

WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2009

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting was opened at 09.05)

2. Documents received: see Minutes

3. Implementing measures (Rule 88): see Minutes

4. Passenger compensation in the event of airline bankruptcy (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

5. 'made in' (origin marking) (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

6. Preparation of the European Council to be held on 10 and 11 December 2009 (debate)

President. – The next item is the statements by the Council and the Commission on preparation of the European Council to be held on 10 and 11 December 2009.

Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council. – (SV) Mr President, Mr Barroso, honourable Members, it is wonderful to have this opportunity to have this debate with you ahead of the next meeting of the European Council. It will, of course, be the second ordinary meeting held during the Swedish Presidency and it will also be the last time that it is led by a rotating presidency.

As you know, the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force on 1 December, but in accordance with the declaration adopted in the European Council in December 2008, the rotating Presidency will continue to preside over the European Council until the Presidency ends at the end of the year. All the Member States have now ratified the treaty and deposited their instruments of ratification in Rome. I am therefore delighted to be able to confirm that the Treaty of Lisbon will indeed enter into force on 1 December.

The work involved in getting to this point was long and strenuous, as Parliament is well aware. The new treaty will change the way the EU works in several respects. As a result of the treaty, we will have better opportunities to get to grips with the important issues that the EU is facing and we can do this in a more democratic, transparent and efficient manner. It also brings with it many important reforms that affect you here in Parliament.

At the European Council's extra meeting last week, the Heads of State or Government agreed to appoint Herman van Rompuy as President of the European Council. He will lead the European Council's work and take it forward from 1 January.

Agreement was also reached, following approval from the Commission President, on the appointment of Catherine Ashton as the new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. In line with the treaty, Mrs Ashton will take up all of her roles on 1 December, including that of Vice-President of the Commission. Just as the European Parliament adopts a position on all Members, you will, of course, also be holding a hearing with Mrs Ashton. I understand that she will shortly be presenting herself to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and answering questions.

The European Council also reached agreement on the appointment of Pierre de Boissieu as Secretary-General of the Council Secretariat.

The work in preparation for the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon has continued as detailed by the Presidency in its status report to the European Council in October. On 1 December, a number of decisions will be taken in order to put the Treaty of Lisbon fully in place, for example, with regard to revised rules of

procedure for the Council and rules of procedure for the European Council. At the European Council meeting in December, we will present a new report summarising the status of the issues that we have dealt with in connection with the implementation and practical application of the Treaty of Lisbon. The European External Action Service will be included among these issues. The report will also contain a road map pointing the way forward for the work in this area.

At the European Council meeting in December, the focus will primarily be on economic and financial issues. The effects of the crisis will be felt for a long time to come – particularly on the labour market. However, it is also important for us to take a long-term view and to meet important challenges in both the medium and the long term.

The EU, the Member States and Europe's central banks have taken numerous measures, for example, guarantee programmes for banks and the European Economic Recovery Plan. These measures have made a major contribution to increasing financial stability and reducing the effects of the crisis on growth and employment.

The economic prospects look brighter, but there are still major risks. It is therefore not yet time to withdraw the support measures that have been taken. However, within the Council we have initiated a discussion about how these special crisis measures should be phased out and when this can start. The European Council will review the work that the Council has done with regard to exit strategies. We will also monitor the EU's Economic Recovery Plan.

With regard to the financial markets, it is gratifying that the situation on the financial market has improved considerably. The financial sector's need for support measures has diminished. We therefore need to formulate strategies for how the measures can be phased out in a coordinated way. However, it is important to emphasise that it is still too early to begin a general phasing out of the support measures in the financial area.

The Swedish Presidency is seeking agreement on a number of guiding principles with regard to the timing, coordination and sequencing of the phasing out of the support measures.

I will now turn to financial supervision. There is agreement that increased and improved cooperation in relation to financial supervision within the EU is necessary, particularly in view of the experience we have had during the financial crisis.

The proposal for the structure and focus of the work in the Systemic Risk Council was adopted by the EU's finance ministers at the Ecofin meeting on 20 October. The Presidency then received the mandate to initiate negotiations with the European Parliament, which we have done.

As regards the three 'micro-authorities', the Presidency's aim is to arrive at a general approach for these authorities and hence for the entire supervisory package at the next Ecofin meeting on 2 December so that we can report back to the Council in December.

The value of having a structure in place is significant for the financial services industry, for the world outside Europe and for our citizens. The package will include a requirement for the plan to be reviewed in three years. We will then be able to rectify any shortcomings that stand out as functioning less well or as being less effective.

The EU's current strategy for jobs and growth, the Lisbon strategy, expires next year. It is therefore imperative that the EU should agree on a new strategy that is able to promote a vision for long-term growth and prosperity. This will be one of the most important issues over the next few months and one of the priority issues for the forthcoming Spanish Presidency.

The economic and financial crisis has created pressure for immediate action to be taken to minimise the impact on growth and the labour market. At the same time, structural weaknesses and the long-term challenges for our economies have become more apparent.

Maintaining and strengthening Europe's competitiveness on the global market, combating climate change and dealing with the challenges as a consequence of an ageing population are demanding tasks for the European Union and its Member States in the medium and long term. These require common and coordinated solutions, a common vision and a strengthened European reform agenda for the next ten years.

The vision is about turning challenges into opportunities. It is about fully realising the potential of the internal market and exploiting the advantages of foreign trade and openness. It is about recognising the opportunities involved in turning Europe into an eco-efficient or climate-smart economy and creating a labour market with high levels of employment, sustainable public finances and social cohesion.

During the Swedish Presidency, a second follow-up assessment of the EU's sustainability strategy is being carried out. Progress has been made in many areas. At the same time, there are several areas where unsustainable trends have been identified. These areas include the rapid increase in demand for natural resources, the diminishing of biological diversity, the increase in energy consumption by the transport sector and the persistence of global poverty.

We have raised the question of how we can monitor and follow up the strategy in a better and more effective way, including how we can make use of the benefits of coordination resulting from the interaction with other EU strategies, the Lisbon strategy, for example.

The Integrated Maritime Policy will also be discussed at the European Council meeting. The Commission has recently submitted its progress report. The European Council will examine the report and give its opinion of the future direction of this important cross-sectoral work. In this regard, I would like to emphasise our view of sustainable economic growth and eco-efficient work and innovation.

I will now turn to another very important item at the European Council meeting, namely the adoption of a new five-year work programme in the area of freedom, security and justice. The Stockholm Programme is intended to supersede the Hague Programme that is currently in force and which was adopted in 2004.

The vision of the Stockholm Programme is for a safer and more open Europe where the rights of individuals are protected. The programme is a result of intensive contact and discussions in the Council and with the European Parliament. There have also been valuable contributions from national parliaments, civil society, EU bodies and various agencies and authorities.

My Swedish colleagues, the Minister for Justice, Beatrice Ask, and the Minister for Migration, Tobias Billström, were here yesterday and presented the Stockholm Programme in a very long debate. Therefore, I will not repeat what they said, but I would like to take the opportunity to emphasise that the Stockholm Programme focuses on specific measures that bring added value to the everyday lives of citizens. It includes cooperation outside the EU. A more secure and more open Europe requires genuine partnership with our partner countries.

Future work in this area should also be based on a balance between measures aimed at creating a safe and secure Europe and measures aimed at protecting the rights of individuals.

The ambitious work that has been carried out and our future method of working with increased codecision for Parliament should help to provide us with an action plan that is better able to deal with these major challenges.

With regard to climate change, while the European Council meeting is going on, the climate negotiations will, of course, also be taking place in Copenhagen. These issues are important for Europe and for the future of our entire planet. Two weeks ago, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt stood in Parliament in Brussels and presented the outcome of the European Council meeting in October, including the most important elements of the EU's position ahead of the Copenhagen conference. It is now imperative that we continue to make it clear to our partners around the world how highly we regard this and that we provide momentum to drive the negotiations forward. The Swedish Presidency will put all of its energy into this work.

Next month, the European Council will assess the situation in the negotiations that will be going on simultaneously in order to take the decisions that are necessary to enable us to have a successful outcome in Copenhagen.

As usual, a number of foreign policy issues may also arise at the European Council meeting, but it is a little too early to say what these might be.

The top priorities of the Swedish Presidency have been to respond to the demands of climate change and to ensure that the EU retains its leading position ahead of the negotiations in Copenhagen while, at the same time, we are responsible for continuing to address the economic and financial crisis. These issues will have top priority at the final summit.

José Manuel Barroso, *President of the Commission*. – Mr President, we have, on many occasions, discussed the great opportunities offered by the Lisbon Treaty for the European Union, so let me express once again my satisfaction that when we meet each other next time, we will do so with the Lisbon Treaty already in force. And, with the treaty in force, it is time to move even more decisively beyond institutional discussions towards policies and results for citizens.

The appointments made last week, naming Herman Van Rompuy as President of the Council and Catherine Ashton as High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission, are the first steps towards the full implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. I know that both President Van Rompuy and High Representative Vice-President Baroness Ashton are eager to start putting the Lisbon Treaty to work.

The designation of Herman Van Rompuy was, by consensus, a decision of the Heads of State or Government. It is a decision I welcome and personally support very much. Herman Van Rompuy has earned huge respect as Prime Minister of Belgium. He brings a combination of the instinctive Europeanism of Belgium – a founding member of our Union, a country that has always been at the forefront of this European project – and his own skills as consensus builder: exactly the two most precious qualities to have as President of the European Council.

I look forward to working in tandem with him and to joining him here in the plenary debates on the European Council. It is essential that, while every institution has to work within the respect of its own competences and that of other institutions, we all work together for the common European good.

I am extremely proud and happy that Catherine Ashton has been designated as the first Vice-President/High Representative. It is an appointment that I supported and approved during the European Council, as it is necessary according to the treaties. We all know her well as someone who has both the political skill and the sense of direction to take on the demanding task of the first High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission. I can assure you, from my own experience with her as a Member of the Commission, of her deep commitment to the European project.

As I said yesterday, all the nominations for the Commission have now been made. I am particularly happy that within one week, it was possible to triple the nominations of women from three to nine. So the next Commission will have nine female Members, one more than the current Commission, and once again I want to thank all of you who have supported me in this difficult task of getting at least a reasonable – not an ideal, but a reasonable – number of women for the next Commission.

I will now move on to the portfolio allocations. It is my privilege to assure this House that I will do so in the full respect of the priorities defined in the political guidelines that I presented to you and that through your vote were endorsed by Parliament, and I will also respect all the commitments I made to Parliament on that occasion. Then Parliament can hold substantive hearings and vote on the next college in January.

Next month, the European Council gives us the first significant opportunity to show that we are now focused on policy substance, to show that it will make a difference. I would like to concentrate very briefly on three key dossiers which will be under the spotlight.

First, climate change. A European Council a week before the conclusion of the Copenhagen Summit is certainly well timed. The European Union has shown itself the pioneer of action on climate change. We have been the first to show that cap and trade can work. We have been the first to put a binding, tough target for reduced emissions on the table. We have led the way in defining how the developing world can make a real contribution to financing the costs of climate change in developing countries.

But, as the preparation of the Copenhagen conference draws to its close, the pressure grows. We need to stay united and to keep focused on our goal of cutting global emissions and getting the necessary finance on the table; that is our task. We have to say clearly that it cannot only be a task for Europe: we need others, namely the major economies, also to contribute to ambitious goals.

What should the key messages from the European Council be? First, that we want to see an ambitious and meaningful agreement in Copenhagen that, first and foremost, enshrines the 2° C objective. This is essential. Sometimes we see politicians and diplomats negotiating. They can negotiate – we can negotiate – with each other, but we cannot negotiate with science. We cannot negotiate against the science of nature. We cannot negotiate against the scientific advice, and this is the minimum: to reach an agreement compatible with the 2° C objective. So we must set real and effective emission reduction targets for developed countries, as well as substantive actions from developing countries, especially the fast-growing, emerging economies. It must also be comprehensive, covering the full range of issues in the Bali road map.

Second, even if at Copenhagen it will not unfortunately be possible to finalise a new treaty, it must bring an operational agreement based on real commitments on all sides, to which all the major players contribute and which is endorsed at the highest political level. We need a clear, simple political text that shows that we are moving from talking about tackling climate change to doing something about it. And it should be explicit that this will be turned into a fully fledged treaty as soon as possible.

The agreement should be precise. That means specific individual numbers on reduction of emissions and a detailed finance package to help developing countries both to develop mitigation programmes and to adapt to climate change. In particular, fast start funding is going to be very important.

Finally, I feel the leaders' involvement is going to be central as these are difficult decisions that need to be made at highest levels of government. I am pleased to hear that, following Prime Minister Rasmussen's invitation, already at least 65 or so Heads of State or Government are planning to attend Copenhagen. I will attend myself.

Another key area is the Stockholm Programme in the area of justice, liberty and security. People want to live in a European Union that is prosperous and peaceful, where their rights are respected and their security protected. They want to be able to travel freely and to move temporarily or permanently to another European country in order to study, to work, to found a family, to set up a business or to retire.

We have come a long way over the last 10 years. The removal of controls at internal borders in the Schengen area allows more than 400 million citizens of 25 countries to travel without border control from the Iberian Peninsula to the Baltic States, from Greece to Finland.

Now the Lisbon Treaty gives us a new opportunity to move ahead. We all know that freedom, security and justice will see some of the most significant changes from the treaty. It brings this area of policy fully within the scope of our normal procedures. It clarifies what action can be taken and, in particular, it extends the democratic framework for these policies by the full involvement of your Parliament.

The Stockholm Programme, which is largely based on Commission input and proposals, will be a key lever to make this happen. It should set the scene for a comprehensive, effective programme of action which brings real change, real benefit for our citizens.

The programme as it emerges from the European Council needs to lay out the guiding priorities for justice and home affairs in the years to come and to show how they will be put into practice. More effective respect for fundamental rights; better access to the courts; more determined action against organised crime, human trafficking and terrorism; effective management of migration – these are all areas where the Stockholm Programme should set out a series of concrete steps forward. They also require a strong approach with our third-country partners, which I am determined to pursue as we work together to maximise our global interests.

Finally, we must continue to keep the focus on tackling the economic crisis. European Union action has made a major contribution over the last year. Now we must keep the strength of purpose and sense of focus. We must keep a close watch on our recovery measures, especially with unemployment still rising. Our top priority must remain keeping people in jobs and helping those who have lost their jobs to get back into work.

We must also start to shape a post-crisis agenda to exploit new sources of growth and find new job opportunities. The agenda we have sketched out in the 2020 strategy, the consultation paper that the Commission circulated yesterday. I very much look forward to hearing the thoughts of Parliament and including your views in the final document.

The European Council will also face a test of ambition with progress on the financial supervision package. I know this goal is shared by this Parliament, and I urge you to work with the Council to allow final adoption by mid-2010, so that effective new authorities can be in place by the end of 2010.

To conclude, climate change, freedom, security and justice, and the response to the economic and financial crisis – these are three areas which impact on citizens every day of their lives and three areas where the European Council can show that the Lisbon Treaty has indeed opened a new chapter in the history of the European project.

In order to obtain meaningful results, we must work in partnership – in partnership between the Commission and Parliament, to which I am grateful for consistent support for the policy ambitions put forward by the Commission in these areas; in partnership with the Swedish Presidency of the Council, which I really congratulate for the hard work done; and in partnership with our Danish friends preparing the Copenhagen conference.

Let us make the most out of what lies ahead. Let us work together for the common European good. The Commission and I myself are ready to take up the challenge. I am sure this Parliament, with reinforced powers under the new treaty, will also show its sense of responsibility and its commitment to the Europe of citizens.

Joseph Daul, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, here we are at last.

The Heads of State or Government have chosen Herman Van Rompuy as the first President of the European Council and Catherine Ashton as High Representative. Thank you to Fredrik Reinfeldt, the last Prime Minister to hold the rotating Presidency of the European Council. Thank you for having brought about a consensus on the two figures who will bear the heavy burden of carrying out the new functions created by the Treaty of Lisbon.

Today, in this Chamber, I would like to praise the initial statements of President Van Rompuy for whom, I quote, 'the image of the Council will be shaped by its results' and who advocates a step-by-step approach. It is through this method – what I would describe as the 'Jean Monnet' method, a way of acting effectively but without any political posturing – that the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) is finding its bearings. It is this method that has taken us from yesterday's conflicts to today's exchanges. It is this method that has taken us from long waits at the borders of the Schengen area, from fluctuating exchange rates to a stable euro. Indeed, thanks to this step-by-step integration of Europe, considerable progress has been made, and no one can deny that.

I would like to warn you, ladies and gentlemen, against the facile criticisms that we have heard in recent days. I am thinking in particular about those who, just for the sake of making a witty remark, have discredited themselves through irresponsible statements.

Like everyone, the members of the PPE Group also nurture dreams, but the difference between us and others is that we are striving to turn those dreams into a reality. We did it with the integration of Europe, we did it with reunification and we also did it with the Treaty of Lisbon which, despite its imperfections, will take us a little further in the right direction. It is this, and not merely sensational and short-lived statements, that Europeans expect, ladies and gentlemen.

We are convinced that President Van Rompuy will get down to his task with the same determination and the same willpower that he showed in his own country, qualities crowned with success and recognised by everyone. President Van Rompuy has the full backing of the PPE Group, and I offer him our support in a task that will undoubtedly be very difficult.

Indeed, I expect the Council to evolve. I expect it to evolve into a more transparent institution and to work even more closely with Parliament and the Commission. I expect ministers to stop proclaiming national victory against their partners when they have only just got back from Brussels and to stop blaming Europe for everything that goes wrong. Finally, I expect the Council to stop changing its position depending on who its President is. I, along with the PPE Group, expect all this from the Council's first permanent presidency. Mrs Malmström, this does not apply to you since you have already been appointed commissioner by your country. You therefore no longer have any choice; you have to talk about Europe.

On behalf of the PPE Group, I also congratulate Catherine Ashton, the new High Representative and Vice-President of the 'Barroso I' European Commission. We welcome her appointment and will listen closely to her answers to our questions at next January's hearing of the commissioners. It is at the end of this process that she will be fully invested with her duties as Vice-President of the 'Barroso II' Commission.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am glad that the time of asking questions about individuals is behind us and that we can finally, with complete peace of mind, get down to the fundamental issues. We know that two major topics will dominate the European Council in December. The first is the recovery in growth, which must not take place without a recovery in employment. In this respect, we are expecting concrete undertakings from the European Council.

The second topic is climate change. Everyone knows that the Council will be sitting in the middle of the Copenhagen Summit, which ought not only to result in political objectives, but also in quantifiable commitments. This is essential. This first European Council held under the Treaty of Lisbon must enable Europe to play its full role. I therefore hope that it will be able to use its influence and assert its positions with greater determination than in the past.

Martin Schulz, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, both present and absent, in the last few days following the European Council meeting, we have talked a great deal about people

and posts. Once again, I would like to direct my remarks today at you, Mr Barroso. It is important for us to discuss people and positions. As far as the posts are concerned, our group had one clear priority. We said that, as the second largest group in this House, we wanted the second position in the Commission, in other words, the High Representative who acts as Vice-President of the Commission, to come from our party. This is because we believe that the Commission, which is not a neutral organisation, but a political body, should reflect the reality of this Parliament. We have achieved what we have been fighting for. I know that you have also been fighting for this and that is why I would like to offer you my sincere thanks, despite the criticism that you usually receive in this House from me.

This sends out a positive signal because it indicates that the claim that we, as social democrats, make in this House is taken seriously by you, because we still have some distance to go before the final vote on the Commission. We also expect the structure of the portfolios that you will establish for the individual commissioners to reflect the content and the challenges which these people are faced with. In my opinion, this is much more important than the debate about posts and people.

Of course, we are pleased that Cathy Ashton now holds the position of High Representative. Enough has been said about Mr Van Rompuy and I agree with the previous speakers. However, much more important than this is the question of which tasks these people will be responsible for carrying out. I do not believe that the citizens of Europe have any serious interest in the way in which Mr Van Rompuy and Baroness Ashton were elected. However, the question of how we can reduce unemployment, which is currently rising and not falling in Europe, is an important issue. People are interested in the question of whether we can really still prevent climate change and whether Copenhagen will be a failure or a success. Nevertheless, this is not enough. In my opinion, we are not talking enough about climate change. We are not having sufficient discussions about the fact that, for example, in overcoming climate change and investing in environmentally friendly technology in industry, there is huge potential for job creation, that green technology is a project for the future and that industrial policy and protecting the environment are not mutually exclusive, but can be combined with one another.

The ideas that you have presented here about the structure of the Commission are pointing in the right direction. This is an issue which needs to be resolved in Copenhagen in just the same way as the global health policy, the question of whether Europe should show solidarity with a dying continent like Africa, combating aids and opening up resources for the future. Can Europe's energy security problems be solved peacefully? Or are we threatened by intensifying conflicts on Europe's borders resulting from the purchase of gas, oil and other raw materials? This is a job for the High Representative of the European Union. The question of bringing the financial markets under control is a primary objective of European policy, because it is truly scandalous that, in the middle of the phase when the taxpayers of Europe continue to be responsible for the follow-up costs of the crisis, the casino has opened again and the gamblers have once more started travelling around the world. In this case, we do not need a debate about the allocation of posts, but clear rules for the financial markets in the European Union. That is much more important.

(Applause)

This is why I am saying that, yes, Herman Van Rompuy and Cathy Ashton have been elected, but now they need to get on with their jobs and the Commission has to be set up. Therefore, I would like finally to repeat my remarks to Mr Barroso. We social democrats have discussed our ideas with you. One of our requests has been fulfilled to our satisfaction, that is the position of the High Representative. We assume that the environmental, social and financial policy structure of your Commission will correspond with what the social democrats are asking from you, preferably under the leadership of social democratic commissioners, and then all will be well.

Guy Verhofstadt, on behalf of the ALDE Group. – Mr President, I shall not go back to the nominations of last week. Let me just say that there was good news and there was bad news. The bad news was that it was not a Liberal who was in the President's seat, but the good news was that it was a Belgian. As the President of the Commission said, Belgium is, in fact, a country with an overall consensus, certainly about European matters and about the future of Europe.

So, Mr Barroso, what we hope now is that we have a new Commission as soon as possible. I hope that there will be a large number of Liberal Commissioners in it –some people are saying there are too many, but for me 50% would be good! I think that nearly one third of Liberal Commissioners is a good figure. Anyway, I am very pleased that, of the eight Liberal Commissioners who have been presented as candidates for the Commission, there are four women, so there is a gender balance in the Liberal presence in the Commission.

On priorities, I think that there are three main priorities for the next days and weeks. First of all, Copenhagen. We have to make a success of it. I think there are two remaining questions: how to address the concerns of the developing world, and how to make a treaty that is legally binding, because that is the main question. What the substance of the treaty will be is important, but more important in my view is the legally binding character of all this.

The second point is the Stockholm Programme. For our group, the basic point here is the balance between security and freedom. It is obvious that we have to protect our citizens against terrorism and organised crime, but maybe, after 9/11, we have put too much focus on security and protection. I think that the Stockholm Programme – and also the philosophy of your Presidency – has to rebalance that towards respect for fundamental rights and also more openness in society. I think this is the big ambition and what the Stockholm Programme has to do. The view of our group, the ALDE Group, is that it is more ambitious than the Tampere Programme and the Hague Programme, but with a more important focus on the fundamental rights of the people. It is good to protect and to organise security, but you have to do it in a balanced way with respect for fundamental rights.

The third big task for the next days, as the President of the Commission said, is financial supervision. Mr Barroso, I think that it is perhaps becoming more and more clear that in the end, a single European financial supervisor is what we need. We need a good supervisory body for cross-border financial institutions that would link micro- and macro-supervision and perhaps link it as closely as possible to the European Central Bank – why not? – and, naturally, also to what is happening in the Commission.

What is important now is that the Council does not downsize the proposals that are on the table. That is my fear for the moment. In Parliament, we are pushing for more ambitious proposals, but I think the temptation for the moment in the Council is in the opposite direction. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that there is a good understanding about this between the Commission and Parliament, which will involve saying to the Council: that is codecision procedure, so if you come with proposals and the Council comes with proposals which go down towards the Commission proposals, that is not going to work in the Parliament. We are going in the opposite direction.

I think there is a majority here in Parliament in favour of going in the direction of a single supervisor. That is what we need in the future, and I think it is an important message to give to you to give to the Presidency, because there will certainly be a huge discussion on 10 and 11 December when there is the next European Council.

Rebecca Harms, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, Mr Barroso, you will understand that, as the leader of a group in this House, I am, of course, pleased that we women have succeeded in making the women at the top of the European Union more visible. However, it is important for us that women are not only taken into account in terms of numbers. You can rely on us to help you ensure that these women have influential positions within the Commission. We do not want mere token gestures.

There has been a lot of publicity about the people in the top jobs, Herman Van Rompuy und Baroness Ashton. The Members of this House are more familiar with Baroness Ashton than they are with Herman Van Rompuy. We will have the opportunity to get to know them even better in the hearings. I recommend that you suggest to Herman Van Rompuy that he comes to meet the groups in this House, so that we can find out more about him. Everyone is saying that the Belgians are very proud of him. Why does he not enter into a voluntary debate with the groups in this House, so that we can get to know one another better at the beginning of his period of office?

That was my look back at last week. The next summit will soon be upon us. Mr Schulz, I do not think that we are talking too little about Copenhagen. We are drawing too few logical conclusions from our discussions. Parliament will be voting this week on a resolution which includes everything that would be right for Copenhagen, if you believe the United Nations and the scientists. People in Europe have increasingly backed away from these recommendations over the course of time. My analysis of the central problem behind this is that climate protection is regarded as a burden and that the opportunities presented by a consistent climate policy are not recognised.

Another agenda item for the next summit is the Lisbon Strategy. One of the long-term tasks of this strategy has been to promote sustainable development, but we have not been able to achieve this. The different pillars of the Lisbon Strategy have always been given different levels of importance. The environment, social justice and sustainability have always been marginalised in favour of older and, in my opinion, outdated priorities relating to industrial, economic and even research policy. If you intend to decide at the next summit that we

should adopt the revised Lisbon Strategy in the spring, we do not have time to analyse the weaknesses of the Lisbon Strategy, which, as I see it, has failed. Why did we get into such a disastrous economic crisis? Why do we have so many social and labour market problems in the European Union? We do not believe it is a good idea to prepare the Lisbon Strategy and to review it without careful reflection, without self-criticism and without a genuine consultation process, such as the one called for by the trade unions and the Social Platform, because the Lisbon Strategy is very important for all of us and for the perspective of the European Union.

Finally, I would like to look at the Stockholm Programme. Like many of these large programmes, it sounds like a good thing, and this is what is constantly being said about it and what people generally seem to be thinking. However, my group has the impression that there is an imbalance between freedom and security. We do not agree with this development and we will be highlighting this using the example of SWIFT. It was a serious mistake not to put SWIFT on the agenda. Mr Barroso, you are attempting to bypass Parliament with this provisional SWIFT agreement, while disregarding the concerns about data protection. This is an indication of the fact that freedom and security are currently out of balance.

Timothy Kirkhope, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, first of all may I wish Mr Van Rompuy and Baroness Ashton well in their new roles, and I hope they are able to establish templates for their posts which will endure.

If the European Council is to have a semi-permanent president, it should be someone who takes a low-key but practical approach to building a consensus among the Member States where this is possible and desirable. If we are to have a reinforced High Representative for Foreign Affairs, the main task should be working closely with Member States in coordinating common policies where they have shared objectives.

These appointments should be an opportunity to put a stop, once and for all, to the nightmare vision of an ever more centralised and bureaucratic European foreign and security policy, in favour of one that is based on willing cooperation amongst our Member States.

The appointment of Baroness Ashton, in particular, as a currently serving Commissioner must have been a source of particular happiness for President Barroso, though this must not afford an opportunity for the Commission to assume greater power in its hands rather than in the hands of the democratic institutions of Europe.

But having spent a decade obsessed with its own institutions, the European Union now needs to get back to business. It is often said that the citizens of our Member States do not understand Europe, and, if they did, it would be more popular. But this misses a vital point. Our citizens do understand Europe's self-absorption only too well. What they do not understand is why so much time, effort and resources are devoted to the institutional processes and so little to the policy outcomes which actually might make a difference to their lives.

Our citizens can see that our economies are in crisis, that unemployment is rising, that businesses are finding it harder to generate growth, that climate change is getting worse and that other parts of the world are becoming increasingly and dramatically more competitive.

Yet, when they turn to Europe, they find a Union which has devoted years to this institutional wrangling. Why should they care about the details of qualified majority voting if they have lost their jobs? Why should they be interested in the intricacies of codecision if their children face such an uncertain future?

I hope that the appointments last week can draw a line under these years of introspection. The European Union must now move on and concentrate on the real work at hand, in building dynamic and competitive economies and in creating a strong global trading system and, specifically during the course of the weeks ahead, in securing a really effective agreement on climate change.

I admit that the words from the Swedish Presidency and from President Barroso are encouraging in that respect. Let us hope that practical delivery in other areas, vital to all of our citizens, can now follow.

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

John Bufton (EFD). – Mr President, after the fine words that were spoken then by Mr Kirkhope regarding the situation that we find ourselves in, my question to him is: do you not feel that you have denied the British people a referendum, which David Cameron promised in the UK? You are here now with no mandate and the bottom line is that the people of the UK and in most parts of Europe have had no say on Lisbon.

David Cameron should be ashamed of himself. As for the Conservatives in this Chamber, the way that they vote is to press green, green, green. It is go, go, go all the time. They are pro the EU. I think it is time now that you came clean and told the people back at home where you actually stand.

Timothy Kirkhope (ECR). – Mr President, I am very sorry that UK domestic politics seem to have taken over here this morning. What I would like to make very clear is I am not ashamed of anything at all that the leader of the Conservative Party is saying or doing and, in particular, it is clear to all of us that we have always indicated that, if the Lisbon Treaty had not been ratified, we would have wanted it to be put to the British people. I think that is an honourable position for us to take.

I think that those who talk about unreal objectives in relation to Europe, those who talk in an extreme and obsessive manner, will do no good to the very people that I have been talking about in my speech – the citizens, not only of Europe, but the citizens of my country, who want prosperity, who want certainty in their lives and the future. This institutional navel-gazing occurs with these people just as much as it does with any of the institutions of Europe.

Lothar Bisky, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group. – (DE) Mr President, I would like to welcome the two candidates on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group. Above all, we welcome the fact that a woman has been elected. We assume that the two candidates for the high offices will not only focus on the content of their responsibilities, but will also develop a cooperative approach to Parliament.

We expect the Council to deal more closely with the social issues resulting from the crisis and to draw the right conclusions. Billions have so far been paid to the bankers, but there has been virtually no help for the ordinary people. Mr Schulz is right when he says that the casino is open again, but at the same time, poverty and, in particular, child poverty is growing.

Four million jobs were lost throughout Europe as a result of the crisis. According to reports from the Commission, this figure could increase to seven million over the course of the next year. We know that estimates of this kind are often lower than the real figures. For example, 1.5 million people in Germany are on short-time work and it is important to emphasise this.

However, growing unemployment and poverty are the first signs of even greater inequality of opportunity which will have a major impact on educational opportunities. We also need to discuss this subject. The question that arises is whether the Heads of State or Government will find ways out of the crisis which combine the European concept of integration with social progress and which have a real impact for the citizens of Europe. Instead of exit strategies for the economic recovery programmes and mandatory budget consolidation, we need a change of policy. I have just three observations to make about this. Firstly, we expect the Council to give a statement on its position on the plans for the 2020 strategy, which is intended to replace the failed Lisbon Strategy. Innovation and knowledge, combating exclusion, green economic strategies, a digital Europe – as a list of slogans, this does not sound too bad. However, we urgently need concrete proposals describing how all of this will be implemented.

Secondly, the Council must finally commit to a strict control system for the financial markets. I have a number of legitimate questions about how the Council can bring this into line with existing treaties, because in some cases, restrictions on the free movement of capital and payments are not permitted or wanted. We are interested to see how you will achieve this.

Thirdly, I would like to emphasise once again that the Council must give a clear signal after Copenhagen that a binding climate change agreement is needed. Voluntary commitments have never achieved the desired objective.

Nigel Farage, on behalf of the EFD Group. – Mr President, you are all very downbeat this morning. I thought this was going to be a big, proud moment! It has taken you eight and a half years of bullying, of lying, of ignoring democratic referendums. Eight and a half years it has taken you to get this treaty through, and on 1 December you will have it.

Of course, the architect of all of this, Giscard, wanted, from this constitutional treaty, for the European Union to have a big, global voice, but I am afraid the leaders have suffered from a collective loss of nerve. They have decided that they want their faces to be up on the global stage, not somebody from the European Union, and so we have got appointed a couple of political pygmies.

The Kissinger question of who to call in Europe has not really been answered, has it? I guess the answer can only be Mr Barroso, because he is the only one that anybody in the world has ever heard of and is probably the big winner out of these posts. No wonder, Sir, you look so happy this morning.

And we have a new president of Europe, Herman Van Rompuy. It does not exactly trip off the tongue, does it? I cannot see him stopping the traffic in Beijing or Washington; I doubt anybody in Brussels would even recognise who he is. And yet he is going to be paid a salary that is bigger than Obama's, which tells you all you need to know about this European political class and how they look after themselves.

But at least he is an elected politician, unlike Baroness Cathy Ashton, who really is the true representation of the modern-day political class. In some ways she is ideal, is she not? She has never had a proper job, and she has never been elected to anything in her life. So I guess she is perfect for this European Union.

(The President asked the speaker to conclude)

She has never been elected to anything and no one knows who she is! Even the Prime Minister was talking about Baroness 'Ashdown' as opposed to Ashton. I mean, no one has ever heard of her. She is even less well-known than Herman Van Rompuy! I mean, that takes some doing, does it not?

She has risen without trace. She is part of this post-democratic age. She married well: she married an adviser, friend and supporter of Tony Blair and got put in the House of Lords. When she was in the House of Lords, she was given one big job, and that job was to get the Lisbon Treaty through the House of Lords and to do so pretending that it was entirely different to the EU Constitution. So she is good at keeping a straight face, and she vigorously crushed any attempt in the House of Lords for the British people to have a referendum.

So here she is: never stood for public office, never had a proper job, and here she gets one of the top jobs in the Union. Her appointment is an embarrassment for Britain.

(Interjection from the floor)

Well, at least I have been elected, Sir, unlike her! She has not been elected, and the people do not have the power to remove her.

But just hear the next bit. There is something rather more serious than that. Cathy Ashton was an active member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In fact, she was the treasurer of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament during a period of time when CND took very large donations and refused to reveal the source. What is known is that these donations were obtained by a man called Will Howard, who was a member of the Communist Party in Great Britain. Will Baroness Ashton deny that, while she was treasurer, she took funds from organisations that were opposed to Western-style capitalism and democracy? That question must be asked.

And are we really happy that somebody who will be in charge of our overseas security policy was an activist a few years ago in an outfit like CND? If we really think that, frankly, we need our bumps felt! I do not think she is a fit and proper person to do this job. She has no experience and she must answer those questions. Did she take money from enemies of the West? That question must be answered.

Well, we have our two pygmies. We will have the bland leading the bland, but I am not celebrating because they will press on with political union and, whilst our leaders may have saved face for the moment for themselves on the international stage, they have all betrayed their national democracies. The European state is here. We are about to get an avalanche of new laws because of this Lisbon Treaty and there is no question in my mind that there has to be a full, free, fair referendum in the United Kingdom to decide whether we stay part of this Union or not. I hope and pray that we vote to leave, but either way the people simply must be asked.

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

President. – I would like to say a word to Mr Farage. It would be very much appreciated if we could calm the atmosphere down a little, because some words and expressions are not always easy to accept.

Edit Herczog (S&D). – Mr President, Mr Farage has said that those people who were elected last week are not people that the traffic will stop for. This is why we elected them – because we wanted to elect people who will make the traffic move for all European citizens to get a better life for themselves, and this is what they will do.

Mr Van Rompuy and Mrs Cathy Ashton are for the people, and the 480 million Europeans will know it soon. I think this is the stake. We have to stand up for them. We have to save their personal integrity. And, Mr Farage, I would like to quote a Hungarian saying to you. It is good that you are here because, if the monkey goes up the tree, it is easier to see its backside!

Nigel Farage (EFD). – Mr President, with respect, I think the honourable Member has completely missed the point, because twice she said ‘the people that were elected last week’. They have not been elected. That is the point that I am making, and, in the case of Baroness Ashton, she has never been elected to public office in her entire life. She takes an enormously powerful job, and the peoples of Europe, of Britain, of everywhere else, do not have the power to hold her to account and to remove her, and that, fundamentally, is what is wrong with this whole European Union. It is all about bureaucracy versus democracy. Things have gone horribly, horribly wrong.

But can I please come back and ask you a question, Mr President? You seemed to imply that I have said something that was inappropriate, or over the top, or wrong. Could you please explain what that was? I want to know.

President. – Your way of describing the selection of people who are so important for the European Union and what you say about the whole issue connected with it are, in my opinion, absolutely improper to the whole situation.

(Protests)

That is my opinion, colleagues.

Nigel Farage (EFD). – Mr President, when you were elected as President, you said you would act as a neutral President to ensure that all sides of the debate were given their chance to have a say. If you are criticising me on the political content of what I say, then you are not doing your job as a neutral chairman.

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) Mr President, after all this excitement, perhaps we need a more down-to-earth approach. Energy-hungry emerging economies and wasteful industrial countries were not even prepared to implement the Kyoto Protocol. I am therefore doubtful as to whether anything will change following the Copenhagen conference. The purpose of certificate trading is also questionable, with millions being spent on this, while the genuine alternatives, such as renewable energy, are fobbed off with peanuts. This must definitely not lead to nuclear power plants being promoted as a Kyoto-friendly alternative.

The second urgent crisis, in other words, the subsidy race for the failing car manufacturer Opel, is an equally explosive issue. Signs such as a drop in orders were not taken seriously enough and the EU has probably contributed to the decline of a once flourishing industry with its raft of regulations. The lesson we must learn from this is that we need, in future, to establish basic conditions which can be planned and predicted for all industries, and until we have fully-developed concepts in place, it is irresponsible to throw billions of euros of European taxpayers’ money at the problem. It is important to ensure at least that this money does not go to the US. In addition, repayment rules must be introduced.

If nothing else, it should be possible to lay the foundations for finalising the ‘transparent’ European citizen at the forthcoming meeting. The Stockholm Programme gives people fewer rights, not more, because they have no control over how the data is used. There is no sign of an end to the monitoring of passengers, the controversial subject of data protection has not yet been resolved and if we are to introduce a European asylum system, then in my opinion, we should apply the strictest criteria, such as those in use in Denmark.

Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council. – (SV) Mr President, my thanks to the group leaders for their very inspiring contributions. The vast majority, although not all, seem, like the Swedish Presidency, to be pleased that we were able to successfully make the two appointments of Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton. Both of these people contribute to coherence, stability and increased coordination in the European Union, something that is necessary if we are to be able to focus on the major challenges that overlap the six-month presidencies. I think that is very good.

Like Mr Schulz said, now that they have been appointed, they will be able to focus on their tasks and we can move past this debate. Perhaps once the Treaty of Lisbon finally enters into force on 1 December, the British domestic policy debate can also be left outside this Chamber. The EU needs modern ground rules and the Treaty of Lisbon will provide us with them. We will be better equipped to deal with the major issues that we face.

In the forthcoming period leading up to the European Summit, there are three main issues on which the Swedish Presidency hopes to make progress together with you and with the help of the Commission. The climate issue, with regard to which we are doing our utmost to get an ambitious political agreement with a timetable, so that it can eventually become legally binding. We will have to live with the outcome of Copenhagen and what happens afterwards for a long time and we need to gradually change our societies to become more climate smart.

On the economic issues, even though things are looking brighter on the financial markets, we are facing high levels of unemployment in many countries and this will be a distinctive feature of our economies for many years to come.

With regard to Mr Verhofstadt's questions concerning supervision, I am pleased that we are nevertheless making progress on this issue. The problem that we have had up to now with financial supervision is that it has focused too much on individual companies and too little on the financial system as a whole. Cooperation between the different supervisory bodies has not been working either. With the new European supervisory bodies in place, we will be able to remedy this. They will have an overarching view and enhanced cooperation. They will also, of course, be accountable to the Council and to the European Parliament. Other details of this matter will be discussed at the Ecofin meeting on 2 December, when I hope that we will make further progress.

Finally, with regard to the Stockholm Programme: this is a very important decision that we will also have to live with for a long time to come and over which the European Parliament will have a very great deal of influence in future. As many of you said, it is a matter of finding solutions to the terrible problems that we are facing with regard to cross-border crime, trafficking and the threat of terrorism, and of balancing this with a policy that places citizens centre stage and ensures that an individual's privacy is respected.

I hope that we can produce a long-term programme to deal with these issues within the Stockholm Programme. These three issues, together with a number of others, have been the Swedish Presidency's priorities and I am very pleased to see that we will, hopefully, bring these to a successful conclusion in December. Thank you very much. I will, of course, speak again at the end of this debate.

José Manuel Barroso, *President of the Commission*. – Mr President, there was this concrete issue on SWIFT and I want to clarify the position on that matter because I think it is extremely important. It also has to do with the Stockholm Programme.

The SWIFT Programme is, indeed, a very valuable instrument for Member States in their fight against terrorism. It has allowed Member States' authorities to prevent terrorist attacks in Europe. We are not talking about theoretical cases. We are talking about actual cases.

The draft European Union-United States agreement, which is currently being discussed, is an interim arrangement with a maximum duration of 12 months. It is needed in order to legally replace the existing one after the move of the data storage out of the United States.

If the interim agreement is adopted before 1 December and the legal basis is changed, it will avoid a security gap and a serious blow to European Union-United States relations in this area.

In the recent meeting we had, involving the European Union and President Obama, the first issue he raised was the cooperation on the fight against terrorism between the United States and Europe. He gave us the names of concrete countries in Europe that escaped terrorist attacks recently because of the cooperation in this matter between us and them.

I can give you some data on that, if you wish. More than 5 450 cases under the Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme have been passed to date to European governments, with over 100 new generated leads provided to European countries from January to September this year.

I can give you concrete examples. This information has provided substantial assistance to European governments during the investigation into the al-Qaeda-directed plot to attack transatlantic airline flights travelling between the UK and the United States.

In mid-September 2009, three individuals were convicted, and each was sentenced to at least 30 years in prison. In early 2009, this system was used to identify the financial activity of a Europe-based al-Qaeda individual who played a role in the planning of an alleged attack on aircraft. The information was passed to the governments of European and Middle Eastern nations.

In summer 2007, the same system was used to identify the financial activities of Germany-based members of the Islamic Jihad Union. This information contributed to the investigation and eventual arrest of Islamic Jihad Union members who were plotting to attack sites in Germany. They subsequently confessed to these activities.

So, this system has already saved many lives in Europe and elsewhere. We are talking about an extremely serious matter. I fully agree that the whole fight against terrorism has to be done in the full respect of fundamental rights and guarantees of our open, free societies. We were the first in the world to say to President Bush that he needed to close Guantánamo – we Europeans. And we stand by it. At the same time, we have to see to it that we stay united and committed to the fight against terrorism.

That is why I want to give you all the assurance that we will present to you a new mandate on the basis of the new Treaty of Lisbon, precisely for addressing this issue, where the European Parliament will have its full powers.

So, in early 2010, we will come with a new basis respecting the Lisbon Treaty that will, of course, give Parliament all the capacity to act in this matter because we want Parliament to also be at the forefront of this action against terrorism and for security, by fully respecting, of course, our fundamental rights and our legal guarantees.

Finally, since so many of you spoke – and I thank you for your comments – on the issue of gender balance, which is so important for me, for the Commission and for the European institutions, let me signal the fact that today is the 10th anniversary of the international day for the elimination of violence against women. I think this is an agenda where we also have to do something in Europe. Unfortunately, there are still many cases in Europe where women are affected by attacks by their male companions or former companions. I want to use this opportunity to show our commitment to this very important agenda which is also in our European society.

Mario Mauro (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, when commenting on the appointments made for the opening of the new European Union season, the international press has very often used terms such as ‘candidates who are not up to the job’ or ‘unsatisfactory candidates’.

I would like to buck the trend. Mr Verhofstadt never said a truer word when he stated that a glass may be seen as half full or half empty. I therefore wonder what the Council’s rationale was when it chose these individuals. I believe it was a Community-based rationale, and I will try to explain what I mean by that. Choosing an outgoing member of the European Commission for the role of European Foreign Minister sends out a clear message: it is saying that the intention is to conduct a Community foreign policy and not a foreign policy that adheres to the philosophies of any one nation in particular. As far as I am concerned, therefore, the news is not that Mrs Ashton is British, but that she comes from the Commission. In other words, she adopts a Community approach to foreign policy matters that is not linked to the particular viewpoint of one nation.

As for the Belgian Prime Minister’s nomination as a candidate, this has been questioned by comparing him with higher-profile individuals. I believe that what we are asking of the President of the European Council, who will remain in office for two and a half years, is not to shout louder than others or to assert his authority more than others but to persuade others to speak with one voice. For this reason, I believe that it was a good choice to put forward Mr Van Rompuy.

We must be driven by a Community approach, because if we really want to build Europe, it is right that we choose these individuals on the basis of this criterion. We will be able to observe the efficiency and effectiveness of this choice when we see them in action, but I call on everyone to strongly support their work because otherwise, we really will have wasted the best opportunity of our lives.

IN THE CHAIR: MR PITTELLA

Vice-President

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, I took the floor yesterday in plenary to highlight the importance of the Stockholm Programme, which is on the agenda for the European Council on 10 December. I did so in order to draw attention to its content and, in particular, to call for the broadest possible parliamentary support to move forward the report drawn up by three committees working together. I refer to the Committee on Legal Affairs, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, and

the Committee on Constitutional Affairs. Yesterday, therefore, I focused on the importance of creating a Europe for the citizens, as well as a market.

I think now is the right time to emphasise the significance of this matter from a constitutional point of view, on the agenda for the European Council to be held on 10 and 11 December. After all, Parliament will be strengthened pursuant to the Treaty of Lisbon.

Parliament will be strengthened notably in the area of freedom, security and justice and through the development of the action plan to be adopted during the Spanish Presidency. This is because, pursuant to Article 17 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 295 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, such cooperation is required. These articles call on us to engage in interinstitutional cooperation and require us to reach an agreement on interinstitutional cooperation in order to jointly develop a strategy for implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon. Furthermore, we are required to do so whilst complying with the principles of the greatest possible transparency, subsidiarity and cooperation with national parliaments. The latter will therefore be involved in the development of the Lisbon Agenda.

This means we will have to work much harder. Life is not going to be easier for us. On the contrary, it is going to become more complicated. We will also be forced to undertake an evaluation process to learn from the experience. The main aim of the exercise will be to ensure we comply with the European model and with fundamental rights. The European Parliament will also have to be more involved regarding data protection. I have in mind the follow up to the SWIFT Agreement referred to earlier today and which is so important in the context of our bilateral relationship with the United States.

Most significantly, however, the European Parliament is going to be involved in the assessment and follow up of the performance of the agencies within Europe's institutional structure. I refer to Europol, the European Asylum Support Office, Eurojust and Frontex.

For all these reasons, I would like the agenda for the European Council to reflect the importance of strengthening the commitment to act and work in cooperation with the European Parliament, notably in relation to the preparation and follow up of the action plan to be adopted during the coming six months of the Spanish Presidency.

Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, we have done it – the Treaty of Lisbon has entered into force. I would like to thank Cecilia Malmström, the Swedish Presidency and the entire team who have all worked very hard. This is a major achievement.

In this context, I would like to talk briefly about two points which formed the subject of this debate. The first point is the Council President. Mr Barroso, you have just said that you want to work in tandem with Herman Van Rompuy. I think that this is a very good idea. It is right that you should work together with the Council. There is, though, one thing that I would like to say quite clearly: the Council President is not responsible to the European Parliament nor to any other parliament. This means that you in your role of Commission President are the legitimate democratic institution and the legitimate democratic president of Europe. For this reason, by all means work in tandem, but please make sure that you are sitting in the front and steering the vehicle.

My second point is that the representative of the Council said that Cathy Ashton would take up both the office of High Representative and the office of Vice-President of the Commission on 1 December 2009. Firstly, it is only one office – High Representative, Vice-President of the Commission – and secondly, she cannot take up office without the consent of Parliament. From 1 December, the first Barroso Commission is in a legal no-man's-land between the end of the Treaty of Nice and the beginning of the Treaty of Lisbon. Cathy Ashton will only fully take up office after receiving the consent of Parliament at the end of January 2010.

One final word on the debating culture in this House. We only need to listen to Mr Farage. If he and his party were ever to be in government in the United Kingdom, the British would really come to value the freedom of establishment in the European Union, because huge numbers of them would move to France, Germany, Spain and Italy and to Portugal, Mr Barroso.

Jill Evans (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, the Council meeting will take place less than two weeks after the Treaty of Lisbon comes into force and we have, as the Minister said, been through a long and difficult process to reach this point. But many of us feel that we have missed a critical opportunity. There is still a missing link, a vital democratic element in the relationship between the EU and the people of Europe, and that is the sub-state, or regional level of government.

Many constituents feel that Europe is as distant as it ever was and we have to address this urgently. Not all of us had a referendum and the opportunity to give our views on the future development of Europe, yet there are things happening across the EU that have a direct impact on our work in facing the challenges before us and all of those policy issues that have already been mentioned – employment, social rights, economic regulation, fighting terrorism, peace and justice – and I am proud to speak, incidentally, as chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Wales.

We are weeks away from the Copenhagen Summit, the biggest challenge of all. Up to 80% of mitigation and adaptation policies will be implemented at the local and regional levels. And many regional governments, like the government in Wales, have been leading the way in adopting radical policies to combat climate change. This is where any international agreements made will be delivered. So we must look beyond the Member State level to the peoples of Europe.

On Sunday, 13 December, over 150 municipalities in Catalonia are holding referendums on independence from Spain. How is the EU responding to this? Will this be on the Council agenda? I very much doubt it, but it should be. Europe is changing and I hope that the new President will recognise and respond to this.

Peter van Dalen (ECR). – (NL) First of all, I should like to express my compliments to the Swedish Presidency for the efforts it has undertaken over the past few months. It deserves particular recognition for the manner in which it has solved the Rubik's cube with the appointments of Mr Van Rompuy and Lady Ashton.

I am very happy with these appointments, because Mr Van Rompuy has already said that his personal views are entirely irrelevant. His words are a testament to the wisdom and good sense of his insight. I congratulate Mr Van Rompuy on this Euro-realistic approach and will keep reminding him of it in the future, regardless of whether these reminders are expected or necessary.

Unfortunately, I have also heard expressions of disapproval from those who fear that the first permanent President of the Council does not have sufficient competences for the job. Evidently, some had been hoping for some kind of European superman. I certainly do not share such views and Mr Van Rompuy's first statements have put me at ease. He has never indicated that he wants to become a European superman of that kind.

President, at the upcoming Council meeting, the heads of European governments will have to dot the i's and cross the t's of their Copenhagen strategy in order to be able to achieve the best result possible. I wish President Van Rompuy and Mr Bildt, President-in-Office of the Council, every technical success in this very important task. In addition, I wish all of us a positive and, above all, a forward-looking outcome.

Takis Hatzigeorgiou (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, the next Council will face a major issue, the issue of enlargement. When we talk of enlargement, we understand that Turkey is a large chapter in the debate. We, both Cyprus and my party – and I wish to say this very clearly before the European Parliament – are absolutely in favour of Turkey's accession to the European Union. However, we shall not tire ourselves repeating that this accession cannot happen if Turkey fails to deliver, like all the other countries which have acceded, on all the commitments it has made to Cyprus and to the European Union.

Talks are under way in Cyprus between the two leaders and, if a solution is achieved, it will be a symbol of victory for the entire European Union. This victory will encourage the European Union to take up its place in the modern world. However, we must put the truth back on the table and the truth is that Turkey is occupying half of Cyprus with 40 000 troops supposedly protecting 80 000 Turkish Cypriots. That equates to two Turkish soldiers outside every Turkish Cypriot house. I do not know of any MEPs with that much security. So we are talking about the isolation of Turkish Cypriots and we are publicly in favour of eliminating the isolation of Turkish Cypriots by the occupying army.

To close, I should like to point out that, while supporting the accession of Turkey, Cyprus cannot consent to the opening of the energy chapter until Turkey has honoured its commitments towards the European Union and Cyprus and until it has eliminated the obstacles it is placing on the Republic of Cyprus in its efforts to enlarge its economic area.

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – (HU) There have been two important personnel decisions made very recently in keeping with the Treaty of Lisbon. The European Union now has a permanent president and a foreign high representative. Do these personnel decisions convey an important message to us? They do, indeed. We talk a great deal in this Chamber about the balance which exists between the European Commission, Council and Parliament. In my view, there is an imbalance, with the EU's government, the Commission, having a

monopoly over initiating legislation. In some cases, it almost acts like a judge. It controls the main power, while we in this House give it the rubber stamp of democracy. The Treaty of Lisbon does not specify the duties of the permanent president. These will obviously depend on how charismatic and determined the person ending up in this post is. It can be interpreted from the decision that the power and control should remain – in your words – with the Commission representing the supranational common interest. However, what we say is that it has remained in the hands of the head of an empire centrally controlling the lives of 500 million people.

On the other hand, it would also be very important to make sure that we act decisively where our immediate task is concerned, when we talk about the climate conference. However, this involves a decisive step against the United States. I am almost confident that the reason why President Barroso has just stepped out was to make a telephone call on this matter.

Marietta Giannakou (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, it is important that the Treaty of Lisbon has finally entered into force. Of course, European citizens have been watching for ten years as the European Union has failed to find ways of ensuring the institutions work effectively following enlargement with the accession of the twelve new Member States. Today, however, things have changed. We have a Council President – and everyone assures us that this is a person who will seek consent and agreement – and we also have a High Representative for foreign policy.

Commenting *ex ante* on whether or not they are suitable in comparison with those whose names were being bandied about beforehand or compared with those who have supposedly specialised in such matters is unimportant. What is important is how the treaty will be applied. Cooperation between the European Commission and the European Parliament is hugely important here. Parliament's role has been strengthened but, in order for it to be strengthened in essence and for European citizens to perceive this, the European Commission urgently needs to raise questions, given that it has the initiative in the European Council.

The Council will supposedly operate faster, given that it will no longer operate as before under the presidencies of the Member States, and governments will not have the opportunity to manipulate the Councils in order to argue that everything good comes from governments and everything bad and irritating comes from Brussels.

Clearly, there will be questions at the December Council about enlargement, but neither the Minister nor the President of the Commission has given us any details; they have only spoken to us in general about other matters. It is a fact that enlargement to the western Balkans and Turkey, on the basis of the proposals by the European Commission, is up against numerous doubts and questions, despite the objective of integrating these countries into the European Union.

Catherine Trautmann (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, on Thursday the European Union appointed Mr Van Rompuy as its first permanent President of the Council and Mrs Ashton to be in charge of European diplomacy. Ladies and gentlemen, I wanted to return to the debate that has been taking place in our institutions since these appointments were announced.

Indeed, in my opinion, beyond the issue of names and functions, there is the central issue of the States. Let me explain what I mean. We are witnessing what could be the worst nightmare of those who conveyed the ideal of the European Community and their desire for union. At that time, it was believed that the roots of the Union were to be found in state legitimacy and that its future lay in transcending national selfishness. Tension between two contradictory mediums, which is sometimes painful, often produces original mechanisms, but, above all, serves a political approach that is unique in the world.

This nightmare, ladies and gentlemen, is that of a Europe that would be limited to a community of intergovernmental acquisitions. The result, as we can see today, would be suspicion of incompetence, presumption of illegitimacy and tension between political families.

In making this speech, I do not intend, as you will have gathered, to return to making judgments on mere intent. I prefer to recall with you the rights and duties of we MEPs. Our duty is to question the impenetrable haggling that surrounds appointments to the posts that resulted from the Treaty of Lisbon. Our duty, in future, is to force the Council to put an end to this undemocratic, archaic method of appointment that fosters the idea that Europe, in building itself, is sheltered from the peoples.

Our duty is to use all our new parliamentary prerogatives to influence the policies that will result from the new powers guaranteed to us under the Treaty of Lisbon.

Parliament, between a weakened Commission and a strengthened intergovernmental centre, needs to become the institutional point of equilibrium. On this matter, I hope that the Vice-President of the Commission will be subject to the same hearing process by the European Parliament as the other commissioners. Indeed, we have a right to carry out this process; it is conferred by the treaties. I also support the proposal of Mrs Harms, who has suggested a meeting between the new President and the groups as a whole.

Our duty is to kick-start European integration, which is in a seriously bad way. No one can reasonably want the mandates entrusted to Mr Van Rompuy or Mrs Ashton to fail and, more especially, I wish Mrs Ashton every success because I am proud that a woman has been appointed to this post of High Representative.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE). – (FR) Mr President, first of all, thank you to the Swedish Presidency for leaving us, at the end of the year, with the best of itself. This is good news for the Commission and good news for our Parliament.

Having said that, I shall now take up a number of points. Firstly, the issue of appointments. I am not calling into question the issue of people, but that of procedures. Furthermore, I really do hope that this is the last time that this will happen in such a way. Europeans expected transparency, democracy and clarity in the debate and, basically, what they got was obscurity and last-minute negotiations held behind the closed doors of a European Council. This must not be repeated, and I believe it will be up to our Parliament to propose new procedures and new rules for the future.

With regard to climate change, my wish is that the Union will speak with one voice and act jointly after Copenhagen, no matter what the scope of the outcome of the conference. Let us move forward! Let us aim for an actual 30% reduction in greenhouse gases! When I say 'actual', this means that it will eventually be necessary, one day, to raise the issue of derogations and emissions trading. Let us move forward and, again, make a firm financial commitment to developing countries. We owe it to them.

Lastly, with regard to the economic and social situation, we must work on establishing a new economic model that gives priority to employment, social progress and the long term, in other words, sustainability in all its forms. We therefore need supervision and regulation, a policy that is more advantageous to small and medium-sized enterprises, and common thinking on a tax system that favours the long term over the short term.

Gerald Häfner (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, what position are we in now in the run-up to this summit in Europe? Some speeches made it sound as if everything would be fine provided that we simply had enough social democratic or liberal – yes, Mr Schulz – commissioners. I believe that is a mistake. Everything will be fine when we agree on the major tasks facing Europe.

In Europe 20 years ago, we brought down the Iron Curtain and it seems to me significant that it was the people, the citizens, who achieved that and not the armed forces, the governments or the secret service. I believe that in future, too, we will only be able to build Europe together with the citizens.

Secondly, there are other walls to be brought down, including those in our heads. For example, many people still believe that we can play off freedom and security against one another, although we know that freedom is only effective when we protect it. However, this protection must not be at the expense of our fundamental rights and must not lead to the creation of a surveillance state, given the example of SWIFT and other issues.

Many people also believe that it is possible to play off Europe and democracy against one another. However, only a democratic Europe can be successful in the long term. Many people believe that the environment and the economy are opposing concepts, whereas the only way to ensure long-term prosperity is to establish an environmental economy.

Finally, I would like to say one thing. We are now in the run-up to Stockholm and if we do not do whatever is possible there, regardless of the cost – and many people are prepared to spend hundreds of millions on bailing out the banks, but are tight-fisted about the climate – if we do not act quickly and consistently, then what applies to me as a speaker now will also be true of the human race. Its time will be up.

Roberts Zīle (ECR). – (LV) Thank you, Mr President. Last week, European society experienced two events. The society of football saw how a referee chose a team that will take part in the World Cup finals, but society as a whole failed to see or to understand how and why certain arbiters chose the champions for European office. Yet, if one asks whom the occupant of the White House or the Kremlin will call in future, the answer is they will call the same people they called before. As for the Council's December measures, given the economic, financial and employment situation, I challenge the Swedish Presidency not to forget the

well-known situation of the Baltic States in these respects. Given the aggressive investment into these countries, they have been forced desperately to adhere to their national currencies' tight and investor-friendly peg to the euro. What this means in reality is the devaluation of their economies, so that the Baltic peoples are becoming the unemployment champions, while their demographic society bleeds to death. What sort of European solidarity can we tell our citizens about if their social and economic situation ends up even further behind the European average than it was before they joined the European Union?

Andrey Kovatchev (PPE). – (BG) The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon should entail greater transparency, greater democracy and greater effectiveness for the decision-making process. However, as we are well aware, effectiveness and democracy do not always go in the same direction, especially when there is a lack of coordination between the institutions and relations with citizens. There is no doubt that it is more democratic to find an appropriate way for European citizens to be involved in the election of a president of the Council so that the European Union can really get closer to its citizens. I think that this will be a task for the future. In spite of all this, I wish those appointed as President of the Council and High Representative every success.

As far as the forthcoming Council meeting on 10 and 11 December is concerned, I greatly hope that an ambitious programme of institutional matters relating to the Treaty of Lisbon will be adopted at it. I am thinking of the European External Action Service. We must be given a clear understanding of its composition, legal status and powers. In this sense, our Parliament is voting on its position on Mr Brok's report. I am also expecting to receive a clear explanation from the Council on the results of the coordinated strategies applied and proposed for exiting the crisis, including any package of economic and financial measures. I would like to know in particular what the Council's view is of the future European Financial Supervisory Authorities, which should reduce in the future the risk of financial misdemeanours, which basically contributed to the current crisis.

Another important point which I am expecting to hear the Council's decision on is, for example, an integrated post-Lisbon strategy, which we heard is expected to be adopted in March 2010. I hope that Parliament will take an active role in this strategy. Europe's citizens must be at the heart of this strategy. Providing jobs through investment, research, innovation, green technologies and eco-efficiency must be a factor contributing to sustainable economic development, and not the other way round. With regard to the Stockholm Strategy, I would also like the Schengen Area to be expanded, of course, to include Bulgaria and Romania as soon as possible. Thank you and I wish you every success at the meeting.

Glenis Willmott (S&D). – Mr President, first of all, I would like to say that I welcome the new appointment of Mr Van Rompuy and I am particularly proud that we have an extremely able and talented British woman in Cathy Ashton as the first High Representative.

Regarding the Council meeting in December, we have seen the impact of adverse weather this week in Cumbria in the north-west of England, which has experienced severe flooding, and it is not just in Europe that the weather is creating unexpected hardship. Adverse weather is causing other unforeseen human tragedy across our planet.

Denial is the easy option, but I did not go into politics to fight for easy options. I do not want my children or my grandchildren to ask why I did not act. In my region, the Conservatives are represented by Roger Helmer, who describes man-made climate change as a myth. Despite the claims of the Tory leader, David Cameron, that they are a party of the environment, Helmer represents the danger and unreliability of Conservative environmental policy.

We need to act, but fighting this alone will not work. We need action at all levels, which involves reducing the amount of carbon we produce to at least 2%. I support those like our Prime Minister, who has pledged to cut carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. The Labour Government in the UK wants a deal that is ambitious, effective and fair and to support the poorest countries to cut their emissions and adapt to climate change.

Any climate financing agreed must be additional to existing development aid targets and it must not come from existing budgets. Any funding agreed at Copenhagen needs to deal specifically with the effects of climate change on the developing world and should not replace other valuable aid flows. Presently, the focus seems to be on near-term, fast-start finance, but we also need long-term commitments. Can Mr Barroso guarantee that he will make post-2012 finance commitments a priority for any Copenhagen agreement?

Diana Wallis (ALDE). – Mr President, we stand at the beginning of a new era, and perhaps we should pose ourselves three questions: who, how and what? The 'who' was more or less answered last week, and nobody

could be more pleased than me. In a week where we started with only three women in the Commission, we finish with nine.

I can advise some of those that the women MEPs in suits and ties have stood down for the moment, but they will be back in five years' time if the process does not improve. Next time, please can we have a process where all Member States nominate a woman and a man as candidates, so that we do not have the last-minute rush.

That is what I want to talk about as well: the 'how'. This process was untransparent. It has been mentioned that we now have to think about the practical implications of the Lisbon Treaty. Let us make transparency the watchword for our three institutions and how we deal with one another, how we are open to the public. Transparency must rule in the future.

The 'what' must be the focus on our citizens. The new Stockholm Programme is a good start, much more citizen-centric than any of its predecessors, but we must continue to protect our citizens' rights in giving them protection but also making sure that their daily lives are easier across Europe.

Mirosław Piotrowski (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, the forthcoming European Council Summit is still going to be dominated by the recent elections of the President of the Council and the head of EU diplomacy. For many, not only was the election of these particular people a surprise, but also the lack of a clear indication of their responsibilities. For a long time, we have been told that the new Lisbon Treaty will improve the work of the EU, but now, at the outset, it turns out to be evoking conflicts over personnel. Neither of the candidates has presented a programme, in contradistinction to Mr Barroso, for example, who did present a programme prior to his election.

We are moving into an experimental phase in which a great deal is going to depend on the personality and imagination of the new leaders. We can only hope that, when they are dealing with matters like Commission reshuffles and cyclic changes in nature which are largely independent of human activity, they will also deal with resolving the specific problems of EU citizens, such as the economic crisis, aid for the poorest regions in the EU and the fight against terrorism.

Gunnar Hökmark (PPE). – Mr President, I think that after the Lisbon Treaty becomes reality, the meeting of the European Council last week and the nomination of Commissioners, it is time to set new perspectives and see the new challenges that are ahead of us.

One of them is obvious and that is that the work after Copenhagen will be just as challenging as the work before. It will continue to be one of the main tasks for the European Union and the new Commission. But, also, we shall consider the fact that now is also the time to leave behind the old concepts of East and West in Europe, or new and old, and to think that it is one Europe.

And it is also time to see that now, after all the discussions regarding the Lisbon Treaty, it is time to see a new momentum for the enlargement process.

Croatia and Iceland – I would like them to compete to be number 28. But, also, the western Balkans and, of course, the negotiations with Turkey need to be considered. Those are issues that are now ahead of us and are a way of improving the strength of the European Union in a new world, where we need to be strong and to lead as regards ideas and values.

But it is also a matter of now ensuring that we will have a new agenda for a social Europe – meaning jobs, innovation and prosperity – and the only means to achieve that is to ensure that, after the crisis, we can become a competitive and leading economy.

And I would underline that there is a responsibility for the new Commission to ensure that there will be no protectionism, that it will be easy for small and medium-sized enterprises to grow and emerge and act throughout Europe, and that we can ensure that Europe will be a dynamic economy. This is important, and I say this to the President of the Commission and to all Commissioners: we need to ensure that we have a competitive European economy in order to have a social Europe.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) Mr President, Mrs Wallström, the Treaty of Lisbon's ratification process is now over, and Heads of State or Government have elected Commissioner Catherine Ashton as the EU's first Foreign Minister, although this is not her official title.

The next task now will be to set up the European Union's foreign service. There is one consideration which I think is important to bear in mind when setting up this service – and I am asking the Swedish Presidency,

and Cecilia Malmström specifically, to ensure that attention is paid to this in the foreign service – which is that there is an extremely low level of representation of new Member States in the Directorates-General for External Relations and Enlargement. When national quotas are being assigned to Member States, consideration must be given to the fact that the new Member States are essentially barely represented in these two Directorates-General. Therefore, no discrimination should be applied because for the foreign service to gain credibility in people's eyes, attention needs to be paid to this proportionality. It is very important for this proportionality and equal treatment to be implemented in the foreign service. This is in our common interest.

I urge the European Commission and Council as well to look closely at this aspect. Out of the EU's 143 external representations, there is only a single ambassador from a new Member State. This fact speaks for itself.

Charles Goerens (ALDE). – (FR) Mr President, what I am going to say does not concern the Swedish Presidency-in-Office of the Council, which has been an excellent presidency, and I would like to congratulate it, but my comments concern, more specifically, the entire College of the European Council.

What has not been done to save the Treaty of Lisbon? We have fought for years to make Europe more transparent, more efficient, more visible, closer to the citizens.

By our reasoning, the extraordinary European Council on 19 November 2009 would not have betrayed the spirit of the Treaty of Lisbon by appointing the President of the Council and the High Representative only after the new treaty came into force. We have fought for 10 years to have this treaty, and the Council did not want to wait 10 days to enforce the new provisions relating to the appointment of the two posts.

The spirit of the Treaty of Lisbon, for which we have fought so hard, would not have been betrayed by entrusting the post of President to Jean-Claude Juncker, a staunch European, fine teacher and Europe-enthusiast with outstanding experience and expertise. It is rare to come across someone embodying so many qualities. It has not yet been explained to us in what way his unquestionable qualities constituted an obstacle to his appointment, as indeed seems to be the case. I am not the only one who would like to be enlightened on this matter.

From ordinary European Council to extraordinary European Council, last Thursday's meeting was not capable, either, of disguising the underlying divide between intergovernmental spirit and the Community method. I am not the only one to deplore this state of affairs. Even though, after the referendum in Ireland, many people believed Europe had been given a new lease of life, just as many people regretted the rather unconvincing start to the beginning of this parliamentary term.

Just a word to conclude: it only remains for me to hope that the appointed President, whose human qualities and political skill are well known, manages as quickly as possible to give fresh impetus to a Europe that sorely needs it.

Simon Busuttil (PPE). – (MT) Sometimes we get so caught up in our daily work routine that we fail to fully appreciate the historical moments passing us by. The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty is one such occasion that will go down in history and which our children and future generations will eventually study and learn about. However, on occasions such as this, we must also reflect upon the meaning of such an historical moment. I would like to make two brief reflections.

First, thanks to the treaty, we will finally see an end to what I believe are useless debates on the European Institutions and on the constitution of the European Union. Instead, we are now going to be in a better position to face up to the realities that Europe has to deal with, such as the economic situation, employment, climate change and immigration. These are the challenges that our electorate wants us to tackle.

The second reflection concerns Parliament's role. This is the last time that the Parliament will be meeting within this plenary with the powers it has had thus far. This parliament was born fifty years ago, and its members were appointed by national parliaments. Today, it is a Parliament that shares the power to decide, legislate and draw up laws together with the Council of Ministers. I believe that this will result in the creation of European Union laws that will better reflect our citizens' interests. This Parliament shall be committed to guarding the citizens' interests in the laws we adopt.

I augur that the Council that is meeting next week will dwell upon the historical meaning of this moment and that together, we will work towards overcoming the challenges we are contending with.

Jörg Leichtfried (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, there is one clear priority for me, for all of us and for the entire European Union in future, and that is the labour market. We must pay much,

much more attention to creating new jobs and securing existing ones. This highly important area can be the key to a successful and sustainable Europe and, in my opinion, has been seriously neglected in recent months. We must be aware that a low unemployment rate has a positive influence on many other areas. Let us make sure that we are applying the lever in the right place.

In addition, I fail to understand many of the speakers in this House who complain that some European politicians did not enjoy worldwide fame before their election. Why should they be famous? We need to be self-confident enough as Europeans to say who we like and who we think is appropriate and then to elect these people and not to decide on the basis of whether other people have or have not heard of them or whether or not they suit our partners throughout the world. Any other approach would be ridiculous, just as ridiculous as many of the speeches from many of the people who, if they are here at all, are hiding behind their brightly coloured flags.

Tunne Kelam (PPE). – Mr President, this is a good beginning for Advent time – looking forward to the Lisbon Treaty coming into force.

However, it is not just God's gift. We need to make a determined effort to gain added value for our European project. First and foremost, the way is now open for common European policies. There are no longer any formal excuses to abstain from them. It is now up to the Council to start vigorous common foreign security and energy policies that could become truly credible for our partners. One of the most pressing tasks will be completion of the single energy market, developing all-European energy-supply networks and storage facilities, as well as implementing an energy solidarity clause.

The second problem arises from the economic crisis. In fact, the countries outside the euro area have suffered the most from the dramatic decrease in investments and rising unemployment. They also have become more vulnerable due to competitive disadvantage if compared to the euro area members. Therefore, temporary measures by the EU, like additional lending facilities to support SMEs and energy and infrastructure projects are clearly needed. Furthermore, better access to the European funds could be facilitated by temporarily reducing the national cofinancing requirements.

As you know, President, my country, Estonia, is making determined efforts to join the euro area by 2011. Estonia has one of the lowest foreign debt rates and has succeeded in bringing the budgetary deficit under control. The recent acknowledgement of Estonia's efforts by the OECD and Commissioner Almunia are encouraging signs that we are on the right path.

Zoran Thaler (S&D). – (SL) In December, the European Council will address very important issues. This will be the first Council meeting after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and my colleagues in this House have already spoken about what those issues will be.

Personally, I would like to draw your attention to one very important issue that sometimes tends to be overlooked but which concerns the stability of Europe and the European Union as a whole: and that is the issue of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

The FYROM has been a candidate country for the past four years and, over the past 18 years, it has been in a virtual frozen conflict with Greece, its southerly neighbour and a long-standing member of the European Union. This means we could be said to have a frozen conflict in the heart of Europe.

This year has been a very successful one for the FYROM. In 2009, the FYROM made significant progress. It has received a positive report from the Commission, which recommended that the Council give this country the go-ahead to commence negotiations on fully-fledged membership. On 20 December, it will have its visa requirement lifted and, a short while ago, we had elections in Greece.

I call on the representatives of the Council and the Commission, on the one hand, and on the Member States, on the other, to lend support to Prime Ministers Papandreou and Gruevski, these courageous two men, so that they can finally find a solution and so that the FYROM can join the large family that is Europe.

Andrzej Grzyb (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the European Council to be held on 11 and 12 December will sum up a fruitful Swedish Presidency. I would like to congratulate the minister and the entire government, because they finalised the very difficult ratification process. Secondly, implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon is beginning. It also introduces new institutions, such as President of the European Council and High Representative for Foreign Policy. We know that these appointments have caused discussion and controversy, including here in this Chamber.

We wish the nominees well, but we would like to say that the real test will be, amongst others, the quality of Eastern policy and the process of setting up the European External Action Service. We regret, however, that there is no one in the team who would represent Central and Eastern Europe. I think another reshuffle could certainly fulfil this requirement in the future.

The Copenhagen Climate Summit is to approve, among other things, the ambitious objectives which have been put forward by the European Union. This, too, is a matter for the forthcoming Council. So is the Stockholm Programme, which is important from the point of view of security, and the citizens, and the new provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon. In addition, there is everything connected with the economic crisis.

Our expectations connected with the introduction of the Treaty of Lisbon are, above all, a more efficient EU, able to carry out further enlargement and bringing benefits both to citizens and Member States. We expect the Treaty of Lisbon to bring a new start to the common market by eliminating the gulf between political and economic integration. We would also like appointment of the new European Commission to be done with respect for the European Parliament and its rights, as well as implementation of the new role for national parliaments while preserving the principle of subsidiarity, and discussion of how to build Europe after Lisbon. However, practical implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon means an acknowledgement that solidarity and energy policy are also matters governed by current legislation, such as the regulation on security of gas supply.

Ivari Padar (S&D). – (ET) Mr President, first I would like to talk about the High Representative appointed last week. Some previous speakers have criticised both the President and the High Representative, which I consider quite inappropriate. No one is ever entirely happy, but personally I see the appointment of both Representatives in a positive light, since a balance has been found between everyone's interests: between small and large countries, between men and women, and between the different political poles.

Perhaps the only thing that annoys me personally is that no Representatives from the new Member States got any of these posts, although perhaps this will be possible next time. In any case, I want to thank every candidate from my area, especially the Estonian President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, and the Latvian President, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga. I think, though, that now we should go on with the essential work and stop occupying our time with personalities.

The second important point I wish to talk about is dealing with the financial crisis, which I believe the Council has made a priority. The citizens of Europe expect us to deal with the problems of unemployment and the financial supervision package. As far as this is concerned, it is very important what kind of Commission the new Commission will be, and how effective it will be. This is also true for my country, Estonia, because for us, the most obvious aim is to secure new economic growth in order to become an enfranchised member of the euro area, which we are very close to doing, as there is a large possibility that we will fulfil the Maastricht criteria. Thank you.

Alojz Peterle. (PPE). – (SL) I am pleased that the first meeting of the Council to be held according to the rules of the Treaty of Lisbon is upon us. I wish Mr Herman Van Rompuy, the first President of the Council, every success. We have quite similar views on how we should act in unity, while having regard to our diversity.

The new institutional arrangements have been adopted in order to bring our decision making closer to citizens and to make it simpler, more democratic, more transparent and more effective. In this respect, we have heard much talk of a powerful Europe. However, the essential question which needs to be asked here is what concept of power we should develop, or on what foundations we can build a powerful Europe. The European Union's power and success hitherto stem from two key ideas of Europe's founding fathers: the first being respect for human dignity and the second cooperation. This means that, whilst working to safeguard our interests, we should also consider others, whether that means individuals, peoples, minorities or countries.

Today, we need to ask ourselves once again in all seriousness what it means to respect human dignity and what it means to put the human person at the centre of our concerns. This question is very closely linked to the Stockholm Programme. Many of you here have called attention to the fundamental freedoms and the need to protect them, but we appear to have quite divergent opinions about where human rights actually begin. I hope that we can, at least, agree that human rights begin before a person is granted citizenship of a given country.

I am with those who firmly believe that Article 1 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights ought to apply to human life in its entirety, i.e. from the beginning to the end of a person's life. In particular, we need

to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Before we can protect human freedoms, we must protect human life.

I was pleased to hear so many of you use the words 'acting together' and 'acting in partnership'. Europe's power lies in its joint efforts, whether we speak of the humanitarian or the intergovernmental method. We might be facing increasing challenges which demand that we show joint political will, but more cooperation does not mean losing our identities.

Göran Färm (S&D). – (SV) Mr President, we are hearing criticism that two quite unknown politicians have been appointed to top positions within the EU. I think that this criticism is unfair. We in Parliament at least have come to know Mrs Ashton as an excellent leader. However, the criticism needs to be dealt with, for many are now concluding that the Member States want to see the EU function merely as an intergovernmental coordinating body, rather than a separate political level with the task of finding common solutions to major challenges such as growth, jobs, peace and the environment. If it were true, it would be quite absurd.

Against this background, it is worrying that the Commission and the Council have found it so difficult to demonstrate any ability to act in respect of one of the greatest internal challenges that the EU is facing, namely the reform of the EU's long-term budget. We now need to provide the necessary resources in order to invest in the internal market. It is transport and infrastructure for energy that are at issue. We must provide the resources necessary to be able to back up what we are saying in the new Lisbon strategy with a view to 2020. We need to resolve the issue of climate financing at least to some extent through the EU's budget and we need to prepare for forthcoming enlargement.

My question to the Presidency and the Commission is therefore: when will we see tangible proposals for a mid-term review that will have an impact on the non-existent budget margins for the remaining three years of this financial perspective, where the current ceilings prevent any reasonable action being taken to tackle the challenges that cannot wait until after 2013 and also a proposal drawing up guidelines for a long-term budget reform?

Seán Kelly (PPE). – (GA) Mr President, I would like to say a few words on behalf of Ireland on this historic occasion for the European Union.

The Lisbon Treaty coming into being, particularly on the foot of the 67% vote in favour by the Irish people, is a great boost to everybody in the European Union. I think this is reflective of the support there is amongst the citizens for the good work that the European project has done over many years.

Unfortunately, the appointment of the President and the High Representative has brought a lot of negative criticism which I think is somewhat unfair.

Firstly, when people are appointed to office, they should be given some time to settle in and they should be judged by results and not by preconceived notions of their ability to do the job.

In the case of Mr Van Rompuy, it has been said of him that he is a consensus builder and an effective negotiator, as if these were negative attributes. These are very important attributes in the times we live in. What do we want? A presidential-style guru strutting the world stage, causing trouble? A destroyer, a disrupter? No, what we need now is a good, effective, sensible chairman and I think we have got that. I wish him well.

As regards Baroness Ashton, it has been said she was never elected to office and that is true, but that in itself does not reflect one way or another on her qualities as a person or as an effective politician. I only saw her in action here since I came here and, in particular, I questioned her on the trade agreement with South Korea and I thought she acquitted herself very well.

I think some of the comments made today unfortunately by Mr Farage were over the top, but at this stage I am becoming aware of the fact that Mr Farage is like a long-playing record. He keeps repeating the same political agenda, harking back to the days of *Rule, Britannia!* and nation fighting nation. Those days are over. The European Union is the greatest peace process ever known. It shall continue to do so and we parliamentarians must work hard to ensure that that is the way it is going to be from now on.

Diogo Feio (PPE). – (PT) Mr President, this is an important debate, since I believe that it is the last in which we will be discussing names. It is, in fact, time to turn the page, to discuss policies and to discuss the challenges facing the European Union. I would like to highlight one such challenge: the issue of tackling the crisis. It is one of those issues on which the European political institutions have been most united.

It is time to congratulate the Council on its concern and, in particular, the Swedish Presidency. It is time to congratulate the Commission and its President, who has always been very concerned about tackling the crisis, and to highlight that Parliament itself has shown great readiness to discuss this issue by setting up a special committee.

However, it is also a time when there have been discrepancies between what is said by political leaders and what has been said by the governors of the central banks, at both national and European levels.

Firstly, we need to be cautious about the end of the crisis. This is not the time to withdraw support measures for state economies and companies. It is also time to plot the route ahead. The leaders of the central banks have alerted governments to an ambitious plan to correct deficits.

Times change. Moreover, they have revealed their opposition to some policies, such as those that aim to lower taxes, in a message addressed to several governments. I am sorry that the Portuguese Government is not going down the route of lowering taxes. The route has to be that of competitiveness, and the message of this concept has to be clear: more competitiveness, more stimulus, more growth, more support for companies, more Europe to support growth and jobs.

János Áder (PPE). – (HU) Mr President, the Copenhagen conference features as the fourth item on the European Council's agenda. There are two important controversial points preventing the European Union from reaching a united stance on this. One concerns the sale of carbon dioxide quotas after 2012. The Commission and some of the old EU Member States want to ban the sale of quotas after 2012. However, nine countries – the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Romania, the three Baltic States, Slovakia and Bulgaria – are insisting on being able to sell their quotas after 2012 as well.

The countries mentioned, including Hungary, have fulfilled, failed to fulfil and overfulfilled their Kyoto commitments. Hungary, for example, which committed to an 8% decrease, has achieved a 23% decrease. This is why Hungary finds the Commission's stance totally unacceptable and is insisting as firmly as possible on being able to sell its carbon dioxide quotas after 2012 as well. I would also like to call on my fellow Members from Bulgaria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and the Baltic States, irrespective of party affiliation, to stick just as resolutely themselves to this viewpoint.

Othmar Karas (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, firstly, I would like to offer you, Mrs Malmström, my sincere congratulations on moving, so to speak, from Parliament into government and from government into the European Commission. I wish you all the best.

We are having the last meeting under the Treaty of Nice and we are talking about the first meeting under the Treaty of Lisbon. This quantum leap, this change, this new chapter must be noticeable at the first summit. Europe has changed. The debate about the institutions is over and the debate about staffing as well, I hope. We are moving over to policy making in a new context. Citizens' rights and parliaments will be strengthened, the European Union's and the institutions' ability to act will be reinforced and we, all three institutions, will be given rights which will make it easier for us to represent our continent in the world.

You can write anything you like on paper. However, whether we can convince the people that we have the political will to take action, formulate new objectives and involve citizens in projects will depend on all these meetings in the next few weeks. I am expecting this summit to generate a new dynamic, a new sense of responsibility and a more serious approach to handling different topics. What we have seen over the last few days was the search for the lowest common denominator: nationalisation and politicisation. The Treaty of Lisbon, on the other hand, is a call for Europeanisation and for policy making.

This is why I expect that we know what we will do with the model of the social market economy. How will we handle the financial and economic crisis? We cannot do this by defending existing rights, but by searching for global solutions. I also expect us to review our finances. It is essential for us to know how much money we have to spend on our policies. The summit must pass the responsibility for this financial review to the Commission. We must discuss the various themes seriously, honestly and openly and set ourselves new objectives. I wish you all the best.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, we should be happy today, as we are emerging from an institutional difficulty. We have the Treaty of Lisbon, we have parity, we have faces, and yet how can I explain to you this uneasiness that I feel?

Today, in this almost empty Chamber, I sense no life; we are taking part in a disappointing debate with regard to the preparation of this European Council. I cannot explain this sense of uneasiness regarding the preparation of this final European Council under a rotating presidency.

What a difference from the joy of the peoples in 2004, when the former Communist countries joined the Union! What a difference from the celebrations to mark the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall! Yes, we know now that the solution will not come from the Member States. The solution will come from the peoples, it will come from the European Parliament.

So I look to the Commission, which ought not to take sides, but to establish a political alliance with the European Parliament so that the alliance of the peoples ensures that we can dream of what we desire for this European Union, the Union of peoples.

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) Mr President, I agree with the majority of the previous speakers that the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon represents a new historic phase in European integration. However, the people, the citizens throughout Europe are not always in the mood to celebrate when they think about it. Many people are afraid that the Treaty of Lisbon could result in increased centralism in Europe.

Many people fear that the small EU Member States, for example, my home country of Austria, will have less influence, because the large Member States will be able to decide everything as a result of the new voting methods. People also have the feeling that the choice of the people to fill the top positions in the European Union was based on the weakest and lowest common denominator. That is not to say anything against the personal qualities of Mr Van Rompuy and Baroness Ashton. However, people realised that the process did not involve democratic choice.

If we want to lead the European Union into a productive future, we in this Parliament must push for more democracy, including in the process of choosing people to fill the top positions.

Rachida Dati (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Mrs Malmström, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the European Union returned to growth in the third quarter of 2009, which could lead us to believe that the worst is behind us.

However, a worrying situation remains, that of the explosion in unemployment, and we must therefore continue to be extremely cautious. Moreover, the Commission, in a report dated 23 November, states that the financial crisis wiped out more than 4 million jobs between the second quarter of 2008 and mid-2009.

It is vitally important today that, at the next European Council, the issue of employment be discussed within the context of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy. The latter absolutely must include bold targets and innovative measures.

I believe that, from now on, the debate must focus on adapting this Lisbon Strategy to this confused period. Our fellow citizens expect Europe – and we see it every day on the ground – to provide solutions to the employment crisis. Let us not disappoint them.

However, my observation and my disappointment are akin to those of my colleague, Mr Audy, in the face of an almost empty Chamber, in the face of an extremely worrying situation for our fellow European citizens.

Aldo Patriciello (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, first of all I wish to thank the Swedish Presidency for the great efforts it has made during these months, which have led, amongst other things, to the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon.

Finally, after 10 years of institutional impasse, the European Union can resume its trajectory of growth, which was unexpectedly cut short some time ago, by strengthening the codecision procedure.

Quite apart from any debate over the qualities of the individuals chosen, the appointments made in recent days have certainly shown that the appointment procedures are far removed from the principles of transparency and responsibility in respect of its citizens that the European Union upholds. This House must undertake to ensure its greater future involvement in negotiations, which cannot and must not be conducted in secret by the States within the Council.

Lastly, I hope that we will be able to conclude 2009 by reaching an ambitious agreement at the Copenhagen conference, where the European Union must speak with one voice to express its opinion on climate change.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the most important work of the Swedish Presidency was, more than anything, the Lisbon Treaty, which opens up new possibilities for Europe. We need to establish a road map for its introduction. Filling vacancies is only the beginning. Secondly, we need to adopt a plan for economic renewal. We need to remember, not only about help for the banks, but also about help for ordinary people, especially in the area of limiting unemployment. Thirdly, we are working on a strategy for combating climate change – and this is good. We are deciding what should be done in this area, but let us remember that, in terms of financial aid, the fight with the crisis comes first. Fourthly, the Stockholm Programme means a safe and open Europe, a Europe of freedoms – only then is it a common Europe. A certain kind of balance between these important values is essential here. Finally, development of the Baltic Sea region requires greater cooperation of the Member States in the region, and Sweden has done a great deal in this area.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE). – (RO) I want to begin by congratulating the Swedish Presidency for the way in which it has made the preparations for the transition to the Treaty of Lisbon. This priority on the Swedish Presidency's agenda has been successfully achieved. I believe that the Council in December must work on finding solutions aimed at tackling the two-fold challenge Europe is facing: the economic crisis and climate change.

At the moment, confidence needs to be restored in the financial markets by setting up a monitoring system designed to manage and prevent the occurrence of a similar crisis in the future. On the subject of climate change, I think that the drafting of the environmental protection policy must not affect other types of policies, or the allocation of European funds for policies such as regional development.

Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council. – (SV) Mr President, I will answer a few short questions. There was a question about Turkey. We are, of course, pleased that Turkey continues to have European integration as an overarching objective. The negotiations with Turkey are progressing – perhaps not as quickly as we would like, but progress is being made and we hope to be able to open the environment chapter at the end of the year.

Naturally, we also support the negotiations between Turkey and Cyprus and the talks that are being held on the island to find a solution to its division. It is the parties concerned who are responsible for this process and the UN is providing assistance, but the EU, of course, supports this and I was in Cyprus very recently to talk with the various parties involved in this matter, as it would be fantastic if a solution could be arrived at soon. There will also be a debate on enlargement in respect of Turkey and other candidate countries this afternoon with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Carl Bildt, when Members will have the opportunity to ask questions about this and other issues.

I will say a brief word about the Baltic Sea Strategy. I would, once again, like to thank the European Parliament for the support it has shown to the Swedish Presidency with regard to this matter. It was, of course, here in Parliament that the idea of the Baltic Sea Strategy was born, so we are very pleased that it is now in place and in force. It will be a very important factor in being able to tackle the environmental problems in the region, but also in increasing cooperation for prosperity, innovation and security, among other things.

The European External Action Service is one of the biggest and most important changes resulting from the Treaty of Lisbon. At the summit in October, the European Council approved a general framework for this Service. Mrs Ashton will now continue to work on this framework together with the European Parliament and will submit a final proposal by April next year at the latest. The External Action Service will, of course, be phased in gradually and it is important for this to be carried out in a competent and constructive manner. The European Parliament will have the opportunity to discuss the form that this will take.

As regards the budget review, Mr Färm, I fully share your view that, now that we will finally have the Treaty of Lisbon in place in a week's time, with new modern ground rules for the European Union, we clearly also need a modern budget that is able to meet the challenges involved. I hope that the new Commission will be able to table such a proposal as soon as possible. I believe that President Barroso also mentioned this yesterday during question time.

Eight years after Laeken, we are now on the threshold of a new treaty. It is an historic moment, the start of a new era for the European Union. I am very pleased that the Swedish Presidency has been able to play a part in putting this in place. We can now put the institutional questions behind us to a certain extent and concentrate on the major political challenges that we know the citizens of Europe – because it is, of course, the citizens' Europe that we are all fighting for – are concerned about.

Many of these issues will be discussed at the European Council meeting in December. With regard to the climate – the key issue for our generation – the European Council meeting will be held at the same time as the climate meeting in Copenhagen, and the summit will give us the opportunity, where necessary, to fine-tune our negotiation position in Copenhagen.

As regards the financial issues and the economic crisis, we can put a number of instruments in place and also draw up long-term guidelines for how we can make Europe competitive once again to provide prosperity and social cohesion and, in particular, look ahead to the new Lisbon strategy which, in the long and medium term, could be very helpful to Europe in this regard.

Finally, the Stockholm Programme will bring safety and security to Europe's citizens, and it is extremely important that we get this programme in place. All of these issues will remain after the summit and on all of these issues we will need very close cooperation with the European Parliament. Prime Minister Reinfeldt will be here for the December sitting and will then report the outcome of the summit and also provide a general summary of the Swedish Presidency. Thank you very much for a very good and constructive debate.

Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, on this same day that we are celebrating the fact that the next Commission will apparently have at least nine women – and I also see that as a victory for all of us who have actively fought for this – we hear from news reports this morning that, in France alone, 156 women were killed last year by domestic violence. As this is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, this is something that should make us stop and think and, hopefully, also act in the future at European level, as well as at international level. Perhaps we should also bring this up in different meetings during the rest of today.

This is an important step forward. It also says a lot about the procedure from now on, which should be more open when we appoint Commissioners. I hope that, in the future, Member States and governments will nominate both a man and a woman. I think that is an excellent idea.

Let me also comment on the appointments of a new High Representative and a new Council President. Mrs Cathy Ashton was nominated to the Commission with the full confidence of the UK Government. She was actually voted for here in the Parliament a year ago with a very large majority – with 538 votes, if I am correct. As we have heard from several of you, she has been working very closely with Parliament and has always looked for Parliament's involvement on different issues. She was appointed unanimously by 27 Heads of State or Government, so I think she has all the legitimacy to fulfil her job and to gain the respect of the European Union's foreign partners. I liked the metaphor that was presented here that instead of having somebody who would stop the traffic, or mean red traffic lights, you would have a smooth operator, somebody that would actually help the traffic flow or decisions to be made in a democratic and good way in the European Union. I have got to know her as a very good colleague, and I would say that she is also a convinced European. That is indeed an important starting point.

We have already had good comments in the debate here. I think it has been a fruitful and constructive discussion, and thanks for all your contributions. May I also comment on the direct question by Göran Färm about the budget review. I can only repeat what the Commission President has already told you, that this will be handed over to the new Commission. This is firstly because the new Lisbon Treaty will contain provisions that require a new institutional set-up, so it will also have a good basis for decisions on the budget. Secondly, the new Commission will have to decide on the political priorities and then put its money where its mouth is in order to actually have the budget to accompany the political priorities. I would say that is an important innovation and an opportunity for the next Commission. It will also be handed over to Cecilia Malmström with warm hands from all of us. What the Commission can say is that a proposal for the budget review will come early next year and will be the immediate task for the next Commission.

I would just like to comment on one thing concerning the Stockholm Programme. The adoption of the Stockholm Programme coincides with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, where the European Parliament will have a crucial role in the development of these policies. This will again increase the democratic legitimacy of the important decisions to be taken on justice and home affairs issues. This is good news for European citizens and also for all EU institutions.

On climate change, I can hear that there is a common view here on the active role that the European Union should play in Copenhagen and from now on.

So, again, thank you very much for the debate. With the new Lisbon Treaty, we now have a text that will help us deal with all the important issues that have been raised here – climate change, fighting the financial

crisis and its social and other effects – and, of course, also make sure that we have a democratic European Union in the future.

President. – That concludes the debate.

Written statements (Rule 149)

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The forthcoming European Council is intended to lay the foundations for the future of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs. It is doing so at a time when unemployment in Europe is reaching historic levels and the economy is in recession, foundering in a deep crisis. Eight years on, we must bow to reality: the stated objectives have completely failed. The causes behind this failure lie in what soon showed itself to be the true agenda of this strategy: deregulation of labour relations and the associated devaluation of work, an attack on social rights, dismantling of essential public services, privatisation and liberalisation of key sectors of the economy and imposing the market as supreme in increasing areas of public life. Workers and people have every reason to hope for a radical move away from this agenda: a change of direction that it is vital to implement. Among other things, such a change calls for: recognition of education as a right, not as a service or just another market sector; democratisation of access to knowledge and culture; valuing of work and workers' rights; protection of productive sectors and of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; quality public services for all; and a fairer distribution of wealth.

András Gyürk (PPE), in writing. – (HU) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, at the forthcoming European Council meeting, Member States are expected to agree on the main basic principles being represented at the Copenhagen climate conference. I think that it is important that the issue of energy efficiency does not get sidetracked by emission quotas and the financial support being granted to developing countries. In other words, the European Union tends to forget about this easy prize. The reason why this would be particularly detrimental is because in some regions of Europe, we can reduce emission levels more cheaply by improving energy efficiency than with any other solution. Two conclusions can be drawn from the above. Firstly, the European Union must endeavour to ensure a global convergence of energy efficiency standards with the adoption of the new climate protection scheme. Secondly, energy efficiency subsidies must be given a more significant role in the EU's future long-term budget, with particular consideration for the former socialist countries' building reconstruction programmes. This is due to the fact that in this area, it is possible to achieve spectacular savings with a relatively modest financial expenditure.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) The key theme of the Stockholm Programme is 'Building a Citizens' Europe'. What this means to me is that, starting from now, European institutions alongside Member States must make progress towards abolishing the borders inside the EU, as citizens continue to face administrative and legal obstacles which seem to prevent them from exercising their right to live and work in the Member State of their choice. This is why the Stockholm Programme must make this key theme become a reality and come up with clearly defined instruments for facilitating access to the Community labour market for all workers in the EU, which is a major symbol of European citizenship.

In addition, the current economic crisis highlights even more the need to promote the full exercising of the right to free movement. Improving mobility within the EU, in a common area of freedom, rights and obligations, entails consolidation of the Schengen Area and, as a result, the need to integrate the remaining Member States as soon as possible. Furthermore, this also involves good management of the EU's external borders, which must be performed in as consistent a manner as possible.

Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE), in writing. – (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank the Swedish Presidency for its work drafting the new Justice and Home Affairs work programme.

Thanks to the Stockholm Programme, the European Union will be able to improve the everyday existence of all EU citizens. Security, well-being and equality are the result of consistent adherence to the rule of law, solidarity and non-discrimination in different areas of policy and when legislation is being drafted.

I would like to see far more attention given to improving the everyday existence of immigrants, minorities and those who, for one reason or another, face discrimination. This is not just about marginal phenomena: according to a new Eurobarometer survey, one in six Europeans said they had experienced discrimination in the last five years.

In this connection, I would like to stress the importance of the directive now being discussed by the Council on the prohibition of discrimination in the supply of goods and services. Unfortunately, the directive's progress in the Council has been very sluggish, and it has met with considerable opposition from some

Member States. The European Union's value base is structured around a respect for the principles of human rights and equality. These principles must also be fully implemented at the level of European-wide legislation.

(The sitting was suspended at 11.40)

(From 11.45 to 12.05, Members gathered for the award of the LUX prize)

(The sitting resumed at 12.05)

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

7. Voting time

President. – The next item is voting time.

(For the results and other details on the vote: see Minutes)

7.1. 2007 discharge: EU general budget - Council (A7-0047/2009, Søren Bo Søndergaard) (vote)

- Before the vote:

Nicole Sinclaire (EFD). – Mr President, I rise under Rule 173, regarding Rule 2 of the Rules of Procedure. I quote: 'Members of the European Parliament shall exercise their mandate independently'. At the debate on the Council and Commission statements this morning, you, Mr President, said that Mr Farage's remarks were unacceptable. As a new Member of this House, I would like you to clarify, with respect to Rule 2, whether a Member of this House is free to express his or her opinions without any censorship.

President. – With your permission, I will have a meeting with Mr Farage and we shall have a friendly talk about it. That is what I propose. Thank you very much.

Martin Schulz (S&D). – *(DE)* Mr President, I also took part in the debate this morning. I did not have the impression that you were unfair or abused your office in any way. On the contrary...

(Uproar)

I would like to say, on the contrary, that you listened with great patience and respect as the chairman of this so-called group demonstrated to us that he is a professional slanderer. That was the reality of Mr Farage's speech.

(Applause)

Søren Bo Søndergaard, rapporteur. – Mr President, I would like to request a roll-call vote on the discharge of the Council's budget 2007. I think that it is important that the Council can see the broad support from this Parliament behind our demands to the Council on more cooperation with Parliament and its competent committees on the next discharge procedure.

7.2. Labelling of tyres with respect to fuel efficiency (A7-0076/2009, Ivo Belet) (vote)

- Before the vote:

Ivo Belet, rapporteur. – Mr President, briefly, I would just like to thank the Swedish Presidency for the excellent cooperation. I think this agreement is ambitious as well as realistic. It will convince us to opt for fuel efficiency, for low noise and also, of course, for safety. My thanks also go to the Commission and the shadow rapporteurs, Matthias Groote and Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, for the terrific job they have done.

7.3. Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: Belgium - textile industry; Ireland - Dell (A7-0044/2009, Reimer Böge) (vote)

7.4. Adaptation of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure to the Lisbon Treaty (A7-0043/2009, David Martin) (vote)

- Before the vote:

Bruno Gollnisch (NI). – (FR) Mr President, my machine is not working, but that is not the main thing that I wanted to say.

This report, Mr President, included an amendment that has been withdrawn, Amendment 86. My point of order is based on Rule 24(2) of our Rules of Procedure. As I have had the honour of explaining to you on behalf of a number of my colleagues, this Rule provides for the non-attached Members to appoint one of their own as a delegate to the Conference of Presidents. Following the blocking by the administration, this obligation has not been met since July.

However, it was envisaged, under this Amendment 86, that this provision would be changed in order to let you decide which of the representatives of the non-attached Members should sit in the Conference of Presidents. This, Mr President, is a real disgrace, and I choose my words carefully. It is seen as such by all our colleagues. It would seem that we are the only ones to have the appointment of our representative to the Conference of Presidents imposed on us.

I hope, Mr President, that you will be intent on refusing this option afforded to you by the Socialist Group and the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) to which you belong.

President. – I understand what you are saying. Would the rapporteur like to say something about this? May I ask the rapporteur to comment?

David Martin, rapporteur. – Mr President, we do not have to spend a lot of time on this because the *Non-Inscrits* are not worth spending a lot of time on. We are not voting on this. If they bothered to turn up at the committees to which they are entitled to turn up, they would know that we are not voting on this today but we are going to vote on this in January. I will be sticking to my recommendation that you, Mr President, invite a *Non-Inscrit* to attend the Conference of Presidents.

7.5. Preparation of the Copenhagen Summit on climate change (vote)

- Before the vote:

Satu Hassi (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, on the voting order between Amendments 43 and 54, my group sees that this voting order in this list is the wrong way round.

Adopting Amendment 43 should not make Amendment 54 fall, because in 54 there are also other issues which are not covered by 43.

If some of this makes another amendment fall, then 54 should be voted on first and then 43 after that.

This is not on the first vote but a vote on the second page. I just wanted to announce this so that you know when we come to that place in the vote.

President. – Would a representative of the Committee like to say something about this? Perhaps Mr Leinen? Are you proposing a change to the voting order? I have to say we were not expecting this change. No such proposal has been made.

Jo Leinen, Chairman of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety. – (DE) Mr President, yes, Mrs Hassi is right. We can follow the procedure that she has proposed.

(The motion was adopted)

Markus Ferber (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, just now the interpreter asked for Article 20 and not for Article 22 which makes it difficult to do what you intend. Therefore, I hope that the interpreters now translate the Polish numbers correctly.

President. – Maybe it was my fault. I am sorry.

Jo Leinen (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, an official delegation is representing Parliament in Copenhagen. You will also be attending and, for the first time, we do not have to rent an office in the city. Instead, we will have an official presence in the EU pavilion. This is good and we are grateful. Therefore, Article 61 is not needed.

The Treaty of Lisbon ensures not only that Parliament will be listened to with regard to international treaties, but also that it has to agree to them. This is the beginning of a new era for us and, therefore, we are asking, in accordance with Article 60, to be admitted to the EU coordination meetings and not to be left standing outside the door. The Commission must treat us in the same way as it does the Council when it provides information about treaty negotiations and we are asking it to begin with the Kyoto agreement. This is our request to the Commission. Perhaps Mrs Reding would like to say something on this subject.

(Applause)

Viviane Reding, Member of the Commission. – (DE) Mr President, I have taken the message on board and I will pass it on to the Commission President and the other commissioners.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert (ALDE). – Mr President, I would like to ask you very kindly to speed up a bit because, if we continue at this pace, we will end up voting in plenary at midnight.

7.6. Multi-annual programme 2010-2014 regarding the area of freedom, security and justice (Stockholm Programme) (vote)

Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, what Mr Ferber rightly complained about has happened again. We have heard three different numbers relating to the paragraph that we are just about to vote on. I do not know whether this is because the numbers were not read out correctly or were not translated correctly. I heard 33, then 30 and then 43, making it very unclear.

Marc Tarabella (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, I can assure you that the speed of the vote is perfect. You are a very polite man and we are very grateful to you for that, but we could make even faster progress if you did not say 'thank you' after every vote, but only at the end of the vote!

Thank you, Mr President!

President. – Thank you for that remark!

– *Before the vote on an amendment to paragraph 131:*

Carlo Casini (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, the subject is an oral amendment to paragraph 131, on which I am in agreement with the other two rapporteurs, Mr López Aguilar and Mr Berlinguer.

The current text states: 'calls on the Council, the Commission and Member States to evaluate and review current international, European and national laws and policies on drugs and to promote harm reduction policies, notably with a view to the conferences on those issues held at UN level'.

The oral amendment proposes inserting the words 'prevention' and 'recovery', meaning that the call to evaluate and review laws would concern 'harm reduction, prevention and recovery policies'.

(The oral amendment was adopted)

7.7. The state of play of the Euromed Free Trade Area (vote)

7.8. Passenger compensation in the event of airline bankruptcy (vote)

7.9. 'made in' (origin marking) (vote)

IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

Vice-President

8. Explanations of vote

Oral explanations of vote

- Report: Søren Bo Søndergaard (A7-0047/2009)

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, the first duty of any assembly is to hold the executive to account. We are here as the people's tribunes. There should be a creative tension between us and the executive – that is, the Commission.

But when it comes to these budgetary questions, the European Parliament, uniquely among the elected assemblies of the world, sides with the executive against its own constituents, in the cause of deeper integration.

Every year the European budget grows; every year we have the report from the Court of Auditors that shows tens of billions of euros being lost or stolen. And yet we do not do the one thing which we are empowered to do, which is to withhold supply, in other words, to say that we will not hand over any more money until the accounting procedures have been put in order.

Yet again we are waving through this budget despite all the errors in it and thereby betraying those who put us here, who are our constituents and also our taxpayers, because the majority of people in this house take a 'Europe right or wrong attitude' and would rather see things being badly done by Brussels than competently done by the Member States.

- Report: Reimer Böge (A7-0044/2009)

Miguel Portas, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group. – (PT) Mr President, the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left voted in favour of the mobilisation of EUR 24 million to support workers made redundant in Belgium.

We voted in favour because we are on the side of those who are in need, those who devote their sweat and their brains to companies and who, ultimately, are victims of an unfair economic system and unchecked competition for profits, which have devastating social effects.

That being said, the role of this Adjustment Fund must be assessed.

In 2009, only EUR 37 million were mobilised, out of a possible EUR 500 million. The fund is not reflecting the reason for which it was set up.

Secondly, instead of supporting the unemployed directly, this fund supports national employment security systems. As they are very different from each other, the fund ends up reproducing the obvious inequalities among our own distribution systems.

In Portugal, the fund provides an unemployed person with EUR 500 of support. In Ireland, it provides an unemployed person with EUR 6 000 of support.

Thirdly, the case of Dell shows how it is possible simultaneously to support workers who are made redundant in Ireland and the very multinational that made them redundant, which is currently receiving another kind of public funds in Poland.

Dell was given money to set up a new factory in Poland while it was gaining new positions in US markets and, in the third quarter of this year, announced profits in the region of USD 337 million.

All aspects of the Globalisation Adjustment Fund therefore need to be carefully assessed.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, I have said it many times before and I will no doubt say it again: whatever the motives of its founders, the European Union has long since ceased to be an ideological project and it has become a racket, a way of redistributing money from people outside the system to people within it. Hence, the thing we are talking about today – these bungs to selected favoured companies.

Let us pass over the suspicious timing of the grant to Dell in Ireland that was announced with questionable procedural propriety in the run-up to the Irish referendum on the European Constitution or Lisbon Treaty. Let us just make the wider point that we have tried this before as a continent: in the 1970s, we went down the road towards propping up uncompetitive industries, with disastrous consequences. We know where that road leads. It ends in stagnation, inflation and ultimately in collective bankruptcy. Let us not go there a second time.

Syed Kamall (ECR). – Mr President, I was interested to read the first sentence, where it says that the fund has been created in order to provide additional assistance to workers suffering from the consequences of major structural changes in world trade patterns.

But have we not always had major changes in world trade patterns? In my constituency of London, we had textile companies that responded and prepared for globalisation by outsourcing some of their functions to poorer countries, thereby creating jobs in developing countries, but keeping high-value research and development and marketing jobs in London, in the constituency, in the European Union.

Why then, if these companies can respond, are we rewarding inefficient textile and IT companies who bury their heads in the sand and hope that globalisation will go away?

Surely this money should be returned to taxpayers so they can spend it as they see fit. Surely it is time for governments to focus on creating the right conditions so that, when jobs are lost, entrepreneurs can come along and create new jobs.

- Report: David Martin (A7-0043/2009)

Bruno Gollnisch (NI). – (FR) Mr President, I return to this real abuse of authority that has very nearly been committed, precisely under the pretext of an amendment to the Rules of Procedure that is designed to adapt them to the conditions of the Treaty of Lisbon, this Amendment 86 by which the administration granted itself the right to appoint the representative of the non-attached Members to the Conference of Presidents.

It is completely scandalous that this appointment, which should have taken place, as in all of our Parliament's bodies, either by election or by consensus, by election failing consensus, has not yet taken place due to deliberate manoeuvring by officials who are opposed to it.

Furthermore, it is alarming that these officials should have won over to their cause political groups which are hostile to us and which, clearly, ought not to give a *de facto* or *de jure* opinion on the appointment of our representative. We shall challenge this decision, if it is discussed again, before the Court of Justice.

- Motion for a resolution (B7-0141/2009) Preparation of the Copenhagen Summit on climate change

Marisa Matias, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group. – (PT) Mr President, in order to ensure that we have genuine and binding results in the fight against climate change, there are four principles that must be guaranteed, and I would like to highlight them. They have also been voted on here today.

The first is that we need to reach a legally binding agreement.

The second is that strict political targets need to be guaranteed, including targets for reducing emissions. We need to have ambitious targets in this regard. I believe that we could have gone further than we did today.

The third point is that the necessary public funding should be guaranteed to enable us to tackle this problem of climate change.

The fourth and final point – which I believe is very important to consider – is that it should be a global agreement, and not just an agreement among certain regions, and this has to happen by means of a process rooted in democratic participation involving all countries.

I believe that the resolution we have adopted here today is not as good – shall we say – as the one that was previously adopted in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.

However, I believe that what should be safeguarded here is really the result achieved and the efforts made throughout this process and so we leave for Copenhagen with a rather good job done within Parliament. I sincerely hope that we fight hard and that we can fulfil what we have adopted here today.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D). – Mr President, I supported this resolution. Climate change is a global political priority at the Copenhagen Summit. It should deliver not merely political commitments but binding agreements and sanctions for non-compliance.

The fight against climate change is a global action, and the active involvement of both developed and developing countries is necessary. However, the rich countries have to play the leading role. They must agree on mandatory targets to cut their emissions and, at the same time, find money to help developing countries deal with climate change.

Jan Březina (PPE). – (CS) With today's adoption of the resolution on the Copenhagen Summit on climate protection, Parliament has given a clear signal that it attaches enormous importance to this issue. This is reflected in an authentic approach under which Parliament sets out the principle of shared but differing responsibilities. In accordance with this, the industrialised countries are to take a leading role while the developing countries and economies such as China, India and Brazil will be provided with adequate support through technology and the building up of capacity. On the other hand, I must say that the assumption that a deal in Copenhagen might provide the impulse for a *green new deal* initiative is, in my opinion, overly optimistic and ideological one-sided. We must not put blinkers on our eyes and walk over the corpses of industrial enterprises in an idealistic effort to reduce CO₂ emissions. I would not consider such an unrealistic approach to be a sustainable alternative for the whole of Europe.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI). – (FR) Mr President, the report that has just been adopted in our Chamber definitely toes the 'politically correct' line that reigns supreme here, unchallenged by established dogmas.

However, just because something is said a thousand times does not mean that it is justified. There has always been global warming. There has been global warming since the last glaciations, for example, and, after all, it was not the cars used by Neanderthal Man that caused the previous instances of global warming.

There is no dispute, there is no question about what is repeated to us a hundred times, a thousand times, and for what reason? We can clearly see that there is at least one very important reason: to prepare for the advent of world government; and the second reason is once again to instil a sense of guilt in Europeans and in Westerners, who are considered, wrongly, as being responsible for all the world's ills.

I shall stop there, Mr President, because I am not entitled to sixty-one seconds. Thank you for having taken notice of what I have said.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, at his first press conference as the new President or as the appointee, Mr Van Rompuy declared that the Copenhagen Process would be a step towards the global management of our planet. I cannot be alone in being alarmed at the way in which the environmental agenda is being piggybacked by those who have a different agenda about the shifting of power away from national democracies.

Environmentalism is too important to be left to just one side of the political debate to apply its solutions. As a Conservative, I consider myself a natural conservationist. It was Marx who taught that nature was a resource to be exploited, a doctrine that found brutal realisation in the smokestack industries of the Comecon states, but we have never tried the free market solutions of extending property rights, of having clean air and clean water by allowing ownership, rather than the tragedy of the commons, where you expect state action and global technocracies to achieve these ends.

Environmentalism is altogether too important to be left.

- Motion for a resolution (B7-0155/2009) 2010-2014 Multi-annual programme regarding the area of freedom, security and justice (Stockholm Programme)

Clemente Mastella (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, the resolution on the Stockholm Programme on which our Parliament voted today is the outcome of a great cooperative effort and a brand new procedural formula, of which we do not have much experience as yet.

This formula in fact sets truly ambitious goals, but if we are to have a Europe that is open yet also safe, we must be able to strike the right balance between increasingly effective cooperation in the fight against crime and terrorism, on the one hand, and a strong commitment to safeguarding public privacy rights, on the other.

We are committed to implementing a common policy on asylum, to respect for the safeguarding of fundamental human rights and to a common immigration policy through greater control of our borders.

The next task is to set up a European judicial area. To achieve this goal, we must promote all forms of cooperation with the aim of disseminating a common European judicial culture. Examples of this include the mutual recognition of common judgments and rules, abolition of the exequatur procedure and the implementation of measures aimed at facilitating access to justice and fostering exchanges between magistrates.

Then, there is the multi-annual programme, which stresses the concept of European citizenship, which should be considered to complement, not limit, national citizenship.

I believe that these are goals requiring a greater commitment by all ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Lena Ek (ALDE). – (SV) Mr President, I have, today, voted in favour of the EU's strategy for freedom, security and justice, in other words, the Stockholm Programme, but when the Council's actual legislative proposal comes back to Parliament via the Commission, I intend to be very strict and tough when it comes to the question of openness and transparency in legislative work.

This is particularly important with regard to the asylum procedure. The option to apply for asylum is a fundamental right, and European cooperation is about tearing down walls, not about erecting them. The Member States must therefore respect the definition of a refugee and an asylum seeker in accordance with the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and I have now tabled an amendment to this effect. In its final form, the Stockholm Programme must stand for European values such as freedom and respect for human rights. These are worth fighting for, and that is exactly what I am going to do.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – (ES) Mr President, I would first like to thank you and your officials for your patience during these explanations of vote.

Mr President, a former British Home Secretary, Willie Whitelaw, once told a successor in that office that it was the best job in the Cabinet because one did not have to deal with any foreigners.

No Home Secretary in any Member State could say that today. There has been the most extraordinary harmonisation in the justice and home affairs field. On everything from immigration and asylum, visas, civil law, criminal justice and policing, we have effectively given the European Union that ultimate attribute of statehood: a monopoly of coercive legal force over its citizens, that is to say, a system of criminal justice.

When did we ever decide to do this? When were our voters ever consulted? I accept it has not been done in secret. There was no conspiracy about it, or at least it was perhaps what H. G. Wells called an open conspiracy, but at no stage have we had the courtesy to ask people whether they want to be citizens of a state with its own legal system.

Philip Claeys (NI). – (NL) Like many European citizens who were not given a chance to have their say on the Treaty of Lisbon, I, too, have become quite concerned about developments in the areas of freedom, security and justice. More and more asylum and immigration powers are being siphoned away to the European Union, and these issues are increasingly being excluded from the ambit of citizens' democratic control. The outcome of this will be even more immigration and all the problems which that leads to.

The issue of conferring rights without imposing any obligations, which is another thing that emanates from this resolution, gives immigrants an excuse for not adapting to the norms of their host countries. An example of what annoys me is the passage which deals with what has been phrased as 'the multiple discrimination faced by Romani women', because it fails to mention that, in many cases, such discrimination is self-imposed. Just consider the fact that many Romani women and underage children are being required to go ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Bruno Gollnisch (NI). – (FR) Mr President, I had asked to talk about Stockholm.

Mr President, as has been said, this report includes two objects of concern.

The first is its very distinct pro-immigration perspective. The second is not disclosed by the content of the report or by the conclusions. We came to know about it simply through the intentions of Commissioner Barrot: it is the criminalisation of freedom of expression, research and thought.

In many European countries today, there are people who are being prosecuted, arrested, severely punished and detained, simply because they want to express a critical point of view, on the history of the Second World War, for example, on contemporary history, or on the phenomenon of immigration. They are being denied this right and they are being hit with very heavy punishments. This is a major reason for concern since it is completely contrary to the European spirit.

- Motion for a resolution (B7-0153/2009) Passenger compensation in the event of airline bankruptcy

Aldo Patriciello (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, some months ago, we witnessed the sudden and unexpected collapse of some low-cost airlines, such as Myair and Sky Europe, with the consequent immediate cancellation of all their scheduled routes. This caused untold inconvenience for thousands of passengers who were denied the right to board duly booked flights. More serious still is the fact that the same consumers were also denied the possibility of obtaining a refund for flights that were cancelled due to the bankruptcy measures affecting these airlines.

For these reasons, it seems more necessary than ever for the Commission, which counts the prosperity and well-being of consumers among its principles and values, to urgently adopt appropriate measures so as to prevent similar situations from occurring to the detriment of European citizens.

In particular, we need to speed up the process of revising Directive 90/314/EEC on package travel, just as we need, on the one hand, to equip ourselves ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Siiri Oviir (ALDE). – (ET) Over the past nine years, 77 airlines have filed for bankruptcy. That is not just one, two or three, and not just yesterday: I repeat, this is over the past nine years. As a result of this, thousands of passengers have been staying in foreign airports without any protection. They have not obtained any compensation, or at least have not obtained the appropriate compensation in time. On account of this, I voted for this resolution, and I agree with the idea that in the airline sector, we must also regulate this gap in our legal system, something which has prevailed today.

I also support the concrete deadline put forward in the resolution, which is 1 July 2010 – quite soon, therefore – when the European Commission must come forward with concrete, real proposals to solve this problem, and in future, air passengers' rights should also be protected ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D). – Mr President, this is a very important issue and I voted for this resolution because I believe that we need to have a piece of legislation protecting our citizens in case of airline bankruptcies. Millions of our citizens use low-cost airlines every day. However, the high number of low-cost airline bankruptcies in the European Union since 2000, and the recent case of Sky Europe, have clearly demonstrated the vulnerability of the low-cost carriers to the changing oil prices and the current difficult economic conditions.

We must rectify this situation, and we ask the Commission to consider the most adequate compensation measures for our passengers.

Lara Comi (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, in the wake of recent cases involving the suspension and revocation of the licences of many airlines, a substantial number of passengers and holders of tickets that were neither honoured nor reimbursed have suffered considerable losses.

I therefore believe it necessary to propose a specific regulation that defines the best solutions to problems arising out of the bankruptcies in terms of both financial loss and repatriation.

It is thus important to provide compensation for passengers in the event of bankruptcy and also to define the associated financial and administrative procedures. I refer to the principle of mutual liability to protect the passengers of all airlines that fly the same route and have available seats. This would allow the repatriation of passengers left stranded in foreign airports. In this sense, suggestions of a guarantee fund or a compulsory insurance for airlines could represent plausible solutions that would have to be weighed against the trade-off, which would be an increase in prices for consumers.

Hannu Takkula (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, it is very important to talk about the security of airline passengers and, above all, compensation in situations in which companies go bankrupt, as Mrs Oviir just mentioned.

There have been 77 bankruptcies in the past nine years, and it is alleged that the airline industry is facing more turbulence than ever.

Fierce competition is a kind of payoff. A new phenomenon is the cheap airlines, which at the moment seem to be doing well and making huge profits. This has driven many other airlines into an unhealthy competitive situation. As has been said, it is very important to ensure that there is no repetition of the earlier unfortunate cases and that airlines take some sort of responsibility for their passengers and that they should be liable for compensation if a flight is cancelled due to bankruptcy. To ensure that...

(The President cut off the speaker)

- Motion for a resolution: 'made in' (origin marking)

Siiri Oviir (ALDE). – (ET) With the Lisbon Agenda, the European Union aimed to strengthen economic union. It is therefore important to improve the competitive strength of the economy as well. However, it is essential in this matter that fair competition should prevail in the market. This means that clear rules should operate for every manufacturer, exporter and importer. I supported the proposal in this resolution because imposing an obligation to identify the country of origin of goods imported from third countries in the European Union is an infallible way to obtain transparency, to give the consumer the appropriate information and also to secure compliance with international trading rules. Thank you.

Lara Comi (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, the debate on origin marking absolutely does not prioritise the interests of one or a few Member States, as is sometimes mistakenly believed. Instead, it embodies the fundamental economic principle of levelling the playing field.

This principle, in line with the Treaty of Lisbon, aims to implement European competitiveness at international level by promoting clear and balanced rules for our producing companies and companies that import products from third countries.

We are therefore discussing matters that concern Europe as a whole. For this reason, I believe it is essential to reach an agreement on origin marking that goes beyond individual national interests or those of political groups and leaves room for the will to implement a single market by promoting competitiveness and transparency.

Submitting to Parliament the proposal for a regulation on origin marking, as it was formulated by the European Commission in 2005, represents a step forward in this regard.

In line with the Treaty of Lisbon, the process of codecision between Parliament and the Council will therefore make it absolutely possible to speed up the approval of a regulation that is so important to the economy and European consumers.

Written explanations of vote

- Report: Søren Bo Søndergaard (A7-0047/2009)

Robert Atkins (ECR), in writing. – British Conservatives have been unable to approve discharge of the 2007 European budget, European Council section. For the 14th consecutive year, the European Court of Auditors has only been able to give a qualified statement of assurance for the accounts of the European Union.

We note the auditors' remarks that around 80% of the transactions of the EU are carried out by agencies working within the Member States under joint management agreements. The auditors consistently report that levels of control and scrutiny of the use of EU funds within the Member States are inadequate.

In order to address this ongoing problem, the Council entered into an Interinstitutional Agreement in 2006 which obliged them to produce certification for those transactions for which they are responsible. We are dismayed to note that, to date, the majority of the Member States have not satisfactorily delivered on their obligation and therefore, despite the traditional 'gentleman's agreement' between Parliament and Council, we will not grant discharge until such time as the Member States fulfil their obligations under the Interinstitutional Agreement.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of granting financial discharge to the Council for the 2007 budget whilst emphasising the fact that I disagree with the way in which the Committee on Budgetary Control has managed this situation in which the rapporteur, Mr Søndergaard, has produced two contradictory reports; the change in position between the proposals for postponing discharge in April 2009

and for granting discharge being justified by the assertions resulting from meetings without any audit work, whilst the European Court of Auditors has made no comment on the management of the Council. I regret that there has been no legal study to ascertain the powers held by the European Parliament and, consequently, those held by the Committee on Budgetary Control, in particular, concerning the Council's external and military activities. At a time when we will be negotiating political relations with the Council as part of the application of the Treaty of Lisbon, it is important for the work of the institutions to be based on rules of law.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) At the end of the last legislative term, in April, Parliament decided to postpone discharge of the Council in respect of the implementation of the budget for 2007 due, essentially, to a lack of accounting transparency concerning the use of the Community budget. In particular, Parliament felt it was important for there to be greater transparency and tighter parliamentary scrutiny of the Council's spending on the Common Foreign and Security Policy/European Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/ESDP).

The report adopted today finally discharges the Council, since it considers that Parliament has obtained a satisfactory response from the Council to the requests made in the resolution of last April. However, it provides some warnings for the next discharge procedure. In particular, it will verify progress made by the Council with regard to the closing of all its extra-budgetary accounts, the publication of all administrative decisions (when they are used as the legal basis for budget items) and the transmission to Parliament of its annual activity report. Although the Council has taken a small step forwards in its presentation of accounts on the use of the Community budget, we believe that, in terms of CFSP/ESDP expenditure, the available information is still very far from adequate, which is why we still have reservations.

- Recommendation for second reading: Ivo Belet (A7-0076/2009)

Liam Aylward (ALDE), in writing. – (GA) I voted for this regulation regarding the fuel efficiency labelling of tyres. Energy efficiency is vitally important as regards environmental sustainability and as regards conserving finite resources. Clear, informative labelling will help European consumers make better choices from now on. Not only will these choices be based on cost, but they will also be based on fuel efficiency. Another advantage of this type of labelling is that the labelling of wet-grip tyres will increase road safety.

Jan Březina (PPE), in writing. – (CS) I voted for Mr Belet's report on fuel efficiency labels for tyres, which endorses the common position of the Council. In view of the fact that 25% of overall CO₂ emissions come from road transport and that 30% of the overall fuel consumed by vehicles is related to their tyres, the introduction of an obligation to label tyres represents a key instrument in the fight for a healthier environment.

The decision taken today by Parliament will result in a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of up to four million tonnes a year. For the purposes of illustration, this is equivalent to removing 1 million cars from EU roads. The unquestionable benefit of the approved legislation comes from improving the quality and therefore the safety of tyres. This should not lead to any increase in prices, which consumers will certainly appreciate, especially those who decide what to buy based on the price of a product. In my opinion, this confirms the results of market research showing that consumers are interested in buying more environmentally friendly products. In my opinion, the advantage of the approved regulation for producers is that, thanks to the unified standards for conveying information on the efficiency of tyres, there will be a better chance for customers to compete on the basis of factors other than product price alone.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The new regulation on the labelling of tyres is part of the Community strategy on CO₂, which sets targets to be achieved through vehicle emission reductions. From November 2012, tyres will be labelled in the EU according to their fuel efficiency, wet grip and noise emissions. Tyres are responsible for 20 to 30% of the energy consumed by vehicles due to their rolling resistance. By regulating the use of energy efficient tyres that are safe and have low noise emissions, we are helping both to reduce environmental damage, by lowering fuel consumption, and to increase consumer protection, by means of market competition. I therefore welcome the creation of another instrument that represents one more step in the direction of a sustainable Europe in terms of energy.

Lara Comi (PPE), in writing. – (IT) Mr President, I approve Parliament's decision to finally adopt a regulation that increases safety as well as the environmental and economic efficiency of road transport. The aim is to promote the use of safe, quieter tyres. According to some studies, it is possible to significantly reduce (by up to 10%) the proportion of fuel consumed by a vehicle that is dependent upon tyre performance.

In line with my commitment to consumer protection, this regulation establishes an effective regulatory framework through clear and precise labelling and information. This makes it possible to safeguard transparency and makes consumers more aware of their buying options with the support of brochures, flyers and web marketing.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I welcome the fact that, instead of a directive, we have a regulation on the labelling of tyres, which is the result of a suggestion by Parliament.

From November 2012, tyres will be labelled according to their fuel efficiency, wet grip and noise emissions. European citizens will have more information to select the right tyres so as to reduce fuel costs and to help reduce energy consumption. They can thus make a more environmentally friendly choice and reduce their carbon footprint.

Moreover, labelling will lead to increased competition among manufacturers. This labelling is beneficial from an environmental point of view. It should be noted that road transport is responsible for 25% of carbon dioxide emissions in Europe.

Tyres can play an important role in reducing CO₂ emissions because they are responsible for 20 to 30% of the total energy use of vehicles.

For passenger cars, more energy efficient tyres can save up to 10% on fuel costs.

I therefore voted in favour.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the compromise package on tyre labelling. This Parliament deals with many issues which appear extremely technical and, at first glance, are not high on many people's political agenda; this is perhaps one such issue. However, closer examination reveals that almost a quarter of CO₂ emissions come from road transport and that tyres play a significant role in determining fuel efficiency. This proposed legislation therefore plays an important part in wider EU efforts to tackle global warming.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this report in particular because it contributes to two essential points: improving the information available, which facilitates a more environmentally friendly choice of tyres, and the fact that, by making such a choice, we will be contributing to greater energy efficiency, given that tyres are responsible for 20 to 30% of the total energy use of vehicles.

Aldo Patriciello (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the proposal for a regulation on the labelling of tyres approved today by this House is a crucial step towards marketing safe and quiet products that also allow fuel consumption to be minimised. The fact that the legal form of the proposal has been amended from a directive to a regulation is particularly welcome.

This will allow us to achieve the equal and immediate application of all the provisions in all Member States, ensuring more effective harmonisation of the European tyre market. Moreover, the effort put into the negotiations by the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy concerning flexibility in displaying the label will offer consumers adequate protection while simultaneously ensuring that manufacturers are not burdened with excessive bureaucracy.

The interim provision of exempting tyres manufactured before 2012 from the obligations of the regulation also constitutes a necessary measure for the purposes of ensuring a gradual phasing-in of the new European regulations in the market. For these reasons, we can therefore say we are satisfied with the common position achieved, in the certainty that it corresponds to the aims of the Commission's initial proposal.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for the regulation on the labelling of tyres with respect to fuel efficiency. This regulation is part of the legislative package concerning energy efficiency and will help cut polluting emissions produced by the transport sector. According to this regulation, tyre suppliers must use labels and stickers to provide users with information about fuel consumption and running resistance, wet grip and external rolling noise. In practical terms, the label will indicate for these parameters the level from A to G which the tyre is classified as. Tyre suppliers also have the duty to provide explanations on their website about these indicators, as well as recommendations concerning driver behaviour. These recommendations include the need for eco-driving, checking the tyre pressure regularly and complying with the stopping distance. Member States will publish by 1 November 2011 all the provisions laid down by law and administrative actions required to transpose the regulation into national legislation. The provisions of

this regulation will be enforced from 1 November 2012. The transport sector is responsible for approximately 25% of polluting emissions. This is why this regulation will help reduce these emissions.

- Report: Reimer Böge (A7-0044/2009)

Regina Bastos (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGAF) aims to support workers personally affected by redundancies resulting from major changes in world trade. More specifically, the EGAF finances job-search assistance, tailor-made retraining, entrepreneurship promotion, aid for self-employment and special temporary income supplements.

In the longer term, these measures aim to help these workers find and hold on to a new job.

My country, Portugal, has benefited from the EGAF twice: in 2008, following 1 549 redundancies in the car industry in the Lisbon region and in Alentejo, and in 2009, following 1 504 redundancies in 49 textile companies in the northern and central regions of the country.

The crucial role of this fund is clear. However, the question asked by Mrs Berès highlights that there is a situation that should be clarified by the European Commission. We must prevent the allocation of funds or State aid in a Member State resulting in job losses in other areas of the EU.

I therefore agree with the need to guarantee effective coordination of European financial aid, preventing companies from seeking to profit by creating and cutting jobs.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), *in writing*. – I support this allocation of €14.8 million of European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGAF) support to the 2 840 workers of Dell in Limerick who have lost their jobs following the closure of their plant because, rather than Dell, it will benefit the redundant workers directly. Indeed, it appears that while Dell was closing its manufacturing plant in Ireland, it received €54.5 million in State aid from the Polish Government to open a new plant in Lodz. This State aid was approved by the European Commission. What consistency is there at the heart of this policy followed by the Commission? It effectively exempts Dell from facing the social consequences of its strategy and allows companies to engage in a race to the bottom supported by both Member State and EU funds. Clarity on the coordination of the European Commission's policy on State aid and social policy is urgently needed.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) As I have had occasion to say before, even before the emergence of the current financial crisis, which has increased and exacerbated some of the earlier symptoms, the serious impact of globalisation and the resulting relocation of businesses on many people's lives was already clear to see. The unique challenge of the times in which we are living and the exceptional need to use mechanisms, themselves exceptional, to assist the unemployed and to promote their reintegration into the labour market become clear when we add to these problems the present lack of confidence in the markets and the shrinking of investment.

In this respect, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund has already been used several times, always with the aim of mitigating the impact on European workers caused by their exposure to the global market. The cases described in Mr Böge's report are once again worthy of consideration, although some doubts remain as regards knowing if everyone really will qualify. It would therefore be better if applications were submitted separately in future.

I would restate my belief that the European Union must take steps to promote a more robust, free and creative European market that will generate investment and jobs.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this report because, since the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGAF) is an instrument to respond to a specific European crisis caused by globalisation, this applies to the current situation. This fund provides individual, one-off and time-limited support directly to workers made redundant. It is argued that, in allocating this fund to workers, there should be no disproportionality as has been seen.

Moreover, the European Social Fund (ESF) supports the European Employment Strategy and the policies of Member States on full employment, quality and productivity at work, promotes social inclusion, particularly access to employment for disadvantaged people, and reduces employment inequalities at national, regional and local levels. This is a crucial fund for strengthening economic and social cohesion. The current situation calls for robust, proper and swift implementation of the ESF.

It is clear that the EGAF and the ESF have different, complementary objectives, and that neither one can replace the other. As the extraordinary measure it is, the EGAF should be financed autonomously, and it is a very serious mistake for the EGAF, a short-term measure, to be funded at the expense of the ESF or any other structural fund.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE), in writing. – I welcome the decision of the European Parliament to approve aid for the Dell workers under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. The redundancies at Dell have seriously affected the local Limerick economy and surrounding areas. We must put in place appropriate re-training measures to ensure that the people who lost their jobs at Dell can secure employment in the near future. The approval of the Irish application for aid under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund will contribute to the re-training and up-skilling of the workers in question.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for the cases of Belgium and Ireland, as I consider that we should use all possible means to help employees who are victims of the damage caused by globalisation and the economic and financial crisis.

I nevertheless wonder about the consistency of European policies when, alongside the mobilisation of this fund, the European Commission permits Poland to grant State aid to Dell to open a plant in its country, even though the company is closing one in Ireland. How can European citizens have faith in the 'benefits' of Europe when it authorises this kind of 'trick'?

One might doubt the legitimate use of public funds in this context and regret the lack of social responsibility of our companies, which are guided by an exclusive concern for profitability, regardless of the jobs destroyed.

Jacky Hénin (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) The Dell group, yesterday number one, today number three in the world in the field of information technology, with an estimated stock market value of USD 18 billion, posting a USD 337 million profit for the third quarter of 2009, and predicting an even bigger profit for the fourth quarter ...

Yes, I am behind Dell's employees!

Yes, I hope they find a job and get back to living a dignified life as soon as possible!

But, no, I will not contribute to the plundering of European taxpayers. I will not, under any circumstances, join in showing any more contempt for employees who are in a state of utter disarray.

It is up to the guilty to pay and up to Europe to implement a strong industrial policy that meets the needs of the populations before dividends are allowed to be distributed!

Alan Kelly (S&D), in writing. – Today the European Parliament endorsed a €14 million fund which is to go towards the training of 1 900 Dell workers who were made redundant by the decision to move the plant from Ireland to Poland. This fund can provide for those who have lost their jobs to retrain and acquire qualifications to get back into the workforce. The fund will act as a hand-up rather than a handout, as the money will be forwarded to third level colleges in the Munster region to pay the tuition fees of former Dell employees. The approval of this fund represents a key example of Europe's commitment to helping Ireland out of the recession. The fund should help slow the trend of increasing unemployment in Munster and will provide a major boost for the local economy as those affected by the closure of the Dell plant return to the workforce.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) It is in thinking of the Irish and Belgian workers as victims of neo-liberal globalisation that we are voting for this report and for the granting of aid under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund.

However, we vigorously denounce the reasoning that the social and human tragedies experienced by European workers should be regarded simply as 'adjustments' necessary for the smooth running of neo-liberal globalisation. It is totally unacceptable for the EU to support the very parties who bear the responsibility for these tragedies by giving its political and financial backing to the relocation and transfer processes that they are carrying out for purely profit-making purposes.

The commercial appetites of capitalist predators such as the Texan company Dell, the world number two in telecommunications, cannot be indulged independently of the general interest of the citizens of Europe. At any rate, this is not our vision of Europe.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The EU is an area of solidarity, and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund falls within this concept. This support is fundamental for helping the unemployed and victims of the relocations that have occurred as a result of globalisation. An increasing number of companies are relocating, taking advantage of the lower labour costs in a number of countries, particularly in China and India, with damaging effects for countries that respect workers' rights. The EGAF is intended to help workers that have fallen victim to company relocations and it is essential for helping them to have access to new jobs in the future. The EGAF has already been used in the past by other EU countries, in particular Portugal and Spain, and it is now time to provide such aid to Belgium and Ireland.

Marit Paulsen, Olle Schmidt and Cecilia Wikström (ALDE), *in writing*. – (SV) The EU has established a legislative and budgetary instrument to be able to provide support to those who have lost their jobs on account of 'major structural changes in world trade patterns and to assist their reintegration into the labour market'.

We are convinced that free trade and the market economy benefit economic development and we are therefore, in principle, opposed to financial assistance for countries or regions. However, the financial crisis has hit the Member States' economies very hard and the economic downturn is deeper this time than any downturn that Europe has experienced since the 1930s.

If the EU does not take action, the unemployed will be very severely affected in those regions in Belgium and Ireland that have applied for assistance from the EU. The risk of social marginalisation and permanent exclusion is very great, which is something that, as Liberals, we cannot accept. We strongly sympathise with all those affected by the consequences of the economic downturn and would like to see measures such as training that will help individuals overcome this. We therefore support the assistance for the unemployed affected in the textiles sector in the Belgian regions of East and West Flanders and Limburg and in the computer manufacturing industry in the Irish counties of Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary, as well as in the city of Limerick.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) I endorsed mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, because mass redundancies are, without doubt, a negative consequence of the economic crisis, and despite popular opinion, the crisis is still with us. There is no doubt that those in the countries concerned who have lost their jobs should be helped. Losing their jobs is a huge tragedy in the lives of these people and their families. This is why I think the role of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund is especially important in the difficult times of the crisis. In my opinion, the budget of the Fund should be significantly increased in the future, so that it will be able to meet social needs. The economic crisis continues to take its toll in the form of group redundancies, which often lead to human dramas, a growth in social problems and many other unhelpful phenomena. Therefore, I think we should do everything possible to help, in the most effective way, the people suffering the effects of the economic crisis.

- Report: David Martin (A7-0043/2009)

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I welcome the proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure on account of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. I should like to emphasise one of the aspects that I consider to be of the utmost importance at the moment, as we witness the negotiations for the new agreement that will replace the Kyoto Protocol in January 2013. The Treaty of Lisbon makes the international fight against climate change a specific objective of EU environmental policy. The Treaty of Lisbon adds support for international action to fight climate change to the list of objectives that make up its environmental policy. The Treaty of Lisbon also gives Europe new powers in the fields of energy, scientific research and space policy. Energy is now a joint responsibility, paving the way for a common European policy.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of Mr Martin's report on the adaptation of Parliament's Rules of Procedure to the Treaty of Lisbon, because it is necessary to amend some of Parliament's internal rules, in view of the increased powers resulting from the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, particularly the increased legislative power, which will enable it to legislate on an equal footing with the Member States' governments on a greater number of issues.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The amendments on which we voted today will be incorporated into the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament because the Rules need to be brought into line with the heralded entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, scheduled for 1 December. I believe that the significant

stepping up of Parliament's powers, which calls on all MEPs to tackle new challenges, is an important test of its ability to propose legislation and of its sense of responsibility.

As a result, I can only welcome a change in the Rules of Procedure that will bring the way the House works more into line with the provisions of the treaties.

I am particularly pleased with the increasingly important role played by national parliaments and Member States' initiatives in terms of European integration.

I hope that the subsidiarity principle, which is subject to special attention from the European legislator, is increasingly fulfilled and respected by all European decision makers.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of David Martin's report on the reform of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure insofar as it will allow our House to adhere to the new ground rules accompanying the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.

The reform involves, in particular: welcoming new 'observers' who should be able to become MEPs in their own right as soon as possible; introducing rules relating to the new role of national parliaments in the legislative procedure, by examining the respect shown for the principle of subsidiarity, a reform I gladly welcome insofar as it helps deepen the democratic debate; and, above all, granting the European Parliament an enhanced role in the drafting of European laws.

Finally, this text clarifies the types of action to be taken by the European Parliament in the event of a 'breach by a Member State of fundamental principles', which is especially positive in its defence of fundamental rights.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – Under the old Rule 36 of this Parliament, we were required to 'pay particular attention to respect for fundamental rights'. In the new Rule 36, we must 'fully respect' those rights as laid down in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. This is a subtle change but one which I consider to be important and which binds all MEPs to upholding the rights of all citizens.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009 means it is necessary to adapt the Rules of Procedure to bring them into line with Parliament's new rules and powers.

With these amendments to the Rules of Procedure, Parliament is preparing itself for the increased powers that it will have when the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force, taking account of the arrival of 18 new MEPs, increased legislative powers and the new budget procedure. Future cooperation with national parliaments is also important here.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) There is very little to be seen of the much-vaunted increase in democracy and stronger voice for parliaments which the Treaty of Lisbon was supposed to introduce. There are merely a few new procedures. The procedure for evaluating respect for fundamental rights must not, under any circumstances, be misused for the mandatory imposition of political correctness or for anti-discrimination mania.

The lack of democracy within the EU remains unchanged after the Treaty of Lisbon. Not much has changed when the European Parliament has to choose the Commission President from a pool of failed politicians who have lost elections. The fact that the Stockholm Programme is being pushed through so quickly that we cannot bring up our data protection concerns demonstrates how strong our voice really is. In reality, the changes to the Rules of Procedure brought about by the Treaty of Lisbon have not resulted in any increase in transparency or a stronger voice for parliaments. For this reason, I have voted no.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Treaty of Lisbon will bring more speed, legitimacy and democracy to the decision-making process in the European Union, which is responsible for measures that affect us as citizens every day.

In particular, Parliament will see its legislative power increased, as it will share responsibility equally with the European Council on most issues handled by the institutions. In fact, under the Treaty of Lisbon, so-called codecision will become the rule and the normal legislative procedure.

For my part, as an elected MEP, I am mindful of the challenge that this change brings.

This report, in particular, takes up the work undertaken and almost finished in the previous parliamentary term, to adapt the Rules of Procedure that govern Parliament's work in light of the new treaty, which should enter into force at the start of next month.

Some amendments are purely technical in nature and others concern updates that Parliament has taken the opportunity to implement on this occasion. As a whole, the report represents a compromise that satisfies the political family to which I belong, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), by incorporating, in a balanced way, issues such as subsidiarity and proportionality, as well as strengthening cooperation between the European Parliament and national parliaments.

For those reasons, I voted in favour of this report.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The Greek Communist Party is opposed to and voted against the amendments to adapt the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure to the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon. The amendments maintain and strengthen the reactionary and anti-democratic character of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure, which forms an asphyxiating framework for every voice which rises in opposition against the sovereignty of the political representatives of capital.

It is a lie that the Treaty of Lisbon 'gives the EU a more democratic dimension', because it allegedly upgrades the role of the European Parliament. The European Parliament is a component of the reactionary construct of the EU. It has proven its devotion to the reactionary policy of the EU, its support for the interests of the monopolies, its role as the body which gives allegedly legal credence to the anti-grassroots policy of the EU. The European Parliament does not represent the people; it represents the interests of capital. The people's interest lies in opposition, in breaking with the anti-grassroots policy of the EU and the European Parliament which supports it and in overturning the euro-unifying construct.

- Motion for a resolution (B7-0141/2009) / REV 1: Preparation of the Copenhagen Summit on climate change

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this resolution, which seeks an ambitious and legally binding international agreement in Copenhagen, since I believe that concluding this agreement can lead to a new, sustainable model that stimulates social and economic growth, fosters the development of environmentally sustainable technologies, as well as renewable energy and energy efficiency, and reduces energy consumption and enables the creation of new jobs.

I believe that approval of this resolution – which stresses that the international agreement should be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, with the developed countries taking the lead in reducing their emissions and accepting responsibility for providing developing countries with financial and technical support – will contribute to a certain global balance.

It is therefore essential that the Union takes the lead on the issue so as to safeguard the well-being of future generations.

Dominique Baudis (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the resolution on the Copenhagen Summit, since it is our responsibility, as elected members, to protect the planet for future generations. The world is staking its future on the months to come. It is unthinkable that the international community should fail to reach an agreement that binds States to the path of reason. Heads of State or Government, you hold in your hands responsibility for tomorrow's Earth. Be capable of setting aside your national interests and short-term issues because humanity has no time to lose.

Frieda Brepoels (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – (NL) In the resolution adopted by the European Parliament today, a specific chapter stresses the great importance of regions and local authorities, especially in the consultation process and in disseminating information about and carrying out the implementation of climate policy. Up to 80% of adaptation and mitigation policies will be implemented at a regional or local level. Several regional governments are already leading the way and pursuing a radical approach in fighting climate change.

As a member of the European Free Alliance representing European nations and regions, I fully support the direct involvement of regional governments in the promotion of sustainable development and an efficient response to climate change. In this context, the work of the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD) must be emphasised. This Network has already set up a close partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Members of the EFA therefore call for the explicit recognition of regional governments in the context of the Copenhagen agreement, recognising the role which they are playing in mitigation and adaptation policies.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) It is crucial that the Copenhagen conference results in a politically binding agreement. This agreement must contain operational elements that can be implemented immediately and a schedule that will allow a legally binding agreement to be drawn up during the course of 2010. The agreement must involve all the countries that signed the Convention, and it is vital that any commitments, whether in terms of reducing emissions or in terms of funding, are clearly set out. While, on the one hand, industrialised countries should lead the way in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, economically more advanced developing countries also have a role to play, contributing in accordance with their responsibilities and respective abilities. Industrialised countries and emerging countries with more advanced economies should be subject to comparable efforts. Only then will it be possible to reduce distortions in international competition. It is also crucial that we define the structure of the funding so that this will be sustainable in the medium and long term. The funding must come from the private sector, carbon market and public sector of industrialised countries and economically more advanced developing countries.

Nessa Childers (S&D), in writing. – It is extremely important that the EU takes action and becomes a world leader in reducing carbon emissions approaching the Copenhagen Summit. The Parliament has already shown more ambition than the Member States in relation to a reduction in carbon emissions, and today's resolution is to be welcomed with calls for real financing, calls for strong targets in the high end from 25-40% in line with the science, and the insistence on a legally binding agreement.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) I abstained, firstly because Amendment 13, which considers nuclear energy to be an important factor in reducing carbon dioxide emissions, was approved and, secondly, because Amendment 3 by my group, calling for developed countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 80 and 95% by 2050 compared with 1990 levels, was rejected. There are numerous positive points in the resolution, such as the EU's commitment to granting EUR 30 billion a year up to 2020 to meet the requirements of developing countries in the field of moderating the impact of and adapting to climate change. However, I consider that a return to nuclear energy as an antidote to the greenhouse effect is not the solution in the fight against climate change; on the contrary, it is a dangerous choice. The three camps of developed, developing and underdeveloped countries and the three camps of governments, basic movements and people will clash in Copenhagen, given that climate change largely undermines efforts to reduce poverty and hunger in the world. The Copenhagen Summit is a real challenge to which we must rise and we must not allow the industrial and nuclear lobby to be the glorious victors.

Jürgen Creutzmann, Nadja Hirsch, Holger Krahmer, Britta Reimers and Alexandra Thein (ALDE), in writing. – (DE) The German Free Democratic Party members of the European Parliament have abstained from voting on the Copenhagen resolution for the following reasons. The resolution contains statements about financing for climate protection measures in third countries without defining the specific criteria or purpose of the financing. We cannot justify this to taxpayers. In addition, we believe that blanket criticism of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) is wrong.

The ICAO is the organisation which deals with aviation matters at an international level. Both the criticism and the statement about the alleged failure of ICAO negotiations are incorrect and inappropriate. The call for specific arrangements for a CO₂ trading system for the aviation industry goes against current EU legislation and overburdens the EU's negotiating position in an international climate agreement with unrealistic demands.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), in writing. – The effects of climate change are being felt now: temperatures are rising, icecaps and glaciers are melting and extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more intense. The UN estimates that all but one of its emergency appeals for humanitarian aid in 2007 were climate related. We need a global energy revolution towards a sustainable economic model, which provides for environmental quality to go hand in hand with economic growth, wealth creation and technological advancement. Ireland's per capita carbon emission is 17.5 tonnes per annum. By 2050, this will need to be reduced to 1 or 2 tonnes of carbon. Clearly, this means radical change in the production and consumption of energy. The first step is a comprehensive agreement in Copenhagen binding the international community to mandatory reductions and providing for sanctions at international level for non-compliance. Indeed, the international community should show commitment exceeding that shown to tackle the financial crisis. The response to climate change lies in strong international governance and financial commitment. Aid to the developing world must be in addition to Overseas Development Aid or risk not attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, climate change will require increased investment in the public sector.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) The joint resolution which has just been adopted by Parliament sends out a clear signal. The Union needs to speak with one voice and act jointly following Copenhagen, no matter what the scope of the outcome of the conference. We must aim for an actual 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. When I say 'actual', this means that it will eventually be necessary, one day, to raise the issue of derogations and emissions trading. Parliament hopes that the Copenhagen Summit will be an opportunity to present a European Union that is strong and that also makes a firm financial commitment to developing countries, because we owe them.

Anne Delvaux (PPE), in writing. – (FR) In Copenhagen, from 7 to 18 December, nearly 200 nations will negotiate a new international treaty to combat climate change, a post-Kyoto treaty that will enter into force from 2013 ...

The resolution voted on will serve as a road map for negotiation for the European Union. As a current member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, I made my contribution via amendments supporting, in particular, the legally binding nature of the agreement.

My requirements, when voting, are to reach a global political agreement that is ambitious and binding and that quickly paves the way for a genuine legal treaty; to achieve a 30% reduction in relation to the 1990 greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, with an ambitious, quantifiable yet flexible commitment from other polluters such as the United States and China, and an 80% reduction by 2050, in compliance with what the experts are demanding; and to clarify the crucial collective commitment by industrialised countries in terms of finance and aid for developing countries. In a crisis context, it is difficult to determine the exact amount, but it will be necessary to ensure that it at least corresponds to the commitments undertaken!

Failure in Copenhagen would be an environmental, political and moral disaster!

Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on the Copenhagen conference on climate change, since I believe that it sets out a good parliamentary compromise on the fundamental aspects that should guide negotiations on a future international agreement on this matter, especially with regard to the issues of adaptation, funding mechanisms and deforestation. I would reiterate that reaching a legally binding international agreement in Copenhagen that is ambitious, realistic and involves all parties is also a matter of social justice.

Jill Evans (Verts/ALE), in writing. – In the resolution adopted by the EP, a specific chapter stresses the great importance of regions and local authorities in the consultation, information and implementation of the climate policy. Up to 80% of mitigation and adaptation policies will happen at the regional and local level. Several regional or sub-State governments are leading the way on radical policies to fight climate change.

As Members of the European Free Alliance representing European nations and regions, we fully support the direct involvement of sub-State bodies and regional governments in the promotion of sustainable development and the efficient response to climate change. In this context, the work of the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD) has to be underlined. This Network has already set up a partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme. We therefore call for the explicit recognition of regional governments in the context of the Copenhagen agreement, recognising the key role they are playing in mitigation and adaptation policies.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) As I have said before, it is vital that a legally binding, global, political agreement on climate change is adopted so as not to put European industry in an anticompetitive situation. The European effort must be aimed at seeking an agreement that requires a joint effort, and not just an effort by the EU.

In my view, the idea of a tax on international financial transactions as a solution to fund adaptation to climate change and mitigation of its effects by developing countries is not appropriate, given that it will be at the expense of the economy (particularly in crisis situations such as the one we are currently experiencing), trade and wealth creation.

The cost that such a tax would have for society in general (increasing the tax burden, with consequences for all taxpayers and consumers) and its impact on the financial market (decreasing the necessary liquidity and flow of credit to businesses and households) cannot be ignored.

I believe that this is not the way to regulate the market and that other alternatives that are less damaging to the global economy can be devised.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution because I believe that the EU should continue to lead by example in the fight against climate change. It is worth noting that the EU has surpassed the goals drawn up in Kyoto.

I believe that the Copenhagen agreement should be binding. In this regard, I have tabled an amendment to Parliament's resolution on this matter, requesting an international set of sanctions to be included in the final text.

I believe that the agreement should be global, ambitious and with a clear timeline. If we are not ambitious, we will end up with a token instrument that will be even less effective than the Kyoto Protocol, which already provides for international sanctions. Let us therefore hope that there will be effective regulation and that the agreement will include a review clause so that it can be easily updated.

I also believe that China and India cannot be exempted from all responsibility when they produce a large percentage of global emissions, while our industries are going to great lengths to reduce their emissions.

The US has a great responsibility for ensuring the success of this summit. I hope that the President of the United States, Barack Obama, will show that he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize, because combating climate change will contribute to peace and happiness for all nations.

Elisa Ferreira (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) The adopted resolution contains positive aspects, such as: the importance of maintaining an international post-2012 commitment; the need to align reduction targets with the latest scientific data; the call on the US to make binding the targets promised (although not committed to) in the last election campaign; the emphasis on the historic responsibility of industrialised countries for greenhouse gas emissions; the promotion of energy efficiency and the enhancement of RD&D activities.

However, the importance attributed to so-called market solutions, and to carbon trading in particular, is indisputable. This is fundamentally a political and ideological choice, which not only does not guarantee that we will meet the established reduction targets, but is itself the most serious threat to achieving the stated environmental goals. The experience of how the European Union Greenhouse Gas Emission Trading System has functioned since 2005 is an illustration of this. Carbon trading aims to commercialise the Earth's capacity to recycle carbon and, thus, to regulate the climate. As a result, this capacity – which is what guarantees life on Earth as we know it – is at risk of ending up in the hands of the very corporations that are defiling the planet, its natural resources and the climate.

Robert Goebbels (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I abstained from the vote on the climate change resolution because the European Parliament, as is its wont, displays worthy sentiments without taking the realities into account. The European Union produces approximately 11% of worldwide CO₂ emissions. It cannot set an example and pay for the rest of the world too.

It is illogical to restrict Member States in the use of clean development mechanisms (CDMs), albeit provided for by Kyoto, and, at the same time, ask for EUR 30 billion a year in aid for developing countries, without conditions or proper judgment, to mention only one incongruity in the resolution.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) On the climate change issue, there is an urgent need to act and not to leave developing countries powerless. They are the ones that are affected in the first place, but they lack resources suitable for influencing the phenomena created by developed countries! Future generations will be powerless in the face of the effects of climate change if no global action is taken today. That is why it is essential for our governments to show political leadership so as to encourage other States, such as the United States and China, to reach an agreement. This commitment must also include the introduction of a tax on financial transactions that is used to finance not banking sector supervision, but rather developing countries and worldwide public goods, such as the climate.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – Next month, the eyes of the world will be on Denmark. Across the North Sea, in a country of similar size, the Scottish Government is making a vital contribution to climate change efforts. According to the official website of the Copenhagen Summit, Scotland has taken on 'world leadership on climate protection'. The efforts of the Scottish Government are to be fully supported and we must hope that other nations add their weight to global efforts next month.

Astrid Lulling (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted for this resolution on the European Union's strategy for the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change as I am convinced that a comprehensive international agreement can actually alter the trend of uncontrolled growth in greenhouse gas emissions.

Environmental policy in general, and climate policy in particular, are also a driver of technological innovation and may generate new growth prospects for our companies.

I am very glad that Europe is playing a leading role by providing for an energy and climate policy that aims to reduce emissions by 20% in 2020 compared with 1990. I am firmly opposed to additional restrictive targets without a comprehensive, international agreement. On the one hand, Europe, which is responsible for 11% of the world's emissions, does not carry enough weight to reverse the trend on its own and, on the other, I fear the relocation of energy- and CO₂-intensive industries.

Only a comprehensive agreement focusing on the medium and long term will provide the predictability necessary to be able to embark on major research and development projects and to commit to the substantial investment required to dissociate economic growth from the growth in greenhouse gas emissions on a permanent basis.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) It is very important that an ambitious and legally binding agreement on climate change is reached at the Copenhagen conference.

However, it is also important that everyone is involved, particularly China, India and Brazil, in view of their significant economic role and intense industrial activity. These countries must also commit to pursuing ambitious targets and goals, comparable to those of other countries, though with aid, as far as possible, from other richer, more industrialised countries. It is also essential that the United States plays its part in this extremely important matter.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) For far too long, the EU has been attempting to reduce the concentration of greenhouse gases single-handedly while energy-hungry emerging economies and wasteful industrial countries were not even prepared to implement the Kyoto Protocol. We will have to wait and see to what extent the Copenhagen conference will change this. Against this background, rules are needed for the financing process, together with sanctions for non-compliance.

In order to bring about change, we need to restructure our environmental policy so that it does not merely involve millions being transferred to and from as part of the certificate trading process, but also enables the promotion of real alternatives, such as renewable energy, and the reduction in the transport of goods all over Europe which is subsidised using EU money. This report does not deal with this problem in sufficient detail and, therefore, I have voted against it.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for this resolution as a mandatory, global legal agreement must be reached in Copenhagen, based on which developed countries or developing countries as well will commit to targets for reducing emission levels comparable to those of the EU. We can achieve the objective of maintaining global warming at a gradient of 2° C and of cutting greenhouse gas emissions only if we invest in clean technologies and in research and innovation. Additional funds must also be allocated, taken from the contributions made by the states signing the global agreement, which reflect the economic development and solvency of these states.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D), *in writing*. – This resolution represents a clear and realistic strategy for dealing with the key areas which must be addressed in order to achieve an effective agreement in Copenhagen next month. We have a text which balances ambition with realistic targets, and which deals with the difficult issues that the negotiators must resolve. The European Parliament has now called on the EU negotiating team and the Member States to press for action on the following: emissions trading; a global carbon market; a fair system of financing for adaptation and mitigation; forests; and aviation and maritime transport.

The Parliament has kept to its earlier commitments regarding emission reductions by 2020, and has now set out even more ambitious targets for 2050 in the light of new recommendations from the scientific community. The willingness of the EU to lead on this issue may well prove to be a key factor in establishing an internationally binding agreement to deal with climate change.

Bogusław Sonik (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) The European Parliament resolution on the EU strategy for the Copenhagen conference on climate change is a significant legislative document and an important voice in the international debate and the negotiations preceding the climate summit, and is intended to supplement the European Union's position on this question. If the European Union wants to remain a leader in combating climate change, it should continue to set itself ambitious reduction goals and to meet previously made reduction commitments. In this way, it would give an example to other countries, despite the difficulties involved.

The voice of the European Parliament, as the only democratic institution of the EU, is crucial in this debate, which is also why our resolution should show the right direction to take, and should formulate priorities which are truly of importance. The text of the resolution itself must not be just a collection of demands and wishes without any basis, but should be the coherent and, above all, united voice of the citizens of the EU, based on the principle of joint, but differentiated, responsibility of Member States on the question of combating climate change.

The European Union, as a serious partner in negotiations, must take its seat in Copenhagen as a united body which gives consideration to the interests of all its Member States. The European Union should show a readiness to increase reduction goals to 30%, provided other countries also express a readiness to set themselves such high reduction targets. It should also be remembered that the EU has not accepted any unconditional obligations, only conditional ones.

Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), in writing. – (NL) I voted in favour of the resolution because the European Parliament is calling on EU negotiators to make EUR 30 billion available to developing countries for their fight against climate change. Parliament is thereby sending out a clear signal to the negotiators who will be attending the climate summit in Copenhagen on Europe's behalf in a fortnight's time. Up until now, they have always been vague about what their financial input at the summit will be. Now, however, Parliament has called on them to be more explicit about actual amounts and percentages. And that puts the ball back in the United States' court. There are signals that the Americans are busy drafting a CO₂ emissions target which they want to table. This resolution ramps up the pressure on President Obama to come up with specific proposals, because that will do little to increase the chances of success in Copenhagen.

It also increases the chances of countries like China, India and Brazil joining the global fight against climate change. Like my colleagues in the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, it was therefore with a great deal of enthusiasm that I voted in favour of this robust resolution. Its only drawback is that the production of nuclear energy has somehow crept in. However, what is important now is that the Commission and the Member States drive a hard bargain in Copenhagen.

Konrad Szymański (ECR), in writing. – (PL) In today's vote on the EU strategy for the climate conference in Copenhagen, the European Parliament adopted a radical and unrealistic position. In demanding a doubling of restrictions on CO₂ emissions in EU countries, Parliament is undermining the climate package which was recently negotiated with such difficulty (point 33 calls for a 40% reduction). While demanding an expenditure of EUR 30 billion annually for clean technologies in developing countries, Parliament expects countries with coal-based power generation, such as Poland, to pay double for CO₂ emissions: once in the form of a fee under the system for emissions trading, and a second time in the form of a contribution to help developing countries in the area of combating climate change (point 18 talks about the contribution, which should not be less than EUR 30 billion annually). While demanding that calculation of Member States' contributions towards clean technologies in developing countries be based on CO₂ emission levels and GDP, Parliament has overlooked the criterion of ability to bear these costs. This means a cost to Poland of EUR 40 billion over the next 10 years (this is a consequence of rejecting amendments 31 and 27). This is the reason why the Polish delegation alone voted against the whole resolution on the EU strategy for the Copenhagen conference on climate change (COP 15).

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) The enhanced risks to the environment and health and particularly dangerous climate changes, with the overheating of the planet, are the result of industrial development based on capitalist profit and commercialisation of land, air, energy and water. These phenomena cannot be properly addressed by the leaders of capital, the very people responsible for creating them.

The road to the Copenhagen Summit is blocked by the escalation in imperialist infighting. With proposals for 'a viable green economy' and an economy of 'low carbon' growth, the EU is trying to pave the way for even more investments by the euro-unifying monopolies and, at the same time, to satisfy the speculative expectations of capital with a 'pollution exchange'.

In order to plan and implement a development course which will help to balance the relationship between man and nature and satisfy grassroots needs, we need, in the final analysis, to overturn capitalist relations of production. The Greek Communist Party voted against the European Parliament resolution. It proposes combined satisfaction of grassroots needs in accordance with the wealth produced in our country. The political preconditions to the implementation of this objective are socialisation of the basic means of production and central planning of economic life, with control by the grassroots and working classes, in other words, power of the people and an economy of the people.

Thomas Ulmer (PPE), *in writing*. – (DE) I have voted against the motion for a resolution because it determines in advance that the EU will make large amounts of funding available from the start without waiting for the other partners. I cannot justify to my voters using their money in this way. Climate protection is an important objective, but the panic-mongering before the Copenhagen Climate Summit is outrageous and does not reflect the scientific facts.

- Motion for a resolution (B7-0155/2009) Multi-annual programme 2010-2014 regarding the area of freedom, security and justice (Stockholm Programme)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this resolution, since it addresses priorities in fundamental chapters such as freedom, security and justice, particularly with regard to the conditions for the reception and integration of immigrants, fighting discrimination, particularly on grounds of sexual orientation, access to justice, and combating corruption and violence.

Fighting discrimination is vital, whether on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious affiliation, colour, descent and national or ethnic origin, as is fighting racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, homophobia and violence.

Freedom of movement should also be guaranteed for all EU citizens and their families.

In conclusion, the protection of citizens against terrorism and organised crime should also be guaranteed, and the regulatory framework should therefore be strengthened to deal with these highly topical threats, given that they have a global dimension.

Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The Greek Communist Party is categorically opposed to the Stockholm Programme, just as it was opposed to previous programmes to implement the misleadingly entitled area of freedom, security and justice. Its objective, the demagogic pronouncements of the EU notwithstanding, is to harmonise or homogenise national laws in order to achieve the uniform application of the EU's anti-grassroots policy and to strengthen existing and create new mechanisms for prosecution and repression and EU level, on the pretext of terrorism and organised crime.

The top priorities of the Stockholm Programme include stepping up the anti-communist hysteria in the EU which is already proceeding full steam ahead, culminating in the historically inaccurate and unacceptable equation of communism with national socialism. The EU area of freedom, security and justice and the programmes to implement it are not in the people's interests; on the contrary, they form a set of measures which strangle individual and social rights and democratic freedoms, intensify authoritarianism and repression at the expense of workers, immigrants and refugees, safeguard the political system and the sovereignty of the monopolies and aim to strike at the working class and grassroots movement, this being prerequisite to the implementation of the savage attack by capital against the employment and social rights of the working classes and grass roots.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I am convinced that the protection of children's rights is a very important aspect of the Stockholm Programme. I would like to draw attention to the fact that in recent years, violence against children, including the sexual exploitation of children, sex tourism involving children, trafficking of children and child labour have been of increasing concern. Given that the protection of children's rights is a social priority of the European Union (EU), I call on the Council and the Commission to dedicate more attention to protecting the rights of those who are most vulnerable.

Children's rights are part of human rights, which the EU and the Member States have pledged to honour in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child. The EU must increase its commitments to help the situation of children in Europe and the whole world, so that it can properly ensure the promotion of children's rights and their protection. I would like to underline that only a strategy based on coordinated and joint action can encourage the Member States to honour and adhere to the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child throughout the European Union and beyond its borders. In order to properly ensure children's rights, I would propose adopting standards of an obligatory nature in all EU Member States. Sadly, respect for children's rights has not yet been universally ensured. Therefore, by implementing the Stockholm Programme, I call on the Council and the Commission to take concrete measures to ensure that children's rights are properly protected.

Carlo Casini (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Mr President, I voted in favour of the resolution because it indicates the right way to strengthen European unity around the fundamental values that constitute its very identity.

We cannot fool ourselves that it will be possible to achieve agreement on so-called common values. We may nevertheless hope that the application of reason can help the various political components to look more closely at what is right and fair where progressing along the road to European unity is concerned.

The clear distinction between the right to free movement and the principle of non-discrimination, on the one hand, and the value of the family as a natural society founded on marriage, on the other, has led to the formulation of the paragraph that upholds the independence of individual States in family law and the ban on discrimination against any human being.

Those who, like me, fully promote the principle of equality, affirming equality between children who are born and those who are not yet born, can only support the principle of non-discrimination against people with different sexual tendencies, but cannot accept the destruction of the concept of marriage or of the family. The significance of this concept, as recognised by Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is fundamental to the succession of generations and the educational capacities of heterosexual couples.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) I voted against the motion for numerous reasons; my main reasons are outlined below. In essence, its basic dimension is the philosophy of ‘security’ and fear, at the expense of basic rights and freedoms. However, it is precisely by protecting and respecting these rights under the rule of law that security is safeguarded. It reinforces the perception of and the facility to implement fortress Europe, which treats immigrants as potential terrorists and criminals and, in the best case scenario, ‘accepts’ their presence not as people with equal rights, but depending on the needs of the EU labour market.

It promotes disgusting mass redundancies, it does not strengthen the right of access to asylum, it paves the way for the active participation of the EU in refugee camps outside its borders and for the imposition of leonine agreements with third countries, but is indifferent to the safeguarding of human rights. Finally, even though much more could be pointed out, the resolution introduces policies which multiply the various bodies which monitor, collect and exchange personal data on citizens, infringing their collective and personal dignity and trampling the right of freedom of speech underfoot. This resolution is addressed to a society which only has enemies and in which everyone is a suspect. That is not the society we want.

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE), in writing. – (SV) We believe that it is vital that women are not subjected to violence or the sex trade. Similarly, it is self-evident that we should respect human rights and observe the international conventions that are in place for refugees. For us as EU citizens, having a stable legal system with everyone being equal before the law is a given, as is the fact that we can have confidence in the way authorities treat our privacy.

Many of the 144 points in the motion for a resolution and the 78 amendments to Parliament’s resolution that have been tabled were, of course, worthy of support. The resolution and the amendments also include a number of points, concerning human rights, discrimination and privacy for example, that are already covered by previous programmes as well as the Treaty of Lisbon. We have chosen to vote against a number of amendments in order to obtain a resolution that is even stronger on the issues that are not already covered by previous programmes and treaties. Even though there are points in the resolution that was voted through that should not have been included, we have chosen to vote in favour of the resolution, as the benefits far outweigh the negative aspects. It is more important to send a clear message of support for the Stockholm Programme from the European Parliament.

Marije Cornelissen and Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE), in writing. – (NL) In itself, the European Parliament resolution calling for an area of freedom, security and justice serving the citizen is a progressive resolution and one which puts a check on the desire of the Council of Ministers to allow the free exchange of citizens’ personal data. It is also a resolution which guarantees the protection of refugees and migrants.

This resolution is a step towards progressive European lawmaking on migration. Some of its crucial amendments, including those concerning the establishment of the principle of non-refoulement, the diminution of the role of Frontex, which will have no role to play in the resettlement of migrants in third countries, a positive attitude to ‘en masse’ regularisation of illegal immigrants and the assertion that security should serve the interests of freedom, are of decisive importance. The paragraphs about combating illegal migration are open to several interpretations, although, to my mind, they do not err on the repressive side. I deeply regret the fact that the resolution has been watered down as regards the anti-discrimination dossier.

Anne Delvaux (PPE), in writing. – (FR) So far, progress has been slow with regard to some aspects of the area of freedom, security and justice, whereas the right to move and to reside freely within the EU is now

granted to more than 500 million citizens! It is important to manage this, and the European Parliament resolution passed today helps in this respect.

I welcome the resolution, as it primarily concerns the citizens and ties in with my priorities: a Europe of law and justice (protection of fundamental rights and the fight against all forms of discrimination); a Europe that protects everything whilst not acting like Big Brother (strengthening of Europol and of police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters both operationally and administratively, improvement of inter-State cooperation between the police and information services, construction of a European criminal justice area based on the principle of mutual recognition, protection of personal data); and a Europe that is united, responsible and fair with regard to asylum and immigration through true solidarity between all the Member States, and the fight against the trafficking in, and the sexual and economic exploitation of, human beings.

The next stage: the European Council on 9 and 10 December 2009!

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the motion for a European Parliament resolution on the Stockholm Programme, since I believe that the proposals it contains clearly and precisely establish the priorities for the coming years in terms of European legislation in the areas of freedom, security and justice, in the light of application of the Treaty of Lisbon.

It is vital to strike a better balance between the security of citizens and the protection of their individual rights. Consequently, I would like to stress the importance of applying the principle of mutual recognition to same-sex couples in the EU, as well as setting up a European Court of Cyber Affairs and adopting measures that give prisoners new rights.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) It has been common practice in this Parliament to promote divisive issues, which go far beyond the competences of the European Union, by including them in texts on broader issues that would normally warrant widespread support. I must condemn the application, once again, of this surreptitious method, which only goes to discredit this House and widen the gap between MEPs and voters.

Fortunately, matters concerning family law fall within the competence of the Member States, and it is therefore absolutely illegitimate and a blatant attack on the subsidiarity principle for Parliament to seek to coerce them towards a common understanding on these issues by seeking to promote radical agendas.

Recognition by Parliament of same-sex unions – which are effective only in four Member States – cannot be imposed on the rest, and it represents a crude attempt to influence legislators and national public opinions, which deserves to be condemned in the strongest terms.

When the Charter of Fundamental Rights was adopted, it was feared that it would be invoked abusively in the future and that it would clash with national law. The current situation confirms that these predictions were right.

Carlo Fidanza (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) This resolution ultimately affirms some important principles: common responsibility in the fight against illegal immigration, in the distribution of asylum seekers and in the repatriation of foreign detainees. On the other hand, I feel that the part that refers to respect for the rights of minorities, and particularly the Roma minority, is very inadequate and overly politically correct. The text completely overlooks the situation of degradation in which the Roma communities live, in certain states such as Italy, not due to lack of integration policies but, quite the contrary, due to a deliberate decision to reject any rule of civil living.

There is no condemnation of the illegal activities (thefts, bag-snatching, tiresome begging and underage prostitution) that are increasingly connected with illegal Roma settlements in the outskirts of major cities in Italy and elsewhere. There is no mention, even in the section on the protection of minors, of the need to safeguard those very children against the actions of enslavement perpetrated against them by some Roma heads of family. There is no mention even of how Directive 2004/38/EC on the removal of Community citizens who are unable to demonstrate a certain level of income after a three-month stay in an EU State should actually be applied. Integration cannot happen without respect for the rules, and the Roma minorities are not exempt from compliance with this principle.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The majority in Parliament has approved the main thrust of the European Commission's proposal for the so-called Stockholm Programme, which is a powerful attack on such a key element of Member States' sovereignty as justice. Increasing joint actions in the area of political and judicial cooperation and cooperation between secret services, as well as introducing an internal security

strategy and new measures for exchanging data within the EU, come at the expense of the rights, freedoms and guarantees of all those living in EU countries.

Development of a joint migration policy based on the classification of immigrants according to a scale of desirability, and in its most repressive form, the use of Frontex, violates migrants' rights and ignores the human tragedy taking place in many countries.

The growing use of surveillance and monitoring of people is worrying, as is the practice of profiling, based on data mining techniques and universal data gathering, irrespective of whether citizens are innocent or guilty, for the purposes of so-called prevention and control. Also worrying are the huge funds channelled to the military-industrial complex and its investigation activities in the area of internal security.

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D), in writing. – (PL) Mr President, political strategy concerning the area of freedom, security and justice – the Stockholm Programme – will be adopted by the Council in December this year, straight after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. At this special moment, when the decision-making powers of the European Parliament will increase significantly, the role of national parliaments in the process of making Community law will also increase. The citizen's voice, strengthened in this way, will also have a stronger mandate to bring about realisation of the principles of the Stockholm Programme.

Particularly significant and urgent, in my opinion, is the need to take action to ensure equal treatment of all citizens of the European Union, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious association, world-view, skin colour, background or ethnic origin. To do this, it is essential that the Council adopt a comprehensive directive on non-discrimination, one which would encompass all the areas I have just mentioned. The EU does not have such a law, as we have often said in the European Parliament.

I hope this loophole will be filled as part of realisation of the Stockholm Programme. However, just making a law is not enough. If the Stockholm Programme is to be successful, EU citizens have to know their rights. The job of the new European Commission will, therefore, also be to raise public awareness of antidiscrimination legislation and of gender equality.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of this resolution because it enables a better balance to be struck between respect for individual freedoms and a predominantly repressive outlook accompanied by security measures of which it is difficult to gauge the effectiveness today. Through this programme, we are reaffirming our attachment to a Europe of solidarity and values that has a duty to defend freedom of religion, equal opportunities, the rights of women, the rights of minorities and the rights of homosexuals.

That is why I strongly support the adoption of the Anti-Discrimination Directive, which is currently being held up within the Council and which the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) did not want during the last parliamentary term. The PPE Group has restated its opposition to the text. I also welcome the adoption of amendments calling for a request to remove the obstacles to the exercising of the right to family reunification and demanding a ban on placing foreign minors and unaccompanied minors in detention.

However, I regret that the objectives of the migration policies have been ignored again and have taken a back seat behind the issue of combating illegal immigration and strengthening the Frontex Agency. On the subject of asylum, the proposals on a common asylum system will be examined by the European Parliament in its capacity as legislator, and it will closely monitor the genuine political will to make progress in this area.

Timothy Kirkhope (ECR), in writing. – Whilst the ECR Group supports much of what is contained in the Stockholm Programme, such as cooperation and solidarity over issues of policing, fighting cross-border crime and corruption, protecting fundamental rights, and finding solutions for immigration by seeking to assist those countries in southern Europe that face serious immigration problems, we do not support proposals for a European Security Strategy, or measures which would hand over control of our criminal justice system and asylum policy to the EU, or calls for 'compulsory and irrevocable solidarity'. We believe in cooperation rather than compulsion; and therefore we voted against this report.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The Stockholm Programme is concerned with strengthening security, particularly in the fight against cross-border crime and terrorism, while respecting citizens' rights. The effort, which is also a result of the new reality of the Treaty of Lisbon, would lead you to expect a responsible discussion about the essential points of an area of freedom, security and justice serving the citizen.

Regrettably, there were some who wanted to contaminate the discussion of such a fundamental issue as the Stockholm Programme with the issue of same-sex marriages, which is irrelevant and unrelated to the subject, with no regard even for the legitimate differences in the internal legal solutions of each country of the European Union. Those who acted in a such a way, merely for the sake of political manoeuvring, were not bothered about the fate of the Stockholm Programme.

Conversely, my vote reflected the importance of discussing the needs of this area of freedom, security and justice serving the citizen. It was also an expression of condemnation of the strategy of those who wanted to contaminate this discussion with a divisive agenda which had nothing to do with it.

Judith Sargentini (Verts/ALE), in writing. – (NL) In itself, the European Parliament resolution calling for an area of freedom, security and justice serving the citizen is a progressive resolution and one which puts a check on the desire of the Council of Ministers to allow the free exchange of citizens' personal data. It is also a resolution which guarantees the protection of refugees and migrants.

This resolution is a step towards progressive European lawmaking on migration. Some of its crucial amendments, including those concerning the establishment of the principle of non-refoulement, the diminution of the role of Frontex, which will have no role to play in the resettlement of migrants in third countries, a positive attitude to 'en masse' regularisation of illegal immigrants and the assertion that security should serve the interests of freedom, are of decisive importance. The paragraphs about combating illegal migration are open to several interpretations, although, to my mind, they do not err on the repressive side. I deeply regret the fact that the resolution has been watered down as regards the anti-discrimination dossier.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), in writing. – (PL) I would like to share a few comments on the multi-annual programme 2010-2014 regarding the area of freedom, security and justice (the Stockholm Programme). Ensuring the citizens of the European Union freedom, security and justice is one of the main responsibilities of Member States. The countries of the European Union must increase cooperation in judicial matters, without detriment to the traditions and fundamental laws of Member States. We need to increase mutual trust between Member States concerning the appropriateness of decisions made by the authorities of another Member State, especially in areas related to legal and illegal immigration, and also concerning the cooperation of police and courts in criminal matters. The EU must intensify efforts related to fighting transborder crime and terrorism. To this end, steps should be taken to improve the efficiency of information exchange while not forgetting the matter of the protection of privacy, personal data and fundamental freedoms. Security in Europe is our common affair, as is the common, single market, and we should do everything possible for every citizen to feel safe within the borders of the EU, because this is one of our fundamental values.

Renate Sommer (PPE), in writing. – (DE) I welcome the adoption of the motion for a resolution on the Stockholm Programme. It is important for this Parliament, as the representative of the citizens of Europe, to propose a route to be taken by the justice and home affairs policy. We have achieved a good result. In addition, the Treaty of Lisbon gives us security. In future, the European Parliament will not only be playing an advisory role in these policy areas, but will also be part of the decision-making process. We have found a good balance between security and citizens' rights.

The population needs increasing levels of security. However, we must repeatedly answer the question about whether and to what extent citizens' rights and freedoms can be restricted by the introduction of security measures. I think we have chosen a good middle way. However, to ensure that this middle way really does feed into the justice and home affairs policy, we are calling for more control rights for this Parliament and for the national parliaments in the EU as part of the implementation of the Stockholm Programme. Unfortunately, plenary did not support my call for police access to Eurodac.

This would have been another useful tool in the fight against terrorism and crime. However, my motion calling on the Commission to present proposals for combating the abuse of the asylum system throughout Europe was successful. Every abuse of the asylum system makes it more difficult to grant asylum to those who have a legitimate claim to it.

– Motions for a resolution: The state of play of the Euromed Free Trade Area

Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of this motion for a joint resolution on the state of play of the Euromed Free Trade Area.

In spite of some progress made, I regret that the main objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership have not been reached, jeopardising their planned achievement by 2010. It is vital to ensure that the

Euro-Mediterranean integration process is restored as a political priority of the EU, since the success of this process and of the free trade area could contribute to peace, prosperity and security throughout the region.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The Mediterranean is the cradle of civilisation as we know it. Along its shores, ideas and institutions that define the essence of European civilisation and form an integral part of its history and its future plans were born, have developed and have grown powerful.

Deep divisions have also appeared along its shores, often resolved by force of arms, which have led to a painful political separation, a widening gap between its peoples and development divorced from, if not opposed to, what was previously the centre of the world.

The EU, which wants to open itself to the world and to promote dialogue between its members and third countries, must cherish the idea of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area that makes it possible to build closer relations again between both sides of the Mediterranean and which also promotes greater South-South convergence.

It is essential to acknowledge that the results achieved up to now do not tally with the ambition behind this idea. There are many economic and financial obstacles, although it is clear that the more serious sticking points are distinctly political in nature. We must persist and help make it possible to recreate a market on a Mediterranean scale that brings with it increased contact between peoples and restoration of the ties that have, in the meantime, been broken.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing.* – (FR) I regret that there is still a striking economic, social and demographic imbalance between the two sides of the Mediterranean. That is why I have voted in favour of giving new impetus to the integration of the countries of the south and the east of the Mediterranean in international trade so that they can diversify their economies and share the associated benefits fairly.

We must reduce the gap separating the north and the south sides of the Mediterranean in development terms. Moreover, this free trade area should be supplemented by the gradual and conditional introduction of free movement for workers, with account being taken of the current discussions on the links between migration and development.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (ES) I voted against the Euromed report because it is not possible to dissociate the issue of trade from that of political dialogue in the Union for the Mediterranean. This report focuses on the hard core of the European Union's interest in the Union for the Mediterranean. I refer to the establishment of a free trade area across both regions. I am against implementing such a free trade area.

The trade chapter must be based on the principles of fair trade, taking account of the imbalances between the countries of the European Union and the Mediterranean countries. As regards the political chapter, however, we cannot agree with the award of the Advanced Statute by the European Union to Morocco whilst the latter continues to violate human rights. As far as the European Union is concerned, the Sahara conflict must be a priority issue for the Union for the Mediterranean, with support for the process of conducting a referendum on self-determination pursuant to UN resolutions. It follows that we also cannot accept the so-called upgrade that the Union has granted Israel. This is because of Israel's continual violation of international law, and because of our political commitments to Palestine.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) I very much welcome the fact that multilateral contacts with the Mediterranean region and, in particular, with the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries (SEMC) will be improved and strengthened. I also support the European Union's efforts to start the process of modernising the economies of these countries and, therefore, to help the population. However, I doubt very much whether this can be achieved by means of the planned Euromed Free Trade Area.

A sustainability impact assessment carried out by the University of Manchester warns of the negative social and environmental consequences for the SEMC involved. I fear that this agreement will bring new sales markets for the EU countries, but will seriously damage the economies of the SEMC. The parallel introduction of freedom of movement for employees called for in the motion for a resolution would also result in a huge wave of migration to Europe and lead to the drain of workers urgently needed in the SEMC. In order to help ensure a positive future for the SEMC, I have therefore voted against this resolution.

Cristiana Muscardini (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) Mr President, following the Barcelona Conference in 1995, not all of the potential intrinsic to the natural relations between countries lining the Mediterranean basin has yet been developed.

The ambitious plan of forging new and closer political, social and cultural links between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean must remain one of the priority goals of the European Union in order to achieve the desired and strategic implementation of a free trade area. This Euromed area may make a significant contribution to peace, prosperity and safety throughout the region.

I support measures and efforts aimed at removing barriers and obstacles to trade and I realise that the success of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership does not depend only on the will of European countries. The implementation of a free trade area requires the determined, ongoing and synergetic contribution of all parties.

The UFM must also step up forms of cooperation existing within the Euromed framework to allow all partner countries to participate in European Union regional programmes and corresponding policies. On the subject, I note that the drawing up of plans within the framework established in Paris in July 2008 in strategic sectors such as new infrastructures, cooperation between SMEs, communications and exploitation of renewable energy sources may contribute positively to development and the facilitation of exchange and investments, because the countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean sorely need this. All these conditions promote the achievement of peace and the establishment of friendly relations.

For all these reasons, I approve the resolution and hope that the roadmap drawn up by the Commission can be respected and offer the benefits that we all expect.

- Motion for a resolution (B7-0153/2009): Passenger compensation in the event of airline bankruptcy

Richard Ashworth (ECR), in writing. – The ECR rejected the motion for a resolution tabled by other groups in the Transport Committee concerning passenger compensation in the event of airlines bankruptcy. We in the ECR tabled our own motion for a resolution which would have rectified a number of key weaknesses in the adopted text for the following reasons.

Although supporting passenger rights is, of course, of vital importance, there are more efficient measures that can be taken without passengers being burdened with even higher costs.

1. We should await the impact assessment that was proposed by Commissioner Tajani during the plenary session on 7 October.

2. The text that has been supported calls for the establishment of a 'guarantee' fund that would be used to compensate passengers in case of airlines bankruptcy. However, the establishment of such a fund would inevitably have to be funded by the consumer, meaning passengers would be required to pay even more for their tickets. At this stage, this unnecessary step would add to the sizeable list of existing airport taxes, security charges and other duties that they are already forced to pay.

(Explanation of vote abbreviated in accordance with Rule 170)

Liam Aylward (ALDE), in writing. – (GA) I supported this motion which asks the Commission to review the current legislation, and also to draft new legislation to ensure that passengers will not be left in dire straits as a result of airline bankruptcy.

At the moment, there are no provisions under European legislation to protect European passengers in the case of the bankruptcy of an airline with which the passenger has made a reservation. I strongly support the position of the chairman of the transport committee who has said that many passengers do not have the resources to cope with losses of this sort. As such, a support mechanism or a compensation fund should be set up to help those left in a predicament as a result of this type of bankruptcy.

Rules regarding passengers' rights must be updated and strengthened to give protection and help in the case of airline bankruptcy or incidents of that type over which passengers have no control.

Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on passenger compensation in the event of airline bankruptcy, since I believe it is necessary to increase protection of European passengers in the event of airline bankruptcy by introducing new legislation or revising existing legislation, and by creating a reserve fund for compensation.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Commercial airlines have been contending with a serious crisis since the attacks of 11 September 2001, which has been exacerbated by the current economic and financial crisis.

Bankruptcies and unpleasant situations in which passengers, many of them in transit, find themselves truly stranded, are on the increase.

This lack of consumer protection is truly unacceptable, and it calls for a European response that provides for the assessment of airlines, promotes assistance for passengers caught in these situations and sets out compensation for damages.

In view of this, these measures must take account of the financial fragility of airlines and, therefore, should not be unnecessary obstacles to their operation. They must confine themselves to what is strictly necessary to ensure the protection of consumers/passengers.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) Seventy-seven airlines have filed for bankruptcy in the European Union since 2000. Admittedly, European legislative provisions relating to price transparency and compensation in the event of denied boarding do exist, but the EU must close the loopholes regarding cases of insolvency, especially when tickets have been bought on the internet. There are still too many passengers who are finding themselves trapped in situations which they do not have the means to do anything about, having spent all their savings on a family holiday for themselves. I am in favour of rules to guarantee that passengers do not remain stranded at their destination, with no alternative means of travelling home or alternative accommodation.

Jörg Leichtfried (S&D), *in writing*. – (DE) I am voting for the resolution, in particular, with regard to Regulation No 261/2004 establishing common rules on compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding and of cancellation or long delay of flights and repealing Regulation No 295/91, which has already been adopted. The right steps have already been taken in this regulation and strengthening and protecting passengers' rights is simply a logical development of this.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) We are voting in favour of this resolution in the hope of preserving as many of the interests of airline passengers as possible given the current state of affairs (liberalisation of transport services, increase in the number of airlines).

We would stress, however, that the compensation system proposed in this report is merely a stopgap that does nothing to change the fundamental problem.

The real solution lies in the creation of a European public air transport service. A public service that is concerned with the general interest and thus, with rationalising the journeys made, in order to reduce the impact on the environment. A public service that is concerned with the general interest and thus with the safety, freedom of movement and well-being of its users and employees alike.

We must, as a matter of urgency, put the Europe of exclusive interests behind us and build a Europe of the general interest.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The growing number of bankruptcies that has been seen among airlines, affecting thousands of citizens in the Member States, has made it necessary for the EU to take measures to protect them. In fact, it is important to safeguard the rights of those who use air transport on a daily basis. I therefore voted in favour.

Robert Rochefort (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the resolution on passenger compensation in the event of airline bankruptcy. Indeed, at present, the only passengers covered by European legislation in the event of airline bankruptcy are those who book a package holiday.

However, it is clear that consumer habits have changed a great deal in recent years where booking holidays is concerned: there has been an increase in the use of low-cost European airlines, a sharp fall in the number of package holidays sold and an increase in the number of direct and individual on-line sales and seat-only sales.

If we add to that the crisis that the sector is currently going through, we can easily imagine the number of European passengers who find themselves stranded at their holiday destination, sometimes without any accommodation and desperately awaiting a return flight, following the collapse of the airline that they were meant to fly with.

Afterwards, they will receive only a nominal amount of compensation for the inconvenience suffered, and even obtaining that will be a struggle ... The Commission must urgently take a legislative initiative to address

this worrying situation. A compensation fund financed by the airlines should be put in place at the same time in order to finance these compensation payments.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) European regions that are distinguished as tourist destinations must provide users of services in this sector with the highest level of service and quality.

Madeira is an example of this, having been classed last week as one of the best tourist destinations in the world by the World Tourism Organisation, which awarded the region the highest rating on 13 of its 15 assessment criteria. In order to maintain this position in a highly competitive market, it is necessary to continue the work done by public and private bodies with a view to environmental, economic and social sustainability. This objective also involves providing tourists that visit the island with the utmost guarantees regarding their air travel and accommodation conditions.

The motion for a resolution on which we voted today is a step in this direction, as it aims to protect passengers of bankrupt airlines by establishing compulsory insurance and guarantee funds for these airlines, as well as optional insurance for their customers.

Also positive is the call on the European Commission to present a proposal with the aim of compensating passengers of airlines that go bankrupt and ensuring their repatriation if they are stranded at an airport.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for the European Parliament resolution on passenger compensation in the event of airline bankruptcy. There are currently several European regulatory acts governing the following situations: compensation and repatriation of customers in the event of bankruptcy of travel companies which have provided package holidays; accountability of airline operators for accidents and arrangements for compensating passengers; compensation and provision of assistance to passengers who are denied boarding or whose flights are cancelled or subject to long delays.

However, there are no legal provisions to protect consumers in the event of the airline operator going bankrupt. Over the last nine years, 77 European airline companies have gone bankrupt. This is why I believe that this directive is absolutely necessary. The European Parliament has therefore asked the Commission to strengthen the position of passengers in the event of airline bankruptcy. In fact, the European Parliament has asked the Commission to come up with a legislative proposal by July 2010, which should award compensation to passengers with airline companies that go bankrupt, introduce the principle of mutual responsibility for passengers of all airlines flying to the same destination with available seats, provide compulsory insurance for airlines, establish a guarantee fund and offer voluntary insurance services for passengers.

- Motion for a resolution: 'made in' (origin marking)

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the joint motion for a resolution on origin marking since it is based on the principle that consumer protection requires transparent and consistent trade rules, including origin marking. In this respect, I support the intervention of the Commission, together with the Member States, to defend consumers' legitimate rights and expectations whenever there is evidence of use of fraudulent or misleading origin markings by non-EU importers and producers.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) In view of the need to guarantee consumers appropriate information when making a choice to purchase certain products, particularly with regard to their country of origin and the respective safety, hygiene or environmental protection standards applicable to their production – information that is necessary to make a conscious and informed choice – I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution, which calls on the Commission to resubmit its proposal to Parliament so that it can be debated in accordance with the legislative process established by the Treaty of Lisbon.

However, I must mention that, during evaluation of the Commission proposal on origin marking, I shall pay close attention to the appropriate support given to traditional products, so that better consumer protection – which is both necessary and desirable – does not irreparably harm small producers of traditional products. I shall also pay special attention to the mechanisms used to establish origin, so that this does not become a competitive disadvantage for European producers against their competitors.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) We believe that the adopted resolution falls well short of what, in our view, origin marking should be, which is to say, among other things, an instrument to protect industrial jobs in Europe, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises, and an instrument to tackle social and environmental dumping. That is why we abstained.

Furthermore, this resolution overlooks the consequences that liberalising world trade has for jobs and the industrial fabric in the various Member States. It overlooks countless relocations in search of easy profit and their consequences, such as the deindustrialisation of vast regions, rising unemployment and worsening of economic and social conditions. This resolution only goes as far as calling on the Commission and the Council 'to take all necessary steps to ensure a level playing field'.

Lastly, we regret that the majority in Parliament has rejected the proposals we tabled, which, among other things, sought to preserve jobs, respect workers' and consumers' rights, fight child labour or slavery and oppose the importing of products from occupied territories, and which insisted on the need to withdraw European aid from companies and investors that relocate their production.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) Against a backdrop of economic crisis that is hitting our European businesses, the European Union must now, more than ever, equip itself with a mandatory system of origin marking, if only for a limited number of imported goods, namely textiles, jewellery, clothing and footwear, leather goods and handbags, lamps and lights, and glassware, because this is precious information for final consumers. It would also enable European consumers to know exactly which country the goods they buy come from. They will thus be able to identify these goods by the social, environmental and safety standards commonly associated with that country. In other words, our citizens, as responsible consumers, will have as much transparency as they require.

Jacky Hénin (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) The 'made in' concept must not simply be about marking, but must quickly become a powerful concept of respect for the most advanced rules in relation to knowledge, employee rights, sustainable development and environmental protection, and the expression of a responsible economic attitude.

With the introduction of a 'made in Europe' concept, we could enable consumers to make an informed choice, to take action to gain new rights.

However, once again, we have limited ourselves to statements of good intentions, as though simply saying that we are the best and the strongest will make it come true.

That is a shame and that is why I will abstain.

Elisabeth Köstinger (PPE), *in writing*. – (DE) I understand the need for a discussion about the creation of a European legislative framework for origin marking of commercial end products, in particular, against the background of consumer information and transparency between trading partners. The use of a standardised marking system will result in improved and more accurate information for consumers and will indicate the social and environmental standards that the products comply with. In addition, origin marking is an important step towards producing coherent trading regulations with third countries.

However, it is important to find the right balance from the perspective of producers and consumers. The transparency offered to consumers must not be created at the expense of the manufacturers. No additional costs must be involved for small and medium-sized businesses. As part of the ongoing discussions, it is important to establish clear guidelines and to defend them, including on behalf of Austria. One possible solution would be to create a voluntary European origin mark for commercial end products, taking into account existing national and regional quality labels.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour because the 'made in' marking is essential for market transparency and for giving consumers the necessary information regarding the origin of the products they buy.

It is necessary to strengthen the Community economy by improving the competitiveness of EU industry in the global economy. We will only succeed in having fair competition if it operates with clear rules for producers and for exporters and importers, while also keeping sight of common social and environmental requirements.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) I very much welcome the introduction of origin marking by the European Union. From now on, the country of origin must be specified on certain products imported into the EU from third countries. The particular purpose of origin marking is to give EU consumers unrestricted information about the country of origin of the goods that they buy and to allow them to make a connection between the goods and the social, environmental and safety standards in the country in question.

This represents the first stage in a war against goods from the Far East, which are often produced by workers in exploitative conditions and which are then sold on the European market at dumping prices.

Cristiana Muscardini (PPE), in writing. – (IT) Mr President, today Parliament forcefully reiterated an opinion it had already expressed on several occasions during the previous Parliamentary term: Europe must introduce a regulation that establishes the origin marking of many products that enter its territory.

The decision arises out of a need to guarantee more information for, and therefore the protection of, consumers so as to enable them to make informed choices. The regulation on origin marking will finally enable European business to compete on an equal footing with companies in third countries where laws on the origin marking of products entering their territories have already existed for some time. The market is free only when rules are clear, mutual and applied.

The aim of the approved resolution is to call on the Commission, after the fruitless attempts at mediation with the Council, to reiterate the proposal in the light of the new responsibilities that Parliament has acquired with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. We are sure that agreement between the political groups of the European Parliament will be instrumental in establishing a definitive legal framework with the Council.

I take this opportunity to emphasise that the commodity categories envisaged in the current proposed regulation must be respected and extended with regard to fastening products, in other words, products for which it is essential to ensure quality and compliance with European regulations in order to guarantee safety in the construction of bridges, cars, electric household appliances and any other item that involves the use of fastening products. Guaranteeing safety is a priority for us.

Today's vote is an important success that we dedicate to European consumers and producers at a time of new political momentum for Parliament, due to the codecision procedure that has finally made up for the democratic shortfall that we have had to put up with for so long.

9. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

President. - The list of Members wishing to present an explanation of vote has now been completed.

I should like it minuted that Mr Brons made a request for the floor, on a point of order, because he felt he had been alluded to in some of the words uttered by Mr Martin. Pursuant to the Rules of Procedure, Mr Burns was going to be given the floor now. I should therefore like it to be minuted that Mr Brons was given the opportunity of taking the floor, but was unable to make use of it as he was absent.

(The sitting was suspended at 14.10 and resumed at 15.00)

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

10. Telecom (signature of acts)

President. – We have before us an important event, because in a moment, Mrs Torstensson and I will sign some very important documents related to the 'Telecom' package. Mrs Torstensson, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, fellow Members, the legal acts which constitute the 'Telecom' package were enacted in a codecision procedure. Electronic communication and the internet have become the main tools of our modern societies. This legislative package is a good example of how our work can help people and how it can affect their everyday lives.

In particular, we have the revised framework directive for electronic communications networks and services. Its rapporteur was our fellow Member, Mrs Trautmann, who is with us today. The directive was adopted at third reading, which shows how much work was required so that we could achieve the best deal for our citizens. The elements of this directive which remain are a more efficient and, to a greater degree, strategic management of radio frequencies, greater competition and easier investment in the internet in the future.

The directive on universal services and users' rights, whose rapporteur was our fellow Member Mr Harbour, also represents an important step towards offering better services. We wanted to improve consumers' rights, protect privacy and personal data, and also to make it easier for every citizen to keep the same mobile telephone number when changing operator, and that this should not take longer than one working day.

Finally, in order to bring these principles into being in a better and more cohesive fashion, Parliament and the Council decided to establish a European organisation bringing together 27 national operators. The rapporteur for Parliament on this matter was Mrs del Castillo Vera.

I would like, therefore, to express great esteem for the rapporteurs, of course, who are always key people. I would also like to thank all those whose hard work on these directives has contributed to today's success. The effort of many people combined to produce this success. In particular, it was successive presidencies, and principally the Czech Presidency and the current Swedish Presidency, as they were responsible for the second and third readings.

I would like most of all, at this particular moment, to thank the Commissioner and the European Commission very much for preparing this package, which was not the only good result produced during the last five-year term of office. We would like to offer our congratulations. Your cooperation is of great help to us, and it also affects the way the citizens perceive what we do.

Of course, the three rapporteurs are most deserving of credit, as also is the Chairman of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, our fellow Member Mr Reul, and Vice-President of Parliament, Mr Vidal-Quadras, who chaired the EP delegation to the Conciliation Committee. So it was quite a group of people who contributed to today's success.

I would like, speaking from this seat and on behalf of all of us, fellow Members of the European Parliament but, above all, citizens of the European Union, to express great respect and esteem, because this is the best example of how we can do something which the citizens will perceive as a great success, something which will make their lives easier. I congratulate you all.

Åsa Torstensson, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) Mr President, I would like to start by emphasising how pleased I am that we are able to sign the telecoms package together today. The package strengthens competition and the protection of consumers in Europe. We will have modern and up-to-date regulations in an area where development is very rapid.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank all of those involved for their incredibly solid and constructive work and very creative cooperation. I would like to extend a special thank you to the European Parliament's Vice-President, Alejo Vidal-Quadras, the Committee Chairman, Herbert Reul, and the three rapporteurs from Parliament, Catherine Trautmann, Pilar del Castillo Vera and Malcolm Harbour, who, like my colleagues in the Council, have done some extremely important work to enable us to put the telecoms package together.

This cooperation meant that we succeeded in reaching an agreement that clearly indicates the major and crucial importance of the internet for the freedom of expression and the freedom of information, and in so doing, we have not contravened the treaty.

The telecoms package is a major victory for all consumers in Europe. Once again, I would like to thank everyone for the work that has been put in to achieve this agreement.

IN THE CHAIR: MR VIDAL-QUADRAS

Vice-President

11. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting: see Minutes

12. Enlargement strategy 2009 concerning the countries of the western Balkans, Iceland and Turkey (debate)

President. – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on enlargement strategy 2009 concerning the countries of the western Balkans, Iceland and Turkey.

Carl Bildt, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, honourable Members, this is a truly important debate on a truly important subject. Still, if I wished, I could limit my intervention today to just saying that the Presidency is in full agreement with the motion for a resolution that has been put forward by Mr Albertini on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. It is important that Parliament and the Council, as well as the Commission, stand together on an issue as critical as this one.

In retrospect, perhaps the most crucial of all the Articles in that treaty that was signed on the Capitol Hill in Rome more than half a century ago was what today is Article 49 in the Lisbon Treaty: any European state which respects our values and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union.

It is by this that 19 of the countries of our Union today have become members and part of the historic undertaking of our Union. It is by this Article that we have managed to promote peace and prosperity and further the rule of law and representative government in ever larger parts of this once so conflict-ridden part of the world.

Sometimes you need to go to other parts of the world, as I have the duty to do quite often, to be reminded of how enormous this achievement really is.

During more than half a century, our Europe exported wars and totalitarian ideologies across the rest of the globe. Two world wars; two totalitarian ideologies; strife and suffering.

Now, we are instead exporting the idea of peaceful reconciliation, of integration across old borders, of common rules and regulations as the common way to better governance. Add to this all that has been achieved by Article 49 and it also makes our Union stand taller in the world.

A Europe of 6, of 9, of 12, of 15 or even of 25 would have been smaller in every single respect – in ambition, in standing, in possibilities, in respect across the globe.

Your resolution is surely right to say that enlargement, and I quote, 'has proven to be one of the most successful of all European Union policies'. This is, if anything, an understatement.

We all know that the process has not been entirely easy. I remember coming in a different capacity to an earlier European Parliament representing a country seeking accession and also meeting those who feared that further enlargement from the then 12 would risk diluting the political ambitions of the Union.

There have been both the difficulties of the new members implementing our ever increasing policies and *acquis* and our difficulties in adjusting to our own success in the form of new members, but when we look back, it is easy to see that periods of enlargement have been periods in which we have also deepened our cooperation.

During the past two decades, we have more than doubled the number of Member States and, in rapid succession, we got the Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon. The previous three decades did not even succeed in fully implementing the Treaty of Rome.

Article 49 is as important, I would argue, to our future as it has been to our past. Our magnetism is still there. During the last year, we have had new membership applications from Montenegro, Albania and Iceland, and there are others that we all know that are equally keen on reaching the position where an application can be handed in.

After the last enlargement that brought in approximately 100 million new citizens to our Union, our attention is now focused on the countries of south-eastern Europe – perhaps up to 100 million citizens as well.

This will be neither fast nor easy. The different challenges we face in the different countries of the western Balkans are well known, and the magnitude of the transformation of Turkey has not escaped us either.

We are all aware that there are those in our respective public opinions that would prefer just to shut the door to all of them, hoping that the issue will go away, and who opt for a more closed idea of Europe.

I belong to those who are convinced that this would be a mistake of historic proportions, the consequences of which would haunt our Europe for a very long time to come.

Their door to our Union might sometimes be a very distant one. Some of them will have to travel a long and difficult road of reforms, but, were that door to be shut, other doors would immediately open up to other forces, and we might well see those parts of Europe moving off in directions which, over time, will have negative consequences for us all.

That is why Article 49 remains of such fundamental importance. It is the beacon of reform and reconciliation that also inspires and guides the regions of Europe that are not yet members of our Union.

Commissioner Rehn will go into more details concerning the Commission's assessment of the progress of all these countries concerned, and the Presidency does share the assessment made by the Commission.

It remains our ambition to move all of the countries of the western Balkans forward in the accession process, knowing that they are at very different stages of it. We expect, somewhat related to this, a decision to be taken that from 19 December, there will be visa-free access to our Union for the citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. That is a major and most important step forward.

Along with Parliament, we share the hope that Albania and Bosnia will catch up and will be able to join this most important step as soon as possible.

The accession process of Croatia has been unblocked and is now moving forward. This is important for Croatia and for the entire region. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has been given a very positive report by the Commission, and it is my hope that the Council in December will be able to concretely indicate further steps in its accession process.

The applications of Montenegro and Albania have been forwarded to the Commission and I believe we can expect its opinion within a year or so.

In Bosnia, it is our hope that the political leaders will be able to agree on the reforms necessary in order to make it possible for that country as well to contemplate an application for membership. Indirect talks facilitated by the European Union and the United States in close cooperation are under way as we speak today.

Serbia has been making good progress on its unilateral implementation of the interim agreement, and we will obviously look very carefully at the upcoming report by the ICTY Chief Prosecutor concerning its cooperation with its efforts. It is our hope that he is satisfied with the current level of efforts, although it is, of course, also critical that these efforts are maintained.

Moving further to the south-east, I would like to pay tribute to the fundamental reforms under way in Turkey on the Kurdish question. The success of these would bring the country much closer to our European standards in areas of fundamental importance.

There are numerous other issues which I think the Commissioner will go into. Not directly related but also of obvious significance in this regard are the ongoing talks between President Christofias and Mr Talat on the reunification of Cyprus. We can only urge them to move forward towards a comprehensive solution on the basis of a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with political equality in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The importance of this can hardly be exaggerated.

We will move either towards a new era of reconciliation and cooperation in this part of Europe and the entire region of the eastern Mediterranean, or towards a situation where it is easy to see that we will be faced with rapidly mounting problems.

Much of our attention is on the challenges of south-eastern Europe, but the application of Iceland is adding to the reasons we have to focus more of our attention on all the issues of the Arctic and the wider high North. This is an area where our Union must also be more present and engaged in the future. Its importance is coming more and more into the focus of all the significant global actors and the application of Iceland should also be seen from that perspective.

With a democratic tradition that reaches back a thousand years or so, and with its membership in our single market through the European Economic Area, it is obvious that Iceland has already travelled quite a bit on the road to membership, although we will have to assess the further progress when we get the *avis* from the Commission.

Mr President, this is what the Swedish Presidency has so far managed to achieve in the important area of enlargement. We still have some important weeks in which I expect further progress, but let me conclude by saying that I do not believe that we have completed the building of our Europe. I do believe that we must remain an open Europe and that we should remain committed to an enlargement process that brings good governance, the rule of law, reconciliation, peace and prosperity to larger and larger parts of our Europe.

This is obviously of key importance to them, but we should recognise that it is of key importance to us as well, and let us not forget that it will also make it possible for us to stand taller in the world and for our voice to demand even greater respect in the future.

Olli Rehn, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, let me first thank the members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and its Chair, Gabriele Albertini, for a balanced and comprehensive resolution. I would also like to thank all of you for your excellent cooperation over the past five years. The European Parliament has greatly helped to shape our enlargement policy and you have set an example of democratic accountability. I look forward to continuing our excellent cooperation in the future, whatever the portfolio in my case.

The EU will take a long-awaited step forward next week when the Lisbon Treaty enters into force. This will start a new era in the EU's foreign policy. Indirectly, it will also cement the EU's renewed consensus on enlargement based on the three 'C's of consolidation, conditionality and communication, combined with an approved capacity to integrate new members. This will enable us to continue our gradual and carefully managed accession process.

As your draft resolution illustrates, enlargement is one of the EU's most powerful foreign policy tools today. This was also the spirit of Carl Bildt's message, and I do agree with this message based on empirical evidence during the Swedish Presidency and over the years and decades. It is also true that the EU's credibility as a global actor stands or falls by our ability to shape our very own neighbourhood. It is here that we have achieved our most remarkable successes over the past 20 years of transforming the European continent by reunifying East and West and thus building a stronger European Union.

Enlargement has been a key driver of this process and it continues to transform south-eastern Europe today. Albania's and Montenegro's applications for EU membership underscore the Union's continued power of attraction. Iceland's application adds a new political and geo-economic dimension to our enlargement agenda. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia are both considering submitting an application. Given the economic crisis, all these countries might easily have turned inwards. Instead, they continue to pursue European orientation with all the tough choices and bold reforms this entails. Croatia is nearing the finishing line after four years of intense accession negotiations. Zagreb now needs to intensify its reform efforts, especially in the judiciary and the fight against corruption and organised crime, so that negotiations can be concluded. ICTY cooperation remains a must.

We have seen steady progress in Turkey as well. Turkey plays a key role in energy security and in the dialogue between civilisations. Ankara's commitment to normalise relations with Armenia is historic, as is the democratic opening to resolve the Kurdish question, but Turkey still has a long way to go. Besides reforms, we expect Turkey to ensure full implementation of the Ankara Protocol and to make progress towards the normalisation of relations with Cyprus.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has made convincing progress recently and substantially addressed the key reform priorities. The country sufficiently fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria. These factors enabled the Commission to recommend the opening of accession negotiations. I have the impression that the government in Skopje has rightly seen our recommendation as an encouragement to finally settle the name issue with Greece. There is now a new context, a new debate and a new window of opportunity that I trust both Skopje and Athens will indeed capitalise on.

There has been good news in Serbia too. Belgrade has demonstrated its commitment to EU integration, not least by implementing the interim agreement with the EU unilaterally, and I assume that the ICTY should now be satisfied with Serbia's efforts. I agree with your draft resolution to unblock the agreement. It is high time to allow Serbia to move to the next stage of its European journey.

Bosnia and Herzegovina presents its own serious challenges, partly due to its wartime history, but let me be clear that there can be no discounts in EU enlargement. Bosnia's application for EU membership can only be considered once the OHR has closed. Bosnia also needs to undertake constitutional changes in part to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights. Respect for human rights is a founding principle of the European Union. Together with the Presidency and the United States, we have proposed a package of reforms to achieve this. I hope, for the sake of the citizens and for the region as a whole, that the Bosnian leaders will rise to the occasion and reach an agreement. The EU and the US are engaged at the highest levels because we want Bosnia to succeed, and I believe it can succeed.

As for Kosovo, stability has been maintained but still remains fragile. The Commission has presented a study on how to promote Kosovo's socio-economic development and anchor it to Europe. We identify eventual visa facilitation and trade as flagships once the conditions have been met.

To conclude, we set out together an ambitious but, in retrospect, realistic agenda five years ago when I started my mandate as Enlargement Commissioner. During my hearings, I told this Parliament that by 2009, we

wanted to see an EU of 27 Member States with Bulgaria and Romania in, the accession process with Croatia reaching its final stage, the other Western Balkan countries anchored in the EU through association agreements, Turkey firmly on a European track, Kosovo's status settled and Cyprus reunified. I am glad and proud that, with the important exception of Cyprus, where settlement talks are still ongoing, nearly all our ambitions have materialised. We have worked together for these very worthy goals and together we have made a difference. Even Cyprus might still happen, to the benefit of all of its citizens and the European Union.

Besides, though I hoped for it, I did not dare to forecast progress on visa liberalisation five years ago. Yet here we are, one month away from turning the dream of the citizens of Serbia, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia into reality. We hope to do the same for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina next year once they meet the conditions.

It is therefore a very important reminder to all of us who work with south-eastern Europe of how attractive the European dream remains for millions of citizens in our immediate neighbourhood. Let us keep that dream alive and, in time, make it a reality.

Gabriele Albertini, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Monday's vote within the Committee on Foreign Affairs provided additional evidence of the complexity and, at the same time, of the benefit of extending the geographical and political borders of the Europe that we know today.

Thanks to the work and efforts of my fellow rapporteurs and the contribution of individual political groups, we have achieved a text that expands on the original and has refined many aspects that were initially only mentioned in passing.

The debate in committee and also within the groups themselves was not lacking in disagreements, sometimes lively, which are typical of an across-the-board confrontation that transcends the respective political positions. Historical events within each nation and the current state of their relations were at odds with applications made by candidate countries or aspiring candidates.

In less than a year, another three applications were submitted to open membership negotiations: Montenegro in December 2008, Albania in April 2009 and Iceland in July 2009. It is a sign that the European project can still boast plenty of appeal and is considered a major factor of stability, particularly following the meltdown in financial markets.

The text obtained as a result of the votes within the Committee on Foreign Affairs more forcefully underlines the need for the countries who wish to join the European Union to face up to this transition conscientiously, aware of the duties and implications that this process involves.

Their entry requires them to respect European parameters, not only economic and political, but also cultural, social and legal, to ensure that the end result is more than the sum of its parts.

I hope that the text that the plenary session will vote on tomorrow will address all aspects of the general strategy on enlargement in a more balanced and concise way. It will obviously benefit from the contribution of specific resolutions on each country.

Kristian Vigenin, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, the enlargement strategy paper and the resolution we are going to adopt tomorrow show our strong commitment to the enlargement policy, which has proved to be one of the most successful of all EU policies and has benefited both existing and new Member States.

Enlargement has contributed to an unprecedented extension of the area of peace, security and prosperity in Europe and now we prepare the further extension of this area to encompass in the years to come the western Balkans, Iceland and Turkey.

The Alliance of Socialists and Democrats remains one of the most pro-enlargement forces in this Parliament, while underlining that no compromises can be made with the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria and all the important benchmarks on which the preparedness of the candidates is evaluated.

We hope to see the negotiations with Croatia concluded as early as possible next year. We expect that the Council will confirm the proposal of the European Commission to start negotiations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia next year so that the process can begin next year. We hope for new dynamics in the negotiation process with Turkey including opening of the energy chapter. And we believe that the EU can keep up the momentum reinforcing the positive developments in all enlargement countries. The visa

liberalisation is an excellent step to demonstrate to the people in the western Balkans that they move in the right direction.

Let me also express the hope that the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty will further increase the capacity of the EU to integrate new members, finalising the institutional reforms within the Union.

Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (NL) As Chair of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I have friends, acquaintances and comrades in all of the countries that form the subject of today's report.

I would like to begin by wishing Commissioner Olli Rehn every success with what he has been working on over the past five years and, in particular, to compliment him on those efforts. He merits our full recognition. As I was saying, I have friends and acquaintances in all of these countries and I can say, with a certain degree of pride, that, to my knowledge, we are the only large political family which has come to an agreement on the statute for Kosovo. We reached a unanimous position on this as early as 2006 and have maintained it ever since. Do not think that this was merely coincidence, because it was something which we put a great deal of hard work into.

You can therefore imagine how disappointed I am, firstly, to see that Kosovo has not been included in the Visa Facilitation Agreement. It seems to me that the Kosovars are being punished for the fact that a number of EU Member States have not yet been able to reconcile themselves with the fact that Kosovo is now an independent state. That is a great pity, in my opinion. President-in-Office of the Council and Commissioner, allow me to also raise a few questions about what seems to be the current state of things in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I fear that I am less optimistic about a positive outcome on a number of fronts than you are, if only because it is possible that the people there might get the impression that, all of a sudden, everything has to proceed incredibly swiftly and that there is no time for adequate consultation, at least not with any political parties other than the largest ones, with which you are in touch.

Finally, I would like to make it clear, on behalf of my group, that we absolutely insist that the candidate countries respect all of the Copenhagen criteria, without any exception whatsoever being made for absolutely anyone. Nor should you think that we are indifferent to the absorption capacity of the European Union. However, what we are unhappy about is the fact that some of our fellow members seem to wish to use this notion of absorption capacity in order to postpone the accession of new countries indefinitely. We do not approve of that.

Let me conclude. Commissioner, I do think that the past five years have indeed been a success. I wish you every success for the future. I am sure we will meet on these benches again, even if it is perhaps in a different capacity, but many thanks, anyway.

Ulrike Lunacek, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, on behalf of the European Greens and the Free Alliance, I have to say that I am very pleased that this joint resolution again says that there is a strong commitment by the European Parliament to enlargement, and that the momentum for enlargement, about which we had a discussion in the Committee on Foreign Affairs, is to be kept up.

That is especially true for south-eastern Europe. I hope that the history of armed conflict, of cruelty beyond imagination, in that part of Europe will be over once and for all, and I think the European Union plays an essential part in that. In that sense, too, I am very pleased that the strong commitment is being kept up in this resolution.

There has been progress, as has already been said, on many issues. There has been progress on some of the conflicts we have there and, as rapporteur for Kosovo, I am very pleased that the Spanish Presidency has announced during its presidency that it will invite Kosovo to take part in the western Balkans conference, which I hope will be an opportunity for progress on the status issue.

There is one thing about Kosovo that the speaker before me has already said. I would have preferred Kosovo to have been part of it, but at least we have ensured that there will be a start to visa dialogue with the objective of visa liberalisation.

I would like to comment on one amendment that we will propose for tomorrow. It is about one of the minorities that have a very difficult status in many regions of south-eastern Europe, and in other parts of Europe as well, but especially in Kosovo, that is, the Roma minority. At the moment, some 12 000 Roma people, mostly children, are about to be sent back from Member States, mostly to Kosovo, where we know the conditions are such that they will be unable to have a humane life. So I would ask Members of this

Parliament to vote tomorrow for the amendment that we propose in order, at least for the winter time, to stop sending Roma people back to Kosovo and to help Kosovo make conditions liveable for Roma minorities there and here.

On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, I am also very pleased that we have achieved amendments in this text which make it clear that discrimination against women and violence against women are also something that both the governments of the region and also the European Union have to work against.

One last thing: other ethnic minorities and sexual minorities. I find this is an important path towards democratisation.

Charles Tannock, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, the ECR Group strongly supports European enlargement. By extending the benefits of EU membership to those countries that are eligible under Article 49, we hope to see develop the looser, more flexible Europe in which we believe as a group.

I happen to be the permanent rapporteur for Montenegro, which is a good news story in terms of progress towards membership, and it has just applied fairly recently. Nevertheless, I will also be visiting that country soon to make up my own mind and have an independent assessment.

I also welcome the fact that Iceland may be a candidate soon. But, still in the Balkans, Croatia's bilateral border dispute with Slovenia must not be a barrier to joining the EU, and I hope that Macedonia will also be opening negotiations shortly.

With regard to Turkey, there remain many concerns over human rights, the ongoing blockade of Armenia, religious freedoms and the refusal to admit Cypriot ships to Turkish ports. It was also regrettable, in my mind, that Turkey recently invited to the OIC Summit in Istanbul President Bashir of Sudan, a man indicted by the International Criminal Court for the horrors of Darfur.

Finally, although Ukraine is a country not directly linked to this debate, I hope also that, regardless of the results of the impending presidential elections in Ukraine, the EU will continue to hold out the possibility of eventual EU membership for Ukraine, if that is indeed the majority view of the people of Ukraine. By the same token, that should apply to Moldova and, one day, to Belarus, if it becomes a democratic country.

Nikolaos Chountis, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (EL) Mr President, Commissioner, Mr President-in-Office, to start with the question of the enlargement strategy, I should like to say that, judging from enlargements to date and from how we approach new candidate countries, I think that the policy of the European Union does not always help in addressing the economic and social problems of the workers and of the societies which have acceded or will accede and, in numerous cases, assistance, financial and otherwise, is either inadequate or goes in the wrong direction and, as a result, regional and social inequalities are either perpetuated or extended.

I should like to mention the case of Turkey. Pressure needs to be exerted to make Turkey keep its promises and honour its commitments, especially the Ankara Protocol on the recognition of the Republic of Cyprus, whose rights under international law it is challenging. I would remind the House that there are still problems with respect for democratic rights and trade union freedoms in Turkey, as underlined by the recent prosecution and trial of Turkish trade union members in Izmir.

I should also like to mention the case of Kosovo. Here, the approach must be with respect for UN Security Council resolution 1244/99. There are still problems such as the status of Serbs in Kosovo, who are living in a state of isolation, and the failure to abide by agreements on the re-establishment of refugees.

Finally FYROM: the problem of the name must be addressed within the framework of the UN and within the framework of a bilateral agreement setting geographical boundaries. I should like to ask you, Commissioner and Mr President-in-Office, what you think of the latest initiative by the newly-elected Greek Prime Minister for a meeting with the prime ministers of Albania and FYROM?

Nikolaos Salavrakos, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (EL) Mr President, Article 49 of the Treaty of Rome is not, in my view, a romantic urge to the Member States to participate in the enlargement of a unified Europe. It is a realistic ambition for as many European countries as possible to adopt the principles of the European Union. Only then will the basic preconditions apply to the three 'Cs' of consolidation, conditionality and communication.

Tomorrow, the Council will examine the motion for a resolution by Mr Albertini, in which he expressly states that, although Turkey has made some progress in terms of meeting the Copenhagen political criteria, a great deal still needs to be done, both in the human rights, freedom of speech and religious freedom sectors, and in Turkey's political conduct in general in the system of justice and so on.

However, it is clear that Turkey has been making an effort recently to impose its rule on the area of the Middle East and the Caucasus in a way that is contrary to the standard principles of the European Union. Another example is Turkey's behaviour on the question of Iran, which is totally contrary to EU foreign policy and its commitments under the Ankara Protocol. There are still eight chapters which need to be examined with Turkey and I therefore believe that this being so, Turkey is not yet ready to be given a start date for negotiations.

As far as FYROM is concerned, I have two things to say: we have noted that recent actions and statements by its Prime Minister are causing problems in neighbouring countries and we should like this behaviour to be toned down.

Barry Madlener (NI). – (NL) Mr Van Rompuy was, naturally, quite right when, in 2004, he made the following observation: 'Turkey is not part of Europe and never will be'.

In that observation, Van Rompuy was emphasising the fundamental values of Europe, which, in his view, Turkey would undermine. Van Rompuy has thus expressed objections to Turkish membership in principle. And we, the Dutch Party for Freedom, completely agree with him. Of course, he cannot now take such principled words back, not even in the interests of securing the plum job of President of the European Union. Turkey has even shown contempt for democracy and freedom of expression by calling the leader of my party, Geert Wilders, a democratically elected representative of the people, a fascist and a racist. What an outrageous and baseless comparison! We should not be denied the possibility of criticising Islam. But Turkey is showing its true colours here.

Mr Rehn, I put the following question to you: what is your reaction to this outrageous attitude on the part of Turkey? There is, of course, only one possible response: to immediately cease all negotiations with Turkey. Let us be honest with the Turks. Be honest with the Turks, as Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy have been, and as their great friend Herman van Rompuy has also been. Cease all negotiations with Turkey and other Islamic countries.

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

William (The Earl of) Dartmouth (EFD). – You seem to be very impressed with what Mr Van Rompuy has to say. Do you not think that most people would be more impressed by the fact that only 3% of the land mass of Turkey is in the continent of Europe at all, and this proposition that Turkey should become a full member of the European Union is, on geographical grounds, completely bizarre?

Barry Madlener (NI). – Well, I did not hear a real question, but of course we agree that there are multiple reasons to say 'no' to Turkey. I just mentioned a few, but this is another good reason to say 'no', so thank you for that.

Elmar Brok (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, Mr Bildt, Commissioner, this is possibly the last enlargement debate that we will have with you, Mr Rehn. I would like to thank you for the many good debates that we have had with you since 2004.

I would like to make a few comments. In my opinion, it is now time for the difficulties being created for Croatia from outside the country to be quickly resolved so that, during the next year, we can rapidly come to a decision with Croatia, complete the negotiations and ratify the accession treaty. I believe that these bilateral issues, which apply to a number of other countries, including FYROM and Greece, and also the measures continually being taken against Serbia, which I think is an extremely important country in terms of the stability of the region, should be rapidly resolved.

It must be made clear that every country should be judged according to its capabilities and that the promise made in Thessaloniki, particularly concerning the western Balkans, will be kept. Every country must be evaluated on the basis of its abilities and the tempo of the process must be adjusted accordingly.

However, it is also important to explain that the Copenhagen criteria apply. I regret the fact that the Social Democrats, the Greens and others have refused to mention the Copenhagen criteria in committee. I hope that will be reviewed in plenary. We would be giving completely the wrong message to the candidate countries, in the same way as if we had failed to mention the absorption capacity of the European Union.

The European perspective must be correct in order for the internal reform processes to start. However, it is also important that the necessary conditions are met so that no false expectations are raised.

For this reason, with regard to the Copenhagen criteria, we must also ensure in Turkey's case that the political conditions relating to freedom of speech, democracy, the rule of law and freedom of religion are a requirement for accession and that there is no question of a compromise in this area.

Adrian Severin (S&D). – Mr President, perhaps the most important lesson of the past enlargement is that we have brought into the Union countries, markets, institutions and industrial assets, but we have left behind the hearts and minds of the people. I think that we have to avoid repeating this same experience in the future.

We have also to prepare not only the acceding countries but also the existing Member States. The famous enlargement fatigue says more about the lack of preparation of the present states – of the old Member States, unprepared to live together with the new Member States – rather than the indigestible character of the new Member States.

Next, I think that we should, when speaking about the candidate countries, avoid any conditionality which is not linked directly to their capacity to be interoperable with us from the legal, institutional, political and cultural point of view and to compete with us within the internal market in the broader sense of this concept. We should not impose conditionalities which are not linked with these criteria. We should remember that enlargement is about a better future, not about a better past. We think too much about this past.

Thirdly, each country should indeed come in based on its merits. But we should also assess their capacity with their accession to contribute to a better situation in the region, more stability and more integration on a regional basis.

Management of expectations is also extremely important and I believe that perhaps in the future, we should be a little bit more imaginative in trying to allow for some kind of gradual integration of a country for which full integration is not to be envisaged in the short term.

My last point is that I believe we have to revisit the problem issue of our identity, our cultural and geopolitical identity, in order to know exactly what the limits of our enlargement are.

Ivo Vajgl (ALDE). – (SL) We are about to adopt a resolution here today which is awaited with much interest and much anticipation in many countries of south-eastern Europe.

This resolution speaks in terms very different from those used in south-eastern Europe only as recently as a few years ago. It is, in fact, these terms that have provided the impetus for, and a guide to, our debate today. I think it is important that what can be taken from the words of Mr Bildt, President-in-Office of the Council, and Commissioner Rehn, on the one hand, and from those of Mr Albertini, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs who has ensured that we can adopt such a rich and substantive resolution, on the other, is that we support the European prospects of all the countries concerned. Here, I would single out Turkey, in particular.

It is only when we offer the prospect of enlargement and inclusion to all the countries concerned that some issues in this region, such as trends pointing to further fragmentation of some of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia, border issues and occasional incidents involving religious or similar intolerance, become somewhat less dangerous for the wider region.

We can therefore conclude that the project of bringing peace and progress to what was once a volatile part of Europe is set to continue.

Hélène Flautre (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, I agree, and so does my group, that the European Union's enlargement policy is one of its most productive and most convincing policies.

That is why, Mr Rehn, I am a little concerned for your future, because I am not entirely sure how you are going to be able to find a portfolio within the future Commission that is more attractive than that of enlargement.

It is absolutely astounding to see what the prospect of membership can bring about as a force for change, for democracy-building, in a country such as Turkey. Yes, of course, there are still many things to achieve: the independence of the judiciary, a role for the army, freedom of expression, that all aspects of the Kurdish issue are genuinely dealt with once and for all, of course.

However, I feel it is important to emphasise that this EU enlargement strategy is not just for the benefit of the countries that are going through the accession process; it is for our benefit and for the benefit of our European decision makers, too.

It is irresponsible to diminish the efforts to change of a country such as Turkey by allowing doubts to remain about the outcome of the negotiation process. Yes, the outcome of the negotiation process will be that Turkey joins, and we must say so clearly.

Ryszard Antoni Legutko (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, enlargement of the European Union is not only in the interests of the countries which accede to the EU or which aspire to do so, but it is also in the interests of us all. This is because it increases integration and security. Therefore, it is with pleasure that we note the progress being made concerning the countries of the western Balkans and Turkey, as well as the fact that Iceland has submitted an application for membership. There is such a thing as enlargement fatigue, but let us remember that every democratic European country which meets very precisely specified criteria can apply for membership of the European Union. We should not forget those criteria, but we should not shut the door on the candidates. Let us also not shut the door on our eastern partners. We should offer Ukraine a clear possibility of membership.

There is one more thing. The word 'solidarity' is very often used in the European Union. It is a word which attracts other European countries to our Community and, at the same time, obliges us to enlarge the EU further. Unfortunately, in many cases the EU does not show solidarity in its internal relations. An obvious example is the Northern Gas Pipeline project, which is directly intended to hit transit countries and Poland in particular, while South Stream is Moscow's answer to plans for energy diversification related to Nabucco. It is very disturbing to see how particular countries have so easily allowed Russia to manipulate them. This is why the realisation of bilateral interests between individual EU Member States and Russia leads to internal conflicts and weakens our position – the EU position. This is a contradiction of the principle of solidarity. Enlargement makes sense, but we must have conformity between rhetoric and practice.

Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, the Treaty of Lisbon is creating an even more negative framework for the peoples of the Member States of the European Union and of the enlargement countries. Unfortunately, the peoples of the Balkans are in a drastic situation, caused by the consequences of the NATO war, capitalist restructurings, agreements with the European Union, foreign military bases in the area, the capitalist crisis and the competition between major forces on energy. The accession of these countries serves the interests of big business and imperialist plans, which even include re-defining the borders of the countries in this area. The accession of FYROM to NATO and the European Union will sharpen the infighting, while the sovereign powers of this country still persist in their redeemed stand. Turkey is exploiting its geostrategic position and persisting in its occupation of a large part of Cyprus, making claims in the Aegean and holding thousands of trade union members, Kurds, journalists and others in detention. In Iceland, the myth of the economic miracle has been exposed and pressure can be heard for it to hitch up to the European imperialist chariot. The Greek Communist Party is against the enlargement of the European Union, because it is against the European Union itself and against Greece's having joined and remaining in it. We are fighting together with the people of Europe for peace and social justice and against imperialist unions.

Fiorello Provera (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, European Union enlargement may be an opportunity or a problem, but it still remains a great challenge.

The opportunity is represented by the fact that the new Member States can make a tangible contribution to constructing European policy. To do this, it is not enough to meet the Copenhagen criteria and merely confirm them formally. It is essential to increase the European awareness of citizens in candidate countries through a hearts and minds campaign that must involve politicians, intellectuals and the media.

Europe can no longer be seen merely as a great pool of financial resources for resolving economic, social and infrastructural problems but as an institution to which everyone must offer an original contribution in order to establish a policy built on shared values.

Support for enlargement is low in the Member States, particularly with regard to certain States. Do we wish to shut our eyes to this situation or do we want to involve our fellow citizens and ask their opinion? I think a referendum is the best way forward because it is the most direct form of democracy and it would bring Europe closer to its citizens and their freedom of choice.

Philip Claeys (NI). – (NL) We have to stop putting on this great pretence where the accession of Turkey is concerned. We must stop obscuring and minimising the problems. We all need to be brave enough to face

the reality. We have been conducting accession negotiations with Turkey for five years already and what has been the result? Turkey is increasingly pursuing an anti-European and an anti-Western foreign policy. Under the leadership of Mr Erdogan and President Gül, Turkey is becoming increasingly more Islamist in nature. Turkey still refuses to recognise all the present Member States of the European Union and to honour the obligations it is required to fulfil under the framework of the customs union. Turkey is still continuing its occupation of one part of the territory of one of the EU Member States. And I have not even mentioned the structural and persistent problem of Turkey's lack of respect for freedom of expression yet.

Just now, Mr Bildt said that he rejects the idea of a closed Europe. Well, as far as I know, none of us here are in favour of the idea of a closed Europe, but we do have some members here, and I am one of them, who are in favour of the idea of a European Europe. To borrow the words of Herman van Rompuy, president designate of the European Council: Turkey is not part of Europe and never will be!

IN THE CHAIR: MRS ANGELILLI

Vice-President

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE). – (RO) We are talking about enlargement in relation to the western Balkans, Iceland and Turkey, which are three very different cases. Firstly, we have the countries in the western Balkans, which are far from meeting the economic and political criteria expected by the European Union. However, in these countries, public opinion and political leaders support the objective of integration and are extremely optimistic about accession.

The second case we have is Iceland, a country which meets many of the economic and political criteria, but where public opinion and its leaders are deeply divided about this objective of joining the EU. What seems to link the western Balkan countries and Iceland, only at the moment, is the fact that the deep economic crisis is giving them the courage to join.

However, lastly, we have Turkey, whose European aspirations are not linked to any kind of economic cycle. It is one of the countries with the most dynamic economic activity where a great debate is going on. Very recently, 45% of Turks supported this objective.

I want us to differentiate between these three situations because the western Balkans, Iceland and Turkey present three different scenarios from an integration perspective. On the other hand, it is also a good idea for us not to deal with these cases according to bilateral policy logic.

In my view, the differences between Member States and the prospective candidate countries cannot be used by Member States or third countries to block a path to European integration. I believe that the merits of each country and public consensus are the only benchmarks for determining a path towards European integration.

Maria Eleni Koppa (S&D). – (EL) Madam President, despite some people's reservations, the policy of enlargement has brought stability, peace and prosperity to Europe. Today, we are being called upon to continue negotiation with the candidate countries: the western Balkans, Iceland and Turkey. The integration of the western Balkans is, without doubt, the biggest challenge. Their integration will put an end to a period of clashes which started in 1990 and will eliminate what is going to develop into a black hole in the heart of Europe. Croatia will be ready for integration in a few months and the other countries are making dynamic progress. For Serbia in particular, we all need to recognise how far it has come and support its progress by encouraging it to move towards Europe. There are, of course, outstanding questions. The unresolved status of Kosovo, the difficult situation in Bosnia and the dispute over the name of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia are open wounds in the area. As far as Greece is concerned, the new government is making an effort to find a solution which will put an end to the dispute. After 17 years of tension, time must be allowed for a solution to be found, at long last, which is acceptable to both sides. Generally speaking, good neighbourly relations have been demonstrated which, whether we like it or not, are the precondition to integration. So let us all work on them.

Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE). – (DE) Madam President, you have made a good, clear and concise speech, Mr Bildt. The things which you said about the European Union being a geopolitical stabilising factor and enlargement policy being a tool are all correct.

However, I believe that it is not intellectually or politically satisfying to behave as if the conflict of objectives between the increasingly large union and the increasingly close union did not exist. This is a question which we have not definitively answered. You are right when you say that a larger European Union has more

influence, but it is also more complex, which has consequences for our ability to act. Therefore, we must have a new dialogue about enlargement, as Mr Severin from the Social Democrats has proposed, which covers gradual integration and new forms of membership, in order to be able to reconcile these two legitimate objectives.

We need institutional reforms. For example, I cannot explain to people in Germany why I am standing by Thessaloniki and why the Yugoslav successor states will one day have more commissioners than all the founder members of the European Union put together. This is not right. We need to be honest about our enlargement policy so that we once again have the support of citizens for this important policy area.

Peter van Dalen (ECR). – (NL) According to a Eurobarometer poll, European citizens have made their opinion clear on Turkey's accession: 28% in favour and 59% against. These figures speak for themselves and no politicians can or should deny them. If we do deny them, we will only further widen the gap between citizens and politicians.

Turkey is not geographically part of Europe, nor is it part of European history, whose religious, cultural and political landscapes have been defined by Christianity, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the democratic nation state. On the other hand, a form of privileged partnership would combine the best of both worlds. In addition to many economic advantages, such a partnership would create a more relaxed relationship between Europe and Turkey and would free us from the unrelenting stress of accession. Therefore, it is time to make a clear decision: let us bring a halt to the accession negotiations and embark on the process of negotiating a privileged partnership. Let this be our enlargement strategy for 2010.

Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL). – (DE) Madam President, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, I and many of my colleagues in my group have always seen enlargement as one of the EU's most important projects and have always supported it. Despite all our justified criticism of different aspects of enlargement, it has been one of the most successful chapters in the EU's external development and it represents a complex long-term task for both the candidate countries and the EU. This has already been discussed today in plenary.

We must ask ourselves whether further enlargement processes are appropriate for us. With regard to south-eastern Europe in particular, with its long history of the break up of states and empires, it is right and proper that the people in these countries, which form part of a troubled region, have been offered the possibility of membership of the European Union. The fact that some politicians in the Member States of the European Union have distanced themselves from this promise under the pretext that strengthening the identity and institutions of the EU takes priority over further EU accessions has not only increased the mistrust of the candidate countries, but has also had an inhibiting effect on the democratic opinion-forming process and the reform processes in the region.

Bastiaan Belder (EFD). – (NL) I still have vivid recollections of Commissioner Rehn saying, at one of our recent meetings, that to be a commissioner in charge of enlargement, you have to be an optimist.

I must admit that, in my opinion, that word describes him very well but, as far I am concerned, the role of optimist is not a fitting one for him. My personal view is that, in politics, and that also includes European politics, optimism ought to take second place to realism. I find it downright shocking that Parliament has gone along with such a rose-tinted approach. Why was it necessary to tone down the clear signal addressed to Turkey and Bosnia in the first version of Mr Albertini's report? Why did we have to pay compliments to Turkey? Why did we make desperate efforts to find a positive opening message for Bosnia?

Is Parliament not fully aware of the fact that we are obliged to represent the peoples of the Member States of the European Union? Information campaigns are not going to be of any help in achieving an enlargement process that is supported by the people. We will only achieve that by honestly and realistically assessing the extent to which these countries have complied with the Copenhagen criteria.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Madam President, it is alarming how evident the EU's democratic deficit is in the case of Turkey's accession. The majority of the EU population is clearly against Turkey joining the EU. Nevertheless, the process of whitewashing, evaluation and negotiation is going on over the citizens' heads.

It is dishonest to behave as if we were not moving towards full membership. As an accession candidate, Turkey is already receiving EUR 2.26 billion for the period from 2007 to 2010. This is being paid for by the countries which are net contributors and whose citizens do not want Turkey to join.

This is obviously all about US interests. It would be possible to resolve numerous non-European conflicts following Turkey's accession. However, despite Turkey's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest, I am

of the same opinion as the highly respected former German president, Theodor Heuss, who gave a clear definition of Europe. Europe, he said, is built on three hills: on the Acropolis for Greek humanism, on the Capitol in Rome for the concept of the European state and on Golgotha for the Christian Western world.

Doris Pack (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the enlargement of the EU to include the western Balkans has been settled since Thessaloniki. Accepting these countries once they have fulfilled the conditions is not an act of mercy, as many people maintain, but a simple necessity, given their geographical position in the centre of the European Union.

Our stability is determined by their stability as we unfortunately found out in the 1990s. All the countries must, of course, meet the requirements of the Copenhagen criteria and, as these countries were formerly enemies, they must also take part in regional cooperation programmes. This also applies to the countries which are the neighbours of these accession candidates. I expect Slovenia and Greece to help the accession candidates to achieve their objective quickly and easily.

Unfortunately, Bosnia and Herzegovina is in a very difficult situation and I do not believe that I can cover it in one-and-a-half minutes, although I am the rapporteur for this region. I will not even try. I only wish, Mr Bildt and Mr Rehn, that the negotiations there could take place close to the people and not be dictated from the outside.

All the countries in the region have different distances to cover and we must help them to overcome their problems. Mr Lambsdorff, the idea that the accession candidates will have more commissioners than the founding members is a quite pathetic argument. It is actually not an argument at all; it is a knock-out argument. This problem can be resolved, but the people in these countries should not be excluded just because you do not want to resolve the problem.

Zoran Thaler (S&D). – (SL) I wish to congratulate both Commissioner Rehn and Mr Bildt, President-in-Office of the Council, on their constructive and positive introductory remarks.

As rapporteur for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), I am particularly pleased to note that this country has made progress in 2009 and that the Commission has recommended that the Council fix a date for the commencement of negotiations. We also take note of the fact that Prime Ministers Papandreou and Gruevski have begun communicating directly.

I would call on Mr Bildt and Commissioner Rehn, as well as on the governments of all the Member States to whom this issue is of interest, to pick up your telephones and contact Prime Minister Papandreou and Prime Minister Gruevski in the lead-up to the December summit to show them your solidarity and to encourage their determined efforts to find a solution to this dispute which has lasted for 20 years.

This is the only way in which Greece, as a long-standing member of the European Union, will be able to fulfil its ambitions, and honour the responsibilities it has to this region.

Jelko Kacin (ALDE). – (SL) Serbia has made progress over the past few months and, by fulfilling its criteria for visa liberalisation, it has demonstrated to both itself and Europe that it is capable of achieving more and performing better than it has done to date. It deserves recognition for this success.

Serbia has hidden potential which it needs to realise on its road to EU membership, and it must do so in its own interest and in the interests of its neighbours, the region as a whole and the European Union. Given its size and strategic position, it could become a driving force that brings the region closer together. It is time that it became aware of that role and that it did more for enlargement than it has done so far.

The leadership in Belgrade must devote itself systematically to urgent political and economic reform and cooperation with all its neighbours. Full cooperation with the Hague Tribunal is not enough because it needs to be brought to a successful end. Serbia needs to improve its political culture, because its record hitherto on that score might impede the accession process. It needs transparency and it needs to actively build as broad a public consensus as possible and to overcome divisions between the ruling coalition and the opposition on key EU issues. However, two important preconditions of a more rapid progress are freedom and independence of the media and putting an end to media manipulation.

Geoffrey Van Orden (ECR). – Madam President, all I would ask for is more honesty in our dealings with Turkey and a correct and fair interpretation of events, particularly in relation to Cyprus where a distorted version of recent history has unfortunately become the accepted wisdom.

There is a real opportunity between now and the presidential elections in Northern Cyprus in April which should be seized, and this is a matter for all sides. We should always remember that the Turkish Cypriots agreed the UN plan for reunification in April 2004. It was rejected by the South. We should also remember the May 2004 promise of the European Union to end the isolation of Northern Cyprus, a promise which was never fulfilled. The EU has a moral duty here. I fear that if we go on treating Turkish interests in this way, we risk losing a key ally in a strategic area of great importance and encouraging all the wrong tendencies in Turkey itself.

Of course, many of us are deeply concerned about migration problems in relation to our nations. This is an aspect of our negotiations with Turkey that will have to be dealt with in a particular and robust way.

If I had time, I would also make reference to Croatia and other countries in south-eastern Europe which urgently need to address corruption, organised crime and abuse of certain private property rights before accession, in the case of Croatia, or candidacy can be taken forward with confidence.

William (The Earl of) Dartmouth (EFD). – Madam President, the countries proposed for EU membership are comparatively poor. Their European dream, to quote the Commissioner, is that they will receive subsidies. That is what it is about. The fact is that rich countries, for example Norway and Switzerland, simply do not want to join the EU. To make the telling point, Iceland, when it was a rich country, had no interest in joining the European Union. Now that it is bankrupt, and sadly so, the Icelandic Government is, of course, in the queue to join. The San Andreas Fault for the European Union is between the seven Member States who are large net contributors, and the rest.

This situation is unstable, untenable and unsustainable. You think you are enlarging the EU empire by this ill thought-out policy. In fact, you are driving it towards economic chaos in the future.

Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE). – (ES) Madam President, the enlargement process has been a resounding success. The latest enlargement has allowed us to come together with those countries of Central and Eastern Europe that were unfairly denied freedom and prosperity after the Second World War. At present, enlargement is focusing on the western Balkans, Turkey and Iceland.

I endorse the ideas that we have identified as the guiding principles of the enlargement process in recent years. I mean consolidation, conditionality and communication. That is to say, that we should fulfil our obligations, but not make rash promises on future enlargements.

Secondly, progress in the various accession processes is subject to strict compliance with the conditions. The candidate countries must make a determined effort to carry out the necessary reforms. Thirdly, we must all make an effort to communicate with the citizens. The resolution we are to vote on tomorrow highlights the very important issue of communication.

In this connection, I should like to reiterate the broader proposal I made on previous occasions, namely that it would be appropriate also to enhance young Europeans' knowledge of the Union by making this a compulsory subject in the upper secondary school curriculum.

Another relevant idea contained in the resolution is the capacity for integration. Enlargement requires existing Members of the Union to take certain measures. Regarding finance, for instance, enlargement calls for sufficient financial resources to ensure that essential community policies such as the common agricultural policy or cohesion policy are not put at risk.

I am about to conclude. I should like to point out that as we are all aware, Kosovo is a special case. Unfortunately, however, there are sections of the resolution where this particularity is not made clear.

Pier Antonio Panzeri (S&D). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I consider the resolution that we are discussing today in Parliament to be genuinely positive.

To dwell on part of this, I consider that the topic of European enlargement to the western Balkans is, and must remain, one of the linchpins of European action in the coming months.

I would like to compliment the Swedish Presidency and, above all, Commissioner Rehn on their work. We must nevertheless feel more involved in the process of enlargement.

Some countries must undoubtedly step up their action on the legal front in terms of the fight against crime and reforms. Yet we must not lose sight of the political aim, which is to consolidate democracy in those countries and have them follow the European path in economic, social and infrastructural terms.

I am thinking, for example, of countries such as Kosovo – and in this regard I agree with the amendment tabled by Mrs Lunacek with regard to the Roma issue – because this is a country we cannot sideline merely because five European countries have not yet recognised its independence.

To sum up, we need the right amount of courage and a far-sighted policy that is up to the challenge that the process of enlargement sets all of us.

Jorgo Chatzimarkakis (ALDE). – (DE) Madam President, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, I am speaking as head of the delegation to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and I will be concentrating on this country. I would like to offer my very warm thanks to Mr Rehn for his courage. His report and his green light for this country represent a bold step forward which has generated momentum. At the same time, elections have been held in Greece and there is a new government in Athens, which gives us a situation and a window in which we can achieve something. However, I would like to ask my fellow Members to react calmly. A meeting is being held on Friday between Mr Papandreou and Prime Minister Gruevski, and if we set expectations too high, we may increase the pressure so much that the whole thing falls apart and we do not want to risk that.

We must encourage all sides to continue in friendship along the path that has already been taken. I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mr Thaler, for describing this route so accurately. I would also like to wish my friend, Mr Rehn, a successful future in the Commission.

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

Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE). – (DE) Madam President, I have a question for Mr Chatzimarkakis, if he will allow me to ask it. Mrs Pack obviously did not hear me when I said that we are standing by Thessaloniki. I would like to repeat that here.

I wanted to ask Mr Chatzimarkakis what he believes to be the most urgent steps which the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia must take in order to make progress in the dispute over the name and to ensure that the negotiations which are just beginning are as successful as possible.

Jorgo Chatzimarkakis (ALDE). – (DE) Madam President, thank you very much for the question. I believe that both sides need to change their spots and it is clear that both sides are ready to take a step forward. We are now expecting a lasting solution. For this reason, I expect the name issue to be resolved clearly and definitively in the course of a five-minute discussion. That is not the problem.

The application of the name, the so-called scope, is the major issue and both sides obviously need time to resolve it. I would like to see a lasting solution because the alternative is a short-term solution which could lead to disaster. For this reason, all of us must give both sides friendly encouragement to find a long-term solution with a broad scope and a broad application.

Mario Borghezio (EFD). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, we must consider the statement that enlargement will be a factor of stability very carefully.

Let us think back to what Prime Minister Erdogan said a few days ago. He said that he could not get along with Mr Netanyahu but felt much more comfortable with Mr Bashir who, if I am not mistaken, is the Sudanese President under investigation because he is accused of crimes against humanity.

On the subject of neighbours, if Turkey joined Europe, we would have Iran, Iraq and Syria as our neighbours. This does not seem to me to be an ideal neighbourhood. It would be much better to have Turkey joined to Europe by a bond of privileged partnership. A somewhat worrying trend of de-westernising Turkey has reached a highly advanced stage under our very eyes. We need only think of measures affecting communal social living, such as separate swimming pools for men and women, restrictions on freedom of opposition, actually extending to the imposition of a EUR 3 million fine for opposition broadcasts, and so on.

I think we must still consider one fact: there may be a majority in favour in this Parliament, but the majority of Turkish people are against Turkey's entry. We are insisting on extending our borders to Turkey when the Turks themselves do not want it.

The President of the Italian Republic has said that pacts must be respected. I agree, but we must consider that Turks are Turks.

Georgios Koumoutsakos (PPE). – (EL) Madam President, the report we are debating today wants to send a positive message about European prospects and, ultimately, about the accession of the countries of the

western Balkans, Turkey and Iceland to the European Union. I believe that all of us here in this Chamber, or at least most of us, agree with this positive message. At the same time, however, it must be made clear that progress is needed before accession. It is not a path paved with roses. It is therefore a question of credibility for the European Union to see that the criteria and preconditions which it sets are satisfied with deeds and not just good intentions. In other words, full adaptation is required for full integration.

Within this framework, the application of good neighbourly relations is very important. We must not try and hide behind our finger. The serious unresolved issues in good neighbourly relations between candidate countries and Member States are affecting the progress towards accession of those who want to become members of this family. The precedent of Slovenia and Croatia confirms this. That is why the outstanding issue of the name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia must be resolved before, not after, the start of accession negotiations. The reason is simple. If this country is given a start date for negotiations without this having been resolved, then its government will no longer have any strong incentive for taking a constructive stand in order to ultimately achieve a mutually acceptable solution with Greece.

As far as Turkey is concerned, regularisation of its relations with the Republic of Cyprus and a halt to overflights over Greek territory by its military aircraft are two important factors in speeding up its progress towards accession. It is with these thoughts that we shall decide on our stand in the vote tomorrow.

Richard Howitt (S&D). – Madam President, today's debate and resolution gives the new European Parliament the opportunity to recommit itself to the further enlargement of the European Union, to note the positive developments that there are in the candidate countries, in almost every individual case, and to remind ourselves that freeing up trade, buttressing stability, improving control of our borders and expanding the opportunities for travel and free exchange for our peoples, strengthen – not weaken – our European Union.

The European Conservatives repeat today that they say they favour enlargement but, at the same time, exclude it from the founding document of their new group whose official spokesperson, speaking in this debate, repeats his opposition to Turkey, thus putting them in exactly the same camp as the Far Right as we have all heard this afternoon.

However, I do express my warm thanks to Commission Olli Rehn, whose good humour was reflected by his recent comment that, in future, the Directorate-General for Enlargement should not be an equal distance from either the Council or the Commission, in the middle of rue de la Loi.

I appreciate his good humour and I appreciate his good judgement. I hope his legacy will be the accession of all current EU candidate countries.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE). – (GA) Madam President, there has always been a strong link between Iceland and the European Union and as Chairman of the Delegation for Relations with Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and the European Economic Area, I was very happy to welcome the parliamentary delegation from Iceland last week. I hope that a Joint Parliamentary Committee will be established soon and the Icelandic Government is taking part in close talks with the Commission following the decision of the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the Union last July. I am sure that European leaders will give the green light so that negotiations can begin between the Union and Iceland at the summit meeting next Spring. As Iceland is a member of the European Economic Area, it has twenty two of the chapters that need to be fulfilled already covered. A lot of the work is already done. I am confident that the other chapters will be dealt with in a positive, directed way and in the spirit of friendship.

Krzysztof Lisek (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, as a Pole, but at the same time a citizen of the European Union for five years now, I would like to express great satisfaction that we are talking here in such illustrious company, including people who are closely involved in the enlargement process, such as Mr Rehn and Mr Bildt. We are talking about further enlargement of the European Union, and we are doing so in spite of those who are saying that the EU has reached the upper ceiling of its possibilities for territorial development. The only good news which I have for those opponents of further enlargement is that there will be no enlargement of the EU at all in 2009.

I would not like us to look at the process of EU enlargement only from the point of view of legal clauses. I would also like us to view it as an historical process. History teaches us, after all, that the Balkans, for example, were the source of many conflicts in the 20th century. They were conflicts which then spilled out over the entire continent, such as the First World War, and conflicts like the war in the 1990s, which also affected other countries, if only because of the migration of many millions of people. Therefore, admission of the

Balkan States to the European Union could, in my opinion, be the EU's most important contribution ever to stabilisation and peace in our continent.

If I could just say one more thing about what Mr Bildt said concerning open doors, I would like to ask you not to forget that there are still other countries, not mentioned in today's document, which dream of EU membership.

Emine Bozkurt (S&D). – (NL) First of all, I regret the fact that right now we are unable to paint a rosy picture of the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The process of reform in this country is still being paralysed by political forces there. The two entities have not been able to develop a shared vision, as a result of which progress has ground to a halt.

Once again, I would like to emphasise the importance of building the sustainable constitutional framework which is necessary for this country and its institutions to work more effectively. I therefore call on the political leaders of both entities to work towards this as a starting point.

Furthermore, I would like to point out that I am delighted to learn that Turkey is so close to the hearts and minds of my fellow member Madlener's party, the Dutch Party for Freedom. It is precisely because of Turkey's negotiations with the European Union that this country has made such huge steps forward. I was, therefore, expecting the Party for Freedom to show greater support for the negotiation process.

Finally, I would like to point out that the accession process ought to be results-oriented and that it should be guided, not by the date of accession, but by the results achieved. Only once the candidate countries have complied with the requirements set and thereby qualified for fully-fledged membership can there be any talk of accession.

Arnaud Danjean (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, Minister, you rightly pointed out that the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon was going to enable us to enter a new era of enlargement policy, and we have to embark on this new process with realism and a clear head: that is the essence of this resolution.

On the one hand, a new process does not mean going for broke. That would be the surest way of creating misunderstandings, even suspicion, among the public, and it would also be the best way of creating false ideas among the candidate countries and of encouraging them to take refuge in rhetorical and cosmetic policies rather than in policies aimed at more thorough reforms. We must be wary of steps, conditions and values on which we cannot compromise, and I believe in particular in cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal.

On the other hand, it must be reaffirmed, in the clearest of terms, that the place of the western Balkans, of all the countries of the western Balkans, including Kosovo, is indeed in the European Union, and that we must encourage them to continue and to increase their efforts. There is no contradiction between making the demands clear, on the one hand, and showing full support for the process of enlargement to include the western Balkans, on the other, just as there is no contradiction between pursuing this philosophy of judging everyone on merit and having to take important initiatives for all of the countries in the region, such as visa liberalisation.

Finally, allow me to say a word about Turkey. Before speculating on any very hypothetical future outcome concerning Turkey's accession process, I will simply say that the Commission has noted, for the second year running, that no progress was made on the Ankara Protocol and that that prevented any new negotiating chapters from being opened.

Hannes Swoboda (S&D). – (DE) Madam President, I missed the beginning of this discussion, because as rapporteur for Croatia, I had to report to the EU-Croatia Joint Parliamentary Committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Bildt and Mr Rehn for their help in bringing about at least a temporary solution to the border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia. This is a good example of how cooperation between the Council, the Commission and Parliament can help countries to overcome their problems. I have also made a contribution to ensuring that the treaty has been almost unanimously ratified, at least in Croatia.

However, it is Bosnia and Herzegovina which causes me much more concern. I was recently in Banja Luka and Sarajevo. It is true that Mr Dodik made some compromises and offered some changes during our meeting which he can agree to. However, I would like to pick up on an idea that Mrs Pack has just mentioned. How

can we make contact with broad swathes of the population? There is a great deal of interest there in overcoming this lack of a voice and the contradictions which characterise many policies at the top. We must somehow manage to talk to the people directly, because in contrast to what the Earl of Dartmouth has once again said, there are many people in this region who are not interested in European Union money, but who want to move from a region of hate and war into a union of peace and understanding. That is what Europe is about. You do not want to understand that and you will never understand that. However, the people in Sarajevo and Banja Luka know what Europe means and they are the ones who need our help.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, we must bring Croatia into the European Union next year or at least bring the accession negotiations to an end and start the ratification process. For 20 years, Croatia has been moving towards joining the European Union and towards freedom. Artificial obstacles have been put in its way and I am grateful to the Swedish Presidency for helping to remove them.

Croatia has now ratified the agreement with Slovenia with a two-thirds majority and we must do everything we can to ensure that Slovenia also fulfils its obligations to the European Union. The target date of 2010 is also important because this is a question of the credibility of the European Union itself.

As far as Macedonia is concerned, I hope that the Swedish Presidency will succeed in enabling accession negotiations to begin next year, so that we can finally resolve the bilateral problem which also exists in this case. I hope that we can change the text of the report which rather one-sidedly places too many obligations on Macedonia and not enough on its neighbours. Everyone must do their bit, including those in the European Union.

I believe it is crucial for us to include Kosovo fully in the Thessaloniki process and these are important passages in the Albertini report. This country also needs a European perspective. I would like to call on all Member States who have not already done so to recognise Kosovo, so that we no longer have any legal or technical problems and so that Kosovo can play a full part in the integration process.

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

Nikolaos Salavrakos (EFD). – (EL) Madam President, I noticed that Mr Posselt, like other members, uses the term 'Macedonia' for FYROM. It is precisely the term 'Macedonia' which is causing friction between Greece, which is a Member State of the European Union, and this candidate country. I would be most grateful if a recommendation could be made to my fellow members to use the actual name of this country.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, I would like to respond briefly by quoting my highly esteemed colleague Mr Cohn-Bendit from the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance who once said in this House: 'Macedonia is Macedonia is Macedonia'. I am of exactly the same opinion. Bullying a neighbouring country is never helpful.

Nikolaos Salavrakos (EFD). – (EL) Madam President, there is only one Macedonia and it is Greek, which is why these games need to stop. When speaking in this Chamber, we need to use the terms which everyone has accepted and FYROM, the candidate country, has been accepted as 'FYROM' and not as 'Macedonia'.

Andrey Kovatchev (PPE). – (BG) I first of all wish to thank Mr Albertini for the work he has done on this difficult report concerning the strategy for boosting the progress of many countries at different stages in their preparations for meeting the criteria for European Union membership. I understand and support Mr Albertini's desire to provide the utmost clarity and give a thumbs up to the European Union's enlargement with the western Balkans, Iceland and Turkey. However, the majority of proposed amendments indicate that this is a complex subject. Once the Treaty of Lisbon has come into force on 1 December, we must analyse and increase our Union's integration capacity. I want to suggest to the Commission that it carries out such an analysis of the European Union's integration capacity because, without the support of our citizens, the European Union itself is at risk of turning into an empty shell.

I also support the view that a Member State should not impose unfulfillable membership conditions on a candidate country. All bilateral problems must be resolved in a spirit of European understanding, sharing common values, history and culture. On this point, I want to call for joint commemoration of historical events and heroes from the Balkan peninsula.

Kyriakos Mavronikolas (S&D). – (EL) Madam President, I wish to speak in connection with Turkey's interests which, in my opinion, are being handled to the detriment of the interests of the Republic of Cyprus. I wish to express my dissatisfaction at the fact that issues relating to the Republic of Cyprus are being relegated;

issues on which Turkey should be condemned are being used today to improve Turkey's position in terms of its accession to the European Union. Back in 2006, Turkey committed to recognising the Republic of Cyprus, applying the Ankara Protocol and helping to resolve the Cyprus question. It has done nothing. On the contrary, today talks are being used for Turkey's benefit, crowned by efforts to open the energy chapter, which, of course, is considered to be of benefit to the European Union itself. However, you will understand that the Republic of Cyprus, as a small state, needs to look after its interests and to request sanctions against Turkey, one of which is, of course, to prevent chapters from being opened.

Franziska Keller (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, firstly, my group, the Greens, would prefer not to put any date in for the accession of Croatia. We think that experience has shown that that has not been a good idea in the past, whether Croatia should join as soon as the criteria are fulfilled.

Secondly, Mr Brok, the Copenhagen criteria are, of course, valid. They are there; we do not need to mention them time and time again. We are sticking to the agreements that the European Union made on accession and to the Copenhagen criteria. The aim of accession progress is the accession itself.

When we are discussing Turkey, we should not forget the amazing progress that has also been made in Turkey in areas where, a few years ago, we thought would not ever have been possible. This is the clear success of the accession process, which we should not forget.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE). – (RO) Madam President, Commissioner, please allow me to thank you for your dedicated work on the enlargement of the European Union. The European Union has had a powerful impact in the western Balkans over the last two years on democratic change and economic deregulation. The visa waiver for some countries in the western Balkans and the start of the accession negotiations for FYROM mark progress which European citizens will benefit from, both as a result of judicial and police cooperation with the EU and from an economic perspective.

I believe that during the current time of economic crisis, the EU enlargement process offers a solution for revitalising the European Union's economy. However, we must not forget the adverse consequences arising from the unfair benefits offered by the European Union to different countries in the western Balkans region. The Commission must also look closely at including Moldova in the group of countries in the western Balkans as the aid offered to neighbouring countries to help implement the necessary reforms must continue in a fair manner. Moldova is a potential candidate, prepared to come into line with the European Union as part of the political and economic integration process.

Corina Crețu (S&D). – (RO) The European Union now has a constitution – the Treaty of Lisbon – a President and a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. We can therefore adopt a different perspective when dealing with the new enlargement process involving the countries of the western Balkans and Iceland, but especially Turkey.

I am aware that there are many within the European Union who hesitate to commit to a new enlargement process, but the experience of Romania and Bulgaria, for instance, shows that accession to the EU has been the most powerful instrument in changing things for the better in our countries.

We need, of course, to cast a highly critical eye at the processes in all these countries wishing to join the European Union. We must focus, above all, on the sound nature and functionality of democratic political systems. However, we have adequate instruments for monitoring compliance with accession conditions. Offering these countries a clearer prospect of accession would be a stabilising factor and would act as a catalyst to internal progress in candidate countries.

György Schöpflin (PPE). – Madam President, I am very grateful for this opportunity to share a few thoughts with you. Enlargement has rightly been called one of the most successful policies of the European Union; many of us in this debate have said this. And the idea that the central values of Europe – democracy, human rights, solidarity – should encompass all the states of Europe has been, and will remain, at the heart of Europe's identity.

The Europe that exists was built around the proposition that, through integration, the states of Europe will gradually accept a peaceful resolution of conflicts, but this process does not come without effort. The acceding states must undergo a thorough transformation in order to meet the requirements of EU membership. The process, it should be stressed, is voluntary. No state is coerced into joining, but, in order to join the EU, certain conditions must be met.

At the same time, precisely because meeting the conditions requires a major effort, acceding states must also be encouraged to make the effort involved and not only that. The obligations that go with EU membership must be transferred from paper to practice. Without implementation, the process remains empty.

This is the message that the Albertini resolution is sending to prospective candidates for EU membership. The EU is ready to accept the states of the western Balkans and Turkey as full members, but it is up to them to meet the conditions that the EU has set.

Carl Bildt, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, let me try to be brief.

First, if this is appropriate from the Presidency point of view, I join those Members who have paid tribute to Commissioner Rehn for the work that he has done over the past five years. Much has been achieved. It may be good for your successor that there is still something left to do, but much has been done.

I also express our appreciation for the very broad support for the policy of enlargement that has been expressed throughout this debate by all of the representatives of all of the major political factions here. I think that is a source of strength.

(Interjection from William (The Earl of) Dartmouth: 'Did you listen to the debate?')

I did listen to the debate. You are not part of one of the major groups. I am sorry about that.

Mr Severin was one of those who mentioned that this is a process that we must also anchor in the hearts and minds of people. I do agree with that, but we should also recognise that this requires determined political leadership by each and every one of us. If you look back on the history of our Union, it is easy to note that very little in the history of European integration has happened because of some sudden groundswell of public opinion demanding it.

Nearly everything has been the result of visionary, far-sighted, often difficult and demanding political leadership, but we have also subsequently won the support of our citizens for what we are doing.

I said that I was Prime Minister of my country when we entered the European Union. We fought a very bitter referendum campaign. We won that narrowly. We had public opinion against the European Union for quite some time. We are now, if you look at the public opinion polls, one of the more Euro-positive countries in Europe. It took political leadership to achieve that. It does not happen by itself.

Let me also say, when we go to the more difficult areas of Europe, that reconciliation is not easy. That requires a lot of that leadership, and reconciliation has yet to be fully achieved in all parts of Europe.

The western Balkans were taken up by a number of speakers, and rightly so. Let me assure you that we are aware of the issues of Kosovo, and of the need to move forward with them, taking some of the issues that we have inside our Union into account as well.

Bosnia has been taken up by several people, such as Mrs Pack and Mr Swoboda, and let me just make a couple of remarks there. I have spent four full days this year engaging with the political leadership of Bosnia, trying to move them forward and trying to tell them the dangers of slipping behind when the rest of the region is moving ahead. I have probably done too much because at the end of the day, as Mrs Pack said, they have to do this by themselves. It is their country, not our country, but we also have the duty to tell them that, if they do not do it, the rest of the region will move ahead and that will not be good for their country. That is what we have been trying to do, and to a certain extent are still trying to do.

Our process of enlargement, as everyone has been pointing out, is performance-based. It requires reforms. It requires reconciliation. And that applies to each and every one. It did apply to Sweden once upon a time, and we managed. It applies to each and every one.

As to the gentleman who was interested in engaging in debate, I did notice that there were a number of – mainly – gentlemen from the Far Right up there who had their reservations on Turkey, to put it in the mildest possible terms. If I understood the argument, it was that Turkey is too large, too complicated and too Muslim.

If you read Article 49 of the treaty, and that is what we have to base our policies on, it does not make any exceptions for big countries, it does not make any exceptions for complicated cases, and it has no religious criteria.

(Applause from the centre left)

So that is what we have to abide by. I listened to the moving words on the Christian heritage, and there is much truth in that. All the Catholics and Orthodox or Protestants and Anglicans might interpret that in very different ways, but I would caution against defining the Jewish heritage out of Europe. They are not Christians, but they are, with all of the problems in our history, also part of our Europe of the past, the present and the future.

I would also argue that it would equally be a mistake to define citizens of Muslim faith, be they inside our existing Member States, be they in Bosnia, be they somewhere else or be they in Turkey, and exclude them from the applicability of Article 49 of the treaty. I think that would be a mistake.

(Applause from the centre left)

I listened with interest in that respect to Mrs Koppa representing Greece in her comments on both the challenges in the western Balkans and reconciliation with Turkey, and I have noted the steps and statements made by Prime Minister Papandreou lately.

Could I just finally pick up one of my favourite items. Someone mentioned, as sometimes happens in this debate, the question of absorption capacity – that we simply cannot absorb too many countries. I do not like the word. I do not see our Union as ‘absorbing’ nations. I do not know if we have absorbed Britain. And I do not know if France wants to be absorbed. And I hope Sweden will never be absorbed.

I see our Union as enriching the countries when we enter, and I have yet to see an enlargement that has made our Union weaker. Every single enlargement, although it has been difficult, has made our Union stronger, has made it richer, has made it more ambitious, and I for one do not belong to those who believe that history has come to an end. Article 49 applies.

Finally, one of the gentlemen said there are other countries as well that we have not debated on. That is true. Article 49 applies to each and every European country, including those that have not yet been mentioned in the debate today.

Olli Rehn, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, I would like to thank you for a very lively and substantive debate on EU enlargement and our strategy – now, next year and in the near future. This debate has been in line with the best democratic traditions of this Parliament, and I am grateful for the broad general endorsement of our carefully conducted enlargement policy.

You have rightly underlined the importance of simultaneous and parallel commitment and conditionality in EU enlargement. I agree, and I want to underline the paramount importance of being both fair and firm at the same time.

We have to be fair and respect the commitments we have undertaken to the countries that are covered by our consolidated enlargement agenda in south-eastern Europe, that is, the western Balkans and Turkey. At the same time, we can be as firm and as we are fair, and we need to apply rigorous conditionality when dealing with these candidate countries and potential candidates.

These only work together – in tandem, in unison – and that is, indeed, the best recipe for driving reforms and democratic and economic transformation in south-eastern Europe. It is also the best recipe for anchoring stability in the western Balkans and driving reforms that enhance fundamental freedoms in Turkey.

I think Mrs Flautre is right that there cannot be, by definition, a more attractive portfolio than enlargement. However, I am a man of moderation – believe it or not – and I believe that there are certain limits to how much attraction and fascination a man can take. And, as Carl requested, some work will also be left for my successor, for the next Commission and for this Parliament.

Be that as it may, it has been great to work with you. Together we have made a difference. Let us recall that EU enlargement has greatly contributed to the fact that Europe today is whole and free. Let us keep it that way, and let us complete our work in south-eastern Europe.

(Applause)

President. – I have received one motion for a resolution⁽¹⁾ tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

⁽¹⁾ See Minutes

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 26 November 2009.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Elena Băsescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I believe that it is extremely important for the European Parliament to be involved in evaluating the enlargement process. This process has been a major success for the European Union, bringing it peace and stability. Against this background, we must bear in mind that the countries in the western Balkans are a part of Europe geographically, culturally and historically. Among the potential candidate countries referred to in the resolution, I would like to highlight the successful efforts and tangible progress made by Serbia. This country has gone ahead and implemented unilaterally the Interim Agreement on Trade which it signed with the EU, thereby demonstrating that it is determined to move closer to the European Union, in spite of the political and economic difficulties it is facing. The European Parliament must encourage Serbia to continue on its journey towards the EU. On this point, we must ask the Council and Commission to show openness and continue the negotiations with this country in a constructive manner. I believe that progress with the process of Serbia's integration into the European Union must not be subject to the recognition of Kosovo's independence.

Takis Hatzigeorgiou (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The stand against Turkey is a most important issue which will be discussed, within the framework of enlargement, at the European Council Summit in December. We support full integration, considering that this objective must constitute a driving force for reform and policy change on important issues. We would point out that Turkey has still not honoured its contractual obligations towards the EU and all the Member States. It must start to honour its commitments immediately, otherwise it will not come through evaluation in December unscathed. The commitments on which it will be evaluated and the timeline are contained in the conclusions dated December 2006. They include the application of the Additional Protocol, improved bilateral relations with and recognition of the Republic of Cyprus and a constructive stand on the procedure for resolving the Cyprus question. It is absurd that, while seeking integration and a regulatory role in the area, Turkey continues to infringe international law and the principles on which the EU is founded by maintaining occupying troops in a Member State. Finally, the energy chapter cannot be opened as long as Turkey prevents the Republic of Cyprus from exercising its sovereign rights in its exclusive economic zone.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) The EU is like a building under construction and therefore, the notion of halting its enlargement would run counter to the very principle it is based on. According to Article 49 of the EU Treaty: 'Any European State... may apply to become a member of the Union'. This is precisely why the Enlargement Strategy for the western Balkans, Turkey and Iceland is receiving increased attention as part of our activities. I unreservedly support this close interest. Croatia, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have candidate status, having embarked in a responsible manner on the road to integration. Iceland, Montenegro and Albania have applied for accession, with the first two currently being evaluated by the Commission. There are certainly problems still to overcome, such as corruption, crime or freedom of the media. The introduction of the visa-free scheme in Serbia, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, starting on 19 December, will give this process significant impetus. However, I also want to draw your attention to the fact that when we are talking about enlargement, we must also look at the Republic of Moldova, which is currently going through a crucial political period, in terms of embarking on the road to democracy and EU accession. With this in mind, we must support the implementation of the objectives of the European Strategy for the Republic of Moldova 2007-2013 in order to achieve the results desired by both sides.

Tunne Kelam (PPE), *in writing*. – I would like to make three observations. First, I am glad that Foreign Minister Carl Bildt pointed out the most important message of the Albertini resolution – that the EU remains strongly committed to the enlargement policy and views it as one of the most successful EU policies. This is very much due to the excellent work of Commissioner Rehn. The second important message is that the rule of law is seen as a key principle of democratic progress and one of the main conditions for further accessions. We should also remain clear about the relevance of the Copenhagen criteria. The third observation: I strongly suggest that the opening of the accession negotiations with Macedonia be decided by the December European Council in accordance with the Commission's recommendation.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), *in writing*. – Iceland is already an active and long-standing partner in the wider European integration process. Iceland cooperates closely with EU Member States as a founding member of NATO, a member of the Council of Europe, EFTA, the OSCE and the Schengen Cooperation. Also, it has

been estimated that Iceland has already adopted some 60% of the vast *acquis communautaire*. From this point of view, the application of Iceland for EU membership is a logical step.

In my view, Iceland has always had a European vocation and Icelandic membership will represent a win-win situation for both sides. We are already learning from Iceland's experience in sustainable management of fishing resources, the use of geothermal heat and measures to fight climate change. Iceland has proven its determination to join the Union by submitting the answers to the Commission's questionnaire well ahead of the deadline and I look forward to the evaluation to be made at the summit in mid-December. If all requirements are met and the principle of own merits is respected, I hope Iceland's accession can be coupled with that of Croatia.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) A differentiated approach to the enlargement strategy is needed. While Iceland is a European country which is ready for EU membership, the Balkan States are far from being ready, with the exception of Croatia. Unresolved problems are difficult to deal with after accession and remain unresolved for years. Therefore, there must be absolutely no doubts about the Balkan States' readiness for accession and wages and social conditions there must correspond to the European average. For years, the reports on Turkey's progress have consisted of one long list of problems. If Turkey were a car, it would long since have failed its MOT. It is true that this country is not a part of Europe either geographically or in spiritual or cultural terms. This is clear from its consistent disregard for human rights and freedom of speech, which the plan for the Kurds cannot disguise, and from the Cyprus issue. However, perhaps the EU also wants to deviate from its human rights standards. This is the only way in which its obeisance to the Beneš decrees can be explained. Turkey regards itself as the supreme power of the Turkic peoples. As a result, the EU's problems would only increase following Turkey's accession, as its actions have repeatedly made clear. The positive aspects, such as an improvement in energy security, can also be achieved by means of a privileged partnership. It is high time that we began speaking honestly and clearly.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D), *in writing*. – (HU) As an MEP from Hungary, a country neighbouring the Western Balkan region, I wholeheartedly support the Western Balkan countries' ambitions to join the EU. An important step in this area has been the initiative implemented by the European Commission, removing the visa requirement for Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro from 1 January 2010. However, the European Parliament's proposal, which would remove the visa requirement as early as by 19 December, would be of symbolic significance and also provide practical benefits.

The European Union could hardly offer a better Christmas present than visa-free travel to Hungarians living in Vojvodina in Serbia with numerous links to Hungary, benefiting families and friends living on either side of the border. I am confident that Member States will give their blessing to this decision this very month.

The visa waiver is a positive response to the Western Balkan countries' genuine efforts towards European integration. Serbia has made particularly significant progress recently. Even the report issued recently by the Commission states that the new government of Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković has successfully taken on the fight against corruption, not to mention the extremely important advances that have been made in the area of minority rights. The Serbian Parliament has adopted a law on national councils. In the wake of encouraging preliminary discussions, a decision on Vojvodina's status will come before the Serbian Parliament next week. Apart from the many positive developments, efforts must continue to be made to eradicate ethnically incited violent crimes and the ever-increasing incidence of beatings against Hungarians from Vojvodina completely.

Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) I would like to thank Mr Albertini for the resolution on the European Commission's enlargement strategy. Of course, I agree that candidate countries must continue the process of reform. Efforts should concentrate on ensuring the rule of law and equal treatment of ethnic minorities, as well as fighting corruption and organised crime. The evaluation of the political situation in Turkey, including reforms which are planned or have been carried out, repeats the Commission's evaluation contained in the Regular Report. Progress is evident in the area of meeting the Copenhagen political criteria, but unfortunately, much remains to be done in the broadly-understood category of citizens' freedoms. However, most important of all is that bilateral disputes be resolved by involvement of the parties. These things should not, on their own, be obstacles on the road to accession, but the EU should strive for their resolution before accession. The European Parliament should be an objective observer, because we would like the negotiations to end with agreement, which would facilitate Turkey's accession to the EU. As a citizen of Poland, a country which joined the European Union in 2004, I know that the enlargement strategy is one of the most effective areas of EU policy. It is crucial to keep to commitments which have been made, and that also applies to the European Union. The objective of accession negotiations is full membership, and

therefore fulfilling tough but clear conditions should also be a basic prerequisite for them to achieve this objective. This applies to all states, including Turkey.

Dominique Vlasto (PPE), in writing. – (FR) Our resolution on future enlargements must reflect the prevailing opinion in Europe. We must avoid repeating past mistakes and build Europe with its peoples. The decisions to be taken are laden with commitments and must be prepared well and explained well so that the majority of European citizens can support them. Our Parliament, which represents these citizens, must be particularly vigilant about this.

Haste would be the worst possible policy and could take us back to institutional instability, even though the European Union is just about leaving it behind with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. Today we must test the new institutional mechanism resulting from the Treaty of Lisbon, build a political Europe and consolidate the policies that our fellow citizens want in terms of employment, the economic recovery, the fight against climate change, security of energy supply and common defence.

We should not reverse the priorities but rather increase the consistency and the effectiveness of Community policies before we aim for new EU enlargements. Lastly, I am still opposed to Turkey's accession to the European Union and I continue to hope for a privileged partnership with that country within the Union for the Mediterranean.

13. Elimination of violence against women (debate)

President. – The next item is the debate on:

– the oral question to the Council on the International Day for the elimination of violence against women by Mrs Svensson, on behalf of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (O-0096/2009 – B7-0220/2009),

– the oral question to the Commission on the International Day for the elimination of violence against women by Mrs Svensson, on behalf of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (O-0096/2009 – B7-0220/2009).

I would remind you that today is the International Day for the elimination of violence against women, and the opportunity to hold this debate is particularly important to us.

Eva-Britt Svensson, author. – (SV) Madam President, today is 25 November, which marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment by the UN of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Throughout my adult life, I have been politically active in women's organisations and in networks for combating this violence against women. During my work, I think I have used every possible word to describe the situation. I think I have used very many words – we have done so together in this fight. Now I feel that we actually need to see some concrete action.

This is a type of violence that robs women of their human rights. It affects and defines women's everyday lives. It is a type of violence that determines the course of the lives and the situations of women and young girls.

We all have a responsibility to break the silence and, within Parliament and outside, to cooperate with all of the forces for good to stop this violence. It includes violence within intimate relationships, sexual harassment, physical and mental abuse, rape, murder, the sex slave trade and female genital mutilation. During wars and armed conflicts and during the reconstruction following conflicts, women are subjected to violence to a greater extent, both as individuals and collectively.

Some people claim that violence within intimate relationships is a private matter, a family matter. That is not the case. It is structural violence and a social issue. Society must take responsibility for stopping this violence.

It is a structural and widespread problem in all regions, countries and continents. Putting a stop to all forms of gender-based violence is a fundamental element of a society of equality. Male violence against women is, in my view, a clear indication of the unequal power relationship between men and women. At the same time, it helps to maintain this power order. The work to stop the violence of men towards women and children needs to be based on the realisation that it is about power, control, ideas about gender and sexuality and a

prevailing societal structure in which men are considered superior to women. Male violence against women is a clear indication of the unequal power relationship between women and men.

This is a public health problem. It is a social problem, which – quite apart from all the personal suffering – involves huge costs for society. However, it is, above all, an equality problem. We therefore need to tackle the problem of violence against women from an equality perspective. It also means that the EU has the power to take action, and it is this action by the EU that I and my colleagues in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality are calling for.

Within the EU, we have the Daphne Programme, which provides a certain amount of economic assistance to various initiatives to combat violence. That is good and it is necessary, but it is far from sufficient. Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality is therefore asking the Commission and the Council whether there are plans for the Member States to draw up national action plans to tackle violence against women. Is the Commission planning to table proposals for guidelines for a more coherent EU strategy, and will the Council support this? Existing treaty provisions contain an obligation to work towards equality between women and men.

When does the Commission intend to organise a European Year against Violence against Women? That is something that Parliament has repeatedly called for since 1997. It should be time for this now!

Åsa Torstensson, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) Madam President, honourable Members, the honourable Member and Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality has raised a serious and urgent issue. Right at the start, I would like to say quite clearly that violence against women has no place in a civilised society.

This year we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Resolution establishing 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Today we are thinking of the countless women and girls who suffer violence in war zones and areas of conflict. We are aware of the sufferings that befall women throughout the world, women who are raped, abused or suffer harassment or who are the victims of harmful traditional practices. We express our solidarity with the victims of forced marriages and violence in the form of honour-related crimes, which can involve anything from female genital mutilation to murder. We are aware of the worrying extent to which many different types of violence are committed against women in Europe on a daily basis.

Violence against women is a problem that relates to a large number of different policy areas. That is clearly stated in the motion for a resolution on the elimination of violence against women that you will vote on tomorrow. Violence against women is not only a question of crime and injustice against women, but also a question of men being the perpetrators, and it is a question of equality. The best strategy for combating this violence is to take a holistic approach and work from a broad definition of violence against women.

In all of its work to promote equality, the Council is guided by the principle of the integration of equality. In accordance with Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Council is to promote equality between men and women in all activities.

The Council has raised the problem of violence against women on several occasions and in several different contexts. I would like to start with something positive. One of the most successful examples to date of the integration of equality in the EU is the area of women and armed conflicts, where a more comprehensive policy for combating violence against women is starting to appear.

Of course, the Council's ability to take action in this area is limited to the powers stated in the treaty, and the Member States are responsible for matters that fall within their areas of competence, in particular, issues to do with justice and home affairs, as well as health issues.

The Member States have the right to draw up their own plans for combating violence against women, but they also benefit from cooperation. However, measures are also taken at European level. Eradicating gender-based violence and trafficking is one of the six priority areas set out in the Commission's Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010. Under this heading, the Commission supports the Member States in producing comparable statistics increasing awareness, exchanging good practice and cooperating on research. We are now looking forward to the Commission's new plan on equality for 2011-2015.

The Stockholm Programme, which is to be adopted next month, provides a framework for tackling many of the concerns about violence against women that have been expressed by the European Parliament. We look forward to an agreement on the programme and to it subsequently being implemented.

In the meantime, there is already a lot going on at EU level, particularly with regard to increasing awareness, gathering information and exchanging good practice. Some of you were at the Presidency's recent conference in Stockholm on precisely the subject of strategies for combating the violence of men against women, which presented an opportunity for participants to share experiences and discuss future policy.

The 2007 Decision establishing the Daphne III Programme, which has been so important in combating violence against children, young people and women, has also been significant. I welcome the impact that the Daphne Programme has had and continues to have on our societies.

In your resolution, you quite rightly stress that there is no regular and comparable data on different types of violence against women. The Council is also well aware that the collection of accurate and comparable data is important if we are to be able to improve our understanding of the problem of violence against women at European level. I hope that the European Institute for Gender Equality, which was set up jointly by the Council and the European Parliament, can make a significant contribution in this area. The Council itself has already taken concrete measures to improve access to statistics on violence against women. The Council has been working within the framework of the Beijing Platform for Action and has adopted special indicators within three areas that are relevant here: 1) violence against women in the home, 2) sexual harassment at the workplace, and 3) women and armed conflicts. We have made progress, but, of course, much more needs to be done.

Many of the most vulnerable women in the world live in developing countries. The Council, which is aware of this, has adopted a series of conclusions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation, in which we stress the importance of tackling all forms of gender-based violence, including such harmful practices and customs as genital mutilation. However, we should not be content with this. Female genital mutilation, so-called honour crimes and forced marriages are also a reality within the EU.

The European Parliament has consistently been at the forefront when it comes to calling for measures against harmful traditional practices. In line with this approach, the Council confirmed its commitment to protecting those who are most vulnerable in its conclusions on the situation of the girl child, which the Council adopted last year. In these conclusions, the Council stressed, and I quote, that 'the elimination of all forms of violence against the girl child, including trafficking and harmful traditional practices, are crucial for the empowerment of girls and women, and for the achievement of equality between women and men in society'.

As the honourable Member emphasised in the introduction to her question, violence against women has a harmful effect on women's ability to participate in social, political and economic life. Women who, as a result of violence, are excluded from social activities, including employment, are at risk of marginalisation and poverty.

This brings me back to the holistic approach that I mentioned at the start, and the structural nature of violence, which was stressed in the question to the Council. The problem of violence against women represents a more general problem – a lack of equality. The broader campaign to promote the empowerment of women helps to combat violence. Women who have the freedom to utilise their whole potential are less vulnerable to violence than women who are excluded. The Council has also repeatedly explained that it is necessary to alleviate women's poverty. Employment is often the best way to leave poverty behind. More needs to be done to facilitate the participation of women in the labour market. Economic and social crises make women more vulnerable. At its meeting on 30 November 2009, the Council is expected to adopt a number of conclusions on gender equality: strengthening growth and employment – input to the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy. The aim is to guarantee that both the integration of equality and special equality measures will have prominence in future strategies.

As we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Resolution establishing the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we recognise the extent of this problem. At the same time, we also welcome the fact that the nations are working together to put a stop to it. A large part of our work to combat violence against women here in Europe is carried out within an international framework.

At its next meeting in March 2010, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will undertake a fifteen-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Swedish Presidency has already drawn up a report on the progress made in the European Union and the challenges that remain. On 30 November, the Council is expected to adopt a series of conclusions on this matter. The Beijing Platform for Action provides us with a structure and a long-term agenda for international gender equality policy. The Council is actively involved in this work, with a significant part of it being devoted to combating violence against women.

The problem of violence against women knows no national boundaries. We need to tackle this at international level, both within and outside Europe. We need to step up the fight against gender-based violence in our international missions and we should not close our eyes to the violence that is committed at home, against our own citizens.

Mr President, honourable Members, I will repeat what I said at the beginning: violence against women has no place in a civilised society. I am grateful to Parliament for raising this issue today. You have the full support of the Council, of this Presidency and of all those who stand up for what they believe in and defend the principles of justice, equality and solidarity.

Karel De Gucht, *Member of the Commission*. – (FR) Madam President, on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Commission would like to reiterate its strong political commitment to combat violence against women. This commitment is reflected in the communication on the Stockholm Programme, the priorities of which include the need to pay special attention to the rights of the child and to the protection of people who are particularly vulnerable, such as female victims of violence and the elderly.

With its road map for equality between women and men for the period 2006-2010, the European Commission made a commitment to help eradicate sexual violence and violence linked to the trafficking in human beings. Combating violence against women will also be an important priority of the new strategy, which will follow the road map and which is currently being drafted.

However, it is also vitally important to finance practical measures on the ground. The Commission has already done a great deal to help combat violence in Europe through the Daphne Programme. Its response in the fields of violence prevention and victim support must now be enhanced by means of more practical measures.

Firstly, the Commission has identified measures within the context of the Daphne III Programme in order to implement a more consistent EU strategy for combating violence against children, young people and women. Thanks to an annual budget of approximately EUR 17 million in 2009, the Commission targeted the at-risk groups directly. These funds were in addition to the aid provided by the national programmes.

The creation of an expert review group is envisaged as part of the Daphne III work programme for 2010. This group will be able to help identify necessary measures at Community level and encourage a common approach among the Member States.

The Commission will also start work on an important feasibility study that will assess whether it is possible and necessary to harmonise legislation on sexual violence and violence against children at EU level. The results of this study will be presented in autumn 2010. The Commission intends to bring together representatives of the Member States' governments, of Community institutions, of political groups, of civil society organisations, of international organisations, and so on, with the aim of drafting a more explicit Community policy.

Furthermore, the exchange of best practices, standards and intervention models has already been the subject of discussions organised in December 2007, under the auspices of the European Crime Prevention Network.

Lastly, it is important to stress that extreme forms of violence against women must be combated with the harshest of instruments. To this end, the Commission proposed, in March, a change to the European criminal framework relating to the fight against trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of children, which affects the most vulnerable women and girls in particular.

With regard to the request to organise a European day on violence against women, on the basis of an in-depth study, the Commission has concluded that it would be premature to take such an initiative before a genuine strategy to combat violence has been drafted.

I would now like to give the floor to my colleague, Mrs Ferrero-Waldner.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, *Member of the Commission*. – (FR) Madam President, honourable Members, as you are all aware, I have always – obviously as a woman myself – been involved in the fight against violence against women, but also in the matter of the empowerment of women in general, not just in the last five years of my term as Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, but prior to that as a minister. This is why I would like to add a few words on this point.

As far as the outside world is concerned, beyond specific interventions in developing countries, about which my colleague will speak a little later, the fight against violence against women has become an important focal point in the EU's human rights policy, and the action is reinforced by the specific guidelines adopted in December 2008.

The implementation of these guidelines is particularly pronounced at local level in third countries where the European Union is present. In around 90 third countries the embassies of EU Member States and the delegations of the European Commission have developed their own action plans, which aim to implement these guidelines and set out a whole list of initiatives to be carried out in the period 2009-2010.

We are systematically sending out a clear message on this: the violation of women's rights cannot be justified in the name of cultural relativism or traditions.

In the context of these talks, we will also offer assistance in the form of our cooperation in order, for example, to implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, to strengthen the national institutions in charge of matters of gender equality or indeed to support changes in legislation that provides for discrimination against women.

The subject 'Women, peace and security', which is what Resolutions 1325 and 1820 of the Security Council of the United Nations are about, has captured our full attention. Moreover, in December 2008, the European Union also adopted a global approach for the implementation of these resolutions.

This, I believe, provides a base of common principles, both for operations concerning European security and defence policy and for interventions involving the use of Community instruments. These activities should enable us to integrate the 'female' dimension more effectively in the whole cycle of conflict, from the prevention, management and resolution of crises to the consolidation of peace and long-term reconstruction.

Personally, I have sought support from 40 leading women throughout the world to give new impetus to the implementation of Resolution 1325 by proposing, as you know, the organisation of a ministerial conference 10 years after its historic adoption. This idea has been approved by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and I am very proud of that. What is perhaps even more remarkable, however, is the fact that, in preparation for this ministerial conference, a growing number of states and international organisations, such as the African Union, have decided to step up their efforts to promote Resolution 1325, notably through the development of national action plans.

Madam President, I would like to finish on a personal note. I value greatly the possibilities that EU policies, whether internal or external, have offered the fight against violence against women, and I am delighted with the support they have received in general. I am very happy to see that action which, in the past, was often somewhat limited to a personal commitment is now becoming a completely joint effort.

IN THE CHAIR: MR LAMBRINIDIS

Vice-President

Barbara Matera, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the elimination of violence against women is a very important topic that requires a greater effort and commitment by all of us: European institutions, Member States and civil society.

Violence against women not only represents a violation of human rights but also gives rise to serious individual and social consequences that cannot be ignored. It is therefore a topic that must be tackled on different fronts.

On the cultural front, we must fight the idea that there can ever be any justification for violence based on cultural, religious or social aspects. We must organise information and awareness campaigns that also reach out to young people and thus take place within schools. The organisation of a European Year, called for several times by the European Parliament, could have the right amount of European and international impact to build a more consistent and effective policy.

On the political front, it is essential to include this subject as a priority on national, European and international agendas. I therefore believe it is appropriate to forge stronger bonds – and I am about to finish – between the European Union and the United Nations so that we can all work together in the same direction. In this respect, the address by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mrs Migiro, at the European Parliament was exemplary. It is therefore my wish for all of us that our cooperation will grow ever stronger.

Britta Thomsen, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DA) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, today – 25 November – women and men all around the world are marking the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Violence against women is a major social issue that cannot simply be reduced to a women's issue. Rather it concerns the violation of human rights, the right to life and the right to safety. The UN estimates that seven in ten women will experience violence from men during their lifetime. In fact, violence by men costs more women's lives than malaria, traffic accidents, terrorism and war combined. We cannot simply remain passive spectators. It is essential that we in the EU take action NOW. The Commission must submit a plan as soon as possible for an EU policy to combat all forms of violence against women.

If we look at the initiatives taken by the various Member States, it is quite clear that some countries take the problem more seriously than others. Spain, which takes over the presidency of the Council on 1 January, has put combating violence against women at the top of the agenda for its presidency. Spain is the only Member State of the EU to have established an observatory on violence which each year submits a report on the development of gender-related violence and regularly updates its best conceivable strategy for combating such violence. Let us support the forthcoming Spanish Presidency's initiative to get an observatory on violence established in the EU for the benefit of all European women.

Antonyia Parvanova, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, it is not only because of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women that, when we consider a resolution on this matter, we should ask whether we have done enough. In Europe today, one in four women is a victim of violence, domestic abuse, rape, sexual exploitation, or female genital mutilation.

One of the most horrific examples of gender-based violence is when rape is used during war as a weapon, as is the case in Congo. It is time for a comprehensive EU strategy leading to a concrete action plan aimed at fighting all forms of violence against women, including trafficking in women.

Commissioner, I would like to inform you that we have today voted, during the resolution on the Stockholm Programme on an amendment which requests a directive, a European action plan, on violence against women ensuring the prevention of violence, the protection of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators.

I hope that this time our colleagues, you, and also the Council, will not quote the subsidiarity principle, and that very soon we will see this directive and action plan in place. We have also brought this issue to the Spanish Presidency which is very much in favour of such a priority. I hope this will be priority for all of us.

Raül Romeva i Rueda, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, it is indeed necessary to establish a clear legal basis for combating all forms of violence against women.

I also urge the Council and the Commission to take a decision on the full communitarisation of the European policy. None of the EU's Member States are succeeding in addressing these problems on their own. Zero tolerance towards all forms of violence against women must become a top priority of all institutions throughout Europe.

Parliament's demand to the Council and the Commission for a targeted and more coherent EU policy plan to combat all forms of violence against women is a step in the right direction, as is the observatory on violence that has already been mentioned.

Furthermore, I wish also to remind the Commission and the Council of my request on addressing violence against women in the gender-related dimension of human rights violations internationally, in particular, in the context of the bilateral association and international trade agreements in force and those under negotiation, as is also established in my report on feminicides, I also wish to ask the Commissioner if she can be a bit more concrete about this.

Let me just finish by welcoming the presence in the gallery of our friends from the Congolese Association for Peace and Justice. They have given us these flowers in order to remind us every day that this is a common fight that we have to fight together and also with the people who are suffering and fighting in the field on this matter.

Marina Yannakoudakis, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, violence against women, especially in the domestic environment, is an issue that needs to be debated and I congratulate the Chair of the FEMM Committee for bringing it to the forefront.

We need, however, to recognise this issue is not only a gender issue. It is not only an equality issue. Indeed, it is not only a human rights issue, but is a criminal law issue in the first instance. And, because it is a criminal law issue, it is a sovereign state matter, and it is up to the nation state to lead.

According to the Council of Europe, one in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. The EU can be proactive in this area by providing resources for education and increased awareness and by opening up the debate on violence against not only women but also against men: according to the UK Home Office, one in six men will suffer domestic violence.

I recently visited Elevate, a women's refuge in London, to talk to victims of domestic violence. They are from all socio-economic groups. There is no such thing as a stereotype. Violence affects the victim, their families and children. Its effects are both insular and outgoing and destroy lives. The road to rebuilding these lives is long and needs support. Elevate's project offers victims a safe haven and supports them in rebuilding their confidence and ability to function in society. Projects like this need support, and need financial support.

The EU can be proactive by breaking down some of the taboos around violence against women – and men. It is an area which we as a society can no longer afford to ignore.

Laurence J.A.J. Stassen (NI). – (NL) Mrs Svensson has tabled an oral question about violence against women and submitted a draft resolution. In it, she argues that violence against women is a structural and widespread problem across the whole of Europe and that it arises out of inequality between men and women.

Although the Dutch Party for Freedom is unable to join action against this problem at a European level, we are nonetheless in favour of these proposals and urge the Member States to take integrated action at an individual level. The Party for Freedom condemns, in the strongest possible terms, any violence against women. However, there is much violence being perpetrated in Europe against Muslim women, particularly within the domestic environment. We therefore also need to consider cases of domestic violence, crimes of honour and female genital mutilation which stem from the Muslim vision of the roles of men and women.

Although the Party for Freedom finds all violence against women utterly objectionable, we would like to draw attention here to this particular form of violence. Let me stress again: this is totally unacceptable. For this reason, my party wishes to issue a strong call to Member States to combat these forms of violence and take specific action to investigate Muslim-related violence against women.

Edit Bauer (PPE). – (HU) Minister, Commissioners, I, too, would like to recall what the minister said: violence has no place in civilised societies. We are commemorating the tenth anniversary of the resolution passed by the UN to combat violence against women. As I was listening to your speeches and those of fellow Members, I was wondering whether in 10 or 20 years' time, our successors will still be saying in this House that violence has no place in civilised societies. It is true that time is not on our side as we witness the increase in aggression in our societies. The media's influence has something to do with this growth, but it is growing during the crisis as well. Psychologists say that aggression is much more prevalent during the crisis than at other times. Violence against women is certainly a problem, but we are also having the problem, as male fellow Members are often saying, that men are being affected by violence too. Unfortunately, the statistics still indicate that 95% of victims are women. In the case of human trafficking, 80% of victims are also women. I do believe that this really is now the time for European institutions to deal with this problem more seriously.

Iratxe García Pérez (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, today, millions of individuals and millions of women the world over are shouting out against gender violence. Today, we cannot turn a blind eye to this major social scourge exemplifying power relationships that have been unequal throughout history. There can be no reason, no argument and no scope for understanding. Some women are murdered simply because they are women.

Faced with this state of affairs, we have the responsibility of using all the means at our disposal to eliminate gender violence, and to move forward and create a more equal society, by way of brave and determined legal measures. This responsibility is incumbent on all of us, the European institutions, the Member States and organisations.

Countries such as Spain have made a clear commitment in this regard. The law against gender violence is a necessary and essential instrument. It should therefore serve as an example to the rest of Europe. I could also mention education for equality, combating stereotypes and legal aid for victims. I am sure we could refer to many other necessary policies in this area. The incoming Spanish Presidency has named the fight against

gender violence as one of its priority objectives. I believe this is very important and trust that the House will strongly support each and every one of the initiatives in that regard.

We must make a joint effort and work together. Only then will we be able to support the millions of female victims who cannot afford to wait a single minute longer.

Corina Crețu (S&D). – (RO) As has already been emphasised in this Chamber, violence against women is really an extremely serious issue to which we do not always devote the appropriate attention. This problem is at an appalling level in developing countries, especially in countries ravaged by wars and conflicts. Rape and sexual violence against girls, women and children have reached epidemic proportions in African countries riven by wars, in particular, the Congo, Somalia, Burundi and Liberia. Unfortunately, the huge incidence of violent acts is not only typical of countries in conflict. This is also evident on a large scale even in the most peaceful and democratic countries in the world.

It is our duty to focus our attention and efforts on punishing those who are guilty of violating human rights, while also making efforts to improve women's safety and ensure that appropriate assistance is given to victims of sexual aggression, ranging from medical aid to their reintegration into their family and society.

Finally, I would like to remind you of the events which took place as part of the development committee devoted to the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and also thank Commissioner De Gucht for attending these events and for the interest he has shown in this matter, as well as Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner for her attendance at this debate.

Silvia Costa (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to dedicate this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to the memory of Anna Politkovskaya, a journalist and a woman who paid for her love of truth with her life, to the African women in conflicts, and to the many forms of suffering of women in Europe that often go unobserved.

These examples are at odds with the degraded and consumerist image that the media often attaches to female identity, helping to create a culture where women are oppressed and humiliated. This is also a serious form of violence against which Europe must speak out and intervene in.

We must urgently set up a consistent European system for statistical recording – it has been said more than once – with particular reference to minors, trafficking, physical and sexual violence, and women in vulnerable categories, such as immigrants. Yet we would also like to see tangible results from the European Union guidelines on women in armed conflict, which the Commissioner also mentioned previously, at least through the provision of financial and other support for projects, often organised by small associations, local NGOs, including in countries concerned with reintegrating and assisting women who are victims of violence.

We are aware that today, we have a new possibility, as offered by the Treaty of Lisbon and the Stockholm Programme, to enshrine this preventive action within the Community.

However, we must also denounce another aspect of violence: the context in which violence takes place. Alcohol- and drug-related violence is growing among young people and minors, and perhaps we do not mention this often enough when we discuss violence against women.

Joanna Senyszyn (S&D). – (PL) Mr President, millions of women are beaten, molested, bought, sold, raped and killed only because they are women. More women die from the aggression directed against them than die from cancer. We must make public opinion understand that in a modern, democratic society, there is no place for violence against women. Let us begin by educating the political class and freeing politics from the influences of those religions which sanction the domination of men. This is an essential condition for real equality and ending violence.

In my country, the conservative right, which is under the thumb of the clergy, refuses to grant women full human rights. They promote a patriarchal family, in which the woman's role revolves around kitchen, cradle and church. Women do not have the right to an abortion, and there are plans to deprive them of their right to *in vitro* fertilisation. The idealised 'Polish Mother' bravely bearing her cross in the form of a wife-beating husband is an absurdity which must be opposed socially and legally.

I would like to extend a warm invitation to a conference on eliminating violence against women to be held on 10 December in the European Parliament, organised at the initiative of the Women's Rights Centre in Poland.

Pascale Gruny (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, every day in Europe, one in five women is a victim of violence. Violence against women is unacceptable, irrespective of the form it takes. Yet, in Europe, many women and young girls continue to live in the shadow of aggression or exploitation.

The figures are alarming. Violence against women comes in many forms and occurs everywhere: domestic violence at home, sexual abuse, sexual harassment at work, rape, including within relationships, and also as a tactic of warfare outside Europe.

In Europe, domestic violence is the main cause of death and disability among women between the ages of 16 and 44. As we debate these extremely serious matters, women are being assaulted. Talking about it is not enough. It is time for action.

The European Union has a duty to protect its most vulnerable citizens. Fighting violence against women is a battle for fundamental human rights, and the Daphne Programme, which supports actions aimed at combating all forms of violence, is insufficient.

New measures must be considered for the development of consistent European plans. I support the initiative of organising a European Year to combat violence against women, which our institution has been calling for now for more than a decade.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to reiterate what has already been said by Mrs Matera and Mrs Stassen on violence for cultural and religious reasons. I would like to use this minute to tell you about an experience that affected me personally as a volunteer in one of my missions.

It is the story of a woman, the story of Karin, the story of a woman who did not wish to wear the burkha. To punish her, her husband poured acid over her. He did it one night; he did it while she was sleeping. Karin now wears the burkha, not because she wants to wear it but to hide the marks of this tragic attack.

I hope that this day does not remain simply another date on the calendar but that it can help all those women who experience violence every day and that our words can be converted into tangible actions and deeds.

Marc Tarabella (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, many women in Europe and throughout the world fight each day to end violence against them, but they cannot and should not carry on this struggle alone, because these acts of violence against women, largely perpetrated by men, are also acts of violence against the whole of humanity.

It is only right that men also become involved in this struggle. That is why I am taking part in the White Ribbon Campaign. Initially set up by men for other men, this campaign started in Canada nearly 20 years ago. A group of men decided one day that they had a duty to urge other men to protest publicly against violence inflicted upon women. This white ribbon is a symbol, it is also the symbol of the carnation that recalls the fight of Congolese women against the suffering they undergo every day – they were here just now.

Therefore, I call on as many of my fellow Members as possible to join us in this fight against violence against women, because as well as physical violence, there is psychological violence and often, as you know, words can hurt more than blows.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D). – (RO) Violence against women, in its diverse forms, varies according to the economic, cultural and political background in society. It can range from psychological and physical abuse within the family to forced marriage at a young age and other violent practices. Any form of violence against women is an unacceptable infringement of human rights and hampers gender equality. This kind of violence is prevalent on a wide scale. It has more victims than cancer and leaves deep scars on people's psyches and on the fabric of societies. This is why we should increase our efforts to combat this problem.

UN estimates also indicate that acts of abuse are not only continuing, but are actually on the rise. Unfortunately, these acts are not acknowledged in most cases or are just simply ignored. In Romania, I support the campaign run by the UN Population Fund and the UN Information Centre, entitled 'Women in Shadows'. It is intended to raise public awareness of the serious nature of this problem.

Gesine Meissner (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, violence against women is a dreadful violation of human rights, regardless of what form it takes, including forced marriage, beatings and rape. I find the term 'honour killing' particularly repellent, because there is nothing honourable about it. Honour killing is a hideous crime and we must do everything we can to combat it.

The Treaty of Lisbon is about to be signed and, therefore, the Charter of Fundamental Rights as an annex to the treaty will be particularly important. This is why we in the European Union are obliged to do everything possible to combat this violence.

It has already been mentioned that rape can be used as a weapon of war. References have already been made to the Congo, where these dreadful acts have been taking place for years and where rapists even claim young children and elderly women as their victims. We have a number of programmes in place and Mrs Ferrero-Waldner has referred to the fact that she has approached women in government all over the world. Apparently that is not enough. This is not just a problem for women. It is a problem for everyone in the world. We in the European Union must do everything we can to improve the situation.

Małgorzata Handzlik (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, in recent years, initiatives in support of eliminating violence against women have multiplied. Unfortunately, this phenomenon continues to exist in Europe, irrespective of the age of the women, their education or their social position. We must, therefore, continue to stress that violence against women is neither natural nor unavoidable. Violence against women, everywhere in the world, is quite simply a crime and a violation of the right to life, personal dignity, safety, and physical and mental inviolability. Talking about violence is not just presenting women as victims but, above all, involves the necessity of condemning the act of violence itself and its perpetrator, who should not go unpunished. We need long-term education of women and men which will remove stereotypes and make everyone understand the need to fight this phenomenon.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL). – (PT) I hope this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women will mark the start of the collapse of the wall of silence and indifference that still exists in our society with regard to this genuine scourge that affects millions of women in the European Union and throughout the world.

Violence against women is a violation of human rights and an obstacle to their participation in social and political life, in public life and at work, preventing them being citizens with full rights. Although the different kinds of violence also vary across cultures and traditions, as already mentioned here, capitalist economic and social crises make women more vulnerable, exacerbating their exploitation and leading to poverty and marginalisation, which also contributes to trafficking of women and prostitution.

It is therefore crucial that we consolidate financial resources and policies that are genuinely committed to promoting the role of women in society and to promoting equal rights, and that we implement real plans to combat all forms of violence against women, along with eliminating the discrimination that still exists and protecting victims.

Nicole Kiil-Nielsen (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, the 2000s have been characterised in Europe by a proliferation of security laws: surveillance, repression, detention and imprisonment.

Budgets linked to these policies have exploded. Yet violence against women is not in decline. It follows that, in 2008, 156 women died from injuries inflicted by their spouse in France, where almost one in ten women is a victim of marital violence. The security measures implemented for video surveillance, filing or biometrics do not meet the real security needs of women.

This violence affects all women in all countries, whatever their origin, social background or religion. It is linked to discrimination based on gender. Sexism, just like racism, consists in denying another person an alter ego status.

How do we combat sexism? What we require is strong political will to inform, prevent and protect, the political will to abolish all forms of discrimination in which violence takes root. Is not the safety of more than half of all European citizens, in other words female citizens, worth a substantial political investment?

Åsa Torstensson, President-in-Office of the Council. – (SV) Mr President, Mrs Svensson, honourable Members, thank you for a very important debate. The violence of men towards women has many guises and it may take many forms, but the vulnerability and pain are the same no matter who is affected.

It is good that so many initiatives are being taken by the Commission in this area and it is my hope that European cooperation will be a force for combating violence and strengthening equality and that we will work strategically. This initiative and activity has been called for by many of you in Parliament.

I would like to reiterate that violence against women is a priority area for the Swedish Presidency: 1. Within the framework of the Stockholm Programme that will be adopted next month, there will be greater

opportunities to tackle those problems concerning women who are subjected to violence that have been highlighted by Parliament.

2. On 9 November, the Presidency hosted a conference at which Member States and representatives of civil society had the opportunity to share their experiences and information relating to combating violence against women. During the autumn, the Presidency also organised a conference in Brussels on victims of people-trafficking, with the aim of highlighting the need for measures to be taken for those affected and the focus on cooperation with countries of origin for human trafficking.

I would like to express my thanks for this extremely important debate. The road is long and the obstacles are many, but our vision must be for the violence against women to stop.

Karel De Gucht, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, I just have some closing remarks, but first of all, I would like to thank all the Members who spoke in this debate, which is a very crucial debate. This is one of the most brutal forms of human rights abuses that are very widespread, not only in the developing countries. We are talking a lot about Congo, but we should also talk about other developing countries like, for example, Pakistan. Last night, after a meeting in this Parliament, I watched television and there was a programme on 24/24 on abuses against women in Pakistan. It was horrible, simply horrible. But it is also the truth. One of the Members gave the example of the woman who did not want to wear a burkha.

It is obvious that conflict is exacerbating and making more severe the abuses against women, that sexual violence is used as a weapon of war, that you see after some time that the social fabric and the cohesion of the traditional communities are destroyed, are breached, that ethics disappear and that you end up in a situation where not only rebels and soldiers but also ordinary citizens commit these kinds of horrendous attacks on women and children.

Several Members have asked whether it is possible to have a European directive on violence against women that would ensure the prevention of violence, the protection of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators. Unfortunately, I do not think there is a legal basis for that. There is a legal basis in the Lisbon Treaty for some specific actions that can be taken ...

(FR) ... particularly as far as people trafficking, the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography are concerned. There is a clear reference to that in the Treaty of Lisbon, but the Declaration of Human Rights as such is not a legal basis on which to launch a directive.

However, I still believe that the Commission must continue to exploit various ways of attacking this problem, especially through programmes that target not only developing countries, but also certain vulnerable groups and our own Member States, because here too in our European Union, which should really set the world an example as far as the protection of human rights and the rights of women are concerned, there are still problems.

You can rely on the Commission – both the current one and the next one – to pursue and develop this action, for the simple reason that we believe it is necessary. It is not a question, as one of you suggested, of whether the Member States, the Commission or the European Union should take the initiative. I think that, at all levels and in all of our spheres of responsibility, we really must bear this problem in mind.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS WALLIS

Vice-President

President. – I have received one motion for a resolution⁽²⁾ tabled in accordance with Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure on behalf of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow, Thursday, 26 November 2009.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I agree with this resolution and I urge the Commission to declare the Year for the Elimination of Violence against Women. I believe that then, Member States will be

⁽²⁾ See Minutes

quicker to improve national legislation combating violence against women, especially when combating violence against women at home, and would also effectively implement national action programmes for combating violence against women. Member States must establish a single system for the reduction of violence against women – to consolidate prevention, protection and aid measures. It is very important for this matter to be one of the priorities once the new Commission begins work and Spain presides over the Council.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), in writing. – Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Violence against women exists everywhere and among all classes, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, the socially mobile and the marginalised, but a widespread and structural blindness to this problem has persisted. This resolution calls for a targeted and coherent EU policy plan to combat all forms of violence against women, as stated in the EU Roadmap for Equality between women and men. National laws and policies should be improved through the development of comprehensive national action plans to prevent, protect and prosecute. In Ireland last year, 1 947 women and 3 269 children were admitted to refuges. Over 120 women have been murdered since 1996, a significant number by a partner or ex-partner. EU studies have shown that one woman in five has suffered violence at the hands of her male partner, and that 25% of all violent crime reported in Europe involves a man assaulting his wife or partner. Domestic violence aims to control and destroy the human spirit. Reports of planned cuts of up to 30% by the Irish Government to some services amply illustrates their lack of real commitment to prevention, protection and prosecution.

Louis Grech (S&D), in writing. – One in five women has been subjected to domestic violence in Europe. In Malta, 467 cases of domestic violence were reported between January and October 2009, but these figures are probably not fully representative of the problem in Malta. Similarly, statistics in other Member States are misleading. This is because women often fear being misunderstood by authorities and judicial bodies. The resolution outlines that violence, aside from its criminality, is also a question of discrimination and inequality – an area of EU competence. The motion rightly focuses on the prosecution of perpetrators. That there should be no legal loopholes that allow perpetrators to go unpunished is important. Having said that, however, the rehabilitation of abusive partners should also be considered in order to avoid future repetition of violence. Certain Member States do not have sufficiently trained staff to adequately provide support, help and advice to victims. For victims, creating shelters is not enough. Such women require help from government to re-enter the labour market in order to acquire true economic independence from their abuser. Training programmes for victims must be stepped up, to allow them to fully reintegrate into society, and the EU should use its power to fully address such blatant inequalities.

Zita Gurmai (S&D), in writing. – Violence against women is a serious concern in the world. Women – and children – are the most vulnerable part of society, those who have to face abuse the most often. For instance, in Europe, it is estimated that 20-25% of women are victims of physical violence during their grown-up lives, while 10% of women even have to abide sexual violence. As for domestic violence, 98% is violence by men against women, and therefore we need to consider this as a gender-related issue. When talking about violence, we are not only talking about psychical violence: and thus the results above would be much worse.

I believe that we cannot accept such figures and the reality that affects especially women. The European Socialists have long been calling for effective protection and for good programmes. The Daphne Programme is a good start, but we need to do more at EU Member State level. I think that it is very important that the Spanish Presidency has decided to make a priority of the fight against violence. No social problem can be solved completely in just six months. Therefore, I will do everything to ensure that the Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies continue the work began by the Spanish Presidency.

Lívía Járóka (PPE), in writing. – Coercive sterilisation is one of the most grievous forms of violence against women and an impermissible violation of human rights. In several Member States, Roma women have been subject to coercive sterilisation aiming to reduce their 'high, unhealthy' birth rate. Despite several cases being recorded and judicial verdicts having been reached in favour of the victims, adequate compensations and official apologies in most cases are still pending. I would herein like to welcome the apologies of Prime Minister Jan Fischer, as well as the recent motion by the government of the Czech Republic requiring that by 31 December 2009, the Ministry of Health would undertake a series of measures to ensure that such violations do not occur anymore. I hope that other countries, such as Slovakia, will adjoin the Czech initiative and will establish a mechanism to provide adequate compensation to women whose reproductive capacities were destroyed without their consent. It is indispensable that Member States investigate without delay the extreme human rights abuses against Roma women, penalise the perpetrators and ensure that all victims

are identified and provided redress. It is the common goal of European countries to safeguard the health and physical integrity of all women in the continent.

Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) In the general campaign for upholding human rights, it seems that the problem of violence against women, including domestic violence, is given too little attention. The UN campaign to end violence against women worldwide in 2008 revealed that women from the ages of 15 to 44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, road accidents, war or malaria. Various forms of sexual harassment at work have been reported by 40-50% of women in the EU itself. It is estimated that from 500 000 to 2 million people, and the majority of these are women and children, become the victims of human trafficking every year, forced into prostitution, forced labour and slavery or bondage. Therefore, I am pleased about the fact that this problem has been presented in the resolution prepared by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. It is important to harmonise the approach to combating violence against women, which should, as a result, make these efforts more effective. It is also important to give the right kind of help to women, and to people who have already become the victims of violence. However, no less important is also an awareness on the part of society that domestic violence must not be an inconvenient problem which is kept closed within four walls.

Anna Záborská (PPE), *in writing*. – (SK) Today, 25 November, is not only International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, but also the day on which the Christian world remembers Saint Catherine of Alexandria who, at the beginning of the 4th century, was imprisoned and became a victim of violence, a martyr to conscience and freedom of expression. Some people overstate the problem of violence in such a way that I sometimes get the feeling that we women do not have any other problems. I firmly believe that for most of the time by far, women are much more worried about poverty, health concerns, education, the value placed on their work in the family and other circumstances in their lives.

However, we must nonetheless admit that violence is also a problem. It is a problem unworthy of a civilised society, a problem which undermines human dignity. However, I gather that there is politically correct violence and politically incorrect violence in the European Parliament, for that can be the only reason why my draft amendment condemning the forced sterilisation of women and the violent termination of pregnancies did not get through in the FEMM Committee.

Zbigniew Ziobro (ECR), *in writing*. – (PL) It is a matter of great shame that there are still so many cases of violence against women in Europe. Particular concern must be aroused by the fact that a significant proportion of instances of violence are not reported to the police, especially in view of the fact that they are instances of such serious crimes, such as the crime of rape. No strategy for eliminating violence against women can be successful if the victims do not report the fact of violence to the right authorities. The law must ensure a resolute reaction in this area, so that victims can recover a sense of justice, and also so that both they and the whole of society can be protected from similar incidents in the future. Concern must be aroused by the fact that in several countries of the EU, including Poland, sentences imposed for crimes of a sexual nature are very lenient and, in addition, these sentences are often suspended. As an example, we can point to the fact that 40% of sentences imposed in Poland for the crime of rape are suspended prison sentences. The imposition of such lenient punishments is, in fact, a slap in the face of the victims on the part of the courts, which take such a light view of the wrong done to the victims. A serious approach to the problem of violence against women must involve the necessity of treating the perpetrators of that violence severely, in order to ensure a just recompense for the wrong done, and also to make society safe in future.

14. A political solution with regard to the piracy off the Somalian coast (debate)

President. – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on a political solution with regard to the piracy off the Somalian coast.

Carl Bildt, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, I am grateful for this opportunity to briefly discuss Somalia and, in particular, the very serious problem that is caused by piracy off the coast of Somalia.

I will not go into all of the background: the country has been in dire straits for more than 18 years, the humanitarian situation is horrible, and there is strife throughout the country. There is a process with the transitional federal government, but it is fragile – to put it in the mildest possible terms – and it requires sustained efforts by the international community to gradually move the country towards reconciliation and gradually build up some sort of functioning state that can restore some kind of stability to this horribly torn country.

Piracy is a very serious threat indeed. Addressing that requires a broad engagement within the country itself which, as indicated, is enormously difficult given the current security situation in the country. Accordingly, as you have noticed, our current efforts have been concentrated on practical assistance that can be delivered outside Somalia for the benefit of the country and the people. We are, of course, discussing, as you might be aware, further steps in that particular respect.

On the specific problem of piracy, the Atalanta naval operation continues to operate successfully off the coast of Somalia. All shipments from the World Food Programme have been safely delivered to Somalia from Mombasa to Mogadishu and to Berbera. No successful attacks have occurred in the Gulf of Aden since early May 2009. This is, at least to a certain extent, the outcome of the commitment of the EU Member States and the rest of the international community, which has helped to produce a high-level generation of significant naval assets. The operation's success in this limited respect is also the result of close cooperation between the civilian maritime community and the EU operational headquarters at Northwood in the UK. This has allowed the development of best management practices which are also increasingly respected by seafarers. There has also been very effective implementation of the coordinated mechanism for the naval protection of commercial traffic in the Gulf of Aden.

For the time being, therefore, it can be said that piracy in the Gulf of Aden has been contained, but still continues. For this reason, the Council has decided to extend the counter-piracy operation until December 2010. This means that we have to be able to sustain our current efforts and maintain the right level of military resources. In parallel, we expect UN Security Resolution AL1846 to be extended over the coming days.

In spite of what I have said, there is no room for complacency. Pirates continue to extend their activities further to the east into the Indian Ocean, and with the end of the monsoon season, we have recently witnessed a new surge of attacks to the north and north-east of the Seychelles, which is quite a distance away. No fewer than 11 ships are currently being held – all of them following attacks in what is referred to as the Somali Basin – with a total of 250 crew members.

With operation Atalanta, we have reinforced our capabilities in this remote maritime area. Additional patrol aircraft have been deployed in the Seychelles, and I can announce that Swedish maritime patrol aircraft will join the force in the Seychelles as well. This has proved helpful. For the time being, additional protection measures are already in place or planned on a national basis, with France, and more recently Spain, offering an appropriate and effective response.

There is also the protection of the internationally recognised transit corridor in the Gulf of Aden. That is the recommended route through the Gulf, and all ships benefit from naval protection irrespective of their flag. We currently have naval units there from the European Union, from NATO and from the US-led coalition maritime forces with very good coordination of the patrols and with the very essential intelligence cooperation that is necessary for an operation of this sort.

China is now willing to associate itself with this coordination mechanism and to participate in the protection. This means that existing mechanisms will have to be evolved and widened. It could, in due course, lead to China, and possibly other maritime powers, taking some responsibilities. Others – Russia, India and Japan – have also deployed naval assets, and they should be invited to join this mechanism as soon as possible. Coordination is, of course, the key to success.

I know that there is some interest in Parliament in the rather difficult question of the trial of suspected pirates who have been arrested and apprehended by Atalanta units. There are currently 75 suspects being held in Kenyan jails. The legal process involved amounts to nine different trials and creates a significant additional burden on the Kenyan judicial system. The proper conduct of these trials is, of course, essential if we are to maintain both the deterrent effect provided by Atalanta and the overall credibility of our counter-piracy efforts. A recent agreement with Seychelles, which I imagine you are aware of, on the transfer of suspected pirates constitutes an important additional contribution in this respect. Piracy is a very lucrative business, and it is important that in every single respect, we gear our different activities towards reducing every possibility of the pirates gaining further money from these truly despicable operations that they carry out.

At the end of the day, of course, what we are doing in the maritime waters cannot be a substitute for what needs to be done in Somalia or on Somalia itself, but that, as I indicated earlier, is something where immediate success cannot be taken for granted. We will have to continue the maritime operation and this will require firstly that we are prepared to sustain a long-term commitment of military assets; secondly, that we will have to strengthen coordination cooperation between all of the powers and international bodies involved in this operation; and thirdly, that we must also help to develop regional maritime capabilities as the burden cannot

only be on us. The maritime international organisations, such as the contact group on piracy, will have an important role to play here.

Finally, this is one of the areas where we have demonstrated the capabilities of the ESDP in recent years. Go back a couple of years and few of even the most ambitious here would have envisaged us operating European Union naval assets in the Gulf of Aden or in the Indian Ocean. Imperative humanitarian and other reasons have led us to what has, within the limits of what is possible, so far proved to be a relatively successful operation, but let us not have any illusions. Much remains to be done. We need to sustain the operation, and the support of the Parliament is very important in this respect.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, this time the focus on the whole question of Somalia is wider, also addressing the root causes of this scourge with sustainable methods. The Commission has always maintained that piracy can only be finally eradicated by addressing the underlying causes, beginning with the instability in Somalia and also addressing the country's development needs, which manifest themselves in the most extreme poverty, including massive illiteracy and vulnerability.

Therefore, a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges of security and development in Somalia, which have been mentioned, is essential. This will require the establishment of a functioning state, capable of enforcing laws and providing at least basic services. In the medium to long term, governance, including institution-building and security, education and economic development are necessary preconditions for the eradication of the incentives which now exist for Somalis to become pirates.

On the security side, a rapid approach is essential. The African Union has, as you know, a pivotal role to play, not least through AMISOM, which is the African Union force providing security for the transitional federal government in Mogadishu. Through the Africa Peace Facility, the European Union is a major contributor to AMISOM, providing funds to support African Union forces. The new contribution agreement of EUR 60 million has just been finalised. This is part of a pledge made by the Commission at the conference in Brussels in April this year. The joint strategy paper 2008-2013 defines Commission assistance to Somalia and, in concrete terms, the EC support programme for Somalia has a budget of, altogether, EUR 215.4 million from the European Development Fund (EDF) for the period 2008-2013.

The Operation ATALANTA, the EU's first naval operation, will soon celebrate its anniversary. This operation is a success, providing deterrence to piracy but also raising the awareness of the shipping community on best self-protection measures. But, we all know that much more has yet to be done. In parallel to the operation ATALANTA, the Commission uses the instrument of stability, a financial instrument, to support the Kenyan justice system – as the President of the Council has just mentioned – because Kenya has undertaken to prosecute transferred suspected pirates apprehended by the operation, and it is necessary that there should not be impunity. This support to the Kenyan judiciary system includes a sort of mixture of capacity-building measures for prosecution, police, judicial and prison services. The programme is implemented through the UNODC at a cost of EUR 1.75 million.

In a broader context, regional maritime capacity development is also an important aspect of ensuring security in the area. The Commission supports the implementation of the so-called Djibouti Code of Conduct of the International Maritime Organisation, once again by using our instrument for stability. A programme dealing with certain critical maritime routes, including the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden region, will assist the creation of a regional training centre for maritime affairs in Djibouti. This centre will focus on the capacity-building and training of maritime administration staff, officials and coastguards of the region, including from Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland, as feasible. A regional information-sharing centre in Sana'a, Yemen, has also been identified for funding in 2009. The first phase of this programme has already started and technical feasibility studies are launched.

Let me now turn to another important issue before concluding. The Commission is developing an integrated maritime policy – including an external dimension – and also integrated maritime surveillance across the sectors and borders to generate maritime situational awareness of activities at sea, impacting, among other things, on maritime safety and security, but also on general law enforcement.

The current Swedish Presidency has initiated a significant effort to ensure the inter-pillar coherence of EU maritime policy, ensuring the link between Community action and the work developed under the second pillar, notably by the European Defence Agency. We believe that the integration of maritime surveillance has a strong potential to assist EU operations against piracy, as the harvesting of maritime surveillance data from different sources allows authorities acting at sea to take decisions and react in a more informed manner.

All these different strands of activities, which are also outlined in the EP resolution of last October, constitute the Commission's contribution to the fight against piracy.

Cristiana Muscardini, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (IT) Madam President, Minister, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, we welcome with great satisfaction the extension of the Atalanta mission.

I have sought to devote myself to the Somalia problem for some 10 years and I cannot deny that on too many occasions, Europe has not acted quickly enough.

The situation in Somalia becomes more dramatic every day due to the consequences of international terrorism and also the problem of piracy and the human tragedy lived out by millions of people, particularly women and children, who suffer violence, face hunger every day and, all too often, are forced to escape across the desert in an attempt to seek shelter on European shores.

In conjunction with the fight against terrorism, we must also introduce actions that bring new hope to the economy of the region but also introduce European control of the situation of the refugee camps in Libya. We have received reports of very serious situations in these camps, both of violence and of failure to respect human rights, often directed against Somalian women.

During an address organised by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), the permanent representative to the United Nations of the Somalian transition government, Dr Yusuf Mohamed Ismail Bari-Bari, pointed out that Somalia has been further impoverished by fraudulent fishing of its shores and that many of the pirates are also former fishermen who have not received justice or attention.

We therefore need to fight hard against terrorism but also strive to bring justice, hope and economy to a country that has become a martyr to years of war.

Roberto Gualtieri, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, through this debate and with the resolution that we in the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament will approve tomorrow, it is our intention to express our strong support for the European Union's commitment to fight piracy. At the same time, we intend to express our concern regarding the dramatic nature of the situation within Somalia, which reinforces the need for and urgency of an action to promote stability in the country in order to tackle the root causes of the phenomenon of piracy.

The Atalanta mission is a success story: it has allowed the transport of 300 000 tonnes of aid and has improved safety in the Gulf of Aden for all maritime traffic, demonstrating the capacities and added operational and political value of the ESDP.

At the same time, we need greater European commitment, alongside the African Union, to support the Djibouti process and for this reason, although we are aware of the difficulties and risks, we express our support for the possibility of an ESDP mission in Somalia, which the Council has begun to examine.

We therefore hope that, in the context of the amendments and debate, all the groups will help to reinforce this message instead of falling into the trap of using a dramatic situation such as that in Somalia as an excuse for political diatribe within certain countries that have nothing to do with this debate and with the work of Parliament.

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (ES) Madam President, we must support the social and democratic development of Somalia in order to bring piracy to an end. In addition, we call for European vessels fishing in the southern Indian Ocean to be protected from pirate attacks under Operation Atalanta in the same way as merchant vessels are. We call for military escorts to be provided, because that is the most effective solution and also the cheapest and the one recommended by the International Maritime Organisation. In addition, we wish persons arrested and charged with piracy to be judged in the countries of the area, as provided for in the March 2008 treaty with Kenya and the Seychelles.

This is all because fishing vessels run a real and increasing risk of being attacked and hijacked in the area. We should recall that Parliament spoke out against this situation a year ago, yet even the Commission has admitted that nothing has been done on the subject. In the meantime, the pirates are continuing to carry out attacks.

The most recent victim, the *Alakrana*, was held for almost 50 days. It should also be recalled that these vessels are fishing pursuant to a European fisheries agreement. They are operating legally, in international waters, and controlled by the competent authorities.

That is why we should increase the protection offered to vessels of this type.

Reinhard Bütikofer, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, the Atalanta operation represents a successful contribution by the EU to security in the Horn of Africa and it should be continued. However, the EU also has a broader common responsibility. This involves not turning a blind eye when illegal toxic waste exports or illegal fishing damages Somalia's interests. For this reason, we must take a consistent approach to following up on these matters.

The resolution that we will be voting on tomorrow takes the wrong track in two respects and we do not endorse these approaches. It is wrong to want to change the Atalanta mandate now, either with regard to enlarging the area of operations or with regard to the attempt by Members of this House to extend the mandate to include fishing. We want the mandate to continue unchanged.

Secondly, it is highly questionable to launch a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) training mission which has not been properly justified and which will not make a demonstrable contribution to state-building in Somalia. We should be working on the principle of caution rather than haste.

Willy Meyer, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (ES) Madam President, we fully support the first part of the statement by Mrs Ferrero-Waldner. That is indeed the nature of the problem and its very root. Until we tackle the root of the problem, there can be no chance of either an air-based or land-based military solution to it. As to a maritime solution, the officer responsible for Operation Atalanta stated quite clearly yesterday that no maritime solution to piracy is possible. I would remind the House that the United States did attempt a land-based military solution and failed in the endeavour.

It would, therefore, be a mistake to hold back on development aid and on solutions concerning the governance of the country. No military solution is possible, but it is not possible either to privatise the functions of the armed forces, as the Spanish Government has seen fit to do. It is not a case of replacing armies with private security firms equipped with the weapons of war. No, that is certainly not the solution. The solution, in fact, is to put an end to all kinds of piracy. I mean, to put an end to piracy based in Somalia and also to foreign piracy that is wreaking havoc in Somali territorial waters.

Niki Tzavela, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (EL) Madam President, international observers have remarked that the solution to the problem of piracy lies in achieving political stability in the area. This is something we all wish for, especially we Greeks, because Greek shipping is being hard hit by piracy in the area.

Commissioner, what you said was a pleasant surprise to me. Until now, the only information we have had, both from international media and from all sides, was about progress in military operations. You disarmed me because I wanted to put the following question to you: what progress has been made to date by the political forces in the country, because we are now focusing on the fact that, in order to resolve the problem, we need political stability in Somalia. Thank you for the information you have given us and I must say that it would be useful if both the European Parliament and the media concerned with the question of political intervention could be given more detailed information.

Luis de Grandes Pascual (PPE). – (ES) Madam President, Commissioner, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, Spain has just endured a painful situation in which a vessel, the *Alakrana*, and all its crew were subjected to blackmail, humiliation and countless risks.

The Spanish Government is being called to account in Spain, as is appropriate in the case. In this House, we are going to talk of Europe and more Europe. Accordingly, it has to be stated that after a year in which we have demanded diplomacy and determination, the outcome has been positive.

Operation Atalanta is inadequate, however. It needs to be broadened and made more flexible. It has to become possible to protect not only the routes along which humanitarian aid moves, but also Community fishing and merchant vessels. The latter must be protected, and that is why, in the resolution to be adopted tomorrow, we shall call on the European Parliament and on its institutions to make certain commitments.

What we are seeking to do is to say 'yes' to the strong stance taken by states that protect their vessels with their armed forces to deter and, if necessary, legally repel pirate action. We must say 'no' to recourse to private security contractors, a move which, according to the IMO, carries with it the risk of unnecessary violence. We must say 'no' to the passive and dilettante attitude of governments that are making life easy for the pirates. We must say 'yes', however, to diplomacy, 'yes' to aid to Somalia, and 'no' to unsubstantiated charges of alleged illegal fishing.

Community vessels are fishing in compliance with our international agreements. They are doing so legally and must be protected. The Community's institutions are duty bound to do so.

Saïd El Khadraoui (S&D). – (NL) The complex and dangerous situation in Somalia and its impact on stability in the region is a source of great concern to all of us. At the same time, the whole world has borne witness to the problems which this country has been experiencing as a result of sea piracy and its impact on shipping in the wider waters surrounding Somalia. In order to resolve this situation, we obviously need an integrated approach, as Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner said earlier.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to express our appreciation for the excellent work which the Atalanta mission has carried out to date. Their efforts are very important, because the accessibility of this zone is crucial for international trade and goods transport. Our wish is that both the seamen on board merchant ships and the fishermen who work in the region will be able to carry out their jobs in safety. We think this is essential. Let us therefore continue to support the work of this mission. Of course, let us also consider what else we can do and, as the Commissioner rightly said, let us, at the same time, tackle this problem at the source, effectively and on various fronts.

Franziska Katharina Brantner (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Madam President, Somalia is a country in a constant state of emergency and has had no government for almost 20 years. We in the EU must help to change this situation. This is why we support the Commission's work. However, we are very sceptical about the new European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission and the plan to train 2 000 soldiers for the transitional government in Somalia.

What is the real goal of this mission? What is the overall political concept for Somalia? What value can we add to the current US and French training projects? We do not understand how this mission can contribute to state-building. What legitimacy does the transitional government have? Why are we supporting it? Why do we believe that the soldiers will help it? How can we prevent the soldiers from joining the war lords once they have been trained? We believe that there are still too many questions relating to this mission for it to be possible to start planning for it. Above all, I do not see what value the EU can add and I believe that the money would be better spent on other projects which the Commission is already running.

Eider Gardiazábal Rubial (S&D). – (ES) Madam President, if we are to try and understand what is happening in the waters of the Indian Ocean we must tackle the issue of piracy in a responsible manner, refraining from demagogic statements and from taking a party political stance. I am saying this despite the statements that I have had the misfortune of hearing in this House. Certain Members have taken the opportunity to attack the government of Spain while they had the floor. I would point out that the aforementioned government was instrumental in promoting and taking forward Operation Atalanta which we are today commending. That operation is clearly inadequate, however, and must be strengthened.

I therefore wish to ask the Council to strengthen this operation, to enlarge the protected areas for which it is responsible, to increase its staff allocation and to grant it additional competences. I refer, for instance, to surveillance of the ports from which the mother ships used by pirates leave. Nonetheless, it is clear that Atalanta cannot be the sole mechanism for resolving the Somali problem. That is why I am taking this opportunity of calling on all concerned to seek a common strategy on Somalia. Such a strategy should include development aid and political dialogue with the transitional federal government.

I also call on the Council to set up a new operation, in parallel with Atalanta. That operation would help to train and equip the Somali federal government's security forces whilst also strengthening the commitment to respect for human rights and the rule of law.

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

Luis de Grandes Pascual (PPE). – (ES) Does the Member think it is irresponsible to have stated that the Spanish Government should be held to account in Spain, and that in this House we should focus on discussing Europe and European measures in support of Operation Atalanta?

Eider Gardiazábal Rubial (S&D). – (ES) Mr de Grandes Pascual, please do not try to bandy words. What I consider irresponsible is for you to take advantage of having the floor to have a go at the government of Spain.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE). – (EL) Madam President, it is a fact that Somali pirates are a threat to international shipping. Piracy not only affects the cost and reliability of maritime transport, it also – and

most importantly – prevents the provision of international humanitarian aid to Somalia, thereby exacerbating the serious food shortage in the country. Nonetheless, I must point out that countries with a long tradition in merchant shipping, such as Greece and other Mediterranean countries, are particularly affected. I understand that the EU anti-piracy mission to protect the sea passage in the Horn of Africa is an important step. However, we need to understand that the very things that we all used to think belonged to the realm of fantasy and the film world – I read about them in story books when I was a child – are now knocking at our door, are a visible danger, a reality. That is why we need to coordinate, to persuade the Council and the Commission to take more political initiatives.

Josefa Andrés Barea (S&D). – (ES) Madam President, piracy is a very important issue for Spain since it is affecting our fishing vessels, and I welcome the release of the vessel *Alakrana* and commend its fishermen, its owner and the Spanish Government for their efforts.

Fishing boats are a target for pirates and, it seems, provide irresistible opportunities for hostage taking. Pirates have modernised their tactics, as the Council has said, at sea and on land. They are profitable and Member States must respond to the situation.

Operation EU NAVFOR Somalia (Operation Atalanta) was a success, and the Commissioner mentioned that a large number of activities had been undertaken, but we need more and better such operations. Fishing boats must no longer be vulnerable; we need fishing boats to be protected and we need the area in which they are offered protection to be extended.

Above all, we need a solution on land, because it is on land that the problem is created: as the Commission has pointed out, we need democratic stability. We are asking the Commission if it would be prepared to organise a summit on piracy in the area, in an attempt to find solutions on land to what is happening at sea.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE). – (ES) I too, of course, am delighted about the happy ending to the *Alakrana* case, but I fear that unfortunately it may not be the last such case. As has been said, it is important to remember that pirates feed not just on poverty, but also on the faults and gaps in a system that does not work.

While it is certainly sad and regrettable that sailors are being kidnapped when, at the end of the day, they are only doing their job, it is also deplorable that there are those who are taking advantage of the lack of government, not only in Somalia but in the region as a whole, to fish the waters illegally or dump pollutant waste. Regrettably, Mr de Grandes Pascual, this is what has been happening.

We condemn any act of piracy, without a doubt. Combating this phenomenon, however, requires more than soldiers and mercenaries. In fact, reducing it to such terms could even be counterproductive and lead to a worrying escalation in the conflict, especially given that we know that some ship owners, in order to maximise their presence in the area, are risking more than they should and moving further away from protected areas than they should, creating a risk that is always very difficult to address.

Carmen Fraga Estévez (PPE). – (ES) Madam President, while illegal fishing in the Indian Ocean may be occurring, the Community fleet can certainly not be described as illegal, as has been suggested here. The Community fleet fishes within the strictest bounds of legality, with licences issued under the European Community – Seychelles Fisheries Partnership Agreement and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), which regulates and manages tuna fishing in the area.

Secondly, all Community vessels are equipped with a satellite monitoring system, through which they can be located in real time and at all times by the fishing and military authorities.

Thirdly, the Community fleet has observers on board and complies with a strict regime of providing information on fishing activity through fishing logbooks, catch samples and a ban on transferring goods at high sea, among other measures.

Lastly, the entire Community fleet has been duly entered in the IOTC regional fleet register. I personally would like both the Commission and the Council to acknowledge that the European fleet fishing in that area is doing so within the strictest bounds of legality.

Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D). – (PL) Madam President, I would very much like to express my thanks, and to start by saying that we have been given today, in my opinion, very good and dependable information both from Mr Bildt and the Commissioner. This information shows the fact that the European Union's efforts concentrate on two areas. The first area is humanitarian aid. The second is military action, and these two

areas of activity are, fortunately, being increasingly effective. I would like, however, to ask this: should we not attach at least the same importance to building the State in Somalia, because it is, in fact, a country deprived of proper rule? Should we not also build the local police, as well as a core of military forces? In my opinion, if this third area is not treated in the same way as the other two, it will be difficult to achieve success in the long term.

Carl Bildt, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, I will be very brief. Somalia is a big problem. It has been a big problem for 20 years. We discussed piracy. But let us not forget the humanitarian situation, which is a disaster. Let us not forget the problem of terrorists. Let us not forget the region's instability.

Over time, we need to try and deal with it all. But let us also be realistic. The international community, the United Nations and others have been struggling with Somalia for a very long time. Results have been fairly limited. We are fairly late entrants in this area when it comes to trying to deal with Somalia. We are trying to do certain things.

In Atalanta, we all claimed it a success, but let us not think that it can solve all the problems. When we are discussing extending it out into the Indian Ocean, we are talking about absolutely enormous areas. And, even if we were to deploy all of the naval assets of all of the countries of the European Union, I would not be certain of absolute success.

And some of these pirates are, of course, fed money as well, which makes it possible for them to invest in further resources. That makes the problem rather challenging.

That is not the reason for not doing what we can do. With the reservation of all of the difficulties, we should try to engage in supporting the transitional federal government.

That is what we are trying to do with different training programmes. Is there a guarantee of this being successful? No, there is not. But the only thing that we can be absolutely certain of is that, if we do not even try, we are absolutely certain not to succeed. If we try, at least there is the possibility of us making a positive impact. And, if we have received nothing else, we have managed to secure the programmes of the deliveries of the World Food Programme to the starving and suffering people of Somalia. That in itself is something to be proud of.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, I know very well that this is an issue that is very important in some member countries because of the victims they have had, because of the difficulties there. Our Greek colleague who asked me a question that I wanted to answer is no longer here, but I wanted to say what we have been doing and why I said that there was a certain success.

As our President mentioned, there was the so-called Djibouti Process and the international contact group, of which the Commission was part and where I know that our former colleague, Louis Michel, who is now a European parliamentarian, tried very hard to help and support the transitional government. It is this government that is still best placed to bring some stability to Somalia. This is our first and foremost task, and we will have to do it with diplomatic and political support.

Then we have to help and protect the boats and all the people there. Then we also have to do what I said before – the colleague who spoke last has maybe heard me before. I said before that, institution-building, capacity-building, trying to help the legal process, to help the population, is absolutely fundamental. Only then, when we have more stability in the country and steps have been taken to eradicate poverty, can all of that then be done. So it is indeed a very complex process.

In order to be helpful, apart from the other things, we now have concrete support ongoing for 29 projects, worth over EUR 50 million, which is a huge amount of money for these people, that support governance, security and civil society, that support the reconciliation process and institution-building. The ultimate aim is to help create a functioning state that will be able to serve the Somali people and where we also have to combat terrorism. Terrorism, unfortunately, is very much anchored there, where we nearly have a failed state, so we have a huge task indeed.

Somebody asked whether there could be a summit on piracy in the future. We, the Commission, would certainly not be against it, but I think this is for the Member States to decide and, in particular, maybe for the next Spanish Presidency. If they have an interest, then they might indeed do so.

President. – I have received six motions for resolution⁽³⁾ tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow (Thursday, 26 November 2009).

Written statements (Rule 149)

Alain Cadec (PPE), in writing. – (FR) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to give this resolution my unfailing support, as it underlines the relevance of Operation Atalanta and its success. I understand the immensity of the task to be achieved, given the size of the territory to be covered. However, I would like European fishing boats operating in the zone to be seen as very vulnerable vessels and, for that purpose, to receive special protection. They must therefore be classified as category 3.

In fact, tuna boats are particularly vulnerable, insofar as, on the one hand, they have a very low freeboard and, on the other, they are immobile and not manoeuvrable during seine fishing: that is, during a four to five hour period. At these times, they are therefore at risk of pirate attack. It is this particular feature that justifies this specific request. I would also like to clarify that this classification in Operation Atalanta would be in addition to French and Spanish protection operations on board ships.

Filip Kaczmarek (PPE), in writing. – (PL) The Commission and the Council are right. The only possible answer to the situation in Somalia is a comprehensive approach to the conflict there, with coordinated action of all parties engaged in efforts at achieving stability in the region and ending piracy. Our immediate objective in the problem of eliminating piracy must, of course, be continuation of Operation Atalanta. This should even include extension of its mandate, so that fishermen would also be protected. I cannot understand why certain fellow Members do not want to protect fishermen. Since we are protecting commercial and tourist shipping, as well as ships carrying food aid, we should also do everything possible to enable fisherman to do their work in safety.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the long-term goal, without which a lasting solution to the problem of piracy will never be found. I am referring to peace, stability, the elimination of poverty and development of the country. Therefore, acting on a long-term basis, we must concentrate on:

- strengthening the AMISOM mission,
- resolute maintenance and execution of the arms embargo on Somalia,
- stabilisation of the country by a coordinated and comprehensive strategy for action involving the European Union, the African Union and the USA,
- striving for lasting peace agreements between the parties, and,
- support in building State institutions active throughout the country.

15. Smoke-free environments (debate)

President. – The next item is the debate on the oral question to the Council on smoke-free environments by Edite Estrela, on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, (O-0119/2009 – B7-0225/2009).

Edite Estrela, author. – (PT) Firstly, I would like to thank the shadow rapporteurs of all the political groups for their joint work and the effort they have made in order to be able to table a joint resolution in such a short time. I would also like to thank the secretariat of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, the secretariat of my group and my assistant for their support. They have all been outstanding.

On behalf of the Committee on the Environment, I will begin by expressing my regret that the Swedish Presidency has decided to finalise this dossier without waiting for Parliament's report. This attitude shows an unacceptable disregard for those elected by Europe's citizens. Hence the question that I put to it on behalf of the Committee on the Environment: can the Council confirm its intention to adopt conclusions on this

⁽³⁾ See Minutes

subject in the Council of 1 December 2009, despite Parliament's timetable? What are the reasons for the Council to rush into adopting the recommendation without the European Parliament's opinion? Since Parliament was consulted on the Commission's proposal, is the Council prepared to take Parliament's view into account when drafting the Council's conclusions?

It should be noted that the Committee on the Environment supports the objectives of the recommendation, since tobacco is still the leading cause of death and disease in the European Union. The Committee on the Environment would therefore like its timetable to have been respected, which would allow for a thorough debate to be held on the issue and for Parliament to adopt a position.

Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, also known as passive smoke, is a significant additional cause of death, disease and disability in the European Union. Passive smoke contains more than 4 000 gaseous compounds and particles, including 69 known carcinogens and many toxins. There is no safe level of exposure to passive tobacco smoke. The most conservative estimates indicate that many thousands of people die every year because of passive smoke, and it therefore also puts significant burdens on the economy, in terms of direct medical costs, and also indirect costs associated with lost productivity.

Considerable progress has been made in recent years in establishing smoke-free environments in several Member States. To date, more than a third of Member States have adopted wide-ranging legislation prohibiting smoking in workplaces and enclosed public spaces. However, there are still significant differences in the level of protection against exposure to tobacco smoke within the EU. For example, workers in the hotel and catering sector make up an occupational group that is particularly vulnerable to the lack of global protection in most Member States and the exceptionally high concentration of tobacco smoke in bars and restaurants.

At EU level, the issue of smoke-free environments has, up to now, been the subject of several non-binding resolutions and recommendations which do not provide detailed guidelines on how to set up smoke-free environments. The issue also appears in a number of directives adopted in the area of occupational health and safety, but is only addressed indirectly in some cases and does not guarantee an adequate level of protection in others.

I would point out that Article 8 of the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which, to date, has been ratified by 26 Member States and by the Community, obliges all parties to guarantee effective protection against exposure to tobacco smoke in workplaces and enclosed public spaces and on public transport.

We believe that only a total ban on smoking in enclosed workplaces, including the catering and hotel sector, public buildings and public transport, will be able to ensure protection of the health of workers and non-smokers, and will encourage smokers to stop smoking.

I will end by saying that we hope that the Council takes account of this resolution, which, we hope, will be adopted by Parliament tomorrow.

Åsa Torstensson, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) Madam President, on 1 July 2009, the Commission submitted its proposal for a Council Recommendation on smoke-free environments, based on Article 152(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The principal aim of this proposal is to implement Article 8 of the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Article 8 concerns protection against exposure to tobacco smoke. So far, this convention has been ratified by 26 Member States and also by the Community.

With regard to the Swedish Presidency's work programme and in order to be able to give the other institutions sufficient time to give their opinions, on 8 July 2009, the Council called on the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions to submit their opinions at the latest by 26 November, 5 November and 8 October 2009, respectively. The European Economic and Social Committee has already adopted its opinion and the Committee of the Regions announced that it did not intend to submit one. I believe that the European Parliament is planning to adopt its opinion by March 2010 at the latest, which I find regrettable. Unfortunately, that will be too late for the Council to have the chance to take it into account. It is absolutely nothing to do with a lack of respect – quite the contrary, in fact.

The Minister for Elderly Care and Public Health, Maria Larsson, confirmed to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on 2 September that it is the Swedish Presidency's intention for the recommendation on smoke-free environments to be adopted before the end of the year. The text of the recommendation is currently being discussed in the Council and so far, we have made significant progress.

I am certain that we will achieve our goal for the recommendation to be adopted at the Council's meeting on 1 December 2009. However, the Council is not planning to adopt any conclusions in this regard.

The Council has examined the European Parliament's resolution that was adopted on 24 October 2007 on the Green Paper 'Towards a Europe free from tobacco smoke: policy options at EU level'. In the resolution, Parliament called on the Member States to introduce legislation on smoke-free environments within two years. Many EU Member States have now adopted such laws, and several are on the way to doing so. Parliament also considered that the smoke-free policy should be complemented by other supporting measures. The Council shares this view.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to report on the Council's timetable with regard to the proposal for a recommendation on smoke-free environments and look forward to hearing your views on the matter.

Theodoros Skylakakis, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (EL) Madam President, the Council Decision to promote its proposal on smoke-free environments to the Member States post haste, without giving Parliament sufficient time to process its position is, in our opinion, a mistake. Our reaction, apart from today's question, is the resolution that I hope we shall pass tomorrow, on which we have achieved a good compromise and which, I think, expresses the majority view in the House. This resolution contains numerous new elements. We in the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) are particularly proud of the emphasis placed in this text on the protection of children from passive smoking and, at our proposal and with the acceptance of other groups, numerous new elements have been introduced.

I would highlight, for example, the reference to the need for particular awareness and protection because children, unlike adults, do not have the facility to give their legal, moral or even psychological consent to their exposure to passive smoking. Parents have a duty to protect, but they need our help, because passive smoking by children has not been researched sufficiently and, consequently, neither parents nor anyone else knows what the consequences are of children's long-term exposure to smoke and to what degree they need to be protected.

That is why our proposal that the Commission conduct a Europe-wide study into the problem, including third-hand smoking, is particularly valuable. The information obtained may provide a massive service. Moreover, there are numerous important elements in the resolution and we hope that the Council will bear them in mind.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (RO) The European Union's citizens and environment must benefit from the protection offered by the ban on smoking in public places. We cannot ignore the fact that smoking currently remains one of the biggest causes of illness and death. We fight with all our might against dangerous epidemics and invent complex and costly vaccines to protect ourselves against new viruses, but making the effort to protect our children, families and the environment from the harm of smoking is much more achievable for us.

Simple logic, if not the appeal to concepts such as the right of the non-smoking majority, should convince us to make this effort a priority. Some recent studies indicate that the ban on smoking in North America and Europe has led to a rapid decrease in certain serious health problems. In fact, this effect was noticed almost immediately after the smoking ban was introduced. In countries where smoking has been banned completely in public areas, the positive impact on health has been attributed to a number of factors. These include not only the removal of smoke inhaled indirectly by smokers, but also the reduction in passive smoking affecting non-smokers.

I would like us not to lose sight of one essential fact: smokers are a minority in the European Union. Of course, no one can suggest curtailing the right of individuals to smoke, not even for the sake of certain principles which we all support, such as strong protection for public health and an environment rid of sources of pollution. At the same time, however, the majority made up of non-smokers want a smoke-free environment. This reality should guide us when drafting and supporting anti-smoking legislation.

As the evidence suggests to us that smokers are likely to give up smoking with the help of these support measures, I think that we must strengthen anti-smoking legislative measures as part of a Community policy for controlling tobacco consumption, in order to make a practical contribution to improving public health right across the European Union.

Frédérique Ries, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, with this resolution, our Parliament intends, as a matter of course, to support the Commission's very proactive policy on the fight against smoking.

However, we are also asking it – and this is essential – to go even further and guarantee that, in 2011, European men and women will have the right to a clean area in all public places, means of transport and places of work.

In fact, Europe has the right – it is obvious – and even the duty to offer protection, and thus in this case to introduce a ban, as it did and as it continues to do in respect of a whole series of toxic substances, substances that kill, in some cases, far fewer people than tobacco: chemical substances, pesticides, some heavy metals or even asbestos, to mention but a few.

When I say that Europe must introduce a ban, and therefore guarantee this non-smoking area for all workers, as an overwhelming majority of citizens are asking us to, that obviously does not mean that we are launching a crusade against smokers. I am a liberal and am virulently attached to this notion of freedom, free choice and free will. A European text can provide for dispensations, smoking rooms and areas of freedom. To legislate does not mean to oppress. Here we are talking about public areas, but you cannot tell me that Europe does not have a role in this debate.

Carl Schlyter, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (SV) Madam President, I would like to point out that this is, of course, a worker-protection issue. That is the only reason that the EU is getting involved in the matter at all. We prohibited DCM, dichloromethane, for example – a matter that I was responsible for – precisely because it affects the health of workers. Workers have the right to be protected by European legislation, and we are now talking about the health of restaurant and hotel workers.

A smoking ban in these environments would save many more lives and be much more effective in preventing a lot of poor health than most of the laws that we make here. It is one of the most effective instruments we can introduce to protect the health of workers in the workplace, and especially children and other innocent victims of smoke. Dozens of substances in cigarette smoke are so toxic that, if you want to use them in a laboratory, you have to have a special permit, and yet this is what we want to release into people's everyday environment. It is a completely absurd situation. It is not about freedom of choice, because those who become sick have not chosen it at all. We can now help those people and prevent them from becoming sick in future, and this is an opportunity that we must take.

Jiří Maštálka, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (CS) I am delighted that we have succeeded in creating a joint resolution which represents a decent compromise and which can contribute to reducing the incidence of deaths and ill health caused by smoking. I welcome the wording of Article 15, which should ensure that the effort to control tobacco is protected particularly against the commercial interests of the tobacco industry. The mechanism established in Article 22 for submitting reports is a good one, in my opinion. I am disappointed that we have not managed to incorporate a reference to standardised packaging in the joint resolution. Studies have shown that standardised packaging would greatly reduce consumption and demand, especially among young people. I am also disappointed that, for reasons of time, the proper consultation process was not followed and I hope the Council will back the aforementioned proposals. I would also like to add for the record that we have adopted at today's session measures that will put the protection of non-smokers in the European Parliament on a proper footing.

Peter Liese (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the resolution. Passive smoking is a huge problem, particularly for children. The president of the German association of paediatricians once said that smoking in the presence of children constitutes intentional bodily harm. I would not express it as drastically as that myself, but it is clear that we need to act.

I very much welcome the legislation that has been introduced in Ireland, Italy and other countries. I think that the legal and practical situation in Germany is shameful from a health policy perspective. We have a lot to learn from other European countries in this respect.

Nevertheless, it is not as easy as paragraphs 2, 10 and 13 of this resolution suggest. We have only limited authority at a European level and introducing legislation in this area could be politically counterproductive. We can only protect workers. We cannot provide special protection for children by taking action at a European level. However, it is this sort of protection that is urgently needed. Therefore, I would ask you to support the amendments put forward by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) on this subject.

One word about the controversial tobacco subsidies, which we have been discussing for years. The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety has always called for them to be abolished. Now we have a good compromise in the Council and, therefore, I would like to make a strong personal plea, subject to a discussion with my group, for leaving paragraph 9 unchanged. It is an effective compromise and people will

not understand it if we continue to pay subsidies as we have in the past. We need this change and we should support it.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Madam President, during the 2004 European elections, Ireland introduced a ban on smoking in the workplace, so we met many irate voters outside restaurants and public houses. They were furious about the ban. But this is 2009, and there has been a huge acceptance that what we did was good for workers, good for employers and good for the public health system. People have come to live with it.

This morning, I took the healthy option and walked into Parliament and I was dismayed to see in cars young parents, with children strapped into the back, smoking cigarettes. There were parents pushing children in buggies, with a cigarette hanging over the child. Obviously, we have a lot of work to do to educate adults about the dangers for children.

So, I support my colleague, Peter Liese, in his call for the protection of children. They are so vulnerable, and it is so sad to see that they are exposed to this danger.

But let us not demonise smokers. Remember that tobacco is a terrible addiction and smokers need all our help and support to kick the habit. Those who chose, as others may say, not to kick the habit should carry on with what they wish to do, without doing harm to others, and understand fully the harm that they are doing to themselves.

This is a good resolution and, obviously, in Ireland, where we are well advanced in this legislation, we are fully supportive.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė (PPE). – (LT) Here in the European Parliament, we often discuss human rights. According to a *Eurobarometer* survey, 70% of European Union citizens do not smoke and the majority would like smoking to be banned in public places. There could be some discussion about whether this might discriminate against smokers. However, I believe that given the recognised damage to health that smoking can cause, we cannot risk people's health. Of course, when talking about a smoking ban on an EU scale, we must not forget the principle of subsidiarity and we must allow the Member States themselves to decide how they will defend and protect their citizens. In Lithuania, for example, as our Irish colleagues have already mentioned, we have the Law on Tobacco Control which is one of the most progressive when compared at EU level. Of course, there is still more to achieve. In Lithuania, tobacco consumption is banned in public institutions, in workplaces, in enclosed areas, in all eating establishments and on public transport. In Lithuania, the Law on Tobacco Control was accepted quite willingly and in truth, even smokers themselves admit that they are now smoking less or, in some cases, have even stopped altogether. Of course, Lithuania, like other EU Member States, must devote somewhat more attention to the problem of under-age smoking. I believe that we are all interested in having a clean and healthy environment, especially for our children. Therefore, the good examples set by states banning smoking in public spaces should encourage and inspire those states that are more sceptical in this area to defend the rights of non-smokers and they should encourage EU institutions – having heeded the opinion of the European Parliament – to find ways of adopting legislation of an obligatory nature.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Madam President, firstly I would like to compliment Mrs Estrela on her initiative. I agree with the points that she made.

In Ireland, I have also seen the transformation in attitudes to smoking and I have seen a transformation in the habits of Irish smokers. I was President of the Gaelic Athletic Association, which is Ireland's largest sporting body. We introduced a ban in our biggest stadium, which can hold 82 500 people. People resisted it but now they accept it. There is a complete change. I have no problem with people smoking but it affects others and that is the problem. Passive smoking has basically been eliminated in Ireland and adults have also cut back on smoking. Many have given it up and also – and more importantly – young people are less inclined to smoke now than they were before.

The final point I would make is that, even in terms of their clothes, people find that there is no longer a smell. When you go abroad and go into restaurants, and if you smell smoke, you are inclined to leave, and it is the same for hotel rooms. It is a good initiative and, the sooner it is introduced, the better for everybody. They will not regret it, I can guarantee that.

Chris Davies (ALDE). – Madam President, people have the right to smoke but I bow to no one in saying that others should not have to breathe in the smoke at the workplace or any establishment that is breathed out by others.

Personally I hate the stuff – just loathe the stuff – and I welcome the ban that has been introduced in my country. But I do not think the decision should be taken at European level. I do not think we should be calling for binding legislation to apply to every Member State. I am a federalist but I am not a centralist. Decisions should be taken at the lowest practical level and, in this case, that is the Member State, or indeed the regional government, as in Scotland, the first area of my country to go smoke-free.

It is so easy to disregard the principle of subsidiarity when we think we are doing good. In this case, I think we are trying to do good, but with the Lisbon Treaty now adopted, we should be bending over backwards to respect that principle.

Anja Weisgerber (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, we need clear and practical rules for the protection of non-smokers to be introduced throughout Europe. However, in my opinion ‘throughout Europe’ does not necessarily mean ‘from Europe’. Many Member States already have in place legislation to protect non-smokers and others are in the process of introducing laws of this kind.

Why are some of my fellow Members now saying that we in Brussels can do this much better than the Member States, regardless of the fact that the European Union has no authority on health policy and that we have to implement this via the circuitous route of health and safety at work? In my opinion, the Member States should decide which regulations to put in place to protect non-smokers. This makes sense, because they are closer to the local problems and issues. I do not understand why Brussels should impose protection for non-smokers in Lapland and in Andalusia which is identical in every detail. What has happened to the cross-border implications? We in Brussels have come up against our limits in this respect.

For me, protecting children and young people is particularly important. We need comprehensive protection in this area. If we introduce protection for non-smokers on a European level via health and safety at work, we are not protecting children and young people, because they are not employees. Therefore, I would ask you to support Amendments 2 and 13 put forward by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats).

Åsa Torstensson, President-in-Office of the Council. – (SV) Madam President, my thanks to the honourable Members for this important debate. It is extremely positive that we are all so committed to succeeding in achieving smoke-free environments. I believe that we have many points of view in common. As I said earlier, I regret the fact that the European Parliament has not been able to submit its opinion in time, but the Presidency will take account of Parliament's resolution.

With regard to smoking in the workplace, the Commission has initiated a round of consultation with the social partners at EU level. They have been asked to give their opinion of the current legislation and any future legislative initiatives in this area. The proposal for a recommendation states that it is particularly dangerous for children and young people to be exposed to second-hand smoke and that this could increase the likelihood of their taking up smoking.

The proposal for a recommendation on smoke-free environments invites the Commission to report on the implementation, the functioning and the impacts of the proposed measures, on the basis of the information provided by Member States. The Commission's report will also provide an appropriate opportunity to return to this issue.

The issue of tobacco control will have a prominent place on the agenda over the next year as well. We will then begin preparations for the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The conference will be held in Punta del Este in Uruguay on 15-20 November 2010. I am sure that at that time the Council will want to discuss this issue with the European Parliament once again.

President. – I have received one motion for a resolution⁽⁴⁾ tabled in accordance with Rule 115(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow (Thursday, 26 November 2009).

Written statements (Rule 149)

⁽⁴⁾ See Minutes

Martin Kastler (PPE), *in writing*. – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, it is often the case that good intentions cause problems. No one here would question the fact that non-smokers need comprehensive protection. However, the compromise motion for a resolution on smoke-free environments on which we will be voting on Thursday goes far beyond the protection of non-smokers. Even though the current draft explicitly supports the principle of subsidiarity, it also undermines it. The motion calls for strict and legally binding regulations at EU level. It abuses valid concern for health protection in an attempt to transfer invalid authority in the field of health policy and of work and social issues to a European level. We all want a Europe which is close to its people and the principle of subsidiarity is the key to this. The Member States or, in the case of Germany, the federal states, must have their own discussions on the protection of non-smokers. This is the only way to identify solutions which suit each country's traditions and culture and are therefore close to its people. For these reasons, I would ask you to vote against the motion for a resolution in its current form on Thursday.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) I am a non-smoker myself. I am fully aware of the damage to health caused by using tobacco and by passive smoking. However, as is so often the case, these plans from the EU go a step too far. Some of these regulations are completely absurd and, in some cases, do not even permit smoking in the open air. The EU is focusing obsessively on the consumption of tobacco, while there are a number of other activities in daily life which have been statistically proven to be hazardous and harmful, such as fast food, sun beds, alcohol and coffee, driving a car, taking no exercise and having too little sleep, to name but a few. I would welcome sensible regulations and awareness campaigns which aim to minimise the risks involved. However, all adults should ultimately be responsible for making their own decisions about the extent to which they are prepared to accept the resulting damage to their health. A total ban on smoking in businesses is planned for 2012 and this gives very little consideration to those businesses that will suffer most, in other words, those in the catering industry. They can expect a drop in their takings of up to 20% which will result in the loss of numerous jobs. In addition, in recent years, restaurants and bars were required by law to set up smoking and non-smoking areas on their premises. A total smoking ban in 2012 would make these expensive investments obsolete at a stroke. The draft Council Recommendation on smoke-free environments is not a sensible measure.

Richard Seeber (PPE), *in writing*. – (DE) The Member States in particular have some catching up to do when it comes to the protection of non-smokers. Our central concern must be to protect vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant women. However, the European Union has no direct authority in this area. Health care is, and remains, a matter for the Member States and the countries must take on responsibility for these issues. The EU should therefore focus on what it can do to protect non-smokers, which means protecting employees in the workplace. However, attempting to achieve the fundamental aim of making Europe smoke-free by introducing a large number of regulations to protect workers is not a satisfactory solution to the problem. In order to protect as many sections of the population as possible and, in particular, children from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke, we need more campaigns to raise public awareness. This is the only effective means of changing the way in which people in Europe think in the long term and this is the only solution to reducing smoking in the private sphere.

(The sitting was suspended at 19.30 and resumed at 21.00)

IN THE CHAIR: MRS KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU

Vice-President

16. Composition of committees and delegations: see Minutes

17. The ratification and implementation of the updated ILO conventions (debate)

President. – The next item is the oral question to the Commission on the ratification and implementation of the updated ILO conventions by Alejandro Cercas, on behalf of the S&D Group, Marian Harkin, on behalf of the ALDE Group, Jean Lambert, on behalf of the VERTS/ALE Group, and Gabriele Zimmer and Ilda Figueiredo, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group (O-0131/2009 – B7-0228/2009).

Alejandro Cercas, author. – (ES) Madam President, fellow Members, Members of the Commission, we all know that economic globalisation, the international financial crisis and all future challenges must be addressed at the global level. We can no longer tackle these problems at the national or even regional levels. Cooperation

between the European Union and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has therefore become a key item on our agenda.

The ILO, with its tripartite method, is doing invaluable work in bringing coherence and rationality to our world. Our values are those on which the ILO was founded. It and we are working towards a social model that respects people's dignity, and we believe that we can work together. It is clear that Europe needs the ILO in order to maintain that social model – we could not do so in an unjust world – and that the ILO gives us the opportunity to be a global player in international relations.

The European Union and its Member States claim that they are working very closely with the ILO and that they are promoting the programme on decent work for all and the Global Jobs Pact, with the ILO at the helm. However, ladies and gentlemen of the Commission, there is a lack of consistency between what we all say and what we do. It is therefore absolutely crucial this evening to discuss ratification of the ILO conventions, and tomorrow to approve a resolution on the issue, in order to offer certain guarantees to the ILO and also to our own project.

In your Communication on a Renewed Social Agenda, you called upon Member States once again, but the Member States did not respond. You called on them to ratify and implement the conventions, but with little success. It now seems that you must take much more ambitious action. There is no point in saying that Member States have already ratified the core ILO conventions. The ILO has updated 70 of its conventions, and even some third-world countries and developing economies are moving faster than the European Union. This is hard for the rest of the world to understand, and Europe is losing credibility and missing opportunities.

Therefore, ladies and gentlemen of the Commission, it is somewhat scandalous for Europe to speak out in favour of decent work and in favour of the ILO, and then not ratify the ILO conventions and simply content ourselves with rhetoric.

This is where the question arises. And so, tomorrow, all the groups in this Chamber want you to go further and issue a communication demanding that Member States should ratify the conventions, in order to create coherence between what we say and what we do. The lack of such coherence in politics is one of the reasons why we are losing credibility among the citizens and why Europe, too, is losing credibility in the rest of the world.

Marian Harkin, *author*. – Madam President, I am very happy to support the call for the ratification and implementation of the updated ILO conventions by the EU Member States. It is certainly worth saying that, when the ILO was created in 1919 after the Treaty of Versailles, which ended the First World War, it was to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can only be accomplished if it is based on social justice. In the intervening 80 years, the ILO has responded to the needs of people all around the globe for decent jobs, livelihoods and dignity.

Tonight we are asking all Member States of the EU to ratify and implement the updated ILO conventions; but it is not just the authors of this question who are asking – many other agencies and bodies are also. If you look at the United Nations Supplier Code of Conduct, you will see that the ILO conventions have served as a foundation on which most of the Code of Conduct is based, and it is the UN's expectation that any supplier providing goods and services to the UN will adhere to the principles of the Code of Conduct. Therefore these conventions need to be ratified and implemented across the globe so that all suppliers can adhere to them. Surely we can manage that in the EU.

The European Commission, in its communication on the renewed social agenda, states: 'The Commission calls upon all Member States to set an example by ratifying and implementing the ILO conventions that are up to date'. In a resolution on the renewed Social Agenda approved by the last European Parliament in May of this year, again we state that we consider that strengthening of the implementation and enforcement of existing labour law under national and community law and under ILO conventions must be a priority for EU institutions and Member States. So, tonight, we in Parliament are reinforcing all of those calls. We are asking the Presidency-in-Office to be as ambitious as possible on the matter, we are calling on Member States to consider the strong social arguments for ratifying and implementing these conventions, and we are asking the Commission to consider the adoption of a recommendation to the Member States to encourage the ratification of conventions that are up to date.

We also believe that the EU must ensure coherence between its internal and external policies. In this Parliament we hear again and again about exchanging best practice between Member States. Surely this is a prime example of where we can achieve best practice among ourselves by all Member States ratifying the relevant

conventions and promote best practice externally or globally by, as the Commission itself suggests, setting an example by ratifying the up-to-date conventions. Today, 25 November, 7 650 ILO conventions have been ratified globally, with 47 in the last 12 months. We expect Europe to lead the way on climate change in Copenhagen; we could do similar good work with the ratification of all ILO conventions.

Emilie Turunen (*on behalf of Jean Lambert*). – (DA) Madam President, on behalf of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, I would like to emphasise that we consider the messages in this decision on the ratification and implementation of the ILO's conventions to be very necessary and a matter of great urgency. Why? For two reasons. Firstly, the EU should take the lead in fighting for decent work. We should be a global pioneer when it comes to promoting good working conditions and decent work.

Secondly, as has been mentioned here today, a gap is opening up between what we say and what we do, in other words, a gap between the EU's internal and external responses. If the EU forgets or if EU Member States forget or choose not to ratify and implement updated conventions, that is not only bad for the workers of Europe. It is also a very bad signal to send to countries outside the EU that we are demanding should ratify the very same conventions. We should practise what we preach.

It is crucial that the EU takes the lead at a global level, that we show that we are a region that succeeds in combining good working conditions with a high level of competitiveness. The ILO is our global player when it comes to regulation at international level. It is essential that the EU supports the ILO as an institution and that we take the ILO's conventions seriously. Consequently, the Group of the Greens fully endorses the messages in this decision and we call upon the competent bodies of the EU to impress upon the Member States that they should take it just as seriously as we are doing here this evening.

Ilda Figueiredo, *author*. – (PT) Madam President, we support the call on the Member States to consider the strong social arguments for ratifying and implementing the Conventions that have been classified by the ILO as up to date.

Since 1919, the International Labour Organisation has maintained and developed a system of international labour standards which cover a broad range of subjects, including work, employment, social security, social policy and related human rights.

We therefore supported the initial draft of the joint resolution tabled here. Regrettably, however, due to pressure from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), the other signatories have allowed the importance of the resolution to be diluted and its power to be undermined, with the inclusion of a reference to the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

However, as we are all aware, it was in the name of the Lisbon Strategy that the European Commission presented to this House some of the worst proposals against labour and social rights, through their emphasis on flexibility and labour deregulation.

Who could forget the proposal to amend the Working Time Directive, which sought to devalue work and make it even more precarious, to extend the working day and to undermine collective bargaining and the role of trade unions, precisely the opposite of what the ILO conventions uphold?

It is because of this regrettable reference to the Lisbon Strategy in particular that we have withdrawn our support for this resolution.

However, on behalf of the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left, we call on the Member States to ratify the ILO conventions and we urge the European Commission to consider our proposals.

Karel De Gucht, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, over the last few years, the Commission has repeatedly highlighted its commitment to the internationally agreed Decent Work Agenda, including the promotion of ILO conventions.

The Commission has actively supported the Member States and closely cooperated with the ILO with a view to adopting ambitious legal standards which meet the challenges of a globalised economy and contribute to the implementation of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. The Council and the European Parliament have underlined the importance of the Decent Work Agenda and of the Commission's activities in this respect.

The EU Member States have already ratified all ILO conventions covering core labour standards and a large number of other ILO conventions. The Commission has reaffirmed its commitment to the Decent Work

Agenda as part of the renewed social agenda. In particular, the Commission called upon all Member States to set an example by ratifying and implementing the ILO conventions classified by the ILO as 'up to date'. In doing so, the Commission underlines both the internal and the external dimension of the Decent Work Agenda. In addition, where ILO conventions have involved exclusive Community competences, the Commission has issued timely proposals for Council Decisions authorising the Member States to ratify the relevant conventions combined with a call to ratify the standards as soon as possible, notably the Maritime Labour Convention and the Work in Fishing Convention.

Finally, the 2008 Decent Work Report provides for the monitoring of the policy developments with regard to the ratification process. The outcome of this analysis is expected to be reflected in the follow-up Decent Work Report to be published in 2011.

Csaba Óry, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (HU) First of all, I would like to welcome the fact that the groups have managed to agree on the text of the resolution to be drafted on the subject of ratification and implementation of the conventions revised by the International Labour Organisation. We will therefore also support this.

As is well known, the International Labour Organisation is one of the oldest international bodies. It was founded in 1919 with the fundamental aim of creating work regulations governing the development of working conditions and difficult working environments to counter exploitation. It subsequently expanded its activities more widely to include social policy and a technical cooperation system as well.

We in the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) feel that the work standards devised by the International Labour Organisation help mitigate the harmful effects of competition on the international market, thereby increasing the chances of balanced economic growth being achieved. This has particular significance at a time when we are perhaps already emerging from the current crisis, and certainly reinforces the legitimacy of these standards and the fact that they have come about at the end of a tripartite process and were based on a separate democratic process conducted with the cooperation of governments, employers and trade unions. We are therefore dealing in this case with rights and commitments at the workplace and a comprehensive system encompassing them, which the countries who accept and ratify the conventions must comply with. At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that the European Union, as a community, cannot ratify agreements. Only individual Member States can do this. This therefore raises the issue, at any rate, of the proper application of Community jurisdiction and subsidiarity. This is why the text features, very appropriately, a call to the EU to define exactly which legal areas and regulations relating to them come under the Community's jurisdiction and which come under individual Member States' jurisdiction. This means that if we can take into account the principle of subsidiarity, we will support the drafting of a recommendation, thereby facilitating the ratification of the convention as soon as possible.

Ole Christensen, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (DA) Madam President, we have an internal market in the EU in which we are able to sell goods to each other in a free market. We ensure free competition and cheap goods, and that is all very well and good. However, other areas need to be included. Fundamental workers' rights must be ensured and respected throughout the EU. EU Member States must not compete on poor working conditions, and the workforce in all the Member States must secure equal pay for equal work. The right to strike is also a fundamental right.

It is therefore important that there is close cooperation between the EU and the International Labour Organisation, the ILO. We share some common values and we can use the ILO conventions as a basis for developing the European social model further. Unfortunately that is not possible at present, since the Commission only considers the conventions binding if they have been ratified by more than half the Member States. We could start by ensuring that every EU Member State as a minimum ratifies and implements the conventions that the ILO has classified as updated. We do not need more talk; what we need is action. How else can we ask other countries of the world to ratify and implement the ILO conventions and ask the WTO to include fundamental workers' rights in all trade agreements?

The EU must take the lead. Only then can we tell other countries that they must all ratify and implement these conventions. We must promote decent work in the EU and in the world as a sustainable, strong response to the global crisis we are facing.

Elisabeth Schroedter, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Madam President, it is true, ladies and gentlemen, that in times of crisis, worldwide minimum standards protect workers from inhumane working conditions. The EU always supports the core standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in

soapbox speeches and in its contacts with third countries and rightly so, because they protect workers against discrimination and social dumping.

Unfortunately, within the European Union things do not go any further than these soapbox speeches. The Member States of the EU and the EU itself ignore the ILO conventions. They do not ratify them and they do not implement them. This allows the Member States and the EU to shirk their responsibilities. For example, the Court of Justice of the European Union has abolished the right to strike and the Commission has applauded the move. For example, the convention on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers has been ratified by only three out of the 27 Member States. This is scandalous and this situation needs to change 90 years after the founding of the ILO.

Elisabeth Morin-Chartier (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to thank my colleagues in the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and the other political groups of our European Parliament, because on this matter of decent work, we all wanted to toe the same line and submit a joint resolution, and the negotiations of the last few days have been extremely positive.

Since 1919, the International Labour Organisation has been able to guarantee and develop a system of international labour standards covering a wide range of issues, including work, employment, social policy and human rights. We must not forget this, particularly at this time of crisis.

That is why it is extremely important that the conventions have been classified by the ILO as up to date after a tripartite process bringing together employers, workers and governments. That is the reason why we have put this recommendation to the Member States, encouraging them to ratify the conventions that have been classified by the ILO and asking them to contribute actively to their effective implementation for the sake of the development and progress of social Europe. We hope that this will happen as soon as possible. We will be vigilant regarding the deadlines for applying these conventions while, of course, respecting the principle of subsidiarity.

The PPE Group will be particularly vigilant regarding the application of these conventions in the Member States. The fight against illegal work, the modernity of social progress, the building of a genuine social Europe that shows the world the way, is what is at stake, and we really want to help move it forward.

Sylvana Rapti (S&D). – (EL) Madam President, one of the most important attributes of the European Union is the importance that it ascribes to social policy and fundamental rights. We know full well that the application of these rights is a prerequisite to becoming a Member State of the European Union. We also know that these rights, when they are infringed, create an obligation on the part of the European Union to impose sanctions.

The rights established alongside the creation and operation of the Union also extend to the workplace. The importance which the Union ascribes to defending labour rights is not only demonstrated when it produces internal legislation, but it is also demonstrated in its foreign policy. We know full well that, when it comes to concluding agreements with third countries, one of the preconditions laid down is that basic labour rights be respected. That is why the Union could not but be one of the first to support the necessary systematic update of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions.

The ILO recently updated its conventions following negotiations with workers, employers and governments. While the governments of the Member States and the Union are among those who participated in the update in question, we face a paradox. The paradox is that, although many Member States of the European Union have adopted unifying directives imposing more advanced labour rights than those in the ILO conventions, they underestimate the importance of the formal question of ratification of these conventions at national level.

As the image that this gives third countries, especially developing countries, is distorted, it would be reasonable for us to change our attitude and for those Member States which have not done so to proceed with the necessary ratifications. Be that as it may, the European Commission should not hesitate to be more proactive in asking the Member States to honour such obligations, so as to increase the credibility of the Union by promoting dignified working conditions, especially in the present financial crisis.

Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL). – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, clearly we must emphasise the importance of implementing the conventions of the International Labour Organisation, but unfortunately, I fear that the system that governs us, namely that of free competition, is making a market and therefore a

commodity out of labour itself. That creates threats everywhere to labour codes, threats to the reductions in working time that were planned, and downward pressure on the cost of labour, which is very damaging.

In France, we have an example where a ball bearing business has now closed so that it can be relocated to Bulgaria, and the workers of that business are being asked to go and train the Bulgarian employees. So you can see clearly that this downward pressure on labour costs leads to relocations, to downward pressure and to the decline of social rights everywhere. Consequently, we should invent a system of upwards harmonisation in terms of social rights and levels of social protection, so that there is no more of this fierce competition between employees, engineered by businesses and our institutions themselves.

Similarly, we should not continue moving towards what is referred to in this Chamber and at the Commission as flexicurity, but we should, on the contrary, progress towards a system of occupational social security for work and employment, combined with periods of training, which are necessary. That is what would allow us to exit the crisis, to train workers to help them move towards the professions that have to be invented for tomorrow.

Olle Ludvigsson (S&D). – (SV) Madam President, now that the Treaty of Lisbon has been adopted and the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights has become legally binding, we have a new opportunity to reinforce the social dimension of European cooperation. In order to do this, we need to be able to realise these opportunities in practice, too. A good place to start would be for the EU Member States to ratify all of the updated ILO conventions as soon as possible.

There is also an external dimension to this. If the EU wants to be a serious partner in the international work to improve working and living conditions, it is imperative that the EU Member States also adopt the ILO convention. If we want to influence the situation in third countries, we must first set an example ourselves. I would therefore like to call on the Commission and the Swedish Presidency to act in a progressive way and to do their utmost to ensure that all of the ILO conventions that are up to date be adopted by all Member States.

Personally, I think it is a little disheartening that my own Member State, Sweden, has not ratified basic conventions such as Convention No 94 on public contracts. I would therefore like to call on the Presidency to take action at national level, too, to ensure that this happens. This, together with the Charter of Fundamental Rights becoming binding, should reduce the risk of the European Court of Justice making any more rulings like that in the Rüffert case. We cannot have a situation in which we have EU legislation that contravenes basic ILO conventions.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Madam President, the ILO, as colleagues have said, has been around for a long time – since 1919: 90 years of business and still working on the Decent Work Agenda. It is important that Member States, as others have said, ratify all of the conventions, especially at a time of economic crisis when workers are under pressure. But I think it is also important in this debate to acknowledge the role of the ILO in the developing world and its links with non-governmental organisations and the many programmes which it runs particularly targeting the most vulnerable, for example, working with people with a disability who would never have any opportunity if it were not for these programmes. Also, two very important areas that we talk about in this House: forced labour and child labour. So if we are looking to the ILO to do good work, as it does, in the developing world, I think the very least that Member States of the European Union could do is to fully ratify the conventions, to lead by example.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, over the many years of its activity, the International Labour Organisation has adopted and presented for ratification by EU Member States a series of international conventions and directives on matters of employment, trade union freedoms, social policy and social insurance, and also collective employment relations and conditions of work. Member States should ratify and apply conventions which the ILO considers to be currently in force. The European Union should resolutely and actively make its contribution to the extremely important matter of protection of the rights of working people in a globalised world.

It should be stressed that every citizen, irrespective of background, faith or race, has the right to improve material prosperity, to spiritual development in the context of freedom, and to dignity, economic security and equal opportunities. We must remember that poverty, irrespective of where it is found, is a serious threat to us all.

Karel De Gucht, Member of the Commission. – (FR) Madam President, honourable Members, there is a significant convergence of opinion on the usefulness of and need for the ratification of the ILO conventions

among speakers from the European Parliament and the Commission. Nevertheless, as Mr Óry observed, the Commission can only impose itself in areas where it has exclusive competence and, as I have said, it has done this.

As far as the role of unions is concerned, in its recent decision, the European Court of Justice recognises collective action as a fundamental right. However, this right can be regulated, and this complies with other international instruments. I will nevertheless pass on your concerns to my colleague in charge of social policy so that this matter can be followed up in depth.

President. – I have received three motions for resolution⁽⁵⁾ tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 26 November 2009.

18. FAO World Summit on Food Security - Eradicating hunger from the face of the earth (debate)

President. – The next item is the Commission statement on the FAO World Summit on Food Security – Eradicating hunger from the face of the earth.

Karel De Gucht, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, the World Food Summit last week in Rome is the latest in a series of high-level events organised this year where food security and agriculture have featured prominently: in January in Madrid, in July in L'Aquila, in September in New York and Pittsburgh, as well as at the meeting of the Committee on World Food Security last month.

The underlying premise of all these events has been the realisation that we are failing in the fight against world hunger. Over one billion people in the world presently do not meet their daily basic nutritional needs, and the situation is threatening to get worse in many developing countries, owing also to the effects of climate change, which is posing additional challenges to these countries' capacity to become food secure.

The World Summit on Food Security represented an opportunity to sustain the political momentum that has been building up in past months. Once more, world food security has been in the spotlight. However, the time for discussion is over; now it is time to deliver.

For the European Commission, the summit was a useful event for three reasons. First, there was the pledge to renew our efforts to achieve the first Millennium Development Goal of halving hunger by 2015. In my view, that target is still valid, and we should strive to reach it – particularly in those countries and regions where progress towards its achievement has been very limited, for example, in Africa.

Second, the promise to improve international coordination and the governance of food security through a reformed Committee on World Food Security, which would become a central component of the global partnership for agriculture, food security and nutrition. The European Commission has actively encouraged this reform and is assisting in providing core funding for it. This is, in my view, a very important step, which will pave the way for a global governance system of food security based on sound scientific advice but one also more open to key actors in the public and private sector and non-governmental organisations. These actors are crucial to making the new system more effective than the current one.

Third, the promise to reverse the downward trend in domestic and international funding for agriculture, food security and rural development. If we want to meet the first Millennium Development Goal of halving hunger by 2015, the commitments taken to increase ODA must be fulfilled – in particular by those countries which have committed themselves to reaching the target of 0.7% of gross national income.

Some have criticised the final declaration for not setting more precise official development assistance targets for agriculture and food security, but we must recall that significant financial pledges had already been made at the G8 Summit in L'Aquila. The priority now is to honour them. With strong support from the European Parliament, the Commission has successfully mobilised the EUR 1 billion food facility, of which 85% is already committed for the period 2009-2011. However, we need more and sustained assistance over time.

⁽⁵⁾ See Minutes

In order to be accountable for our pledges, we need a global pecking system of commitments, but we also have to develop monitoring mechanisms, specific indicators and benchmarks which can be used to report on the outcomes and impacts of investments. However – and let me say this loud and clear – even the most substantial commitment by donors will be worthless if governments in developing countries fail to translate their own commitments into better agricultural policies, strategies and investments.

In discussing food security, we should also be careful about terminology, and distinguish food security from food sovereignty and food self-sufficiency. Efforts to achieve production around the world are not enough in their own right. What counts is that people should have sustained access to food, which is basically a poverty question. Food trade – regional as well as global – plays an important part in enhancing access to food by providing farmers with an income and by allowing consumers access to cheaper food. Self-sufficiency in food or autarchy could be a very costly strategy and will not be necessary when markets and trade work well.

Therefore, concluding the Doha Round with a balanced and comprehensive outcome would be a major step ahead. We should also not forget that global food security is a very complex and multifaceted problem which requires a holistic approach. In this area, the European Union has made enormous progress in the past decade and progress will continue to be ensured through the Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) process. The various reforms of the EU common agricultural policy have strongly reduced export refunds and the vast majority of support for farmers in the EU is recognised as being ‘non-trade distorting’ by the WTO. Moreover, with the Everything But Arms arrangement, market access to the EU is free for the least developed countries, and the provisions of the economic partnership agreements (EPAs) show an understanding of problems faced by many of the ACP countries in guaranteeing food security to their citizens. We have therefore come a very long way in the EU, in enhancing policy coherence for development and thereby creating improved food security conditions for developing countries. Other countries and regions should do the same.

To conclude, the FAO Summit has underscored that if we want to keep to our objective of halving hunger by 2015, then we should step up ODA and increase ODA and private investments in agriculture and we should improve global governance of the agricultural sector.

Albert Deß, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, it is important for us in the European Parliament to discuss the subject of hunger in the world. We cannot simply sit silently by while the number of people suffering from hunger, which includes many children, increases.

I was first elected to a parliament 20 years ago and I can still remember well how international organisations such as the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, the United Nations itself and the World Trade Organisation stated their intention of halving hunger in the world within the next 20 years. What has happened since then? Hunger has not been halved, it has increased. More than 1 billion people suffer from hunger every day. The opposite of what these organisations intended has occurred.

There is a wide range of different causes for this. There are countries such as Zimbabwe where an incompetent government has transformed the bread basket of Africa into a famine region. A communist president has brought this rich country to a position where people are suffering from hunger and we say nothing. However, we share the responsibility for this. We spend weeks, if not years, talking about the climate in one hundred years’ time. The people who are suffering from hunger today and tomorrow are not interested in the climate in one hundred years. They want something to eat tomorrow, but we have no answers to their problems. Without wanting to neglect the issues of the future, it is a question of simple humanity to concern ourselves with people who are suffering from hunger today. Mr de Gucht, when we say that we intend to halve hunger by 2050, I find this almost insulting. As a world community, it must be possible for us to reduce the number of people who do not have enough to eat much more quickly. We can transport weapons to every corner of the world, but apparently we are not able to do this with food. This is a failure of the world community, which I would like to denounce. We must find other answers than the ones which we have come up with today.

Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (PT) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the figures illustrating hunger and malnutrition in the world, which we are all aware of and see tritely repeated, are so tragic that it is almost obscene to mention them.

The right to food is associated with the most sacred right of all: the right to life, meaning a life with a minimum of decency and not merely a fight for survival.

Fighting hunger in the world should therefore be the number one priority of all political agendas and all resources should be mobilised to achieve this objective.

Unfortunately, we are all also aware that resources, including financial resources, are not always the main limitation. The problem nearly always lies in the management and use of resources and in the lack of judicious governance and effective coordination at global, regional and national level.

The motion for a resolution that was tabled here today – and to which my political group, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, subscribes – contains proposals and recommendations that, were they to be followed, could certainly help significantly to mitigate such a serious problem. I therefore urge the Commission to give it the attention it deserves and, based on it, to present legislative proposals and adopt procedures to put them into practice.

The difficult and uncertain political situation that we are experiencing is also a time of change for those policies that are the best tools for the European Union to use on this issue: the common agricultural policy and the common fisheries policy, which we are about to reform radically.

With the new powers given to us by the Treaty of Lisbon, this is also a perfect opportunity for Parliament to go beyond mere proclamations and to take real action. The European Socialists are ready for this challenge. We hope that the new Commission and other political groups are prepared to accompany us on this mission.

George Lyon, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Madam President, I would like to thank my colleagues who have already contributed.

The first point I would like to make is that I think the recent spike in world food prices serves as a wake-up call to all of us. The doubling of grain and rice prices has had a disproportionate impact on some of the poorest people in developing countries around the world. Indeed, it is estimated that an extra 75 million people around the world went hungry as a direct result of the higher food prices in 2007 and 2008. That is something we have to take very, very seriously. Indeed, in many countries, we have seen food riots and political instability as a result of the spike in food prices.

With world population predicted to rise to over nine billion and climate change predicted to have a major impact on our ability to feed ourselves, food security is, I would argue, a major issue that we must confront and address and find solutions to. The European Union must do all it can to help developing countries to develop sustainable farming and food production systems that enable them to feed themselves. That requires finance – as the Commissioner outlined in his statement – and it requires open markets. Here, there is a recognition that Europe has gone a long way to assist in opening up and liberalising markets. But also many of the problems that developing countries face result from a failure of politics and a failure of the legal system. No amount of help will actually correct that problem until you have got a stable political system and a stable legal system that allows farmers to flourish and to reap the benefits of higher market prices.

It is estimated that EU production will have to rise by over 70% just to meet rising demand in the future. I would argue that European agriculture has a major role to play, not only ensuring that we are self-sufficient here, but also ensuring that we can contribute to global food security in the future.

José Bové, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, the fight against hunger demands a substantial political and financial investment. The Food and Agricultural Organisation was unable to generate that investment last week in Rome, and I regret that.

More than a billion people suffer from malnutrition and 40 million men, women and children die of hunger each year. These dramatic figures have risen since 1996, the year of the first World Food Summit. The global financial and economic crisis has aggravated the situation, and the populations of the countries of the South are the main victims. Ten per cent of the advertising budget worldwide would allow developing countries to be given the necessary support to safeguard their agricultural infrastructure.

The food crisis is one of the main threats hanging over peace and stability in the world. In 2050, small farmers will have to feed more than 9 billion people. Soil damage, damage to biodiversity, oil dependency, greenhouse gas emissions, groundwater depletion and the development of consumption patterns put us in a very fragile situation, more fragile than 40 years ago.

Poverty and dependence on imports are the main cause of food insecurity. The need to support local production is obvious. At the end of the 1950s, Europe introduced the common agricultural policy in order to produce the food it needed. To do this it protected its internal market and supported its consumers. This

autonomous choice, this right to food sovereignty, must now be accessible to all the countries or groups of countries throughout the world that want it.

James Nicholson, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Madam President, our resolutions on this issue address the dual challenges of eradicating hunger – which currently affects one sixth of the world's population – and securing a food supply for the future.

We are facing a situation whereby, on one hand, the world's population is growing, while, on the other, food production is proving to be an ever more challenging endeavour owing to the negative effects of climate change and rising costs associated with food production.

While the agricultural element of food security is undoubtedly key to solving this problem, we should also firmly focus on how good governance in developing countries is absolutely necessary if we are to have any chance of successfully tackling world hunger. Take Zimbabwe, for example, which Mr Deß has already referred to. It was once known as the bread basket of Africa, and was once able to feed itself and many neighbouring countries. Now it is unable to do so, after being destroyed by the actions of Robert Mugabe and his henchmen.

We have all got to work together to overcome this problem and prevent the civil unrest and misery that could arise from it.

Patrick Le Hyaric, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, if the European Union wants to play a positive role in the world, if it wants to bring to life a new humanism, it should really listen to the deafening cry of hunger resounding across the planet.

Here and elsewhere we continue to make our fine speeches. Honestly, though, can we, here, have a clear conscience when a child is dying of hunger every five seconds? It is not because there are technical problems that children are dying. It is the result of this wave of ultra-liberalism flooding the world today.

Until now, we worked the land to feed people. Today, the capitalist system has turned soil and food into commodities, into objects of global speculation. That is why we must radically change policy, support the Food and Agriculture Organisation and give it the means to act.

We need action, as you have said Commissioner, and we demand action. However, to ensure that action takes place, the European Union could enforce the principle of food sovereignty for all peoples, could help implement farm work remuneration systems with guaranteed prices for every country and every continent, could respect and enforce the commitments to grant official development assistance to the countries of the South, could cancel the debt of poor countries, could stop the purchase of land by multinationals and hedge funds, and could recognise that agriculture and food cannot be part of the hard bargaining of the World Trade Organisation.

We must hear the cry of famine and act accordingly. That would make Europe grow in stature, and it is urgent!

Bastiaan Belder, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (NL) In the ten years or so that I have been a member of the European Parliament, I have regularly heard fine words being used in this House. In the run-up to the World Food Summit in Rome, Mr Barroso, President of the Commission, also used fine words. He said: 'We have collectively failed in the fight against famine. That is a moral scandal and a huge stain on our collective conscience.' End of quote. And he was absolutely right. Which makes the outcome of the summit all the more disappointing. I have a sneaking feeling that what took centre stage in Rome was the political interests of the wealthy countries, rather than the interests of the one billion hungry people in the world. To give you a concrete illustration, I will use two examples: as is increasingly being recognised, the biofuel policy and its promotion are causing price increases and, thus, more famine. However, it seems to be taboo to express any criticism of this policy.

Also, I have, on many previous occasions, already drawn this House's attention to the danger of encouraging third countries to make large investments in Africa, with a view to ensuring their own food security, for example. How can countries where millions of people are dependent on UN food aid be expected to export to third countries? Yet, there is no mention of this in the final declaration.

It is very easy for wealthy countries to deal with controversial topics by simply making well-intentioned, impassioned pleas and commissioning further studies. Another thing I take from the declaration is that

developing countries will have to rely primarily on their own resources. In the light of the international community's failure so far to eradicate hunger, I would call this nothing short of shameful.

Apart from that, I have also spent some time going through the final declarations of previous world food summits and come to the conclusion that they share a surprising number of similarities – with each other and with the resolution of this Parliament, for that matter. They all talk of urgency and invariably call for the implementation of promises made in the past. However, should not the repetition of all those calls be a warning signal to us? To quote Mr De Schutte, the UN rapporteur, 'poor people do not need promises'. As has often been said before, food security ought to be a human right. Madam President, I wish to approach this from a different angle and say that the Bible teaches us that it is one of God's commandments that we should feed the hungry. That is my personal duty and our collective responsibility.

Dimitar Stoyanov (NI). – (BG) I personally attended the FAO meeting in Rome. I saw with my own eyes what this conference was like. I think that we also need to drop the hypocrisy slightly which has affected us because, given the money spent on organising a conference like this, where the outcome is usually only a long series of promises, perhaps we need to use this expenditure in practical terms to calculate, as the speakers before me have said, exactly how many children need not have died today of hunger if these funds had not been spent just on happy stories. However, the Commissioner said that the problem was to do with the global production of food, but before we start to remove the speck from our brother's eye, let us first see the beam in our own.

My country Bulgaria has, based on scientific proof, the most fertile soil in the European Union. One hundred and fifty years ago, Bulgarian farmers were able to feed the most densely populated regions of the Ottoman Empire in Asia Minor using 19th century technology. However, nowadays, agriculture in Bulgaria is in steady decline, even more so since Bulgaria joined the European Union. The quotas which the Commission itself has imposed on Bulgaria are restraining agricultural production, while the land in Bulgaria is going to waste. It only takes one farm in one of the 28 regions in Bulgaria to produce the whole quota of tomatoes, for instance, which is assigned to Bulgaria by the European Commission. It has been like this because some data 10 years ago indicated that this was the official production level. However, no one is looking at what the real production level could be. Currently, within the European Union itself, there are restrictions on food production processes which could otherwise significantly improve the situation and actually offer a real measure for fighting hunger. Therefore, as long as things are controlled by officials who only look at sheets of paper and are not interested in anything else, all that we will be left with are just promises and no action.

Filip Kaczmarek (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, the number of people suffering from hunger and living in extreme poverty has risen dramatically over the past year, and it is not true that this is the fault of capitalism. There are political systems which are significantly worse for human life and the fight against hunger. I will give but one example. In Europe, several decades ago, a country which has very good agricultural conditions was driven to starvation by communism. As a result of this, more people died in a single country than currently die of starvation worldwide. That country was Ukraine. I would advise caution about what is said in this Chamber.

In the year 2000, 198 Members of the United Nations adopted specific Millennium Development Goals. The Commissioner spoke today about the first, most important goal. Today, we must answer the question as to whether this goal is attainable. Europeans are asking if our priorities and policy are correct and, in particular, for example, if an expensive battle with climate change is more important than the fight against poverty. I received such a question only this week: is the European Union not mistaking means for objectives, and instead of fighting the effects of global warming, beginning the most expensive tilt at windmills in the history of humanity – a battle with climate change?

I think the best proof that there is no inconsistency between action to protect the climate and to eliminate hunger would be effectiveness in the latter area, in other words, really to remove hunger from the world. Then no one would accuse us of having wrong priorities and of making the fight against climate change more important than the fight against hunger, as Mr Deß has also said.

Agriculture is going to be very important in the next few years. What we have to do is to persuade and help developing countries to invest in agriculture and to abide by their own declarations that 10% of the national budget will be designated to the development of agriculture. It is only in this way that we can increase the agricultural potential of poor countries and help in an effective fight against hunger.

Louis Michel (ALDE). – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, with the exception of Mr Berlusconi, whose country hosted the summit, no leading member of the G8 was present at the FAO World Summit on Food Security.

So a highly political meeting in economic, social and financial terms was reduced to a run-of-the-mill technical meeting. Nevertheless, Mr Diouf's objective was to develop tools and means of production, in order to ensure food security in a sustainable way in developing countries.

The economic and financial crisis – as we know, since it has been said repeatedly – is only aggravating hunger worldwide. The subject was more topical than ever since, for the first time in history, hunger today affects more than a billion people in the world. That is a sixth of the world's population, 20% more than in 2005 and 105 million more than in 2008.

As Mr Bové said, all of that means there is a strong risk of stirring up new conflicts and, moreover, conflicts of an extremely serious nature. It is the lack of investment in agriculture that has led to this phenomenon of food insecurity. The fact is, agriculture is the sole means of existence for 70% of the world's poor, as Mr Diouf underlined. He made an appeal for a total of USD 44 billion per year to fund investments to help small producers. His demand has been completely disregarded: there is no timetable, no strategy and no political will on the part of rich countries.

Commissioner, how much progress has been made in implementing the G8 commitments made in July? Having been in your position, I know the difficulties involved in getting donors on board. I still remember the extremely difficult battle, which President Barroso also waged, to obtain that wretched EUR 1 billion, two years ago now, in order to establish this food facility. However, Europe's future is intimately linked to the fate of developing countries.

Commissioner, I do not believe in the formulas of our socialist fellow Member who talks to us of ultra-capitalism and ultra-liberalism – which, moreover, as a semantic assimilation, is morally debatable. I myself cannot see the solution in this kind of rather short-sighted ideological ranting.

Mr Le Hyaric, I must tell you that Marxist obscurantism bears a much greater responsibility than liberalism for the underdevelopment of some countries since they gained their independence.

That is what I wanted to say, because I did not want to let any ideological ranting or incantation that is short-sighted and that pushes the limits of intellectual honesty go unchallenged in this Chamber.

Judith Sargentini (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, my colleagues Mr Bové and Mr Belder sketched the problem and the political reality, but there is a new trend in farming. Rich countries ensure their staple food or their biofuels by buying up land in poor countries – land grabbing or, as it is euphemistically called, 'farmland acquisition'. It happens in Madagascar, for instance.

This seems to be too sensitive for world leaders to discuss. Europe and its leaders have a moral duty to go against this new form of what I would call colonialism. The declaration of the FAO Food Summit did not touch upon the issue of land grabbing and in that respect, really missed out on an opportunity to target hunger in the world. Why did you not do that?

Then there is the common agricultural policy of the EU. We produce a lot of food. Europeans have food to eat, but that CAP ruins chances for both small-scale farmers and industrial farmers in developing countries, and they lose the chance to earn a decent living. That causes food shortages and brings a need for food imports. When can we see a free and fair European agricultural policy?

Richard Ashworth (ECR). – Madam President, both the United Nations and the European Union have agreed that the growing world population is going to demand greater global output of agricultural productivity of the order of a 50-100% increase. We accept that. We accept the Commissioner's point of view, not only because we accept it, but because it is a target that the world cannot afford to miss. But, at the same time, agriculture is being asked to do it using less land, less water, less energy, less greenhouse gases. So there are three points which we need to understand.

Firstly, governments – and the EU in particular – must invest more in research and development; we simply do not have the information upon which to base a plan for the future. Secondly, faced with volatility in global markets, we need a safety net from the common agricultural policy. And, thirdly, food security, and all that it implies to the European Union, involves cost. These are costs which we cannot pass on to consumers, and therefore I repeat: we need a strong agricultural policy, and we have to win the argument in the budget debate.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Madam President, the final declaration adopted at the last FAO Summit by its 193 member countries truly is, unfortunately, a drop in the ocean in the fight against hunger. No deadlines have been set and, above all, no concrete resources and conditions have been established to tackle a scourge that affects more than 6 billion human beings.

According to available data, in the mere 90 seconds it will take to give this speech, 15 children in the world will die from hunger. This is the starkest and most cutting indictment of an unfair, exploitative, irrational and, therefore, historically reviled economic system.

It is a system that is based on real policies and guidelines and, now, Mr Michel, on protagonists and a liberal rhetoric that have led to the current situation: promotion of the agri-industrial model, in line with protection of the interests of the large agri-food industry, and the resulting qualitative impoverishment of the world's farming industry; years and years of inadequate investment in farming, of promotion of abandonment of the farming industry, and of liquidation of small and medium-sized farms, a sector that provides subsistence for 70% of the world's poor.

Market fundamentalism, policies of privatisation and liberalisation, and free trade have resulted, and are continuing to result, in the abandonment of land, the concentration of land ownership, and production dominated by the few and food dependency for the many.

Experts estimate that it would cost USD 44 billion to overcome the scourge of chronic malnutrition. This is a much more modest sum than what the Member States handed over to big business to save it from the ongoing systemic crisis.

Diane Dodds (NI). – Madam President, during the World Summit on Food Security, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, said 'the food crisis of today is a wake-up call for tomorrow'. By 2050, our planet may be home to 9.1 billion people, over two billion more than today – a staggering figure and one which will mean that farmers will have to grow 70% more food.

Farmers in Northern Ireland want to help to meet that need. However, most of them believe that Europe is hindering their ability to produce more food by forcing a reduction in stocking rates through nitrate and phosphate regulations, red tape, a lack of research and development within the industry, and hence an attitude that food security is not an issue.

CAP reform will determine the farmers' ability to produce food. It will also influence the price of food. If farmers are not supported by Europe through direct payments, the price of food will have to increase to meet production costs. My aim is to promote food production within Northern Ireland and food security within Europe. This will only be achieved by allowing farmers to farm. CAP reform will play a huge part in this, and food security should be a central component of our work as this CAP reform goes ahead.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Madam President, as one of the authors of this report, can I first thank the political groups, who worked very closely together to come up with a text which does not have amendments to it. I think we should all be very pleased with that. We have different opinions on many things, but I think, on the general point of wanting to do the right thing to assist in feeding the hungry of the world, this text is a step in the right direction.

I was also the author of a report on global food security and the CAP in the previous mandate, so I have worked very hard on this issue. Can I make one very simple point, which seems to escape many: it is farmers who will feed the world if they are given the right climate – and I mean that in the broadest context – to do that particular job. The rest of us will talk about it. It is our responsibility to develop and put in place the policies to allow our farmers to produce food. They will respond if they have two basic elements: one is decent prices and the other is stable incomes. The recent volatility has hit both of those and farming cannot survive on that.

Lest I run out of time – and as one of the authors I beg your forbearance on this – please do not demonise the common agricultural policy. Some of the arguments made now are historic and out of date; we have reformed absolutely this policy and perhaps without the CAP, we might have greater problems of food insecurity within the European Union. Why do we not adopt the best parts of it and ask the developing world to take onboard a common agricultural policy? Because let us be very tough on this: we should not let the developing world's governments off the hook; it is their responsibility to use the development aid properly; it is our responsibility to ensure that more money is spent and invested in agriculture. I think it is time to

stop pussyfooting around this issue and be tough with governments and tough with ourselves. We have a moral responsibility and we are prepared to take it on board.

Enrique Guerrero Salom (S&D). – (ES) Madam President, Commissioner, the world is facing two major long-term challenges: combating the effects of climate change and combating poverty and hunger in the world.

The Commissioner mentioned the figures, as did other members of this Parliament, and they appear in the final declaration of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) World Summit on Food Security: over a billion people around the world are suffering from hunger and 40 million die every year as a result of poverty.

First the food crisis and then the financial crisis have been hindering achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We are not progressing; we are actually moving backwards. The challenges are long term, but the solutions are urgent and are needed now. However, in recent weeks, we have received alarming news of resistance among the main gas emitters to making decisions at the Copenhagen conference and the absence of leaders and specific results at the FAO Summit in Rome.

Our problems are alarming, but no less so is the lack of capacity for action. Human beings have progressed because we have identified challenges, determined the responses and taken action. In the current times, we know what we are up against but we have lost the capacity for action.

I therefore support the resolution, which calls on Parliament to take action as a matter of urgency.

Franziska Keller (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, Article 208 of the Lisbon Treaty states that the main aim of European Union development policy is poverty reduction and eradication. Poverty is also the main reason for hunger. Article 208 also states that the Union shall take account of these objectives in other policies that might affect developing countries.

However, with export subsidies, the EU is destroying markets in developing countries, therefore causing poverty and hunger. If we want our development assistance to be effective, we need to make sure that it is not hampered by other policies. Otherwise, we will not manage to meet the Millennium Development Goals. We should keep that in mind when we review and reform policies such as the common agricultural policy and fisheries policies.

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

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Madam President, I would like to ask the previous speaker to be specific about *what* export refunds. I made this point in my speech, and I accept that in the past, damage was done through export refunds and that Europe has now reformed its agricultural policy. However, when we introduced export refunds for the dairy sector last year, the only country which complained was New Zealand, which is not a developing country. Can I please ask for an example of where this is currently a problem.

Franziska Keller (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, of course the frozen chicken example that you all well know is already a bit old, but still now, for example, tomatoes that are highly subsidised in the European Union make it to African markets, are cheaper than the local products and therefore destroy jobs and increase poverty. So that is still a common phenomenon and I think we have to work on that.

Béla Glattfelder (PPE). – (HU) An ever-increasing number of scientists in the world are saying that a severe oil, water and food shortage will develop simultaneously by 2030. However, it would seem that the first one we must face is the food shortage, as there are already one billion people on Earth suffering from hunger. The number of people suffering from hunger is growing at a faster rate than the world's population. Therefore, while only one person in six is suffering from hunger at the moment, we must face a situation where in a few decades' time, as many as one person in four or five will be suffering from hunger. Two children die of hunger every minute. The solution to this situation is obviously not for us to discontinue the European Union's common agricultural policy. The European Union can only be strong and play a strong role in the world if it has a strong common agricultural policy.

However, hunger is not unique to Africa. Hunger is present in the European Union as well. For example, there are regions in the European Union where people spend less than 10% of their income on food, whereas there are other regions too – some parts of Bulgaria and southern regions in Romania – where people are spending on average more than 50% of their income on food. These also include those people – representing the average – who spend many times more than this on food. It is worthwhile emphasising this point because we must face the fact that each time we draft a new regulation that makes agricultural production more

expensive and reduces its efficiency, such as animal welfare regulations which increase the amount of fodder required to produce 1 kg of meat, we are not only harming the environment by increased CO₂ emissions, but every single measure of this sort increases the number of people suffering from hunger. It is perhaps precisely this extra amount of fodder which we must use, for instance, in rearing poultry, that will be missing from a starving child's table.

Corina Crețu (S&D). – (RO) The number of undernourished people in the world has passed the one-billion mark, exacerbating the tragic situation that one person in six suffers from hunger. Unfortunately, as has been mentioned earlier, the leaders of the main industrialised powers have shown an indifferent attitude to a summit which is so important and necessary like the one organised by the FAO in Rome very recently. The leaders of the G8 Member States did not feel it necessary to attend this meeting, with the exception of the Italian Prime Minister.

I cannot help but mention the huge, unfair discrepancy between the maximum level of attention given by the representatives of this group of countries, which account for 60% of global GDP, to saving the banking system and their disregard for the tragic reality of famine affecting an ever-increasing number of our fellow human beings. In fact, this is a crisis which is not of the poor countries' own making, but they are the ones being hardest hit by it.

We have reached the most serious level of global famine since 1970. A child dies of hunger every six seconds. Unfortunately, the world's developed countries are closing their eyes to a tragedy which will affect us all through its complex implications. The best example of this, and also a warning to us, is the neglect shown to agriculture over the last two decades, which has ended up at the current food crisis. Out of the total amount of official aid for development, the funds allocated to agriculture have fallen as a proportion from 17% in 1980 to 3.8% in 2006.

Food security is an extremely serious challenge which requires urgent solutions, primarily through opening up markets and providing aid to farmers in developing countries so that food can be provided and famine eradicated as soon as possible.

Esther Herranz García (PPE). – (ES) Madam President, I would like to begin by congratulating Mrs McGuinness on this initiative, which demonstrates the important role that the common agricultural policy (CAP) plays in meeting food provision needs internationally.

Now that the European Commission seems to want to reduce the burden of the CAP on the Community budget, it is important to stress that while the CAP may not be a priority, food sufficiency must be. In past decades, it has been clear that without the CAP, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve food sufficiency.

Agriculture cannot, therefore, be compared with other sectors of the economy which are able to thrive in a free market, because the food market is not a free market. Farmers need the support of the European Union in order for their businesses to succeed, and the European Union, in turn, needs farmers in order to maintain an agricultural model that is capable of providing sufficient food of sufficient quality to its increasingly demanding citizens.

I therefore believe that we must change the course of the CAP, but not abolish it. In order to do this, direct aid must be guaranteed to farmers and a policy of managing agricultural markets must be restored to bring about greater price stability, which would benefit not only farmers but also consumers and third countries.

A framework of best practices should be established in order to encourage balanced relations between the different players in the food chain, avoiding abusive practices and promoting fairer distribution of commercial margins.

In addition, a European consumer information policy that highlights efforts by Community producers to comply with European Union regulations in the areas of the environment, food security and animal welfare is needed, since Community producers have to compete with imports from third countries, where the standards applied are much lower.

Third-country producers prefer to export to the European Union rather than supplying their own countries' markets because such exports are more profitable under World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements.

Michèle Striffler (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, it was said earlier that, every five seconds, a child dies of hunger and poverty somewhere in the world, and it is estimated that more than a billion people suffer from malnutrition.

The matter of global food security therefore assumes an extremely urgent character and must be at the top of the European and international political agenda. European policies need to be made more consistent so as to ensure that the first Millennium Development Goal is realised.

The EUR 1 billion food facility is a necessary first step, and it is essential that the implementation measures are focused on small and medium family and crop farms, in particular, those run by women, and on poor populations, those therefore that are most affected by the food crisis.

Sustainable agriculture must be a priority area. Innovative funding mechanisms, such as an international tax on financial transactions, must be explored to accompany adaptation to climate change, while being accessible to the small farmers of the most vulnerable countries.

Ricardo Cortés Lastra (S&D). – (ES) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, in the wake of the recent conclusion of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) World Summit on Food Security, I would like to express my disappointment at its limited social, media and political impact. In particular, I am disappointed that no agreement could be reached on the package of USD 44 billion intended to help the poorest farmers, and sad that everything will continue as before.

When we talk about food security, agriculture and development, we often forget the issue of water scarcity, an essential problem now and, above all, in the future. In the current context of economic and environmental crisis, more than ever we need a commitment by developed countries to create a new forum for international reflection, at the highest level, with the aim of consolidating water as a public good, sharing technologies and developing efficient, sustainable and economically viable systems of water management.

If we do not look after our water, we will never succeed in combating hunger.

Chris Davies (ALDE). – Madam President, in 18th century England, Thomas Malthus predicted that population increase would exceed food supply. Now, in many ways, his ideas have been discredited because we have had a series of agricultural revolutions which have transformed our society. But his words were also true: in the lifetimes of many of us, world population has trebled – trebled, quite incredible – and, in too many parts of the world, that has exceeded our food supply. We need to be doing more if we want to prevent hunger and control population growth, and the way of doing that is to ensure that women everywhere have control over their reproductivity. And we have got to save the lives of children. The best way of reducing population growth is to save the lives of youngsters, so that people do not feel the need to have bigger families.

Here in the Western world, we are addicted to eating meat: a massive waste of resources. All I can say is – and I see my time is up, Madam President – as someone who gave up eating meat 20 years ago, if we want to save the world and prevent hunger, then we eat green, not red.

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, adequate food is a human right and hunger is a crime against humanity. I also think that the human race has enough technical and scientific knowledge to ensure that no one in the world should have to suffer from hunger. Of course, money is also needed to combat world hunger. However, it is not just about money. We also need to meet the following requirements beforehand. Firstly, developing a stable democratic structure in developing countries, secondly, fighting corruption, thirdly, establishing a suitable agricultural system in developing countries and then, finally, investing in agriculture. Too little is often said about the first three points. In addition, a lot of funding disappears in these countries, gets into the wrong hands and is used for corrupt practices.

Marc Tarabella (S&D). – (FR) Madam President, I would like to expand on what I said here myself two days ago concerning the tragic food crisis that Africa, above all, has been plunged into, and the clear lack of support from the most industrialised countries, as well as emerging countries, with regard to the problem of global food security.

During the debates that took place at the FAO Summit in Rome, several NGOs accused the food multinationals of trying to grab thousands of hectares of very fertile land belonging to small farmers in the developing world. More than 40 000 hectares have already been acquired in this manner from Ethiopia to Indonesia.

They also condemned the tendency many rich countries have of favouring the use of chemical fertilisers and new technologies in Africa instead of encouraging the sustainable development of agroecology. They castigated agrochemical companies, the use of GMOs and the development of biomass fuels to the detriment of crop growing.

I call on the European Union to invest as a matter of urgency in the implementation of the global partnership project, which will enable actions for combating famine to be better coordinated. It seems to me that subsistence agriculture is undoubtedly the most obvious answer.

Elisabeth Köstinger (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, long-term food security is one of the central challenges of the common agricultural policy. In particular, in the light of food shortages, we must emphasise the importance of a strong CAP which will take on a key role in future in overcoming global challenges.

This means that adequate long-term funding for the CAP is required. The CAP is an important element of the EU food and security policy and after 2013, it will play a significant role in development policy and in external food security policy. Therefore, perfectly functioning ecosystems, fertile soil, stable water resources and further diversification of the rural economy are the highest priorities. International cooperation and solidarity, together with balanced trade agreements which promote, rather than jeopardise, food security are an essential element of global food security and this is where a strong CAP can make an important contribution.

Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE). – (RO) First of all, at the risk of repeating an idea already mentioned by Mr Stoyanov, I deplore the fact that we have so much uncultivated land in many countries in Europe while we are talking about hunger in the world.

Secondly, because the motion for a resolution is dealing with this issue, and I am pleased that the Commissioner touched on this subject, I wish to draw attention to the danger posed by the objective of food self-sufficiency, which is very much in vogue. This objective, which is not synonymous with food security, might have an undesirable effect in the current conditions because climate change affects every region in a different way. This situation makes trade more necessary than ever and not the ambition of every country to produce everything that it wants to eat.

Marian Harkin, author. – Madam President, I just want to comment on two matters raised in the debate so far. First, the link between hunger and climate change. As Ban Ki-moon said in Rome, at a time when the global population is growing and our global climate is changing, by 2050, we will need to produce 70% more food, yet the weather is becoming more extreme and unpredictable. So any positive efforts we make on climate change will impact positively on food production.

Another issue raised once again is the easy option: blame the CAP – as if the CAP were responsible for all of the ills of the developing world. The CAP is not perfect, but it has been reformed. If we want our farmers to continue producing and ensure food security for Europe, we cannot, by regulation and withdrawal of support, literally force them out of business.

For example, has anybody done a study on the recent reform of the sugar industry in the EU to see if the decimation of the EU sugar industry has benefited those in Third World countries or if it has just benefited the sugar barons and landowners while leaving the small sugar growers in poverty? In no way do I want to minimise the issue of world hunger, but we need to ensure that when we put forward solutions to the problem, they actually do alleviate it.

Sari Essayah (PPE). – (FI) Madam President, it is excellent that on the same day that we are discussing the resolution on the Copenhagen climate conference, the issues of food security and the problem of hunger are on the table, because these matters are very closely linked.

Some Members have already mentioned the problem of how, through climate policy, we have also partly caused more problems. We have set unrealistic targets for biofuel, for example, which has led to a situation where land has been bought from developing countries for the cultivation of vegetation for biofuel. So land is being taken away from the poorest of the poor, who could use it for farming and developing their own agricultural production.

There have been similar distortions in agricultural policy. These have resulted in over-production being exported to the developing countries, thus hampering the development of agriculture there. It is extremely important to bear in mind one truth: in the world today, we have more than enough food, but the desire to share it fairly is missing.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, at the last FAO Summit, the participating states did not manage to produce any constructive proposals. The absence of a common strategy at international level is concerning, especially in light of the continually increasing world population, which is set to reach 9 billion in 2050.

We all well remember the effects of the food crisis of 2007 when, as a result of a sudden rise in the prices of basic agricultural products, millions of people around the world were faced with a lack of food. I think the crisis should teach us a lesson. We must end action intended to limit agricultural production, so popular, strange to say, in recent years in our EU.

I think that, in the light of global trends on the foodstuffs market, every attempt to restrict the CAP is an unwise move which will, in the near future, threaten the food security of our continent. We should help developing countries establish an agricultural policy that will enable them to ensure food security to their citizens.

Karel De Gucht, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, I also deplore that none of the G8 leaders were present at Rome except for Commission President Barroso, and of course, it adds to the image that this has been a summit which did not bring that much new. When you look at the final declaration this is, I think, also obvious. On the other hand, I think it is also very important that we managed to keep the food security item on the political agenda and the result of the several summits we have been witnessing in 2009 has certainly been that it is now high on the international agenda and that, whenever world leaders meet, for example, latterly in Pittsburgh for the G20, there is talk of development cooperation and development policy. So that in itself is a very positive element.

I have been in Rome and I must say that apart from the final declaration which is, I must agree, a little bit disappointing, there have been very good discussions and also a very good presence, and something can come out of it. For example, there was a whole discussion on the selling of fertile land in developing countries and countries which have no arable land; buying them itself is a very interesting topic to discuss and I think it is also one where we can come to some common understanding.

The second thing I would like to say is that, as a couple of Members have already said, the CAP is, of course, not ideal. Nothing is ideal in this world, but when you look at the effect of the common agricultural policy on the developing world, I think we can claim that it is, by far, the least harmful system of a big trading block with respect to distorting effects in the developing countries. The WTO has acknowledged that most, if not all, of our subsidies are non-trade-distorting because they are supporting agricultural income, not the prices of agricultural products.

I am also a little bit, how should I put it, disappointed that we are blaming ourselves all the time. Europe is not ideal either but I think that with the Food Facility, for example, we took a major step forward. This involves EUR 1 billion on a two-year basis; it is not about supporting the delivery of food, but is largely focused on delivering seeds and so on, sustaining small agricultural producers in the developing world. I think this really is an innovation. It has also been acknowledged as such by the World Bank, for example, which is taking over this mechanism. So we should not blame ourselves all the time. By the way, this facility was an innovation by my predecessor. There is one thing I do not agree with him and that was about a gentleman who, in the meantime, has disappeared, Mr Le Hyaric. He is not a socialist, my predecessor, he is a communist; I mean you should look at his political group: he is a communist and that probably explains the reasoning he was using.

Having said this, also in LAquila, we took up our responsibility as a European Commission and we pledged USD 4 billion, which is about 20% of the food package and the support package that was agreed in LAquila. With that, we are by far the largest donor that made pledges in LAquila and we are also going to honour them. We are also going to commit this sum and to disburse this as soon as possible.

I will end by saying a last word on the new EU agricultural and food security policy because, in the 2010 work programme of the Commission, there is a plan to present to the Council and the Parliament a communication on a renewed policy for agriculture and food security for the European Union. This document will review current issues affecting agriculture and food security, for example, challenges posed by climate change, enhanced attention to nutrition and food quality, safety nets and social protection policies, the impact of biofuels on food production or the use and impact of new technologies and biotechnologies, increased calls for rights-based approaches, large-scale land acquisition, etc.

The communication will aim firstly at renewing the EU commitment to assist developing countries advancing their agricultural production. This remains crucial, notably in view of the increasing demand for food due to a growing global population and changing dietary patterns and the challenges and threats that climate change is posing to sustainable agricultural production. Secondly, it will aim at launching reflection on how the EU could best use its experience and know-how to support the emergence of regional policies and strategic frameworks in agriculture and food security. Thirdly, it will aim at providing the basis for the whole EU

approach to harmonise existing ECMS policy frameworks following the commitments set out in the L'Aquila agenda for action. Fourthly, it will aim at proposing ways on how the EU could contribute to accelerating the process towards the achievements of the MDGs and notably, MDG1 in view of the upcoming review of the MDGs in September 2010 in New York. Fifthly, it will aim at better positioning the EU vis-à-vis current developments in the global food agricultural governance system, and lastly, at addressing issues that have recently gained prominence in the food security agenda.

A public consultation on an issues paper was launched on 16 November and will close in early January. Thus we will consult all the stakeholders and then come forward with a formal communication by the European Commission.

President. – I have received six motions for resolution⁽⁶⁾ tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 26 November 2009.

19. Meat imports from third countries (debate)

President. – The next item is the Commission statement on meat imports from third countries.

Androulla Vassiliou, Member of the Commission. – (EL) Madam President, I apologise because this issue is of great interest and has many facets and I shall be a little long-winded in my statement for the benefit of the honourable Members of Parliament.

The Commission has in place a robust set of EU animal and public health requirements for meat coming from third countries.

For a number of years, the EU has maintained a very effective import policy which takes into account scientific developments and the current disease situation in third countries. In particular, it pays close attention to foot-and-mouth disease in exporting third countries because, as you know, the EU is free of this disease, which has the potential to cause serious economic harm. Very detailed standards and requirements have been established at the level of the World Organisation for Animal Health to prevent the spread of FMD.

The WTO agreement on sanitary and phytosanitary measures acknowledges that, while countries may use different standards and different methods of inspecting products, this does not necessarily increase the animal and public health risks. The EU cannot impose an exact replica of our internal legislative measures on third countries, just as third countries, to which we export, cannot impose their own national rules on us. We can only require that their measures have an equivalent effect to ours.

Let me take traceability as an example. In the EU, we have very stringent rules on the individual identification and traceability of cattle. In case of a disease outbreak, our rules facilitate the tracing of potentially infected animals to limit the spread of the disease. In addition, our rules allow us to trace and follow food or feed through all stages of production and distribution from farm to table. On the other hand, traceability rules applying to third countries exporting to the EU are aimed solely at ensuring that imported meat does not pose unacceptable risks for the EU. Thus, the scope of these rules is much more limited than the rules in force in the EU.

I would also like to stress the fact that the measures on traceability of cattle in the EU were adopted largely in response to the BSE crisis which, as you recall, caused a dramatic drop in consumer confidence and major disruption of the internal market in relation to the trade in beef.

Let me now take this opportunity to explain in more detail the extremely effective cascade of risk-mitigating measures that we have in place for beef imports and which ensure the highest possible level of protection for EU public and animal health, whilst taking account of OIE standards and remaining fully in line with the principles of the SPS Agreement. These measures can be grouped into five main levels of protection. They are so comprehensive that only 12 third countries outside Europe are able to meet all these requirements, and consequently, we only import beef from these few countries.

⁽⁶⁾ See Minutes

First, imports of beef are only permitted from third countries or from certain parts of these countries that have been specifically authorised following a Commission inspection to verify the competence of their veterinary authorities and the animal health situation in general. Second, the territory of origin of bovine animals must be recognised as free of FMD by the OIE and the European Union. Third, beef-exporting countries must have an approved monitoring plan for specific residues from veterinary medical products, growth promoters and performance enhancers which are restricted or banned in food-producing animals in the EU. Fourth, all imports of fresh meat must come from an approved slaughterhouse that has been authorised and listed for that specific purpose. Fifth, we have specific conditions concerning meat production and storage.

We have an additional layer of protection by only allowing bone in meat to come from Australia, Canada, Chile, New Zealand and the United States. For the seven other authorised countries, only deboned and matured beef without offal can be exported to the European Union. This treatment ensures the inactivation of the FMD virus, should it still be present despite all the previous measures I have described, thus providing an additional safeguard. Consignments of meat destined for the EU market must be certified by an official veterinarian who guarantees that all of the above conditions are fully met.

When the meat consignment arrives in the EU, controls are carried out by the official veterinary services of the Member States at our border inspection points. All imported meat must undergo mandatory veterinary checks at EU borders. The border inspection posts are obliged to carry out documentary, identity and physical checks. Imported meat is subject to 100% documentary and identity checks at border inspection posts. In addition, a physical veterinary check is carried out on a minimum of 20% of all consignments of imported meat. Furthermore, we have an additional level of protection through our ban on feeding swill or catering waste to animals throughout the EU. This measure ensures that susceptible species in the EU are not exposed to the FMD virus should it enter the EU despite all the previous measures I have described.

All the measures I have described are fully harmonised. In 2006, the European Food Safety Authority recognised that these measures are very effective at reducing the risk of FMD entering the EU. In its opinion, EFSA stated, 'The EU thus has a sophisticated import control system in place. These efforts appear to be very effective with regard to legal trade in meat and meat products'.

This brings me to my next point. Since the harmonisation of the veterinary import conditions in the 1970s, we have never had an outbreak in the EU of FMD through the legal import of meat. I am sure I do not need to remind you that the FMD outbreak in the UK in 2001 was caused by the illegal introduction of meat – most probably from Asia – and the illegal use of swill feeding. I therefore believe that we should focus our efforts on where the real risks are, and target illegal introductions or personal imports rather than trying to excessively regulate legal imports. In this regard, I hope you have all seen the posters in EU airports and at other points of entry into the EU explaining to travellers the rules concerning the introduction of products of animal origin.

I am aware that some of you have expressed concern as regards our imports of beef from Brazil. I would like to remind you that additional requirements were established for imports of Brazilian beef in January last year. These include, in addition to all the requirements I have already outlined, that the farms of origin are audited and approved by the Brazilian authorities. The Brazilian authorities now also require that bovine animals whose meat is destined for the EU market are individually identified and registered in a database. These animals represent less than 1.5% of the total Brazilian bovine population, amounting to about 2.9 million animals in approved holdings. As a consequence, the Brazilian authorities reassessed holdings wishing to produce beef meat for export to the EU. From a total number of more than 10 000 holdings eligible for export in November 2007, only 1 708 farms are currently approved. As a consequence, EU imports of Brazilian beef have dropped dramatically. In early 2009, some deficiencies were identified during a Commission inspection, and the Brazilian authorities demonstrated full cooperation to address these deficiencies. In any case, the overall findings did not justify any further restriction on imports of beef from Brazil. As things stand, imposing further restrictions on imports of beef from Brazil could be interpreted as protectionism by some, and could lead to a challenge to our measures at the WTO.

We also need to bear in mind that the EU will have to face, from time to time, animal-health or food-safety problems, and we insist that third countries react in a proportionate manner to these problems. We should lead by example therefore, playing by the rules governing international trade.

I would like to conclude by assuring Parliament that the Commission will continue to target illegal introductions which present the greatest risk to our high standards. The Commission will also maintain its current proportional approach towards imports of beef from third countries, including Brazil. These will

ensure we maintain our high level of public and animal health in the EU and that the EU retains its respectability at international level.

Esther Herranz García, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (ES) Madam President, the European Union imposes on Community producers the highest standards in the world in terms of food security, health, animal welfare and the environment. European stockbreeders are obliged to meet these standards as a prerequisite for receiving European Union support. For the vast majority, this support does not offset the increased burden, and farms are being abandoned at an alarming rate. This process will continue unless adequate measures are taken.

Let us, however, examine the issue more closely. The growing deficit in European production is naturally being covered by imports from third countries, mainly from Brazil. Given the pressure on Community stockbreeders, it would be totally dishonest to allow consignments of meat to enter the Community market if they failed to meet the minimum requirements agreed by the European Union with third countries.

I would also like to highlight the fact that these requirements are lower than those imposed on our own farmers, because it would seem that imposing exactly the same standards on third-country imports would go against World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. Given that the WTO prevents us from imposing the same standards on imports as we do on European stockbreeders, however, the Commission must, at the very least, guarantee that all meat that crosses Community borders comes from farms that have undergone adequate inspections. It would make no sense to block imports from countries like Brazil, since there is a Community demand which must be met. Nonetheless, this does not justify closing our eyes and looking the other way in the face of any irregularities that the European Union's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) might detect during its regular inspections.

I would like to know why the Commission is so keen to downplay these irregularities given that the FVO, on its last mission to Brazil, confirmed that some certification authorities do not meet the necessary inspection standards. The FVO also found huge flaws in the traceability system used by Brazil and detected problems with many consignments in transit to the European Union that did not have the necessary certificates.

In view of this information, how can it be guaranteed that the 1 500 Brazilian farms do fulfil the agreed requirements?

Alan Kelly, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Madam President, when it comes to the issue of meat imports, we in Europe must nail down the principles which form our policy on this, and have a strong but fair system of regulation.

Those principles must be based on consumer safety and trust, protection of the environment and – vitally – a fair playing field for producers of meat. Currently, the system is operating in a way that is blatantly unfair for both farmers and consumers. We are forcing our farmers to go through a range of time-consuming and costly practices, only to allow them to be undercut by meat products from outside the EU, with Brazil being a prime example. There is huge evidence from the FVO in relation to this.

This situation is simply unsustainable. Farm practices in Brazil are, in many cases, simply not up to the standard that is known and acceptable to European consumers. If we are not careful, the incentive to produce high-quality, safe meat will disappear because we are allowing inferior quality products to undermine prices and farmers' incomes. Also, naturally, owing to the way the food chain is integrated, once you have meat in the system it will disperse across a wide range of products and become untraceable. How is that fair to consumers in Europe?

Beef producers across Europe are getting it in the neck, and the situation cannot last for them or consumers. There is no faith that the new measures implemented recently are actually being taken stock of. There are many examples of claims of cattle being produced and put through farms that are approved, when they do not actually originate from those farms.

Commissioner, I am not advocating protectionism in any way, but it is time to act. We cannot stand idly by and let this practice continue. It is simply unfair. It is unfair for European consumers and it is unfair for producers in Europe, who are having to take on practices which, at the same time, are not being accepted, and are not practised, by producers in Brazil.

George Lyon, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Madam President, I would like to thank the Commissioner for her statement, where she outlined that the range of protections and measures are there to ensure that third-country imports are meeting the highest standards possible. I want to look in particular at the FVO

report from Brazil. Proper traceability systems and designated holdings in Brazil are at the heart of the measures that the EU has requested be put in place to prevent any threat or risk of contaminated meat products being imported into the EU from that country. They are fundamental in guaranteeing to EU consumers, farmers and taxpayers that there are no risks.

Let us not forget that foot-and-mouth disease is still a serious problem in Brazil. Yet the Commission's FVO report in February highlighted a catalogue of failures: 50% of the farms which were inspected which were designated for exports to the EU had problems. 25% of these with serious problems, with missing ear tags identified, cattle on farms which could not be identified – they had no idea where they came from. There was a lack of documentation; there were conflict-of-interest issues; EU inspectors found that one of the government supervisors just happened to be married to the person responsible for cattle identification – and it turned out that they actually own some of the cattle on that holding where the stock records were inaccurate.

My concern, Commissioner, is that the summary of that FVO report stated that all the controls were generally satisfactory. But I am sorry, the content does not support that conclusion whatsoever, and we must, as a group of nations, be on our guard. I do not need to remind the House of the impact a major disease outbreak can have on taxpayers, farmers and customers. In the last major disease outbreak in the UK which you referred to in your speech, foot and mouth erupted and we destroyed a million animals and it cost our taxpayers GBP 4 billion. That is the kind of risk we run if we do not get this right, so we must be vigilant.

I am not asking for restrictions to be put on Brazil; what I am asking from the Commissioner here tonight is an assurance that this matter is taken seriously and that the Commission makes sure that the failings identified in the report are corrected in the next report. We need to see a clean bill of health to reassure farmers, taxpayers and consumers that they are protected and that free and fair trade can resume between Brazil and the EU.

Alyn Smith, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Madam President, I would also like to thank the Commissioner for her very full statement – possibly one of the fullest and most substantive statements we have heard from a Commissioner lately.

This issue does merit it and, as one of the last veterans of the first battle of Brazilian beef, it is a pleasure to see so many familiar faces in the Chamber tonight. I hope that indicates that we are interested and serious regarding this issue. We support you in what you are saying about the import controls and about FMD. Frankly, that is not quite what this issue is about, and that is why I am so glad that those who wanted to broaden this issue out to imports from third countries have achieved that aim.

It is not just about Brazilian beef. It is about the wider principle that our consumers, our voters and our farmers demand that imports from those countries which would seek to bring their produce here meet our standards – and that means meet all our standards.

So it troubles me to hear you accept the fact that Brazil has lower standards of traceability than we do because it might not create such a disease risk coming into the territory of the European Union. Our consumers expect exactly the same standards in all things coming into the European Union. I accept your point if you are talking about strict disease control, but we are talking about equity and fairness. Our consumers demand – and our farmers demand and we, frankly, demand – that we have exactly the same standards of traceability across Brazil and across all third countries. For an FVO report to come back that said 50% of the inspections failed or had problems with them is just like throwing red meat to a pack of hungry wolves, as you perhaps see this evening. Can you assure us: when is the next FVO report, and will you actually take it seriously and ban whichever countries fail to meet our standards?

James Nicholson, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Madam President, the first thing I want to make clear here tonight is that this is not about third-country imports. This is about Brazilian beef coming into Europe. That is what it is about.

I am saddened that I stand here tonight and we do not have a resolution. I do not know why, but I understand that some of the big groups in this Parliament were not prepared to stand up to the Brazilian Ambassador who lobbied last week in Brussels. That goes for the Socialist Group and I will let the Liberals answer for themselves, for I understand they did not stand up at the Conference of Presidents and allow us to have a resolution before us.

I want to make it very clear. The Brazilian Ambassador did not lobby me. Maybe he did not think I was worth coming to see; I do not know. Or maybe he thought I was too hard a nut to crack because – let me make it very clear here tonight – in the future, Commissioner, I have to say to you that you in the Commission are no longer going to tie the hands of the farmers of Europe behind their backs on meat standards which they meet every day of the week and then come here and lecture us about the WTO and everything else.

I have to say to you, Commissioner, that we are here for the next five years. I do not know how long you are going to be there, but you, if you are there, or whoever takes your place, are going to have to satisfy us in every way, shape, size and form as to how the meat that comes into Europe has got to be of the same standard as the meat we produce. We will not accept second best any more. You are not going to destroy us any more. I hope you pass that on to your officials because we cannot be expected to accept this on behalf of those who are our producers in Europe.

John Bufton, on behalf of the EFD Group. – Madam President, I, too, want to raise serious concerns about the safety and suitability of Brazilian beef exports. Unregulated meat is imported from thousands of miles away at the expense of native farmers. The meat brings with it the risk of contamination such as foot-and-mouth disease, as we have heard tonight.

The lack of strict regulation in Brazil means exporters also have an unfair competitive advantage over European farmers. The extent of hypocrisy on the matter of foreign beef exportations is made even more apparent in the context of climate change discussions. Whilst we are told we must commit to an ambitious climate change agenda, the EU turns a blind eye to the fact that the Brazilian beef export industry is responsible for 80% of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest.

Before a ban in 2007, 30 000 premises in Brazil exported beef to the EU. Today only 12% of those exports are authorised, but more and more premises are approved for EU exportation daily. Around 100 farms per month are given that right.

At the start of this issue, the Food and Veterinary Office reported significant problems in Brazil with the certification of farms and traceability of livestock. There are grave concerns about unidentified cattle in slaughterhouses. It is also widely held that many inspectors have strong connections with, or even own, the farms being granted authority to export beef.

European farmers must abide by rules put in place for the safety of the consumer. The fact that their foreign counterparts do not work under the same regulations gives overseas exporters an unfair competitive advantage. The UK beef industry faces real problems from producers outside the EU, who can mass export meat at much lower prices.

Some of the world's largest retailers, such as Carrefour and Wal-Mart, have already banned Brazilian beef on the grounds of the deforestation the industry is responsible for. Each year, an area in the Amazon the size of Belgium is cleared for the lucrative beef export industry. It is estimated that cattle rearing is responsible for 80% of illegal deforestation.

It amazes me how there is one set of rules for British and European farmers and another for farmers in Brazil. Which agricultural industry does the EU and the Commission actually support?

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

Alyn Smith (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, I would welcome much of what Mr Bufton was saying, but I would take issue and question him on one of his phrases there. He said that unregulated meat was imported into the EU. You said that, Mr Bufton, quite early in your presentation. Given the 15-minute presentation we heard from the Commissioner earlier on, would you accept that that is just clearly not the case; that your sort of hyperbole undermines the case in the serious discussion we are having here tonight about a very technical piece of legislation and regulation; and that you are not actually helping the case, you are hindering it?

John Bufton (EFD). – Madam President, I will answer that. Certainly if we look at what is happening with meat coming into the country from Brazil and countries like that, where we know there are problems with it, that is unregulated, of course. It is quite simple. The whole issue is there: it is quite clear. So I know the point you are making is a very important point, but I am telling you now that there is unregulated meat coming in from these countries.

Why on earth have we got this situation now, within the European Union? We have got meat coming across – we have heard tonight about how this meat is not being inspected in these places, in slaughterhouses and so forth, and I mentioned earlier on about the fact that we had the Food and Veterinary Office reporting these issues. That is clearly the case. We are on the same side with this one.

Diane Dodds (NI). – Madam President, I thank the Commissioner for her lengthy and full statement. Like many here in this Chamber tonight, Commissioner, I have been a little bit mystified by your acceptance that there is nothing that we can do in relation to the import of meat from Third World countries.

Just earlier in your statement, you said that just as third countries cannot impose standards in the EU, so the EU cannot impose standards on other countries. Now, for many of our farmers, that would seem an unfair position to have, and I would respectfully suggest tonight that, yes, we can impose standards until we are sure. And, until we get food and veterinary reports that actually tell us that there is compliance with the regulations that we have looked at, then we should not import beef from those countries.

Many of our farmers are suffering under the huge strain of production and feel the unfairness, and I think that you can hear in this Chamber tonight the anger that many feel in relation to this particular issue.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Madam President, as one of the co-authors of this question, can I just support Jim Nicholson's plea, regretting that the Socialists, in particular, who are now crying crocodile tears about this issue for populist reasons, refused to support a resolution on this important issue. Sometimes late at night we get cross, but sometimes it is justified.

Commissioner, thank you for your very long and detailed presentation, which I appreciate very much, but can I just say that you missed the elephant in the room. I will be blunt. You were forced to act only because of pressure from, and action by, the Irish Farmers' Association, which was reported in the Irish Farmers' Journal and followed up by this House. Political pressure brought you to your senses.

I listened in detail to your speech, took notes and will read it again. However, I really would like you to accept that you were forced to act. Can I draw your attention to your own figures: it is quite staggering that in 2007, there were 10 000 farms eligible to export while currently, only 1 700 are approved to export. Does that tell us that the others should not have been exporting at all? There are serious questions which we raise and rightly raise in this House about this importation.

I have a little time left, so let me stretch this with two points. I do not have faith in the current Commission to deal adequately and responsibly with this issue. However, I am putting the next College of Commissioners – both President and members – on notice that I and others in this House will pursue this to the very end, because we have got to persuade and cajole our producers to meet high standards. They will revolt in time if they see that those standards are debased by imports from third countries.

You may not realise the anger that is on the ground, but let me tell you it is there. We will also face this issue over cereal imports, with tighter pesticide regulations in Europe, and we will face it on animal welfare regulations when we ban caged-egg production in a few years' time and imports of powdered egg from small cages.

Rest assured, Commissioner, that it may be late but we are wide awake, and the next Commission had better beware.

Marc Tarabella (S&D). – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, what makes European beef different from imported beef? It is not necessarily the taste, nor is it just the price; it is, above all, the health standards that exist within the European Union and that do not necessarily exist in the third countries exporting their meat.

For example, as far as the production of Brazilian beef is concerned, particular mention was made of veterinary- and health-related shortcomings in a report by the Irish Farmers Association submitted to Brussels in 2007. Tests carried out by the Belgian Scientific Institute of Public Health have also revealed that the bacteriological quality of Argentinian beef was not as good as that of local meat, for instance, when the beef arrives on our plates. It is hardly surprising if we consider that it takes around two months for Argentinian beef to arrive in Europe. Consumption cycles are much shorter in Belgium, for example, as produce is usually consumed in the month of slaughter.

That is why the health standards imposed by the European Union must not only be respected by European countries; it is equally important that third countries exporting meat to Europe respect the same standards.

If this is not the case, it shows that the European Commission, who considers banning premature and unjustified, has failed in its responsibility to defend consumer interests and is penalising European producers.

Finally, the countries that have banned the import of Brazilian beef, such as the United States, Chile and Japan, are showing Europe the road to take, since for us, quality is an essential requirement. Let us therefore act accordingly so as to protect our producers, who are the guarantors of this quality.

Marian Harkin (ALDE). – Madam President, the Commissioner said we cannot impose the same standards, but we must ensure they have an equivalent effect. She spoke of EU traceability from farm to table, but she also told us that in third countries, the scope of traceability is much more limited. If the scope is much more limited – and those are the Commissioner's words – then how can it have an equivalent effect?

But my issue is the recent FVO report on beef imports from Brazil. My problem is that both the Commission and the FVO consistently play down the impact of their findings and they minimise any adverse information. Yes, additional requirements were authorised; but as my colleague Mrs McGuinness said, that was only after sustained pressure from the Committee on Agriculture and the Irish Farmers' Organisation.

I was a maths teacher for most of my life, and if I gave my students 12 problems to solve – like the 12 visits that the Commissioner had to establishments in Brazil – and they only solved six of them correctly, I would not stamp 'satisfactory' on their exam paper. If three had minor and three had major problems, I would not consider that a good outcome, particularly if I had spent years working with them to improve their grades.

EU farmers want fair trade as well as free trade, and EU consumers deserve certainty. The EU Commission and the FVO have a responsibility to ensure both. I certainly would not give them an 'A' grade for their work.

Richard Ashworth (ECR). – Madam President, I was happy to hear that the Commissioner is determined to maintain food standards in the EU, but there are two issues that I want to pull her up on.

Firstly, Commissioner, you talked about posters in airports. I have got to tell you that I have never seen any warnings or any checks carried out in airports in the EU on imported food products. I suggest you reinvestigate that, because it is not happening to the extent that you think it is.

Secondly, I am not convinced about your argument regarding Brazilian beef. I went there myself, saw matters on the ground and support previous speakers in this regard.

Farmers in the EU conform to the world's highest standards, and rightly so. However, these imply a level of cost which we cannot pass on to our consumers. It is therefore grossly unfair to expose European producers and consumers to a product which simply does not conform to the same standards as we are expected to achieve.

Past experience has shown us that you cannot leave it to commercial interests to resolve this problem. You have to have a sound EU food policy. That is not protectionism – it is a common agricultural policy doing precisely what it was intended to do, which is to supply an assured quantity and quality of food. The two points I have made show it to be falling very short.

Albert Deß (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, I am grateful to Mrs Herranz García for bringing up this topic today in Parliament. This is a discussion which is fundamental to food policy. I am not interested in shaming Brazil or other countries. The basic question is this: Do we need these strict regulations for European agricultural production in the interests of consumer safety? If the answer is 'yes', then this means that consumer protection is regarded as a coherent whole. If the regulations are needed, then the same rules must apply to imports as to our own farmers. The Commission must not allow imports from countries which do not fulfil these requirements. Cattle farmers in Europe must not be punished because one cow in their herd has an ear tag missing, when imports are allowed from cattle herds which do not have a single ear tag. This is not acceptable. If traceability is so important for consumer protection, then it must also apply to imports. If we cannot ensure that this is the case, then it is unfair to our farmers to demand it of them.

I have the impression that those people in the Commission who are responsible for imports are applying double standards. As already discussed, I am not interested in partitioning off Europe. I would like to see fair competition for our farmers in Europe so that we can continue to guarantee the food supply of half-a-billion people in future. I can assure you of one thing, Commissioner, and you can pass this on to your successor, Parliament will continue to touch on this sore point. We will not give up until equal competitive conditions have been established. We have good arguments that we can bring up repeatedly to ensure that food security is guaranteed in Europe in future.

Ricardo Cortés Lastra (S&D). – (ES) Madam President, Commissioner, fellow Members, the European Commission must continue to monitor compliance of third-party imports with European standards, since such monitoring benefits us all. It benefits our farmers and stockbreeders, who have worked hard to comply with European standards, it benefits our consumers, who are demanding increasing amounts of high-quality farming products and livestock that comply with rules on plant protection, animal welfare and traceability, and it benefits third countries wishing to export their products to the European Union.

Lastly, I would like to recall that this problem is not restricted to a single sector or a single country. The issue of the competitiveness of European agriculture is a complex one that requires in-depth debate.

Julie Girling (ECR). – Madam President, my region of south-west England is blessed with a particular blend of climate and landscape which produces good grazing and excellent beef. British farmers are amongst the most efficient in the world and they work, after bitter experience, to the highest standards of animal welfare and traceability. All these factors, coupled with a growing world population and increased efforts to ensure food security, should mean that they are a happy lot.

Nothing could be further from the truth. They find themselves under attack on many fronts. Only this week we see that this Parliament will be entertaining the vegetarian lobby, claiming that meat eaters and, by association, farmers, are climate criminals. Yet they see the EU failing to be rigorous in dealing with countries where they are clearing rain forests to raise cattle. How can the consumer see any logic?

Beef farmers are not asking for special privileges – just a level playing field. It is absolutely vital that we support them, not by protectionism, but by making sure that all exports to the EU match their high standards. I urge you, Commissioner, to sharpen up your act, stiffen your backbone, reread your FVO report and deliver.

Giovanni La Via (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that the topic we are discussing this evening is only a small part of a much bigger problem. The topic of fairness between the treatment of imports and the conditions imposed on our producers does not concern only meat and meat imports but also affects many other production sectors.

As you are well aware, Europe is a net importer of meat. In our continent, Europe, we produce only 60% of our requirements. This means that we are forced to import. Yet we wish to guarantee consumption conditions and the health of our consumers. We hope this is the last time we have to hear what we heard today, in other words, that it is not possible to impose similar conditions on imports, because this is certainly not the direction in which we should be moving.

Although we have product traceability conditions which help to raise standards internally for our consumers, I believe it is important to maintain these standards both for our producers internally and for imports from abroad.

Esther de Lange (PPE). – (NL) Commissioner, as the last speaker on the official speakers' list, I will try to sum up this debate. I think that one way in which I can do that is by using the Dutch proverb: 'All monks of the same order should have to wear the same habit'. My apologies to whomever has to come up with an interpretation of that at this late an hour but, although we in the Netherlands have hardly any monks left these days, we still use that proverb when we want to say that you have to apply the same standards in equivalent situations. Therefore, any requirements which you impose on EU producers should also apply to third country producers who wish to enter our market. Otherwise, you will simply be making it impossible for our farmers to compete.

That applies to the identification and registration of cattle and to animal disease prevention measures in Brazil. However, it should equally apply to chlorinated chicken imported from the United States and to bovine growth hormones in milk. And to cloned animals, and so the list goes on, Commissioner. Listening to my fellow members, I get the impression that that is exactly what Parliament is going to judge the new Commission on – whether or not they apply the same standards in equivalent situations. And they are not going to judge them on it, as we are doing now, five years down the line, but well in advance of the new Commission taking office.

Commissioner, you also spoke about foot-and-mouth. I agree with you that we have indeed taken some steps forward. For example, vaccination has been given greater prominence in the combating of the disease. Thank God, because, in my country alone, 285 animals have had to be destroyed, as a result of 26 cases of foot-and-mouth. However, Commissioner, the next Commission will also be judged on whether we have been able to market products derived from these vaccinated animals within the European Union.

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, Parliament's agricultural experts have made a quite simple demand. They are asking for no more and no less than the same conditions for production at home, that is within the European Union, as for imports.

I listened with interest as Mrs Vassiliou spent more than ten minutes explaining to us that essentially, this is not possible. She could have answered more concisely. She could simply have said: 'Yes, Parliament is right and I will put that in place and take it into account in future'. What my group and now Parliament are asking for has nothing to do with trade restrictions. On the contrary, it is a crucial requirement for fair world trade and for the mutual exchange of goods. We want fair rules in the market economy within the EU and abroad, no more and no less. We will be calling for this now and in future from the Commission. You can be sure of that.

Graham Watson (ALDE). – Madam President, the debate prior to this was about hunger. These two debates are linked. The Commissioner is right to do what she can to ensure consumer protection in Europe, and colleagues in this Chamber are right to hold her to account and to hold the highest standards.

But beef is a cash crop. It is produced as cheaply as countries can produce it. Tragically, to produce one kilogram of beef takes 100 times more water than to produce one kilogram of soya.

If we are concerned about consumer protection worldwide, we will do two things. First, we will help third countries more to develop the kinds of systems of traceability that they need, and second, we will follow the advice of my colleague Chris Davies in the last debate in encouraging all of our citizens to stop eating meat.

Elisabeth Köstinger (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, our citizens have high expectations regarding the safety and quality of their food. This concerns not only animal health and food safety, but also environmental standards, production and animal welfare. The traceability and accompanying transparency of foodstuffs from the producer to the consumer is only guaranteed in Europe. It is in all our interests to ensure that our consumers are protected, that European agricultural products are competitive and, therefore, that the agricultural industry itself is competitive. For this reason, I feel that it is essential and that it is one of our responsibilities as Members of the European Parliament to speed up this debate and to ensure that the related political framework is in place.

Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE). – (RO) Madam President, Commissioner, as you are very well aware, Romania is not entitled to sell pork and pork products on the European market, in return for which we have been given the right, from next year, to import pork from other Member States and export it afterwards in processed form.

In addition, we will also have to implement, within a maximum of one year, clear, stringent and costly slaughter rules. I am convinced that Romanian pig farmers would be extremely happy if these rules were replaced by a system of superficial and selective controls or by a few posters stuck up at airports. I am obviously joking, but the rules, if rules are to be applied, must be the same and mandatory for everyone.

Michel Dantin (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, thank you for your statement, which I believe reflects the remarkable work you have done during your mandate. Europe has chosen a food model to protect its population. Our fellow citizens are ready to pay EUR 100 per year per capita if we guarantee the quality of their food.

The other day in committee, we learnt of the Food and Veterinary Office's report. I must tell you that, as a new MEP, I was deeply concerned to see the discomfort of your staff, who obviously could not answer or did not want to answer our questions.

Commissioner, should we be ashamed of having strict rules to protect our consumers? Should we be ashamed of imposing these rules on those who want to feed our consumers? Are we ashamed when, in order to sell aircraft or cars, these same countries force us to establish this or that factory or impose this or that condition on us?

Our market access conditions are important conditions because they affect food and they affect the health of our residents. We have nothing to be ashamed of.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, we want to export, but we also have to import. Trade accelerates development, it brings benefits to the parties to the exchange, but certain necessary requirements are imposed here, related to quality and meeting suitable standards – this is obvious, and I am sure we are agreed on this. Europe has a variety of forms of inspection and audit in order to protect its market

from an influx of food which does not meet European standards, or which would be a threat to our health security. From what the Commissioner has said, we cannot expect the same audit procedures as we apply to our own producers – have I understood that correctly? What does it mean, as you clearly indicated, that only the effect of these measures should be the same? By way of comparison I would like to ask if, for example, Russia or another country can impose requirements on the import of goods from the EU which we cannot impose, for example, on meat imported from Brazil? Are only the effects important here, as in the case of imports from Brazil?

Androulla Vassiliou, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, may I remind the honourable Members that what I said was not that we cannot impose rules on third countries. I am sorry that, even after a presentation of 10 to 15 minutes, I failed to explain the rules we impose when we import from third countries.

I must remind you that at the same time as we are importers of meat from third countries – and at this point we import from Brazil only 5% of our requirements for beef in the European Union – we are also big exporters to third countries: to Russia and elsewhere. At this point, our exports to Russia amount to EUR 1 billion per year – mostly from Ireland. We are trying to convince Russia that we cannot accept the same rules as applied in Russia. There are rules of international trade, and we apply equivalent, but not identical, rules provided that we are satisfied that they are strict enough to protect our consumers.

This is what we are doing. The reason why we applied the safety rules in the case of Brazil is precisely because our FVO missions have shown us that something was going wrong. We applied very strict rules. I gave you the figures.

Regarding the last mission to Brazil, there were indeed problems, but I challenge you to look at all the reports of our FVO missions to any of the Member States and make a comparison. You will also see very serious deficiencies in the Member States, which we ask Member States and their authorities to put right. That is also what we have asked Brazil to do.

Problems were identified in Brazil. In one state, where three holdings showed significant deficiencies, the Brazilian authorities took corrective action to de-list all the holdings concerned and to retrain the auditors responsible for their audits.

Problems were also identified at three other holdings, mainly in relation to delays of notification of animal movements or to the consistency of the data in the database. These problems were recognised to be minor problems by the FVO Team. Nevertheless, the Brazilian authorities made an undertaking to review the database to avoid incorrect data.

The FVO missions have this in mind when they go. They know that they will find defects. Our obligation is to correct the deficiencies that we find – whether this is in Member States or in third countries – because our obligation is to our consumers. I want to assure you that we shall continue sending missions to Brazil and to other third countries to make sure that when deficiencies are discovered, they are put right. I must also assure you that we are playing a very fair game for our farmers and producers vis-à-vis third countries.

There was a remark about Romania, which in the same way as Bulgaria and – in the past – many other Member States, had a problem with classical swine fever. We have heard a lot about Romania and Bulgaria. I must challenge you to ask your respective governments what assistance we have offered in order to get rid of this problem. I am sure that Romania will be able to export meat in the very near future precisely because of the assistance we have offered it and Bulgaria to get rid of classical swine fever.

In ending I want to assure you that our first responsibility is to our European consumers and that we want a just and fair deal for everybody. You can also be assured that our FVO missions to third countries will be very strict. We shall remain vigilant and if something goes wrong, we shall try to put it right. We shall remain vigilant and strict. Whether more farms are put on the list or not depends entirely on the Brazilian authorities, and on whether they are prepared to spend the money that they have to spend in order to have their farms approved in accordance with our standards and to be able to export. If they do not, then they will not.

President. – The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Béla Glattfelder (PPE), in writing. – (HU) The European Union's food safety regulations are the most stringent and high-level in the world. However, compliance with these regulations incurs significant additional costs for Europe's farmers. European products cannot be put at a disadvantage to products originating from third

countries simply because the latter have been produced according to a lower level of food industry regulations. The health of European consumers must not be endangered by products which are not of the appropriate quality and are unsafe. Meat products can carry a particularly wide range of health risks if they are not produced in the appropriate conditions. This is why the European Commission and Member States must ensure that identical conditions apply to meat products produced within the EU and originating from third countries.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), in writing. – (PL) Ladies and gentlemen, recently, the European Commission has noted a significant rise in beef imports from third countries, in particular, from Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. To import any product to the EU, including beef, high Community standards must be met, standards which have recently been made more rigorous by the European Commission. Very often, however, products coming from third countries do not meet these food safety standards. Despite this, their significantly lower price makes them competitive in the marketplace. This is also why a key question at the moment is the support of our farmers, and promotion of European products, which meet high standards and are healthy and safe. The subject we are discussing has another aspect. We should draw conclusions from the critical situation in the dairy market. Perhaps today, when, in many EU Member States, we cannot cope with the overproduction of milk, it would be worth thinking about how to reorganise beef production. Thank you for your attention.

20. Agenda for next sitting: see Minutes

21. Closure of the sitting

(The sitting was closed at 23.50)