

Let us look at solutions. The EU and this Parliament need to examine honestly how it approaches such matters in the future. Europe must be much more assertive in standing up for itself and, in doing so, should continue to set ambitious targets involving targets and emissions reductions of 30%.

This is an economic race to lead the world into the 21st century based on green jobs and sustainable living. Europe must win that race regardless of what our friends do or do not do.

Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines (PPE). – (ES) I would like to welcome Mrs Espinosa; I am very pleased that she is here.

I am most concerned by the change in attitude, and the fact that our analysis of Copenhagen may well lead to a change in attitude. Firstly, I think that one of our problems is a lack of humility and realism, as my colleagues have already said. Above all, however, I am concerned that, when we have been to other countries, we have found that they do not talk about climate change but rather global change.

The context in which we will be moving in Mexico, and the context in which we have been moving, is that of a growing population, a food shortage, a need for more agriculture, and limited land and water resources; therefore, any decision we take on climate change must be considered within that context. Of course, we must also remember that many countries have a right to develop.

We thus need to take a systemic view, something that is lacking in our analysis of climate change. Climate change cannot be resolved on the issue of emissions alone. A sectoral, quantitative vision does not lead anywhere.

What is more, we have to attach greater importance to science. In particular, I ask the Commission that those teams who tampered with data be checked and have their funding withdrawn, if the European Union is indeed supporting them, because this will discredit us forever.

How are we going to coordinate on this matter? That is another very important question. How is the European Union going to organise itself in order to reach an agreement? We should have already started working on that this morning.

Finally, the issue that concerns me: adaptation is carried out in the territory concerned, and we have to begin that process, once again, with a new, strategic vision of the territory; this includes productivity, strategic

reforestation, regions, areas and districts devoted to agro-energy and, of course, water and biodiversity. We are lacking that vision.

On this point, I think we need to think about the option of Structural Funds for new strategic plans in all regions in order to be able to carry out this adaptation; and decision makers should be invited to begin that strategic revision of the territory because we do not have responsibility for that area and it will be very difficult to work on it from Europe.

Saïd El Khadraoui (S&D). – (NL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as has been said many times already, of course, the summit was a failure. We are miles away from our objectives. Over the next few months, we shall have to see if things can still be put right. I believe, however – as others have also said before – that there is still a great deal we can put right ourselves, even without an international agreement under the auspices of the United Nations. I am thinking in particular of what we can do to achieve a more sustainable transport system. A priority objective was to reduce aviation emissions by 10% by 2020 working through the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), and maritime transport emissions by 20% through the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). Thus, I should like to ask the Council and the Commission to continue negotiations within these organisations and to step up the pressure by starting to prepare unilateral measures already if an agreement cannot be reached in a relatively short period of time.

In the meanwhile, of course, there is a great deal of homework we can be doing ourselves. With regard to intra-European transport, I heard Commissioner-designate Hedegaard advocate an ambitious climate and transport package during the hearings. Commissioner-designate Kallas seemed rather less clear, but I would remind the Commission that transport accounts for 25% of CO₂ emissions and, as such, requires urgent action. It is complicated, it is difficult and it requires a combination of measures, but I call on you to continue working on it and thus to make an important contribution to a more sustainable policy.

Catherine Soullie (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Minister, ladies and gentlemen, we no longer need to demonstrate the importance of the issue of climate change. Its short, medium and long-term impacts are undeniable, although the results from the JESC have made the front page of a certain national newspaper and will undoubtedly strengthen the sceptics' position.

The Copenhagen conference appeared to the world to be a unique opportunity for world leaders to bear witness to, act on and correct the effects of this process of climate change. The European Union was a key player at this forum, not only on account of the bold legislation we have passed to limit the impact of our activities on climate, but also because Europe represents a union of countries which can really make a difference.

The outcome of the Copenhagen conference has obviously left a feeling of dissatisfaction, but I refuse to call it a failure. The world, including even one of the most reluctant countries, China, has agreed on the issue of limiting the increase in temperature to two degrees. Brazil has just passed a law aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions by around 39% by 2020, in line with its undertakings.

Many other countries also showed great ambition with regard to greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. I am thinking here of Japan and Norway. I must also highlight the very positive point that was the consensus achieved on the urgent need for a mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation. A specific and unanimous text was produced on the implementation of the so-called REDD+ mechanism to reduce deforestation and enable CO₂ to be stored naturally.

Although far from a binding agreement, but clearly along the lines of a political agreement, the outcome of Copenhagen should lead us to question why it was such a disappointment. I attended the Copenhagen conference, as did a number of my fellow Members, with this desire to participate, to help and to see a Europe of negotiation and of leadership take action. I was hugely disappointed because Europe, and particularly Parliament, clearly did not play the role that it deserved to in the negotiations.

To make its presence felt, Europe must be seen to be stronger in this area. The meeting of our environment ministers in Seville went nowhere, and our leaders were seen to be unsure and hesitant, and we are still divided over our targets.

I hope that Mrs Hedegaard, armed with her proposals and the undertakings she gave before the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, will be able to restore the ambitions of the European Union.

Lambert van Nistelrooij (PPE). – (NL) I concur with what Mrs de Lange said on behalf of our delegation from the Dutch Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) in this debate. I, too, am disappointed that the legal agreement failed to materialise, and I should like to put a question to the President-in-Office. What are the implications of the lack of such an agreement for our legislative framework, namely the package we have laid down for CO₂ trading, among other things? What will be the impact on that system? Can you tell us that? I should like to point out, chiefly in my role as coordinator of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) for regional policy, that our objectives must be retained in full. Also, Europe should not question the efforts of citizens, towns and cities, regions and enterprises that have committed themselves to the package of implementing programmes. The climate issue is not just hype, and I also note that, fortunately, it is enshrined in the EU 2020 strategy of the new Commission.

I would also point out that we have now turned the EU's own instruments and resources towards climate-related priorities: 30% of regional funds have been channelled to the climate and to energy-related projects, which is double the figure for the previous period. This particular priority creates scope to continue with the innovation and new green technology that will help give us the edge at a global level. This also goes for expenditure under the European Economic Recovery Plan. I believe that this sets a positive trend, including for the financing beyond 2013. I do indeed note great commitment in regions, towns and cities to continue working on this. It would send the wrong message – in the desperation that may be perceptible in a number of speeches here – to diminish this ambition. I share your hope that, in Mexico – our second chance – we shall do better.

János Áder (PPE). – (HU) Mr President, we should not embellish things. Copenhagen was a failure. I do not want to focus on this, however, but suggest that instead of criticising others, we would do better to mind our own business. We have to admit that one of the reasons behind the failure was the lack of a common European position in Copenhagen, either in terms of CO₂ quotas or funding. I agree with those who say that it is the prerequisite of successful negotiations to have a common EU position. That is true. What do we need in order to achieve this? It is necessary that the Commission and all Member States of the European Union adhere to both the letter and the spirit of the Kyoto Treaty. Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, the Baltic States, Slovakia and the Czech Republic fulfilled their commitments beyond the level determined in Kyoto. Therefore, they can sell their CO₂ quotas. I think it is dishonourable, unfair and inappropriate on behalf of the Commission and the other European Union Member States to deprive these countries of this opportunity.

In Copenhagen, Poland and Hungary suggested a compromise. The point of it was to retain the possibility of selling the quotas beyond 2012, but its volume per year should be limited, and the money received should be spent on green investments. We suggested a compromise for the sake of a common European position. Now it is up to the Commission and the EU-15, especially because without Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the other countries, the EU-15 could not state to have delivered on their commitments, since instead of the 8% undertaken, only 5.5% would have been achieved. Thank you for your attention.

Françoise Grossetête (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, the negotiations have highlighted the failure of the EU's strategy, which was aimed at making others follow in its wake by being the most virtuous.

The reality is that there was a gulf between the rhetoric of an EU wishing to be the world leader in the fight against climate change and its capacity to get others on board in the final negotiations. Not only did nobody come on board but, by putting all its cards on the table far too early, failure was inevitable. In fact, the EU was virtually inaudible during the final negotiations.

So what are we to do now? We must, above all, implement the principle of reciprocity in our exchanges with third countries. Europe can no longer accept a situation in which certain imported products do not satisfy environmental requirements. The situation brought about by the failure in Copenhagen therefore creates uncertainty as to the future international operational rules in the area of carbon emissions reduction, which is particularly harmful for those companies of ours that are required to make major investments. This lack of visibility could also have a detrimental impact on the CO₂ market, the rise in power and smooth running of which require a clear and stable framework.

At the same time, the United States and China are investing massively in green technologies to create the green jobs of tomorrow. Europe must not miss the innovation train. It must support a real European industrial policy because that is the real challenge of the fight against climate change. These new clean technologies are available; it is up to us to accelerate their use in our policies for the benefit of everybody, and especially of developing countries.

That is the challenge that must be taken up by the EU. It has the means to successfully undertake this revolution, but let us be more pragmatic as we approach the next deadlines so that, a year from now in Mexico City, we can turn the agreement concluded in Copenhagen into something legally binding.

Andrzej Grzyb (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Mrs Espinosa, Commissioner, the Spanish Presidency has decided to prepare an evaluation of the Copenhagen climate conference, while we are saying here, according to many speakers, that it ended in a fiasco. However, a fiasco does not have to be a disaster – sometimes you have to draw good conclusions from a fiasco and see what really caused it. Current European Union strategy for negotiation on climate protection needs to be evaluated, because preparations are under way for the next summit, to be held in Mexico in December this year.

I have a question: should we increase the reduction objective, since the current objective was not achieved in these negotiations? We have to find partners for the present objective, and for an increased objective we do not have any partners at all. It needs to be pointed out that without the United States, China and India, and this has also been said many times in this Chamber during this debate, there will be no success with the objectives set by the European Union at the Copenhagen Summit. It will be similar in Mexico, too. We must evaluate the declaration of the other parties, maintaining, above all, the forum of the climate conference as the main forum for negotiation of an understanding, irrespective of the critical evaluations as to whether the UN forum is appropriate, good, working properly, etc.

We want a green economy, which makes rational use of the environment and which develops new sources of energy and new technologies to generate energy and to save it. At the same time, we know that the cheapest energy is energy which has not been exhausted, and so we need to be rational. By the way – and this is my last sentence – reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases is not achieved by the use of expensive technologies. Very often, our own resources, such as forests and soil, can also be an excellent place for absorption, and this is biological absorption and, hence, effective absorption.

The President. – Unlike this morning, when we were in such a rush, we now have a few minutes at our disposal; so, breaking with the usual rule, we are going to try to give the floor to all those who have asked to speak under the catch-the-eye procedure. I would, however, ask all of you to keep your speech under one minute.

We will cut your speeches off after one minute, because 13 people are on the list. I want everyone to have a chance to speak, but for Mrs Espinosa and Commissioner Rehn to be able to respond, you must all speak for just one minute.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE). – (RO) In line with expectations, the Copenhagen Summit did not end with any concrete results. However, we have a clear view on the phenomenon of global warming and the need to take action. The European Union must continue its efforts at foreign policy level, especially discussions with the United States and China. Positive results should be achieved. We have commissioners for both foreign policy and climate change.

Until then, the actions which the European Union has taken so far, even those taken unilaterally, must be continued. I hope that at the informal meeting in Seville in January, environment ministers will deal with the outcome of Copenhagen pragmatically and consider climate change in the context of the future Action Plan for Energy Efficiency for 2010-2014.

In addition, the third package of measures for the internal energy market must be coordinated with the Copenhagen Agreement in order to achieve energy security, promote renewable energy, and capture and store carbon dioxide.

Linda McAvan (S&D). – Mr President, a question to the President-in-Office, and maybe to the Commission as well, about this deadline of 31 January. What is happening about the pledges inside the EU? I assumed the EU would make one pledge, but I am hearing that in Coreper, they are discussing several pledges. What exactly is happening?

Secondly, we talk about one voice for Europe, but is it not part of the problem that the EU went to Copenhagen with a mandate and there was no flexibility for the negotiating team to negotiate? That is part of the problem. That is why the EU is cut out of the final negotiations. Why talk to a negotiator who cannot move at all and has no flexibility? How are we going to resolve this? I am told that the same thing happens at the WTO. It is a big problem for the EU.

Finally, I hope, Commissioner Rehn, that you will pass on our best wishes to Commissioner Dimas. I am sorry he is not here for the final session. We would have liked to thank him for the excellent work he has done over many years, and I hope we will see him next week in the Environment Committee to pass on our thanks.

Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (ALDE). – (NL) Mr President, unfortunately, the giants – the United States, China, India, Brazil – were not joined by a European giant in Copenhagen. Worse still, 28 European dwarfs sat at the table: 27 Member States and one powerless Commission. This is how not to do things. If Europe fails to speak with one voice, it is powerless and cannot fulfil its potential role. This is a pity not only for Europe but also, in particular, for the results of this kind of conference. This morning, President Barroso, Treaty of Lisbon in hand, said it is the Commission that speaks on behalf of the European Union in environmental matters. Let him put his money where his mouth is. My question to the Commission is: instead of fine words about one voice, are you prepared to lay claim to that role and, if need be, to push the Council aside?

John Stuart Agnew (EFD). – Mr President, whilst the big conference at Copenhagen was under way last month – complete with politicians, NGOs and activists – there was another climate conference going on in the same city, where most of the speakers were scientists, and I believe that I was the only MEP present.

These scientists, one by one, demolished the so-called facts about man-made global warming, with scientific argument as opposed to alarmist sound bite. We heard about the technical failures of Al Gore's hockey stick graph and the unreliability of weather station data after the fall of the Berlin Wall. We were advised on the scientific shortcomings of the computer models that are reluctant to predict cold weather, and the probability of the opposite relationship between carbon dioxide and global temperatures to the one that we are being brainwashed with. We were shown satellite photographs of the rapid increase in Arctic ice over the last three years, and we were briefed on the increase in the numbers of polar bears.

Andrew Henry William Brons (NI). – Mr President, the earlier references to the so-called evidence about Himalayan glaciers need to be elaborated on. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said in 2007 that they would disappear by the year 2035.

The Sunday Times has recently discovered that the report was ultimately based on an interview given to the *New Scientist* by an Indian scientist, Mr Hasnain in 1999. Mr Hasnain has subsequently said that this was based on personal estimates and did not mention the year and did not carry out any formal research.

If our conclusions on the hypothesis of climate change are to be based on evidence, then that evidence must be irrefragable. It must not be manufactured and it must not be invented.

Iosif Matula (PPE). – (RO) Unlike other regions in the world, the European Union understands and assumes a pioneering role in the battle against climate change. At the same time, the large number of participants at the meeting in Copenhagen fills me with hope that the action of such a large number of allies will ultimately have a chance of success. Although the summit's conclusions were not what was expected, I believe that our involvement at different levels will lead to the desired results.

We must promote more investment programmes in our states, both in renewable energy and in areas with direct implications for climate change. I am referring here to both small projects, such as those involving technical assistance for local energy sources, and large projects with regional coverage, such as the selective management and recycling of waste or the restoration and extension of water and drainage networks and systems.

Gilles Pargneaux (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, Minister, on 11 November, Václav Havel said to us, 'Europe is the homeland of our homelands'. However, after Copenhagen, our European compatriots are being very hard. There is a real lack of confidence and, therefore, faced with this crisis of confidence and to enable this confidence to be restored, I should like to put a two-part question to you.

Firstly: during the six months of your Presidency, do you wish to bring back to the negotiating table the introduction of a Tobin-type carbon tax on financial transactions? It seems to me that this tax would enable this confidence to be restored, not only amongst our compatriots, but also amongst all the individuals throughout the world who have also lost confidence.

Secondly: do you wish to bring back to the table a more binding list for carbon quotas and carbon leakage?

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr President, just as one swallow does not make a summer, neither does one cold winter disprove theories of climate change and global warming. Indeed, for more and more people, the evidence is overwhelming because both the scientific evidence and the visual evidence prove that there is climate change.

People have described the Copenhagen conference as a flop and a failure. I think it could be more accurately described as a little step in the right direction: one small step in the right direction. But the challenge now is, in Mexico, to turn that small step into a giant leap for mankind.

For us in the European Union, in particular, it is a major challenge, to show that the new institutions and the new positions created in the Lisbon Treaty are effective. If we are marginalised, as happened in Copenhagen...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Andrés Perelló Rodríguez (S&D). – (ES) Few subjects have met with such general agreement in the European Parliament and in society and it is a shame to dash the hopes of the society that supports us, which trusted in Copenhagen.

I do not believe the summit was a failure, and I certainly do not believe something that people who cannot tell the difference between climate and weather are saying: the fact that it has snowed in the north is to be expected, but it is not normal for it to snow in Seville and for it to be four degrees Celsius in Cuba, which effectively confirms that climate change is having an effect. I do not believe that any of these issues should make us lower our guard.

Now, more than ever, we must maintain our position, Minister. In other words, during these six months, you must push even harder, persuade the Council of the need for an increasingly uniform and united position. You must inspire the Commission to ensure that we speak with one voice so that, when we go to Mexico, Mr Obama cannot turn round and say, 'I am going to meet the Chinese and then tell the Europeans about it,' because that is the root of the frustration experienced by the European Union.

Minister, we must maintain our leadership for the sake of the climate, for the sake of the European Union and for the sake of all humanity.

President. – You are aware that you can submit your speeches in writing and they will appear in the verbatim record of the House. If you speak very quickly, though, the problem is that the interpreters cannot follow what you are saying and you will be the only ones to hear the speeches, or at least those of you that understand the language in which they are spoken.

It is therefore a good idea to speak slowly so that your speech can be interpreted and, as I said, use the option of delivering your speech in writing so that it will appear in the verbatim record.

Bogusław Sonik (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, it should be admitted that the tactic the European Union has used till now, including at the Copenhagen Summit, was wrong. It was a tactic of showing all our cards and believing that if we adopted ambitious goals, others would join in. The haggling, which also took place here in Parliament, about whether to limit emissions by 40% or 50%, was wrong. It is somewhat reminiscent of negotiations during the Cold War, when some political groups believed that unilateral disarmament would induce the Soviet Union to disarm, too. We need to change this tactic and be firm in talks with the world's powerful countries – China, the United States – and even threaten the imposition of what our fellow Members from France are talking about, a carbon tax at the European Union's borders. Our businesses must be competitive in a world market. We should also remember new technologies, including technologies (...).

(The President cut off the speaker)

Marc Tarabella (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, everybody is agreed in acknowledging that the Copenhagen Summit ended in a double failure. Indeed, not only was the summit a damp squib, resulting in a non-binding agreement that was not signed by every country, but we also have to come to terms with our own defeat, because it was the key role played by the two most polluting countries on the planet, China and the United States, which was placed under the spotlight through the negotiations in Copenhagen. This G2 led the negotiations without the Europeans or developing countries really having a say in matters. Agriculture was therefore hardly touched upon. Yet this sector is one of the most fundamental elements in the fight against climate change. European agriculture is currently preparing to switch over to more sustainable production models, with more responsible water management and models that are less energy-intensive and less dependent on chemicals, because it realises that biodiversity and the preservation of ecosystems are the very

keys to a reduction in environmental pollution. So, please, when are we going to acknowledge that agriculture ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Bogdan Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the Copenhagen Summit showed another way of looking at the question of climate change. The real problem was not about limiting greenhouse gas emissions, but about proposing effective mechanisms which support their reduction. So far, the European Community has been the leader in the field of reducing CO₂ emissions, and is still setting standards for achieving this worldwide.

Therefore, within the framework of the European Union, it is worth proposing a sustainable approach which would make possible the financing of appropriate measures of our own, first of all, within the EU. The money would come from an EU fund established jointly by all Member States, with contributions being based proportionally on each country's *per capita* GDP. In this way, we would achieve equal contributions from each Member State, without unnecessary complications. Priority would be given to financing measures which would contribute to a real reduction in emissions at the lowest cost.

Adam Gierek (S&D). – (PL) Mr President, in relation to the critical remarks of scientists concerning the reliability of the IPCC's conclusions and the revelation of falsification of data, and this undoubtedly influenced the outcome of the Copenhagen conference, I asked the Commission about the possibility of conducting research to verify the disputed findings. In his answer, Mr Dimas said: 'the IPCC assessment is the expression of a consensus reached by thousands of scientists.' I ask, therefore, are results in science decided by consensus, and are scientific conclusions the result of voting? Concerning Climategate, the Commissioner said: 'the European Commission's position is that it does not affect the obvious and justified conclusions contained in the IPCC report.' I ask, therefore, what kind of conclusions come from falsified data? I think we need impartial research to verify the effects of CO₂. Without scientific credibility, another disaster will be waiting for us in Mexico.

Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE). – Mr President, the next steps from Copenhagen should improve the position and negotiation abilities of the United Nations.

We should facilitate the UN to start negotiating on the high-level segment with the Heads of State and then to continue drafting in detail with civil servants in the way it is done in the G8 or G20. The EU has the interest and capability to push this kind of change through in the UN system.

Secondly, my wish and hope for the Council and for the new Commission is that now with the new Lisbon Treaty, the core issue in our foreign policy would be dealt with by the trio of the President of the Commission, the High Representative and the Climate Change Commissioner and allow for negotiation on the basis of a single negotiated text.

Edite Estrela (S&D). – (PT) It has been said here already, and it is true, that Copenhagen was a disappointment, as not a single politically binding agreement ended up being approved. Now, however, we need to look forwards, and prepare ourselves politically for the conference in Mexico – the European Union has already prepared itself in technical terms. The European Union needs to reclaim the role of leader and make itself heard with one voice. The Treaty of Lisbon will help with this, letting Europe assert itself and speak with a united voice and the authority of someone who has done their homework. We are also counting on the Spanish Presidency for when we arrive at the meeting in Bonn ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

President. – We have concluded this session. It has been exceptionally long, but at least we have been able to allow a significant number of Members to speak. The large number of Members present also reveals the House's interest in the topic we are dealing with.

Now we have reached the final part of the debate and firstly, we will give the floor to Mrs Espinosa so that she can reply.

Mrs Espinosa will understand and the House will understand that I am delighted to offer her the floor, due to the friendship, warmth and admiration I feel for her.

Elena Espinosa Mangana, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank all of you for your contributions, which will undoubtedly help us to improve. I am sorry I cannot respond

to all of you personally, from the first contribution by Mrs Wortmann-Kool to the last one by Mr Grzyb, and also the 15 additional speeches we have heard. Allow me, however, to say a few more words following my opening speech.

Several goals of great importance lie before us in the field of climate change: to consolidate support and an appropriate level of commitment around the Copenhagen agreement and to strengthen each of its components, by developing and detailing their content and speeding up their implementation.

The Copenhagen Summit revealed the new international scenario that surrounds us. Within this scenario, we need further improvements, where new goals and expectations are voiced by very different players and where the rules for the adoption of decisions must be changed to adapt them effectively to new timeframes and needs.

Within this context, the European Union must consider the best way to demonstrate its leadership in the field of climate policy on the international scene.

We must not lose sight of our aims because that would weaken our credibility and our position, which has been challenged in recent years. No one knows better than the European Union how hard it is to build this collective leadership. Similarly no one is more aware than Parliament of the advantages and the satisfaction of a result that improves things for all of us. On a global scale, we can only move forward if the way forward is based on mutual trust and the public interest.

Some have defined Copenhagen as a perfect storm with a bittersweet result. I prefer to take something from it that I feel to be very valuable: the fact that it has provided us with a great potential that we will be able to draw on in the coming months. Ladies and gentlemen, you can rest assured that we can say loud and clear that the European Union was not the problem in Copenhagen.

Moving on to the speeches, several of you mentioned solidarity with third countries, emission reductions, deforestation, and more efficient and more sustainable industry, and many of you spoke of leadership and unity. At this stage, it is our duty to push for the immediate application of the Copenhagen Accord.

It is also our duty to push for full integration of the accord in the ordinary procedure of the United Nations and also to lay firm foundations for a significant advance in Mexico. The role of regional and sectoral alliances will be fundamental there, and the European Union must strengthen them and extend them.

We must stand shoulder to shoulder in our work, facing the future. We must learn and move forward. We must not succumb to complaining. In looking to the future and thinking of what we must leave for future generations, Parliament can do a lot. All of us together, the Member States, the Environment Council, the Commission, Parliament and of course the Presidency: we all have a role to play.

Instead of supplanting one another, we must act together and pool our best efforts to defend our common future, without forgetting that environment, development, competitiveness and innovation are common goals that must proceed hand-in-hand.

I take note of your contributions and assure you that you will always have the Spanish Government, which will hold the rotating Presidency of the European Union until 30 June, working with you to achieve a more sustainable future for all of us.

Olli Rehn, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, first of all, let me thank you for a very substantive and responsible debate. I will certainly pass your best wishes to my colleague, Stavros Dimas, for his recovery so that he might join you in the committee shortly.

I took note of your points and I will try to respond to some of your concerns and policy positions on the basis of the briefings I have asked for during this debate. I think we can interpret your basic messages so that, even though the Copenhagen Accord does not reflect our level of ambition, there is still a certain European fingerprint on it. In other words, the Copenhagen Accord contains references to the level of ambition needed to address climate change for the post-2012 climate agreement and it sets the basis for a financial package and invites serious commitments on emissions reductions.

On our own behalf, concerning our commitments, Coreper is meeting at this moment, and the Commission and the Member States want to make a single submission that is clear. The details are now under discussion, and I am confident that we will be ready before the deadline of 31 January. This is in response to Mrs McAvan, and this should also create a sound basis for the single negotiating text that Mrs Pietikäinen was calling for.

At the same time, we see the Accord as a stepping stone for future major leaps in Mexico in future international climate negotiations. Mrs Hassi and many others have called for the EU's leadership. I agree, and the Commission is determined to ensure that the EU maintains its leadership position over the coming months and transforms this Accord into the ambitious and legally binding treaty that we all want to see. I count on your support for this goal.

Unfortunately – as has been rightly said in this debate – some of our important negotiating partners, such as China and the United States, have not been able or willing to commit themselves as closely as the European Union has done, which, of course, had a detrimental impact on the negotiations. It is clear to everyone that China, in particular, did not want to commit itself to seriously meaningful objectives. It is my personal view that the new Commission will have to define an overall China strategy for the European Union to better pursue and achieve our common interests with the view of climate policy, trade tensions and exchange-rate policy. It is not acceptable that China's currency-dumping is risking the economic recovery in Europe. In the same way, we would expect China to make a serious commitment in the field of climate change policy.

But let us also recall that our leadership starts at home. We need to make every effort to fulfil our Kyoto commitments as we are approaching the finishing line. We also need to ensure that new ambitious policies and measures are put forward that will lead us to the 20% – or even 30% – reduction goal that we have set for ourselves. In order to achieve that, we need to invest in innovation and research in resource efficient, environmental and energy technologies, which will be at the heart of the new EU 2020 strategy we are currently preparing.

I agree with Mrs Dati and Mrs Grossetête, as well as Mrs Ek, that this implies that the EU 2020 will have to be a climate industry and a jobs strategy – and thus at the heart of the economic revival of the European Union. I would also still like to respond to Mr Davies, concerning his very concrete question. I have checked and I can inform you that the use of the EUR 300 million allowances for carbon capture and storage should be decided on 2 February in the respective comitology committee. I can reassure you that we want to support 12 demo plants. Eight plants will be supported in the first round and the rest in the second round.

To conclude, it is our duty for future generations to continue to lead by example and reach a legally binding agreement by the end of this year, ensuring a better and sustainable future for all.

President. – After this speech by the Commissioner, to whom we wish the best of luck, secure in the knowledge that he will do an excellent job, as he has done in the past, we close the debate.

Voting will take place during the first part-session in February, in other words during February I.

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) 'Politics is the ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next week, next month and next year. And to have the ability afterwards to explain why it didn't happen,' said Winston Churchill.

In the light of the Copenhagen conference, we are all good politicians. The conference got under way with a great deal of political optimism for a new climate agreement, but the negotiations demonstrated that optimism and respect for the environment are more European than global values. The fact that the outcome of the Copenhagen conference marked a disappointment, in that our expectations and those of our citizens were not met, should motivate us and make us determined to get more involved and show greater unity at the next summit in the autumn in Mexico. Europe must learn to be a player and an active negotiator, and to speak with a single voice.

Ivo Belet (PPE), in writing. – (NL) Mr President, following the Copenhagen fiasco, we could sit on the sidelines pitifully weeping and wailing, but that would be a waste of energy. Let us continue to put our own house in order. Europe is the only continent to have specific, ambitious legislation for reducing CO₂ emissions. This must be implemented in the coming months and years. We must not forget that this also has a direct impact on other superpowers, not least China. All the consumer products China wishes to sell in Europe in the near future will have to comply with the strictest European environmental standards. This obliges Chinese manufacturers, too, to change course. 'Hopenhagen' may have largely failed, but we must set to work again, as next year will see new opportunities, first in Bonn and then in Mexico. In the meantime, Copenhagen has undoubtedly made sure everyone is alert, greatly heightening our environmental awareness. That is not enough, but what makes me optimistic is the realisation that investing in the climate is also good for our own pockets, for the economy and thus also for employment.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The environment summit in Copenhagen has been described by many as a resounding failure as its outcome was a vague agreement without any clear assumptions and deadlines. However, if we look more closely at what happened in the Danish capital, we can see that the foundations were laid here for a new global climate order which we are going to achieve, but after years and years of hard work and negotiations.

This was the first time that 115 Heads of State or Government met to discuss climate change. This is an important sign. The fact that the summit took place under the aegis of the UN highlights that even the developing and poorly industrialised countries realise that they need to play an active role in cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

The importance of bilateral discussions between powerful industrialised states and developing states has grown, especially in light of the next summit on environmental issues in Mexico. The EU has all the data available to play an important role in bilateral discussions with states such as China, India or Brazil. The time has come when no effort will seem too great when we are talking about the future of the planet we all share together.

George Sabin Cutaş (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) For the last month, 'failure' has been the word most used to describe the Copenhagen Summit. The summit's unsatisfactory outcome is due to both the reticence shown by the large industrialised countries and the system's complicated rules based on the UN's consensus.

Furthermore, the European Union's inability to assume the role of catalyst for the global efforts to restrict the effects of climate change should be examined. By announcing unilaterally a year before this conference its intention to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020, the EU had the moral upper hand to provide a fillip to the negotiations in Copenhagen. However, we did not know how to make our voice heard in a meeting dominated by the positions of the US and emerging countries.

A more restricted format of discussions is required so that we can hope for negotiations ending in success. The ministerial meetings in Bonn and Mexico City in June and December must be used as effectively as possible to leave the way open for adopting a new treaty. Member States must coordinate their actions so that we speak with a single voice on the global stage.

Adam Gierek (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) The fiasco of the climate summit has exposed Europe's weakness and the naivety of its political elite. It has shown that we are only one of many players on the world stage. Why did the proposals concerning CO₂ emissions turn out to be unacceptable? It was because they threaten the interests of many developing countries, do not take account of competition based on the military economy worldwide, unfairly distribute the right to use the common good, which is the Earth, and are based on the not very credible hypothesis put forward by the IPCC on the harmfulness of CO₂, while, as it turns out, the so-called 'proofs' have been manipulated (Climategate). Science must not be politically controlled, but should take account of all circumstances and answer every possible question. Has anyone asked, for example, what would happen if there were not enough CO₂ in the atmosphere? We should be glad about the warm period in the contemporary history of our planet and that, at the moment, we have around 370-380 ppm CO₂ in the atmosphere. In physics and chemistry we know Le Chatelier's principle of equilibrium, which predicts development of the ideal conditions for photosynthesis. The Earth is becoming greener, a fact which has been confirmed many times, and this guarantees greater harvests and better conditions for development. Let it continue this way, although, unfortunately, there are many signs that, in the next two decades, the world will get cooler. Conclusion: the European Union should immediately review its restrictive climate and energy package, because it reduces the competitiveness of the EU economy.

Béla Glattfelder (PPE), *in writing*. – (HU) The current liberal trade regulations encourage higher carbon dioxide emissions. By introducing emissions trading, supporting renewable sources of energy and through investment aimed at improving energy efficiency, developed nations are making considerable efforts to curb their carbon dioxide emissions. These measures result in additional costs for businesses. What is more, energy consumption is increasingly taxed in these countries.

Meanwhile, many developing countries do nothing to reduce their emission of greenhouse gases. They even constantly increase their carbon dioxide emissions. Instead of giving the largest industrial users incentives to embrace energy efficiency, they provide them with electricity at subsidised rates. Many say that nowadays, the most important comparative advantage of these countries is no longer cheap labour but cheap energy.

This is why new international trade regulations need to be put in place that prevent trade from leading to further carbon dioxide emissions. We need not only 'fair' but also 'green' trade. To this end, we need to ensure

that if a country fails to fulfil its commitments made in climate change agreements, there are effective legal sanctions in place.

András Gyürk (PPE), *in writing*. – (HU) The Copenhagen conference on climate change was disappointing. There were no legally binding commitments determining the future framework of international climate protection. The situation is aggravated by the fact that despite its intention, the EU was unable to significantly influence the final outcome of the negotiations. The failure of the conference does not justify idleness. We have to get used to the idea of emphasising regional solutions until an international treaty is drawn up that is legally binding for every player. Accordingly, the European Union should work on polishing up its internal regulations on climate protection. The regulations of the Union should be made more efficient without causing competitive disadvantage for European industries.

However, the EU's climate policy should not disadvantage new Member States either, as was the case with the internal EU burden-sharing agreement recently. When it comes to climate protection, solutions that have many additional effects on top of decreasing emissions should be preferred. Thus, the development of urban transport improves the quality of life, the investments in improving energy efficiency create jobs, and the amounts spent on Research and Development improve competitiveness at the same time. These points of view should also be reflected in the budget for the next seven years. Europe cannot afford to only be a spectator at international negotiations on climate protection. It should continue to take the initiative even if, instead of ground-breaking changes, climate politics will now be characterised by small, incremental steps.

Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE), *in writing*. – (FI) Mr President, it was with some dismay that I heard these complaints of a poor outcome at Copenhagen. I can only say that it is time the EU woke up to reality. We have to stop deceiving ourselves in imagining that the EU has been in a position of leadership or that it could take on such a role. Let us be honest: our ineffective and expensive strategy is tempting no one. I am also going to say this to the future Commissioner responsible for climate change. The Copenhagen Summit has come and gone, but why is Mrs Hedegaard still trying to have us believe that the EU is the leader on climate policy and the one to show the way in the world? It has not played that role for a long time.

'Follow me, I'm right behind you,' is the paradoxical slogan the EU has developed for itself. It is with this sort of self-deception that the EU continues with its wretched climate policy that is destroying jobs in the cleanest industries. Those who followed the climate debate at all had known for a long time that an international agreement based on the EU's formula would not be achieved. The United States of America, China and Japan have chosen a route that has rejected the UNled model, with its negotiated emission ceilings and timetables. They are investing directly in reducing carbon intensity and in new technology which, in time, will also be seen as the logical way to cut emissions. That method, however, will not expose the economy and jobs to bureaucracy, unfair competition or unforeseen price fluctuations. In Europe, we will be exposed if the EU continues to follow a different path, remaining alone and worsening the plight of companies. It is a sorry state of affairs that no one benefits from this, the people least of all. The environment will not benefit either if the cleanest industries in the world have sanctions imposed on them in emissions trading, sanctions that are not imposed on the rest. It is time for the EU to review its policy and end this fantasising.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The European Union must remain involved in the international negotiations for adopting a post-Kyoto agreement. It is clear that, in order to sign a new global post-Kyoto agreement, the EU's negotiating strategy needs to be evaluated and prepared thoroughly with a view to continuing the negotiations in 2010.

Although it cannot be considered a success and is far from what the European Union wanted, the Copenhagen conclusions mark a further step towards signing a legally binding, global post-Kyoto agreement. The EU's efforts in the immediate future must focus on diplomatic efforts aimed at obtaining commitments from all the relevant global partners, especially the US, China and India, so that the global objective of restricting the rise in temperature to two degrees Celsius, compared to the pre-industrial level, can be achieved.

We must be aware that the EU's commitment to raise the level of emission reductions by 30% by 2020 is conditional on comparable or proportional commitments being assumed by third countries.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) We can take stock of the climate change conference one month on from it. The Copenhagen Agreement was negotiated and signed with great effort, being just short of a total failure. The compromise accepted with great difficulty was only that of 'to take note'.

Although the EU has assumed specific, ambitious objectives, they have not led to similar actions from the other partners. However, it should be emphasised that all the major economic and political powers in the

world met to debate and assume responsibility for combating climate change. The objective was recognised of maintaining the global warming gradient at 2° C and agreeing to financial support of USD 30 billion during the 2010-2012 period (fast-start financing) and USD 100 billion by 2020. These sums are intended to fund the measures for reducing and adapting to the effects of climate change for the least developed and most vulnerable countries.

I believe that the future Commission, especially if there is going to be a commissioner responsible for climate change and action, must evaluate very closely all the reduction proposals – commitments made by the countries which are party to the United Nations Convention – and also prepare the negotiations in the same way so that a legally binding agreement is signed at COP 16 in Mexico in 2010.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D), *in writing*. – Most of us have rightly expressed disappointment at the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit and the failure to reach a legally binding agreement. Some progress has been made, however. For example, the creation of the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund will provide financing for poorer countries to adapt to climate change and to develop clean energy, and the formal acceptance by emerging economies that they have coresponsibility makes a concrete commitment from these countries more likely in the near future. The EU must continue to play a leading role in the absence of a legally binding agreement. The Commissioner-designate for climate action has expressed commitment to an international agreement on the protection of tropical forests, the inclusion of road transport and shipping in the ETS, and the linking of EU and US cap-and-trade systems, which would represent a crucial step in international cooperation for global emission reductions. We should continue to develop and implement our own climate legislation as other countries work towards theirs. Our work with international organisations and partner countries in the coming months will increase the chances of more meaningful progress at the next conference in Mexico.

Zbigniew Ziobro (ECR), *in writing*. – (PL) The problem of climate warming is one of the main issues troubling the modern world. Recently, in Copenhagen, a climate summit devoted to this issue was held. Meanwhile, we discovered that the contents of several thousand documents and e-mails had found their way onto the Internet from the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, one of the world's most prestigious institutions dealing with climate warming and the effect of human activity on this process. The material included correspondence between scientists from various countries, whose research has had a key influence on the position of the European Union and the UN on climate change. The leaked information shows that research results may have been manipulated and, as a result, unreliable information on the greenhouse effect and climate change may have been issued. The countries of the EU, and so our societies, are bearing substantial costs related to the emission of greenhouse gases, while in Copenhagen, attempts were made to make developed countries, including the EU, accept an even greater financial burden related to global warming, in order to help, in this way, developing countries. Every doubt which exists on this matter should be clarified in detail, not even because we want to convince those who doubt the legitimacy of measures to limit gas emissions, but because European taxpayers are bearing and are going to bear huge costs related to this, and they must be sure these measures are based on sound reasons.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS WALLIS

Vice-President

12. Question Time (Council)

President. – The next item is Question Time (B7-0002/2010).

I welcome the Minister to this first Question Time with the Spanish Presidency.

The following questions are addressed to the Council.

Question 1 will not be taken as the subject to which it refers already appears in the agenda for this part-session.

Question 2 by **Gay Mitchell** (H-0477/09)

Subject: Credit crunch/Loans for business

In December, the German Minister for the Economy said that Germany faced a new credit crunch if banks did not lend more, especially to small and medium-sized enterprises. This is a problem that could become prevalent across the EU.

What specific action is the Council taking to ensure that banks make loans available to business so that enterprises can sustain themselves, creating employment and growth, and contribute to the economic recovery?

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) The problem of ensuring that companies have sufficient access to capital and also the actions taken by Member States to that end have been a matter of concern to the Council for some time, as you are aware.

In January last year, the Council observed that the Member States had acted forcefully and decisively to free up the credit markets, amongst other things. In spring, the European Council stated the importance of continuing to apply economic recovery measures and called on the Commission and the Council to evaluate the efficacy of the measures adopted and to report back to the European Council in June.

The June European Council did, in fact, evaluate the efficacy of the measures adopted by the Member States to support the financial sector and the situation with regard to the stability and operation of financial markets. These results were fed back, in the form of a report, to the European Council itself. So the report was passed from the Council, in other words the Council of Ministers, to the European Council. The report was positive, indicating the existence of recapitalisation guarantees and mechanisms within Member States and concluded that Member States had played a crucial role in halting the downward spiral. I would remind you that the whole financial system was in danger of meltdown at the end of 2008.

There were therefore positive repercussions in allowing banks access to global finance, in turn, bolstering the flow of credit to the real economy. The Council appreciated that the measures adopted by the States had been significant in keeping credit channels open.

At the moment, the banking sector is even now under a certain amount of pressure with regard to recapitalisation and the Council therefore called on the Member States to individually recapitalise or restore their balance sheets in order to reduce uncertainty and make it easier to give credit.

By last month – December – the Council could see that Member States had applied a wide range of support measures with the aim of re-establishing financial stability. It underscored, however, that their recovery was still somewhat fragile and called on the Committee of European Banking Supervisors to provide regular information on the amount of capital available for additional borrowing.

We now have a series of measures in place: monitoring by the Council, on the one hand, and guidance from the European Council, on the other. The result has been an improvement, with the European Central Bank understandably acting to ensure bank liquidity, first and foremost, and access to loans by companies.

Gay Mitchell (PPE). – Madam President, can I say to the Minister that it is my experience that some banks – by no means all banks, but some banks, perhaps even a lot of banks – behaved irresponsibly during the financial market growth and some banks – perhaps, again, not all banks, but many banks – are continuing to behave irresponsibly in the time of the budding weeks and months of recovery.

I am aware, for example, of one particular company in Dublin, very well run, where the man is meticulous in meeting his commitments and the bank is far from helping him. It has taken the opportunity to reduce his overdraft and put him under pressure in his business – a business that is viable, a business that will survive this recession.

Please, Minister, take these banks in hand, tell them we are giving them taxpayers' money and we expect them to take the public interest into account, not just the interests of their shareholders – some of them very wealthy shareholders.

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) What I must tell you is that I believe that the Council and the European institutions are doing a good job. I believe that they have done a good job and that a vast contribution has been made to preventing a collapse in the availability of liquidity throughout the economy.

Ecofin has been following and continues to follow the measures which have been adopted by the Member States. It is doing this in a systematic manner. For example, Ecofin is currently tasked with observing how guarantees granted to banks are made available, whether or not there are restrictions set for companies in the financial sector and how credit finance is being carried out by the European Central Bank.

I would simply like to say that on 7 December 2009, Mr Trichet, the President of the European Central Bank himself said that there are no restrictions to supply for banks to borrow money from the European Central Bank. There are no restrictions to supply. If there are banks which do not make use of this, that is a matter for each of these financial bodies; however, there are no forms of restriction as far as the European Union or the European Central Bank are concerned.

In any case, the Council, together with the European Parliament, is, of course, more than happy to examine the present directives to be debated in relation to financial supervision systems or any other initiative which the Commission may put forward in this regard.

Catherine Greze (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Madam President, one of the priorities of the Council Presidency is to increase the influence of the EU on the international stage and, more specifically, in Latin America.

However, what kind of influence are we talking about? The current concept of international relations affords little space to democracy and human rights. Would the Council wish to use free trade agreements to support regimes which constantly violate human rights in Latin America?

I would like to cite the example of Peru, where acts of violence committed in Bagua are a terrible illustration of the way in which the government collaborates with multinationals by confiscating land from the indigenous populations for financial purposes. Already, almost 70% of the land is in the hands of multinationals and mining companies.

Another notorious example is that of Colombia, which is the most dangerous country for trade unionists, given the hundreds of people assassinated there. My question is as follows: do you intend to put the issue of human rights once again at the core of EU foreign policy in Latin America?

President. – I am very sorry but your question does not appear to be related at all to the last question. I am not sure whether or not you have participated in Question Time before, but you are allowed a supplementary question that relates to the main question. I am sorry, but I have to rule your question completely out of order. I suggest that you look at the Rules.

As far as I am aware, there were no supplementary questions at the time I closed the last question. I am therefore going to continue unless there is another question relating to the credit crunch/loans for business.

Mr Zemke, if that is what your question is about, then you have 30 seconds.

Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D). – (PL) Yes, that is precisely what my question is about.

We know perfectly well that the situation is very different in different Member States. In relation to this, if we are talking about help for business, I would like to ask a question about the situation in Greece, because the crisis in that country today is worse than anywhere else – are any special measures foreseen in relation to this?

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) I believe there is a later question which deals with exactly the same issue. I would ask the Member to remain until I answer on this and I will therefore respond to this as well as to the question which is on the agenda on exactly the same point.

I am referring to question number 9 on the list I have, or number 8 on the current one, from Mrs Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou: the Economic Situation in Greece.

President-in-Office of the Council. (ES) I am referring to question No 9 on the list I have, or No 8 on the current one, from Mrs Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou: the Economic Situation in Greece.

President. – Question 3 by **Bernd Posselt** (H-0479/09)

Subject: EU integration of Kosovo

What steps is the Council planning in order to fulfil the European Parliament's wish to see Kosovo included in EU programmes, pre-accession strategies and the Thessaloniki Process irrespective of the status question?

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) The Council has always reiterated the prospect of the Western Balkans joining Europe. This has undoubtedly been as part of foreign policy, in this case, Neighbourhood Policy, and even the enlargement policy of the European Union.

Hence, recently, the Council meeting in December 2009 confirmed the need to respect certain fair conditions, in the context of the stabilisation and association process for the Balkans.

With respect to Kosovo, the Council has already observed that, in this case, the Member States were deciding in accordance with national practice and international law.

As you are aware, the Kosovo unilateral declaration of independence is currently subject to court proceedings in the International Court of Justice. In any case, however, the Council has always taken Kosovo into account in its political relations with the Balkans and there has been a consensus between Member States and governments in this respect, for example, in terms of the liberalisation of visas, which Kosovo should benefit from, as the Council has always understood. In addition, the Commission's Communication regarding the means to reinforce Kosovo's political and socio-economic development has been welcomed.

The Council invited the Commission to take the necessary measures to support Kosovo's progress towards the European Union in accordance with the European perspective on the region, to which I previously referred.

The Council encouraged the Commission, and this was done with a consensus, of course, to initiate Kosovo's participation in the European Union's programmes, incorporating Kosovo into economic and fiscal supervision, setting in motion the second component of pre-accession help and reinforcing the stabilisation and association process dialogue.

These conclusions were endorsed by the last European Council on 10 and 11 December 2009.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – (DE) President-in-Office, I have two further specific questions. Firstly, do you believe that, during the Spanish Presidency, we will succeed in making headway with regard to visa arrangements for Kosovo, so that Kosovo will not remain a prison within a free Balkans region? Secondly, what will you do over time to try to get the Member States that do not currently do so to recognise Kosovo? However, as I said, the primary point is the visa arrangements.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) I referred to the visa system earlier.

The Council has always expressed its wish that Kosovo should also benefit from the visa system and from a possible liberalisation of visas throughout the region. As you know, the Commission is working on the details of this. Firstly, with respect to visa facilitation and then even visa liberalisation, so that it can present a proposal to the Council. Of course, certain requirements still need to be fulfilled regarding this and, in this respect, the Commission is working with the countries affected. It is, in this case, working with Kosovo and is informing the Council on a regular basis.

The idea of liberalisation of visas that may extend to areas neighbouring the European Union is an idea certainly shared by the Council and the Spanish Presidency and I believe that it is one of the political orientations that we must clearly encourage in Europe in the next few months, in terms of mobility, a capacity to communicate and to move around not only in the European Union but in all areas on the edges of the European Union. I believe it is a stance that will clearly benefit both sides: the European Union, which grants these visas, and these countries, which must naturally also do so on the basis of reciprocity.

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) Mr President-in-Office, in all the initiatives that the Council is taking in respect of Kosovo, will the views of Serbia and the information it provides also be adequately taken into account? Irrespective of the territorial issue with regard to Kosovo, Serbia is, of course, a key State in connection with the integration of the Western Balkans into the EU, and one which we should involve in all steps that we take.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Madam President, Mr López Garrido, I appreciate the stance being taken by your country, Spain, which has not recognised the independence of Kosovo, and your recent decision to withdraw Spanish troops which have served in Kosovo to date.

As we are in a period of economic crisis, I shall ask you the following prosaic question: how much did it cost Spain to keep troops there? Can you comment on the stand being taken by my country, Greece, which has the same force in Kosovo and, as we all know, has economic problems? Is it right to keep troops in Kosovo?

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) With respect to the first question on Serbia, of course Serbia is the strongest country in the Western Balkans, which we must always truly take into

account in any policy, in this instance, the policy on the European perspective, which is the European Union policy regarding the Western Balkans.

Of course, there is a recent agreement, which you will be aware of, on the liberalisation of visas for Serbia and recently also, as a further consequence of the deadlock in the interim association agreement with Serbia being broken, Serbia has made a formal application for accession to the European Union.

Provided this happens, we are in favour of applying Community regulations, of the Commission investigating this, of giving a technical opinion and duly deciding whether it is realistically possible to commence negotiations regarding accession through the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria. Thus, of course, Serbia is a country which carries obvious weight in the region and which has a European perspective, in our opinion. The majority of the Council, which is currently unanimous, was in favour of unblocking the interim agreement and it has heartily positioned itself in association with Serbia.

As for Kosovo, you asked me about a matter, honourable Member, which relates to domestic policy and to internal decisions by the Spanish Government. You know that, in this case, I am representing the Council, not one particular country but the Council, and therefore, in this case, regardless of whether I had specific data here, which I can hardly have in relation to the figure to which you refer, I feel that in this case, it is not possible for me to speak on behalf of one country because I am speaking on behalf of the European Council, a body of the European Union, which represents 27 countries.

President. – Question 4 by **Jim Higgins** (H-0486/09)

Subject: Devastation of the tropical rainforests

In view of the outcome of the world discussions on climate change in the December Copenhagen meeting, would the Council agree that, while European agriculture is a contributory factor in the production of CO₂ emissions, the devastation of the tropical rainforests in the Amazon basin more than outweighs the negative effects of European agricultural production in terms of CO₂ emissions?

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – (ES) The Council very much agrees with you, Mr Higgins, that agriculture and deforestation are factors which affect the emission of CO₂ into the atmosphere.

It is difficult to know which of these two factors has a greater effect. This is a scientific debate rather than a political one. However, in any case, action must be taken in both areas at the same time and this has always been the case.

When dealing with sustainable agriculture, we have always made progress in both areas. This has even led to the modification of the European Union's rural development policy. As part of the revision of the CAP reform, it is being taken into consideration for tackling challenges such as mitigation and adaptation to climate change and, as you are aware, within European policy development, common agricultural policy is considered to be an important factor to be taken into account in relation to a broader policy of tackling climate change.

In 2008, the Council backed proposals by the Commission on deforestation and the Commission proposed that the loss of forest areas, which are continually disappearing at an extensive rate, be halted by 2030 at the latest, and that mass tropical deforestation be reduced by at least 50% by 2020 compared to current levels.

We therefore need to help promote sustainable forest management. Dealing with deforestation, the destruction of the forests, clearly forms part of the Spanish Presidency's objectives and we understand that it is necessary to apply some of the instruments which the European Union has at its disposal, for example, the Non-Legally Binding Instrument, on all types of forest, and the European Union's action plan on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade which, for example, stipulates the creation of a legal framework to prevent the importing of illegally felled wood.

The European Union's position was along these lines and, despite the varying degrees of disappointment arising from the failure to fulfil some of the Copenhagen objectives, certain technical matters concerning the importance of tropical deforestation, which must be dealt with in developing countries as a key factor in preventing CO₂ emissions, were clarified.

In addition, it must be said that the conference adopted a decision regarding measures to reduce deforestation and the destruction of forests, boosting support for the improvement of the capacities of developing countries.

Jim Higgins (PPE). – I would like to wish the Spanish Presidency well. I think you are off to a very good start this week. So, *¡viva España!*

Can I just say in relation to the question itself that trees provide a carbon sink in that they absorb CO₂ emissions. The tragedy as regards the Amazon basin, 60% of which is in Brazil, is that the ruthless destruction of the beautiful Amazon forest is obvious: for example, 4.1 million km² have been destroyed so far. It removes the carbon sink; it destroys a way of life, by virtue of the fact that the Amazon Red Indians are being wiped out; thirdly, from the point of view of agricultural production, we know that the standards of production in no way meet EU standards of compliance.

At the end of the day, is there anything we can really do, or are we just talking?

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Mr Higgins, I would like to tell you that we very much agree with your reflections and also that the truth is that, in terms of biodiversity, the Spanish Presidency's objective is to intensify conservation and sustainable use, that is to say, to have an advanced, profound vision in the context of biodiversity. It will be one of the focal points, one of the priorities of our Presidency.

I appreciate the assessment you have made on the fine start to our Presidency and, furthermore, I also must tell you that the Commission has an idea to present a Green Paper at the start of this year on forest protection. This could be a very important initiative and work will be carried out on this front to respond to the phenomena that destroy these areas. You have mentioned some of these elements and there are others, for example, damage caused by forest fires.

There are many other elements to consider, but it is certain that this will be an important time to battle against the destruction of our trees, that this focus fits in very well with the biodiversity strategy and that this will be, without a doubt, one of the key elements of action taken by the European Union this year.

Chris Davies (ALDE). – I bring good cheer because one of the few successful outcomes of the Copenhagen conference was broad agreement on a mechanism that will enable developed countries to contribute financially to prevent the destruction of tropical rain forests.

So, would the Minister agree that one of the objectives of the Spanish Presidency should be to give this agreement substance and to secure a good indication from Europe about how much we are prepared to commit to prevent the destruction of rain forests?

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Mr President-in-Office, as we all know, certificates were introduced in order to achieve a reduction in CO₂ emissions, and this is what my question is about. Not so long ago, it came to light that there were underhand dealings and abuses of the system associated with emissions trading. To what extent have the accusations been investigated, or are they being investigated, and are there any changes planned in this regard?

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) I agree with the first speech. I believe that this is in line with what we have said. We must tackle tropical deforestation in developing countries. That is an essential factor in improving developing countries' capacities, including for their own benefit, and it must be done with the participation of indigenous peoples, of the local population and the establishment of national forestry control systems.

Thus, I believe that there has been significant progress made in Copenhagen in this regard and it cannot be denied that the European Union is maintaining a position of vanguard and of leadership in this respect and in other respects relating to the fight against climate change. The criticism which could be made of the European Union in relation to Copenhagen is that it has been streets ahead of what was achieved there.

The European Union wants to tackle this issue much more profoundly and so, this naturally takes account of the issues you raise, which are closely linked to action by the European Union in relation to the fight against climate change.

The specific case mentioned is, of course, within the realms of what is put into practice, the implementation of measures to combat climate change. Part of that is naturally preventing actions from being denatured by abuse of individual instruments and it is part of the difficulty that can arise from this measure or from any others and, of course, it forms part of the obligations that we must all monitor carefully.

President. – Question 5 by **Liam Aylward** (H-0487/09)

Subject: European-level action on combating Alzheimer's disease

It is estimated that 8.6 million people in Europe suffer from neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and with Europe's ageing population, the numbers suffering will continue to rise.

Can the Council give further details on the recently announced Joint Programming Initiative on combating these illnesses? How does the Council envisage coordinated European action alleviating the burden on patients, their families and their carers?

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – (ES) The Council attaches the greatest importance to Alzheimer's disease and to neurodegenerative diseases in general.

Control of this disease must be an essential objective for the European Union, also bearing in mind that the incidence of this disease is increasing at an exponential rate with age and that it doubles every 5 years from 75 years of age. Eurostat predicts that the number of people affected at the age of 65 years or over will double in the European Union between 1995 and 2050

There are two aspects to the question that you have asked, Mr Aylward. On the one hand, a pilot programme of joint planning, which the Council has already embarked upon, is required for neurodegenerative diseases and Alzheimer's disease in particular. This is set out in the Spanish Presidency's programme with which you are familiar. And, on that basis, the Commission tabled a proposal, as you know, which was adopted, in the Conclusions of the Council in December 2009. In addition, the Council has taken the resolution of this House, of the European Parliament, into account on this pilot initiative. On the other hand, with respect to the coordination of Europe's action, the Council is also in agreement with this line that we must clearly cooperate on a European level to combat this disease and other similar diseases, above all, because we must lighten the load suffered by patients and their families. It is calculated that for each person suffering from this disease, there are three family members affected, given that the burden falls on them to provide care. It is therefore important that there is cooperation on a European level in this respect.

In the joint report on social protection and inclusion which was adopted by the Council in 2008, Member States made a commitment to increase access to high quality services balancing out public and private competences and formal and informal care. The Member States have felt that the provision of services in a residential or a community setting is better or preferable to institutional care, although it is true that these high quality services continue to be a challenge for many Member States.

What the Council and the European Union have done is put forward these guidelines regarding this disease.

Liam Aylward (ALDE). – As you have rightly said, it is estimated that by 2050, the number of people with dementia will have doubled in Europe.

As a result, it is vital that Member State governments address the specific needs of people with dementia and provide essential support for carers.

At present, however, many European Union countries do not have plans in place to develop national strategies for dementia; so my question is: How will the Council specifically support Member States to make dementia a public health priority?

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – (ES) What we are planning to do under the Spanish Presidency is to encourage a directive, which we consider crucial, on advanced therapies and assistance in the case of chronic and non-transmissible diseases. This is something which has to be tackled at the highest level and therefore should also go hand in hand with the promotion of patients' quality and security improvement initiatives and the work conducted by the high-level Public Health Group.

Therefore, we need to provide assistance – as the European Union often does not have the necessary powers to be able to do this – by guiding, coordinating, cooperating, producing a synergy between Member States' actions with respect to these neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's disease, and also by helping indirectly.

It is true that Member States are responsible for providing the most direct assistance to families, for example, and even to non-governmental organisations, although within the EU Public Health Programme, it is possible to gain access to specific funds on behalf of non-governmental organisations in fact, which is also an

interesting, albeit indirect way of being able to help those affected and their families who are very directly affected by Alzheimer's and other degenerative diseases and, in this sense, are very dependent.

Jim Higgins (PPE). – I wish to thank the Council for the reply. Can I ask the Council what its attitude is in relation to the tube-feeding of patients with Alzheimer's, which is a widespread practice in the United Kingdom and Ireland? I do not know about the rest of Europe.

What we are talking about is feeding a tube into the abdomen. The Council spoke about guidelines. Guidelines and standards are very important, but the justification for this particular procedure is that it gives the patient sufficient nourishment in order to ensure that, even though they have dementia – they have refused food and so on – that they will actually live, but to me, there is something very bizarre about it. What is your attitude to it, and are you going to set down standards?

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) Bearing in mind that neuro-degenerative diseases affect a huge number of people and, unfortunately, some countries have inadequate facilities for diagnosing and treating these diseases, I would like to ask you whether you are in favour of setting up European treatment centres which, based on a growing number of patients, may encourage research in the field in order to discover solutions for preventing and treating these diseases.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) These two issues which have been raised by two Members obviously require a scientific opinion, so to speak. I believe that, in that respect, there are groups and initiatives within the European Union which are the appropriate forum to work on the suggestions and observations which you have raised. For example, the pilot programme for combating neuro-degenerative conditions and, in particular, Alzheimer's disease, on which the Commission submitted a proposal for a Council recommendation, which is currently under way.

On the other hand, as you know, I have previously mentioned the existence of a high-level group for joint planning in connection with these conditions which, in this case, are chronic and not contagious. This group is carrying out close monitoring of this pilot initiative so as to define and specify certain matters and, therefore, to enable much more specific decision making, such as you raised in your interventions. I think that is the right place to deal with this matter.

Up until now, this high-level group has agreed on an approach and a strategic research programme. There are 24 countries taking part and, at the moment, they are establishing their management structures and deciding upon their plan of action. The next meeting of this group will occur in this term of the Spanish Presidency, and I think that from thereon, they will be able to tackle questions such as those that you have raised in a very specific, direct and immediate way.

I think that is the place and the forum. That is what it is there for. That is what this high-level group was set up for: to work and prepare subsequent decisions.

President. – I can understand that Mr Higgins will probably not be happy, but I think it is a difficult issue and one that probably deserves a question of its own at some point.

President. – Question 6 by **Harlem Désir** (H-0489/09)

Subject: Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

At the 'Protect, Respect, Remedy' conference in Stockholm on 10 and 11 November 2009, the current Presidency and the future Spanish Presidency called on the European Union and the Member States to take the lead in CSR. In March 2007, Parliament asked for a mechanism to be put in place to make it easier for victims of corporate abuse to bring damages claims against companies in European courts. It also asked that the responsibility of company directors be extended to include the duty to minimise the negative impact of their activities on the environment and human rights and that clear reporting standards be implemented at an international level. In its statement, the Council underlined the progress made, but also recommended working within a common framework, explicitly mentioning the State's responsibility to protect and ensure that human rights be respected by the corporate world and penalties imposed in the event of violations.

What binding legal instruments does the Council propose to ensure that companies respect the principles of due diligence and reporting and are punished in the event of violations of human or environmental rights within their area of responsibility?

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) I must refer to the conference on the social responsibility of businesses which took place in Stockholm on 10 and 11 November 2009.

The Swedish Presidency, which organised the conference, and the then future and now current Spanish Presidency came to the conclusion that on this aspect, the European Union should take the global lead, and should serve as an example on the important subject which Mr Désir raises with this question. This subject is the social responsibility of businesses in terms of creating markets, fighting corruption, protecting the environment, and defending human dignity and human rights in the work place, especially given that the European Union is the largest economy in the world and the greatest contributor to development cooperation. Europe plays host to many multinational businesses. It is a very suitable place to take on this leadership.

Essentially, social responsibility has three components – protect, respect and remedy. The state should protect, and this means legislation, rules for development as regards violations of human rights, especially on the part of businesses. There is a responsibility in business to respect those human rights and there is a responsibility for all parties involved to guarantee access to adequate remedy, with the aim of protecting and improving those human rights.

I wish to point out that we now have another instrument available, which is the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the citizens of Europe, which is legally binding and which means that, for the first time, including at a European level, there is that protection in respect of the matters to which the idea of social responsibility refers.

It is necessary for all interested parties to participate. It is necessary to continue dialogue with non-Member States, with civil society, with the unions, with businesses, including small and medium-sized businesses, to bring about that concept, that trio that we mentioned: protect, respect and remedy. The Spanish Presidency will continue to promote it. In particular, on 25-26 March, it will host a conference in Palma de Mallorca, which will deal with the question of institutionalising the social responsibility of businesses, from the point of view of its relationship with social dialogue.

The conference will study the possibility of including this framework in the list of instruments that the EU and its Member States will be able to use to accomplish their activities, including in the context of a matter alluded to this morning in the presentation of the Spanish Presidency's programme, which is the EU 2020 Strategy. There, too, the aim of social responsibility must have a presence.

Harlem Désir (S&D). – (FR) Thank you, Minister, for your reply. I congratulate you on your initiative to hold this conference in Palma de Mallorca in March, as it will follow on from the conference held in Stockholm.

The problem is that we have to contend with multinational companies; as you said, Europe has to take the lead in corporate social responsibility, but it also has to take the lead as regards the conduct of European companies located outside Europe. The problem is that these subsidiaries are separate legal entities. Are you prepared to envisage a legal instrument by which parent companies would be obliged to assume responsibility for the conduct of their subsidiaries located in other parts of the world when they fail to meet their obligations in relation to the environment or to respect for human or workers' rights? Because, if this obligation is not imposed, European companies will slip through the net of this corporate social responsibility that Europe wishes to promote due to the conduct of their subsidiaries located elsewhere in the world.

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) I think that the European Union needs to facilitate best practice across Europe, and that this will produce the legislative proposals which can improve this situation.

We need to take into account that part of social responsibility, which we will call the legally binding part, which, above all, has to do with respecting human rights. There is also a voluntary part made up of optional practices. It is therefore important for forums to be created at European level and beyond to deal with these matters. Some of them are already operating. In fact, for example, the high-level group of the Member States meets every six months to share experiences relating to social responsibility.

I also believe that in this context of an economic crisis, it is even more important to work along these lines and to work towards competitiveness and environmental protection, connecting it with social inclusion. This is particularly the case in 2010, which is the Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

I think that this should be the starting point, and that it is in that context, in something that is still, to a certain extent, pioneering, where these forums should be shaped, where everyone concerned should take part in a dialogue which should give rise to the subsequent measures. I think, however, that we should tackle this

stage of the dialogue, which is absolutely fundamental, via joint action which, so far, has been practically unprecedented.

Ádám Kósa (PPE). – (HU) I would like to welcome the suggestion of the Minister for highlighting best practices. We are all aware that the EU has a significantly ageing population, and companies have a responsibility for maintaining the health of people who go on long-term disability. Does the Council plan on putting pressure on companies to use the expertise of retired people in society? That is, allowing them to remain active and not to stop after retirement.

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) President-in-Office, the issue you mentioned has occupied us for a very long time. Much of what has been said could have been said 10 or 15 years ago. I have some specific questions in this regard. Do you agree that, in order to properly implement and make visible the adoption of corporate social responsibility, sanctions as well as incentives would be necessary? Do you think that a system of naming and shaming could be introduced by the European Union? When we consider how often products are labelled, could you also envisage a clear reference being placed on companies' products with regard to whether they comply with these basic rules of corporate social responsibility or whether they contravene them? We are used to so many other types of labelling. Why not use this method with regard to social matters, too?

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) I agree with the first speech, in that I believe that it is the basis for what I called the European Union's dialogue with non-Member States, civil society, unions, enterprises and all interested parties, and, of course, the participation of the people to which you refer, honourable Member, is absolutely essential.

I believe that the time has come to discuss this and also what you referred to, but I think that it should be as part of an overall, comprehensive approach to a question that is going to be tackled, probably for the first time, or almost the first time in the high-level group that I referred to and in the conference to be held in March. That is where I believe the discussions should take place and it is the best way to achieve our objectives.

Sometimes it is better to take the path of incentives, other times it is better to take the path of sanctions. The path of sanctions is not always the best one. I think that this requires an integrated study, because I think that we need an integrated vision and a series of measures, not successive individual measures, but ultimately, an integrated vision of the whole problem, and of the issue that it represents, which is a great opportunity: social responsibility.

President. – Question 7 by **Hans-Peter Martin** (H-0491/09)

Subject: EU financial supervision

The President of the ECB, Jean-Claude Trichet, said to the European Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs on Monday 7 December 2009, with regard to the topic of EU financial supervision and agreement by EU finance ministers, 'that is not necessarily the best solution', because there are, for example, no provisions for the planned EU authorities to have direct powers to issue instructions.

How will the Council ensure that transnational banks, insurance companies, financial service providers, investment funds and hedge funds do not evade effective supervision because national competences continue to be fragmented?

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Mr Martin, clearly, I think the EU is tackling proper supervision of the financial system at European level, and surely, in this case, we have needed to extricate ourselves from a severe crisis. It is carrying this out from two essential dimensions which are laid down in the financial supervision directives, the six directives which the Commission set out last year and which, at the moment, will require agreement between the Council and this Parliament. We intend to get this agreement completed during the Spanish Presidency. Therefore, we will mainly be discussing it with this House.

On the one hand, there is what is known as macroprudential supervision, through the European Systemic Risk Board, which seeks to prevent serious crises, to guarantee financial stability and to reduce disruptions to the financial system. And, on the other, there is what is known as microprudential supervision, which I think is what Mr Martin was basically referring to in his question.

These are the three European authorities on banking, insurance and the stock market. The aim of this supervision is more in-depth supervision, forgive the repetition, and reducing disturbances in individual financial entities, therefore protecting the clients of such entities.

The Council, as I have said, approved a common position in this regard, once and for all. Firstly, last year in October, the Council gave political affirmation, and political confidence to that macrosupervision, and, in December, to microsupervision and the whole legislative package. This is something, as I was saying, that is subject to the ordinary legislative procedure and, therefore, to what Parliament agrees with the Council.

These three committees should be up and running. We would like the Directives to be adopted, even, if possible, in the first semester of the Spanish Presidency, but in any case, up and running by the end of 2010. This is the Council's objective.

Consequently, we expect fruitful cooperation with the European Parliament so that we can bring this important step forward to a conclusion, which I believe is historic and is in line with the approaches which have emerged from outside Europe, from the G20, as the United States is preparing a similar regulation. We believe this is one of the challenges that we must face in order to avoid another crisis such as this one, which originated in the financial system, through a lack of regulation and through the irresponsibility, as the Member previously said, of certain leaders within the financial system.

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) Thank you for your statements, Mr López Garrido. You mentioned the macrosupervision area of the European Systemic Risk Board. You are surely aware that there is already a great deal of criticism in this regard, firstly with regard to the size of the Board, because it has, once again, been put together according to a typical European Proporz system. Do you see a risk here, too, like many others do, that it will not be possible for this Board to work efficiently?

The second problem with regard to this European Systemic Risk Board is its lack of independence. Do you think that you could go a step further during the Spanish Presidency and attempt to ensure that it has a greater degree of independence and make any appropriate improvements with regard to the size of the Board, because it will hardly be possible for it to work in any meaningful way on this basis?

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) I believe that there is a proposal made by the Commission. There has been an agreement, an agreement was finally reached, a consensus in the Council, which was not easy. The Swedish Presidency and the Commission had to work hard to obtain this agreement in the Ecofin Council, and here it is. Now it is here in the European Parliament and it is the Parliament that has to take this approach, as you and others point out.

This is the place to achieve that agreement between the two spheres. There is a consensus at Council level and we will see if we can achieve consensus with the European Parliament.

I think that these matters you have raised are, like others, perfectly arguable and debatable, and I am sure we will come to an agreement, because it is absolutely necessary, between the two legislative bodies of the Union: the Council and the European Parliament.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – As part of the proposed financial supervision, would the Spanish Presidency consider making recommendations as regards best practice to cap the salaries of the CEOs of the major banks, and also to limit the grotesque bonus culture that has fuelled much of the difficulties and landed us in the mire we are now in?

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Madam President, Mr López Garrido, I want to link the question of financial supervision by the European Union to speculative action by mutual funds, including funds domiciled in the European Union, in the City of London. Articles report that fund managers are betting on a fall in the euro, Greek Government and other bonds and on debt and deficit, thereby exacerbating borrowing.

Are you therefore in a position to tell me what specific measures can be taken to protect the economies of the Member States of the European Union from speculative attacks by high-risk mutual funds, including funds domiciled in the European Union?

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Yes, I think it is perfectly possible to debate good practice in relation to financial entities. We are opening a debate which is centred around these financial supervision systems and I believe this is the perfect place to work along those lines and to be able to contribute some of the elements to which you have referred, Mr Kelly, even as part of the directives.

I also think that there is room for the proposal made by the second speaker within these directives, which you will be able to debate in this Chamber, for example, in relation to the regulation of hedge funds, which is within the supervision requirements which have been discussed, or something which the current President of the Council of the Union mentioned here this morning, the eradication of tax havens.

All this, these ideas which have been raised, have their place, and will fit perfectly into the debate which will take place in this Chamber over the next few months on reform, as the European Council called it at the time, a complete and actual reform of the supervision of the financial system. A thorough and important reform, therefore, in which all the issues and debates that you have brought up will have a place.

President. – Question 9 by **Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou** (H-0496/09)

Subject: Economic situation in Greece and role of the euro area

The message emerging from the recent summit meeting regarding the serious economic problems besetting Greece and the question of support for countries finding themselves in such a situation were contradictory. While Chancellor Merkel was at pains to stress the shared responsibility of all euro area countries for the fate of one of its members, Mr Reinfeldt took the view that Greece's problems were home-grown and must be resolved from within.

What is the Presidency's position regarding solidarity between Member States, particularly within the euro area, where one of them is faced with the prospect of insolvency? Is it in favour of European Central Bank loans and guarantees for Member State governments in order to curb speculative profiteering and prevent public debt from spiralling into a vicious circle as a consequence of downgraded credit ratings?

Does it believe that, aside from the punitive remedies prescribed under the Stability and Growth Pact, more effective preventive checks are needed, coupled with measures to shore up employment and growth in debt-laden countries, before their economic situation worsens drastically?

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) In the treaties of the European Union, there is a clear division of competences. The economic policies of the Member States are of common interest to the Union but, at the same time, the national budgets are the competence of each Member State.

Given that there is a single currency in 16 countries of the Union and, at the same time, a view to extending that, as the idea of monetary union is something which appears in the Maastricht Treaty as the most all-inclusive objective possible, there is, of course, observance of the rules of the Member States with regard to their budgets, because this affects the economy and the monetary system as a whole.

Therefore, it is necessary to avoid excessive public deficits, which is something essential to the functioning of economic and monetary union, and out of the two, the one which has developed most, it must be acknowledged, monetary union, not so much economic union.

Hence, the Stability Pact and hence, in Maastricht in its time, today Article 123 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union forbids deficits or the granting of credit to cover those deficits by the European Central Bank and the central banks of the Member States whose currency is the euro. It also says in the treaty that neither the Union nor the Member States will assume or respond to the obligations of the central government or other public authorities of another Member State.

Therefore, each Member state must underwrite its debt commitment and the Council has stated that all Member States must do this, and remains confident that Greece and the other Member States will make the necessary decisions to correct their economic imbalance in order to conserve the strength of their national economic and financial environment.

It must be remembered that an excessive deficit procedure anticipates supervision of economic policies in justified cases. The Council is going to debate the case of Greece, we hope, in February. It is probable that then, whilst dependant on the Commission's right of initiative, recommendations will be adopted and, therefore, strategies set out, in such a way that the European Union can express its interest and its involvement in difficult situations or circumstances which certain Member States may experience.

Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou (PPE). – (EL) Madam President, Mr López Garrido, you have reminded us of the articles of the treaty that deal with the excessive deficit procedure. Parliament knows these articles. However, I have a feeling that you could give me more information about what Mr Zapatero meant when he spoke of solidarity in the euro area, about solidarity in countries with particular financial problems. Is there perhaps a possibility of debating better financial coordination between the centre and regions as far

as subsidies are concerned? Is there perhaps a possibility of better fiscal coordination in order to avoid the fiscal and social dumping which is already burdening the European Union and has particular consequences on certain countries? Can you tell me more about what you said earlier in connection with what Mr Zapatero meant by solidarity?

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) The European Union is a region of the world where solidarity is practised very visibly. For example, in the case of Greece, or my country Spain, we have experienced great solidarity on the part of the European Union, through European funds and through the Structural Funds, which are essential elements of European solidarity policy which will continue.

They have no comparison anywhere else in the world. This has enabled marked progress in many countries, something which benefits the countries as a whole, whilst opening up markets. At the same time, there has been the transfer of certain amounts towards the modernisation of a region. This is a very clear example of solidarity. These are funds which, naturally, have to be used correctly and which are monitored by the European Union, as is perfectly logical. Hence, there is solidarity.

Another form of solidarity is that which we can take very clearly from the treaty. You referred particularly to the treaty. The treaty establishes the obligation of Member States to coordinate their economic policies, their social policies and their employment policies. Article 5 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union sets it out clearly and there, also, the solidarity of the European Union is expressed: in the joint discussion and joint adoption of objectives with a view to a coordinated economic policy.

Many of the current problems in various European countries as a consequence of the crisis would not have been so intense if there had been economic union much earlier, because economic union stopped. Monetary union moved forward, but economic union stopped and those synergies of coordination of economic policies in the European Union did not emerge, which, in short, is what should happen. This is what the treaty ultimately proposes

The Europe 2020 strategy, the objectives which we must agree on regarding investment in education, the specialisation and division of labour, and on the fight against climate change, are also elements to agree on and for solidarity. There, too, solidarity is expressed very clearly in a continent, in a European Union which must always be as united as possible. However, of course, that does not prevent the treaty, quite logically, from also demanding responsibility from the Member States on their level of debt or on the credit that they take on. That, of course, is the responsibility of each State. However, there is a whole context of a market-place, social policies, structural policies, regional policies and, in the future, I hope, coordination of economic, social and employment policies, which is, undoubtedly, a context of solidarity.

That is the most suitable, most in-depth and far-reaching form of a policy of solidarity in the Union.

Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D). – (PL) I would still like to ask a question, because you did say, Minister, that the very serious situation in Greece would be raised at the meeting of the Commission in February this year. It is true that the crisis in Greece is very serious, but we all well know that it may, unfortunately, spread. I would like to ask this: apart from the forum of the Commission, should you not start a more substantive discussion with the European Central Bank? I think it, too, is an important body, which should be more active here, concerning the situation in Greece.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) I believe that each body has its own area of work. This is one of the most important characteristics of the structure of European economic and monetary union and, furthermore, that which gives it credibility.

It is true that the Council will discuss the case of Greece, logically enough as it is one of the Member States of the Union and, obviously, what happens in another European country affects us all. We are affected by what happens in countries outside Europe, not to mention in a place where there is a single market and a single currency for 16 countries.

It is logical that it is debated within the limits set out in the treaty and, furthermore, that it is done based on the budgetary and economic strategy considered to be appropriate to the current circumstances, and which, in this case, is recommended to Greece, from which it will, no doubt, benefit.

The European Central Bank has its own duties in the treaty, duties with regard to financial stability and price stability, from an independent position. The independence of the European Central Bank is an essential principle of the European Union which affords great credibility to our economic and financial system, and our common currency, the euro. That criterion of independence should be respected, because it is a

fundamental element of the economic and monetary union that we adopted several years ago in the European Union.

President. – Minister, thank you very much for your participation in this first Question Time with your Presidency.

Questions which have not been answered for lack of time will receive written answers (see Annex).

That concludes Question Time.

(The sitting was suspended at 19.15 and resumed at 21.00)

IN THE CHAIR: MRS KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU

Vice-President

13. Composition of committees: see Minutes

14. Democratisation in Turkey (debate)

President. – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on democratisation in Turkey.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Ladies and gentlemen, I have pleasure in addressing this Chamber regarding a matter of extreme importance for the European Union, which is the matter of relations with Turkey and, more specifically, the democratisation of Turkey, which seems to be the main objective of the debate, a matter directly related to the Union, not just indirectly, but also directly, bearing in mind that Turkey is a candidate country.

It has the status of a candidate country that has been negotiating for several years to join the European Union and, as is known, among the political requirements of Copenhagen, we require that a country that wishes to join the Union has stable political institutions and guarantees democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for minorities.

Therefore, Turkey must fulfil these requirements. There are several chapters open for possible negotiation. Some are open, others are not yet open, other negotiations are stalled, and it is plain that Turkey is of great strategic importance to the Union. Firstly, because it is a country which has a European perspective and, furthermore, because it is a large country of growing strategic importance from the point of view of energy supply and it is a country with unquestionable economic and also, of course, political relevance. Turkey, by the way, is part of NATO and, therefore, in that respect, for some of the countries of the European Union, Turkey is also an associate in the sphere of that military alliance.

It must be said that Turkey has experienced positive changes. The European perspective has given Turkey particular motivation to follow a path, in a positive sense, towards democratising changes and democratic consolidation. The current Turkish Government has even launched what it calls the 'democratic initiative' as a response to the need for a series of institutional changes to the Turkish political system en route to its democratisation. In relation to the European Union, its interest has even been demonstrated within the government, with the appointment of Minister Bağış, to whom I have spoken many times, specifically responsible for negotiation with the European Union, which is his portfolio.

Hence, we can see how, on the one hand, Turkey has launched reforms, incentivised, no doubt, by the European perspective, but, on the other, inadequacies still clearly persist in the specific area on which this debate is focused, the area of democracy and respect for fundamental liberties.

We still consider as insufficient the levels of protection and the guarantee of certain freedoms, such as freedom of expression, of the press, of religion, or the rights of unions, the rights of minority groups, the rights of women and children, the fight against discrimination and equality between men and women. This has led us to propose to Turkey, as part of this process, a series of constitutional reforms, without which it would be difficult to move forward in any of those areas.

Therefore, as established in the framework for negotiations with Turkey, the European Union wishes to move forward along these lines and, what is more, will direct Turkey when necessary and when it considers that a certain type of measure is not moving in that direction or could make progress difficult.

This actually happened on the occasion of the decision adopted on 11 December by the Turkish Constitutional Court to dissolve the DTP (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*) and to prevent a number of its democratically elected representatives from carrying out any political activity. The Presidency of the Council expressed its concern about that decision adopted by the Court at the time and there has clearly been a voice from the European Union sharply pointing out its concern at that decision. Furthermore, that voice is encouraging the necessary reforms in Turkish legislation to adapt the regulation on political parties to certain recommendations formulated by the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe and the relevant regulations of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms which, by the way, has been signed and ratified by the Turkish State and submitted to the jurisdiction, in this case, of the Strasbourg Court.

Hence I conclude, Madam President. The Presidency of the Council will continue giving much importance to this matter. Every aspect of the reform process currently taking place in Turkey will be closely followed and, in any case, within a framework which we consider to be positive, which is a framework of negotiation and association for membership. We think this is a strategic framework that we must continue with, and the intention of the current Spanish Presidency of the Council is that new avenues of negotiation should continue to open up and therefore, as happened last year with Turkey, we would be able to go into depth in those negotiations.

Olli Rehn, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, I welcome this very important debate on Turkish democratisation. I remind us all that the Turkish EU accession process remains of strategic importance for the European Union.

Democratic reforms and the democratic transformation of Turkey reinforce stability and security in Turkey and in the wider neighbourhood of the EU and Turkey. Progress in Turkey inspires reformers and acts as a catalyst for democracy and human rights in the whole region.

Of course, progress is not always straightforward with positive developments. We also see developments that give reason for concern, and when this is the case, we raise these issues in a very serious manner with the Turkish authorities and we use those instruments that we have, thanks to the conditionality of the EU accession perspective.

When a society like Turkey experiences fundamental political changes, it is rarely the case that there is always full clarity or a direction amidst events.

The democratic opening of Turkey in relation to the Kurdish population is an example of such a development. In the summer of 2009, the Turkish Government launched this democratic opening aimed at raising democratic and living standards for all Turkish citizens. This important initiative addresses the Kurdish issue through dialogue and within the framework of Turkish democratic institutions. A number of landmark reforms have been carried out to date. Some of these were next to impossible only a few years ago: think of the Kurdish-language TV programmes, which are now broadcast by private and public broadcasters. They are a telling example of such welcome changes and transformation.

But the recent setbacks in the democratic opening are, indeed, reason for serious concern. We regret the decision of the Constitutional Court of Turkey in December to close the Democratic Society Party (DTP). Following the closure of the DTP, several party members – including elected mayors – were arrested in the context of an anti-terror investigation. Simultaneously, PKK terrorist attacks continue unabated in the south-east and put the lives of Turkish soldiers at risk. The tense political climate has also been fuelled by celebrations in the wake of the return of PKK members and sympathisers from northern Iraq. Nationalist circles in Turkey have seized this opportunity to attack the government on its policies and on the democratic opening itself.

Following this backlash against the democratic opening, I welcome last week's announcement by the Turkish Government to carry the democratic opening further. The democratic transformation of Turkey is a forceful testimony of the continued soft power of the EC accession perspective when used fairly and firmly and with vigour and consistency.

It is not an easy process but one in which the journey is at least as important as the destination. Let us keep it alive and make it work for the joint benefit of the EU and Turkey.

Ria Oomen-Ruijten, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (NL) Madam President, Commissioner Rehn, I realise that this debate on Turkey, on enlargement, may be the last time I speak to you. In any case, I should like to thank

you for the information you have always been willing to provide in discussions with us, with me. My very warm thanks to you.

President-in-Office of the Council, Mr López Garrido, ladies and gentlemen, today's debate is not about opening chapters. It is about democratisation – certain aspects of democratisation, in particular – as the progress report on Turkey and Parliament's vision are on the agenda for the next part-session in Strasbourg. I agree with Commissioner Rehn that it is terribly important that Turkey move towards democracy. I should like to congratulate Turkey emphatically on all the efforts it has already made in this field, including with regard to the Kurdish issue. After all, who would have thought 10 years ago, five years ago even, that there would now be television programmes in Kurdish?

When, in mid-2009, Turkey launched what it called the 'democratic opening' initiative, this produced an unprecedented debate – not only a debate in the parliament, but also an unprecedented debate in the media. At that time, I hoped that debate would produce very tangible, firmly rooted rights for all Turkish citizens at long last. In October, I congratulated all my Turkish counterparts on daring to hold that debate in spite of public opposition. I have called on them to follow the debate with very specific measures to flesh out this opening. Following all the positive energy that had been put into this, however, Turkey's dark side then reared its head again, as the ruling of the Turkish Constitutional Court brought renewed terrorist attacks. There was a wave of arrests of Democratic Society Party (DTP) members, and the threat of arrest still hangs over members of the Turkish Parliament. This also threatens to put an end to this opening and I have a nasty feeling about this. Whilst I regret the decision of the Constitutional Court, I understand that the same Court is calling for the implementation of the recommendations of the Venice Commission. This House has always condemned violence and terrorism, and has argued in favour of political solutions. After all, only dialogue within Turkish society and legally guaranteed sustainable rights can bring peace, security and prosperity for Turkish citizens, and will also be of great benefit to us.

Richard Howitt, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Madam President, the announcement of the democratic opening last year gave hope of a genuine breakthrough in securing respect for Kurdish linguistic, cultural and human rights in Turkey and closing the door on the years of terrorism and violence.

Yet tonight Parliament joins Council and Commission in expressing our deep concern that what is closed instead with December's Constitutional Court decision is the political party which commands the majority of the vote in the country's Kurdish majority areas, and is what the country's human rights association calls the 'natural negotiator' on behalf of the Kurdish people.

Two years ago, I personally attended, as an observer, the party's congress with some 20 000 people, and saw and heard for myself their legitimacy in the eyes of their own supporters.

I acknowledge that the closure of political parties was opposed by the Turkish Prime Minister in his statement in the wake of the decision, and today's Turkish press reports the governing party's announced intention to prevent further unwarranted closures by bringing the constitution into line with Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights. These promises must be realised.

But it is difficult for any of us to reconcile Turkey's call for guerrillas to come down from the mountains with the fact that other members of the same community who have chosen the path of democracy are then shown lined up in handcuffs and marched into jail. Between 700 and 1 000 of the party's members are reported to be imprisoned, many for simply speaking their own language in public.

In this European Parliament, we should particularly regret the jailing of nine of the party's elected mayors and the banning of two of its MPs.

In our Parliament, as in theirs, the reason that we have parliamentary immunity is so that we, as representatives of the people, can speak out without fear. The fear that we have to combat, for those of us intent on seeing Turkey join the European Union, is the misplaced fear amongst some of the majority population that, in a multi-ethnic country, what we call minority rights are a threat to the unity of the state. In modern Europe, quite simply, they are not.

So, finally, a party whose Turkish name translates as the 'Democratic Society Party' is gone, but its aim of a democratic society in a modern Turkey must not be lost.

Sophia in 't Veld, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (NL) Madam President, first of all, I should like to join Mrs Oomen-Ruijten in offering warm thanks to Commissioner Rehn for all his efforts over recent years. I

also welcome the new zest that has been introduced by the Spanish Presidency when it comes to the negotiations with Turkey.

Ladies and gentlemen, I, too, regret the ruling of the Turkish Constitutional Court. Clearly, this is a step backwards, but let us hope that it is only one backward step and that it will be followed by several steps forward, as we must also recognise that the current Turkish Government has made clear efforts to set democratisation in motion and also to give the Kurds their rightful place in society and in the political system. I would point out, though, that if we want to support this process of democratisation, development and reform in Turkey, we need to make an unambiguous commitment to Turkey's full membership. I believe that we need to give the Turkish people, too – not just the Turkish political class – a shot in the arm, and that we should not waver, discuss interim solutions or move the goalposts during the game. We must make an unambiguous commitment. This also goes for all the Turkish political parties, and so I wish to call on them to bury the hatchet in this regard and make concerted efforts towards reform.

On a recent visit to the country as a member of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, I noticed enormous progress within civil society. After all, Turkey is more than just the politicians and negotiators; it is also the people. I see that the Turkish people are indeed taking up the challenge and are working hard to reform their own society. We must give this our wholehearted support. Therefore, I would urge the strengthening of the pillar that was agreed back then: not only the negotiations, but also the investment in getting to know each other. That was explicitly the second strand. I hope that this House will also make an unambiguous commitment to supporting the accession process.

Hélène Flautre, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner Rehn, thank you for remaining with us at this late hour to discuss democratisation in Turkey, a subject on which you have done a great deal of work, for which I thank you.

I believe that there were very many of us who, when the government announced its democratic initiative, its democratic opening-up, recognised just how bold a step this was and, at the same time, believed that this huge ambition represented a long road ahead, a road that would probably be full of pitfalls; the pitfalls appeared fairly quickly.

The first act, as you said, was the dissolution of the DTP, but I also note that, alongside the ban on the DTP, the ban on engaging in political activity, which affects several elected members of its party, also eliminates the figures who were most heavily involved in the democratic and political dialogue to resolve the Kurdish issue. This leaves a question mark hanging over this decision.

Next, there is also this wave of arrests which, today, are genuinely removing political leaders and therefore also the spokesmen on this Kurdish issue. Yet the Kurdish issue is central to the democratisation process in Turkey! Primarily because it is systemic, because it represents many years of suffering, violence, conflict and war, the tragic scars of which are still in evidence today; and these scars are also economic, social, cultural and political.

This Kurdish issue is also placing a huge strain on the democratisation process. It is placing a strain on freedom of expression, on freedom of the press, on the rights of citizens and on the fight against torture. And when I see today how anti-terrorism legislation is being used as a cover for political reprisals, I say that now really is the time when we have to support the government and expect it to take another extremely ambitious initiative to emerge from this situation because, as we know, not all the established groups in Turkey are interested in a democratic settlement of the Kurdish issue. We are well aware of this fact, as we have been since the beginning.

Therefore, Turkey now needs our support, our unfailing support in this process of democratisation. My fellow Member, Mrs in 't Veld, is right to say that this unfailing support must include the renewal of that promise of membership once the democratisation process has been completed; it is absolutely crucial to say this.

Next, the government will eventually have to produce reforms, which will inevitably have to lead to a new draft constitution. Immediate reforms will obviously relate to legislation on political parties. They will also relate to electoral reform – as a matter of extreme urgency – and to the independence of the judicial system. These fundamental pillars for a democratic state in Turkey must now be courageously and determinedly promoted by the Turkish Government.

Moreover, this government must also implement initiatives to encourage consensus and reconciliation, because polarisation of society and of the political forces in Turkey would have a disastrous effect on the search for the consensus needed for the adoption of a new constitution, which we are all hoping for.

Charles Tannock, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Madam President, Turkey's political system is sufficiently mature now to be considered a pluralist democracy. Political debate is robust and voters have a genuine choice. Moreover, Turkey is a member of the Council of Europe, which, of course, binds its government to common standards of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Evidently, a stable and permanent democracy is a precondition for eventual membership of the EU. There are now, however, perhaps two areas of concern.

The first is Turkey's history of military intervention in the political process. While the army is undoubtedly an important guarantor of secularism and stability, any attempt to undermine an elected government would scupper Turkey's EU ambitions for good.

The second concern is the dominance of the AKP in the political landscape, which leads some observers to fear the gradual development of a de facto one-party state. Provided that happens democratically, we cannot object, even if some have expressed concerns about the relatively high threshold for parliamentary representation at 10% in Turkey, which of course squeezes smaller parties out of the parliamentary process.

However, the AKP's mildly Islamist leanings also give rise to concern in the views of some, and the party's popularity tends to indicate a fundamental paradigm shift in the nature of Turkish society. Until now, the secular Kemalist tradition has served Turkey's Euro-Atlantic leanings very well, but its gradual decline due to demographic changes would tend to indicate that those who believe in the power of Atatürk's vision have rather taken it too much for granted. For the good of Turkish society, democracy needs to be pluralist, secular and built on a bed-rock of respect for human rights, including those of its Kurdish minorities.

One concern in addition, of course, is Turkey's membership of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), where such common Western values as we all share in the European Union are not evident because the OIC cites Sharia law as a basis for human rights in the Islamic world. This, in my view, will also generate some serious conflicts of interest were Turkey one day to join the European Union.

Takis Hadjigeorgiou, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (EL) Madam President, as a Cypriot MEP, when I talk of Turkey, I always feel obliged to express our support for the accession of this country, subject – of course – to the stated preconditions and extensive democratisation.

How can we assist with the democratisation of Turkey? That is a big question. I claim that this can be achieved by telling Turkey the truth. Yes, Turkey is making progress. Much of it is noteworthy. We should tell it as much.

Turkey has turned into a graveyard for political parties. Thirteen parties have been buried by Supreme Court judgments. Recently, the DTP was banned; 200 party members, nine mayors, six former mayors and two former party leaders are in jail. Is there a trend towards democratisation in such a state because there is television in the Kurdish language? We are Turkey's neighbours and we call on you to learn from our experiences as neighbours, not from our weak points. Turkey will be democratised if we talk to it clearly and strictly.

Nikolaos Salavrakos, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (EL) Mr Minister, I welcome the restrained and – if I may say so – wise analyses both by Mr López Garrido and by Commissioner Olli Rehn, whom I congratulate and wish every success in his new office.

There is no doubt that Turkey is a large Muslim country of huge strategic importance. I have no wish to repeat the views of other members which I agree with. However, the analysis of the information relating to this country gives me the impression that there are numerous centres of power which are unable to act jointly and contradict each other. Thus, while the Erdoğan government is trying to present itself as moderate, the armed forces of the country appear to be aggressive both towards Greece, constantly violating Greek airspace, and constantly harassing Frontex.

At the same time, it was noted recently that the judiciary in this country has shown a clear repeated tendency towards the abolition of the government along the same lines as events two or three years ago with Erbakan.

Finally, the Turkish Government appears unable at the moment to safeguard in the country the popular sovereignty which characterises a democracy and is planning a new type of Ottoman commonwealth, as illustrated by the views expressed by Mr Davutoglu and repeated on his recent visit to Lebanon by Mr Erdoğan.

I also find strange the moves by the Turkish Government in terms of its overtures to Iran and its nuclear programme, which conflict with the views of the international community, especially the European Union and the USA.

Moreover, in contravention of the Ankara roadmap and international agreements, Turkey is allowing and, perhaps, encouraging the movement of illegal immigrants through its territory to the countries of the European Union and is not complying with its obligations to grant docking and landing rights to Cypriot ships and aircraft.

At the same time, the primate of the Orthodox Church, Patriarch Bartholomaios, the uncontested spiritual leader of hundreds of millions of Orthodox Christians, has personally entered the fight and frankly and clearly outlined the situation of the Patriarchate, complaining of violations of religious freedoms and minority rights. I therefore consider that Turkey has a long way to go to accession to the European Union.

Barbara Matera (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, in line with the comments made by some of my fellow Members, I believe that the democratisation process in Turkey is an essential journey that will enable that country to move closer to the European Union and that our coexistence within the European Union must be based on inalienable principles and values, and that their recognition is a prerequisite for the entry of any state.

This also applies to Turkey, which must implement those reforms that are necessary to guarantee democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights and the rights of minorities. In particular, cultural, religious and political pluralism are the foundations of a democratic society, but recognising them is a difficult process which is intertwined with historical, ethnic and religious considerations. The events surrounding the Turkish Constitutional Court's ban on the Democratic Society Party, a party close to the Kurdish minority, are one example of this. It follows that the banning of parties and the removal of elected representatives from office are always very serious events because they violate individual freedoms and democratic principles.

The democratisation process in Turkey undoubtedly depends on the solution of the Kurdish issue. The European Union must make a strong political commitment with the political authorities of the countries involved and must carry out joint action with the United Nations. Democracy cannot exist without pluralism, as the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has repeated on many occasions.

I therefore hope that the Turkish political system may swiftly develop in line with these principles. If Turkey succeeds in doing this, then its entry into Europe can only represent a great opportunity for us.

Raimon Obiols (S&D). – (ES) It seems to me that one can say quite forcefully that, since membership negotiations began with Turkey, on the basis of a unanimous agreement of the Council, the process as a whole merits a positive assessment. It has helped the democratisation and modernisation process in Turkey. However, it is also obvious that there are a multitude of problems, there are forward and backward steps, there is bad news from time to time – the recent ban on the Kurdish party, the DTP, is an example – and that we have a long road of enormous complexity ahead of us.

Here, in this Parliament, we are used to saying what others should do. I think that it would be a good idea for us to state also, with a view to future negotiations with Turkey, what our majority stance is. I think that this is reflected in the report by Ria Oomen-Ruijten, which has a large majority and is in favour of not establishing a criterion of two weights and two measures in the process of negotiation, of being firm and clear in our intentions and not giving out contradictory messages, because this could really nurture a vicious circle in which European reluctance, ambiguities, and contradictions could provide fodder for reactionaries or those who are against Turkey's membership of Europe, nationalist groups or suchlike who are against integration into Europe.

In this sense, I would like to declare my satisfaction at the interventions of both the Council and the Commission. Let us play it by ear. We do not know what the outcome will be, but we must be true to our word: *pacta sunt servanda*.

We have a process of negotiation for Turkey's membership of the European Union and we must be clear and precise and also, of course, circumspect in that will.

Sarah Ludford (ALDE). – Madam President, many of the reforms we constantly call for in Turkey come together in the saga of the repeated closure of Kurdish political parties, of which that of the DTP last month is only the latest.

The continued failure to reform the constitution, the Law on Political Parties and the judiciary, as well as the continued involvement of the military in politics, all influence the context in which Kurdish democratic political representation is repeatedly sabotaged. These closures also sabotage the democratic opening launched last year by the Erdoğan government, which was, rightly, widely welcomed. The only way to get a durable settlement to the Kurdish question in Turkey is through a political solution, and that is the best way to combat the PKK.

Commissioner Rehn talked about several mayors and DTP politicians being arrested, but my information is that about 1 200 activists are in prison, including members of the BDP party, which has succeeded the DTP. I am not clear at all how the government intends to strengthen its democratic opening in this context. Who is calling the shots on these arrests? I have heard it said – I think it was by Richard Howitt – that Prime Minister Erdoğan did condemn the DTP closure, although I confess I missed that development. A cynic might say that, electorally, it suits the AKP party rather well to have the DTP closed, as they are electoral rivals in the south-east.

I agree with those like Mrs in 't Veld and Mrs Flautre that a solid and reliable assurance to Turkey that it will join the EU, if it meets the Copenhagen criteria, is the best leverage we have for democratisation in Turkey – though they owe it to themselves, too. Turkey is an important country that has many great assets. It needs and deserves democracy.

Finally, I add my own thanks to Commissioner Rehn for all he has done for enlargement in the last five years, not only concerning Turkey but – also close to my heart – the Western Balkans. I look forward to welcoming him soon in his new portfolio.

Franziska Keller (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, I join those who said that a democratic opening has enabled the kind of progress we have not seen in some years and generated development where, some years ago, we thought this would be impossible.

I also join those who said that it is very important that those democratic openings and reforms go on and are reinforced. I would also add that we have to look at how reforms are actually implemented – not just written down on paper in law, but how they are implemented in the field.

Since we apparently all agree that it is very good that there are reforms, we also need to support those reforms. This does not work if we just demand reforms but then say there is still no chance for Turkey to have a fair accession process. If we want to have reforms, we need to show that introducing reforms will actually lead to some success and will lead to a fair accession process, with the aim of this accession process being accession by its nature.

In this regard, it is highly regrettable that, at the very moment that he took over the Presidency, Mr Zapatero watered down considerably his earlier commitment to a fair accession process.

Since we as the EU have made this commitment, I think we have to stick to it: we have to be reliable in our foreign policy. So I would like to know if the representative of the Presidency could clarify here how, if Zapatero still sticks to his commitment, you will also try to implement this in the Council with other members who are rather sceptical.

Jan Zahradil (ECR). – (CS) I am speaking from the position of someone who supports Turkey's membership of the European Union as a fully-fledged member, and not as a substitute or a kind of privileged partner; and I would like to add a few critical words levelled at our own ranks. We perceive Turkey from the position of an organisation which has promised that country full membership of the European Union but which, at the same time, is unable to guarantee that if it does meet all the conditions we are demanding from it, it will really achieve full membership.

The position of the European Parliament in this matter is clear. The institution has expressed its clear-cut approval; the stance of the European Commission is also clear and, in this respect, I can only join in praising Commissioner Rehn for his objectivity and for the great job he has done in this cause over the past five years. The position of the European Council is not that clear, because there are still governments of some Member States that simply refuse to make it quite clear that as long as Turkey meets all the conditions we require of it, it can become a fully-fledged member of the European Union. In this case, we are involved in double

dealing and becoming untrustworthy; and we can hardly ask for something from someone to whom we are unable to guarantee that we will meet our own promises.

Secondly, Turkish democracy is simply quite specific in its own right. While we justifiably urge that country to bring its standards closer to European standards, while we justifiably call, for example, for the role of its army to be limited, we should also realise what this is going to mean and what impact this is going to have on the structure of Turkish society and on the entire nature of Turkish democracy. I am afraid that our mechanical evaluation of the criteria for democratisation could eventually do more harm than good, and I would advocate more sensitivity, more responsiveness, and more empathy for Turkey in this matter.

Søren Bo Søndergaard (GUE/NGL). – (DA) Commissioner Rehn, in my headphones, you were translated as saying that the journey is just as important as the destination. I have to say that I completely disagree with that. Only that part of the journey that leads towards a democratic Turkey can be supported. In contrast, we must speak out against any part of the journey that leads in the wrong direction. Words must also be accompanied by action. I would like to know how long the Commission will accept part of the EU's accession support to Turkey being used to reward the political allies of the governing party while ethnic and religious minorities are discriminated against, as a recent investigation has shown. The EU should do something about it!

I was at the DTP's headquarters on 29 December when the police came to arrest Ahmet Türk – but where was the Commission and where was the Council? Will the Commission and the Council undertake to attend legal proceedings and stand up for human rights?

Finally, a question concerning the mayor of Diyarbakir, Mr Baydemir, who the Turkish authorities have prevented from coming to this Parliament: is a protest going to be lodged with Turkey about this?

Gerard Batten (EFD). – Madam President, Turkey holds elections but is not a democracy in the accepted Western sense. Political parties can be banned; there is corruption in the legal system; there are abuses of human rights; freedom of speech and association do not exist in the same way that they do in countries like Britain or most other European states.

There is continuing persecution of a tiny Christian minority, which is – sadly – a growing feature of most Islamic countries.

The reforms of Kemal Ataturk in the 1920s were to be applauded, as they sought to leave behind the antiquities of the Ottoman Empire and the worst of the Dark Age Islamic practices and to take Turkey forward into the 20th century.

Even those achievements are now under threat as the worldwide ideological Islamic fundamentalist movement gains power, funded as it is by countries such as Saudi Arabia – courtesy of Western oil revenues – and ably assisted by the supine surrender of western civilisation.

This debate, of course, is just another small step on the road to allowing Turkey to join the European Union. Turkish entry to the European Union is enthusiastically supported by the British Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democratic parties. They look forward to welcoming the hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of Turkish immigrants who will come to Britain if Turkey joins the EU.

And just imagine if Turkey joins the European Union and uses such common legal procedures as the European Arrest Warrant. British voters should imagine their potential free trip on the Turkish Midnight Express courtesy of the Lib Dems, Labour and Tories, and vote accordingly.

Sadly, Turkey wants to join the European Union because they will have their hands out in the hope of having them filled with lots of European taxpayers' money in subsidies, and they see the opportunity of offloading millions of their poor and unemployed excess population by exporting them to Western countries like Britain, where they will either work for low wages or go on the benefits system.

This is hardly a positive vision for a proud nation. I wish the Turks well and hope they achieve real democracy in time, but I also hope they will take the advice of the UK Independence Party not to join the European Union but to preserve their freedom and independence.

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE). – Madam President, I wish to start by welcoming the statements by the Commission and the Council and to thank, congratulate and salute Commissioner Olli Rehn for his personal commitment to the membership of Turkey in the European Union.

EU-Turkey relations go back a long way and are mutually beneficial. Like other candidate countries, of course, Turkey also has to comply with the principles of democracy, freedom and human rights and to adopt its legislative system to the *acquis communautaire*. I would like to join my colleagues who have welcomed the progress made by Turkey so far, but also to recognise that a number of hindrances remain on Turkey's road to accession: freedom of expression and the rights of the Kurdish minority, described by colleagues, are examples.

I wish also to express my concern in relation to the decision by the Turkish Constitutional Court to close the Democratic Society Party and to ban a number of its democratically elected representatives, but this should not be a reason to delay the accession negotiations with Turkey. The European perspective is a driving force for democratic reforms. The lack of our commitment would send a negative signal to the Turkish people. Our uncertainty has a cost. It could undermine the democratic process under way. EU policy should never be driven by fear. We Europeans should support the reforms. They will take time, they will be complex and there will be setbacks, but we should never waver on the Copenhagen criteria. We should never waver on our commitment to Turkey's membership. There has to be a clear light at the end of the tunnel.

That is why I call on Turkey to continue its process of democratic reforms. I think we should pledge to support them on this path.

Maria Eleni Koppa (S&D). – (EL) Mr President, we supported the accession prospects of Turkey, in the hope that it would contribute primarily to comprehensive democratic reform. The results several years later are, unfortunately, very poor. Reforms have ground to a halt and those implemented are basically dead letter. Even progress in resolving the Kurdish question, which generated a great deal of hope, appears to have stopped.

In order to accede to the Union, Turkey must demonstrate its real respect for human rights, minority rights, religious freedoms and political parties and their democratically elected representatives. The European Parliament has welcomed the democratic opening announced by the Turkish Government. However, repression of freedom of expression and the arrests of thousands of citizens and dozens of political representatives are unacceptable and destroy the credibility of any statements about continuing reforms.

Moreover, the main component of democracy is the complete division between the political and military authority. We cannot have a candidate country in which the army, even after so many years, is not subject to full political control.

Turkey's European prospects are and must be our commitment, provided that it undertakes to promote the principles and objects of the Union in practice.

Johannes Cornelis van Baalen (ALDE). – (NL) Madam President, Turkey must be treated fairly. This means that the European Union must also take an honest look in the mirror. The Copenhagen criteria, with which everyone is familiar, are the important things here. These must be met. The accession process is an open-ended process, which was also stated when we opened accession negotiations. This means that the criteria are key; they will determine whether Turkey can proceed to accession. Democracy is vital, of course. This means that the EU must also make every effort to support democratisation in Turkey. It is very strange, then, to note that the pre-accession programme, the programme for pre-accession aid, is being poorly implemented. The Court of Auditors of the European Union has stated very clearly that too many priorities have been laid down, which means no priorities, and has pointed in particular to the aid for democratisation. I should like to hear the Commission's opinion on the Court of Auditors' criticism, and what it will do to ensure that pre-accession aid is properly organised.

Geoffrey Van Orden (ECR). – Madam President, I am not exactly sure why we are having this debate at this particular time. Perhaps it is because it is three years since the death of Hrant Dink, and there are still serious questions still to be answered in relation to that crime.

I met Dink after the trial of Orhan Pamuk. Dink's death was, of course, a great tragedy, and as a friend of Turkey, I did not hesitate to point out the damage to Turkey's standing of restricting freedom of expression and being oversensitive about criticisms of the Turkish State. But, of course, it is in Turkey's interest to strengthen every aspect of her democracy.

I also support the idea of Turkey as a secular and united country that, for over 80 years, has looked to the West. I recognise the need for a strong Turkish army, and I recognise also the key geostrategic importance

of Turkey. It is for these reasons that I believe we should be very supportive of Turkey and not seek constantly to find ways of criticising her and sniping at her.

Of course, banning political parties is generally a bad idea, although there are exceptions to that rule. We all recognise that terrorist organisations have political fronts and it is a fine judgment whether more damage is done by leaving a front alone or closing it down. Of course, the PKK has its political fronts.

I will just say a word about the PKK, because it continues with its terrorist activities. What is clear is that the PKK continues not only as a terrorist organisation but also with its criminal networks, which extend beyond Turkey throughout Europe. The PKK is like a mafia, with a structure carrying out criminal activity, raising funds and bolstering support. It is involved in every aspect of organised crime: tax evasion, counterfeiting money, trafficking of human beings – and the narcotics trade, of course, is one of its key sources of funding. It just seems to me that we ought to be concentrating on doing more to overcome problems such as that in our own countries and helping the Turks in that way, rather than constantly sniping at them and criticising them.

Jürgen Klute (GUE/NGL). – (DE) Madam President, I would like once again to point out that the Kurdish Democratic Society Party ban means that a total of 27 Kurdish parties have been banned by the Turkish Government in recent years. Since the ban – we have only just heard about this – more than a thousand people have been arrested. I think that, in a country in which parties are routinely banned, it is no longer possible to talk of democracy. The prohibition of 27 Kurdish parties almost constitutes an attempt to be included in the Guinness Book of Records.

It is not only about the minorities in Turkey – and this is something that I would also like to mention again at this point. There is currently a strike being held by tobacco workers at the firm Tekel that is very intense and is now escalating. Several thousand workers went on hunger strike today in order to enforce their rights. They feel they have been severely oppressed by the Turkish Government and the Turkish authorities. This aspect must be taken into account, because the protection of the rights of workers and trade unions is an integral part of democracy. The trade unions, but also the minorities, in Turkey are awaiting a clear and unambiguous opinion from this House.

Sari Essayah (PPE). – (FI) Madam President, Commissioner Rehn, you held a very challenging portfolio in the previous Commission, and this new role of yours cannot be very easy either.

Turkey's democratic development has recently suffered setbacks, and the Kurdish position is not the only worrying factor. The status of children and women needs improving, especially in rural areas. Turkey has been slow over the years to protect the rights of religious minorities, such as the Alawites and Christians.

The position of the Patriarchate has already been mentioned here. Orthodox believers have suffered discrimination and there are probably now only around 3 000 of them in Turkey. It is a totally incomprehensible law that says that Orthodox priests, bishops and patriarchs must be Turkish citizens. A patriarch is the head of a worldwide church, so he, of course, may be elected from any member church. Similarly, there must be a guarantee of the protection of church property, and property that has been seized illegally must be returned. A list of names has been compiled here in this House with a position in writing adopted in favour of opening the clerical Seminary of Halki. The last person to appeal to have the Halki Seminary opened was President Barack Obama.

If Turkey were to safeguard the human rights of the Christian minority in this way, it would set an excellent example to the other Muslim nations, encouraging them too to guarantee exactly the same rights for Christians as Christian countries do for their Muslim minorities.

Commissioner, we often ask here whether Turkey is ready to join the EU. I believe that the EU should honestly ask itself whether it is actually ready to accept Turkey as a member. You also said that the journey is as important as the destination. We have to remember that Turkey's democratic development is not as important for the EU as it is for Turkey's own citizens. That is why it is worth continuing on this journey, even if we do not agree on the destination.

Emine Bozkurt (S&D). – (NL) Madam President, the Turkish Government has launched the democratic initiative to democratise the country and improve Kurdish cultural rights. This was a courageous step forward. Banning political parties is a large step back, however. A democratic state based on the rule of law must always allow discussion to take place democratically, with all citizens able to make their voices heard. The ban on the Democratic Society Party (DTP) is not conducive to the success of this democratic initiative.

Eighteen months ago, the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) narrowly escaped the same fate. I expect Turkey to amend its constitution as soon as possible in compliance with the criteria drawn up by the Venice Commission, to preclude the banning of political parties. All parties must be involved in this; after all, the same fate could befall them. In addition, a party system that results in better representation of the Turkish population must be introduced. This can be done by drastically reducing the 10% electoral threshold. The use of party bans as a stake in a political game must be prevented. Turkey will have to work towards this, with Europe's support, immediately and without delay. It remains for me to thank Commissioner Rehn for his tremendous cooperation. I wish him every success with his new portfolio.

Olle Schmidt (ALDE). – (SV) Enlargement has enabled the EU to bolster basic values such as democracy and human rights on our continent and put the conditions in place for the rule of law based on independent courts and legal authorities with a functioning market democracy – a stable and peaceful Europe.

This development must continue. That is why Turkey should be welcomed into the EU fold. Far too many in Parliament and among EU governments are trying to wriggle out of the promises given to Turkey as a candidate country. That is dishonourable and creates uncertainty not just in Turkey, but also in other candidate countries. Naturally, Turkey cannot join the EU until all the criteria are met. The EU must set strict criteria but, at the same time, support the country so that it can in fact meet these criteria.

As has been mentioned, some progress has been made in Turkey; regrettably, however, the situation is far from unambiguous. There are still major shortcomings. The decision by the Constitutional Court to ban the largest Kurdish party is, of course, quite unacceptable and also blocks membership.

May I also take up another matter connected with Turkish membership. I believe that my fellow Member from Denmark has already touched upon this. Last week, Radio Sweden reported on an audit that had revealed major shortcomings in how EU funds are used in Turkey. The money is not getting to those who need it most. There has also been criticism of poor follow-up and the fact that the rural population – minorities such as Kurds and Assyrians – are not sharing in the EU's aid. Women have also been treated unfairly. The rules for applying for project funding are complex and difficult to understand. My fellow Member, Mr Färm, and I have asked Mr Rehn to get to the bottom of this during his final days as Commissioner for Enlargement. We expect a rapid response. Finally, I would like to thank Mr Rehn for his excellent work as Commissioner for Enlargement and wish him good luck in his new post.

Frieda Brepoels (Verts/ALE). – (NL) Madam President, the democratic opening announced by the Turkish Government has degenerated into a democratic negation. The ban on the Democratic Society Party (DTP) has destroyed, and thus negated, the Kurdish people's freedom of expression, of association and of political participation for the umpteenth time. The lack of democracy, the prominent role of both army and police, the very high electoral threshold of 10%, the failure to reform both the constitution and the law on political parties, the persecution and imprisonment of Kurdish politicians and militants; all the signs are that Ankara is clearly unable to deal with minority rights in a mature way. Every time Turkey opens a door to democratisation, it slams another door shut. It makes me wonder whether this can still be called a democratic opening. I should like the Commissioner to give his opinion on this, and to tell us whether he is prepared to work with the Turkish Government to draw up a specific timetable for carrying out a number of crucial reforms in accordance with European standards.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, Mr López Garrido, Commissioner, your statements this evening have given me the impression that you are happy to gloss over the fact that the most recent decision by the Turkish Constitutional Court to put the pro-Kurdish party outside the law was taken a few hours before the decisions by the General Affairs Council and the decision by the summit, which essentially give the green light for Turkey to head straight for Europe, at a time when it is a country which violates human and democratic rights, fails to comply with international law and refuses to recognise the Republic of Cyprus. Have you not come to the conclusion that, instead of bringing Turkey to its senses, this constant indulgence is making it bolder? It is a fact that the Turkish constitution creates political destabilisation, does not guarantee religious and political freedoms and provides an alibi for interventions by the state.

The question is: what measures will you take to protect the rights of Kurdish citizens? And, even more importantly: are we, at long last, going to demand fundamental constitutional reform to provide an institutional framework which will guarantee these freedoms and make the Turkish State respect all rights which are the criteria for a country to proceed along the road towards accession?

Róza, Gräfin von Thun Und Hohenstein (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, the promise of membership in the European Union was, for a long time, a driving force for democratic change in Turkey. However,

after 2005, Turkish support for accession to the Union fell from 70% to barely 42%. In this situation, therefore, the further democratisation of Turkey does, indeed, require better cooperation with the European Union.

Much has been achieved in Turkey – my fellow Members have spoken about this here – and that deserves our recognition, but there are still areas which we should examine with particular care. There is the question, which has already been mentioned, of freedom of the press and the question of the freedom of electronic media. The OSCE reports, for example, that Turkey is blocking 3 700 Internet sites. Another important matter is the ability of women to participate in public life. The Turkish constitution bans women in traditional headscarves from entering university, while such scarves are worn by as many as 70% of women. This battle between secularism and democracy is a real challenge in Turkey.

I would also like to mention the Kurds, and namely to recognise them as a national minority. The solutions proposed by the Turkish Government are not satisfactory. It is true they have started to recognise the Kurds' language, but the Turkish constitution still contains Article 42, which bans the teaching of Kurdish as a mother tongue in educational establishments.

It is important to develop cooperation continuously, both with the parliament and the government, but also to support non-governmental organisations, social initiatives and local government partnerships in Turkey. We must increase cooperation between institutions, but we should remember that, especially when we speak about the development of democracy, it is actually relations between ordinary citizens which change the world.

Arlene McCarthy (S&D). – Madam President, regrettably I share the views of others that the action by the Constitutional Court to ban the DTP can only be viewed as a regressive step in Turkey's democratisation efforts, despite the very strong progress that is being made with recent democratic initiatives.

The law banning the DTP has been used – as has been said – since 1982 to ban some 27 parties but, of course, political parties are an expression of the will of the people. They are the lifeblood of any democracy, and it is time that legal reforms were introduced to end the banning of political parties.

On the other hand, all political parties and candidates seeking elected office in democracies must respect the basic principles of democracy and the rule of law, and must commit to pursuing political objectives through exclusively peaceful means. Growing up in Northern Ireland, I saw too many people maimed and murdered in the pursuit of political goals. In a democracy, politics must be conducted through the ballot box, not with bullets and bombs.

So, like others, I appeal to the Turkish Prime Minister and government to ensure the rule of democracy is established, to reform the constitution, and to ensure that this action does not derail Turkey's progress towards EU membership, which I, and my political party and government, are proud to support.

Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, the conflict between supporters of the integration of Turkey and those favouring a special relationship between Turkey and the European Union illustrates the imperialist infighting within the European Union and the competition with the USA and other major powers.

The progress reports on Turkey presented to the European Parliament are the result of the balances between these forces. They have nothing to do with the savage exploitation, repression and persecution suffered by workers in Turkey. Trade unionists are prosecuted and sentenced in sham trials. Political assassinations and violence by the prosecuting authorities continue. Political parties are being abolished purely and simply because they express the wishes of the Kurdish population. Elected representatives are being persecuted and jailed *en masse*. Turkey continues to deny fundamental rights to Kurds and other minorities. It is illegally occupying 40% of the Republic of Cyprus and scuppering every solution to the problem. It is threatening Greece with *casus belli* and putting forward territorial claims.

Despite all this, the European Union congratulates Turkey because that is what is required by NATO and the European multinationals investing in the Nabucco pipeline and their economic and geostrategic ambitions for this country and the Middle East in general.

Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, I support membership of the European Union for Turkey, but would like to condemn the decision made in December by the Turkish Constitutional Court to ban the DTP. The decision was justified by the party's alleged links with the terrorist PKK organisation. I know we are living in days when security is paramount; however, citizens' freedoms should not suffer because of this. As we know, the party has been representing Kurdish interests in the Turkish Parliament since 2007. Although it did this in a symbolic way with 20 members, it has, in recent years, been an important testimony

to the process of regulating the Kurdish question which has begun in Turkey. The presence of the DTP in parliament did not constitute a danger in any way, but it was one of the conditions necessary for political stability. However, I do not think we should talk about destabilisation, because the conflict with the Kurds is an old one, and at no stage has it really ever shaken Turkey. I did not think this would happen now, and do not suppose it will happen.

The government has made many good gestures in the past, and it is hard to speak of an anti-Kurdish campaign. Nevertheless, the Turko-Kurdish peace process has suffered a severe set back. The ban on the activities of the party is a typical political ploy. The judgment not only sets back Turko-Kurdish relations by many years, but is also a step backwards for the entire process of democratisation.

Inés Ayala Sender (S&D). – (ES) I would also like to elaborate on the contradictory situation in which we find ourselves today, continually supporting the process of Turkey's membership, because we need Turkey in the European Union for many reasons. Today we find ourselves in a contradictory situation, since, only a few weeks ago, the European Parliament was showing support for and satisfaction at the steps achieved with regard to the relationship between Turkey and the Kurdish community and now we find that we are surprised at the ban on the main Kurdish party in Turkey, which, of course, raises serious questions once more.

In that sense, I would, of course, urge this Parliament and the European Union, and I would ask the Commission, to resume or revive still further their efforts to revisit the areas required for membership where we have seen steps forward, in aspects relative, for example, to the need for consensus between political parties and that, of course, this should lead to a call to the Turkish Government to satisfactorily resolve the situation that the Kurdish political party, the DTP, finds itself in.

Theodor Dumitru Stolojan (PPE). – (RO) I am a firm advocate of Turkey's accession to the European Union. I agree with the strong views expressed in this House regarding the need for Turkey to respect human rights. However, I would express the hope that the same firm stance will also be used to support the efforts which Turkey is making to join the European Union.

I welcome the Spanish Presidency's position regarding the desire to continue opening negotiating chapters with Turkey.

I would like to tell you that I visited Turkey last year as a member of the Delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, which came 20 years after my previous visit there, and the progress that has been made by Turkish society is impressive.

Antigoni Papadopoulou (S&D). – (EL) Madam President, the years of violence and terrorism in Turkey do not appear to have come to an end. Kurds, Alevi, non-Muslim minorities, trade unionists, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Armenians, Cypriots, prisoners, local authorities, homosexuals, women, Kurdish political parties and the mass media have a great deal to say when they dare to break their silence.

Despite the reforms and the progress made in Turkey, numerous laws are not applied. The dark side and violations of human rights are very real when it comes to freedom of the press, sexual equality, freedom of expression and minority rights. It is for precisely this reason that the European Court of Human Rights has condemned Turkey following complaints by Turkish citizens and minorities for violation of the right to life, inhumane and degrading treatment and a whole series of other violations.

I believe that the European Union can play a catalytic role in the democratisation of Turkey by demanding full application of the European *acquis* without derogations, without self-seeking calculations and without applying a policy of double standards. By buttering Turkey up and opening chapters, Mr Rehn, you are not contributing to the democratisation of Turkey; you are contributing towards its continuing unaccountability and political amorality.

Bogusław Sonik (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, despite the progress made by Turkey on the road to accession, much is still to be desired as far as the process of democratisation of that country is concerned. In a resolution adopted by the European Parliament last year, concern was expressed over the situation prevailing in Turkey concerning freedom of speech, as well as regret caused by limited progress in the area of freedom of religion. Parliament insisted then, and still insists, that the Turkish Government establish legal frameworks, in accordance with the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, which will allow non-Muslim religious groups and Alevi to function without unnecessary restrictions.

Straight after the adoption in December 2009 of the resolution I mentioned, the anxiety of the Union was aroused by a decision made by the Turkish Constitutional Court to ban the DTP or Democratic Society Party, which had 21 Members in the Turkish Parliament. The pretext for banning the party was links it is alleged to have with the Kurdish PKK.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Madam President, the ruling by the Turkish Constitutional Court that prohibits the pro-Kurdish party for being in violation of the constitution is a clear sign that Turkish domestic policy does not approximate to democracy as we Europeans understand it. It also clearly gives the lie to the very heavily sugar-coated status report of the Ahtisaari Commission.

Although Istanbul traditionally has an enlightened, Europe-orientated, educated population, this fact and the doubtless excellent events associated with Istanbul as the Capital of Culture in 2010, are not, unfortunately, representative of the country as a whole. We therefore need to face up to reality. Anyone who prohibits the political parties of minorities for being in violation of the constitution is not in tune with European values. This constant chopping and changing is also incomprehensible, as this will surely not gain us a good reputation or make a good impression on our Turkish partners in dialogue.

Therefore, stop the negotiations! Please also stop these pre-accession payments, because anyone who wants moral values to be paid for will surely not allow themselves to be persuaded by such payments.

Anna Záborská (PPE). – (SK) Democracy is dependent on conditions that it cannot create on its own. This applies equally to our Member States and the democracy in Turkey. Although there are several problematic issues, I will only mention one of them.

While freedom of cult is respected in the Republic of Turkey, there has not been much progress in religious freedom in recent years. The freedom of worship is formally recognised, but in reality, it is restricted, for instance, with respect to the choice of place of worship. I regret that the EU fails to approach this issue thoroughly. In the most recent progress report, extending to one hundred and eighty pages, this problem is mentioned only on two of them. There is no mention there of the strong restrictions on the autonomous administration of religious communities, not only at the administrative and economic level, but also at the pastoral and clerical level.

Since the Council of European Bishops' conferences has been saying for quite some time that religious freedom is continuously being breached in Turkey, the European Union should consistently insist on respect for human rights in the context of religious freedom.

Ismail Ertug (S&D). – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, Turkey is, of course, an emotional topic, that is quite clear. There is one thing that we should, of course, always take into account in this context, and this has been mentioned several times today, namely that, although the prohibition of the party is totally unacceptable, it was not pronounced by the government, but by the judicial system. We need to draw a distinction here in order to be fair and honest.

However, that was not what I wanted to say. As Europeans, we must ask ourselves where we actually want to go. If, as a global player, we want to pass on not only economic – and as a Social Democrat I would like to emphasise this – but also political values, not only in Europe but also beyond European borders out into the world, then for this, ultimately, we need Turkey. It will also give us the opportunity to be firm and clear in our dealings with Turkey, which is exactly what is required. Only then will we succeed in setting a democratisation process in motion in order to succeed in our overall purpose.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) The Council will act in relation to the issue which we will call the European Union/Turkey relationship, with a view to the accession process, in the following way:

In the first place, we believe that we need to maintain the European perspective for Turkey. We understand that, if one day Turkey enters the European Union, it will make the Union stronger, not weaker. Therefore, that process will be of benefit to both interests.

Secondly, negotiation. As Mr Obiols pointed out, negotiation is an unquestionable weapon for moving forward in that process and for advancing internal reforms in Turkey. That has been irrefutably demonstrated. Negotiation is a strategic element and should be upheld as outlined by Commissioner Olli Rehn in his speech.

Thirdly, a very clear message to Turkey. We must be very clear with Turkey. This has been advocated, not just by Mrs Oomen-Ruijten, the author of this motion for a resolution, which seems to me a very broad, very

thorough, detailed proposal, an excellent basis to work on, I think, but by many of the participants here this evening: Mrs Corazza, Mrs Ludford, Mrs Keller, Mr Zahradil, many others have advocated sending a clear message to Turkey.

Turkey is a country which, if it meets the Copenhagen criteria, will be able to enter the Union and must enter the European Union.

However, at the moment, Turkey is not meeting them and, in that regard, there are two essential factors, democracy and human rights, which are central to the analysis of Turkey's possible future membership of the European Union. With regard to human rights, some of them, specific dimensions of them, are fundamental to the definition of a democracy which meets the requirements, called the Copenhagen criteria.

In matters of justice, in matters of equality between men and women, the matter of torture and mistreatment, freedom of expression, respect for minorities and pluralism, all these are elements to be borne in mind. In all of those, it has been shown here that we can see undoubted advances and in all of them, we also see inadequacies or even backward steps. That outlines the situation. It depends on how you see it. The glass can be half full or half empty. I think, therefore, that those are the fundamental elements to focus on in the relationship between the European Union and Turkey.

I think that the process of moving towards the rapprochement of Turkey and the European Union is possible; it is a feasible process. For this reason, that process is open and Turkey has the status of a candidate country. It is a necessary process which must, naturally, progress as fast as possible. The role of the European Parliament in that process is absolutely vital. It must play an essential role in the development, analysis, evaluation and consolidation of that process which we all want to see move as quickly as possible.

Olli Rehn, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, I am glad to say my last word on Turkey.

I want to thank you for a very substantive and responsible debate this evening. Actually, I said my farewell concerning Turkey to you already in December or November. I will not repeat it now. I hope that I do not have to say any further farewells as regards Turkey in this Chamber and that we can move on and start tackling the major economic and other challenges of the European Union.

I also want to use this opportunity to thank the Spanish Presidency and Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero for launching the Alliance of Civilisations, which is a very important initiative, and I can say that I am a volunteer to join that alliance. It is very important also for EU-Turkey relations.

Today's debate has focused largely on the party closure and rightly so. It is very important that Turkey reform its legislation and the whole constitutional legal framework of political parties in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission.

Mr van Baalen and Mr Schmidt raised the issue of the Court of Auditors' recent report on Turkey. I can say that our conclusion in the Commission, in DG Enlargement, concurs with the report and its conclusions concerning how to make our financial assistance more strategic, multiannual and more clearly linked to the needs stemming from the political reform agenda in our countries, in this case, in Turkey.

Work is now under way to this end, including a completely new orientation for preparing our planning documents on a multiannual basis and moving from project- to sector-based programming. This new approach also comprises a stronger emphasis on sectoral strategies being developed by the beneficiary countries themselves, which ultimately should ease joint identification of policy priorities between the Commission and the Turkish authorities.

I will be glad to provide you with a longer and deeper written response on this matter if you send me a letter shortly so that I can still do it during the term of the present Commission.

I think it is important, apart from party closures, to discuss the democratic transformation more broadly. That is what you have done this evening and I just want to make three points briefly, which, in my view, are the most important next steps.

We have seen tremendous democratic transformation in Turkey in the past five years. It is a very different country today compared to what it was, say, five years ago. But, of course, the glass is not yet full, and there are many important reforms that still need to be implemented in Turkey.

The first and foremost of them concerns citizens' rights and fundamental freedoms. Turkey's record on freedom of expression is not in line with EU standards. Many authors and journalists are still facing prosecution

and conviction for their work. It is now high time for Turkey to adopt the necessary legal reforms so that this problem will belong to Turkey's past and not to its future. That is fundamental for any open and democratic society and it is fundamental also to further discuss such sensitive issues as the Armenian issue, the Kurdish question or the Cyprus problem.

Secondly, the past year has seen important developments concerning civil/military relations. The ongoing Ergenekon investigation is crucial to the democratisation efforts in Turkey, and indeed, Turkish citizens deserve to see this investigation pursued to the end, and they rightfully expect all necessary precautions to be taken to ensure a fair trial for all defendants.

Thirdly, last but not least, genuine democracy cannot be achieved if half of the population – women – are grossly underrepresented in national and local politics. Turkish women's NGOs are relentless in their efforts to promote this agenda, as they should be, and we are their allies. The establishment of a specific Commission on Gender Equality is an important step which I hope will help greatly to enhance political representation of women at all levels in Turkish society.

To sum up, Turkey's EU accession process can be a long and sometimes winding road, but it is essential not to lose sight of the basic goal of the democratic transformation of the country. That is in the fundamental interests not only of Turkey but also of the European Union, and that is best achieved by being both fair and firm with Turkey at the same time, which maintains our credibility and the power of conditionality in driving reforms for fundamental freedoms in Turkey. In this major effort, I continue to count on your strong support. That is essential for this project to succeed in the end.

President. - The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Kristiina Ojuland (ALDE), in writing. – (ET) Madam President, the development report on Turkey drafted by the European Commission in 2009 identifies the implementation of constitutional reform as an important challenge in continuing the democratisation process. The report notes that, in spite of the people's clear support for the government and the large parliamentary majority, the advances made up to this point in implementing political and constitutional reform have not been sufficient, because the parties have not been able to find a common language. As in any other democratic country, the positions taken by the Turkish parties reflect the wishes of the electorate. It must not be forgotten that in a democratic society, the parties are, above all, accountable to their electorate, and in Turkey, the European Union must turn its attention to developments at grassroot level. We must be very cautious in merely taking a didactic approach in guiding Turkey's democratisation process. The successful implementation of the desired reforms requires the support of the public, for which a greater universal level of awareness is necessary, as well as a conception of the importance of and the reasons for the reforms. The top-down reforms that have been implemented will not lead to the desired result as long as there exists a feeling that they present a danger to Turkey's internal stability. The pressure on Turkey's government to accelerate reforms for which there is a lack of public support could, though unintentionally, lead to the flourishing of separatism or religious hostility. I hope that the Council and the Commission, together with the Turkish Government, make efforts towards implementing measures which allow the population of Turkey to be involved in the democratisation process considerably more than has been the case so far, in order to ensure that there is fertile ground for implementing the reforms necessary for accession on the basis of the Copenhagen criteria.

Pavel Poc (S&D), in writing. – (CS) Pre-accession negotiations with a candidate country should be aimed at the given country's accession to the European Union. But in the case of Turkey the situation is much more complex. Pre-accession talks have been open since 3 October 2005. In addition to the country's accession itself, the talks should contribute to the promotion of democracy and freedom, and the preservation of civic and human rights in Turkey. Instead of issuing political declarations, this particular goal should be achieved through legislative changes as part of harmonisation with the legal system of the European Union but, first and foremost, through political and social practice stemming from the example set by the Member States. Arguments against accession based on the pattern 'European countries' versus 'Islamic countries' are incorrect and wrong. Turkey's historic affiliation with Europe is undeniable. As a matter of fact, Turkey is today a member of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. There is no religious yardstick to evaluate a candidate country; on the contrary, freedom of confession is one of Europe's principal values. That is why the sole and decisive criteria for Turkey's accession to the European Union must be its compliance with the principles of the rule of law, legislative confirmation of civil and minority rights, and respect for all the Member States of the European Union.

Renate Sommer (PPE), in writing. – (DE) It is good that the European Parliament is at least addressing the issue of the democratisation of Turkey. The Commission and the Council tend, in principle, to talk up the situation – as dramatic as it might be. They call it ‘soft power’. However, where has this ‘soft power’ got us? It is quite clear that, since opening the accession negotiations, there have been considerably more backward steps than steps in the right direction in Turkey. Now there is yet another party ban. However, there is also the continuing massive restriction of civil freedoms, the oppression of religious minorities to the extent of attempting to expel or destroy them through bloodshed, curtailing their freedom of information and freedom of the press, attempting to annihilate the opposition press and the free trade unions, and the list goes on. ‘Pacta sunt servanda’ – that is always emphasised in connection with Turkey, and rightly so. However, this applies to Turkey, too! With its entry into the accession negotiations, Turkey entered into an agreement with the EU to comply with the Copenhagen criteria. If it continues to refuse to do so, it will have to ask itself whether it really wants to become part of Europe. The ‘softies’ in the Commission, the Council Presidency and the Council ought finally to act in a consistent manner instead of continually opening new negotiation chapters.

15. European Strategy for the Danube Region (debate)

President. – The next item is the oral question to the Commission (B7-0240/2009) by Silvia-Adriana Țicău, Brian Simpson, János Áder, Hannes Swoboda, Eva Lichtenberger, Michael Cramer, Saïd El Khadraoui, Mathieu Grosch, Iuliu Winkler, Victor Boștinăru, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Ivailo Kalfin, Norica Nicolai, Dirk Sterckx, Csaba Sándor Tabajdi, Michael Theurer, Ismail Ertug, Inés Ayala Sender, Jiří Havel, Edit Herczog, Stanimir Ilchev, Iliana Malinova Iotova, Jelko Kacin, Evgeni Kirilov, Ádám Kósa, Ioan Enciu, Eduard Kukan, Gesine Meissner, Alajos Mészáros, Nadezhda Neynsky, Katarína Neveďalová, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Vilja Savisaar, Olga Sehnalová, Catherine Stihler, Peter van Dalen, Louis Grech, Corina Crețu, George Sabin Cutaș, Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă, Cătălin Sorin Ivan, Tanja Fajon, Kinga Göncz, Antonya Parvanova, Adina-Ioana Vălean and Rovana Plumb, on the European Strategy for the Danube Region (O-0150/2009).

Silvia-Adriana Țicău, author. – (RO) I wish to thank all my fellow Members who have supported me in proposing this initiative to have this debate during the European Parliament’s plenary, which will be followed by the vote tomorrow on the joint resolution.

The Danube Region is of particular importance to the European Union because of both the large number of countries it flows through and its outflow directly into the Black Sea. Along with the River Rhine and Main Canal, the Danube links the North Sea and the port of Rotterdam, the largest port in the European Union, with the Black Sea and the port of Constanța, the tenth largest port in the European Union.

In recognition of the Danube Region’s importance, the European Council asked the Commission in June 2009 to draw up a European Union strategy for the Danube Region by the end of 2010. We urge the Commission to initiate consultations as soon as possible with all the countries bordering the Danube, and for the Danube Strategy to be accompanied by an action plan and multiannual operational programme implemented along with the participating states, based on the model for the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The development of the transport infrastructure is vital to the Danube Region’s development. Just some of the priorities in terms of the development of the region’s transport infrastructure include the modernisation of ports, the integration of the Danube’s navigation systems, the elimination of bottlenecks on the Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube waterway to improve navigation, the improvement in intermodality in the region and increased connectivity with the Black Sea through road and railway routes, by which I mean railway freight corridors and high-speed trains.

The Danube Region plays an important role in the European Union’s diversification of energy supply sources. The implementation of joint projects on energy efficiency and renewable energy resources, investments in new technologies and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises will help stimulate the green economy in the entire Danube macro-region.

In addition, tourism is an important instrument for promoting economic growth in the region. Last but not least, the development of centres of excellence capable of competing at international level, along with academic and cultural exchanges will contribute to territorial cohesion in the Danube Region.

The Danube Region and, in particular, the Danube Delta, include several Special Protection Areas and Special Areas for Conservation within the framework of Natura 2000, which is a unique and fragile ecosystem.

Protecting the environment in the Danube basin will have a large bearing on the agricultural and rural development of the region

The Danube Strategy will facilitate, through a coordinated approach, a more efficient use and higher absorption of European funds, without however being restricted to these. With this purpose in mind, we call on the Commission and Member States to use the mid-term review of the financial outlook in 2010 and the debates on the future financial outlook to implement the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

I wish to end by saying that the European Parliament will be a permanent partner in the process of developing and implementing the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

Olli Rehn, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, I want to thank you for raising this very important issue on the Danube Regional Strategy and also for your broader support for the macro-regional strategies in Europe.

The Commission is working with the countries of the Danube Cooperation Process in this context. This means the following Member States: Germany, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania. In addition, the following third countries are participating: Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova and Ukraine.

Concerning the state of play at this stage, we have established inside the Commission an inter-service working group of more than 20 directorates-general to indicate the main policy priorities for this strategy. In parallel, the countries of the Danube Region have each nominated a national contact point, and the first meeting of these contact points has been held with the Member States. A series of events has been planned between February and June this year to create momentum and trigger discussion with the relevant stakeholders. The first such event will be held in Ulm in Germany on 1 and 2 February.

Turning to the future content of the strategy, I would like to underline that we are, of course, only at the beginning of the process of elaboration and preparation. The content will be discussed in closer detail over the coming months among the countries concerned, the relevant stakeholders, the Commission services and other EU institutions.

Nevertheless, it seems likely that the strategy will be based on three broad pillars or, in other words, broader policy priorities: firstly, to improve connectivity and environmentally sustainable communication systems; secondly, to protect the environment, preserve water resources and improve risk prevention activities; and thirdly, to reinforce socio-economic human and institutional development. These three pillars will include a number of concrete actions based on the contributions received from the Member States, stakeholders and from within the Commission.

Finally, let me indicate the next steps. Between now and June, we shall continue to gather ideas and proposals from the Member States, from stakeholders and from other interested parties through position papers, meetings, conferences and also a public consultation exercise via the Internet. Following that, by September, the Commission will prioritise and organise ideas in order to prepare the draft communication on the strategy and the accompanying action plan. Then, finally, by December, the Commission will prepare the adoption of these documents. Therefore, from next year – 2011 – on, we will start setting up the governance systems and concrete implementation of the actions and projects that will have been planned and decided by that time.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to hearing the points you wish to raise in this debate.

Marian-Jean Marinescu, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (RO) The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) attaches particular importance to the Danube Strategy. The Rhine-Main-Danube waterway is a bridge connecting East and West, between the North Sea and the Black Sea. It has a direct link with ensuring energy security, provides the route to Asia via the Black Sea, and also provides a link with the Mediterranean Sea.

We are therefore in favour of drawing up the Danube Strategy during this year, in line with the commitment made by the Commission. I am pleased that Commissioner Rehn has been reappointed, and we want this strategy to be approved, along with a specific action plan, by early 2011 at the latest.

I will mention the following among the major priorities which should be pursued: ensuring the navigability of the whole waterway, primarily the Danube-Rhine connection, and standardising the navigation systems, modernising the river ports and developing the associated infrastructures so that they become integrated

multimodal systems, making efficient use of the Danube's energy potential, developing irrigation systems to avert desertification, implementing an integrated system for monitoring water levels aimed at improving forecasting and prevention and intervention capabilities in the event of flooding, drought or pollution.

Concerted action is required as the non-involvement of a single riparian state may result in the whole process being blocked. Financial resources are also needed. This is why I hope that the new European Commission will consider this matter and not avoid funding based on public-private partnerships.

Romania has the largest section of the River Danube among all the riparian states. For this reason, Romania supports the drafting of this strategy as soon as possible, which will raise the profile of the river's potential, so vital to the whole of Europe.

Constanze Angela Krehl, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Madam President, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament supports the initiative for the development of a strategy for the Danube Region. This is an important project to us, also because it strengthens, in an exemplary manner, territorial cohesion, which has been included for the first time in the Treaty of Lisbon, and may also provide an opportunity to make it clear exactly what we understand by territorial cohesion. I hope that Mr Rehn has also told the many partners he has spoken to that the European Parliament will be duly involved in drawing up the common strategy for the Danube Region. Unfortunately, I did not hear the words European Parliament in your speech, but we will duly take part in the debate. I am pleased that we are having the first major debate here in plenary today.

In addition to territorial cohesion, it is also important to make it clear that this strategy involves cross-border cooperation, something that we are always encouraging and have always supported in the area of cohesion policy, and in fact already wanted to increase during this funding period. I hope that this will have even greater success in the next few years, including in connection with the Danube Strategy.

I would like to point out that, with this Danube Strategy, we will attain European added value, which will be really tangible, particularly for the people living in this region. They should, therefore, be directly involved in drawing up the strategy and they should also be given the opportunity to witness this European project. My earnest request is that we do not overload and burden the strategy with too many priorities, but that we focus on what we want to achieve. In my opinion, it is very important that we use the existing resources more efficiently and that we build or expand warning systems, for example, and set them up appropriately to warn of natural disasters such as floods, but also to respond in the event of industrial accidents, for example, which result in the pollution of the Danube and neighbouring regions. Common areas of activity exist here.

A successful Danube Strategy and successful projects in this region may also provide models for other regions. Without always having to immediately invent a new strategy, we can use this as an example for resolving problems together in cross-border European cooperation and – if we succeed in actually incorporating third countries into such a strategy – also for putting in place a Neighbourhood Policy, which is something that is important for all of us in the European Union and which should be promoted.

Michael Theurer, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the importance of the Danube Region is evident by the very fact that 80 million people in six EU Member States and in four neighbouring countries live along the Danube. In the Black Forest – 100 km away as the crow flies – the Danube begins and then flows down to the delta and into the Black Sea. Therefore, we in the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe support the call for a Danube Strategy and, as the European Parliament, we are also making an important point this evening by having the subject of the Danube Strategy on the agenda.

Twenty years after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, after putting an end to the division of Europe, the Danube is once again a symbol of unification. From a founder member of the EU, Germany, via Austria, which joined in 1995, through to the new Member States in Central and Eastern Europe that joined in 2004, the Danube also connects neighbouring countries like the accession country Croatia as well as other neighbouring countries that have aspirations for accession. It is therefore almost possible to see the reunification of Europe along the Danube.

Ladies and gentlemen – and this is something to which the ALDE Group attaches a great deal of importance – we now need to take the appropriate measures to also make the Danube Strategy a regional policy priority in the new funding period. There are many ways to go about this. One option is for small and medium-sized enterprises to conclude more mutual partnerships.

There are, of course, other major tasks in the area of infrastructure. This is particularly important to the ALDE Group because, as a result of the division of Europe, the historical transport links were broken and have not been modernised. Therefore, the development of the Danube as an inland waterway, the modernisation and improvement of its ports, locks and passability will provide an environmentally sound method of transport. However, work still needs to be done on the road and rail network. It is also particularly important that we involve the municipalities, towns, districts and the citizens in this.

Eva Lichtenberger, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, a development strategy for the Danube region is very much to be welcomed and it is also very important. It is, furthermore, also a very ambitious task, which cannot be compared with anything that we have previously done in the context of regional development. The Danube is not just a waterway and it is not a road. The Danube is a natural treasure. I know that many of you do not like to hear that, but it is this aspect of it being a natural treasure and also an area with potential for sustainable and modern tourism that will make it possible for it to be developed, particularly around the Danube Delta, but also along the attractive stretches of river, in an extremely positive way by small and medium-sized enterprises.

The Danube has very special characteristics as a river – that must surely be obvious – that are particularly sensitive to human interference. We have already seen evidence of this in connection with the Gabčíkovo power station project. The damage caused by this project is still evident today and it was only through the enormous efforts of residents and citizens that it was possible to prevent greater damage as a result of the extension of this power station chain. It led to a lowering of the water table with incalculable consequences for agriculture. It was not without reason that my fellow Member mentioned the strong connection of the subsoil below the Danube with the groundwater of the area. That is something that we should give particular consideration to in this connection.

An important lesson can be learned here: the Danube – and indeed any river – is a lifeline, the life of which needs protection and attention and we need to have a sustainable approach to it. This means not recklessly taking excavators into natural areas, but simply taking the river seriously, using it for shipping, but adapting the ships to the river and not the river to the ships. When you want to start a major project, you do not first buy the furniture and then build a house around it. This is exactly how we need to approach the Danube. Sustainability and mindfulness of the natural environment are of the utmost importance here. Let us not repeat the mistakes of the past!

Oldřich Vlasák, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (CS) The Danube Region is a very specific and indisputably vast territory. As we all know, the Danube is, after the Volga, Europe's second longest river, flowing through or forming the international frontiers of ten countries; its basin covers as many as 19 European states. Hence, it is certainly positive that this region has been receiving specific attention. Still, I believe that we should not try directly to shape the specific form of a Danube Strategy here in the European Parliament. A well-functioning, macro-regional strategy must be defined from below, while the European institutions should create only a framework, facilitate communication at the intergovernmental level, and support the individual actors in terms of methodology, data overviews, etc. In my opinion, the Commission should not elaborate a macro-regional strategy, but rather supervise its birth, since the actual content should be defined at the level of the Member States, the regions, and individual towns and villages.

Furthermore, I firmly believe that even though the Danube Region Strategy should be focused on the future, in its implementation we can hardly eschew the heritage of the past. It should be realised that during the Cold War, the Danube formed the frontier between East and West, in what was then Czechoslovakia, for example. The element of a divided Europe persists in the Danube river basin, actually limiting European integration trends. That is why the strategy should be focused on this particular problem. The Danube's development potential cannot be fully harnessed while there are still unconnected international, interregional and local transport networks, while more profound cooperation in territorial planning and strategic development planning is still lacking, and while mental barriers persist. The problems of the past must be solved if we are to move ahead more efficiently.

It is commendable that while discussing macro-regional strategies, we are not talking about administrative units, individual states, or NUTS territorial units and regions, but rather of a territory inside Europe. This approach does not only require a change of technology or method of implementing the Cohesion Policy but, to a much larger extent, a change of philosophy. In fact, it is necessary to genuinely enforce the administration of public matters at multiple levels to solve the problems facing the territory, regardless of the existing administrative barriers. Macro-regional strategies represent a way to the future, being, to a considerable degree, unique projects hitherto unparalleled in the European Union. Their goal is to secure

cooperation between the Member States, their regional and local self-government authorities and other relevant bodies, based on the principle of partnership, and make it possible for them to solve their problems.

Jaromír Kohlíček, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (CS) Ladies and gentlemen, five years ago, as a new Member of the European Parliament, I addressed a debate in the Committee on Transport and Tourism and revealed a great secret: namely, that the longest river in the European Union is the Danube. Since then, my colleagues have no longer been surprised by this statement, and I am very glad that as one of the initiators, I am in a position to support work starting on a development strategy for the Danube river basin. Naturally, this strategy should cover a number of aspects, and in particular, those aspects related to the environment and its protection, to sustainable economic development, and the development of transport infrastructure and logically call for the involvement of all the countries that use the water resources in this region. It really does not matter whether the countries are members of the European Union or our neighbours. The transport potential, hitherto only utilised to a minimum, as well as other opportunities for development, require a speedy start-up of the entire project. Seen in this light, I fully support the relatively tight deadline set for the European Commission by the resolution, and I am looking forward to seeing that, as of next year, the development strategy for the Danube river basin will be one of the European Union's key development plans. For its part, the GUE/NGL Group gives its full support to the intentions outlined in the resolution and, naturally, it will be backing them during the vote.

Jaroslav Paška, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (SK) In accordance with the conclusions of the European Council from June 2009, the European Commission began work on the preparation of a European Union Strategy for the Danube Region with the aim of improving cooperation between countries in the Danube river basin and helping to increase the dynamics of economic and social development in this region.

The proposed strategy should create a basis for the coordination of activities of the participating countries within the context of the current European Union programmes, without additional requirements in terms of specific funding, institutions or legislation. The European Commission will provide technical and coordination support. The creation of opportunities for cooperation with non-Member States of the European Union is envisaged in the project.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to applaud the European Council's initiative aimed at creating a European Union Strategy for the Danube Region and express my support for it. I firmly believe that such coordinated international cooperation will make it possible to protect the Danube's ecosystems more effectively through joint action by all countries through which the river flows. For millions of Europeans, the quality of drinking water depends on how clean the Danube is. It is, therefore, natural that the protection of the watercourse and its broad surrounding area from pollution should be one of the key pillars of the privileged cooperation between the participating countries.

Another ambitious goal of the Danube Strategy is to complete the Danube waterway in compliance with the parameters adopted by the Danube Commission. This would add an important new economic dimension to the east-west water transport corridor and allow for making some of the bigger Danube tributaries navigable. Such a new impetus for economic growth will also create many jobs.

At a time when Europe is seeking renewable, environmentally clean sources of energy, the River Danube offers an enormous, inexhaustible source of just that. We just need to shake the dust off certain plans for hydroelectric plants, assess them in terms of their environmental impacts and efficiency of returns, and implement them.

Ladies and gentlemen, I firmly believe that the idea of creating a joint European Union strategy for the Danube Region is a good one and deserves our political support.

Csanád Szegedi (NI). – (HU) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the Danube is one of the greatest ecological corridors for Hungary and the Union; it is the seventh pan-European corridor. The Danube River therefore plays a key role, and the Jobbik Party supports the international commitments entered into previously by the Hungarian Republic in order to realise this project, designated by the European Commission as high priority, by the year 2020. This development would very much fit into the concept of Motorways of the Sea, which is also included in the EU White Paper on European transport policy. However, I would like to draw my fellow Members' attention to the fact that unlike others, the Jobbik movement for Hungary would like to support this not for the sake of seeking profits. During implementation, we want all international environmental standards to be respected, thus guaranteeing optimum basin width for the Danube and the water quantity flow needed for shipping. This way, we would avoid damaging the water bases and natural treasures along the Danube. We are convinced that the only way to keep the Danube Region a stable region

of Europe is to put an end to the Beneš Decrees that discriminate against German, Austrian and Hungarian citizens. Thank you for your attention.

Lambert van Nistelrooij (PPE). – (NL) Madam President, now and again, the opportunity arises to break new ground, including in European politics. Up to now – let us be frank – it has been Member States who have very clearly set the priorities for their own territory. I am Dutch. I live just on the other side, downstream on the Rhine and Meuse rivers, and my brother has a dairy farm in an area designated a flood retention basin when there is too much water. How can there be too much water? One reason is the rain, of course, but another is that no measures to retain this water temporarily have been taken in the upper river basin. This means that my brother's farm in that area is at risk.

What I mean to say is that the issue here is essentially whether we are able to work together to flesh out the new territorial dimension objective laid down in the Treaty of Lisbon. This entails striving to reach mutual agreements across the whole river basin, introducing some of our own say into these programmes – with regard to transport, ecology and economy – and tackling some things together. This I know because we have also used this approach together, step by step, on the other side of Europe. There is no such thing as a free lunch in this regard, and such involvement must indeed be bottom-up. That is why I approve of this resolution. In it, we aim to tackle the administrative issues surrounding this broad approach together, and ask the Commission to join us. I agree with Mrs Krehl of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament that we should not put all our policy for that large region in one big basket. Instead, we should have the courage to pick out a number of things that are better tackled and solved at this European territorial level. I give this initiative my wholehearted support, therefore, and look with great interest to the Commission for the relevant document.

Inés Ayala Sender (S&D). – (ES) I wish to thank Mrs Țicău for making arrangements, in September 2008, for a delegation of the Committee on Transport and Tourism to travel the length of the Danube and, furthermore, to visit the mouth of the river, the delta where it meets the Black Sea.

Therefore, I was immensely impressed by the history and the enormous potential of this particularly European river, which crosses 10 countries, six of those already in the European Union, and the other neighbours and applicant countries.

The great inequalities and different focuses, according to the Member State involved, also left their impression on me. Some see it as a real gem, after achieving the highest level of well-being and development on its banks. They need to go back to the origins of a river that has spent centuries being governed. I also have to say that I was shocked to see colonies of birds used to a life on the river which, little by little, precisely because of restoration, because of backward steps, were losing their habitat on the river, and whilst they used to dabble their feet in the water, nowadays I do not know where they could be.

Others, after many years of delayed development, see it precisely as a promise of development and a source of wealth, communication and energy. Furthermore, they now have their rights after so many years of seeing the river as a symbol of non-communication, a blockade, under-development or even conflict. I agree with them on the immense, immediate and urgent need to restore the Danube as a waterway for sustainable transport – there is the Marco Polo Programme, which is still so badly utilised – or as a vector of unique touristic development – because, of course, the landscapes are amazing – or as a source of renewable energy.

Those of us who are not lucky enough to have such European and transnational rivers because we live on a peninsula, in a corner of the European Union – although we do have rivers between Portugal and Spain and their shared and transnational management is an example on a European scale – yes it is true that we view the capacity of the Danube with envy.

Therefore, let us show our unreserved support for the need for this urgent strategy for the Danube Region so that Europe is more complete, harmonised and sustainable.

Filiz Hakaeva Hyusmenova (ALDE). – (BG) Thank you, Madam President, the Danube Strategy can provide the potential for effective implementation of the Cohesion Policy in this geographical region. Member States are stakeholders in this and will submit proposals on this by the end of the month. However, how many of them have been discussed publicly? How many of the countries have launched the process of public consultations?

I specifically wish to emphasise the key role which the regions and cities along the Danube should play in drawing up this strategy. I am thinking of local government agencies, non-government organisations,

businesses and ordinary citizens. Their involvement may guarantee that the strategy will meet the relevant demands, resolve problems and contribute to the development of towns and villages as well as the macro-region as a whole. I am confident that the European Commission will provide the opportunity for them to be included in the process for devising the strategy.

I would like to warn against the danger that meetings, conferences and information, in the broadest sense, and after its involvement, will focus on a few main cities, while the remainder are left outside these processes. The latter can also consider their position now, in good time, and participate in making decisions which affect them. Even smaller towns and villages will be able to outline their measures for change, draw up conditions and resources and contribute to achieving the aims.

The strategy's high profile will facilitate wide-ranging, intensive, simultaneous development in the various sectors, which is also a condition for rapid, high-quality growth. This must be the ultimate goal of the Danube Strategy, given that the poorest regions in the European Union are also located in the Lower Danube region. In the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, we must declare that tackling poverty and inequality in the Danube Region is a challenge which must be addressed by this strategy. The situation in the poorer regions, with the disparities in terms of opportunities and resources, also raises the particularly important issue of investment. Some thought should be given to establishing a dedicated European Danube bank involving the countries concerned.

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) Madam President, like Mr Theurer, who has just spoken, I, too, come from the European Watershed area. We are, in fact, Rhinelanders, but nevertheless, we are very interested in the Danube, although it actually flows in a direction with which our life paths have relatively little to do.

At this point, I would like to ask you not to view the strategy for the Danube Region only in the terms outlined by many of the previous speakers, but also as an opportunity for cultural integration. Using the example of the Danube, young people, in particular, can come to an understanding of how erroneous nationalism can be overcome, of how these tremendous cultural riches – whether it be Nobel prizewinners for literature or the famous avant-garde music events of the Donaueschingen festival right along to the delta – can be grasped and understood. My request is – it is still possible to wish for something more at this early stage – that you also incorporate a cultural identity and cohesion into the strategy as a whole, particularly for young people.

Evgeni Kirilov (S&D). – Madam President, I strongly support the elaboration of this EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Historically, the River Danube has connected Western and Eastern Europe and belonging to the Danube Region has evolved a sense of community among people. We can say that this facilitated cultural and economic cooperation long before the idea of European integration was born.

This strategy is an opportunity to put into practice the valuable principles of solidarity and cooperation. The document should be based on a bottom-up approach, as some colleagues, including Mrs Hyusmenova, have already pointed out. Its priorities should come from the Danube municipalities, districts and cities and it is very important that regional authorities and civil society recognise the strategy as their tool for better cooperation and coordination. So real ownership of the process is needed here.

The Danube countries face similar environmental and infrastructural problems. They aim at strong socio-economic development and endeavour to have higher living standards for their citizens. I am convinced that the Danube Strategy will contribute to achieving these aims and resolve common problems by more effective and efficient use of available funds, that it will facilitate the realisation of common projects, and that European citizens will then benefit from its results.

I agree also that a common approach which does not have too many priorities is needed. The Danube Strategy will be an excellent instrument to considerably enhance cross-border cooperation in this region, and I strongly believe and hope that the Commission will do its best to fully support its implementation, including by allocating additional financial resources.

János Áder (PPE). – (HU) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, politicians frequently quote the proverb 'We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.' It is our responsibility to make sure our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have clean air to breathe and clean water to drink. There is an incredible resource of fresh water located under the bed of the Danube. My priority and the priority of Hungary is to protect this fresh water from all forms of pollution. There are important issues like transportation, tourism, culture, preserving our heritage, but all these rank behind protecting our water resources. I do not know if our initiative relating to the Danube Region, the subject of our current negotiations, will be successful or not. What we already agree upon rather are principles and things that go without saying.

However, as we all know, the devil is in the detail. Therefore, I would like to make it very clear that if we go beyond the principles and start discussing the details, there is one principle I will never cave in on. If we are talking about the Danube, the only form of intervention, the only form of investment and the only form of development that are acceptable, and this is my point of view, are ones that would not jeopardise our supply of drinking water. I would like to look my children and my grandchildren in the eye without blushing, and tell them that we have been able to preserve the Danube as we inherited it, and the same holds true for other European rivers, such as the Tisza. We have not destroyed it; they, too, can use it without any difficulty.

Nadezhda Neynsky (PPE). – (BG) Madam President, I would like to begin my speech with a statement from Erhard Busek, Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact, who said at one time, and I will quote him from memory: 'We cannot allow any citizen who lives along the banks of the River Danube to develop a sense of provincialism.' The truth is that a fair amount of time has passed since then and the development of the European Strategy for the Danube Region is still a work in progress, with very little known yet about its current status.

In actual fact, the aim of the Danube Strategy is for municipalities, regions and countries along the River Danube to develop together. This initiative encompasses 14 countries with a population in excess of 200 million. However, these countries vary in terms of their economic development. The countries of the Lower Danube have the lowest economic status. Please allow me to draw your attention to three issues of significance to my country, Bulgaria, which, in our view, must be resolved, along with the need to restore... bridge tolls and Bulgaria extending the Byala-Ruse and Ruse-Shumen roads.

The Bulgarian part of the river, if we exclude the cities of Ruse, which has the only bridge connecting the two banks of the Danube, Vidin and Silistra, is perhaps the area where the municipalities are the most underdeveloped economically. These municipalities, numbering 39 in total, are on the periphery, and the River Danube still represents for them an insurmountable barrier rather than an opportunity. By comparison, in Budapest alone, there are nine bridges connecting both banks of the Danube, while there is a single bridge in the whole of Bulgaria. This analysis forms the basis for the proposal submitted by mayors of Bulgarian municipalities located along the Danube for implementing a project aimed at creating a panoramic route linking the towns and cities along the banks of the River Danube. This project was already brought to the attention of the ministers for regional development. The second issue is linked to resolving the geo-ecological problems along the Danube and about water purity. Thank you.

Olga Sehnalová (S&D). – (CS) The European Strategy for the Danube Region is important for the development of the entire Danube river basin region. There are many common topics. I would like to single out here just some of the subjects which are also of importance for the countries falling into the wider concept of the Danube Region, such as, the Czech Republic, for example. One of them is the field of water management, complete with flood control. Since devastating floods have repeatedly occurred in this region, an integrated approach in this field is imperative.

Another topic includes large-scale investment activities aimed at ensuring better transport links within the region and its connection with the neighbouring regions. It would be appropriate to also take this macro-regional aspect into consideration in the scheduled revision of the TEN-T network. The individual projects should not be mutually competitive. It is vital to stipulate clear-cut priorities, while the projects should have a sustainable character, be environmentally friendly, and enjoy evident support from local and regional self-government authorities and the public. Not isolated projects, but rather cooperation within the region with a supra-regional perspective can ensure the sustainable development of the Danube Region in the future. At the same time, the European Strategy for the Danube Region may prove to be a comprehensible and stabilising development framework for the Member States as well as for the countries that are outside the European Union, but which are striving to cooperate, either as candidate countries or on the basis of Neighbourhood Policy.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Madam President, the strategy for the Danube Region is one of the most important current European regional policy projects, because the Danube has always been a lifeline between the various countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which historically provided a basis for economic cooperation, but also cultural exchange. I am also thinking here of the positive results of the former Austrian-Hungarian monarchy.

What are we expecting? We are expecting a great deal from this project, including the development of environmentally sound mobility, away from roads and onto ships, the switching of goods transport to the railways, modernisation and clustering of industrial structures in appropriate places, cooperation in

environmental matters and tourism – ecotourism in particular is desired – and, of course, the prioritising of research and development, and a lot more besides. However, I also expect the efficient use of resources, both financial and human. The wealth of experience and knowledge possessed by the people in this region must be brought together and pooled. I expect a rise in the quality of life and numerous good and inspiring ideas.

Eduard Kukan (PPE). – (SK) As a Slovak Member of this Parliament, I would like to welcome the initiative to draw up, adopt and put in place a European Strategy for the Danube Region. I believe that this project will help the region develop more actively. I am also glad that this strategy was included in the eighteen-month programme for the coming presidencies of the European Union. I hope it will become a real priority for the forthcoming period.

I am also convinced that this project will contribute to the development of transport and environmental protection and, in many areas, become a suitable platform for closer cooperation between the regions involved. At the same time, I would like to bring to your attention the fact that greater emphasis in the preparation of this strategy should be placed on environmental protection, in particular, the protection of drinking water. It will probably not take long until drinking water sources become enormously strategically important, not only from a local perspective but also from a European perspective.

In this context, the future strategy should pay attention to improving underground sources of drinking water and eliminating the pollution of the Danube. I would also like to express my support for inclusion of certain non-Member States of the European Union in this project, in particular, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, and a further two countries. I hope that this project will help improve cooperation between the Union and these countries in the region.

In conclusion, I would like to call on the Commission to take as responsible an approach as possible with regard to work on this strategy and base it on realistic goals and resources, all the more so given that at present, certain countries have unrealistic expectations of it.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D). – Madam President, I very much welcome the efforts of my colleagues insisting on a strategy for the Danube Region.

Coming from Lithuania, I am very well aware that Member States alone are unable to achieve significant progress in terms of economic development, environmental protection, sustainable transport and tourism, energy and many other areas. I am positive that regional strategies can be more effective and should be promoted because Member States are then acting in the common interest.

I wish my colleagues the determination to achieve their goals and I believe that their voice will be heard by the new Commission, especially because sustainable regional development is among the top priorities on the Commission's agenda.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE). – (SK) The Danube Region has traditionally been a macro-region with great economic, social and cultural potential whose integration and sustainable economic growth need to be systematically and effectively extended. Therefore, I welcome and support the steps leading to the development of a coherent and comprehensive strategy for the Danube Region at the European level.

I believe that the content of the strategy for the Danube Region will be a genuine result of expert discussion based on a fair approach to all partners so that no Member State or group of states receives special benefits and treatment.

I find transport infrastructure, sustainable economy and environmental protection to be the key areas. As a European transport route, the Danube waterway should form a basis for a network of transport corridors for all modes of transport. This would relieve road transport and, at the same time, contribute to substituting it with environmentally and economically less intensive water transport.

In order for the Danube to become a driving force for economic development, it will be necessary to make certain tributaries navigable and complete connections to other main transport corridors. The development of infrastructure should lead to elimination of isolation of border regions, promote small and medium-sized enterprises, and contribute to development in the social area.

When formulating the strategy, however, we must not forget the issue of transport safety, environmental safety, flood protection and the fight against cross-border crime. Increased interconnection with countries which are not part of the area of freedom, security and justice must not facilitate the influx of international crime or make smuggling and human trafficking easier. I would also like to emphasise that the implementation

of the strategy must respect the rights of Member States and regional and local self-governments which are close to citizens and know their needs.

Evelyn Regner (S&D). – (DE) Madam President, the strategy for the Danube Region could be a wonderful example of a regional strategy for using available resources in a coordinated way in a geographically and culturally unified region, resolving problems and, above all, breaking down barriers in people's minds.

Two areas are of particular concern to me in this regard. The first one is ensuring that the labour market is not only open, but also regulated in an appropriate and cooperative manner. Brain drains and commuter journeys are everyday occurrences in the Danube Region, the labour market is under pressure and, from 2011, the region will more or less constitute an integrated labour market. We need coordinated compensation mechanisms here. The second particularly important concern in this connection is that this is an opportunity for innovation and cooperative research. I am thinking in particular of inland navigation, which could really do with a push in the direction of environmentally sound technology.

Ádám Kósa (PPE). – (HU) I would like to welcome the Danube Strategy. This is taken into consideration when creating several policies of the European Union. It concerns tourism, since it is very important, and the draft resolution should also mention that non-governmental organisations, in other words, civil society, should also be brought on board for this strategy. Talking about the development of the Danube, we should also look at education, social integration and acceptance. The strategy says that the TEN-T networks should be supported. If I may, I would also like to highlight the importance of ecotourism, since this is precisely the sort of activity that can support the future of the Danube.

In my opinion, the Danube is a link between different cultures, and it is also a way of connecting majority cultures, which is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union. It is also important to emphasise that we need to remain realistic. We should not be creating pious wishes and dreaming, and should incorporate only feasible targets into the strategy; after all, we have known since 1830 that we need a supra-national policy. And indeed, this has happened, since Count Széchenyi, one of the greatest Hungarians, did an awful lot to turn this into a supra-national policy area. The Danube Strategy is evidence that the Danube is indeed a supra-national river.

Karin Kadenbach (S&D). – (DE) Madam President, in my opinion, the general goal of politics is to create the framework conditions for achieving the highest possible quality of life. It is under this premise that I would also like to view the European Strategy for the Danube Region. The Danube is a lifeline, as we have heard today, and the Danube Region is the living space. The Danube should and must be a transport route. It is a source of power – we have a large number of power stations. The Danube is a nature reserve and must be protected to preserve its biodiversity, but it is also a protected area for leisure and tourism. The Danube is a life source for agriculture and fisheries, but – as Mrs Regner also mentioned – for future jobs, too. However, the Danube is also a source of danger – you only need to think about last year's floods.

In order to continue to develop the aforementioned quality of life for everyone living in the Danube Region, we need joint, sustainable and, above all, environmentally sound development of the entire Danube Region in order to make it a key region of Europe for the 21st century. The goal must be to make the available resources more efficient in terms of territorial cooperation and to use them more effectively.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE). – (RO) I believe that drawing up a well thought-out strategy and providing the necessary financial resources could significantly improve the quality of life of those living in the Danube basin. At the moment, there are financial instruments available for infrastructure and economic development projects or for environmental protection, but these resources can only be used by Member States and the states neighbouring them.

Particular attention must be focused on this aspect and, in the future, we must not exclude the possibility of finding other sources of funding, apart from EU funds. It is well known that the other states do not have the necessary financial resources, which makes any cohesive development along the Danube impossible from an infrastructural and economic perspective. This is why regional authorities respond in different ways to the problems they are facing.

As far as we are aware, the Commission is considering having consultations with local partners with a view to ensuring sustainable development. The question is whether the Commission is also considering cooperation with groups of experts at regional level in order to draw up the strategy. The question still is whether this strategy's objectives should feature as part of implementing cohesion, using the Danube's economic and transport potential, and protecting the river, its ecosystem and water quality.

I would also like to mention that the Danube is Priority Project 18 as part of TEN-T (Trans-European Network of Transport), and the Commission has just now initiated an extensive process for reviewing the trans-European transport network policy, with a communication on the subject due to be ready, according to the schedule, in May 2010.

This raises the question of how we expect the aspects relating to the transport policy applicable in the European Union's Member States to be correlated with this strategy, which naturally also takes into account non-EU states present in the Danube Region.

Monika Smolková (S&D). – (SK) Slovakia welcomes this initiative. The fact that its national coordinator is the Deputy Prime Minister underlines the importance that Slovakia ascribes to the Danube Strategy. The initial draft of Slovakia's position on the Danube Strategy has been discussed by the Council, Ministries, self-governing regions, municipalities and companies continue to work on the strategy.

The three pillars as proposed by the Commission, connectivity, environmental protection and socio-economic development, should form the basis of the whole strategy. In my opinion, in addition to these pillars, we need to put emphasis on cooperation between both Member and non-Member States of the European Union in the Danube river basin. In order to find a comprehensive solution for the development of the Danube area, the priorities of countries need to be dealt with on the basis of equality and in mutual contexts.

Therefore, I would like to ask what cooperation has been declared by non-Member States, specifically, I am interested in Moldova and Ukraine.

Iosif Matula (PPE). – (RO) I believe that we must express our support for a European strategy for the Danube Region, all the more so as the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU has been beneficial from the point of view that, at present, a large part of the river, which extends more than 2 800 km, flows through EU territory.

The Baltic Strategy has been instrumental in opening up the prospect of macro-regions. The Danube Strategy marks a new step in the same direction. One of the priorities of the Danube Strategy should be to focus on the economic sector, more specifically, on the development of the energy capacity which both the Danube and its neighbouring area have to offer. As a result of the gas crisis in January 2009, Romania is already making efforts at a European level to interconnect its gas networks with those in neighbouring states through the Arad-Szeged, Giurgiu-Ruse, Isaccea and Negru Vodă projects. However, increased efforts are also needed to find alternative, renewable sources.

I welcome the fact that the European Strategy for the Danube Region must take into consideration the analysis and suitability of the objectives, such as the development of energy infrastructures, specifically, new transport networks and new production capacity for electrical energy, the promotion of energy production from renewable sources, new hydroelectric plants, wind power plants, biofuels and the continuation of programmes for developing nuclear power stations, like the one in Cernavodă.

The number one priority must be to protect the environment in the Danube basin. With this in mind, the European Union must get involved, along with the riparian countries, in the conservation of the Danube Delta's ecosystem, which also means bringing the Băstroe Canal project to a complete halt. We cannot allow misguided economic interests from a state neighbouring the EU to cause an ecological disaster in the Danube Delta.

Danuta Maria Hübner (PPE). – Madam President, today, many of the challenges we face do not respect borders, either political or administrative. The numbers of shared problems and challenges has grown in Europe and so has the need to address them through shared efforts.

That is why the European Commission, inspired by the European Parliament and in response to the Council's decision, elaborated the Baltic Sea Strategy and has now embarked on the process of preparing the Danube Strategy. These strategies allow the regions and countries involved to jointly respond to existing problems and to jointly exploit existing opportunities. Thanks to these strategies, there is a chance to have more and deeper cooperation and cohesion in the Union and, through this, more growth and jobs, improved competitiveness and better quality of life for our citizens.

We in the REGI Committee of the European Parliament expect that the Danube Strategy will be an action-oriented strategy based on better coordination amongst stakeholders, as well as on better exploitation of synergies between policies and funds available on the ground. As the Chair of the REGI Committee, the

lead EP committee for this strategy, I can assure you, Commissioner, of our support and of our openness to achieving good cooperation with the Commission at all stages in the life of the Danube Strategy.

Jan Olbrycht (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, after listening to this debate, I have the impression that most of us are discussing objectives, directions and priorities, whereas fundamental questions have appeared concerning the means of implementation. Are we going to be dealing with a horizontal policy, which will use the instruments of different policies while having one leading policy, or are we going to be dealing, instead, with a system of partnership and cooperation without separate special instruments and without a separate institutional system? These are very important questions, because we do not want expectations of the strategy to be disappointed. We have to know exactly if we are dealing with a new macro-regional method or with a system of extended territorial cooperation. These are questions to which we must find an answer as quickly as possible.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) Madam President, within one or two decades, fresh water and food will become strategic items like today's crude oil and natural gas. Managing and preserving our water is therefore extremely important for the whole European Union, and particularly the Danube Region. Currently, we are fighting floods, excess water and, at the same time, these waters are merely running through our territory. In Hungary, in the area between the Danube and the Tisza rivers, the sandy plain is actually experiencing serious desertification.

That is why we so urgently need this Danube Strategy, which will be a priority of the Hungarian Presidency in 2011. Therefore, I welcome today's debate, because we have a complex approach allowing us to reinforce areas of regional policy, environmental protection, navigation, economic development, job creation, and tourism at the same time. And today's debate has demonstrated that the Danube can create peace between states that have disagreements and tension, as our great poet Attila József once said.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) Right from the moment when I put myself forward as a candidate for the European Parliament, I felt that the Danube offered major potential for the EU which had not been utilised to its maximum capacity. The Rhine-Main-Danube transport waterway, which links the North Sea, via the port of Rotterdam, and the Black Sea, via the port of Constanța, can become the backbone of Europe.

The new Danube Strategy seems as if it will be approved, most likely under the Hungarian Presidency. This will focus on such areas as transport, economic development and environmental protection. One of the main barriers to the development of transport on the Rhine-Main-Danube waterway is the different sets of standards which navigators need to apply. Unfortunately, the political will required to harmonise these regulations seems to have been lacking up until now.

The Ulm conference, which I will be attending on 1-2 February, marks a first step in the consultation process. Romania has offered to organise a series of conferences on this subject, including the ministerial conference in June 2010.

Ivaylo Kalfin (S&D). – (BG) Madam President, Commissioner, there have been numerous initiatives over the years on the development of cooperation along Europe's largest river in the areas of transport, ecology, culture, education and trade, to name but a few. However, all these numerous projects pose a problem at the moment. They do not provide any solution. The outcome is the exact opposite of that expected. There is a lack of adequate, effective cooperation, no coordination, no common objectives or synergy of efforts. What we are asking to see through the synergy which will be provided by the European Commission is for this not to become one in a series of instruments for cooperation along the Danube, but actually to be the instrument which generates a common synergy, facilitates coordination and combines the opportunities from the various initiatives existing in this region. This, combined with the involvement of the widest group of stakeholders, including the European Parliament and citizens, is the only way a synergy can be created which is beneficial to every citizen from the 14 countries bordering the Danube. This is also a message which I want to convey to you from a major conference held by students from the University of Ruse a few weeks ago. Thank you.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, the strength of the European Union is the cooperation of states and regions on solving common problems, and also the implementation of development programmes. We have some good examples of such action. There is, for example, the Mediterranean Partnership, the Baltic Sea Strategy and the programme we are discussing today – the Danube Strategy. This idea is a very good example of territorial cohesion policy, which is based on the sustainable character of the natural environment, the economy and society. This initiative will certainly contribute to further cooperation between the old and the new as well as possible future Member States. We have many initiatives and forms

of cooperation of this kind. We should, therefore, strive for harmonisation of Union policy and concentrate on strengthening the character of the strategy as a joint initiative. How does the Union intend to strengthen and integrate existing cooperation programmes in the region? How advanced is work on the strategy and its implementation?

Katarína Neveďalová (S&D). – (SK) The Danube used to be a symbol of freedom for us Slovaks. Today, we see it as a symbol of cooperation. It brings together both Member and non-Member States of the European Union and regional cooperation in the Danube Region provides a very good basis and conditions for cooperation so that these non-Member States integrate into the Union.

It is very important for this region to have a strategy, not only because of the need to create a transport corridor and connection between the North Sea and the Black Sea, but also because this region is the greatest reservoir of fresh drinking water in Europe. In view of global warming and climatic changes, this aspect will be increasingly important.

It is necessary to protect the Danube Region from floods and ensure its sustainable development for future generations. The Danube must remain a symbol for future generations, too. It connects several capitals, including the two closest capital cities in the world, Bratislava and Vienna, as well as Bratislava and Budapest, and this is a really important and symbolic fact for us, the people of Central Europe. I would like to thank Silvia-Adriana Țicău for the fact that, thanks to her enthusiasm, this debate could take place in the European Parliament.

Csaba Sógor (PPE). – (HU) The Danube shapes life and history in Central and South-Eastern Europe. In 1823, Andrews and Prichard were granted exclusive rights for arterial navigation within the Austrian territories. They established a public limited liability company with its headquarters in Vienna. As a result of the Treaty of Paris of 1856, the lower Danube section was made suitable for navigation, and this contributed to the region's economic development. Today, the lasting peace and well-being created by the EU is a guarantee for facing potential challenges. Given the historical background, we could ask why the first step was somewhat halting. I have Intergroup in mind. Maybe it was because the Hungarian, Romanian, German and Austrian interests could not be reconciled. We should remember our history. The region did well when we managed to reconcile often contradictory interests without harming values.

Kinga Göncz (S&D). – (HU) I, too, would like to welcome the commitment that we are entering into here, which might be the first step towards the realisation of the matters we have been discussing here today. As far as Hungary is concerned, the Danube is particularly important. This is also reflected in the priorities for our 2011 Presidency. Hungary is the only country which lies entirely within the Danube basin, with its corresponding dangers and advantages. Some aspects have already been mentioned. I would like to raise a slightly different point that has occasionally been mentioned in today's discussion. If this strategy proves to be successful, it can really make a contribution in terms of developing a Danube identity, overcoming historic conflicts and traumas, promoting coexistence between different peoples along the Danube and having much more intensive civil cooperation than hitherto. We sincerely hope that we will move in this direction.

Olli Rehn, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, I would like to thank all Members who have participated in this debate at this rather late hour.

I want to congratulate you on your level of interest and dedication to the subject. I must also say that I am impressed by the depth of knowledge and experience of the Danube Region that has been shown in this debate. I believe this is a very valuable asset for the Union in the preparation of the Danube Strategy. I am sure that the Commission and Parliament will work closely together during this preparation phase. This is my response to my friend and ex-colleague, Danuta Hübner, and many others of you who have raised this concern of cooperation between the Commission and Parliament.

It is indeed our joint challenge to improve environmentally sustainable communication systems, roads and bridges, and to protect the environment and preserve water reserves in the Danube Region. It is to save and upgrade *die schöne blaue Donau* and its wider region.

So, in conclusion, I would like to thank you for your support for the Danube Strategy. Let us work together. The Commission is ready and willing to listen carefully to your further proposals and to work together in the coming months to advance this very important strategy.

(Applause)

President. I have received five motions for resolution⁽¹⁾ to wind up the debate tabled in accordance with Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure. The debate is closed. The vote will take place on Thursday, 21 January 2010.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Ioan Mircea Pașcu (S&D), in writing. – The Black Sea area, to which the EU has elaborated only a synergy, underlining its bridging geostrategic position, but also its own hesitation to address the geopolitical complexities of the place, comes part and parcel with the River Danube. Let us not forget that, back in 1856, when this area was previously under world attention, one of the results has been a regulatory status of the River Danube at the European level. It was then when the Danube Commission, an organ still existing today, has been created and the maritime sector of the river built. Equally, today too, the River Danube comes to attention once the EU has become physically a Black Sea actor. Only that, different from the Black Sea area, the River Danube is under almost total EU control. Now that the main blockage of the river – the situation in Serbia – is going to be removed, let us not miss this opportunity and give our full and serious consideration to this river, thus making it the truly European waterway we all will benefit from.

Richard Seeber (PPE), in writing. – (DE) Throughout history, the Danube has played a central role in Europe. The nation states with interests in this area were involved in active exchange long before the founding of the European Union. I therefore think it is an important step to use the Danube Strategy to now bring these countries even closer together within the framework of regional policy. There are many points of contact in this context. These are, of course, in the area of the economy, but also in the areas of culture, environmental policy, energy security and Neighbourhood Policy. Macro-regions are ideal instruments for dealing with cross-border challenges. Thorough and long-term planning and preparation are essential if the Danube macro-region is to have lasting success. The European added value of a macro-region will be particularly evident in the areas of the preservation of biodiversity and sustainable energy generation.

In order to make this cooperation successful, the strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which can already go down as a successful European project, provides a good model for comparison. As an Austrian, a regional policy politician and rapporteur for numerous water-related pieces of EU legislation, I give my express support to this initiative and hope that the Danube Strategy will open up new dimensions of territorial cohesion for the countries along the Danube.

Georgios Stavrakakis (S&D), in writing. – (EL) The adoption of a strategy for the Danube Region will be the jewel in the crown of cooperation developed between Member States, local authorities, NGOs, civil society organisations and other stakeholders in the area at national or regional level. The vital component of this cooperation is that it is following an unhurried course, crossing national, regional, local or even administrative borders, because it is the answer to real needs in the daily lives of the people in the area, an answer formulated through initiative and participation of various levels of governance and not something which is being imposed, proving that multiple-level governance can provide these solutions at local level. Despite the fact that the Danube area affects not only Member States of the EU, but also candidate countries and states directly linked to the European Neighbourhood Policy, reality shows that even if all the stakeholders involved do not belong to the EU, they do nonetheless share common challenges which do not stop at the EU borders and which require common action if they are to be dealt with effectively. Adopting the strategy will prove that the EU intends to make further use of everything achieved to date in the area via European resources.

Iuliu Winkler (PPE), in writing. – (HU) Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome the proposed multiparty draft resolution about the European strategy for the Danube Region, because it fits exactly into the line of new European processes launched with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. Due to its increased role, the European Parliament is proving its capacity for taking initiatives on major issues like the Danube Strategy. In my view, however, when discussing the strategy, we should think of more than just the sum of economic, environmental, transportation and tourism elements, and I would therefore highlight the political significance of the strategy, the fact that the process of planning and cooperation involves all the countries along the Danube, including non-Member States as well, such as Serbia and Ukraine. For these countries, the role they play in the Danube Strategy is an important means of growing closer to Europe, thereby also facilitating their future accession to the EU. As a Hungarian MEP from Romania, I am convinced that this initiative and the potential of the Neighbourhood Policy will improve the circumstances of Hungarian communities living

⁽¹⁾ 1 See Minutes

in Serbia and Ukraine. I would add that the Hungarian MEPs working in the European Parliament have a common commitment to the European future of Hungarian communities that live within the Carpathian basin but outside the borders of the EU. One of the most colourful multicultural regions of Europe is located along the Danube; hence, the preservation and dissemination of historic and community traditions, cultural dialogue and the common protection of historic buildings and monuments can all be components of the Danube Strategy that strengthen the region and make it unique.

16. Agenda of the next sitting: see Minutes

17. Closure of the sitting

(The sitting was closed at 23.55)