

## WEDNESDAY, 15 JULY 2009

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

*President*

### 1. Opening of the sitting

*(The sitting was opened at 9.05)*

### 2. Signature of acts adopted under codecision: see Minutes

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**Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Mr President, the Lithuanian Parliament voted yesterday for a law on homosexuality, on propaganda on homosexuality and bisexuality. The Lithuanian President had already refused to sign this law. It was referred back to the parliament. This law is in direct opposition to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and Article 6(1) of the Treaty of Lisbon.

I call on you, Mr President, on behalf of this Parliament, to protest against this law in the name of European values, since the Charter of Fundamental Rights, as reproduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, provides for non-discrimination in relation to sexual orientation, and this law discriminates against sexual minorities.

On behalf of this Parliament, I call on you to write to the Lithuanian Parliament to state that this law goes against the common idea of Europe.

*(Applause)*

**President.** – Thank you. We proceed to a presentation of the order of business.

**Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Mr President, can you tell me whether or not you are going to act? I have asked you to do something; you should tell me whether or not you are going to do it. That is what I asked you.

**President.** – I will find out what the Lithuanian Parliament has adopted and then I will decide what to do. I will be in touch with you about this.

### 3. Order of business: see Minutes

### 4. Outcome of the European Council (18-19 June 2009) - Term in office of the Czech Presidency (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the joint debate on the following:

- the European Council report and the Commission statement on the outcome of the European Council (18–19 June 2009)
- the statement by the outgoing Presidency of the Council on the term in office of the Czech Presidency.

I would like to take the opportunity to welcome the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Mr Jan Fischer. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to the President of the European Commission, Mr José Manuel Barroso.

We have before us the statement by the outgoing Presidency of the Council on the term in office of the Czech Presidency. Please allow me to say a few words at the outset. Yesterday we inaugurated the seventh term of the European Parliament. You entrusted me with the job, the responsibility, the great privilege and the honour of presiding over the European Parliament for the next two and a half years. I would like, today, on this second day, to thank you very warmly once again, to thank you for the trust which you have placed in me. I will do everything to convince you that your decision was the right one.

In the first half of 2009 the Presidency was held by a second country from the group which acceded to the European Union barely five years ago. We have, therefore, opportunity to become increasingly united and to come closer together. We are conscious that it was a difficult Presidency because of the crisis and also because of the energy problems. There was also a crisis in Gaza. We also had the elections to the European Parliament. However, as you know, during elections to the European Parliament there is less contact between the Presidency, Parliament and the European Commission. Today we want to hear how the outgoing Czech Presidency sees the past six months and what conclusions and principal comments it has about what we should do in the near future.

I would like, therefore, to ask the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic to speak and to present the opinion of the Presidency on the past six months and on what should happen in the near future.

**Jan Fischer**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (CS) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honour for me to be able to greet you at the opening of your five-year mandate. The Czech Presidency has come to an end and a new European Parliament is just starting out. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election and on the fact that you have been entrusted by the voters in your countries to represent them in this important European body. I congratulate Jerzy Buzek on his election as President of the European Parliament, along with all of the Vice-Presidents elected yesterday, and I wish you all much success in your important work and in the fulfilment of all the ideas with which you commence your work in the European Parliament.

The Czech Republic is drawing up an account of its six-month leadership of the European Council for a different Parliament to the one that was in place when it assumed the role. This changes nothing in terms of our own assessment of our Presidency, of course. On the contrary, I see it rather as a confirmation of continuity in European politics. In the same way, by tackling the effects of the global economic crisis and the issues of energy and energy security, the new Swedish Presidency will continue to fulfil two of the main tasks which occupied us. The first half of this year will go down in the history of the European Union as a period of demanding tests arising from a complex economic and political situation. We anticipated some of these tests, in particular the continuing and already full-blown economic crisis and the need to complete the institutional reform of the EU. Others were unexpected and some were entirely unexpected, such as the conflict in Gaza and the crisis over Russian gas supplies in the very first hours of the Czech Presidency. Our ability to run the Presidency was then put to the test, of course, due to events on the domestic political scene, when the Czech Republic changed government just as we were two thirds of the way through the Presidency. Unlike many people, I do not think that the political crisis in the Czech Republic seriously damaged the EU as a whole, although I agree that the fall of the government was unfortunate. Nevertheless, I firmly believe that we handled the administration of our Presidency without faltering and that we managed over the entire six months to fulfil our priorities – the planned tasks arising from the EU agenda – and to deal with unexpected topical issues on a continuous basis and with total engagement. This was also due to the fact that the specialist teams in the Czech Republic all carried on working with total commitment, loyalty and one hundred percent professionalism. It was also due to the fact that the Czech Presidency received full backing from the Commission following the change of government. I benefited personally from the support of Commission President José Manuel Barroso and I also received strong support at the time – if you will allow me to add a personal note here – from various Member State representatives. This was an enormous help at the time, both for the Czech Government and for me personally.

I would like to give notice that I shall not be indulging in any philosophical or political analyses. I do not want to weigh up the political dimensions or cogency of EU leadership under large versus small countries or old versus new countries or the pros and cons of political versus bureaucratic governments in the country holding the Presidency. I will leave that to others and for the rest I will say only that a decent and open-minded analysis requires a certain amount of distance and the falling away of emotions and short-term interests. From now on I will eschew grand words and pathos. I would rather concentrate on bare facts backed up by statistics where appropriate – as statistics is after all my life-long profession and possibly even my passion – or on what Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the first President of the Czechoslovak Republic, called the small everyday tasks. As you know, the Czech Republic expressed its main presidential priorities as the ‘Three Es’: the economy, energy policy and the EU’s role in the world. Circumstances, I think, have demonstrated clearly that these were highly topical, valid themes and their validity is by no means limited to the first half of 2009. They are areas that will continue to require all of our combined efforts in the future, in order for the Union to stand its ground even in times of instability and to benefit its citizens – which is the main reason for it being here. They are priorities which put the idea of integration to the test, demonstrating in practice how faithful we are to the values which were there at the birth of the Community and which define Europe as a common area of freedom, security and prosperity. We selected the motto of ‘Europe without barriers’ to

represent this effort symbolically. The economic crisis tested our faithfulness to the idea of integration to the full, adding an even more urgent significance to the Czech Presidency's motto. The results of the many discussions held over the past half-year and the conclusions of the European Councils show that the twenty-seven Member States passed this test with flying colours. Under the Czech Presidency we turned our backs on protectionism and we agreed on a common and coordinated approach to dealing with the effects of the crisis both in an EU context and on the international stage.

In the same way we succeeded in fulfilling a task which many thought us incapable of: the issue of institutional reform. The Czech Republic itself successfully completed the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon by both chambers of parliament. This was a clear and convincing expression of political will and it opened up the possibility of a credible solution to the question of the Irish guarantees. I firmly believe that, as a result of the guarantees agreed on at the June European Council, there is a good chance that Ireland will complete the Treaty ratification process as well, so that it can enter into force by the end of 2009. The Czech Presidency also took a serious approach to a task that is connected with the election of this new European Parliament, namely initiating the process of appointing a Commission for the next legislative period 2009–2014. At the June European Council a clear political consensus was achieved on José Manuel Barroso as the candidate for President of the next Commission. The authority for the Czech Presidency and the incoming Swedish Presidency to hold talks with the European Parliament creates the preconditions for preserving institutional continuity. Overall, the Czech Presidency has managed to achieve a series of concrete results or visible progress in all three priority areas. In the legislative area, negotiations over more than 80 concrete measures were brought to a successful conclusion, thanks above all to close cooperation with the Member States and EU institutions, particularly the European Parliament. In the non-legislative area a series of notable successes were also achieved, including the handling of the foreign policy and energy crises at the beginning of the year, the rejection of protectionist tendencies, decisive measures in support of the European economy, steps towards diversification of energy supply and climate protection and the results of negotiations with key partners in the European Union.

As far as the individual priorities are concerned, the most important task in the economic sphere was to deal with the effects of the global crisis and to continue implementing the European plan for economic recovery as one of the main instruments for restoring economic prosperity. We also passed muster concerning the measures adopted for stabilising the banking sector. The measures we adopted are effective. Through guarantees and recapitalisation, Member States provided the banks with potential support amounting to more than 30% of the European Union's GDP. The compromise achieved over the EUR 5 billion package for projects in the area of energy and broadband internet and measures to verify the efficiency of the common agricultural policy provided a positive message from the spring European Council. The agreement over the contribution of EU Member States towards the EUR 75 billion loan for boosting International Monetary Fund resources was of key significance in terms of tackling the global economic crisis. Under the Czech Presidency, the EU, with strong support from the Commission, made a major contribution to the excellent preparations for and successful course of the G20 summit in London, which produced agreement over the major boost to IMF resources and over the resources disbursed through other international institutions to combat the effects of the global economic recession. The EU also gained a strong position at the summit thanks to the common conclusions adopted at the spring European Council. In this way it confirmed its ambition to be a strong global player. As I said earlier, all of the measures aimed at combating the crisis during the Czech Presidency must be viewed against the backdrop of the joint and unequivocal rejection of protectionism.

In the area of legislative measures, the Czech Presidency managed to achieve a consensus within the framework of the recovery plan over the possibility of applying reduced VAT rates for labour-intensive locally-provided services. This agreement makes a significant contribution towards maintaining employment in the most vulnerable sectors of the economy and should help small and medium-sized companies in particular. The changes to financial market regulation and market supervision represent a whole chapter in the effort to combat the current financial and economic crisis. During the Czech Presidency major progress was achieved in restoring confidence. We completed negotiations on all of the key legislative proposals which the Presidency established as its objectives. Chief among these was the Solvency II Directive for the areas of insurance, regulations for rating agencies and others. In the challenging debate on the regulation and supervision of financial markets, agreement was reached over the basic elements of reform, which should provide stability at the Member State level and at the level of individual financial institutions and their rules. The June European Council confirmed the direction taken by the Commission. The support voiced for the Commission's plans should lead to concrete legislative proposals being drawn up and approved in the autumn of this year.

Energy policy, the second priority of the Czech Presidency, was severely tested in the very first days of the Presidency. At the same time, we saw that it is not always sensible to tackle the problems of energy crises on an ad hoc basis, since a crisis blows up every six months or so. We should rather adopt systematic measures so that the EU can be secure and resilient in terms of energy supplies. Under the Czech Presidency we took steps to boost energy security, focusing on activities that will increase diversification of energy sources and supply routes through the so-called southern corridor. The support for energy efficiency included in the revised regulations for the European Regional Development Fund also makes a significant contribution to energy security. It enables financial investments to be made in greater energy efficiency and in the use of renewable energy sources in residential buildings. This provides a link to the Swedish Presidency, which has energy efficiency as one of its key priorities. The continuity necessary to the work of the entire EU is again apparent here. Last, but by no means least, the March and June Councils confirmed in full that it would not be sensible to abandon our ambitious goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions or for financing mitigation and adaptation measures in developing countries. At the same time, we established clear priorities and goals which must be fulfilled ahead of the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen this December in order for the EU to defend its position as a leader in climate change.

The third priority – or if you will the third ‘E’ – of the Czech Presidency was about the EU in the world, and events demonstrate clearly how important it is for the EU to develop and pursue a common foreign policy. There was ample confirmation of this during the course of the Czech Presidency. While the EU succeeded in solving the gas crisis thanks to its unity, the second crisis from the start of the year, the crisis in Gaza, again showed that if the EU wants to be a truly global player it must learn to speak with one voice. Both of these crises occurred under the one Presidency, which goes to show that the issue of who is actually leading the EU does not matter so much as the unity of all twenty-seven Member States. The Czech Presidency succeeded in kicking off the Eastern Partnership project which is a continuation of the neighbourhood policy, this time in an eastward direction. The main foreign priority of the Czech Presidency was to continue the process of EU enlargement. This mainly involved a European perspective for the countries of the Western Balkans. Due to the situation in the region, the Presidency had limited room for manoeuvre. However, despite the suspension of accession talks with Croatia, progress was achieved in the process of visa liberalisation. I have presented a brief and matter-of-fact summary of the priorities of the Czech Presidency and their fulfilment. More detailed information is of course available and I am now available myself to respond to your questions and comments.

**José Manuel Barroso**, *President of the Commission*. – (FR) Mr President, Prime Minister, ladies and gentlemen, the first plenary session of a newly elected European Parliament is a unique political moment. It opens a legislative term that will influence the daily lives of hundreds of millions of European citizens and the fate of an entire continent.

I should like sincerely to congratulate all the MEPs who have just been elected. Your presence in this Chamber is the result of the greatest exercise in transnational democracy ever staged in the world. I wish you every success for your term of office.

The challenges faced by Europe and those that it will have to take up over the next few years are immense. Firstly, there is the economic and financial crisis, which requires us to continue the systematic coordinated action that we have embarked on. There is the social cost of this crisis, which is our top priority. There is the fight against climate change and the transition to a green and sustainable economy, which shows the political direction we need to go in.

All these challenges have also distinguished the Czech Presidency, which has just come to an end. I should like to congratulate Prime Minister Fischer and his predecessor, Mirek Topolánek, on the results obtained during a particularly difficult phase. I thank them and their entire team for their excellent cooperation, despite some internal political difficulties.

I should also like to highlight the political significance of this Czech Presidency. For the first time, a country which, only a few years ago, was a member of the Warsaw Pact has been in charge of our European project of freedom and solidarity. This is a very important point, which shows the extent to which we have progressed within our Europe.

During the Czech Presidency we have been able to achieve some impressive results in practice: 54 texts have been adopted by codecision. I should like to mention in particular the agreement on a wide range of measures on regulation of the financial markets and on the EUR 5 billion in the context of the European recovery plan, and you are all very well aware of how hard we, the Commission and Parliament, have had to fight to achieve

this. I would also mention the review of the Globalisation Adjustment Fund. I welcome the development of the internal energy market and of the internal transport market.

In all of these areas there were ambitious proposals from the Commission, which were supported by this Parliament. I welcome the unanimous support of the last European Council for the road map that the Commission proposed on the subject of supervision of the financial markets. We now have an ambitious consensus that no one could have hoped for a few months ago when I convened a group of high-level experts under the chairmanship of Mr de Larosière. This will enable us to spearhead the reform of the international financial system. Moreover, it was in this same spirit that we took part in the G20 in London, prompting some very important decision-making.

Beyond its legislative work, the Czech Presidency has also been able to confront challenges of a political nature, some of which were extremely sensitive, indeed extremely serious. We have had to manage the gas crisis between Ukraine and Russia, which has again highlighted the need for Europe to strengthen its energy security. Over the last six months we have made much progress, for example by developing the Baltic interconnection plan.

The day before yesterday I attended the ceremony of the signing of the Nabucco project between Turkey and four of our Member States – Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania – in the presence of many countries from which we hope to import gas in the future. This is a truly European project, and I am proud that the Commission has been able to act as a facilitator in it, since this role has been recognised as essential for all the participants.

Mr President, during the Czech Presidency there were also very important developments concerning the Lisbon Treaty. The last European Council agreed the necessary guarantees that allow the Irish Government to call a second referendum, fully reassured that the concerns expressed by Irish people have been addressed satisfactorily. Let us not forget that it was also during the Czech Presidency that the Czech Senate finalised parliamentary ratification, bringing the total number of Member States that have completed the parliamentary approval process to 26.

The Czech Presidency has now passed the baton to the Swedish Presidency, but the challenges Europe faces continue and go well beyond the scope of a single presidency.

The European project has always been a long-term one. We make progress when we work as a team. Like a team, every member is vital to success: the Council, the Commission and Parliament all have an important role to play in meeting our common European ambitions at the service of Europe's citizens.

The Europe we must continue to build together is a strong Europe, an open Europe, a Europe of solidarity. It is a Europe that offers a maximum of opportunities to its citizens; a Europe that builds on its continental dimension and draws full benefit from the potential of its internal market, so crucial for consumers and for small- and medium-sized companies; a Europe of knowledge and innovation; a Europe that respects the environment and ensures its energy security; a Europe that reaches out to other global actors in a spirit of partnership in order to tackle shared challenges together.

In this time of global crisis, we need a strong Europe more than ever before – and a strong Europe means a united Europe ready to seize and shape its destiny. Let us work together – Parliament, Council, Commission – to show that the expectations of Europe's citizens are safe in our hands; that their desire for freedom, justice and solidarity will not go ignored.

(Applause)

**Ádám Kósa**, on behalf of the PPE Group. – (HU) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I feel deeply moved as I stand here in the European Parliament as the first deaf person able to address you in my mother tongue, Hungarian sign language. I do so not only for myself and the deaf community, but also for every disadvantaged person. I am now beginning to feel that I belong to a European community where even minorities can achieve success. Just take Robert Schuman as an example, who was from Alsace-Lorraine and went on to become the founding father of the EU 50 years ago. Around the end of the EU's outgoing Czech Presidency, a turn of events unfortunately took place which I would also like to bring to the attention of the EU's incoming Swedish Presidency. Two weeks ago the Slovak Parliament adopted a regulation which will seriously restrict the rights of the minorities living in that country to use their own language. As a user of sign language, I feel it is my duty to stand up for the rights of people in Europe to use their own language and for the importance of this. This is the reason why I am going to be working here in the European Parliament. However, I want to give a message to every European citizen. I want a Europe where everyone is guaranteed the right to live

their life to the full and fulfil their potential. I want a Europe where deaf people represented by me or any person living with a disability, for that matter, really do enjoy equal opportunities. I would like to say a particular word of thanks to Joseph Daul, Chairman of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), for giving me the opportunity to address you on this special day. This also proves that Europe really is about diversity, tolerance and equal opportunities.

**Libor Rouček**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (CS) Prime Minister Fischer, Commission President Barroso, ladies and gentlemen, in January this year I warned this honourable assembly that the Czech Presidency would not be easy and that it would probably be marked by major instability. The reason for my fears was the instability within the Czech Government coalition, the disagreements between government and opposition and the disputes between government and president. I would like to say briefly that the speech made by Czech President Václav Klaus to this honourable assembly unfortunately confirmed my fears of instability, showing that the Presidency would indeed be marked by instability, and not just through the collapse of the government. Despite this, some things have been successful over the six months, others less so. On the plus side I would mention the energy policy referred to earlier. I think that the Czech Republic managed very well in resolving the gas crisis of January this year. The signing of the Nabucco agreement, mentioned here by Mr Barroso, was also the result of work done by the Czech Presidency. Unfortunately, the handling of the economic crisis did not fulfil the expectations of Europe and the European Parliament. Let us recall the speech of former Czech Prime Minister Topolánek, when he sent US President Obama to hell, along with his economic policy.

Despite this, I would like in conclusion to thank Prime Minister Fischer in particular for rescuing the Czech Presidency. The June summit is proof of this, since the entire agenda of the summit was successfully implemented. I would also like to thank the hundreds of Czech officials, not only in Brussels but in all of the Czech ministries. In my opinion these officials did a very good and professional job and they cannot be held responsible for what was happening on the Czech political scene.

**Alexander Graf Lambsdorff**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on your election. I wish you every success over the next two and a half years. I was even able to understand your last request to keep to our speaking time without using headphones.

Prime Minister, your predecessor did not have an easy or positive start. The emphasis was quite rightly placed on energy, economy and external relations, but as is so often the case in life, what happens in reality is sometimes very different to what we had planned. In the Gaza conflict, the Council Presidency rushed straight in without first having agreed on a common European approach. In the gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine, millions of people were freezing before your government stepped forward and acted as an intermediary, with very successful results.

Despite the criticism, you were also successful in other areas. It is a lasting achievement of the Czech Presidency that the European Union did not make the mistake of sliding into protectionism, as was the case in the 1930s. That was and still is a real danger. On this issue the Presidency took a clear line, supported in particular by the Competition Commissioner. Many people want to use the crisis to promote a new economic nationalism. That would be catastrophic. For Liberals and Democrats, free and fair competition, as provided for in the Treaties, is the way to growth and prosperity.

However, if our citizens are to accept free competition, they want and need to be certain that the rules are the same for everyone. The distortion of competition, foreclosure, a preference for a state's own national companies – all these things will lead not to the end of the crisis, but straight up a blind alley. During its Presidency, the Czech Republic, as a new Member State, rightly had to issue many old Member States with a call to order, which was unfortunately necessary in view of the fact that the internal market must not be eroded and rules must be followed.

The Czech Government proved ultimately to be helpless in the face of the constant harassment from Prague Castle and the vote of no confidence. Its fall in the middle of its presidential term was unprecedented. The whole of Europe looked to Prague in amazement. With this move, the Czech political class did a disservice both to its own country and to Europe.

Prime Minister, you have however shown that, in politics just as in football, a game can still turn even if substitutions are not made until it has gone into extra time. In the European Council in June the course was set for an overhaul of financial market supervision. It is now the task of the Commission to carry this initiative forward with determination. You have negotiated the guarantees for Ireland so that, hopefully, the referendum

on 2 October will be successful. The Member States have formally agreed on a candidate for the office of President of the Commission and thus met an important demand by our group.

Prime Minister, you personally have done a good job and gained a great deal of respect. However, the first Czech Presidency will probably not take the place in the history books that we had all hoped it would. What we nevertheless ought to remember is your motto: 'Europe without borders'.

**Rebecca Harms**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Prime Minister, President of the Commission, it is not easy to weigh up the progress that ought to have been made during the period of the Czech Presidency. I have tried very hard to do this on behalf of my group, but what we would have liked to have seen – namely the Czech Presidency rising to the challenges – did not actually happen.

With regard to the financial crisis, when we reconvene here in September after the summer break we will have been talking about the required new regulation of the financial markets for a whole year, but we will have made virtually no progress in this regard. A lot of statements have been made that are intended to reassure citizens, but not very much is actually being done.

As regards the economic crisis, the European recovery plan – I find it almost embarrassing that this is mentioned so often – is however merely a token programme to enable us to talk about European recovery planning, but it lacks any real substance. It runs to a mere EUR 5 billion and then there is the petty dispute about how this EUR 5 billion should be used. I do not think that this is something we ought to be proud of. A programme that we have worked hard on, namely a consistent programme for energy efficiency in Europe, which would safeguard millions of jobs, has not been given any real consideration.

I now turn to the climate crisis and I hardly need to ask green politicians to evaluate the policy in this area. Ivo de Boer, the United Nations' top climate change official, and Ban Ki-moon impressed upon us after the last conference in Bonn that all of countries of the world which have claimed that they would take a leading role in this global policy to combat the climate crisis have fallen far short of doing what would actually be needed. If we take the European energy policy as a measure of what we as Europeans are actually willing to do, I do not believe that we can really regard the constantly competitive strategy that was so clearly employed in connection with the North Stream and Nabucco projects to be the starting point for a common future-oriented European energy policy.

Why is this? What are the reasons for this? I believe that the criticism for this should not really be directed at you, Mr Fischer. The country which the chairman of my group, Mr Cohn-Bendit, visited carrying the European flag in his rucksack so that he could give it to the President was in reality weak. And unfortunately, Mr Barroso, even though there is often talk about your strength, where was this strength during the times of weakness of this Council Presidency? We did not see any evidence of it.

(Applause)

**Jan Zahradil**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (CS) Prime Minister, Commission President, it is a great honour for me to be able to stand up today as the first speaker from the many new groupings of European conservatives and reformers and also as a Czech MEP talking about the Czech Presidency. However, I will be speaking as a Member of the European Parliament and not just from a narrow national perspective. At the same time, I will be speaking as a representative of my group and therefore I will take account of its political priorities. I have already had an opportunity to speak at the plenary session in January, when Czech Prime Minister Topolánek presented the priorities of the Czech Presidency here, and I am speaking today as Czech Prime Minister Fischer submits the report on what the Czech Republic has achieved. I do not mention this by chance. I would like to draw attention to the fact that the Czech Government has succeeded in preserving both the political and the organisational continuity of the Presidency, despite the collapse of the Government, which was the result purely of internal political factors. I would like at this point to applaud the tone of the Prime Minister's speech, as it was exactly the tone of the Czech Presidency itself, matter-of-fact and results-orientated. In my opinion, some of the critical assessments were based on the subjective feelings of certain European representatives or media figures and have contributed nothing to our much-vaunted European cohesion, belonging instead to private political campaigns targeted at domestic audiences.

I would now like to turn to the three priorities of the Czech Presidency. In relation to the economy I would like to emphasise again that the Czech Republic has succeeded in heading off an ominous wave of national protectionist measures which would have seriously undermined the fundamental values of European integration and particularly the principles of the unified single market. Concerning energy policy, the issue of secure and maintainable supplies for the energy sector proved to be a well chosen theme. In the first days

of the Czech Presidency an imminent crisis over gas supplies was successfully warded off, bearing in mind of course that any real progress over this issue will require long-term strategic measures, including diversification of supply and liberalisation of the internal energy market. From the symbolic perspective of the other aim of EU foreign relations I would like to emphasise the summits with major global players, in other words the EU-US summit, which reaffirmed the fundamental importance of transatlantic relations, and also the EU-Russia summit and the EU-China summit. I would also like to stress the importance of the Eastern Partnership initiative and its implementation. In conclusion, I believe that the Czech Presidency can be summed up, on the whole, as providing proof that medium-sized countries and so-called new Member States can manage such a role with honour and to a high standard.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MRS KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU

*Vice-President*

**Miloslav Ransdorf**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (CS) I would like to say that the Czech Presidency was actually rescued by Mr Fischer's government and by Mr Fischer himself. I would like to emphasise that the Presidency coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the political changes which the media characterises as a liberation, but we have also had twenty years of unfulfilled promises, because levels of competence in the administration of public affairs have plummeted in the Czech Republic. I would also like to say that from this standpoint the government of Mr Fischer has been a pleasant surprise. He is a prime minister and a man who refuses to lie. His name first came to my attention when he was taking a stand against the falsification of statistical data in the Czech Republic. He is a man who avoids the grand phrases we have heard here under various presidencies, and who acts with deliberation. In my opinion it is a very good thing that such a man finally came to lead the Czech Presidency. As we are now marking the 500th anniversary of the birth of Calvin, who was born in France on 10 July 1509, I would like to say that the only thing that will truly save us in this difficult situation with two crises... *(the President cut off the speaker)*

**Nigel Farage**, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – Madam President, the Czech Presidency has followed a depressingly familiar pattern: continuity, more of the same, the continuing obsession with climate change and the continuing drive to have new legislation. You said that under this Presidency legislation in 18 new areas had been worked on and you seem to be proud of that. I would have thought it is about time we took a couple of steps back and said that what we have in the European Union is an over-regulated model that is serving us very badly during the depths of a recession.

And yet more status quo. You supported the idea of shooing in Mr Barroso without there being any sort of proper contest, but it is on the Lisbon Treaty that I was most interested. You ratified the Treaty through your own parliamentary chambers, without of course the thought of giving the people in your own country a referendum to express their opinion. But it is when it comes to Ireland that I really get interested. You said that you wanted there to be a credible policy for Ireland with their second referendum, and so you produced these guarantees, and here they are – guarantees on the right to life, on taxation, on security and defence.

This document has no legal force whatsoever. It is not worth the paper that it is written on. You are the author of a disgraceful attempt to con the Irish into voting for this Lisbon Treaty in their forthcoming referendum. Of course you have been supported by Mr Barroso on that. He never respects the result of democratic referendums whether they are in France, the Netherlands or Ireland. He says we must ignore them, we must continue. It is all about power. It is all about him and the EU institutions getting more power at the expense of the Member States. I hope the Irish tell you all where to go in the second referendum on 2 October – and they just might!

*(Mixed reactions)*

However, I do not wish to be mean-spirited, because there was one wonderful, bright, uplifting moment during the Czech Presidency, a moment when all of us that believe in nation states, that believe in democracy, that believe genuinely in the rule of law could come into this Chamber and feel for the first time in my experience proud of the fact that we were part of this European Parliament. I am of course referring to the visit of Václav Klaus. What a wonderful speech that was: coming into this Chamber and telling a few home truths and pointing out that European parliamentarians and leaders are not listening to the peoples of Europe – at which 200 of you got up and walked out of the room. So at least for Václav Klaus we thank you very much for the last six months.

*(Applause)*



**José Manuel Barroso**, *President of the Commission*. – Madam President, I should just like to put a question. I am not criticising, but is it allowed to have flags in the Chamber?

*(Objections. Mr Farage held up a Union Flag.)*

Because, if it is allowed, I should just like to put the European flag here today, if I may do so.

*(Mr Barroso placed a European flag on his desk. Applause.)*

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**. – *(DE)* Madam President, in terms of European integration, it is without doubt a good thing that one of the new EU countries, in this case the Czech Republic, held the Council Presidency. Less welcome, however, was the chaos which the Presidency is partly responsible for leading us into.

Of course, we could hardly expect perfection from a new country with little European experience, but we could at least expect a minimum degree of sensitivity. The arts scandal at the start of the Presidency could not have been blamed on the government in Prague, but the Council Presidency can be held fully responsible for its half-hearted response and the fact that the artworks remained on display.

However, the Czech Presidency showed political leadership in particular when dealing with difficulties and in crisis management. In this regard in particular there were considerable shortcomings: a 20-day energy crisis in Europe during the gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine could have been overcome in one way or another; management of the Middle East crisis was, in my opinion, more than a little clumsy. And if the US missile shield in the Czech Republic was not bad enough, dependence on the US was also reflected in the Presidency, for example in the way that the Israeli offensive in Gaza was trivialised as defensive action.

Even the Treaty of Lisbon was only half-heartedly criticised and delayed by the Prague leadership. As a result, we missed an important opportunity to bring more democracy back into the European Union.

The fact that ultimately no agreement could be reached between Slovenia and Croatia with regard to the sea borders is also extremely regrettable. After all, Croatia is no less prepared for accession to the EU than the ten new Member States were at the time of their accession. On the contrary, it may even be better prepared. Even more regrettable, in my opinion, is the fact that Sweden does not wish to continue the attempts at conciliation. Croatia does not deserve that.

Overall, our conclusions about the success of the Czech Presidency are somewhat mixed.

**Jan Fischer**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – *(CS)* Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to respond very briefly on behalf of the Council and the former Czech Presidency. Firstly – on a personal note – to be confronted with the atmosphere of a Parliament, whether the Czech Parliament or the European Parliament, is always a great lesson for a man who is essentially a specialist and who has strong academic leanings. It is a lesson in how different ideas can be at times concerning the speed and intensity of European integration, or the nature of the EU. All of this simply reflects the very broad spectrum of your views and I think it is part and parcel of true democracy. I would therefore like to thank you for expressing your views and ultimately also for the critical suggestions which you have presented here.

As far as the speech of Mr Kósa is concerned, I do not wish to comment on it in detail, but I think it reflects the importance of our motto 'Europe without barriers' and I hope that the EU will continue to live up to this motto. I firmly believe that the measures aimed at mitigating the effects of the very severe economic and financial crisis were adequate and sensible at the time of their adoption. Criticisms have been levelled here at the pace of financial market regulation. We have adopted fundamental measures in this area and they were agreed on after a very serious, challenging and controversial debate, where we juggled with the details right up to the European Council in June, producing a result which perhaps did not satisfy everyone, as there are some who consider the world to be over-regulated. We are nevertheless ready for the Commission's draft legislative solutions to financial market regulation and banking supervision in a European format this autumn. The fact that there have been no manifestations of protectionism is – I repeat again – of fundamental importance, as is the fact that we have managed to agree on applying the principles of solidarity, especially towards certain countries where the economy has got into the greatest difficulties.

I will be meeting with President Klaus this evening and I will convey to him the praises of the honourable Member. Otherwise, the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon in the Czech Republic has of course proceeded fully in accordance with the Czech constitution. The treaty was ratified in both chambers of parliament and we await the signature of the President of the Republic. I hope it will be final, decisive and correct. The fact that no referendum was held in the Czech Republic to ratify the Treaty is entirely an internal matter for the

Czech Republic and is a matter fully compatible and fully in conformity with the Czech constitution. This ends my digression into domestic affairs.

I would like to thank the many speakers who praised the level of continuity achieved by the Czech Presidency. Personally I considered it a great challenge for my cabinet and for myself as well. It was a test for the new cabinet and for all of the ministers and the teams of specialists, and everyone passed the test with flying colours – as has already been pointed out in my own speech and in the appraisals of certain honourable Members. I regarded my one third share of the Presidency as a personal task and I am delighted that the Czech Presidency has carried it off with honour.

**Zuzana Roithová (PPE).** - (CS) Commission President, President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, I am proud of the fact that the Czech Presidency will go down in the history of the EU as the model of an accommodating, professional, non-partisan and well prepared administration. In defiance of indiscriminate criticisms from the European media and the Czech opposition, the Czechs successfully managed to finalise agreements over dozens of legislative standards. The Czechs accomplished this at half time – before Parliament ended with the election period. The agreements covered, for example, roaming, the energy package and measures to combat the crisis. It was the Czechs who finally managed to crack the nut of introducing a lower VAT rate for labour-intensive services, which is a pro-growth and counter-crisis measure. The Czechs also managed not only to assist with the resumption of oil and gas supplies from Russia to Europe, but also to reach agreement on the Nabucco southern gas pipeline and to prepare it for signing together with the Commission President.

Unfortunately, the Czech Republic will also go down in EU history as an example of political instability, because the social democrat Paroubek placed his own ambitions above the interests of the EU and – together with several turncoats – engineered the downfall of the Czech Government half way through its successful Presidency. I would like to thank the teams of Prime Ministers Topolánek and Fischer as well as the Czech mission in Brussels for their hard work in furthering the interests of the EU and the Czech Republic. The teams showed that these interests are not mutually exclusive, even in times of crisis. In addition, they convinced the French President, among others, that protectionism is a dirty word. I would like to congratulate you and all of us for that.

I would now like to call on the Swedish Presidency to begin talks immediately over the suspension of Canadian visas for Czech citizens. I believe that these talks will also be a success. After all, solidarity is the greatest strength of the European Union.

**Edite Estrela (S&D).** – (PT) Madam President, Prime Minister Fischer declared that the Czech Presidency was very successful. Mr Fischer, I regret to say that I do not agree. The Prime Minister will hold the least responsibility for this, but the Czech Presidency was not at all consensual. I would firstly mention the controversy about works of art, a controversy which was favourable to artists, but not to the Presidency. Then there was the domestic political instability, which tarnished the image of the European Union or, in other words, of all of us. Mr Fischer, it is true that the Czech Republic managed to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon, but this is still missing the signature of President Václav Klaus, and we are all agreed that having a Euro-sceptic president while you are holding the Presidency of the European Union is no help at all. The Czech President sent out various signals of Euro-scepticism, primarily by refusing to use the EU flag. However, more important is his failure to sign the Treaty of Lisbon. This is an act of disrespect towards all of us and towards the people of Europe.

However, the Czech Presidency was particularly wrong on the directive on maternity leave. I know what I am talking about, because I was the rapporteur for this report. The Presidency's involvement in this issue was extremely negative and it was greatly assisted by Mrs Lulling, who boycotted the vote on my report. The Czech Presidency was against extending the duration of maternity leave to 20 weeks and it was against including paternity leave, which is essential to ensure that family responsibilities are shared between men and women and therefore to promote gender equality.

Prime Minister, men are needed in the home just as much as women are needed in the labour market. Men have just as much right to see their children develop as women have to enjoy career success. Prime Minister, please do not devalue the rights of women or their skills.

**Bairbre de Brún (GUE/NGL).** – (GA) Madam President, an overwhelming number of people voted against the Treaty of Lisbon last year, because it was believed that a better Europe could be achieved: a Europe that is democratic and responsible; a Europe that promotes the rights of workers, that defends public services and that seeks a positive role in the world.

We are told that the European Council has agreed a package of legally binding guarantees that address the concerns of the Irish people, but what has been published is just a clarification of the Treaty of Lisbon. It does not change in any way the body or the substance.

When we vote on this matter in October, we will be voting on the exact same Treaty that was rejected last year - without any amendment, without any additional matter, without any deletion. The exact same Treaty of Lisbon that 53% of the voters rejected.

We need a new Treaty for a new era.

**Mario Mauro (PPE).** – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I am grateful to the Czech Presidency for its efforts, which can perhaps be interpreted precisely as a parable of the situation in which our institutions currently find themselves.

We all recognise that the European Union is the only possible platform for tackling some of the major challenges we are facing. No one can think, for instance, that Malta on its own, or Italy with 5 000 km of coastline, can resolve the problems of immigration, just as so many other countries cannot resolve the problems linked to the supply of energy.

However, it is precisely the affairs of the Czech Presidency – namely, contending with major internal difficulties, but also with a different interpretation of Europe – that give us a better understanding of what it is we are being asked to do. I have not brought any flags with me this morning, but I know this for sure: I distrust obtuse nationalism and I also distrust bureaucratic monsters that can rip the heart out of our political experience and make us forget what we are being asked to achieve.

The truth is that we are paying the price for indecision. We are paying a tragic price for not having the courage to take certain decisions that, today, are momentous decisions, and this is perhaps also reflected in the fact that we do not have the strength right now to tackle the most immediate circumstances, which are those linked to the start of a very problematic new parliamentary term.

However, I believe that we have a great opportunity. Some did better than others in these elections, but we all know for certain that we will be unable to rise to any challenges if we do not work together. I therefore believe that we must assume our responsibilities and give these institutions the strength to be able to reconnect with our citizens, because one thing is certain: what we are paying for most is the fact that we are paying in the first place, because this leads to the estrangement of our citizens, who are distancing themselves from our ideals.

**Jiří Havel (S&D).** – (CS) Prime Minister, Madam President, Commission President, ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here in order to evaluate the previous Presidency. This Presidency had two faces. Let us not forget either of them, even if there are some things we would perhaps like to forget. Many people here complain that the Czech Presidency was not active enough in combating the financial crisis. Others recall the controversial parliamentary speech of President Klaus. Others yet complain about the tactless description of Barack Obama's crisis programme as a road to hell. However, the Czech Presidency was also connected with some definite progress. Let us recall, for instance, the environmental package and the progress over adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon. The Czech Presidency had two faces and symbolically it had two premiers. Today the more successful of the two stands before you. Prime Minister, I would like to thank you and your government for the efforts you have made and I would like to thank the officials at European and Czech institutions for the work they have done. Ladies and gentlemen, a big hand please for the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic.

**Joe Higgins (GUE/NGL).** – Madam President, this Parliament is dominated by a cynical grand coalition between the principal party of European capitalism, the EPP, and the Social Democrats masquerading as a left but in reality implementing the same neo-liberal agenda of forcing working people to pay for the current crisis of international capitalism.

Now this grand coalition wants the Lisbon Treaty forced on the Irish people and the people of Europe because Lisbon represents the neo-liberal agenda – including attacks on workers' rights – and the enhancement of militarisation and the armaments industry. The so-called guarantees given to the Irish people change nothing, mean nothing and are irrelevant.

As an Irish Socialist, I challenge this coalition. I challenge President Buzek, Mr Barroso, Mr Schulz, and Mr Verhofstadt: come to Ireland in September, debate with us in front of audiences of workers why they should support your Lisbon project, which is entirely hostile to their interests.

(GA) Be prepared for a vigorous campaign against the Treaty of Lisbon in Ireland. We will be speaking on behalf of the millions of Europeans who did not have a chance to vote against the Treaty of Lisbon, a Treaty that is not for the benefit of the majority of the people of Europe, but for the benefit of bureaucrats, of large corporations and of military industries.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

*President*

**Manfred Weber (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, Prime Minister, President of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, during this debate many people have expressed their gratitude to the Czech Presidency for the fact that it has still managed to complete a few projects, in administrative terms, by the end of its term of office.

I ask myself in all seriousness: have we really become so modest in our expectations? We are in the business of politics. What we actually expect, in the greatest economic crisis for decades which is combined with environmental challenges, is a Presidency which shows leadership and vision. That is what we really expect. We have seen that the administrative work has been completed for what is still on the table at end of the term of office. I really would have expected more.

Prime Minister, if you meet with President Klaus this evening, please tell him that had an opportunity during these six months to make the Czech national identity and sovereignty clear to Europe by showing strong leadership. He did of course promote the importance of national sovereignty here in Parliament. Unfortunately, he missed the opportunity.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE).** – Mr President we have only a minute so I shall dispense with the pleasantries. I should like to defend your honour against one of my Irish colleagues, Joe Higgins. I would remind Mr Higgins that you, in your work in the Solidarity movement, defended workers and their rights, and I think the historical facts should be reflected in this House. A little bit of controversy is no bad thing but it is quite extraordinary that this morning we have Nigel Farage on the one side and Sinn Féin and Joe Higgins on the other side – the extremes of the right and left – talking against the Lisbon Treaty.

I think that should be a good enough reason for the rest of us to vote 'yes' to the Lisbon Treaty and for Irish voters, who will be making up their own minds on 2 October, to listen to the voices who are urging them to vote 'no' and to listen very carefully to judge what they stand for, and then to listen to the voices of reason and reflect on the fact that the European Union has been very good for Ireland and Ireland good for it, and that we will continue to remain at the heart of Europe by supporting this Treaty.

**Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, Mr Fischer, Mr Barroso, your Presidency, Mr Fischer, shows, once again, how urgent it is for the European Union to have a stable presidency. Moreover, this is what the Treaty of Lisbon provides for.

I have found you to be rather quiet, Mr Fischer, and I should like to know your opinion of the programme of the Troika, which your government signed in June 2008 with France and Sweden. We are also eager to hear about Sweden's work programme on this subject, and on three issues in particular: the Doha Programme, the Millennium Development Goals and the Union for the Mediterranean.

What is your feeling, Mr Fischer, about this instrument and what is your assessment of the Troika, which is already the first sign of a stable presidency of the European Union?

**Zoltán Balczó (NI).** – (HU) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the short, sharp exchange which took place between group leader Mr Farage and President Barroso was extremely enlightening from the perspective of Europe's future. It made it glaringly obvious that the ultimate destination of the course being mapped out by the Treaty of Lisbon was the abolition of the nation states, which also explains why President Barroso would have been annoyed at seeing a national flag in this Chamber. We share, of course, the same common European objective. But, in doing so, we want to make it clear that, instead of proclaiming the slogan given here, 'United in diversity', we want to strive for cooperation in diversity, which means that we are in favour of preserving the nation states. This is the framework within which we want to work for a single Europe.

**Elmar Brok (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, I would like to state once again that, under conditions for which neither Prime Minister Topolánek nor Prime Minister Fischer was responsible, the Council Presidency was more successful than it appears to have been, and I would also like to thank Saša Vondra for preparing for this Presidency.

I would like to make one further comment and that is in response to Mr Higgins. The Treaty of Lisbon contains a horizontal social clause. It gives us more social rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. If we do not get this Treaty, we will have a Europe with fewer social rights. I believe that this should be made clear, so that the people of Ireland cannot be told any more lies. We should tell the truth. Without the Treaty of Lisbon we are left with the Treaty of Nice and with fewer social rights in Europe. We should therefore stop this awful campaign and tell the people of Ireland the truth.

(Applause)

**Bernd Posselt (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, I would like to point out that the Czech Presidency has not only achieved more than it has been given credit for, but that it was also very varied. First-rate officials and outstanding ministers, such as Karel Schwarzenberg, Saša Vondra, Ondřej Liška and others, as well as Prime Minister Fischer have done an excellent job. I would like to thank them for that. This country has only one problem and that is President Klaus, who has seriously damaged his country by consciously and deliberately undermining this successful Presidency. I would like to thank Prime Minister Fischer for the masterful way in which he rejected this, went to the Brussels Summit himself and successfully concluded this Council Presidency.

**Jan Fischer, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (CS) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, this time my response really will be very brief. I would like to thank you for your contributions to the discussion. They have demonstrated once again the diversity of opinion and breadth of different ideas in Europe; how difficult and yet how necessary it is to look for some sort of common denominator and common voice. However, I believe that this diversity is invigorating for our continent and for the process of integration and that it belongs here. You will doubtless be carrying your positions, your analytical viewpoints and your assessments with you from this place and perhaps there is no scope for me to convince you otherwise, since this is not an academic debate. Both my government and – let it be said – the previous government really did everything possible to fulfil our programme and our agenda for the Presidency and we did it with great perseverance, regardless of the progress made by the Czech Republic in ratifying the Treaty of Lisbon. I would like to make that very clear. As far as the troika is concerned and the work of the troika involving France, the Czech Republic and Sweden, I value this mechanism highly. We were able to cooperate very closely on the day-to-day agendas. It is a mechanism which contributes enormously to the continuity and smooth handover of the Presidency and I appreciate it very much. As far as the ambitions of the Czech Presidency are concerned and the extent to which the Presidency was technocratic, showed leadership, was visionary or whatever – I am sure it began with a vision for the EU and with a programme and also that it succeeded in fulfilling that programme. It is up to you to judge the extent to which this was achieved. For my part, however, I remain firm in the belief that this was a Presidency which fulfilled its goals and ambitions, although there will always be some criticisms and some areas where – for whatever reason – we fell short. Once again, I would like to thank you for the debate and for the critical remarks, and I would like to thank all of you who showed understanding and appreciation, both on a political level and on a personal level. Once again, I wish you every success in your work.

**José Manuel Barroso, President of the Commission.** – Mr President, some concrete questions were raised.

First of all, regarding the reintroduction of visa requirements for nationals of the Czech Republic travelling to Canada, the Commission regrets that Canada has reintroduced this visa requirement. I discussed this issue with the Canadian Prime Minister in the margins of the last G8 meeting. I expect this measure to be temporary and I hope that full visa travel between the Czech Republic and Canada will be established soon.

I asked Commissioner Barrot to meet Czech officials to discuss this urgently, and I understand that the first meeting between Commission officials and Czech foreign affairs officials took place in Brussels yesterday. On that basis, the Commission will examine the situation carefully and will report on this in the visa reciprocity report that will be issued, probably, in September 2009. In cooperation with the Czech Government, we will consult the Canadian authorities in order to get more information on the reasons behind their decision and we will make all the necessary efforts to restore visa-free travel.

Concerning the issue of the regulation and supervision of the financial market, which was also raised during the debate, of course there is still an agenda to complete, namely what was adopted at the European Council as a consensus based on the de Larosière report – a report I commissioned from that high-level group – but we also have to take note of the progress that has been made.

The Commission proposals on capital requirements, deposit guarantees, credit-rating agencies and on the Solvency Directive for the insurance sector have all been adopted by the European Parliament and by the

Council. The Commission has presented draft legislation on hedge funds and private equity, on securitisation and remuneration in the banking sector. It is now for the European Parliament and the Council to adopt them – if they agree – rapidly.

Another point that was mentioned during the debate was the issue of resistance to protectionism. In fact, it was a very important topic at the 1 March European Council. During the last half of 2008 there was a dangerous drive for some protectionist internal measures in the European Union. I think it is fair to say that the Czech Presidency and many Member States made it clear that we cannot accept this kind of fragmentation of our internal market, so the discussion that took place during those months was also a very important development.

Finally, concerning the critics of the parliamentary ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, let me tell you I cannot understand how someone who has been elected to a parliament can call into question the parliamentary ratification of a treaty. A parliament is the basis of democracy and ratification by parliament is as legitimate as a referendum.

*(Applause)*

**President.** – I would like to say once again to the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic: thank you very much for your presidency, for your summary and for your participation in the debate here today.

The debate is closed.

*(The sitting was suspended at 10.35 and resumed at 10.40)*

*Written statements (Rule 149)*

**João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) The world is facing one of the most serious crises of capitalism, with dramatic consequences for workers and people in general.

In the EU, this crisis is the result of neoliberal policies which are still being pursued. These policies are enshrined in the Treaties and in the so-called 'Lisbon Strategy', which the Treaty of Lisbon is trying to institutionalise, with greater depth and scope. Instead of properly tackling the causes of the crisis, the Council is reiterating the fundamental lines of those policies which caused the crisis, in what constitutes a worrying and irresponsible attempt to continue with these policies despite all the evidence. As a result, the Council is supporting:

- the intention to adopt the Treaty of Lisbon, now by means of deception, which involves passing off exactly the same thing, which has already been rejected by the Irish people, as something different;
- free and unregulated movement of capital and the existence of offshore financial centres;
- liberalisation of the markets, privatisation of public services and growing financialisation of the economy;
- deregulation of labour relations, devaluation of wages, intensification of exploitation and defence of flexicurity;
- the failure to properly tackle unemployment, by persisting in channelling huge sums to support the financial sector, without paying the same attention to the productive sectors.

## 5. Presentation of the work programme of the Swedish Presidency (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the statement by the President-in-Office of the Council on presentation of the work programme of the Swedish Presidency.

**Fredrik Reinfeldt, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) Mr President, honourable Members, allow me first to congratulate you on the election of your new president. I am looking forward to working with Jerzy Buzek during the Swedish Presidency – and of course also in the time thereafter.

It is an honour for me to address the European Parliament as President-in-Office of the European Council. I know that approaching half of you have been elected to this assembly for the first time. Collectively, you all give a voice to 500 million Europeans. There are great expectations of you.

I am addressing you during a challenging period. Rarely has the EU cooperation faced harsher tests and tests so varied in nature. In the short term we aim to ensure a smooth transition to a new treaty – the Treaty of Lisbon. Now and in the slightly longer term, we must continue to manage the economic and financial crisis. Under the surface is the threat of a growing climate crisis which, in the long term, is the greatest challenge we face.

One thing is clear. If the Swedish Presidency is to succeed in the many challenges facing it, we must work alongside you – you who work at the heart of European democracy. We hope for your support and cooperation, and that you are prepared to take on the challenges together with us.

When we talk of the history of the EU, we tend to maintain that the cooperation has created a foundation for peace in a Europe that has so often been characterised by the opposite. I would like to tell you that my grandfather was a Swedish soldier posted to the Norwegian border during the Second World War – a war in which Sweden was neutral. The nearest my grandfather got to the war was to occasionally get a glimpse of it – from a safe distance. For a long time, that was Sweden's relationship with Europe: observing from a distance.

While Europe was left in ruins after the Second World War, Sweden was untouched. We were richer economically – but poor in terms of European community. Twenty years ago the barbed wire between Austria and Hungary was cut. The Berlin Wall came down, and Europe changed almost overnight. A number of countries then set out on the journey that resulted in representatives of 27 countries sitting in this room today. Sweden was one of these countries.

If you are a late starter, you need time to catch up. In the late 1980s political commitment for Europe began to mature in Sweden. Slowly the realisation of Sweden's closeness to and dependence on Europe grew. Sweden's foreign minister Carl Bildt played a decisive role in the work on bringing Sweden into the European community – in other words, accepting openness, globalisation and free trade. He was driven by a firm conviction that Sweden belonged in Europe.

Eighteen years ago we made our application for membership of the European Union. We had finally matured in our conviction that people's lives and our future could best be served by cooperation and community with others, that we had something to contribute – and that we had much to learn. We were no longer afraid of cooperating. We dared to be part of Europe.

These years from the mid-1980s onwards, which were revolutionary for Sweden, ran in parallel with a deepening of my own political commitment. I had a strong yearning for Europe, as did many of my generation of Swedish politicians. I remember how as a young, newly elected member of the Swedish parliament I was invited to visit the European Parliament. It was a sign of Parliament's openness and accessibility – despite the fact that at that time Sweden was not a member of the Union.

A few years later, in 1997, after Sweden had joined the Union, I was involved in putting together the PPE Group's youth organisation, Youth of EPP, and I myself became its first chairman. It enabled me to see how European cooperation worked in practice. Together we sought European solutions to European problems. We got to know not only each other, but also each other's history and culture. It enabled me to get to know the capital cities of Europe – and I can hardly count the number of churches I visited in Europe in the process.

In 20 years Sweden has gone from observing at a distance to being an active part of the European cooperation. This has in turn had an effect on the Swedish population. Ten years ago, one in three Swedes thought EU membership was good for the country, but just as many thought the opposite. Today that has reversed. Nearly two in three Swedes believe that EU membership is good for Sweden. In the elections to the European Parliament in June, more than 45 per cent of Swedes turned out to vote. That is eight per cent more than in 2004, and it is above the average for Europe. Today Sweden is a country that appreciates and takes a positive view of EU membership. We woke up to it a bit late, but we have worked hard to catch up. That is a victory for all of us who believe in European cooperation.

*(Applause)*

Mr President, honourable Members, we are facing the question of the fate of our generation – a social problem which, unlike many others, is growing slowly – and only in the wrong direction. Our planet has a fever. Its temperature is rising – and it is up to us to react. The Greenland icecap is shrinking by more than 100 cubic kilometres every year. The icecap in the Western Antarctic is melting at an increasingly fast rate. We know that the shrinking Greenland ice alone could result in an increase in sea levels of up to two metres. The effects will be dramatic. If the sea level were to rise by just one metre around the world, a hundred million people

would be forced to leave their homes in Asia alone. The most vulnerable are those in Bangladesh, eastern China and Vietnam.

There would also be other serious consequences, however. The weather will change, with the risk that many species of flora and fauna could become extinct. This is the case even if we stay within the 2 °C target set by the UN, which was backed last week both by the G8 and by the Major Economies Forum in L'Aquila. Our climate is under threat from both our use of and our dependence on fossil fuels. That is the bad news. So what is the good news?

Although time is short, it is still on our side. We must act now, however. We already have everything in place to expand renewable energy and the technology to improve energy efficiency. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), more than half of the measures required in order not to exceed the 2 °C target can be taken using the technology we already have.

Moreover, measures to counter climate change have very useful side effects – effects which in themselves justify the measures. If we consume less energy, we will save money. We will improve public finances while at the same time households will have greater resources. If we invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency, we will improve our energy security. We will be less dependent on imports from countries that are sometimes both politically and economically unstable. Our investments in the green economy will create new job opportunities and drive growth in the decades ahead.

Allow me to give a specific example. In January, many EU countries were affected by the gas crisis in Ukraine. Last week I spoke to President Yushchenko concerning how we can try to avoid a similar thing happening again. At the same time, it is important to be able to turn the viewpoint around. If Ukraine invested in energy efficiency so that the country reached the same level as the Czech Republic or Slovenia, the amount of energy saved would correspond to the entire country's gas imports for its own use from Russia. Ukraine could then become completely independent of gas imports from Russia and save a great deal of money besides – simply by improving its own energy efficiency. This is where we must seek the answers where the climate is concerned.

*(Applause)*

Twelve years ago a coalition of the willing was formed in Kyoto. However, voluntary agreements are not enough. If we are to succeed in getting an international agreement on climate change in place, then the journey from Kyoto to Copenhagen must move from being a coalition of the willing to being everyone's responsibility.

So how do we get there? Europe must act together and collectively. We must show leadership and keep our promises. Europe is crucial to getting others to join an international agreement. All over the world we must set a price on emissions. We must start using national carbon taxes and emissions trading. The environmentally friendly alternatives will then emerge. If the price of using fossil fuels is set without regard to climate impact, global warming will continue. The alternatives will not emerge. Measures to increase energy efficiency will not become economically worthwhile.

That is not enough, however. We need to have a wider answer to the question of 'how?'. It is not enough to limit emissions in a group of countries that voluntarily agree to reductions, but which together account for just 30 per cent of emissions. Neither is it sufficient to have solutions that are based only on restrictions in the most developed countries. Even if the so-called Annex I countries were to reduce their emissions to zero, the rapidly growing emissions of the developing countries would still take us above the 2 °C target.

That is why we must discuss the financing of investments in the developing countries. We need to ensure rapid technology transfer and we need to make sure that the developing countries also make commitments to check the development for which they are currently heading. In addition, we will need clear commitments in the medium term for countries outside Europe too. The responsibility of the few must now become the responsibility of all.

I know that the European Parliament will accept its responsibility. The Swedish Presidency sees you as our allies. We now want to write the story of how the climate threat was averted, and we want to write it together with you.

Mr President, honourable Members, the economic and financial crisis spread like wildfire around the world within the space of a few weeks. Some people had given warnings, but for most people it came as a surprise – particularly its extent and depth. In a global world, problems also spread quickly to others. The force of the downturn is such that nobody has a miracle cure for getting out of it quickly. Coordinated action on the



part of the EU is the best tool we have to meet the challenges of the crisis. Moreover, there is still much that can go wrong. In the circumstances, the EU has succeeded in showing leadership through these testing times. We agreed on guarantees and rules of the road for supporting the banks. We agreed on a common recovery plan to stimulate the economy.

President Sarkozy and the French Presidency played an important part in this work, but I would also assert that the European Parliament was a driving force. Now we need to devote the autumn to discussing continued measures to take us through the crisis. The economic situation remains difficult, and public finances are now stretched in all the Member States.

According to the Commission's forecasts, the deficit within the EU will exceed 80 per cent of GDP next year. We cannot close our eyes and pretend that it is not a problem. In the middle of all this we must not forget either that behind these figures are people who are concerned about their jobs and who are wondering how they will manage to pay for their homes and to maintain their standard of living. It is our task to answer them.

When millions of Europeans lose their jobs and become excluded, our entire welfare comes under threat, and this at a time when our welfare is already under great pressure. We are living longer, while at the same time we are working less and having fewer children. If this trend continues, in 50 years' time there will be twice as many older people as children in Europe. So what can we do?

We must restore confidence in the financial markets. We must quickly get effective supervision in place to prevent similar crises occurring in the future. The Swedish Presidency will work towards agreement on this in the Council by the end of the year. We are hoping for your help in achieving this quickly and conclusively. Our citizens will not accept the repeated use of tax revenues to rescue financial institutions that have acted irresponsibly.

We must rapidly get ourselves out of the growing public deficits through a coordinated exit strategy and a gradual return to the rules of the Stability Pact. Otherwise, short-term imbalances will be followed by chronic deficits. Large cuts await us, as are already a reality in parts of the EU; and we have previous experience of this in Sweden. Mass unemployment, social unrest and growing tax pressure then await us.

We must ensure a social dimension to European policy that is based on healthy public finances and on getting more people into the labour market. This is by far the best way to safeguard our welfare system. I know that this is an important matter not least here in the European Parliament.

It is unsustainable for three out of 10 Europeans of working age to be excluded from the labour market. Our aim must be an active labour market policy that, together with well-functioning social security systems, is able to manage change effectively. We must strengthen the individual's employability and ability to assert him- or herself in the labour market. In addition, we must activate and reactivate the unemployed. With more people in work there will be more support available for those who are not. We must also concentrate on reforms, modernisation and adaptation to a new reality. The world outside the EU is not standing still. It is moving forward at a tremendous rate. That is something we should acknowledge and accept.

A review of the EU's Lisbon strategy could contribute to a necessary reform agenda. We will initiate this discussion in the autumn.

In the wake of the economic crisis we can see ideas of increased protectionism. The WTO confirms that the number of trade-restricting measures has increased considerably in the past three months. Consequently, I welcome the L'Aquila agreement on restarting the Doha round – in order to ensure that the countries of the world again take the free trade-friendly path that we know benefits us all in the long run. The objective must be an EU that comes out of this crisis stronger.

Mr President, honourable Members, when I travel around Sweden and talk about EU cooperation, I get few questions about the institutions of the EU. The questions instead tend to concern curved cucumbers, snuff and other everyday matters.

Nonetheless, the institutional framework is important because it defines what we can do and in which areas. That is why the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon is so central. The Treaty will make the EU more democratic, more transparent, more effective and more influential in the international arena. Most important of all, however, is the fact that having the Treaty of Lisbon in place will close the chapter on an inward-looking phase of EU cooperation. It is now time for the EU to look outwards and forwards. The Swedish Presidency is prepared to carry out all the preparatory work to ensure a smooth transition to a new Treaty, but naturally

that requires the Treaty to have been ratified by all the Member States. Let us hope that that becomes a reality in the months ahead.

International criminality is growing ever stronger. Criminal networks no longer see their activities bounded by national borders. We can see how the drugs trade and human trafficking are spreading. This is a threat to our democratic values and a threat to our citizens. At the same time, the freedom to move freely across borders is fundamental to our community – to study, work and live in another EU country. New times call for new answers, however. Consequently, this autumn we will draw up a new programme in this area that we will call the Stockholm Programme. The Stockholm Programme will sharpen the instruments that create security in the EU and that fight organised crime and terrorism.

At the same time, we will create a better balance between these instruments and the measures that ensure legal certainty and that protect the rights of individuals. It will also ensure that those seeking asylum in the EU face a common, legally certain system – with greater consistency in the way they are received and the way their case for asylum is examined and greater consistency as regards repatriation policy.

The dream of a future in Europe is a strong one for many people. At the same time, the population of Europe is getting older and older. A flexible system for labour immigration could bring together these two realities.

Mr President, honourable Members, just over 50 years ago six countries laid the foundation for European cooperation. There are now 27 of us. We have grown in strength and influence, and we have grown in prosperity and diversity. Europe has been enriched. As a result, we are also better equipped both to exploit the opportunities presented by globalisation and to meet its challenges. Together we are strong.

We talk of membership 'negotiations'. In the final event, however, membership is about sharing common values and following common rules. This is currently being pondered on by those that remain outside – from Reykjavik to Ankara via the western Balkans. The two leaders on Cyprus are facing a historical opportunity to agree a solution that will reunite the island that has been divided for far too long.

For those inside, there is a temptation to allow the membership process to become an opportunity to resolve long drawn out disputes. In such cases we must find solutions that benefit both sides and open up the way ahead. Otherwise we jeopardise our progress towards our aim of continued European integration. The Swedish Presidency will work to advance the enlargement process in accordance with the commitments made by the EU, and strictly on the basis of the applicable criteria. We will act as an 'honest broker'.

Mr President, honourable Members, with strength and influence comes an international responsibility that we are still striving to shoulder. It is accompanied by a duty to use this responsibility in everyone's best interest. The EU must work for peace, freedom, democracy and human rights. We have a responsibility to support the poorest and most vulnerable countries of the world, a responsibility to live up to the UN's Millennium Development Goals. We also have a responsibility to support the work of the UN in other areas, to work together with our strategic partners, to become involved in the world's crisis hotspots – whether it is the peace process in the Middle East, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, North Korea or the great challenges on the African continent.

However, we also have a responsibility for regional initiatives such as the Mediterranean Union and the eastern partnership that are creating stability and cooperation between neighbouring countries with different circumstances.

I am particularly grateful for the European Parliament's driving role where the Baltic Sea cooperation is concerned. Parliament presented a draft strategy for the region back in 2005. We now hope that this initiative can be crowned with the adoption of a Baltic Sea Strategy at the European Council meeting in October.

The conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s became the starting point for the EU's involvement as crisis manager – an involvement that is now continually growing. Today the EU is involved in 10 or so crisis initiatives around the world.

These days the world's problems come knocking on the EU's door. All around our world – and not least in the areas closest to us – many people's hope for their own development is linked to our cooperation. Let us together meet their expectations.

*(Applause)*

Mr President, honourable Members, as a result of European cooperation, today our continent lives in peace and prosperity, in freedom and stability. We have open borders and a social model that combines a market

economy with consideration for each other. This is our shared Europe. Our citizens also want to know, however, that Europe is borne by ideas for the future and that our cooperation not only has a historical purpose but is also forward-looking. That is why we, as their elected representatives, have a responsibility to say what we want to do with Europe. Let me tell you how I see the Europe of the future.

I want to see a Europe that acts forcefully for democracy, peace, freedom and human rights in the international arena and which dares to act on the foreign policy stage. For there are those among us with experience of what it is like to live without democracy and freedom, which gives us the credibility to act.

I want to see a Europe that takes the lead in the fight against climate threats, which resists the temptation to compete on the basis of an industry that does not pay for the emissions that are destroying our climate and which provides incentives that make green technology worthwhile, so that our children and our children's children get to experience nature as we know it.

I want to see a Europe that takes responsibility for the economy. 'Lending for spending' cannot be the only motto. Neither can it be the case that 'profits are private and losses national'. Let us build up our public finances again, regulate sound financial markets, and secure the economic reforms that we need for growth and for industry that will continue to be competitive in the future.

I want to see a Europe that develops its social model further, a Europe that combines a well-functioning welfare system with growth – with social cohesion, a Europe that through work, enterprise and healthy public finances creates room to maintain and develop our welfare models, in the best interests of all our citizens.

I want to see a Europe that does not allow itself to be lured by the short-term crusades of protectionism, a Europe that safeguards the internal market that formed the basis of our EU cooperation and that allows goods and services to flow freely across our borders, for the benefit of ourselves and of the rest of the world.

I want to see a Europe that is humbled by inequalities, that is open to the arguments of others and that has a strong will to find compromises, all to serve the common interest. Such a Europe will be strong whatever the times.

*(Applause)*

Mr President, honourable Members, it is an honour for me to stand here with you and represent European democracy. Many people have said to me that this will be the most difficult presidency for many years. There are many challenges, and we must prepare for the unexpected. Many ask whether a country the size of Sweden can shoulder this responsibility. Not alone – but together we can face these challenges. Let us do so with vision and drive, with initiative and courage. Europe needs it. The people of Europe need it. The European project is about the dream of solving people's problems together. This dream makes Europe strong. This year, 2009, is a fateful year for European cooperation. We have the chance to take the next step. The Swedish Presidency is ready to take on the challenge. Let us take it on together!

*(Loud applause)*

**José Manuel Barroso**, *President of the Commission*. – Mr President, these are no ordinary times and this will be no ordinary presidency. In addition to the usual legislative work, the Swedish Presidency will have other kinds of highly political challenges to deal with, and no one better to tackle these challenges than Prime Minister Reinfeldt and the Swedish Presidency team.

Today I want to highlight two of the biggest policy challenges facing the European Union in the next six months: dealing with the economic crisis and negotiating an ambitious international agreement on climate change in Copenhagen.

The worst financial and economic crisis in living memory continues to have devastating effects within our communities and families, with unemployment in particular continuing to rise. Getting the economy back on track remains the top priority. The European Union's collective action has led to an unprecedented fiscal effort that is producing concrete results.

We have also shown solidarity amongst Member States, for instance by doubling the ceiling for balance of payments support for non-eurozone Member States to EUR 50 billion. We now need to fully implement the recovery package in all its aspects and make sure it translates into the creation of jobs and the promotion of economic activity on the ground.

I believe it is essential to prioritise measures that limit unemployment and get people back to work. Here we can build on the results of the employment summit held in May as part of a Commission initiative with the Czech, Swedish and Spanish Presidencies. We need to put into practice the shared commitment to youth and to employment.

Of course, responsibility for labour market policies lies with Member States, but we can and should use existing European instruments to help Member States keep people in employment and train them for the jobs of the future. That is why the European Commission is about to make a proposal to simplify Structural Fund procedures and waive the need for national cofinancing from the European Social Fund for 2009 and 2010. We will also redeploy resources in order to fund a new microcredit facility for employment and social inclusion. I hope this Parliament will support these proposals.

The Commission proposals building on the de Larosière report I commissioned last October will form the basis for strengthened financial market supervision and regulation. With the proposals already made – many of them already approved by this Parliament and by the Council, some still in our decision-making process – we are indeed taking the lead globally in the reform of the financial international system. We will continue to do so, I am sure, at the G20 in Pittsburgh in September.

Moving all these dossiers forward over the next six months is essential to build a new economy, because – let us make no mistake – the post-crisis economy cannot and will not be the same as the pre-crisis economy.

We need to rebuild our economic model and put the values back at the heart of our social market economy, where they belong. We need to build an economy and a society based on opportunity, responsibility and solidarity, an economy which will have to reinvent new sources of growth because we cannot rely for ever on monetary and fiscal stimulus; a Europe of open and well-performing markets; a Europe of smart, green growth; a Europe with more effective regulation and supervision of financial markets; a Europe that deepens its single market and uses its potential to the full; a Europe that resists the trends for fragmentation or protectionism.

Concerning climate change, Europe is already the first region in the world to implement far-reaching, legally binding climate and energy targets. I am proud of the way the Commission worked with the last Parliament and the Council to put this legislation in place, and I want to work closely with you and the Presidency in the run-up to Copenhagen.

Our leadership role was very much appreciated in the meetings last week in L'Aquila in the G8, and in the Major Economies Forum. You will have heard about the progress made at these meetings. For the first time, all participants committed to capping the temperature increase at 2°C to respect climate science. This is certainly a welcome step forward, but we should not delude ourselves: our ambition and our commitment are not yet matched by others. Europe is far ahead of the curve in relation to the rest of the world and, frankly, 145 days from Copenhagen, that worries me.

In the coming weeks we will step up our work with international partners to secure clear commitments in Copenhagen. We also need to make progress on the necessary means to support developing countries and boost technology transfer. In September the Commission will put its proposals for financing on the table so that we can build a European consensus and negotiate with others.

The climate change agenda is, of course, closely linked with another priority: energy security. Today, the Commission will adopt proposals to strengthen our rules governing the security of gas supply and reinforcing solidarity between Member States, which I trust the Swedish Presidency will take forward with your support.

These are the headline priorities – and rightly so. But there is plenty of other important work to be done over the next six months. Let me just flag the Stockholm programme, where the Commission has recently tabled an ambitious vision putting the citizen at the heart of our justice, freedom and security policy, balancing security with the protection of civil liberties and fundamental rights.

For most of this decade the European Union has been engaged in internal institutional debates. Changes to our governing Treaty are absolutely necessary to equip the enlarged European Union to work democratically and effectively. I hope that we will see the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the coming months so that we can put its provisions to work and so that we can move on with the policy agenda I have just outlined.

It is important to discuss procedure, but I believe it is even more important to discuss substance. The Swedish Presidency, as well as the next Spanish Presidency, will have to oversee – hopefully – a complex transition to the new Treaty in which the Commission and Parliament will have to play their full part.

The European Union has constantly reinvented itself, from the initial vocation of healing a war-torn continent to the building of the internal market and then on to the reunification of Europe. During these last 50 years Europe has consistently exceeded expectations, confounding doubts. I am sure that we will also rise to the new challenge we face: laying the foundations for the smart, green economy of the future. We will succeed if we respect the key lesson from half a century of European integration: the European Union advances when all its parts cooperate in a spirit of openness, trust and partnership. The Swedish Presidency programme recognises this; the European Commission stands ready to play its part and so, I am sure, does this Parliament.

(Applause)

**Joseph Daul**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, I do not usually address you, but for the first time today, I am going to devote one minute to you.

Firstly, Mr Buzek, I salute you as a man of resistance and as one of the founders of *Solidarność*, as the man from Silesia who never forgot his roots, his history or his values. The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) is also proud to have convinced the vast majority of MEPs from all political backgrounds – Mr Schulz included – to make you the spokesman for 500 million citizens. Yes, Mr President, your election is the symbol of this open Europe, of this tolerant Europe, of this political Europe championed by the PPE Group and by the majority of our fellow Members here present.

President-in-Office of the Council, President of the Commission, what we expect of you is that you will make action the dominant theme of the Swedish Presidency over the next six months – in other words, faced with the twin challenge of the economy and climate change, we are saying that we need to do more, and faster, in order to come out of the crisis, by bringing our social market economy model fully into operation. I firmly believe that it is the vitality of the economy and that alone that will enable us to conduct the true social policy that we need.

If we want a recovery and if we want it to come from Europe and not from Asia, as is anticipated, then we absolutely must speed things up today. When the crisis ends, the winners will be those who gambled on innovation, on training – in short, on action.

In this regard, the PPE Group proposes, among other things, to increase the support given to small and medium-sized enterprises, which are key to maintaining and creating jobs. Furthermore, the economic crisis – I would insist on this point – requires not a national response but a European response. Moreover, our fellow citizens are convinced of this, one need only look at the opinion polls in the various countries: more than 66% of Germans and more than 70% of Europeans are convinced.

To do more, and faster, Mr Reinfeldt, Mr Barroso, that is also what the PPE Group expects of you where the fight against global warming is concerned. It is the responsibility of Europe, under your leadership, to lead the world in this action, which everyone here recognises as being urgent and a priority. And what better opportunity to act and to speed things up than the climate-change conference to be held in December in Copenhagen, in other words, on our own territory!

On the issue of climate change, Europe has proved beyond any shadow of a doubt that it can take action when it wants to. The task now is to capitalise on this, to make the other world powers join us. I am of course thinking of the United States, which must turn its words into deeds, but I am also thinking of the emerging countries, be it China, India or Brazil, which can no longer ignore the fact that they are heavily responsible for global warming. We shall therefore judge the Swedish Presidency on the ways in which it copes with the crisis and in the light of its results regarding the environment.

I shall conclude by saying that, in order to act strongly on these two fronts, Europe must be equipped with appropriate institutions. The last year has shown us that, with the same treaty and with the same outdated principle of unanimity, it was possible to make progress with Europe but that it was also possible to reach a deadlock. It is a question of political will, Mr Reinfeldt, Mr Barroso. Speed things up: that is what the PPE Group is asking you to do over the next six months, and we have faith in the Swedish Presidency. Speed things up: that is what Europeans asked for in electing this Parliament and that is what we must give them if, in five years' time, we wish to see more of them turn out to vote.

(Applause)

**Martin Schulz**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Prime Minister Reinfeldt, ladies and gentlemen, the Swedish Presidency comes at a time of new beginnings for the institutions. It is not only this Parliament that is starting anew; Europe is in a period of transition between the Treaty of Nice and the Treaty of Lisbon,

and – as we all know – it is a time of uncertainty in which we nevertheless need clarity with regard to economic, financial, labour market and climate policy decisions in the European Union and its Member States.

You have talked about this and I agree with much of what you said. Climate change is, of course, the most important issue and you have given it the right level of priority. It is, of course, also the case that the jobs crisis requires an immediate and relevant solution. Therefore, we ask you during your Presidency to urge the Member States to take the investment plans and the economic recovery plans more seriously than they have done so far.

What we need above all is the safeguarding of jobs – now, not next year, as the threat to jobs is present here and now. Job security is vital for the internal stability of society. We therefore expect you to give the utmost priority to jobs and job security in whatever form, for example by combining environmental protection and industrial policy, which is a highly intelligent solution.

On the subject of job security, I would like to say this to you, Mr Reinfeldt: what seriously jeopardises jobs in Europe and is an even greater threat to social cohesion is the case law of the European Court of Justice. As you have just said, you travel a lot in Sweden and in Europe. So do we and what we hear from our citizens is that they do not want a Europe where companies move from country to country cutting wage levels. We therefore need initiatives from the European Union.

*(Applause)*

We need these initiatives as a consequence of the rulings of the European Court of Justice in the Laval, Viking, Rüffert and Luxemburg cases. These are measures that you – and you in particular, because Sweden is affected by this misguided policy, this misguided case law – need to tackle during your Presidency.

You also need to deal with another institutional issue, namely that of how the next Commission will be appointed. In this regard, I have to say that to some extent I get the general impression that not only you, but also all of your colleagues in the Council have been affected by the new institutional beginnings and the uncertainty about which Treaty we should actually be using as the basis for our actions, and that no one really knows where we are. It is a little bit like Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking in her Villa Villekulla – I will make the world the way I want it to be. Wonderful!

If we appoint the President of the Commission on the basis of the Treaty of Nice, we will have 20 commissioners. In that case, I would like to know which country will have no commissioner. To this, the Council will naturally say 'no, we certainly do not want to start a bloodbath behind closed doors. So, we have a wonderful solution – we will nominate the commissioner initially on the basis of the Treaty of Nice. It will take a couple of months for the Commission to be set up and by then the people of Ireland will have voted and we will have the Treaty of Lisbon. Then we can vote on everything else on the basis of the Treaty of Lisbon. Great!'

We are a community based on law – or at least that is what I thought until now – in which the basis is the law in force. The law in force is the Treaty of Nice. Incidentally, there is someone who, as guardian of the Treaties, must first of all clarify which legal basis is to be used. That is the President of the Commission, but I have not heard a word from him on this matter.

I would therefore like to state very clearly what we are expecting. My proposal, Prime Minister, was that you should not take the formalisation decision straight away, but first send your candidate to Parliament so that he can tell us what he wants to do to restore the economy, safeguard jobs, combat climate change, introduce an employment pact, an initiative for a public services directive and an initiative to improve the Posting of Workers Directive and establish a guarantee between the Commission and Parliament regarding an evaluation of the social consequences of the Commission initiatives. We could have already discussed everything with the candidate weeks ago to see whether he would receive a majority vote in this House on the basis of his proposals. Then you could have made a decision regarding formalisation.

However, you took a different route. You said 'no we will take the formalisation decision first and then send the candidate'. I fear that this was another error and I also fear that this candidate, unless he makes a considerable effort, will not receive a majority vote in this House.

*(Applause)*

I would like to make this very clear so that what will probably be the biggest contentious issue during your Presidency is perfectly clear between us right from the start. We expect institutional clarity, we expect socio-political commitment, and I believe that we will be with you with regard to climate policy.

Mr President, just for you I have kept to my speaking time exactly. You will see that in a few seconds my six minutes will be up. You will not need to reprimand me – I knew that that was what you intended to do and I did not want to give you that pleasure.

(Applause)

**Guy Verhofstadt**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, firstly I should like to say to Mr Reinfeldt that our Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe will fully support the priorities of the Swedish Presidency, that is to say, the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, which we naturally expect to be implemented quickly and in full; the preparation for the climate-change summit in Copenhagen, which has already been mentioned and which is a priority that we fully support; and, lastly, the Stockholm Agenda.

Furthermore, and this is the subject of my speech, Mr Reinfeldt, I should like to refer to an issue that is addressed in every speech in this House – the fight against the economic and financial crisis – in order to say to you that you are assuming the leadership of the European Council at a very precise moment in time. It is a good thing that it is Sweden that is chairing the Council because you have specific experience in this area. In the 1990s Sweden experienced exactly the same economic crisis that we are experiencing now throughout Europe and the world. You have experienced a crisis in the real estate sector. In the 1990s you also experienced a financial crisis, and you resolved all these problems by directly tackling the problems in the financial sector.

My message to you is that you must act in exactly the same way today at European level because that is what we are lacking. We are trying to combat the economic and financial crises using 27 different approaches in the various countries, and that will never work.

We expect you, Mr Reinfeldt, to use the experience you gained in Sweden, because it was a success, unlike in Japan, which has been economically stagnant for a long time. Sweden came out of the crisis because you immediately tackled the problems in the financial sector, something which is not being done for the time being in Europe. The thinking is that the United Kingdom can nationalise the banks while others – France, in particular – can recapitalise them. In Germany, work is under way to create 'bad banks'; in the Benelux countries a bit of everything is being done at the same time. The result is that there is no single approach. The United States is stabilising its banks and eliminating the toxic products while we continue to have problems.

My request to you, therefore, is to take advantage of your experience in order to present a single rescue plan for Europe's financial sector, which will form the basis of the economic recovery. Without it, there will never be an economic recovery; the banks will not start lending money again, and so on. This must be your absolute priority.

The second point is that we hope that you, together with the Commission, can also present a new recovery plan, because 27 different recovery plans will not produce the necessary results in the coming years. It is absolutely essential that the Council and the Commission together take the lead in this. I know there are now 27 recovery plans at national level, but we see a number of protectionist measures inside those national plans. It is your responsibility, Mr Reinfeldt, to say to your colleagues that a better way to deal with this is, together with the Commission, to devise one single recovery plan and to invest in sustainable energy and in the new economy.

I think that, with your experience in Sweden during the 1990s, you are the right man in the right place to do what we have not done so far: devise a single strategy in the European Union to combat this economic and financial crisis.

(Applause)

**Rebecca Harms**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Reinfeldt, Mr Barroso, my fellow Member Mr Schulz said everything there is to say about the institutional concerns that my group has had for a long time with regard to the forthcoming election of the President of the Commission. We agree with what he said. We want the whole of the Commission and all of the top-level staff of the European Union to be elected according to the conditions of the Treaty of Lisbon and we will not give an inch on that. However, Mr Barroso, I would like to take the opportunity to explain the political reasons behind my group's doubts

and its belief that you are not capable from a political point of view of doing what we feel to be necessary in the current situation in Europe.

Take, for example, the frequently mentioned need for the new regulation of financial markets. We have had G8 summits, G20 summits, extended G8 summits, European summits. How far have we come? If we look at the picture today and draw a comparison with the game of Monopoly that we are all familiar with, the banks have been re-established, they have passed 'go' and did not go to jail, they have taken hundreds of millions with public approval and then simply started the game again. I do not think that people are being doom-mongers when they say that as a result of this the next crash is inevitable. Mr Barroso, what happened to your forceful intervention? Where are your genuine results? We have seen no evidence of them.

(Applause)

As regards climate policy, you know that during our entire European campaign we in the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance have advocated the Green New Deal. We are absolutely convinced that it is utterly wrong to do what you have repeatedly done in the last five years, Mr Barroso, and that is to play economic strategies off against environmental and climate strategies. We believe this to be very much rooted in the past and it must stop. We need to think about economic development in a sustainable way and we must bring climate protection targets into line with environmental targets. That will benefit the economy and will create hundreds of thousands or even millions of jobs. Mr Piebalgs has demonstrated once again that this is the case in the energy sector in his study over recent months. In our experience, Mr Barroso, you are not in a position to set forth this Green New Deal.

In summary, I can only say that, with regard to climate protection, Europeans have been conspicuous on the international stage in recent months as a result of their new-found hesitation – how far do we really want to go with the reduction targets? – and new tight-fistedness, and that, unfortunately, also applies to Sweden. The establishment of the International Climate Protection Fund for the poorer countries has gone extremely badly. The fact that it is still a secret that the Swedes want to take money from the development pots, for example, to put into this climate protection pot – that is a zero sum game and, from the point of view of the poorer countries, it is totally unacceptable. We must quickly put an end to this new tight-fistedness and new hesitancy in the European Union.

(Applause)

Finally, Mr Reinfeldt, I can say something positive. We are prepared to tussle with you over the new definition of the Lisbon strategy and to work with you on this. You have said you will do this by the end of the year. We will help you in this. We will also support you if you wish to do more with regard to Eastern Europe and Russia, but the focus on a genuine climate policy must not merely be a matter of headlines, it must also be corrected in the small print of the Swedish programme.

(Applause)

**Michał Tomasz Kamiński**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Mr President, I would like first of all to offer my sincere congratulations on yesterday's election, the election of a splendid president – the new head of Parliament. I do this, as you very well know, Mr President, as a Polish politician, but also as a person. You know that it was thanks to you that I met my wife, and that is still the greatest achievement of my life. Congratulations, and I wish you much success in your work.

The European Conservatives and Reformists Group listened carefully to your speech, Prime Minister, and I am glad to be able to say that we share your views on very many matters. I consider your announcement of active measures to tackle the crisis to be especially important. The economic crisis, which is the worst crisis our civilisation has experienced since the 1930s, is causing unjustified anxiety throughout Europe – in poorer countries and in richer, in countries of the north and of the south. I am glad that you have announced an active fight against this crisis, and I am glad that you can see priorities which we also share – more freedom for the market, less regulation, more economic freedom, greater openness to free trade. These are a recipe for the economic growth of our continent, of our European Union.

Prime Minister, we also share your conviction that dealing with climate change is an important matter. I know that you have bold views on this subject, and I want to encourage you to be bold in this area. The issue of climate change shows very clearly that today we live not only in a single Europe, but in a single world, where the threats are shared by all and must be dealt with effectively.



I am very glad that you referred to the fight against crime as a serious problem of our European Union. I am convinced that, because Sweden is already a powerful force in the area of crime novels, we will also achieve success under your leadership in the area of the fight against crime.

It is extremely important, and I am glad that both you and your Minister for Foreign Affairs have mentioned recently that you want to look carefully at our neighbours and take what I hope will be a sympathetic view of the idea of enlargement of the EU. We must not forget that across the eastern borders of the EU there are countries which are entitled to be part of the area of democracy and affluence which we are in today.

I regret to say that there is just one point on which my group is not in agreement with you. This is the question of ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon. You spoke about democracy in the context of the Treaty of Lisbon – and you were right to do so. It should be remembered that it was in a democratic referendum that the people of Ireland rejected the Treaty of Lisbon. Since we have respect for democracy, we should respect the vote of the Irish people.

Prime Minister, I hope that your priorities, which in very large measure are shared by the ECR Group, will prove to be an opportunity which enables you to lead the European Union effectively and to deal effectively with the crisis, which is today our greatest problem.

(Applause)

**Lothar Bisky**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (DE) Mr President, Prime Minister Reinfeldt, ladies and gentlemen, the Swedish Presidency has presented an ambitious work programme which includes a proposal for more transparency. Transparency is needed in particular when combating the crisis we are currently experiencing.

Many people believe that the crisis has been caused far away in the US and by some bankers who are said to be greedy. The heads of government in the EU Member States seem not to have had anything to do with the crisis. They are innocent parties. Those who bask in innocence do nothing to combat the crisis. I believe that transparency should also include talking about the failures of policy that contributed to the crisis and also of course about the bankers. Transparency is in vogue in casino capitalism.

We are keen to see what happens with the Baltic Sea Strategy and I would be behind the President-in-Office of the Council if he were to focus on dialogue with Russia. We would also like the European Union to support the pledges of President Obama and President Medvedev with regard to the dismantling of nuclear weapons. The European Union ought to take advantage of this new opportunity for disarmament.

The Swedish Presidency wants to further harmonise asylum law and make the European Union more attractive to migrant workers. Asylum policy is to be closely linked to development policy. This is a good thing in our view, but at the rigorously guarded external borders of the European Union, particularly in the Mediterranean, thousands of people die every year when seeking sanctuary from persecution, poverty, natural disasters and wars. Despite costly border control, monitoring and data acquisition systems to prevent illegal migration, the Group of the United European Left/Nordic Green Left calls for the humane treatment of refugees and migrants and a change in economic and trade policy to effectively combat the things that cause people to become refugees in the first place.

The Swedish Presidency is focussing on more inclusive labour markets to create full employment and therefore wants to initiate labour market reforms and gender equality measures. We too are in favour of a strategy for good work practices which will support wage increases and introduce a statutory minimum wage across the board in all 27 countries. We want to see the EU agree on targets for the minimum wage set at a level of at least 60% of the national average wage in order to prevent people falling into poverty despite having gainful employment.

I particularly welcome what you said about Cyprus and I wish you every success in implementing your ambitious climate targets.

**Francesco Enrico Speroni**, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I appreciated the fact that the Swedish Presidency emphasised issues that concern our fellow citizens, our electorate, namely the environment and climate change, the financial crisis, the safeguarding of jobs and the fight against crime, because, in order to do a good job, we need to be in harmony with those who voted for us. We are no better or worse than our electorate, but I do believe that it is important to act in accordance with what they are asking of us, and these points seem to me to be along the lines that I mentioned.

Moving on, we must, of course, turn the proposals into concrete action, and here we will come up against one another above all in the codecision procedure, since we, Parliament, and you, the Council, will lay down those rules that will govern the lives, affairs and interests of our electorate, and I believe that that is our fundamental task as legislators.

We must overcome the crisis of confidence that undoubtedly exists. The poor turnout at the elections of this Parliament is a symptom of this, and to overcome it, we must act fully in accordance with the will of our electorate. We must also perhaps avoid making comparisons: your country borders Norway; I live near Switzerland. They are outside the European Union, but they live well all the same; they have the same problems, but they are no worse off than us, and here it is important to see and to demonstrate that it is worth having the European Union.

I believe that this is a great challenge but I also believe that, with everyone's help, we can show that Europe should not be suffered, but should be an opportunity for those who live there and are citizens of it.

**Barry Madlener (NI).** – (NL) The Dutch Party for Freedom has come into this Parliament in order to stand up for Dutch citizens and in order to wrest back the money that has been overpaid by the Netherlands to this cash-guzzling and bureaucratic Europe. The Party for Freedom was elected to this Parliament by Dutch voters to make it clear that Dutch citizens believe that the enlargement of the European Union has already gone far too far.

Mr President, this Parliament spends its time regulating matters that should be determined in the Member States themselves. As far as our party is concerned, the European Union should only be involved in matters relating to economic and monetary cooperation. It is with Dutch interests to the fore that we will keep our eyes on the Swedish Presidency, as it is doing nothing for Dutch citizens. You want to just press ahead with the European Constitution, which Dutch voters rejected and which is 99% identical to the Treaty of Lisbon. You also fail to do anything about the immensely costly monthly relocation from Brussels to Strasbourg. What is more, you have not even put the matter on the agenda. Why not? It costs thousands of millions of euros and the only people who like the idea are perhaps those at Ikea, who get the chance to sell moving boxes and extra cupboards.

We also want to see the negotiations with Turkey brought to an immediate end. Turkey is an Islamic country and the Islamic ideology is completely at odds with our Western culture. Turkey is, furthermore, absolutely not a European country, but an Asian one, while Turkish membership would cost Dutch citizens sacks full of money yet again. Turkey can be a good neighbour, but it does not belong within the European family. The Party for Freedom stands for a Europe of sovereign states, but further building work towards a federal superstate where the Member States get to determine less and less of their own affairs is taking place under the Swedish Presidency. We therefore hope that the people of Ireland will have the courage to vote 'no', once again, to the Treaty of Lisbon. The Irish population has the opportunity, here, to act as the voice of the people of Europe, and I would like to ask you, on behalf of the Party for Freedom, what conclusions the Swedish Presidency will draw from the result of the Irish referendum.

**Fredrik Reinfeldt, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) Mr President, allow me first to congratulate you all collectively on having been elected as group leaders. I know that a number of you were elected with very strong support. I know, for example, that Martin Schulz was re-elected with very strong support in the social democrat group. It is important to be able to represent your respective groups strongly.

I very much welcomed the dialogue that we have had and the consultations which I was asked to introduce by the European Council during the month of June. This was done by EU Minister Cecilia Malmström. I also did it myself, both through telephone contacts and at the meeting that we had on a boat in the archipelago as we moved through the waters of Stockholm, sitting and discussing the situation that had arisen. I had been asked to investigate the possibility of electing José Manuel Barroso, appointed by the European Council, as president of the Commission for a second period of office.

A number of the matters that you touched upon are the main issues that I want to work on during the Swedish Presidency. Let me say that we are putting jobs first. We want to see a Europe in which more people have work. The discussion must start from how we achieve this. Just as Joseph Daul pointed out, I believe it is a matter of innovation and training; in other words, the things that basically drive enterprise and make people employable. I believe that Martin Schulz is right that we must be wary of ending up a Europe in which we compete on the basis of poor terms. We are having this discussion in Sweden, and it is also taking place around Europe. Having low or no pay is not a good starting point from which to try to face the competition; rather, it is only with good conditions that we can face the competition of the future.

Allow me to mention some other things that I believe are very important for steering Europe through the crisis. I have seen how the Commission – and I myself think this is important – has managed to defend the principle of the internal market at a time when many are attempting to compromise it and bring in protectionism. It is very easy to listen to those who are saying ‘Why did you not save the jobs in this particular country?’ without seeing the consequences of this if everyone acted in this way. If we did, we would basically extinguish free trade and the opportunity for cross-border trade. That which has basically created wealth and prosperity would very quickly be lost had we not resisted the call for protectionism. I believe that safeguarding the internal market and free movement is an important starting point for securing jobs.

I also have great faith in other things mentioned by some of you, such as investing in human skills and ensuring mobility in the labour market. I believe, for example, that one way to manage this is precisely this free movement – including across borders.

Just as Martin Schultz, Rebecca Harms and Joseph Daul mentioned, I believe that this is also an opportunity to combat this with a green trend, to bring about the low emission economies that we are talking about all over the world as another way of getting out of the crisis. How we manage financing and how we invest are important. I also want to say – I agree with Guy Verhofstadt on this point – that the Swedish experience of crisis management in the 1990s was that it can only be done by keeping a grip on public finances. I have learnt that when deficits are large and rationalisation is called for, it is people with small margins and those that are most dependent on welfare institutions who are left behind. Consequently, a policy that is prudent with public finances is a good policy for people who are poor or living on small margins.

Where the climate issue is concerned – which will be the main issue we work on ahead of the Copenhagen summit – I want to say that it is true that there is still a lot to do. Time is short.

I want to tell Rebecca Harms that it is unusual for us in Sweden to be criticised for our aid commitments. The average spent in Europe on such commitments is 0.4 per cent of gross domestic product. Sweden is fairly unique in that one per cent of our gross domestic product goes to development aid. For me, these matters are related. We carried out our own review under the leadership of our aid minister within the framework of the UN's initiatives. During this we analysed precisely how we need to bear climate change in mind in our development work. You cannot carry on development work without at the same time looking at climate change and how it is already affecting poor parts of the earth. Consequently, we cannot separate these issues and say that this is development policy and that is climate policy – rather they are related and have to work together.

Where the Treaty is concerned, I would like to say to Martin Schulz that my role is to ensure that there is effective European leadership in a difficult period. We must be able to give answers to the citizens who want to see us take action to combat the financial crisis and on climate issues. We are all politically active and know that in the political domain, when we are inward-looking and discuss names and leadership our citizens perceive this as us having turned our backs on them. We are looking inwards.

Therefore I will do what I can in my role. I have been tasked by the European Council with ensuring that our cooperation and our respect for the integrity of the European Parliament are united by clarity – whether under the Treaty of Nice or the Treaty of Lisbon – in our nomination of a candidate to the post of Commission President. Where José Manuel Barroso is concerned, it is important to state that he was unanimously supported in the European Council, that he was well known as a candidate and had already been introduced to the electorate prior to the election. Naturally, that made it easier for me to act – naturally respecting the fact that the European Parliament will be given opportunity, when you feel ready to make a decision, to say yes or no to the candidate nominated by the European Council. Meanwhile there is time for discussions, which I know José Manuel Barroso has also stated, and to have this type of dialogue concerning how European policy is to develop in the years ahead. I hope that this can now be agreed in accordance with the agreement that has been made. It is what the electorate of Europe now expects, and will enable us to act together with strength.

**José Manuel Barroso, President of the Commission.** – (FR) Mr President, some important questions have been asked; I shall try to answer them very briefly.

Firstly, Mr Schulz's important question regarding the treaties. He referred, in particular, to the Commission's role as guardian of the treaties. We in the Commission believe that there should be respect for the treaties in force. The treaty in force is the Treaty of Nice. All of you who are sitting here were elected under the Treaty of Nice. Obviously, if the President of the Commission is elected now, he will be elected as you were, under the Treaty of Nice.

That being said, we are going to have – I hope – the Treaty of Lisbon. The necessary adjustments will have to be made as regards the composition of Parliament, which will no longer be the same with the Treaty of Lisbon, since there will be certain changes, and the same will have to be done for the Commission. Nonetheless, the European Council adhered to every aspect of your report – the Dehaene report – which was adopted by an overwhelming majority. On the subject of the European Council, before formalising its decision, it carried out consultations, which also took into account – and this is a real first – the result of the European elections, not to mention the fact that there had been a candidate supported by a political force.

The task now is to gain the approval of the European Parliament. I should like to repeat today what I have already said in a letter sent to the President of the European Parliament: I am ready to discuss the content of the guidelines for the next Commission with any political group that wishes to discuss them. In any case, that is my position as regards institutional matters.

On a political level, I should like to stress a very important point. I believe that it is important to link the election of the President of the Commission to the democratic election that has taken place, your election. You have been elected by virtue of the Treaty of Nice, and it is my view that the President of the Commission should also have this legitimacy, which should in a way result from this democratic election.

Furthermore, in view of the economic and financial crisis – and I believe that those who are in favour of a strong Europe and who want a strong Commission will no doubt agree – the matter of Presidency of the Commission should not be left unresolved now pending the final ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, which we all want – at least the majority of us do – when we do not know when that treaty will come into force. Leaving the European Commission and its Presidency in a state of suspense when there is an economic crisis, a financial crisis and a social crisis, and when we have very important negotiations ahead of us in Copenhagen, does not seem very wise to me. Be that as it may, it is up to the European Parliament to decide, and I am ready to enter into a democratic debate as, in fact, I did five years ago.

On the second question about finance and the economy and what Mr Verhofstadt said: we can all have more ambition, and on that matter let me tell you that I share your ambition. But we cannot say that we did not adopt a European economic recovery plan, and that was the maximum that our Member States accepted.

The European Commission proposed more, but that was what our Member States accepted. I want to draw your attention to the fact that some Member States – no less influential at the beginning of this crisis – suggested not to have a coordination plan. Some others suggested a fiscal stimulus of 1%, and the European Commission came immediately to the proposal of 1.5%, and in fact the automatic stabilisers were around 5%. Apart from that, we took those important decisions in terms of balance-of-payment support to some non-euro-area members and also some initiatives at global level.

So you may count on the Commission to do everything we can do to reinforce the European level and a common approach, let us have no ambiguity about it. But, also, let us be honest with ourselves: we are not the United States of America – we are not an integrated nation state – so of course we have different situations. You cannot ask Germany and Latvia to do the same thing. We have countries in Europe that are under balance-of-payment support, so of course we cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach. We have to have a common approach but with specific national responses, because that is the reality we are facing in European and will face in the near future.

We have mainly national budgets. So I share your approach to have a more coordinated European plan, namely to get out of this crisis and to build this kind of smart green growth we want; but at the same time we have to accept that we have 27 national budgets, we have 27 finance ministers, we have 27 national banks apart from our European Central Bank, and it is very important to reinforce the euro and to have economic policies and financial policies that are sustainable. If not, we will put the euro, one of the great successes of European integration, at risk.

Finally, on the question of climate change, once again we can always have more ambition. But for me it was very important that Prime Minister Reinfeldt was with me recently in L'Aquila, when we heard the Secretary-General of the United Nations say: 'You are the locomotive of the world'. We can always have more ambition, but the European Union is leading the fight against climate change in the world.

No one is being more ambitious than we are, so of course I would expect at least a word of recognition in terms of the work done by this Commission, together with our Member States, to put forward ambitious proposals. Let us now try to convince others, because we need others – because the problem of climate

change is not just a European problem, it is a problem for our planet. With your support I believe we can achieve success at the Copenhagen Conference.

(Applause)

**Gunnar Hökmark (PPE).** - (SV) Mr President, as a Swede it is with pride that I listen to the Swedish Presidency's priorities and I am also proud to be able to welcome the Prime Minister of Sweden back here again.

The challenges we face are very substantial. We have 20 years of fantastic, miraculous change in Europe behind us, and as a result we now have one of the early representatives of the *Solidarność* movement for freedom as president of the European Parliament. It is ideals such as democracy, freedom, the rule of law and the market economy that have given us 20 years of fantastic development.

We are now living in a time of change with a new treaty, the climate issue which demands a consistent policy capable of global impact, and the economic crisis. It is therefore important that we have a presidency, but also a parliament, that is capable of ensuring that we get stability as regards public finances, stability as regards the internal market and stability as regards openness to trade and movement across borders that can help to take us out of the crisis.

I would like to take this perspective one step further. The decisions for which we are now preparing the way through the Swedish Presidency and in this Parliament will also decide the form that Europe and the European Union will take after the crisis – what dynamics we have in the financial markets and what confidence and credibility they enjoy, and what room we have for innovation and enterprise, for investments and new jobs.

If the elections to the European Parliament showed one thing, it is that the citizens of Europe want less bureaucracy and regulation and greater openness – across the borders and out to the world. It is this openness that will be crucial to Europe's ability to be a leading force for the values that 20 years ago began to change Europe, and to which we can also contribute out in the world.

(Applause)

**Marita Ulvskog (S&D).** - (SV) Mr President, I would first like to thank the Swedish Prime Minister for his presentation of what he and his government want to do in the coming six months.

We know that we are in a tough starting position; the crisis is deep. It is about jobs, it is about dramatically growing chasms, it is about a generation of young people who are going straight into unemployment and of course it is about the environmental and climate crisis.

This has also been described by Prime Minister Reinfeldt, but it is the conclusions that are surprising. What has been highlighted as the central issue for the Swedish Presidency is not jobs or investments, but rather the Member States' ability to maintain budgetary discipline. As we approach 27 million unemployed in the EU, the clearest message from the Swedish Presidency is thus: budgetary discipline. This is not only wrong, but also worrying.

In this area Mr Reinfeldt's party – contrary to what has been said here earlier – comes with some hefty historical domestic policy baggage. The last conservative Swedish Government led Sweden into economic disintegration, and it was a social democratic government that had to devote 10 years to sorting out our public finances. However, we cannot allow old shortcomings in domestic policy to set the agenda for the whole of the EU at a time of serious crisis. What is needed is major investments in jobs, training and green change – not putting anorexic economies on a diet by means of budgetary discipline.

John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, has also expressed concern that the social dimension of the Swedish Presidency has been given such low priority. Mostly fine words, says Mr Monks, very little in the way of real plans. My group shares these concerns, and they also include the trade union rights of workers, as Martin Schulz stated in his speech. Workers' terms have deteriorated following the Laval judgment and following the Viking, Rüffert and Luxembourg judgments. Their rights have been weakened.

What I and my group want from the Swedish Presidency is a definite commitment that the EU's workers will have their full trade union rights restored. Trade union rights must take precedence over free movement. That must be extremely clear. We do not want to live in a Europe in which the crisis is met with budgetary discipline and with confrontation. Is this matter even on the agenda, I would like to ask the new president, Prime Minister Reinfeldt.

**Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE).** – (FR) Mr President, we are faced with two issues. The first issue is the crisis. As everyone knows, we need a consistent and common response to the economic and social crisis and thus a European recovery plan to increase investments and to support employment. Europe really must show today that it is more attentive and closer to our fellow citizens when it comes to the difficulties they are facing. It must do more to help those who are affected by the crisis. From that perspective, the situation is urgent.

The second issue is finally that of the new development model that must come out of the end of the crisis. It must be a simpler, fairer and more sustainable model, which ensures that finance serves the real economy, which develops new forms of solidarity among Europeans, which takes account of the social and environmental challenges in international trade, and which radically reforms our relations with the world's poorest countries, and here I am thinking specifically of Africa.

In addition to these two major issues there is a democratic requirement that concerns the process for which you, the Swedish Presidency, are responsible. Cecilia Malmström – whom I am pleased to welcome today – knows better than anyone that there are some very important differences between the Treaty of Nice and the Treaty of Lisbon where the appointment procedure is concerned: a simple majority on one hand, and a qualified majority on the other; an appointment on one hand, and a nomination on the other; and a different number of commissioners depending on the treaty. For my part I am really asking you to ensure that the spirit and the letter of the treaties are respected. This falls under your remit, and it is very important for the credibility of our institutions. Thank you in advance.

**Carl Schlyter (Verts/ALE).** – (SV) Mr President, congratulations on your appointment. I would first like to commend the government for having a genuine commitment to the Baltic Sea and I hope that we will make progress here. You also have remarkably good rhetoric on climate change. What I am now looking for, of course, is for this rhetoric to be put into practice. You often say that Europe and Sweden account for only a small part of the world's emissions, but if the EU Member States are home to just eight per cent of the world's population and account for 30 per cent of emissions, then it is also our responsibility to take a large part of the climate work seriously. It is here that I find the concrete information lacking.

How are you going to deal with the IPPC Directive on industrial emissions? How are you going to deal with illegal felling? How are you going to deal with energy efficiency standards for buildings and how are you going to deal with the fact that aircraft cannot continue with their emissions while at the same time avoiding paying the EUR 14 billion in energy tax that they should pay?

Then I would also like to bring up the Stockholm Programme and Acta. Where Acta is concerned, we must ensure that there is openness here. The German constitutional court has said that the countries must have more influence, that the parliaments must have more influence. We need openness in the Acta negotiations. We cannot move towards supervision unilaterally. The same applies to my hometown and the Stockholm Programme. Let it become a name that is associated with the EU's transition from terror paranoia to human freedoms and rights and with a strengthening of asylum law and the protection of privacy. Then we will have made progress.

**Vicky Ford (ECR).** – Mr President, I would like to congratulate the Swedish Presidency for prioritising economic challenges. Whilst we have economic uncertainty, our ability to face any of our other challenges is obviously diminished. You are right to prioritise the need to restore public finances: the extraordinarily high levels of public debt pose great and long-term threats that, unless we face up to them now, may be with us for many decades. But restoring health to financial institutions is also key to regaining the confidence of consumers and returning economic growth, let alone taxpayers' money.

In your priorities you discuss the importance of the supervisory framework. I would add that regulatory clarity is vital. These industries are, as we all know, global industries. The capital, the talent and the individual enterprises are highly fluid. They need workable and defined legislative timetables, prioritisation of legislation and proper consultation.

I welcome your commitment to work alongside the G20, because if we get out of step and go unilateral in the EU we risk not only putting borrowers and investors at a competitive disadvantage but also causing industries to relocate outside...

*(The President cut off the speaker.)*

**Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL).** - (SV) Mr President, firstly of course I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as president and at the same time thank you for the interesting exchange of views that we had during the election period. Prime Minister and fellow Members, thank you for your account of the Presidency's programme. I am convinced that in organisational terms the Swedish Presidency will be a great success and that it will be taken care of truly excellently by the competent Swedish state administration.

Politically, I naturally share the Presidency's opinion of the two major crises – the economic crisis and the climate crisis – and of course these are the priority issues. However, where is the analysis? The economic crisis and the climate crisis were not predestined by fate. The crises have their origin in political decisions made. This is a positive thing, because it means that we can also solve the crises through political decisions – but I see no sign of a change to different policies from the Presidency. It is the same economic policy that takes no account of social or environmental considerations.

What I and many of our citizens are looking for in the programme is workers' rights, which have come into focus following the court rulings, and social issues, where no answers are forthcoming. Neither have we heard anything about the famous progressive equality policy. Where the Stockholm Programme is concerned, it is said that it will create security, but in practice what is emerging is a 'big brother' state that threatens personal privacy. We can never accept restrictions on asylum rights or restrictions on our rights as free citizens in this programme. We need a humane asylum and immigration policy.

**Timo Soini (EFD).** - (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Sweden has always respected human rights and democracy.

Some time ago the Swedish people voted against the euro, and you have respected that decision, although you yourself were strongly in favour. That is why it is rather odd that Ireland should now promptly have to vote once again on exactly the same treaty.

It is the Nordic and the Swedish way to respect the voice of the people. I wish you luck and success in the challenge that you now face. I hope that you will respect the values of the best sort of Nordic democracy: not through compulsion but through cooperation.

I am very pleased that you mentioned the Baltic Sea, and I fully support you in this matter. The Baltic Sea is in difficulties; it is dying and it needs to be saved. The Northern Dimension has been missing in all this, however, and I hope that you will do a lot to promote it, although you made no mention of it.

**Hans-Peter Martin (NI).** - (DE) Mr President, we need a revolution in democracy. We need bold democrats and in this new period we urgently need an exciting, democratic and genuinely effective Europe.

Creative artists and, in particular, freelance writers, will have a role in identifying the values of this new Europe. Their uncensored imagination will be able to put the bureaucratic genie which aims to destroy democracy back in its bottle. After all, it is exciting ideas that lie behind at the birth of social change. Those who can offer visions of hope which allow them to get inside people's minds – the Swedes have been particularly good at this in the past, and in this respect I have every confidence in my former colleague Cecilia Malmström – can also inspire their interest in socio-political matters.

This is how I deliberately worded the final paragraph of my new book at the beginning of this last election campaign, which brought about major changes and which is linked to a great deal of hope that you in particular from Sweden with your great democratic tradition and transparency will now recognise the signs of the times. We are not only facing the economic crisis – and here the Swedes have shown their cleverness by largely avoiding it – but we also have to deal with a rather ominous swing to the right. I therefore firmly believe that together we democrats must stand up for genuine transparency and in particular we must stand together in the fight against the extreme right.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR PITTELLA

*Vice-President*

**Corien Wortmann-Kool (PPE).** - (NL) My heartfelt thanks for the ambitious plans that you have laid out for the coming six months. I can tell you that we have high expectations of you, as you have had the reputation right from the very beginning of having gone into bat for European integration and for our European values. It is important that the solutions that we put forward and that you are working on to get us out of this economic crisis reinforce our social market economy.

It is also important that these solutions do not only benefit our citizens today and tomorrow, but also provide for our children's future. It is therefore so very important to continue to build towards a sustainable economy and towards preventing climate change. It is good that you give such a high priority to this in your programme. I sincerely hope that your efforts in these areas help to bring the Member States closer together and that, in the run-up to the Copenhagen Conference, you also manage to induce the biggest players on the world stage to really play their part in finding a solution to climate change.

Mr President, the social market economy is also important when it comes to sustainable government finances, since government deficits form a burden for future generations. It is therefore important to respect the Stability and Growth Pact and it is also good that you have said so expressly.

Mr President, it is ironic, but the financial crisis has brought Iceland closer to the European Union. I hope that the Swedish Presidency is welcoming towards Iceland, but that it is also strict in ensuring that Iceland complies with the requirements for accession and that it meets the obligations relating to European legislation and towards the Member States.

**Hannes Swoboda (S&D).** - (DE) Mr President, Prime Minister, I hope you will allow me in this connection to speak in particular to Carl Bildt, because I would firstly like to touch on the subject of enlargement, particularly in the Balkans.

You mentioned that this enlargement process will be slower than many people on both sides would have wished. However, it is very important to give clear signals. What I expect from the Swedish Presidency is help in particular for the people in south eastern Europe to overcome the problems they are facing there – including the intergovernmental problems – so that they can feel hopeful that the road to Europe will not be blocked off, but that progress can continue to be made, even if it perhaps takes a little longer. However, the appropriate preparations must naturally be made by these countries.

Secondly, I would like to refer to another subject that you mentioned, namely the issue of restructuring the economy and the linking of economic policy and the environment. It has already been said that you have our full support in this. I believe that this is an important task for Europe. It is true that in this regard we are very much at the forefront, but we still have a lot to do. At the same time, unemployment is also rising. The level of unemployment that we are seeing today in Europe has not yet reached its maximum. It will, unfortunately, get even worse.

It is therefore extremely important to mention the other dimension, the social dimension, as we will only receive broad support for the green restructuring of the economy if people feel that their social needs and requirements are also being taken seriously.

The Nordic countries in particular have a lot of good examples of an active labour market policy. We are not able, either as the EU or as individual Member States, to create jobs, but we can help people who have lost their jobs to find work again as quickly as possible. That is what we mean by a social Europe – this active labour market policy that we need in the individual Member States, which the European Union and the Council in particular must give out a clear message about. The green restructuring of the economy will ultimately result in lower, not higher, unemployment. This is what we are calling for.

**Olle Schmidt (ALDE).** - (SV) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, good to see you here! There are many challenges in these turbulent times: a severe economic recession, the uncertainty as regards the Treaty of Lisbon and the negotiations ahead of the climate conference in Copenhagen. You have a lot on your plate.

Prime Minister, a few important points. You also have to convince your colleagues on the Council that protectionism is an abomination. The strength of the EU lies in its open borders and free trade. State subsidies to rescue the car industry are not the solution. The financial crisis cries out for a new global order, but the regulations must be balanced and must not be excessive. This autumn, as some here have mentioned, the EU must come a bit closer to a respectable asylum policy. The energy policy, just as some have said, requires both realism and solidarity. No new gas crises, no unilateral dependence. The Internet was an important issue in the election campaign. Here Sweden has a great responsibility to bring what is known as the Telecoms package to a successful conclusion. The rule of law must also apply in the virtual world.

I had hoped that during this session Parliament would approve the appointment of José Manuel Barroso as President of the Commission for a new five-year period. Now this will not be the case, and I am sorry for



that. Now is not the time for the EU to spend its time on institutional power struggles. Now is the time for political leadership and drive.

The euro has proved its strength. When does the Prime Minister think that we in Sweden will be prepared to become full EU members and have the euro in our pockets too? Thank you, and as we say in my party: good luck!

**Satu Hassi (Verts/ALE).** – (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Sweden now has a huge responsibility for the future of the human race. Prime Minister Reinfeldt, you spoke quite rightly of the climate crisis.

We know that the technology we need over the decades to come exists, and that it is available at a fair price, but the most problematic issue is that climate protection is an incredible challenge to human cooperation. Unfortunately, the negotiations that are currently going on are more like a combination of hide-and-seek and a competition in self-congratulation.

The European Union must have the courage to put forward a proposal regarding not just the EU's own emission reductions, but the principle of burden-sharing, where all industrialised countries accomplish emission reductions according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Guidelines. The most important thing is that we achieve the emission reduction targets for 2020. Secondly, it needs to be realised that the developing countries will not be able to adjust to a system of adequate emission limits unless we assist them financially at a completely new level, and the EU should be in a position to make proposals on that too.

**Ryszard Antoni Legutko (ECR).** – (PL) Prime Minister, we listened to your speech with great care and would like to express the hope that the most important points of the programme will be put into effect successfully.

I would like, however, to draw attention to three challenges. The first of these is European solidarity, which is especially important at a time of financial crisis. We cannot allow situations to arise in which particular European countries are treated unequally. We cannot accept a situation in which some are allowed to subsidise their banking sector and others are condemned for attempting to strengthen their shipbuilding sector. That is not solidarity, that is hypocrisy.

Secondly, we are glad that the Baltic Sea Strategy is one of the priorities of the Swedish Presidency. This is an important area of macroregional cooperation. The Baltic ecosystem should be protected from hazards such as the very unsafe, and also financially absurd, Nord Stream project. The need for diversification of energy sources should also be mentioned.

Thirdly, let us remember that Moscow does not restrict itself to turning off the tap, as Georgia discovered. I hope that, as Sweden takes the helm of the European Union for the next six months, it will be as resolute as Minister Carl Bildt, who condemned the Russian aggression against Georgia. I am sure that the Swedish Presidency will be equal to these challenges. It can count on our support.

**Morten Messerschmidt (EFD).** – (DA) Mr President, there are two things that struck me when I read the Swedish Presidency's work programme. The first thing is all the promises about how the EU will be used to create a better economy for solving climate and other problems, but there is not a single word about the problems that the EU creates – the problems that the EU has created in our labour markets, the problems that the EU has created in our fisheries sector, in our economy, in connection with the fight against crime and I could go on. This is the first key observation we can make when reading the Swedish Presidency's work programme – that the EU only represents solutions and that the EU is not a problem. This says more about the Swedish Presidency than it says about the EU. The second thing is that there is no mention of the fact that 2 October will be one of the most significant days in the entire history of the EU, and this will be during the term of the Swedish Presidency. I am, of course, referring to the second referendum. There is not a word about what the Swedish Presidency will do to ensure that the so-called guarantees that have been given to the Irish people will also be regarded as such. We have seen before how people have been deceived – deceived over referendums and deceived over democracy. What will the Swedish Presidency do to ensure that this does not happen again?

**Werner Langen (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, President of the Commission, I would like to welcome the Swedes and also offer my congratulations that they – as the Prime Minister said – have finally found their way to Europe after a long process. We are very pleased to find that Swedes today are among the best Europeans.

You have presented your programme and it is very ambitious. However, I would like to ask you to consider whether Sweden would have the courage to take the step, particularly after the experience of the financial market crisis, of joining the euro – especially as you said that the Stability and Growth Pact must be complied with. You, of course, have no opt-out clause like the United Kingdom and Denmark, for example, and you meet all of the conditions now. Will you have the courage during your Presidency to stabilise Europe further and become a member of the euro zone?

Prime Minister, I agree with your prioritising of climate policy and the Baltic Sea Strategy, but with regard to your programme in its written form, I have a request: please pay more attention than proposed to combating the financial market crisis. None of the other projects will have a chance if the crisis in the financial markets and in the economy is not resolved as quickly as possible. For this we need clear rules. It is not enough for the City of London once again to determine the course. We need clear rules in the social market economy, because a market economy without rules cannot operate and will not receive majority support. Therefore, you should consider once again – although we fully support your programme – whether you should not give the subject of overcoming the financial market crisis higher priority than you have done so far. Thank you very much and good luck in a difficult time of upheaval.

(Applause)

**Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, we have all listened to the Swedish Presidency's programme with great interest and appreciation. Its clear priorities are the economy and energy, because the European Union's priority is to help restart the economy and generate employment, curb unemployment and ensure that the Copenhagen meeting in December 2009 is a success.

However, I would like to draw attention to a political, civic and democratic objective, which is to replace the Hague Programme with the programme that will be named after the Swedish capital: Stockholm. The programme combines the achievements of the area of freedom, security and justice over the last five years, which have been very significant in terms of harmonisation, mutual recognition and the principle of trust in relation to fundamental rights and legal protection, but also in relation to active cooperation.

I invite you to be ambitious in this area: firstly, from a substantive point of view, as in all areas related to managing external borders, immigration, asylum, refugees and combating illegal trafficking, organised crime and terrorism it is easy to drift towards reactionary positions that contradict the *acquis* of fundamental rights that should set the European Union apart and which Sweden identifies with so much, as a country that respects transparency and democratic principles.

Secondly, I invite you to also be ambitious in terms of the form, because the Swedish Presidency is most probably going to clear the way for Lisbon, which firstly means that there will no longer be that double procedural framework of the third and first pillars, which is often confusing. However, and most significantly, it will also mean that Parliament will have greater capacity to monitor the legislative initiatives that the Swedish Presidency implements as part of the Stockholm Programme.

This means that what has so far often been seen as a deficiency of Brussels or of the Council will also be the responsibility of Parliament.

**Lena Ek (ALDE).** – (SV) Mr President, naturally I am very pleased and proud to see my government in the Swedish Presidency and I also think that the programme contains a lot that is good as regards solutions for the climate, jobs, the financial crisis, the Copenhagen Conference, the Baltic Sea Strategy, Community policy, enlargement, Iceland, Croatia, Turkey, etc. However, I can see another matter that is important for the future: namely open Europe, privacy and freedom of expression.

Today the ministers are meeting in Stockholm to discuss the Stockholm Programme. What is good is that this is the strategy for the legislation that is now to be drawn up. Parts of the proposal have been long awaited. Ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights will finally take place, I hope – the rights of the child and of the victims of crime. We can make something really good come of this, but there are also downsides; namely the threat to the open society that the Stockholm Programme contains.

Threats to our open society must be fought off using the methods of the open society. Some of what is contained in the Stockholm Programme is not liberal, and neither is it humane or far-sighted. Registering our travel, the mass storage of personal details and the systematic charting of economic transactions is not liberal, nor is it tolerant or far-sighted. Let Stockholm stand for openness, freedom and tolerance, not

registration, supervision and intolerance. Furthermore, I believe that our work in Strasbourg must be discontinued.

**President.** – Before giving the floor to Mr Stolojan, I should like to welcome a guest of ours, a child who is sitting in seat 505. It gives me particular pleasure to see children taking an interest in European issues and in our institutions because it is important to grow up as Europeans from an early age.

**Theodor Dumitru Stolojan (PPE).** – (RO) I wish the Swedish Presidency every success and I believe that the priorities set out are those we have been expecting. The next six months are crucial for Europe's citizens and for the European Union. They are crucial in terms of whether our countries are going to emerge from the economic crisis next year or whether, on the other hand, a large question mark will continue to hang over the economy for another year.

Many proposals and new programmes are being put forward. However, I think it is time for us to assess the impact which the economy recovery programme launched by the European Commission at the start of the year is having, if any at all, and for us to take a close look at the European Union's budget for this year to see which activities have stopped and what resources we can continue to use to come up with new measures.

We also have investment projects planned for the energy sector which have already been approved from that amount of around EUR 3 billion. We will have to take specific measures to implement these projects. I would like to thank President Barroso for his particular contribution to getting the Nabucco project off the ground.

Finally, I would like you to remember the European Union's political commitment to other countries also successfully joining the European Union.

**Proinsias De Rossa (S&D).** – Mr President, we will not overcome the deep financial, economic and jobs crisis – or climate change – as independent, protectionist nation states. Without Europe and the euro we are sunk as a continent, but neither can we continue as a union as though nothing was wrong except a few greedy bankers: budgeting discipline will not solve the problem.

The system is broken and must be deeply reformed. Already the financial institutions are resisting the regulations we need to prevent a future meltdown. We need more integration of our social and economic and climate and energy policies, with the objective of job retention and creation with decent living and working conditions. We need a breakthrough in the climate change summit in December. We need, more than ever now, a recommitment to the Millennium Development Goals and, more immediately, Mr President-in-Office, I regret you did not call for an immediate lifting of the siege of Gaza or indicate any wish to re-energise the search for peace alongside President Obama.

As a Member from Ireland, I would like to remind the House that political irony is a trait much appreciated in Ireland. Jonathan Swift, the author of *Gulliver's Travels*, once proposed to the British Government that the way of solving poverty in Ireland was to encourage us to eat our babies. Well, I do not think the historical irony of the United Kingdom Independence Party proposing to come to Ireland to campaign for the independence of the United Kingdom from the European Union will be lost on the people of Ireland as a subject for a good belly laugh. It will be something to see Mr Nigel Farage, dressed in his Union Jack and leprechaun hat, arm in arm with Gerry Adams, the former leader of the IRA, and Joe Higgins, my colleague up here in the back, calling for a 'no' vote on the Lisbon Treaty, each with their own lemming-like contradictory agendas. I am confident the Irish people will tell this particular circus what they told Libertas: get lost!

(Applause)

**Marietta Giannakou (PPE).** – (EL) Mr President, the programme of the Swedish Presidency does indeed include all the important issues which have to do with our times, both present and future.

I shall start with the recession. I assume that the Swedish Presidency will need to go into this issue in greater depth. The social market economy needs investments in the real economy and not simply in financial products such as those which put us in the situation we are in today.

The issue of climate and sustainable development, which also includes social development, and the issue of work, are obviously extremely important issues. However, here too real investment is needed in the economy, together with more control. A market economy which tries to move towards a *laissez faire - laissez passer* approach is not what we need in Europe.

The issues of crime, home affairs and justice truly concern us all. Organised crime certainly is no longer what it once was and it certainly has links with terrorism and every form of illegal activity. It therefore requires a differentiated approach.

I think what is most important is that we also examine, in relation to the large number of immigrants from third countries, whether the European Union's development policy really did succeed and on which points; in other words, we need a real evaluation and to examine what could or should have been changed in order for illegal immigration to be dealt with in the right way, because we are actually dealing with people and not just political or administrative acts.

The programme of the Swedish Presidency is truly very ambitious, especially, among other things, on trans-Atlantic dialogue. However, on this issue too we must examine whether it is expedient for the European Union to be concerned solely with development and for the United States to be concerned solely with security.

**Ivari Padar (S&D).** - (ET) Ladies and gentlemen, as a representative of Estonia, one of Sweden's neighbours, with which it is connected through the Baltic Sea, I would like to draw attention to one of the Presidency's priorities, namely the Baltic Sea Strategy. The strategy that was initiated with the active participation of my Social Democrat colleague from the previous parliament, current Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, is very important for the whole of Europe, and I would like to thank the Presidency for making this a priority.

This is also a good example of how initiatives proposed by Members of Parliament can achieve concrete results. I would like to call upon the Swedish Presidency to implement the Baltic Sea Strategy, for which there is now a rare opportunity. In order to do this, we must provide funding for the currently empty budget line in the EU budget. I hope the strategy is passed in the European Council during the Swedish Presidency. There are two other areas that are important to me: as a former Minister of Finance, I consider dealing with the economic crisis and the implementation of transparency in the financial sector to be of great importance...  
(Speech interrupted)

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

*President*

**Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš (PPE).** – (LV) Mr President, Mr Barroso, Mr Reinfeldt, firstly I would like to congratulate the Swedish Government on the objectives it has set out for its presidency. This is not an easy time for Europe; it is full of challenges. Of the many important priorities that Sweden has set out for its presidency, I would like to draw attention to the European Union strategy for the Baltic Sea region, and particularly that part of it relating to energy market security. Joint security for Europe's energy market will not be possible so long as divided and mutually isolated markets exist in Europe, both in electricity and in gas. For historical reasons, this problem is particularly pronounced in the Baltic Sea region. In order to resolve this problem and spread the risk relating to energy supply, we need a common European Union energy policy. The foundation stones of such a policy must be not only energy efficiency and renewable resources, but also the creation of a common electricity and gas market with operational interconnections. The European Union's strategy for the Baltic Sea region is a step in the right direction. Its aim is to gradually connect up the energy markets in the region, overcoming deficiencies in interconnections and creating common market mechanisms. The legacy of the Soviet Union occupation in the Baltic Sea region is a split and partially isolated market, which increases our energy supply risk. Our challenge for the future is to change this situation, and by doing so boost our joint energy security. I wish the Swedish Presidency luck in making an energetic start on this important task. Thank you for your attention.

**Åsa Westlund (S&D).** - (SV) Mr President, Prime Minister, if we are to get a good international climate agreement we must also listen to other countries. If we do so we will realise that firstly what is required is that the EU and other countries take greater responsibility for reducing our emissions at home, and secondly that the EU and other industrialised countries state in concrete terms how we will contribute economically to the climate work of poorer countries.

The fact that up to now the Swedish Government has worked against this has unfortunately undermined the opportunities to get a good agreement in Copenhagen. The Council of Ministers must also realise this, and I would therefore ask two questions. Is the Swedish Presidency prepared to contribute to a good international climate agreement by making a greater part of the EU's cuts in emissions on home soil? When does it intend presenting specific proposals to finance the climate work of poor countries?

**Tunne Kelam (PPE).** - Mr President, I would like to congratulate the Swedish Presidency on its historic opportunity to steer the EU toward implementation of the Lisbon Treaty.

I would like to make three points. First, it is of extreme importance to have the new Commission made operational as soon as possible. Institutional uncertainty cannot be used as an excuse to delay the formation of the new Commission. These arguments sound really hypocritical. To come out of the economic crisis and to create new jobs, we need more than ever a strong, independent and innovative Commission.

Second, I would like to commend the Swedish Presidency on taking the lead in the implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy, which was initiated by the European Parliament. However, there is also a special budget line for this strategy which is still empty. We cannot expect a positive change in the environmental situation in the Baltic Sea by relying only on ad hoc projects. We certainly need also coordinated support from the EU budget.

Third, for Estonia the Stockholm programme is important. It should also include a programme for using modern IT. I am wondering whether the establishment of an agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice would be of help in implementing this strategy.

**Alf Svensson (PPE).** - (SV) Mr President, congratulations on your appointment. I would also like to thank Fredrik Reinfeldt for an extraordinary review and report. We all now expect great achievements in Copenhagen, although it must also be emphasised that this is to be an international event. Expectations have really been raised, but I dare say that if not all the groups are satisfied with the result then it will not be the end of the world.

Naturally the economic crisis has been highlighted here. The big groups, the big companies always get attention. I would like to emphasise that the small loyal subcontractors should not be forgotten either when financial matters are under discussion. I would also like to underline the specific values of the Baltic Sea Strategy. I believe that the Baltic Sea Strategy could increase the legitimacy of the entire EU. Europe's largest inland sea can and must be saved. The Baltic Sea Strategy can also help to check the crime trend and trafficking. This is also an important environmental issue that you could say demands its own Copenhagen Conference.

I am pleased that the work on a border solution between Croatia and Slovenia is on the agenda and that the Cyprus question is also being resolved. We are all anxious to see this. We will also, I believe, gradually see the Nordic region enlarged here in the EU to include Iceland and, I imagine, also Norway within the not too distant future.

President Barack Obama gave an extraordinary speech about Africa in Africa the other day. I have reason to stress that Sweden can be proud of its work and I hope that we can continue to hold the flag of solidarity high in the future.

**Ivo Belet (PPE).** - (NL) I think that we and the European project stand at a real crossroads. The Treaty of Lisbon, the Copenhagen climate conference and a vigorous approach to tackling the financial and economic crisis are the three great issues that you will have to deal with over the coming six months, and if we can bring them to a successful conclusion, Europe really could take a quantum leap forwards.

You are no doubt aware that a large majority of MEPs are ready to lend their backing to this route and I would like to urge you, with a quip, to leave the critics and the barking dogs to make their racket on the sidelines. Let them not distract you from your mission, your purpose. I believe that we must concentrate on the essentials.

Allow me to point out just one issue, Prime Minister Reinfeldt. It is crucial that we concentrate on one of the top priorities, namely an aggressive plan for the future of the automotive industry in the European Union. In my opinion, we have not had such a plan up to now, or at least we have had too little of one, and I think that you would agree with us there. It is definitely not too late. The rescue plan for Opel is in full swing and the world, and even Europe, is not rid of the demons of protectionism. They are slumbering beneath the surface, and Swedish society is just as affected as we in Belgium are, just as they are in France, Germany and Slovakia. We are all in the same boat.

What is needed is for us to approach this in solidarity with one another, with a coordinated, rather than an 'every man for himself' approach, and that we do not attempt to clip each others' wings. Mr President, I think that you have a unique opportunity here to work with the President of the Commission – this also sends a

clear signal to the Commission – to draw up a joint plan, a joint plan, Mr Barroso, for the future of our car factories, thereby steering them into the 21st century.

We believe that the energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly car can be realised in Europe's existing car assembly factories and we are counting on you, Mr Barroso and Mr Reinfeldt, being on our side.

**Csaba Sógor (PPE).** – (HU) In our view, Sweden is synonymous with Europe. This country is the home of prosperity, security and freedom, where the issues of human rights and freedoms are just as important as economic and climate change concerns. Then we have the parliament of an EU Member State which adopted a language law on 30 June 2009 stipulating that if anyone, including all of you, does not call that country's capital city by its name in the country's official language, Bratislava, but uses its German name, Presburg, or Hungarian name, Pozsony, they may very well end up paying a fine of EUR 5 000. The explanatory memorandum to the language law amendment states that protection of the national language in certain cases overrides the freedom of speech and right to privacy. A European Union which adopts such a law is no longer a Europe of freedom. I ask the Swedish Presidency to do its utmost to ensure that this law is repealed and that the Slovak head of state does not sign it.

**Kinga Göncz (S&D).** – (HU) I would like to draw your attention to two of the Swedish Presidency's priorities which I was delighted to see on this list. The first of these priorities is the unequivocal opposition to discrimination, racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and homophobia. I think that the importance of this issue is particularly underlined by the fact that we saw how evident the level of support was for the far right in several European countries during the European Parliament elections. This therefore makes it the responsibility of every one of us, including Parliament and the current Presidency, to ensure that the most vulnerable do not end up in a precarious situation. In particular, we must do everything to ensure that there is no cooperation between those parties professing to be democratic and the extremist parties. A very good example of this is the Slovak language law, mentioned already today on several occasions, which is severely discriminatory, as was described. The second priority which I would like to welcome is the series of European measures to be adopted, aimed at the integration of Roma communities.

**Mirosław Piotrowski (ECR).** – (PL) Mr President, continuation of enlargement of the European Union and the future of the Treaty of Lisbon are among the objectives of the Swedish Presidency. The German Constitutional Tribunal ruled recently that the Treaty of Lisbon can be accepted only on condition that the precedence of the *Bundestag* and the *Bundesrat* are safeguarded, which calls into question the idea of European federalism. The Treaty of Lisbon has, therefore, turned out to be a legal monster, which has been noticed not only by the Germans, but also by the Irish in a referendum and by the Presidents of the Czech Republic and Poland. In this context the Swedish Presidency should initiate a Europe-wide debate on the subject of the role of the national parliaments of all the 27 Member States, and should develop a new model of cooperation between sovereign European nations.

It is, therefore, to be hoped that the Swedish Presidency, which I wish much success, will listen with greater attention to the voice of the citizens.

**Simon Busuttil (PPE).** – (MT) I would also like to laud Prime Minister Reinfeldt for staying with us until the very end of this discussion. We will be looking to the Presidency to implement three important priorities. The first is the Stockholm Programme on the area of justice, freedom and security. We have to ensure that agreement is reached on this programme as soon as possible. The second priority is the implementation of the Pact on Immigration and Asylum. We will be looking to you Prime Minister to ensure that you will implement the Pact that was agreed upon last year. Thirdly, last month, during the European Council, agreement was reached regarding the pilot project on burden sharing in the field of immigration. You have a great deal of work ahead of you Prime Minister, and we, together with our President, will be monitoring you closely to guarantee that this work is carried out.

**Ana Gomes (S&D).** – (PT) Since Dag Hammarskjöld, Sweden has distinguished itself as a member of the United Nations (UN). It therefore knows that, without bodies with universally recognised legitimacy and representativeness, there will be no political force to conclude Kyoto2, the Doha Round or the Millennium Development Goals, or to regulate the global economy, not to mention defend human rights.

It is regrettable that the Swedish Presidency is resigning itself to the informal and disputed framework of the G20. It is tragic that the EU – this locomotive of the world according to Mr Barroso, who was citing the UN Secretary-General – is leaderless and lacking in any strategic vision in this area, at a time when President Obama is proclaiming his commitment to global governance. Instead, on our side, we have only heard the Pope insisting on the urgent need to reorganise the UN Security Council and the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Mr President, why is the Swedish Presidency refusing to lead Europe into forcing reform of the UN Security Council, by demanding a seat at the table for the European Union with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon?

**Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE).** – (GA) Mr President, the referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon, which will be held in Ireland on the second day of October this year, will be one of the most important events to occur during the period of the Swedish Presidency.

Ireland has received legal guarantees in a range of policy areas and this is helping greatly to alleviate the concerns that the people of Ireland had in the referendum last year. Now, it is incumbent on those of us who believe that a vote in favour of the Treaty will be to the benefit of Ireland to work to progress this new arrangement in my country.

If the Treaty of Lisbon succeeds – and I hope that the referendum will be passed – the various countries will be able to nominate a member to the Commission. Those in favour of the Treaty cannot afford to be complacent in any way. We must do our utmost to ensure its success.

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Jacek Protasiewicz, (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, I would very much like to thank Prime Minister Reinfeldt for including in his priorities the need to develop cooperation with our Eastern neighbours. I would also like to thank him for Sweden's engagement in development of the Eastern Partnership.

In this context I would like to point out that in the next six months, we as the European Union and Sweden as the Presidency will have to face up to problems relating to the disregard of human rights in Belarus. For six months now, three entrepreneurs, Mr Avtukhowich, Mr Leonov and Mr Osipienko, have been held in detention and have not been able to obtain a just verdict. Of 12 young activists who took part in a demonstration in January 2008, 11 were given custodial sentences, and several days ago one was sentenced to a year in prison. Prime Minister, in the next six months please pay attention to the question of breaches of human rights in Belarus.

**Fredrik Reinfeldt, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) Mr President, I hope I can return a little of the time I borrowed earlier.

*(The President briefly cut off the speaker)*

I know that you are waiting for a vote. Allow me to thank you for having represented your respective party groups very well. I note your eagerness and the expectations that there are of the Swedish Presidency, your desire for us to be more of a driving force in climate negotiations and to take action to combat the financial crisis and economic recession. You have noted our Baltic Sea Strategy, our Stockholm Programme, our continued efforts to drive forward the matter of enlargement, and I would like to thank you all for the support we are experiencing in this.

I also know that the transition to the Treaty of Lisbon will mean that we meet again, and that we have a great deal to do together this autumn. A number of the ministers in my cabinet are here with me today. We have noted and carefully followed your questions and views. I hope that we will cooperate closely and I hope to see you again in the autumn.

**President.** – We also count on constant discussion and keeping in contact with the Presidency. It is very important for the European Parliament. It is the beginning of our term of office and we must do many things, and this is a very good starting point: the Swedish Presidency. Thank you very much, Prime Minister.

I would also like to thank the President of the European Commission.

*(Applause)*

*The debate is closed.*

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**Bairbre de Brún (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (GA) I welcome the Swedish Presidency's proposal to focus on questions of policy instead of constitutional questions during its presidency.

However, the Council has decided to ignore the democratically expressed will of the Irish people, and they have made a decision to force the Treaty of Lisbon through.

Unfortunately, the policy framework that they are pursuing is the same failed agenda of deregulation and liberalisation. This is not the appropriate response to the economic crisis. The complete opposite is the case, namely that it is a continuation of the same policies that instigated the crisis, and it is these same policies that are being further strengthened in the Treaty of Lisbon.

We are told that we need the Treaty of Lisbon because it has been long years in the making. But the Treaty of Lisbon was drafted and agreed before the economic crisis, and is based on policies that helped to ignite the crisis. To force through those outdated policies now would be disastrous, for it would make the crisis worse.

There is a need for new policies for a new era. There is a need for a new Treaty for a new era.

As far as climate change is concerned, it is important that the Swedish Presidency does its best to achieve a robust deal in Copenhagen.

**Diane Dodds (NI), in writing.** – The incoming Swedish Presidency has many challenges but the greatest is the need to ensure that the EU respects the sovereignty of the Member States and does not ride roughshod over the democratic rights of the peoples of Europe.

Far too often the concerns and interests of our peoples are ignored in the headlong rush to advance the federalist agenda exemplified in the Lisbon Treaty.

Looking to changes ahead, the preparations for the reform of the common agricultural policy in 2013 will be an issue during this Presidency. The voice of areas heavily dependent on farming, like Northern Ireland, must be heard during those discussions and in the debate on reform of fisheries policy.

We have a great duty to help and protect our constituents at this time of great financial turbulence. The EU must not put further obstacles in the way of economic growth and stability.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) The anti-social programme of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union represents a dangerous step forward in the expansion of neoliberal policies. It reflects the relentless pursuit of these policies, despite all the evidence, by the leaders of capitalism in the European Union, who are forgetting that their policies are the main cause of the economic and social crisis.

Although, in the presentation of its programme, the Swedish Presidency did refer to people and the problems of unemployment, it did not mention a single measure to change the existing policies which have caused these problems. Quite the contrary. In particular it highlighted the policy of free competition in the widest range of areas, including in services and foreign trade. It has gambled everything on the recovery of the financial markets, on the resumption of the paradigms of the Stability Pact and on the defence of neoliberalism, which will certainly result in new attacks on social and labour rights.

It also did not forget to insist on a new referendum in Ireland on the draft Treaty of Lisbon, already planned for 2 October, in a continuation of the blackmail of the Irish people in order to move forward more quickly with the destruction of public services and the reduction of social rights, including in the areas of social security, health, water, social protection and workers' rights. It is not difficult to predict that it will submit new proposals for directives, which will try to adopt the same lines as those proposals that were rejected in the previous legislative term.

**Livia Járóka (PPE), in writing.** – (HU) I welcome the incoming Presidency and would like to express the hope that as the third member of the Council troika, Sweden will continue the work which was started during the Czech and French Presidencies in the area of Roma social integration. There were many factors which hampered the outgoing Czech Presidency's work, but the overall picture in terms of Roma issues is nevertheless positive. In fact, the Roma Platform held its first meeting in April in Prague, while, in June, the European Council strengthened its general objectives in terms of offering Roma equal opportunities by calling on the Commission and Member States to combat the poverty and social exclusion affecting Roma.

In the same document the Council adopted the common basic principles set out in Prague for achieving Roma social integration, with a call to public policy-makers to take these principles into consideration and comply with them. Based on the results achieved by the troika so far, I hope that the Swedish Presidency will at least focus greater attention than before on Roma issues. For example, I hope that the forthcoming conference on the inclusive labour market to be held in October and the Equal Opportunities Summit due to take place in November will deal with the issue of Europe's largest minority as a main priority. Indeed, in terms of population size, it is considerably larger than the population living in the Baltic region, designated



as a priority by this Presidency. I also hope that the Swedish Presidency will go beyond the theoretical approaches already adopted and the organisational issues decided and start to take specific actions, thereby actually putting these frameworks into practice.

**Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (RO) The Stockholm Programme, which is a priority for the Swedish Presidency, must provide support in reinforcing the area of freedom, security and justice, as well as in promoting economic activity during the current crisis, especially in view of the possibility of the Treaty of Lisbon coming into force.

The success of the Stockholm Programme will help make Europe more accessible to its citizens. This success will be reflected in the enforcement of the right of freedom of movement for all European citizens and the comprehensive implementation of the mutual recognition principle in civil and criminal matters at EU level.

The Swedish Presidency must continue the efforts of the French and Czech Presidencies, whose priorities were to provide all workers in the EU with complete access to the Community's labour market, a freedom which is most symbolic of European citizenship.

In order to do this, Member States must actively participate through concrete actions in abolishing the virtual borders inside the EU which are detrimental to citizens' freedom of movement, as they encounter administrative and legal difficulties when they live and work in another Member State.

The freedom of movement must be a reality for all EU citizens, especially during a time of economic crisis, which highlights the need to promote unrestricted mobility among the workforce. This mobility can be self-regulating and ensure flexibility, as well as reduce the amount of undeclared work and the natural unemployment rate.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (RO) The EU is facing huge challenges nowadays: the economic and financial crisis, the alarming rise in unemployment and climate change. The unemployment rate in the EU is 8.9% at the moment, while 19% of young people under the age of 16 and 19% of elderly people are exposed to the risk of poverty. People are losing their jobs, many businesses are going bankrupt, while national budgets are in major deficit. The EU's Swedish Presidency has a huge responsibility towards its citizens. It must restore their hope of a decent living and lay the foundations for economic recovery by getting everyone to pull together. Such measures as increasing energy efficiency, using energy from renewable sources and improving the EU's energy security feature among the Swedish Presidency's priorities. I hope that the EU's Swedish Presidency will mark the start of an age of prosperity, guaranteeing a period of economic growth for the next 40-50 years. I believe that, now more than ever, we need to invest in education, research, energy efficiency and, above all, in people. Sweden is renowned for its social policies and high standard of living. This is why I would like, along with my fellow Members in the European Parliament and every citizen in Europe, to wish you every success, and we hope that this term will provide the springboard to a new future.

**Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (EL) The priorities of the Swedish Presidency mark an escalation in the anti-grassroots attack by the EU, the aim of which is to safeguard the ongoing profitability of euro-unifying capital by shifting the burden of the capitalist recession on to the working class and grassroots classes. The Swedish Presidency is seeking to speed up capitalist restructurings, within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy. At the epicentre of this anti-labour attack are wage and pension cuts, the complete demolition of labour relations, workers' rights and social protection and insurance systems and even greater commercialisation of health and education.

The 'green economy' is being designed so that, on the pretext of combating climate change, new profitable sectors of activity can be opened up for capital.

The Stockholm programme is endeavouring, in the name of combating terrorism and organised crime, to reinforce the bourgeois political system still further, so that they can combat grassroots reactions and step up repressive measures against immigrants.

The strategy on the Baltic has paved the way for a more aggressive approach by the euro-unifying monopolies in the countries on the eastern borders of the EU, in a bid to strengthen their position in the imperialist competition.

Using 'guarantees' as a smoke screen and blatant coercion, they are trying to grab the Irish vote in order to implement the anti-grassroots Treaty of Lisbon.

## IN THE CHAIR: MR PITTELLA

*Vice-President*

### 6. Voting time

**President.** – The next item is the vote.

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

#### 6.1. Election of Quaestors of Parliament (first, second and third ballots)

*- Before the vote*

**Martin Schulz (S&D).** – *(DE)* Mr President, I think you need to explain something. We are at present conducting a test. In this test we can only vote for two people – for example Pavarotti and Montserrat Caballé. Later, however, in the vote for the quaestors we will be able to vote for five people. I just wanted to reiterate this as it has confused many Members. It is only in this test that we can vote for two people, afterwards in the real vote it will be five.

**Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE).** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, apart from expressing my thanks for putting Pavarotti first, I should like to say something. After we have marked with crosses the two to be voted for, do we have to confirm our vote or leave it as it is?

**Carlo Casini (PPE).** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, since not everyone has fully understood the oral explanation before the vote, it would be a good idea to explain again clearly how we vote.

**President.** – I believe that the outcome of the vote shows how quickly the procedure has been learnt.

*- After the vote*

In accordance with Rule 16 and Rule 15(2) of the Rules of Procedure, the order of precedence of the Quaestors shall be determined by the order in which they were elected. The composition of the new Bureau shall be notified to the Presidents of the Institutions of the European Communities.

#### 6.2. Numerical strength of committees

**President.** – That concludes the vote.

*(The sitting was suspended at 13.45 and resumed at 15.00)*

## IN THE CHAIR: MR PITTELLA

*Vice-President*

### 7. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting: see Minutes

### 8. Iran (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on Iran.

**Carl Bildt, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Mr President, it is an honour to be able to stand here for the first time. I expect to be here numerous times during the coming six months to address different issues.

The issue on our agenda at this time is Iran. Before going into the substance of that issue, let me just express our heartfelt condolences to Iran on the occasion of the tragic accident earlier today. We sincerely regret the loss of life and express our sympathy with all of those affected by this tragedy.

The issue of Iran is obviously very high up on the Swedish Presidency's agenda. That has to do with the outcome of the election and the question marks – to put it very mildly – that were raised after that election, as well as the political developments that we have seen since then.

I think you are all aware of the fact that the European Union has taken a very strong and a very principled stand when it comes to these events. We have reiterated that questions over the conduct of elections are issues for the Iranian authorities to truly investigate and clarify. We have also been very clear in our response to what we have seen happening on the streets of Tehran. We have condemned the crackdown, the violence and the use of force that we have seen against peaceful demonstrations; we condemn the crackdown against journalists, media outlets, communications and protestors. Those are contrary not only to the norms and values that we represent but also, obviously, to the wishes for a more open and more reform-oriented society expressed by so many Iranians.

That being said, we remain in our principled policy of wishing another, a better, a new relationship with the nation of Iran. It is a rich nation that has much to contribute to the development of the world and the development of its own region, and we would hope that at some point in time – hopefully not too distant – there will be that possibility for a truly new relationship.

Before concluding, let me just note one issue that has been occupying us quite a lot, and that is that the Iranian authorities did detain a number of personalities who are staff members of European missions, as well as some European nationals. We have been in constant touch with the Iranian authorities over these issues. We consider possible accusations levelled against them to be baseless, and I can assure you that we will continue to engage with the Iranian authorities in all the ways we can until these issues are resolved in a satisfactory manner – that is, that the persons in question are released.

**Catherine Ashton**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, this is my first opportunity to congratulate all the honourable Members on their election to the new European Parliament. I can say, on behalf of the Commission, that we very much look forward to a constructive cooperation with you, including of course on some of the most pressing international challenges that we face, and the subject of today's debate is certainly one of those. My colleague Benita Ferrero-Waldner is travelling this week and so I have offered and have been delighted to be able to speak on her behalf in Parliament today.

This Parliament plays an important part in maintaining and developing relations between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Exchange visits between Parliament's Iran delegation and members of the Majlis have already played an important role in increasing mutual understanding. Parliament has also played its part in setting up several instruments that serve as an important basis for EU activities in Iran, and we in the Commission hope to continue to make good use of these in the years ahead.

Today's debate was prompted by the recent Iranian presidential elections and the subsequent events. While, as the Presidency has said, the evolution of Iran's politics and policies are chiefly a matter for the citizens of Iran, there can be no doubt of the broader significance, and it is right that we should follow these developments closely.

The European Union has taken very clear positions on the situation in Iran following the presidential elections and has remained united in these positions. We have expressed full respect for the sovereignty of Iran, but have stressed our deep concern about the post-election violence, as we would when lives are lost or rights are put at risk in any country.

Allegations of European interference in the Iranian elections or any involvement in the protests which followed are unfounded. However, suppression of peaceful demonstrations, arbitrary detentions and severe censorship of the media constitute violations of human rights which cannot be considered matters confined to the domestic affairs of any country. In spite of the current delicate situation in Iran, the Commission believes strongly in maintaining a dialogue. That was the case before the elections, and it remains the case now.

The European Union and Iran have many common and pressing interests, including the fight against drug trafficking and support to Afghan refugees. These demand our continued attention and cooperation, and we hope that Iran will share this view.

The Commission continues to search for ways to deploy Community instruments in constructive activities in Iran. We can increase mutual understanding by continuing, for instance, our cooperation through Erasmus Mundus academic exchanges.

We are convinced that the European Union should keep all available channels of communication open with Iran. We should strive for engagement with Iran at all levels. When possible and prudent, we stand ready to continue and expand cooperation in the future.

Our present differences with the Government of Iran are many; some are very serious. We call on the Government of Iran to join us in trying to find solutions to our differences through dialogue. It is only through discussing the challenges that lie between us in a spirit of mutual respect that we can hope to overcome them. Europe has never closed the door to such discussions, and it remains open today.

Finally, I join with the Presidency in expressing condolences to the families of Iranians and Armenians involved in the tragedy of the plane crash today.

**Jacek Saryusz-Wolski**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, I want to reflect the tone of the debate in the extraordinary meeting of the outgoing Committee on Foreign Affairs, which met last Wednesday because there was no time to convene the new committee.

Everyone knows the facts all too well, so I will not dwell on that. The Union has a duty to stress the universality of human rights, to follow up human rights violations in Iran very closely and to take Iran to task for the brutality and violence. Last week we, in the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Delegation for relations with Iran, met with representatives of the civil society of Iran, and these are aspects that seem to us extremely important.

We fully endorse the statements and positions taken so far by the Presidency, Council and Commission, but we are also asking the Council to ensure that EU Member States and their ambassadors in Tehran are fully complying with EU guidelines on human rights defenders and on the prevention of torture. We should also convey to the Commission our insistence that all available means should be deployed. We should support and strengthen civil society organisations in Iran, notably via the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, and deploy all efforts for renewed engagement with Iranian civil society in such uncontroversial areas as the fight against narcotraffic, refugee issues, academic exchanges, and visits to Europe by journalists, to name but a few. They could help to further people-to-people contacts and lead to improved freedom of expression in the country. Pressure on human rights, yes, but no isolation! Dialogue, even if a very difficult dialogue.

We are going through a very difficult and tense period with Iran. The crucial nuclear question is on hold, and we ask the question: what is the way forward? Well, sanctions are one possible measure being explored. We really believe the Union must find a way to re-engage in dialogue with Iran on all these issues. The need to find ways of building fresh trust and to create a strong diplomatic process has never been greater than now. We should offer our full support to the Council and the Commission in their efforts. In turn, we, the European Parliament, must continue with our efforts to strengthen the parliamentary diplomacy aspect of our relations with Iran through our strengthened links with the Majlis.

**Richard Howitt**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, whatever people feel about the outcome of the Iranian elections, there is no doubt that tens – hundreds – of people have been injured, tens of people have been killed in the protests that have taken place since the elections in that country, and thousands of people appear to have been detained as political prisoners. This entire Chamber should therefore have no hesitation in condemning those abuses of human rights, as it should condemn the obstructions to free journalism that have taken place since the elections.

We should also, as Mr Saryusz-Wolski mentioned concerning the meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs last week, recognise that one of the best ways of determining a free and fair election is to invite election monitors to observe the process, and this European Union has got a fine record of doing that. We should note in this Chamber today that the Commission on our behalf did not have the confidence that they could do an independent, fair and objective job and therefore we have proper reason to say that we have no confidence in the election results.

Our hearts go out to the Iranians who have been injured, detained or had their human rights abused. Our thoughts are foremost with them, but I also ask this Chamber not to forget the Iranian who was an employee of the British Embassy. He has been detained and is charged in a completely unjustified way with fomenting the protests. Our hearts go out too to the French student who was detained by the Iranian authorities. We should praise our colleagues in the Swedish Presidency who have stood by those countries and who have ensured concerted action by the European Union in response and ask them to continue it.

Finally, I am ashamed that in this debate the British National Party will speak for the first time, with an MEP who last Friday described Islam as 'a cancer that should be removed from Europe by chemotherapy'. That does not represent British people's views; that is not Europe's attitude towards Islam. We should stand up against that as we stand up against unfairness internationally.

**Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (NL) Iran is a large country with a large and predominantly young population, a long and eventful history and an impressive culture. What is more, Iran is located in one of the most sensitive areas on the planet. For all these reasons, but also out of compassion for our fellow human beings, let us not be indifferent to the goings-on in Iran. The Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe is not in favour of regime change by force. We do believe, however, that all the peoples of the world, including the Iranian people, must be entitled to choose their own leaders and to replace them when they cease to make the grade.

Elections under Iran's current regime do not meet international standards for free and fair elections, a situation that was no different in the most recent presidential elections. Yet even within the tight restrictions in place in Iran, large swathes of the population refused to accept the official results and took to the streets in protest. The Iranian people were not convinced by the extremely limited review of the results and the protests therefore continued.

The protests were put down in a particularly violent way and the prosecutions are still going on. We firmly denounce these prosecutions and we call on the Iranian authorities to bring them to an immediate end and to release all those taken into custody. An immediate end must also be brought to the prosecutions of foreign journalists, NGO workers and the Iranian staff of foreign embassies in Tehran.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Commission, a regime that turns on its own people and its own youth in this way loses all legitimacy, not just at home, but internationally as well. It is therefore particularly tragic that these dramatic developments should take place at a time when the president of the United States has expressed his willingness to enter into dialogue with Iran. Iran is on the verge of missing a historic opportunity to take the place on the world stage that its history and culture deserve.

**Daniel Cohn-Bendit**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Commissioner, President-in-Office of the Council, President of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, when a people wants to free itself, it inspires our admiration and our solidarity. Such is the case for the Iranian people. It is true that those elections effectively ended before they began, but, even in those elections, we saw that the people of Iran were able to find the Achilles heel so as to express their desire for freedom and democracy.

It is true that it is in our interest for the dialogue to be maintained with the Iranian – terrorist – power; no one disputes that. At the same time, however, we cannot simply move on to the business of the day. What took place in Tehran is absolutely horrible. Torture is a daily occurrence in Iranian prisons, but not only for UK nationals. Iranian men and women are tortured daily in these prisons, too.

Therefore, Europe must raise its voice. I know that it is difficult to strike a balance between the interests and the protection of the Iranian people and our own interests, which are not always identical. However, even if it is complicated, it is important to stress that we show solidarity towards the Iranian people every day. I call on the Commission and the Council to analyse the part played by Nokia and Siemens and the responsibility of European weapons in the repression of the Iranian people. It is, after all, unthinkable that it should be large European companies that have enabled the Iranian Government to suppress the freedom and the desire for freedom of the Iranian people.

(Applause)

**Struan Stevenson**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, while we sit here debating the recent uprising in Iran, do we realise that over 50 of the student leaders, the protestors who were arrested, have been taken out and hanged by the Iranian authorities, that over 200 people were killed on the streets, including Neda, who has become an international and very potent symbol of the brutality of that fascist regime against the people of Iran? And, while we continue to enjoy our place as the biggest trading partner with the Iranian Government, do we seriously think that money is more important than lives?

Why are we not prepared to put tougher sanctions in place? Why do we not, as a Parliament, scrap our Delegation for relations with Iran, which in any case in the last five years became nothing more than a compliant mouthpiece of the Iranian Embassy in Brussels and brought shame on the EU institutions? Scrap it and let us start talking tough with the Iranian authorities. It is the only language they understand.

**Helmut Scholz**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, Minister, ladies and gentlemen, the Group of the United European Left/Nordic Green Left is deeply concerned about the ongoing violence in Iran. We, too, condemn in the strongest possible terms the brutal mistreatment of demonstrators.

We are extremely concerned about the fate of numerous people who were detained and call for their immediate release and we also believe that the European Parliament as a whole should do this.

We are also critical of comments in media and governmental circles in other states which exploit the legitimate protests of the Iranian citizens. Not even the most recent developments in Iran justify plans for military action against Iranian nuclear installations. My group rejects such strategies. We therefore welcome the clear statement by President Obama, who has refused to give Israel the green light for an attack on Iran. The US President also believes in diplomacy. Iran is a sovereign state. Its people alone have the right to decide on changes to its society. The government of a sovereign state must openly accept the desire for change and drive through a political solution.

**Fiorello Provera**, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – (IT) Mr President, congratulations on your election. The repression of citizens who contest the election results, the censorship of the media and the persecution of the opposition confirm the absence of democracy in Iran. We find similar situations in other countries too, such as China, but there is further cause for concern in Iran's case.

Firstly, because of its hegemonic ambitions, which manifest themselves in its interference in neighbouring countries, such as in the Basra region of Iraq, and in its support for Hezbollah in Lebanon. Secondly, because of the strong influence that religious extremism exerts on the political power of the Islamic Republic. A few hours ago a singer – an Iranian singer – was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for defamation of religion, and 12 Sunnis were sentenced to death.

President Ahmadinejad has declared on many occasions that the destruction of the State of Israel is his main policy objective. Moreover, Iran's desire to develop a nuclear programme outside international controls is alarming.

In view of the fact that Iran is one of the largest producers of gas and oil, its real objective appears to be to develop nuclear weapons for the obvious purpose of being able to blackmail countries in the region and the entire international community. An intense effort is therefore required from the entire European political community to strike the right balance between opposing the Ayatollahs' regime and supporting the moderate and reformist Iranian element that exists and is active.

In this regard the financial resources from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights could be used to support all of the victims of the current oppression. No political intervention can be effective, however, without all of the countries of Europe uniting and acting as one.

**Krisztina Morvai (NI).** – Mr President, as a human rights lawyer with 20 years' experience internationally, let me ask this Parliament, in order to have legitimacy and credibility, to scrutinise the human rights situation in the Third World and other non-EU countries, but also, please, to take a much closer look at the situation of democracy, the rule of law and human rights within the EU, in particular in my own country, Hungary. Let me share with you a couple of facts.

On 23 October 2006, there was a major demonstration with about 100 000 people in commemoration of the 1956 revolution. This was organised by the largest opposition party, Fidesz, which is well represented here in the EPP, and basically they won the elections this year in Hungary. It was a middle-class crowd of families, elderly people, children, and the brutal Hungarian police brutally attacked this crowd with tear gas, with rubber bullets, with policemen on horseback, causing severe injuries to several hundred people. On the same occasion several hundred people were illegally detained and tortured in prison.

Ever since that date, throughout the last three years right up to the most recent days, when 216 peaceful demonstrators were illegally detained and brutalised by the police, on every single occasion when there was an anti-government protest, not in Iran, not in China, not in Honduras, but in an EU country, Hungary, the same things happened: mass police brutalities, illegal detentions.

May I ask you to please join forces with me and, regardless of political affiliations, help to find out what happened, to find who was responsible, to try to do justice to the victims and please, as the European Union, to try to put an end to these mass violations of human rights within the EU, in order to have the credibility and legitimacy to scrutinise the human rights situation in Iran or whichever country outside the Union.

**Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE).** – (ES) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen. I am here to talk about Iran, and I would first like to join in expressing my condolences for the victims of this morning's plane crash.

Ladies and gentlemen, I agree with many of the ideas that have already been expressed regarding the situation in Iran following the electoral process. This process was neither free nor fair, and has allowed President Ahmadinejad and the most radical sectors of the regime to remain in power, violently repressing demonstrators, preventing journalists from doing their job and seeking to hold a supposed external conspiracy responsible for internal disorder, while using misinformation to conceal the truth.

What is certain is that the Iranian regime has been seriously damaged, both internally and in terms of its external image. Moreover, the oligarchy that has enjoyed power in recent decades is now divided, which will affect the stability of the regime. At the same time, discontent among the people will continue to grow, especially if oil prices do not rise again and consequently the economic situation does not improve.

The European Union needs to maintain a united front and continue to condemn the abuses committed in Iran. It should demand greater respect for human rights, and we also need to look at how we can help civil society, in particular those sectors that want democratic pluralism and respect for human rights for their country. We should not disappoint those sectors that are looking to the West, including the European Union.

However, with regard to Iran we must also not forget the threat that its nuclear programme represents, as it is having a destabilising effect on the region and on non-proliferation in general. It is essential that the European Union and the United States continue to cooperate on this matter, and I am sure that this will be a priority for the Swedish Presidency.

We need to fully involve Russia and China, which are permanent members of the Security Council. Their support is essential in order for a negotiated solution to be found to this grave threat, which requires unity and firmness from the international community. I therefore welcome the resolution adopted in this respect last week at the G8.

Ladies and gentlemen, the events of the last few weeks have openly demonstrated the extremism and radical nature of the current Iranian leaders; it is clear that the international community cannot afford for them to obtain nuclear weapons.

**María Paloma Muñiz de Urquiza (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, President of the Commission, I was going to start my first speech to this plenary by welcoming the fact that the debate on the situation in Iran was not brought on by Iran's prominence in the media, which has been superseded in turn by China, Honduras, the G20, etc.

Unfortunately, the recent executions of Sunni militants in Iran have brought the country and its human rights violations back to the front page of the newspapers. However, I do not think that it should be what is in the news that inspires what is on Parliament's agenda in terms of external policy, but rather Parliament's own sense of responsibility and its considered and coherent response, in line with its growing role in the European Union's external policy, especially in the field of human rights.

This role, Mr President, involves monitoring the consistent use of all the instruments that the European Union has in this field and, in the case of Iran, we should not keep the dialogue on nuclear weapons entirely separate from the complete absence of political dialogue on human rights.

Structured dialogue on human rights has been suspended since 2004. We do not have a cooperation and trade agreement on which to hang a democratic clause, we have not managed to send an electoral observation mission, and the funds of the Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights are minute.

In Parliament and in the whole of the European Union we need to be more effective in using the instruments that we have available to us and that we have equipped ourselves with. Some in this very House and in the Iranian opposition have called for relations with the Iranian regime to be completely broken off and for the new government not to be recognised.

We strongly condemn the political repression and the stifling of freedom of expression in Iran, but we do not think that we should relinquish being a force in the defence and protection of human rights, democracy and the fight against poverty in the world. In order to do this, Mr President, we need dialogue, negotiation and diplomacy, and we need to seek out common interests and build an alliance of civilisations. I call on the Presidency of the Council to do this.

**Anna Rosbach (EFD).** – (DA) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the European Parliament has discussed the violations of human rights by Iran on many occasions and we are, in fact, doing so again today. We will not change the appalling behaviour of the dictators by words alone. It is time for tangible action. The brutal

slaughter of a people who hunger after freedom and who have courageously taken to the streets must cause us to take on some of the responsibility for bringing down this criminal regime. This regime has no place in the 21st century. European governments must report the Iranian regime to the UN Security Council and demand that the perpetrators, primarily Ali Khamenei and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, be brought before an international court.

The Iranian people want freedom and we must support the call for free elections under UN supervision. Parliament cannot maintain its delegation with Iran, which, at its last meeting, was turned into a tool by the dictatorial regime to influence our parliament. We must demonstrate that we do not cooperate with dictatorships.

**Nick Griffin (NI).** - Mr President, last year I served as a monitor at commemorations for the 1956 revolution in Budapest. I can confirm that Dr Morvai is right to criticise those who fret about Iran while ignoring human rights abuses here in Europe.

I trust that no ECR Group members here will be hypocritical enough to condemn Iran for the use of violence in elections when David Cameron is among the sponsors of Unite Against Fascism, an organisation of far-left criminals which routinely deploys intimidation and violence against nationalist dissidents in Britain. The same is true of five current Labour, Lib Dem and Tory MEPs, marked with the shame of supporting the use of British taxpayers' money to support their own militia, which breaks up opposition meetings and attacks their opponents with bricks, darts and claw hammers.

But my main point is this: however well meaning, and even justified, criticisms of Iran made here may be, they will be exploited as war propaganda by the powerful vested interests that stand to gain from a military attack on that country. Neocons, oil companies, construction corporations and the Wahabi mullahs of Saudi Arabia all want to see the sovereign state of Iran destroyed by an aggressive war. Not even European liberals are naive enough to fall for lies about weapons of mass destruction again, so human rights are being drafted in as a new *casus belli*.

Do not add the voice of this place to the warmongers' chorus for a third illegal and counterproductive attack by the West on the Muslim world. Or, if you must, do not leave the war – which hypocritical rhetoric will help to justify and unleash – to the usual brave British cannon fodder: 18-year-old boys from the Mersey and the Thames and the Tyne. Instead, send your own sons to come home in boxes or without their legs, their arms and their sanity – or mind your own business.

**Filip Kaczmarek (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, the death of innocent people is always a tragedy. If, however, they die in defence of values such as freedom or truth, we can say that their suffering is not in vain – as is the case with the recent victims in Iran. Things have become very bad, when a regime shoots at demonstrators, puts opponents in prison, and tortures and kills them. The only source of hope and optimism is that these events may make politicians and public opinion across the world aware of the true nature of the Iranian regime, which is capable of actions which are very far removed from the minimum standards of the modern world. This regime has blood on its hands. We should remember this, and we should work towards changing a state of affairs which we cannot accept. In situations like this the same question always comes up: what can we do? Well, we can support the demands and proposals which have already been expressed.

Firstly, the Iranian authorities must stop using violence towards those who have a different opinion than the regime. In the case of countries like Iran the observance of basic human rights should be monitored and guaranteed by the international community.

Secondly, a free and fair election should be held in Iran, in which all candidates should be allowed to stand, and not just those who have obtained permission to stand. Incidentally, those who are making these decisions about the right to stand in elections do not themselves have a democratic mandate. The fairness of the election should be verified by independent external observers – otherwise the election will be pointless.

Thirdly, we should do everything to ensure that the solutions for Iran are peaceful and political, and that means that we should support those Iranians who want fundamental changes in their country, changes which will mean that Iran will be governed by those who win fair elections, and Iran itself will cease to be a threat to world security.

The leader of the Iranian opposition in exile, Mrs Rajavi, has said that what has happened in Iran is the beginning of the end of the regime. I sincerely hope that Mrs Rajavi is right.



**Mario Mauro (PPE).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am grateful to the Swedish Presidency for its observations before our debate, which I feel were balanced and also able to make us understand the responsibility that we are being asked to fulfil. I should like, in this sense, to make an observation that stems from my having seen, as so many others have, on television screens everywhere, the crowds that in some way stirred up the protest of the last few days.

However, while it is true that Iran is a theocracy in which fundamentalism has shaped its plan to wield power by pretending that it is in the name of God, in recent days we have also seen people take to the streets and actually cry out ‘God is great’. What a difference! This difference in looks, in the will that these people have expressed, and in the determination not to be violent, makes us realise that, in Iran, the love of freedom and of truth, the love for one’s own people, and the love and regard for everyone is not dead.

Thirty years of theocracy, thirty years of systematic human destruction have not been enough to wipe out this memory that is in the hearts of each of us. It is to this that we owe loyalty. It is to this fact, to this love of truth and to this love of freedom that we owe our unconditional devotion, and it is this that should heighten the responsibility of everyone, because asking the European institutions to be strong, to be determined and to make their voices heard is, first and foremost, not a demand by Parliament for geopolitical prominence, it is pointing out that, insofar as it represents this political project that we call united Europe, the love of freedom and of truth that exists in all of those who demonstrated in recent days must not be forsaken by Europe’s institutions.

**Tunne Kelam (PPE).** – Mr President, a crucial change has taken place in Iran. Our first conclusions, therefore, should be that Iran is not and will not be the same again. It is because millions of Iranians have refused to be hostages of their clerical rulers. They have demonstrated an amazing courage in challenging the dictatorship.

The issue, therefore, is not about rigging so-called elections more than usual. This time, blatantly rigged votes provided an outlet for a popular protest the experts outside Iran could not or were not willing to expect.

This reminds me of the situation 20 years ago in Eastern Europe: while the Western governments were prepared for a long-term accommodation and pragmatic coexistence with the Soviet totalitarian system, suddenly millions of hostages of the Communist regime became active: they challenged the system, which was brought to a sudden end.

Therefore, it is important to realise that the European approach to Iran cannot remain the same – just turning a blind eye to routinely rigged elections and systematic repression. It is estimated that during 30 years of dictatorship more than five million people have been imprisoned, more than 200 000 tortured to death and recently more than 200 killed.

The EU governments have been too hesitant in condemning these atrocious crimes and to make the regime bear responsibility for its behaviour. If we are serious about protecting the rights of Iranian citizens, we need to be prepared to cause the dictators real pain. What does this mean? We should, for example, ban any of the leaders of the regime from travelling to the EU; we should recall our ambassadors from Iran as a gesture of our indignation; and free elections can take place in Iran only under UN supervision.

**Lena Barbara Kolarska-Bobinska (PPE).** – Mr President, as the situation in Iran escalates and the violation of democracy also presents a danger to the stability of the whole region, we have to express our concern and condemnation – but declarations must not only be symbolic and empty. Some European leaders are talking about new sanctions to be imposed on Iran, but a discussion is needed right now on the promotion of democracy at grass-root level in this country.

I am Polish, and we in Eastern Europe know how important these types of actions are for the establishment of democracy. A promotion should be adapted to the political and economic situation in a given country, but previous EU experience in the promotion of democracy in North Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe has to be reviewed and evaluated in order to see what should be done in Iran, what can be done in Iran and what is effective under given circumstances in this country.

I also want to remind you that, if the EU wants to be credible, it also has to undertake some measures in Moldova. Soon we will face a new test – on 29 July – with the elections in Moldova. The EU has to do everything it can to ensure free and fair democratic elections in this country. It is not enough to talk about support for democracy: we in the European Parliament and European institutions have to be more active in that respect.

**Bogusław Sonik (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, it certainly is necessary to monitor the progress of the electoral process in Iran, although the beginning of a solution to the conflict should be a declaration by the authorities in Iran that they will stop using force, and that they will free the imprisoned opposition activists, defenders of human rights, journalists, demonstrators and citizens of other countries who are currently being blamed for the situation which exists in Iran. We should, of course, uphold absolute respect for the sovereignty of Iran, but we should also remind Tehran that it is obliged to observe the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

I would also like to express concern at Iran's nuclear programme. Tehran is entitled to a nuclear programme used for peaceful purposes, but it is also obliged to restore the confidence of the international community that Iranian nuclear activity is exclusively peaceful in nature.

**Maria Eleni Koppa (S&D).** – (EL) Mr President, I should like to express my deep regret about the tragic aircraft accident which occurred today in the province of Qazvin in Iran.

The debate here today is a necessity following the events which ensued after the elections on 12 June. However, I think that we must hold it within the right framework. We must not send out the wrong message. Any direct or indirect link between these events and the question of the nuclear programme is misleading. We must be clear that our subject today is the situation of democracy and human rights in Iran.

Talk about new sanctions will not under any circumstances help to resolve the serious problems of the Iranian people. Democracy cannot be imposed by such means. In the European Union we need to step up efforts for democratisation and respect for fundamental freedoms, but by setting this issue within the framework of a substantial political dialogue and by strengthening our contacts with civil society.

We also need to call for further investigation into complaints of fraud in the election process and to emphasise once again that the right of peaceful protest is an inalienable right of the people of every country.

We must therefore roundly condemn the violence from this tribune here today and call for respect for freedom of speech and expression to be applied in practice in Iran, as in every other country in the world.

**Michael Gahler (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, I think it is good that we are having this debate in the first week of the new Parliament. Unfortunately, our group chairmen have rejected a motion for a resolution. I ask myself who we are actually paying attention to here.

A resolution would have been helpful to the dissidents in Iran if we had confirmed to them in a tangible statement that what was officially described as a presidential election did not in any way meet international standards of democracy because most of the candidates were rejected by the Guardian Council and because even those who were permitted to stand cannot be considered to have been given equal conditions. From a political perspective we can therefore conclude without reservation that the results of the election as announced did not represent the will of the Iranian people.

Let us, as the EU, actively use our instruments for democracy and human rights, support the living civil society or even lawyers like Shirin Ebadi, for example, who is standing up for the Bahai detainees there. I believe this is the policy that can be successful at the moment, even in the short term.

(Applause)

**Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, last week – to my great pleasure as a new Member – in a meeting of the Foreign Policy Committee we heard a talk by Mr Makhmalbaf, an Iranian film director, who told us very plainly that before this election Iran had 20% democracy, but after the election, which in his opinion was a sham, there was absolutely no democracy left.

I also agree with this description – it most certainly was a sham election, which, with large-scale electoral fraud, robbed the majority of Iranian people, who had called for change, of this right. President-in-Office of the Council there is one thing in particular that interests me: in the middle of August the inauguration of the 're-elected' Mr Ahmadinejad will take place. What is currently being discussed in the Council and also in the Member States? Will the European Union and the Member States be officially represented at this inauguration? I certainly hope not, as I do not think that there should be any official representation of the European Union or the Member States after this election sham, and as much as I would advocate further dialogue, no one should officially represent the European Union at this inauguration. What is your position on this? How is it currently being dealt with?

**Pier Antonio Panzeri (S&D).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, when debating foreign policy issues, such as today's issue involving Iran, there is always the risk, as we know, of lagging slightly behind the events taking place. However, there is no doubt that the European Parliament, if it wants to, can play an important role in urging Europe and the international community to take the current events seriously and to implement all of the initiatives needed to ensure that the process of introducing a democratic system in Iran can actually take place.

Following the close attention paid by the international public to the post-election period in Iran and the street demonstrations that the Iranian regime sought to repress with the use of violence, it is important to ensure that silence does not descend on the situation in the country. Being realistic about things does not mean taking the Iran issue off the agenda. It is also up to us to keep this level of attention high, and it is also up to the Swedish Presidency – which I thank for the points it has made today – to promote a strong initiative, together with the United States, Russia and other countries, in order to change the way in which issues in Iran, from democratic rights to the nuclear issue itself, develop.

**Alejo Vidal-Quadras (PPE).** – (ES) Mr President, in the last few weeks we have been moved by the repeated demonstrations of heroism and the bravery of the people of Iran, who have confronted the machine guns and truncheons of their tyrants with their bare hands. The large numbers of women leading the demonstrations is an unmistakable expression of the Iranians' determination to live in a true democracy.

President-in-Office of the Council, the European Union's response has been too weak and too fainthearted. We need to send out a very strong political signal to express our absolute rejection of this intolerable theocratic dictatorship.

The solution has been voiced very well by the leader of the resistance in exile, Massoud Rajavi: the Supreme Leader needs to be deposed, and a temporary assembly of experts needs to call free elections under international supervision. Anything else will be a waste of time and will prolong this disgrace.

**Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE).** – (NL) May I start by warmly welcoming the new President-in-Office of the Council, Mr Bildt. I am aware, of course, that he is about to face a number of very busy months, as the problems of the world are going to be resting, more than anywhere, on his big, broad shoulders.

Mr President, when it comes to Iran I have the following points to make. First of all, the Iranian regime is unpredictable. Secondly, I note that there are, in fact, hairline cracks beginning to appear in the regime, specifically in religious circles. Thirdly, it is my observation that the regime supports everything that is bad or involves corruption in this world – be it in the Middle East or in Pakistan. Fourthly, I would point out that dialogue really does not provide any help and, finally, I note the citizens rightly want more freedom and that they must have our – Europeans' – support in this regard.

I would then like to ask you, Mr Bildt, why has the Council been unable to produce a tougher statement and why have we only listened to a couple of countries that always want to act in defiance of the human rights situation?

**Enrique Guerrero Salom (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, I would of course like to start by condemning the events in Iran and the repression by the Iranian Government, but I want to join with those who have advocated that we should combine pressure from the European institutions with maintaining dialogue and the negotiation process.

History and experience have shown us that breaking off all relations with authoritarian regimes does nothing to improve living conditions for the people who are suffering under such regimes and, at the same time, it weakens the position of those of us who are defending respect for democracy and human rights in such countries.

I therefore think that we should use all the tools that the European Union has to put pressure on the Iranian regime, starting with this Parliament, but at the same time that we should also maintain negotiations and dialogue – dialogue that puts pressure on the regime – especially through the High Representative, Mr Solana.

**Magdi Cristiano Allam (PPE).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Iran today represents the principal threat to international security and stability: on the one hand, by violating the United Nations resolutions it is pursuing its objective of equipping itself with atomic weapons and, on the other, it is repeating its desire to physically destroy the State of Israel.

I hope that Europe, with the Swedish Presidency, can send out a clear message to Iran in general, indicating that the non-negotiable values of the right to life, human dignity and the freedom of choice cannot be separated from the development of bilateral relations and that, in particular, it can make it clear that the State of Israel's right to exist is non-negotiable and that Europe, which has lived through the Holocaust on its own territory, will not allow a second holocaust of the State and the people of Israel.

**Philippe Juvin (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, I wish to take the floor to call on our Parliament to declare itself clearly in favour of financial and technical sanctions against Iran.

Of course, there are a great many arguments against sanctions, since they will have consequences for the lives of Iranian citizens. However, the worst thing for Iranian citizens, Mr President, would not be the shortages caused by these sanctions; the worst thing would be our silence, our failure to act. Sanctions, Mr President, would show that we are not indifferent, and I believe that that is crucial.

That is why, Mr President, our Parliament must demand financial sanctions against Iran.

**Charles Tannock (ECR).** – Mr President, the appalling Iranian theocratic dictatorship is already guilty of many crimes against its own people: from hanging Baha'is to hanging homosexuals and now apparently hanging 50 innocent protestors. So we should hardly be surprised by the mere stealing of an election through wholesale electoral fraud. I believe this crack in the regime and the courage of its protesting youth – whom I salute – will eventually bring the whole rotten government down.

Mr Howitt recently, in another meeting, suggested that we should have sent EU electoral observers from this House to confirm whether fraud had actually taken place. No, we must never legitimise any sham election which restricts candidates on the basis of their religious purity and conducts its count behind closed doors.

**Carl Bildt, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Mr President, I have listened very attentively to the different assessments and views expressed. This is, as has been pointed out, a most important debate on a most important subject.

I think it can fairly be said that we stand united in our assessment of what has been happening, what we have seen on the television screens and, more importantly, what we have heard from the people who know even more than what can be seen on the television screens.

I would like to take issue with someone who said we have not been clear enough. If you make a comparison with what the European Union has said, and what every other significant world body of actors has said, there is no question that we are the ones that have been the most clear, the most consistent, the strongest in the words that we have used.

We would have wished those words to have more of an effect than they already have, but that is often the case. But, while words are, nevertheless, important – no question about that – we are discussing primarily what has been happening in Iran since the election on 12 June.

I think it is important also to focus on what we saw on the television screens before 12 June, because that was suddenly a somewhat different Iran from the one we were used to. There was an element within the boundaries of the regime, certainly, of vitality, an element of plurality, an obvious desire for change, for openness, for reform. Whether that represented the majority of Iranians or not is very difficult to judge from the outside, but that it was significant is testified not least by the force of the crackdown that we saw after 12 June. So in condemning what we have seen after, we should not forget what we saw before and the long-term significance of that.

I think we are united in what we say and what we think. Mr Saryusz-Wolski, Mr Cohn-Bendit and Mr Mauro: virtually the same, if we look at what we are assessing. But the most difficult thing is not what we say; the most difficult thing is what we do faced with this situation. I think we must then operate along two lines.

The first one is fairly obvious. The European Union must be the clear voice for human rights and democracy wherever and under whatever circumstances. There might be other factors coming into consideration of policy as well, but it should not dilute in any way from the consistency of our defence for human rights. So we must condemn the killings, the use of the death sentence. We must call for the release of those detained. We must be clear in our call for full respect for the freedom and the rights that are there for every human being in our world.

Secondly – and I think here there might be some dissent – we must also be prepared to engage. I say that, recognising that that is a far more difficult policy than just to stand back, do nothing or try to isolate: that is easy; to engage is difficult. Mr Kelam alluded to some of the historical experience we have, with the balancing act that that entails. But the fact that we have a certain amount of historical experience in Europe – reflected not the least here – perhaps makes it possible for us to venture along that particular road.

We should never believe that just a diplomatic dialogue can sort out every issue that has been addressed here: it cannot. Other factors will come in to that particular equation. But neither should we forget that there are some issues that we have a duty to seek to resolve through diplomatic dialogue. I am thinking of the individuals employed at the British Embassy, or the French student and others, that we must deal with now in a dialogue.

I come from a country where 1% of our citizens have a background in Iran. They move back and forth. We have consular issues that are of a multitude that is difficult to fathom. We need to be prepared to engage, to help individuals in different cases, without believing that that is going to sort out everything at once.

We have the nuclear dossier that has been alluded to. There might be others who believe there are far more simple solutions to that. I do not think there is any solution if we do not engage in a true diplomatic dialogue on that. Those are other issues that we need to engage on.

This is obviously going to be more demanding and more difficult in the circumstances that we now have, there is no question about that, and I think the discussion in the Committee on Foreign Affairs last week highlighted some of the difficult choices and some of the difficult judgements that we have to make in not only the coming weeks, but months – but not very much longer than that. Here we must engage – you, us in the Council and us as Europeans – with other significant international actors, not only with Americans with a new and good approach by the Obama Administration, but also engage with others – the UN Security Council, Russia, China, and with the wider world community. It is only then that we can hope to be able to start resolving not only the immediate issues, but also the other issues that need to be addressed.

I am grateful for this debate. I think it has highlighted the clear unanimity that we have when it comes to defending our values, but it has also highlighted some of the difficult choices and balancing acts that we have to engage in in the months and years ahead. We know what we want to achieve; we must also seek to achieve it. But do not think it is going to be easy. I can assure you that the Council will continue to be very much engaged with all aspects of this particular dossier.

*(Applause)*

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR LAMBRINIDIS

*Vice-President*

**Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Mr President, please excuse me, but I have just been given a piece of information, and I should like to share it with the Council and with all my fellow Members.

Natalia Estemirova, who was a candidate for the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize, was kidnapped this morning in Grozny and is being held by unknown kidnappers. I call on the Council, the Commission and the MEPs to protest so that Moscow is aware that we are thinking of Natalia Estemirova.

**President.** - The debate is closed.

**Richard Howitt (S&D).** - Mr President, this is just to put the record straight, as my name was cited by my colleague, Mr Tannock.

I did not call for EU observers last week and, indeed, earlier in the debate I was very clear in saying that, should the circumstances have justified it, the European Union would have been able to send an observer mission to the Iranian elections. However, it was precisely because the Commission did not have the confidence to do this that causes us proper, justified and objective concerns about the conduct of those elections.

I am sorry that Mr Tannock was not in the Chamber to hear that earlier in the debate, and I hope that I have been able to put the record straight.

**President.** - The debate is closed.

## 9. China (debate)

**President.** - The next item is the Council and Commission statements on China.

**Carl Bildt, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Mr President, another debate of, needless to say, some importance. And, although the subject is China, it of course takes place against the background of some significant developments in Xinjiang in the western part of China. I know that these events have been followed by many Members of this Parliament as well as our respective national parliaments throughout Europe.

We have also, as a Council, expressed our concern over the reports on the unrest there and called for restraint on all sides and for the situation to be resolved peacefully. I think it is time for us to say that we attach great importance to human rights. We also profoundly regret not only the loss of life but the destruction of property and everything else that we have seen happening and we can only condemn those that are responsible for it, whoever they are.

But let me also take this opportunity to take stock somewhat more widely of our relationship with China, a country with which we have an extraordinary range of complex relationships. In fact, when we decided in 2003 to set up those relationships within the framework of a comprehensive strategic partnership, we were committing ourselves to an extremely ambitious enterprise, and this is very much reflected in the broad and wide-ranging relationship which we have with China today.

Complexity of course brings opportunities. It also brings challenges of different sorts. What we have tried to do with this relationship is to open it up to the point where we can discuss frankly and openly any concern that we might have on either side. The basis for such an open dialogue is the shared interest that we have in developing our relationship, our shared interest in global peace and stability.

We pursue this through dialogue and through multilateralism. We have the annual summit meetings and we have fairly frequent meetings at the level of foreign ministers. We also have an intense biannual human rights dialogue and then of course sectoral dialogues on different issues, trade obviously being one of particular importance. We also have the annual high-level dialogue on trade and economic issues. As you are aware, in 2007 we also launched negotiations for a partnership and cooperation agreement. Negotiations are progressing but still there is a potential to increase efforts on both sides in these negotiations.

We have a very clear interest in developing the relationship with China in all fields, and that entails, as I said, the possibility for an open and frank dialogue, also on issues where our values might be different, and we know that such issues exist, including human rights, including issues like the use of the death sentence; but also to pursue the common interest that, needless to say, we have these days: issues of global financial stability, issues of how to deal with the climate change challenge are important.

Also important are foreign policy issues, be that the situation we face over the Korean peninsula with the provocation by the DPIK, or the situation in Burma, where we are concerned, obviously, at what we see happening, but our concern also stretches to the situation in Africa and the need to protect the vital sea routes around the Horn of Africa.

I will not go further into this question now, but wish only to underline the concern that we have over developments, without being able to assess those in every single detail because they are exceedingly complex, our hope that they could be resolved peacefully and our readiness to engage with the Chinese authorities in a frank dialogue on these issues, as well as on the broad range of other interests that we share together and that we need to have a dialogue on.

**Catherine Ashton, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, it is a sign of the importance that this House attaches to our strategic relationship with China that this debate has been scheduled during your inaugural session. I yet again welcome the opportunity to contribute with a brief outline of the perspective of the Commission on behalf of my colleague Benita Ferrero-Waldner, who, I have indicated, is unfortunately travelling this week and cannot be here.

I do not need to remind this House of the huge progress we have made in relations with China since our first summit, now 10 years ago. Economic and trade relations have been transformed, people-to-people contacts are multiplying and we are engaged in dialogue on an ever-increasing range of issues.

Following the last EU-China Summit in May, negotiations on a new partnership and cooperation agreement are proceeding well and we are able to take advantage of a growing number of high-level contacts, including

Prime Minister Wen's highly successful visit to President Barroso earlier this year and the meeting of the high-level economic and trade dialogue which I co-chaired with Vice-Premier Wang Qishan.

Today we are naturally focused on global challenges, including the economic and financial crisis and climate change, as well as regional issues. At the same time, we have strong interests in the situation inside China, where we witness many spectacular achievements but also developments that cause concern. China's policy of opening up its economy has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty and helped the world progress towards the important Millennium Development Goals. Yet China is a huge country with considerable internal challenges and differences between its regions.

The strength of our strategic partnership also allows for constructive and open exchange of views on issues where Europe and China diverge. This can be on aspects of our trade relationship or human rights – for example over Tibet, which I know is of particular interest in this House. Recently we expressed strong concern over the unrest in Xinjiang, deplored the loss of life, and expressed our condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims. We have called on all parties to show restraint and bring an immediate end to all acts of violence. We hope the situation can be resolved peacefully through dialogue without further bloodshed.

The EU has tried, over the years, to convey to the Chinese authorities its worries over the situation of ethnic minorities in China and to share its own experience, many times painful, on how to address the causes of marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination that those minorities often face.

We all share the goal of a more open, transparent China adhering to international standards on human rights and working together to address global challenges. To achieve this, we must continue to integrate China deeper into the international community and work on the development of our strategic partnership in the spirit of constructive engagement.

**Elmar Brok**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I agree with the basic substance of what was said by the previous speakers from the Council and Commission. I too am of the opinion that we should continue the One China policy to achieve the cohesion of China as a unified state, and that we do not want to jeopardise any of this. Of course, we do not permit violence – be it violence by demonstrators under particular circumstances or violence by the state against demonstrators, as was actually the case. I wanted to mention this first.

However, we also need to understand that, in China, the violence of the central government which, in this multi-ethnic state with many cultural differences, does not show a sufficient degree of understanding, will always be a recurring problem. This is why greater cultural autonomy, greater opportunities for mobility and opportunities relating to the preservation of identity and language are all prerequisites for all the citizens of a multi-ethnic state to be able to live together under one roof.

China's history has consisted of a series of break-aways and reunifications with massive campaigns of violence. This can be seen again and again throughout China's history. China needs to realise that this cannot go on and that it needs to introduce this autonomy.

The Uighurs are a moderate Sunni minority. They pose no direct terrorist threat. There is therefore the same danger as we see in Tibet and that is that if China does not enter into agreements with the moderates, there are always young radicals who cannot and do not want to wait any longer. Therefore, delaying a solution with regard to identity delays a solution in the long term. The Chinese Government is extremely ill advised to talk only of terrorists, to claim that these people want to destroy the unity of the state and to say that outside forces like Al-Qaeda and others are behind this. I do not believe that this is a solution for this country and therefore we should make it clear that we do not accept such a policy. All this should be understood under the premise that I mentioned at the beginning of my speech.

**Adrian Severin**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, the Chinese people are completely right to ask us why the European Parliament has put the situation in China on the agenda of the first part-session of its new mandate.

Our answer must be clear: this is because China is very important to us and not because we think that our role is to teach China or to impose our views on how sensitive internal problems of this country should be solved. It is precisely because China is so important to us that we should pay close attention to any event affecting its internal stability and any event that could become a threat to its security.

This time the context was given by the multi-ethnic realities in the Xinjiang region and the aspirations of the Uighur predominant ethnic group to autonomy. Such contexts are always sensitive and, therefore, respect

for human and minority rights leading towards the sense of dignity and security for both minority and majority is important.

Minority rights, however, should not be an excuse for, and they could not excuse, the separatist policies, the extremist means to promote those policies and certainly not the killing of peaceful civilians belonging to a minority or to an ethnic community.

While asking for full respect for human rights and minority rights, while expressing compassion for all victims of these rights, while asking for clarification concerning terrorist, religious, extremist and separatist dimensions of these events, the European Parliament should offer its assistance to the Chinese Government and society in order to cope with these difficult realities, which are also a problem in some of our countries. While asking the Chinese Government to refrain from the excessive use of power, we have also to ask everybody in the world to refrain from using minority rights as a means for promoting geopolitical goals.

**Graham Watson**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, this House has long been critical of the People's Republic of China for its treatment of ethnic minorities. The Uighurs of Xinjiang Province have suffered more than most, particularly since the occupation of East Turkestan by the People's Republic of China in 1949.

The People's Republic claims that it does not seek territorial expansion. History shows that in East Turkestan, Tibet and Taiwan, under Communist rule it has sought to rule and to subjugate. That is the reason why the European Union must not lift the arms embargo on China.

For a European Prime Minister to refer to the reaction to the latest unrest as 'genocide' is perhaps an exaggeration, but for the People's Republic to complain of interference in internal affairs betrays a world view which is touchingly antiquated. If the contours of the world economy are drawn in the computer campuses of West Coast America, in the call centres of India, in the factories of China, if major decisions can be communicated from Beijing to Brussels in a nanosecond, we have become truly one global community, and there is no room in this community for repression or subjugation on the basis of race or religion or ethnicity; no room for Islamophobia or for anti-Semitism or any other kind of hatred.

China's problems stem in this instance from the greying of the middle kingdom. They need more young people to work elsewhere, similar to the problems we face here in the European Union. I saw this when I visited Urumqi four years ago. But the People's Republic will find that it needs policies to protect economic migrants, policies to recognise the legitimate demands of ethnic minorities, just as we do.

Here, Mr Bildt, is a role for the European Union. We know that as democracies mature, so they become more willing to allow people self-government and self-determination. Indeed, the biggest problems in Europe are found in the younger democracies, like Spain and Hungary. We need to help the Chinese people, who are quite capable of living in democracy – as Taiwan and Hong Kong show – to match their growing economic strength with a growing political maturity in developing democracy and help them develop the policies to match, policies like Erasmus Mundus, policies of which the Commissioner has spoken to increase people-to-people exchange. I am convinced that the European Union can play an important role in working with China to these ends.

**Helga Trüpel**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, President-in-Office of the Council, I condemn the violence on both sides, both on the part of the Han Chinese and on the part of the Uighurs, and I mourn for all the innocent victims.

However, this is not a conflict where the two sides are equal. The Uighurs are a suppressed people numbering only nine million. I believe that the minorities policy in the People's Republic of China has failed. The society is also not harmonious as the Communist Party of China claims. In Xinjiang, the region of the Uighurs, there is just as little cultural autonomy as in Tibet. There is no real self-government, even if these regions are referred to as being autonomous and above all – and this is crucial for the younger generation in particular – the Uighurs do not have the same social and economic rights as the rest of the population. However, the Communist Party of China recognises only one charge, only one monotonously repeated charge, and that is of criminal separatism. Anyone who promotes human rights and democracy in China runs the risk of being declared a criminal and a separatist.

However, the People's Republic of China needs to understand that it is only with the guarantee of minority rights that there will be any real chance of internal peace. Only by granting equal rights will China have peaceful internal development and acceptance of this country.



I have one last very important comment to make to the Swedish Presidency. Yes, it is true that we have an interest in a strategic partnership with China on account of climate policy and general foreign policy matters. However, we cannot sacrifice human rights and our criticism of the situation regarding human rights in China for the sake of a strategic interest. Our strategic policy with regard to China must instead include a clear statement regarding the minorities policy and the violation of human rights in China.

**Charles Tannock, on behalf of the ECR Group.** – Mr President, for centuries the Uighurs have eked out a perilous living in an inhospitable part of a vast country. Most of them are peaceful followers of Islam. However, sadly some of the local population in recent years have become increasingly radicalised by terrorists in league with Al-Qaida. China has never been tolerant of dissent or its own minorities, but I do share its concern about the threat of Uighur Islamist terrorism. I actually helped convince the Council to ban the Uighur East Turkestan Liberation Front three years ago.

China's authoritarianism and Han dominance must not be used as an excuse by Uighur terrorists, some of whom are found as far afield as Guantánamo Bay, to spread fear and violence, as most victims of the recent violence were in fact Han Chinese.

Many of us are naturally concerned about human rights in China and I am also committed as a friend of Taiwan. However, the EU remains wedded to a one-China policy and, given that the EU officially considers Taiwan and Tibet part of the People's Republic of China, we should certainly not support in any way the secession of Xinjiang province.

One interesting aspect of this issue is whether this controversy will cause China's Muslim partners in Africa like Sudan to reassess their links to the country.

Finally, I note that Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan has labelled this violence as a genocide: a bit rich coming from him when his own country fails to recognise the Armenian genocide. His efforts to appeal to pan-Turkic nationalism are also hypocritical, given Turkey's treatment of its own minorities and in particular the Kurds in eastern Turkey.

**Bastiaan Belder, on behalf of the EFD Group.** – (NL) The call to jihad has already gone out both inside and outside Xinjiang, and now the bloody clashes between Han Chinese and Uighurs on Chinese territory threaten to escalate dramatically, both in China and beyond. The local Christian community is straining absolutely every sinew against the dangerous religious dimension of the ethnic divisions in Xinjiang. The community prays specifically for peace, stability and justice for all the citizens of Xinjiang.

Irrationally enough, the Chinese Government does not take hold of this helping hand, but strikes it down repressively. This can be seen from a blatant campaign by government agencies against peaceful protestant house churches of late. Thus, on 3 July, eight Christians were arrested in Xinjiang during a service. Four of them are still being held in a secret location, while two Chinese-American missionaries have simply gone missing.

I ask the Council and the Commission to intervene with the Chinese authorities as a matter of urgency in order to ensure freedom of religious practice for all in this critical situation in Xinjiang. This would be the only effective antidote to the call to jihad and would also provide proof to Chinese house churches that they are part of Beijing's plans to create a harmonious society.

**Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE).** - Mr President, 'violence', 'a high number of casualties', 'hundreds dead and wounded in China in the uprising in Xinjiang province': those were the alarming reports we received 10 days ago. In Xinjiang, the internet was blocked completely, limiting communications into and out of the desert region. Taking into account what happened in Tibet last year, recent developments in Eastern Turkestan, also known as Xinjiang, should be a wake-up call to the Chinese Government on its overall policies towards ethnic minorities in China.

The message sent by the Uighur people is that those policies have failed and that the Chinese Government has to understand this and look for the solution. The eight-million-strong Uighur population in the region has long complained about the treatment they receive from the Chinese Central Government and recently during the racist mob attacks the Chinese Government failed to protect the Uighurs from perpetrators of violence. It has nothing to do with the war on terror, the controversial concept used by the Chinese Government as a justification for their repressive treatment of the Uighurs in East Turkestan.

The fact that President Hu Jintao had to shorten his participation in the G8 Summit in Italy to return to China indicates that the Chinese Government realises that events in the province are not just an isolated incident.

Rather than seeking solutions through repression and crackdown, the Chinese leadership needs positive action addressing the basic grievances of the Uighur people, especially if China wants to show maturity and create a sincerely harmonious society.

I fully support the EU position expressed by the President-in-Office to urge restraint on all sides and call on the Government of China to respect freedom of speech and information, as well as the right to peaceful protest.

**Véronique De Keyser (S&D).** – (FR) Mr President, the outbreak of violence in the autonomous region of Xinjiang is being severely repressed by the Chinese Government. The clashes between Uighurs and Hans have taken the official death toll to 186, but the bloodshed continues.

This violence is being presented by China as a mere interethnic conflict between Hans and Uighurs, when it is in fact the almost inevitable result of its repressive policy in the Xinjiang region. The region is strategic but difficult to control. As a key transit route and with its wealth of natural resources – gold, oil and gas – it is crucial to the future of China's energy supply. However, its population includes many non-Chinese ethnic groups, the largest of which is the Uighurs. The latter, which make up almost half of the population, are for the most part Sunni Muslims of Turkish-speaking origin. For a decade, they have been systematically discriminated against and threatened with assimilation and death, and their identity is in danger.

In fact, China's policy towards these ethnic minorities was liberal in the 1980s but it has gradually become tougher, and the Chinese authorities seized upon 11 September 2001 in order to publicise their fight against – and note how they are all merged – terrorism, separatism and religious extremism. In April 2009 Amnesty International issued a stark warning: after Tibet, there will be Xinjiang. The policy of non-violence having failed, the Uighur separatists would seek other ways of having their demands for recognition of their identity met, and this has indeed happened.

However, China cannot continue to maintain its cohesion through repeated acts of bloodshed. As a signatory to international agreements, it is bound to protect its ethnic minorities. Moreover, its constitution, together with its 1984 law on regional autonomy, also oblige it to protect these minorities. Is Europe going to continue to shut its eyes and merely condemn the repression and unsuccessfully beg for the release of the political prisoners? No. Human rights in China are a political problem, and we must dare to remind that country of its commitments to its people and of the risk that it would run with regard to the international community should it fail to fulfil them. We shall expect strong action from the Swedish Presidency in this regard.

**Tomasz Piotr Poręba (ECR).** – (PL) Mr President, the way in which protests have been dealt with in Xinjiang province has provided further confirmation of the authoritarian nature of the Communist authorities in Beijing. At least 180 people are now dead and 1 600 injured as a result of the most significant ethnic conflict to take place in China in recent decades. The European Parliament is duty bound to condemn violence arising from discrimination on ethnic or religious grounds. Such should also be our response in this case, when the might of an authoritarian state has been unleashed against the Uighur minority. The latter is not the only victim of totalitarian governments, however.

The citizens of a Europe based on Christian values have a special duty towards Christian minorities that are persecuted in other parts of the world. Unofficial sources indicate that where China is concerned, this minority consists of over 30 million people. This means that the representatives of a population the same size as that of a large European country are being harassed, persecuted, prevented from seeking employment, tortured and murdered by the Chinese Communist authorities. The Chinese regime is aware that a longing for freedom and the rule of law are concomitant with Christianity, and that is why it is trying to halt the spread of that religion. Its attempts to overcome the Church are proving unsuccessful, however, as the number of believers is steadily increasing year on year.

The Chinese authorities have to understand that the so-called Central State cannot become a truly modern state unless and until it begins to respect the fundamental principles of democracy and freedom of religion.

**Bernd Posselt (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, today's debate proves once again that the Council is the weak point of the EU. This House has adopted a very clear position on human rights and Lady Ashton has given an impressively clear speech on behalf of the Commission. However, from the Council I have heard only that they condemn both sides for the violence.

Of course violence by the Uighurs should be condemned too. But can we really compare it to what a communist dictatorship that has learnt nothing from the massacre in Tiananmen Square is doing in

suppressing an entire people in a brutal and bloody fashion and threatening this people with ethnocide by means of a targeted settlement policy? Can we compare this to incidents which are quite simply an expression of Chinese propaganda and which are not being investigated by anyone at an international level? I do not think so.

The Uighurs are currently being accused of separatism. However, is it separatism if a house is on fire and I try to escape from this house? Is it separatism if I am wrongfully imprisoned and I try to escape? That is not separatism, that is an expression of the will to live. If the Uighurs in China were given space to live in their homeland in freedom and with dignity and independence there would be no more separatism. That is the only way to prevent separatism.

The Uighurs are not a minority, they are a people just like the Swedes, who happen to be smaller in number than the Han Chinese. However, is a people in the wrong simply because it is smaller in number? Do we have to bow to a power simply because it is larger? I do not think so. We, as the European Union, therefore have an important obligation.

I represent Munich, and the headquarters of the World Uighur Congress is in Munich. Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe were also previously based in Munich. We are still proud to have been the voice of freedom at that time. I am sure that one day we will be just as proud to have been the centre for the free Uighurs and I hope that one day all Uighurs will enjoy this freedom.

**Evelyne Gebhardt (S&D).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, one thing needs to be stated very clearly: there is a unified system in China and we do not want to allow this system to break up. We respect the Chinese system. However, that does not mean ...

*(Interruption by Mr Posselt)*

We respect China's unified system. However, that does not mean that the diversity of peoples in China must not also be respected. That is what we Social Democrats are calling for.

We want citizens' rights, human rights and people's freedom to be respected in China. We want freedom of expression to be respected. We want journalists to be able to move around freely so that the situation as it really is can indeed be reported. That is what we want and there is one thing that we would say very clearly to our colleagues in China: what for us is a basic principle we would also expect to be a basic principle for you in China, namely that human rights are universal. What the politicians always say to us – let us first solve the social problems and then we can talk about human rights – is the wrong way to go about things. It must be the other way round. Human rights come first and then social rights, which are quite simply part and parcel of human rights and cannot be separated from them.

I was therefore very disappointed by what you said, Mr Bildt. You seemed to be saying: let us work together on an economic level, that is our main concern and all of the other things are of no particular interest to us. That is not the approach that we need. We need to take the approach presented to us by the European Commission, namely to say that we first want a common basis for our work on which we can then build our cooperation, because we do want cooperation, that much is clear, but not on any basis, only on a correct basis that respects human dignity.

**Nirj Deva (ECR).** – Mr President, may I congratulate Mr Bildt on a very balanced speech just now. I believe in the borders of the nation state as recognised by the United Nations and so oppose separatist-related violence everywhere in the world, be it in Kashmir, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, where I was born, Northern Ireland, where I got bombed, Spain or even in China.

I regret that in China, a country very important for the EU, some 1 680 people have been injured and 184 killed. The problem started in a toy factory in Guangdong and spread. Among those killed in the riots in Urumqi were 137 Han Chinese and 46 Uighur Chinese. This is deplorable. We must condemn it.

If these acts were encouraged and perpetrated by outside forces, particularly separatist fundamentalist forces, then they should be indicted in the International Criminal Court.

If they were home-grown, then it is a matter for the police in China and we must support them. We live in a small world. We must live together. The EU is a clear example of this. Supporting separatism anywhere in the world is against the spirit of the EU. We cannot work to unite Europe at home and encourage the break-up of China abroad. That is the road to chaos and conflict.

**Csaba Sógor (PPE).** – (HU) The question is where do we stand on this issue? Are we on the side of China or Tiananmen Square? Are we on the side of China or Tibet? Are we on the side of China or the Uighur region? Are we on the side of 1.2 billion Chinese or 8 million Uighurs? Are we on the side of repression, the introduction of an alien way of life, a comfortable life, good health and money, or of a peasant, nomad past, which admittedly entails poverty and widespread disease, but preserves one's own culture, and of freedom? The speeches made by one or two of my fellow Members echo the language of the dictatorship of the former Eastern European regimes. Can a mother of 11 really be a terrorist? A woman who served time in prison, and two of whose children are still in prison? Where do we stand then? That is the question. Are we on the side of token autonomy or real autonomy? Are we on the side of repression, an alien way of life, the exploitation of the Uighur region's natural assets, or of the preservation of cultures, freedom and peoples' right of self-determination? It is obvious to me whose side I am on. I hope that it is clear to my fellow Members too. We must make friends with China so that it can learn from us. However, we must do this by showing an example in the areas of human rights, freedoms, self-determination and autonomy. We still have a huge amount of work to do. On this point, I am thinking about the countries which have recently joined.

**Emine Bozkurt (S&D).** – (NL) I have listened to the introductions from both the Council and the Commission and maybe it is to do with the interpreting, but I have not heard the word Uighurs once, and it is, of course, the Uighurs that we are discussing today. There are hundreds of dead whose passing we regret, and many more wounded besides.

The European Union stands firmly for fundamental rights, human rights, civil rights and peaceful demonstration. We are seeing all of these seriously repressed. Needless to say, I heard in the introductions about the need for dialogue. That need is something that I, too, very much want to stress. That dialogue is tremendously important. I would really like to find out from the Council and the Commission, however, what tangible measures they are going to put in place in the short term.

**Reinhard Bütikofer (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Mr President, we are having this debate on the basis of the universal nature of human rights, but also on the basis of the need for a global partnership. A harmonious society has been mentioned. That is one of the slogans of the Communist Party of China, but it is also something more: it reflects a deep hope of the Chinese people. A harmonious society is not simply the same as masking authoritarian relations. I believe it could be our job to support the Chinese people in their realisation of a harmonious society.

A partnership involves speaking out clearly. When we talk about Xinjiang the word 'Uighurs' should also be mentioned. However, clear speaking is not the same as being confrontational – we should avoid that.

I would like to say one last thing to Mr Posselt. He spoke of separatism. Now, I know Mr Posselt that your Bavarian party knows something about this, but I think that we should instead follow Mr Brok and talk about continuing with the One China policy.

**Struan Stevenson (ECR).** – Mr President, it would be a great mistake to place China in the same category in this debate today as we discussed Iran. The EU enjoys a very good relationship with China and I think we have to take care that our discussions on the recent events in Urumqi are accurate and based on fact.

The incident that took place on 5 July involved a premeditated attack on the Han Chinese population of that city by the Uighurs. As we know, certain militants among the Uighur population of Xinjiang are Islamic fundamentalists who demand a separate state. They mounted a violent attack that led to the deaths of 137 Han Chinese. So the vast majority of those killed were Han Chinese. The Chinese Government quite properly deployed police and military personnel to quell the violence and stop the retaliatory attacks by the Han population on the Uighurs. What else would anyone expect them to do? So let us base our criticism on facts and not take unfair records against the Chinese.

**Sabine Lösing (GUE/NGL).** – (DE) Mr President, I think that this conflict is very often presented in a very one-sided manner. I agree with the previous speaker that in the present case it is frequently a matter of attacks on Han Chinese by Uighurs and indeed that some of these attacks are racially motivated.

(Heckling)

I read an interview with a Uighur woman, for example, who said: Would you like to be governed by yellow communists? The Uighurs enjoy many privileges in their region, for example they are allowed to have more children, they are allowed to practice their religion even during working hours and there are many other examples. Many of the local Han Chinese are also envious of them.

We ought therefore to be very discriminating in our observation of this situation and investigate the causes and effects. Sometimes problems do not lie where they seem to at first glance. We should be careful not to take a one-sided position.

We ought to support the Chinese in solving their problems. The one-sided view that is so often presented in this House is, in my opinion, dangerous. The Chinese Government certainly has shortcomings in its policy towards minority groups and it has its failures too. However, it is also showing the will to improve in many areas. We should therefore help it in this regard through cooperation – and indeed also critical cooperation – based on trust.

**Carl Bildt**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, I think this debate has really reflected the complexities of the issues that we face. What has been addressed here are issues ranging from the different system that China has and the evolution of that particular system, the importance that we attach to human rights and the need to help China develop in the direction of a more open society, better respecting those human rights, as well as the problems attached to minority rights, problems that are there in China.

But China is unfortunately not unique in the world in facing these issues and the violence, the ethnic violence, that has been seen in the last few days on the streets of Urumqi. Ethnic violence is always evil. It should be condemned and we can only support those who try to bring reconciliation in this particular situation based on respect for human rights, knowing from our own history the complexity of those issues.

Mr Bütikofer referred to the concept of a harmonious society. We all want to develop and live in harmonious societies and clearly we need to see what we can do in order to help China develop in the direction of a society that is seen as harmonious by each and every one of the citizens of China. They are not there yet. Few societies as a matter of fact are, but it has been fairly obvious. Otherwise let me note that in the initial statements from Mr Brok, Mr Severin and Mr Watson, I found lots of wisdom that could guide our further deliberations as we move on with the important relationship that we seek with China, understanding the complexity of that relationship in all its dimensions.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

*Vice-President*

**President.** – The debate is closed.

*Written statements (Rule 149)*

**Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Conflict resolution for millions of Uighurs in China – dialogue not condemnation. We lament the bloody clashes, the dead and wounded in Xinjiang-Uighur. The actions of the police and security forces were excessive and harm the Chinese Government's goals of growth and stability. At the same time it is wrong to accuse China of cultural genocide. The Government is striving to obtain a balance between the autonomy of minority groups and modernisation in a multi-ethnic state. It is also up to us as a partner to support China's development in terms of democracy and the rule of law, without neglecting the special historical, geographic and cultural aspects of this state. Biased information will prevent dialogue, and it will not compensate for a policy with an inadequate guarantee of human rights. China is an important partner for Europe, alongside the US and Russia. Combating the financial crisis, fighting poverty, stopping climate change, providing energy security and guaranteeing the water supply – none of these things can be achieved without the efforts of the People's Republic of China. The majority of Uighurs are dismayed over the events of the past week and above all want to live in peace once again. The Chinese Government knows that this conflict cannot be solved with violence. We can support the dialogue between the Han Chinese and the Uighurs and other minority groups instead of continuing our decade-long interference from the outside with our inapt methods. Establishing a structured dialogue aimed at developing the rule of law in China is a more important task for the European Parliament.

#### 10. Honduras (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on the situation in Honduras.

**Carl Bildt**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, the world is a big place. I am grateful for this opportunity to focus somewhat on the situation in Honduras and the seriousness of the developments that we see there, not only for Honduras but for the entire region. I will try to be reasonably brief.

Since the beginning of this particular crisis last month, the Presidency has condemned the military action that was directed against President Zelaya, who was democratically elected, in spite of everything else that can be said. That action was in violation of the constitutional order of Honduras.

We have called for the restoration of this constitutional order, in full, and urged all parties and institutions to refrain from violence or talks about violence and to strive to find a swift and peaceful solution.

I think in much the same way as we expect, when we have problems in different parts of Europe, that it is the European Union that should take the lead and we would hope that the rest of the world would support our efforts, our policy has now been guided by giving support to the Organisation of American States in their efforts to find a solution through dialogue and compromise to the problems that they are facing.

We have a situation where none of our ambassadors at the moment are present in Honduras. We do not have any diplomatic contacts at the moment either.

We very much welcome the recent effort by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, to try to reconcile the differences that exist. So far that has proved to be – hardly surprising, one might say – a somewhat difficult enterprise. But I am encouraged by the news that there will be new meetings under the chairmanship of President Arias this Saturday. We can only encourage him to move forward with those efforts and we can only continue to urge both sides to be ready to compromise, fully respecting every part of the constitution of Honduras.

Let me conclude by underlining the importance that we attach, beyond the immediate crisis, to the holding of fair, timely and transparent presidential elections in Honduras later this year. The rule of law and respect for human rights must remain the cornerstone of democratic government throughout the world; Central America, Latin America, all of America are certainly not excluded.

**Catherine Ashton**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, again I am pleased to contribute briefly to this debate on behalf of my colleague, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, as we look at the political crisis in Honduras.

After many years, Latin America is again experiencing an institutional rupture. The crisis in Honduras shows us how fragile is the rule of law and the institutional framework for the resolution of conflicts in some Latin American countries and, indeed, how these countries can plunge into crisis, especially now that they are going through a period of strong political polarisation.

The Commission reacted promptly. We expressed our deep concern about the events in Honduras and we stressed the great importance we attach to the respect for the rule of law, democracy and democratically elected institutions. We have urged all parties involved to resolve their differences peacefully in full respect of the country's legal framework and to promptly engage in a dialogue in the interests of peace and stability in the country.

We deplored the violent confrontations, even more so as they have resulted in the loss of human lives, and we called upon all parties involved to show the utmost moderation and restraint. The Commission declared it would be ready to support all initiatives aimed at a peaceful solution of the crisis and at restoring the constitutional order.

As the Presidency has said, we supported the initiative by the Organisation of American States and its Secretary-General, Mr Insulza, which unfortunately did not bear fruit. We strongly welcomed the mediation efforts of the Costa Rican President and trust that they will result in a peaceful settlement of the crisis.

Following the events in Honduras and after consulting the Central American governments and EU Member States, it was decided to postpone the next round of negotiations with a view to an association agreement with Central America, negotiations that were due between 6 and 10 July in Brussels. But we trust that these negotiations can resume as soon as possible.

Again, as the Presidency has said, in response to the gravity of the situation the local ambassador of the EU Presidency has been recalled for consultations and all other EU ambassadors have also left the country.

In close cooperation with the Presidency and the Member States, we continue to explore the ways in which we can best contribute to the solution of this crisis. For the time being, suspending our cooperation has not been decided, but disbursement of our financial commitments related to budgetary support has been put on hold.

We are very much aware that the events in Honduras could create a dangerous precedent, a step back in terms of democracy, and could destabilise the region. Therefore, we continue to follow the situation closely and we support all efforts to find a peaceful solution. We will continue to keep Parliament informed about any further development.

**José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (ES) Mr President, the fact that an elected President has been removed from his home *manu militari*, put on a plane and dropped in a foreign country is something that should, from a democratic point of view, be categorically and unreservedly condemned.

Mr President, on this basis I have to say that the observation made by a number of esteemed analysts, such as Mario Vargas Llosa, is in any case highly significant: the most conspicuous defenders of the deposed President Zelaya – who, by the way, has won support from all the various political parties, including his own, and the Supreme Court of Justice against the National Congress of the Republic – have in fact been representatives of regimes characterised by a systematic violation of human rights and by a progressive decline in individual freedoms, as this Parliament recognised in the last report on the human rights situation in the world.

We now have to find a way out of this situation. The President-in-Office of the Council has said so: the European Union must facilitate a return to democratic normality by supporting the efforts of a man who has been working to stabilise the situation in the region, namely the President of Costa Rica, Óscar Arias.

Secondly, with regard to the upcoming presidential elections, the European Union needs to make all its election observation experience available to Honduras and should prepare to send an EU election observation mission.

Lastly, President-in-Office of the Council, it is important that the European Union acts consistently, without double standards. It is unacceptable that, on the one hand, the European Union facilitates and intensifies its political dialogue with the only undemocratic country in the region and, on the other hand, makes the citizens of one of the poorest countries in Latin America pay for their leaders' mistakes, to which Mr Zelaya is not exactly oblivious.

President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, I also believe that the European Union needs to be actively present in the region, as Mr Bildt has said. That active presence is currently manifesting itself in the negotiations over the association agreement, which are about to come to a head. Mr President, we cannot make the innocent suffer for the guilty and, therefore, I believe we need to reconsider a swift return to the negotiating table once the conflict is resolved.

**Luis Yañez-Barnuevo García**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (ES) Mr President, we join in the international community's unanimous condemnation, not only because of the seriousness of the situation itself and of the breakdown in constitutional order – as the President-in-Office of the Council and the Commissioner have highlighted – but also on account of the extremely serious precedent this sets in a region which, with a great deal of work and effort, has managed to restore democracy throughout the continent, with rare exceptions.

Therefore, we cannot accept this situation. The European Union and the Member States have done the right thing in recalling their ambassadors, cancelling all forms of cooperation and suspending negotiations with the region. I agree with the President-in-Office of the Council and the President of the Commission that we must now support a negotiated settlement led by the Social Democrat President of Costa Rica, Óscar Arias, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, and not provoke any repressive or insurrectional violence.

This is not the time to analyse the real or presumed mistakes that might have been made by President Zelaya, who has six months left in office; for that is not the matter at hand. This is a time to analyse the very serious breakdown in constitutional order in Honduras brought on by the armed forces (with the support of Congress and the judiciary, certainly, but in an entirely illegitimate and illegal manner).

There will be time enough to consider his future, but today we must demand President Zelaya's restoration without the slightest hesitation; he is the country's constitutional President until January 2010.

**Izaskun Bilbao Barandica**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (ES) (*Speaks briefly in Basque.*) Mr President, I am speaking in Basque, a minority language which is not yet official in this House: Basque. I hope that it will be so in the future, as other languages are, and that we will, therefore, be able to speak in my mother tongue and in the language of the Basque Country.

That said, I agree, and my group agrees, with the need for an outright rejection of the coup – for we should call it by its real name – that has taken place in Honduras. Some may consider it a mistake to have tried to consult the will of the people, perhaps above all else; but we are not here to analyse that. I also agree that both the Commission and the Council have to work to facilitate the restoration of the constitutional and institutional order that has been overturned and to ensure the return of the Honduran President, who was legitimately elected by all the people.

I, too, am concerned about the attacks endured by some members of the government, even in official diplomatic missions in Honduras, which, as we have heard, have been recalled. Naturally, as the representative of the Commission has done, my group also supports all the action that the Organization of American States has taken to address and resolve this conflict.

My group believes that we in Europe need to help to strengthen democracy in Honduras, to ensure fundamental rights are developed and, therefore, to ensure that political dialogue is the only tool used to bring us closer to a solution to the problem we are now experiencing.

It goes without saying that we also support all the work being done by the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Mr Óscar Arias, and accordingly we also hope that, once the aforementioned measures are in place, elections can be held in November 2009 with full transparency and with total respect for the democratic system and for human rights. I hope, too, that the current situation will also allow us to continue the negotiations in order to conclude the association agreement with the European Union.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (ES) Mr President, I, too, wish to use this opportunity to strongly condemn and to express our dismay at the recent events in Honduras.

I have been following the situation in the country and the region in the last few years in my role as Vice-Chairman of the Delegation for Relations with the Countries of Central America; it is particularly significant for me and of the utmost importance that we are discussing this matter on the first day of political debate in this House. That fact shows that this is a fundamental issue: the event has the sad and regrettable honour of being considered the first *coup d'état* in a Central American country in the 21st century, and that is something we should not forget.

Therefore, I not only strongly condemn the *coup d'état* against President Zelaya, but I also urge the European Union not to recognise the coup leader, Roberto Micheletti. Furthermore, I believe it is vital that the European Union insists, as it is in fact already doing, that constitutional order be restored. It is crucial that the November 2009 elections should be prepared in a serious, responsible and credible manner and, with that in mind, I am also pleased that talks aimed at forming an association agreement with the region have been suspended, at least for the time being.

I also ask that we suspend aid in the form of trade support, as others such as the World Bank or the United States have done, with the exception of humanitarian aid.

Beyond these measures, I think it is important to remember the need to carry out a clear and concise investigation into who should be held accountable in this *coup d'état*. It is clear that many people are responsible, that there are many other interests behind this coup and, in some cases, we do not even know their names.

I believe the European Union should press for such an investigation and, for that to happen, we need to send permanent, on-site international delegations who can support the movements that are emerging in the country, in order to demand, reclaim and call for the democracy that has been taken from them.

**Willy Meyer**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (ES) Mr President, four days after the coup, my parliamentary group decided to send me to Tegucigalpa to observe *in situ* the consequences of this military coup, this *coup d'état*. In Tegucigalpa, I was able to witness the consequences of any military coup, namely: repression; a lack of freedom; arrest warrants issued against members of parliament who did not support the coup; leaders of social groups imprisoned; and hospitals, with many injured people, taking advantage of the curfew. That was the detailed picture I gained there.

I welcome the response issued by the Council and the European Commission, for that is the only possible response. Firstly, all the requirements issued by the Organization of American States must be met. May I state here that, in the meeting I had with the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, I found that they are very clear on this matter: any action carried out by the illegitimate government of the



coup leader, Roberto Micheletti, will be declared null and void and, therefore, the Organization of American States has already decided that it is not going to observe any kind of election held by that government.

I hope that the European Union will also follow the same code of conduct – the same road map – so that any action carried out by that government will not be considered legitimate. As a result, under those circumstances we would not be able to observe elections rigged by a government that had seized power in a coup.

It seems to me that this is going to be a decisive week. President Zelaya, the only President of Honduras, has made things very clear: he has made it very clear that he is giving the situation one more week and, if it is not decided within a week at the Costa Rica talks that he should return, he will return anyway.

Therefore, given the decision made by the only legitimate President, I hope that Parliament, the Institutions, the Council and the Commission will support his decision as the Organization of American States is doing, as the United Nations is doing and, by the way, as the United States is doing. Consequently, I believe that it is very important that such a tone, a tone demanding the restoration of constitutional power and the restoration of President Zelaya, serves as Parliament's identifying feature.

My fellow Members, I hope we come to the firm decision that this House condemns the *coup d'état* unreservedly and supports the restoration of President Zelaya. I also hope that we will, therefore, endorse all of the international organisations' initiatives.

**Kader Arif (S&D).** – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to begin by joining with the previous speakers in condemning in the harshest possible terms the *coup d'état* staged against the government of President Zelaya in Honduras. His arbitrary detention and his expulsion from the country are in breach of the constitutional order, which must be restored as quickly as possible. The military overthrow that led to Roberto Micheletti proclaiming himself as the new president brings to mind the darkest periods in the history of Central America that we have known, and this attack on democracy is unacceptable in our view.

I therefore welcome the Organization of American States' decision to suspend Honduras' involvement in the organisation, and the acceptance of President Oscar Arias as a mediator helping to find a solution.

However, I am also very concerned, Commissioner, about the commercial relations that the European Union maintains with this country. For several months negotiations have been taking place between the European Commission and Central America on a new-generation association agreement. Following the *coup d'état*, meetings planned last week have been cancelled. We should be glad about that. I thought I understood you, but I should like to have more details. Is the Commission determined to suspend the negotiations until the institutional political situation in Honduras has returned to normal? That is what I and my political group are asking, but I should like to have more details concerning the Commission's position on this point.

Another issue that I wish to raise, Commissioner, is that of the Generalised System of Preferences Plus, from which Honduras benefits. Several organisations from civil society have reported arbitrary decisions and human rights violations since the *coup d'état*, particularly as regards freedom of movement, association and expression. The European Commission has to be very firm on this issue. The GSP+ is an incentive, the benefits of which are dependent on clear commitments. The testimonies are more than enough to cast doubt on whether the State of Honduras is fulfilling its commitments under its self-proclaimed president. I therefore call on the Commission to launch an investigation into the possibility of temporarily withholding the preferences granted to Honduras under the GSP+.

**Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL).** – (FR) Mr President, our peace-loving principles must not lead us to give the impression that, by appealing to both parties of the current conflict to show restraint, we believe that the perpetrators of the *coup d'état* in Honduras and the constitutional government are as guilty as each other. In a case such as this, the violence of the insurgents who are fighting for the return of President Zelaya is legitimate and that of the putschists is criminal.

The personal involvement of the Heads of State or Government of Central and South America to secure the unconditional return to power of the Constitutional President, Manuel Zelaya, shows that the entire continent wants an end once and for all to the period of *coups d'états* and dictatorships.

Following the unanimous decisions of the UN and of all the regional cooperation organisations, Europe must play its part in this fight, since it is a fight, not an arrangement. It is a historic fight. Europe must break off all relations of all kinds – political, commercial – and all negotiations with the factious regime until the

time of President Zelaya's unconditional and non-negotiable return to power, since there is nothing to negotiate where democracy is concerned. Europe must call on the Obama Administration and on the United States to break off their commercial and military relations with the factious regime, too. This is the price at which we will prove equal to the principles that we so often claim to observe in order to criticise those of others.

**Bogusław Sonik (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, the situation in Honduras requires that the European Union continue specific and resolute action which will lead to stabilisation, restore constitutional order and prevent a growth in the conflict between supporters and opponents of ousted President Zelaya. Therefore I support the initiative proposed by Mr Salafranca to say as soon as possible that a mission endorsed by the European Parliament can be sent to Honduras.

The disputing parties should be led as soon as possible to begin talks, which will enable an agreement to be made allowing President Zelaya to return to his position and serve to the end of the current term of office, but without the possibility of altering the constitution to make possible his re-election. A solution like this would provide hope for stabilisation of the situation, although it may not be acceptable to both...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL).** – (EL) Mr President, I believe that, as the European Parliament and as the European Union, we must make the necessary changes so that the coup in Honduras is as short as possible, President Zelaya returns to his country and the circle of military coups in Latin and Central America is finally closed.

We must consider the enormous progress and democratic changes made over recent years in a series of countries, changes which strengthen constitutional and democratic freedoms, which defend the concept and essence of policy against the uncontrolled position of the market trying to oust it and which break the long-standing bonds of neo-colonialism. That is why I believe that we should consider the huge responsibility of Europe for peaceful action at international level and restore democratic ties and ties of solidarity with the peoples and countries on the other side of the Atlantic.

**Carl Bildt, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Mr President, I think all of those who have spoken have spoken very much in strong terms in favour of the defence of democracy and constitutional order throughout Latin America. In that, of course, there is a condemnation of what happened. Whatever the background, we do not send in the military to arrest the elected president of a country and send him abroad. Irrespective of the background, we must be very clear on this; we are very clear on this.

But then, in order to resolve the situation, there must be some sort of accommodation, some sort of compromise. Judging from what I have heard from Mr Salafranca and others, everyone agrees that President Arias is probably the man best suited to achieve that particular compromise. He will probably have to spend quite some time in negotiating with representatives of both the parties but I think it is important that he has our support as well as the support of the other American states for these particular efforts.

As to the nature of the particular solution, that is for him to judge and for them to agree. But clearly, on the basis of what I said initially, the restoration of constitutional order is what we seek. The return of President Zelaya is a necessity when it comes to the restoration of constitutional order. It is probably not sufficient and in all probability there are going to be other elements in bringing about a full restoration of constitutional order.

So what we are calling for in the form of the restoration and return of President Zelaya is a necessary but in all probability not sufficient part of the restoration of constitutional order, which is of key importance for our relationship with Honduras, for the development of Honduras and for the credibility of constitutional order and democracy in that part of the world.

**President.** – The debate is closed.

**11. Announcement of proposals by the Conference of Presidents: see Minutes**

**12. Agenda of the next sitting: see Minutes**

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### **13. Closure of the sitting**

*(The sitting was closed at 17.30)*