

WEDNESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2009

IN THE CHAIR: MR PÖTTERING

President

1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting was opened at 9 a.m.)

2. Action taken on Parliament's resolutions: see Minutes

3. 2050: The future begins today – Recommendations for the EU's future integrated policy on climate change (debate)

President. – The next item is the report (A6-0495/2008) by Mr Florenz on behalf of the Temporary Committee on Climate Change on 2050: the future begins today – recommendations for the EU's future integrated policy on climate change (2008/2105(INI)).

Karl-Heinz Florenz, rapporteur. – *(DE)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would, in particular, like to say good morning to my fellow Members who have been working for months on this climate report. I am very grateful to you for the fair and cooperative way in which you have worked with me to put together this report.

The procedure in a horizontal committee was new. We did not have discussions with experts in a group, but with people from the transport sector, and, quite rightly, with people from the economic sector and, of course, also with people from the energy sector. It was quite clear during this process that the first hours and days of the debate were somewhat tougher because this was new subject matter. At this point, I would like once again to thank our Chairman and my good friend, Mr Sacconi, who always presided in an excellent and fair manner.

Today's achievement, which we have noted, is essentially that this horizontal cooperation presents a great opportunity, and with the next composition of Parliament we ought to make sure that people talk to each other more and that we do not just have individual groups opposing each other.

That has been the greatest advantage of this committee. We had invited quite high-level experts such as Nobel Peace Prize winner Rajendra Pachauri, and experts in science, research and, of course, politics. Finally today we have an outcome in hand which shows us that the report has proved to be very positive.

We know very well that prohibitions, sanctions and doing without achieve very little. Instead, we must encourage changes in awareness as well as innovation and motivation. Our aim must be for the engineers of Europe to get up each morning and take pleasure in trying to build machines that work more efficiently in this world in order to utilise our children's raw materials better and considerably more efficiently.

The report is also honest. We have stated that we do not have any super weapons. There is no switch that we can flick, not in Brussels nor in Bali nor in Poland in December; instead we have a whole host of measures. This is precisely where the opportunity lies: the opportunity to make it clear to the people that they themselves are responsible for a third of this climate change, for example as a result of them heating their houses. As citizens, however, we are all responsible for a third, including as a result of mobility and all that entails, and industry is also responsible for a third. The report is therefore directed at us all. That is the wonderful thing about it. We do not need to look for a villain; we are all urged to take part in innovative discussions. I am particularly pleased about that.

It is also clear that this report is evenly balanced, and I would like to emphasise that once again, because it does not represent any party programmes. Nor does it disparage any area. Instead, we point out that in certain areas there are more opportunities, whereas in other areas we have fewer opportunities. For that reason, the report also states that it ultimately points the way and indicates the way forward – particularly for Europe, as in Europe we have a vast amount of environmental technology, the volume of which is comparable with the European car industry. The amount will increase, and we must work on this to bring about innovation.

I just said that we should involve our citizens so that they can do something in their own houses. In this connection, local politics, chambers of commerce and industry and trade associations can achieve a considerable amount in terms of motivation and the provision of information.

Let me conclude by saying that the many benefits that we have demonstrated in this report should make us realise that the opportunities lie in innovation and not in depression. If we understand that, then this task has been worthwhile.

President. – Thank you very much for the work that you have carried out Mr Florenz, and for your report.

Martin Bursík, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – Mr President, it is a pleasure to be here and share with you some thoughts on the important year ahead. Firstly, let me congratulate the Temporary Committee on Climate Change for all the work it has accomplished since its creation in April 2007: hearings, conferences, reports, resolutions, exchanges with third parties. Its tireless efforts have greatly contributed towards shaping the EU position on climate change.

The latest resolution, '2050: The future begins today – Recommendations for the EU's future integrated policy on climate change', which was adopted by the Temporary Committee on Climate Change on 2 December 2008, and which you will adopt at this part-session, will again provide a very useful basis when discussing the options for a post-2012 climate agreement and for further deepening the EU's climate policies.

As you know, the work during the Presidency will focus on the international negotiation process. By the way, I am leaving Strasbourg today and flying to Delhi to have discussions with the Indian Government and Indian representatives. Two weeks later we have an EU-Africa meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, and we have already made contact with the US Administration, which I will mention later.

By adopting the climate and environment legislative package at the end of 2008, the EU is sending a very strong political signal to all our partners in the world. With the adoption of this package in a few months' time, the EU will demonstrate that its commitment, as well as its leadership, in the global fight against climate change is as strong as ever. Indeed, the EU will be the first region in the world to commit unilaterally to a reduction of its greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020.

As you know, the climate and energy package will, as of 2013, enable the reform of the EU-ETS (Emissions Trading Scheme), set limits for the emissions outside the Emissions Trading Scheme, stimulate CO₂ capture and storage technology, as well as boost the deployment of renewables.

As far as the ETS is concerned, a single EU cap with a linear downwards trajectory will be set, auctioning will be gradually introduced as the method of allocating allowances and monitoring reporting, and verification will be strengthened. But, of course, the EU has repeatedly said that it will not settle for 20% – we want to go for 30% – and, therefore, we hope for an ambitious global and comprehensive agreement in Copenhagen.

The Copenhagen Conference is now only 10 months away. The December 2008 Poznań Climate Conference agreed on a work programme for 2009, with clearly identified steps towards Copenhagen. The decision in Poznań on the operationalisation of the Adaptation Fund represents an important step forward in the negotiations on the financing building block – one of the key elements of any comprehensive global agreement.

The ministerial round table in Poznań also confirmed the shared willingness of both the developed and the developing countries to find an effective globally agreed response to dangerous climate change for the post-2012 period. This encompasses further mitigation efforts, adaptation actions and finance and technology means to make that response operational.

Poznań has also sent the message that the current financial crisis is not to be seen as an obstacle to further action on climate change, but, instead, as yet another opportunity for profoundly transforming our economic system and moving firmly towards a low-carbon economy.

The Czech Presidency intends to build on such important achievements and to pursue efforts at international level towards a successful agreement in Copenhagen in December 2009.

On 2 March 2009, the Environment Council, and later the ECOFIN Council and the spring European Council, will be the first opportunities for further developing the EU position in this respect, on the basis of the Commission communication towards a comprehensive climate change agreement in Copenhagen, which we received a week ago, and on the basis of your input.

In addition to the shared vision for long-term action for mitigation technology and adaptation, the identification of appropriate means for financing effective and long-term climate policies will be key in future EU deliberations. In this context, I can only reiterate the Climate Change Committee's call on the Commission and the Member States 'to adopt, at bilateral level in the negotiations towards a post-2012 agreement, a mediating role between the positions of developed countries, in order to ensure by means of a balance of interest the success of the climate negotiations involving all major greenhouse gas emitters'.

The EU will also continue to engage in active outreach with key negotiating partners and main emerging economies, but also with a new US Administration. I have spoken on the phone to Carol Browner, the President's assistant for energy and climate change. I have made a preliminary proposal to her for a high-level meeting with US representatives and the EU Commission – Commissioner Dimas – the Czech Presidency and the upcoming Swedish Presidency (i.e. the Troika) in early March, probably 2 or 6 March.

I said that the EU would like to work as closely as possible with the United States on the evolution and linkage of carbon markets. We gather that Congressman Waxman has indicated that he will try to get the legislation from his committee on the cap-and-trade system to be implemented at the end of May. This is quite an encouraging response from the United States as a reaction to the activities of the European Union.

We also count on the European Parliament to ensure that the EU voice is more widely heard, and we appreciate very much the outreach efforts that you have made in the past. I can only encourage you to continue along this path and wish you all good luck for the year ahead.

Stavros Dimas, *Member of the Commission*. – (EL) Mr President, honourable members of the European Parliament, the final report by the Temporary Committee on Climate Change for which Mr Florenz acted as rapporteur has ambitious targets and covers a broad spectrum of issues, thereby confirming the considerable importance that the European Parliament attaches to the question of climate change. I should like to congratulate the Temporary Committee on Climate Change, and in particular the rapporteur, Mr Florenz, on their exceptional work.

Last year, our priority was the package of measures on climate change and energy. Our efforts bore fruit and we can now be proud of this very important package of legislative acts. This year, we shall be focusing in particular within the European Union on preparing the implementation measures for this package. At international level, our priority will be negotiations on climate change, which will be stepped up in the run-up to the United Nations conference in Copenhagen and, as you have just heard, the Czech Presidency attaches great importance to these negotiations and has planned a series of bilateral and multilateral meetings and negotiations. Your report has therefore come along at the right time. In the run-up to Copenhagen we must muster all our forces and work together so that, given the particular role of Europe, we will achieve the best possible result.

I am delighted that your report, in keeping with the Commission's analysis, emphasises that the economic and financial crisis should not be used as an excuse to delay action to deal with climate change. We also agree that taking action to deal with climate change forms part of the solution to the economic crisis we face today.

With the package of measures on climate change and energy, Europe is now moving on the track of an economy of low carbon dioxide emissions. At the same time, it will help to restrict Europe's dependency on imported energy, which is an equally important benefit, as we saw recently with the natural gas crisis. By implementing the target of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases by 20% or by 30%, and provided that the other developed countries accept such reductions within the framework of the international agreement, we shall without doubt be in the most ambitious position of any other country or group of countries. We are setting an example to the rest of the world, which will give a positive dynamic to the international negotiations.

Before we focus our debate on the international negotiations, I should like to comment briefly on an issue which was very rightly highlighted in the report. The report contains valuable proposals on what has to be done in order to make more efficient and effective use of natural resources, in order to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and save energy.

Last year, the Commission made an initial step in this direction by approving the action plan on sustainable production and consumption. More recently, with measures to complement the package of measures on climate change and energy, it strengthened action to save and make more efficient use of energy. Be that as it may, a great deal still needs to be done in the field of the sustainable use of natural resources and, of course, there is still huge potential for making more efficient use of energy. One illustrative example is the proposal

which the Commission tabled recently on the energy efficiency of buildings. This is a sector for multiple targeting as it has significant benefits in terms both of energy savings and climate protection, while at the same time creating employment and contributing to the development of technological innovation.

Today, more than ever, we need to tone up and strengthen our economies by taking measures to speed up the adoption and use of clean technologies which will help to create clean jobs. At the same time, important opportunities will be created for our foreign trade as markets for clean technologies rapidly expand. With this in mind, last December the Commission proposed, among other things, specific actions within the framework of the European Economic Recovery Plan.

As far as international negotiations on climate change are concerned, the package of measures on climate change and energy has without doubt strengthened our arguments and efforts to persuade our international partners that taking effective measures is not only necessary but also feasible. Of course, there is no doubt that the international negotiations will be very difficult, due in part to the fact that they are so complex. Nonetheless, I believe that agreement will be reached in Copenhagen. We can and must reach an agreement. There is no time to lose. It is a question of political will and I think that the will exists.

Now, as the international negotiations start to intensify, last week the Commission adopted a communication which includes its positions on the most important points of the negotiations. First of all, it is the developed countries which are being called upon to continue to play a leading role. Positive messages are coming from the United States because, as the Czech minister mentioned earlier, President Obama has promised that the USA will be actively involved in the international negotiations. He has also announced that there will be a greenhouse gas trading scheme in the United States and that there will be reductions of 80% by 2050 compared with 1990.

All this is positive, but we want to see it put into practice quickly, in fact this year, because we need to reach an agreement in Copenhagen at the end of this year and the United States have a debt and, based on what President Obama has announced, they will need to make a decisive contribution, together with the European Union, so that we can all reach agreement in Copenhagen. Of course we welcome the debate under way within the United States, which will result in various other decisive measures being taken to combat climate change. One illustrative element is the measures announced recently for cars.

The communication by the European Commission confirms the target to reduce emissions by 30% collectively in the developed countries and defines the concept of comparability of effort. Comparability will be of decisive importance both in achieving the environmental targets and in safeguarding fair terms of competition. The Commission has proposed a series of criteria for defining comparability.

As far as developing countries are concerned, although efforts of similar type and scope to those of developed countries are not required, it is nonetheless important to ensure that they will continue to take action so that the economic development which they need will be less carbon dioxide-intensive. In order to achieve the objective of not exceeding 2 degrees Celsius in 2050, developing countries will need to limit the rate of increase in their emissions by 15% to 30% below those which they would otherwise have recorded had they made no effort to reduce up to 2020. Of course, the effort which will need to be made by each developing country separately will depend on their level of economic development and their resources. This means that we shall obviously be expecting more from the rapidly developing economies than from the others.

We all know that we shall not achieve the results we want in Copenhagen if we do not manage to increase investments and safeguard greater funding for reductions in emissions and adapt. Of course, one portion of the investments needed, even in developing countries, will come from the private sector within the various countries, while approximately one-third, according to the Commission's estimates, will come from the carbon dioxide market. Furthermore, one part needs to be public funding and we must examine ways of securing these public funds. Today, in the midst of a recession, this will not be an easy debate. We must nonetheless be prepared and must put forward arguments for this debate, bearing in mind that the cost of doing nothing will be much higher than the cost of any measures.

Finally, the Commission communication stresses the importance of a global carbon dioxide market and the creation, between the countries of the OECD, of compatible trading systems by 2015, while for the economically more advanced developing countries it is proposed that this should happen at a later date before 2020.

These are the main messages in the Commission communication and I shall be most interested to hear your views on them. International negotiations will proceed apace and intense diplomatic work will be needed on our part this year. I welcome your contribution to this major effort.

Romana Jordan Cizelj, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (SL) Climate change is a vast field and I would agree with the rapporteur when he says that we, members of the Temporary Committee on Climate Change, had to find innovative means in order to encompass the full breadth and content of this field. However, now that our work is done, I can confirm that we have, indeed, had ample opportunity to exchange many different views and opinions and to put forward various proposals for future action. Our discussions were quite dynamic at times, precisely because of the diversity of the views expressed. As a result, the report represents a broad spectrum of opinion and offers many good proposals, but it also enables us to coordinate our continued work in the permanent committees, as regards formulating various sectoral policies. Personally, I think that it would be a good idea if we pursued this particular methodology.

Certainly, the fields we mentioned previously, such as energy, transport and industry, proved to offer the greatest opportunities for action, but other fields proved important, too, and here I allude to agriculture, cattle breeding, sustainable forestry, information and communication technologies and the EU's development policy concerning third countries.

Our transition to a low-carbon society will, of course, be possible if we continue to invest in research and to quicken the pace of development and innovation, and if we pursue the other objectives defined in the Lisbon Strategy. However, that alone will not be enough. We also have to change our lifestyles, but we will only be able to do so if people embrace environmental protection as a genuine value. In this regard, we need to achieve much more when it comes to information campaigns and awareness raising.

I also agree with the comments made about the correlation between the financial crisis and climate change. However, even this presents us with an opportunity and fears that climate change might have to take second place to the financial crisis are unjustified, because our measures for reviving the economy need to be designed in such a way as to promote sustainable development, not just consumer spending.

Since our objective is to limit global temperature increases, we also need to work internationally, of course. Here, Europe must establish and deepen its dialogue with the developed countries, because we have to reduce and eliminate the burden of our historic emissions together, while at the same time listening to developing nations and the poorest countries and enabling them to espouse sustainable development, even if it carries a higher price tag.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur, Mr Karl-Heinz Florenz, on the openness he has shown in our work.

Dorette Corbey, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (NL) I should first of all like to offer Mr Florenz my heartfelt thanks for the sheer dedication and resolve with which he has written his report. It has, in my view, become an all-encompassing report with nearly 200 recommendations, and really worthwhile. It contains many sound recommendations that can be a source of inspiration to the next Parliament, the national parliaments and local authorities.

I would like to mention five core themes that are really essential for our group. First of all, this report recognises that climate change is comprehensive, affecting, as it does, all sectors, not just industry, transport and energy, for which we have already established rules, but also agriculture, health, science and technology, ICT, education, soil, water and land use. All these areas deserve our full attention and an effective solution.

Secondly, climate policy should also have a social dimension and should show solidarity. We need to address employment, income aspects and energy poverty. We need to know how new technology will be paid for, and who will bear that cost. We want to know how many jobs will be created and whether any jobs will be lost. We want retraining programmes for the new green poll workers. Without maximum social dedication, it is extremely difficult to maintain political support for climate policy.

Our third core theme is related to the economic crisis, where we once again need a comprehensive solution. The *Green New Deal* has now become a concept, and one that receives our wholehearted support. Considerable investments are needed. Interventions to support banks and businesses should at least have a sustainable component. Investments in houses and blocks of flats in Eastern Europe should be given greater priority, as these will be to the benefit of employment, energy security and the climate.

Our fourth core theme is agriculture. This is usually not something we discuss when we talk about the climate. Today, we demonstrate that it is, in fact, necessary, and it proved to be a controversial topic. We have long discussed the question of whether agriculture should have binding targets, and we are agreed that we should consider this seriously. What is also clear is that agriculture does not only pose a problem, it also offers solutions. Sound agriculture, effective land use and an appropriate use of biomass can help reduce greenhouse gases.

Our fifth core theme, finally, is about involving people. This requires the provision of information and transparency. If we want to change our consumption behaviour, we need to know exactly which products produce high levels of greenhouse gases and we may have to adapt our consumption patterns accordingly. This is not easy, of course, but the problem of climate change – as Mr Florenz pointed out a moment ago – cannot be solved with a few technical tricks. We will, at any rate, need to try our best to involve as many people as possible in the major challenges we are facing. Local initiatives are very valuable in this regard. Free energy audits for houses, better public transport and local and regional food production. Together, we can achieve a great deal.

With this set of measures, there is also reason for optimism. Greenhouse gases can be reduced, which contributes to innovation, economic growth, better energy supply, better food production, more employment and a more stable climate. I am indebted to all fellow Members who have made a contribution to this.

Chris Davies, on behalf of the ALDE Group. – Mr President, an elephant lurks in the wings of this debate that we seem reluctant to identify. There is virtually no reference to it in this report and only a passing mention in the Commission's comprehensive strategy for achieving a climate change agreement in Copenhagen. It is the fact that human population is growing at unprecedented and unsustainable levels. In the lifetimes of many of us here, population on this planet will have trebled. It continues to grow at the rate of 200 000 every day: 80 million a year.

Why does China need a new coal-fired power station every week? Because its population has more than doubled in 50 years, it is continuing to grow fast, demand for energy grows with it, and Chinese people want what we have in the West, and they have every right to that. The Minister is flying to India today. Population growth is even faster there and again they are turning to coal for energy.

But this planet has finite resources. We need to slow and reverse our population growth. We must do so entirely through non-coercive means, and we must never arrogantly forget that those of us in the developed countries contribute vastly more to climate change than those in developing countries.

The UN population fund says that 380 women in the world become pregnant every minute of the day, and half of that number do not plan to do so. Contraception must be available for all. Women must have control over their reproductive lives: it is so preferable to the alternative of unsafe abortion.

Medical resources need improvements so that women can safely delay giving birth until a later age, but above all the issue must be on the political agenda. Our refusal to place it there is the greatest folly. Families everywhere should be talking about this. Governments should be setting targets for population stability or reduction. Admitting the central importance of population growth is key to addressing it, and we will not succeed in tackling climate change or achieving sustainable development if we fail to do so.

Liam Aylward, on behalf of the UEN Group. – Mr President, I would also like to compliment Mr Florenz on his effort and commitment in producing this report and, of course, on his ability to listen to, and understand, the many varied and different opinions.

As legislators, it is paramount, in the midst of a massive economic downturn, that we work on results for green energy technology. We can become world leaders in our diverse renewable energy fields, which should create a tight, effective and coordinated strategy – including governments, NGOs, academia, business, forward-thinkers – seeking not to talk but to solve. We need to reduce bureaucracy and support SMEs and technology developers.

The market is there. The regulatory framework is clear. We have set the targets for renewable energy. Although funding is scarce, it is crucial to technology development and to maintaining expertise. Banks and funders will have to take risks on green technology start-ups. There will be long-term gain if we step up to the mark. The jobs and wealth will flow. If, on the other hand, we dilly-dally during this precious time, we will lose out and other countries will be only too ready to fill the gap.

For example, Ireland could become to ocean wave technology what Finland is to mobile phone technology. We have the undisputed potential due to weather and location in the Atlantic. We have the technology patented. We have the expertise in situ and we have the legal target framework. The market is clear, so it is a magnificent opportunity for job creation, electricity price reduction, energy security and carbon emission reduction, not to mention patent revenues.

We now need to get behind our companies, who have been working for over a decade to come to this point. They have taken the risks, and we need to support them through increased funding. Delays at this point would be detrimental. Green technology is our future. We have the opportunity now, so let us use it.

Rebecca Harms, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, I would also like to thank Mr Florenz, in particular for his patience in the negotiations. The length of the report is evidence of the huge number of issues there were to deal with.

However, I would also like to pose the question of how sustainable the agreement is that is now being signalled at the beginning of this year by this report. I remember the International Climate Conference in Poznań very well and the very weak role that the Europeans played there, because they were preoccupied with adjusting downwards their ambitious promises and ambitious statements from the international round of negotiations in Bali and, in view of the emerging financial and economic crisis, they were busy relegating climate policy to a lower priority.

I believe that the next year will be decisive as regards the question of whether we really are prepared, as we currently keep promising, to adjust the type of economy to which we in the industrial nations have become accustomed on the basis of our knowledge of climate change. I believe that the decision as to whether or not we will go down the road of sustainability has not yet been made.

In Poznań, Ban Ki-Moon and Achim Steiner recommended very strongly that all measures taken by the Member States in their economic stimulus plans and their bank rescue packages now be combined with programmes to combat poverty in developing countries and the dreadful consequences of climate change in developing countries, and also with measures for a really ambitious level of climate protection and a new energy policy.

I can see that any legislation at European level relating to this issue will be establishing new ground. It is by no means certain that Europe will find its way along the road to a modern society of energy efficiency and renewable energies. Now, as before, it all rests on the decision: do we carry on with the old mix of coal and nuclear energy or do we take ambitious new paths? I hope that we continue to address this issue as constructively as we have done in the Temporary Committee on Climate Change, although I am not certain that that will happen.

Jens Holm, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (SV) Finally, we are to take a decision on this climate resolution, after more than eighteen months of work. I would like to mention three things in particular.

The long-term reduction targets: in paragraph 3, we demand emissions reductions in the EU of between 25% and 40% by 2020 and at least 80% by 2050. This is a good thing and it means that we are setting higher requirements than those in last year's EU climate package.

We are also demanding measures to be taken in respect of the meat industry. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) report, Livestock's long shadow, the meat industry is responsible for 18% of the world's emissions. This is something we take note of in this report and we demand a reduction in the consumption of meat. This is a bold and, to an extent, historic decision by this Parliament, which usually prefers to support subsidies for this industry, but it is a shame that the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats, in particular, want to vote to remove these requirements. In the same way that we need to reduce motoring, we also ought to dare to say that the current soaring meat consumption is not sustainable.

Allow me also to remind you that the meat industry is, in fact, the primary cause of the destruction of the Amazon rainforest as a result of the creation both of grazing land for animals and land for the production of feed. A large proportion of this feed is exported to Europe as soya. This is not sustainable.

The car industry is another growing problem. Between 1990 and 2005, emissions from the European transport industry increased by 32%. A huge investment in public transport and other environmentally-friendly transport is needed. Cars using fossil fuels must be replaced by electric cars and perhaps, in future, also by

hydrogen-powered vehicles. We need to ask ourselves whether the situation with all these forms of transport is sustainable. Should we not encourage local production and consumption instead?

Finally, I would like to issue a warning with regard to Amendments 12 and 28, which demand an increase in nuclear energy. If they are adopted, my group will be unable to support this resolution. Therefore, please vote against Amendments 12 and 28. Thank you very much.

Johannes Blokland, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group*. – (NL) Given that a large part of Western Europe is in the grip of a very cold spell right now, a debate on global warming is perhaps a little ill-timed. As the title of the report suggests, however, we are looking at the long term in this debate. We should not, therefore, get too bogged down by short-term events. Mr Florenz's final report has turned out to be well thought-out and sound, and sends out a strong message.

To reduce or prevent the negative effects of climate change, tough action is needed across a wide area. We need tough goals for the period between 2020 and 2050. Not one section of society should escape making efforts. In the run-up to the climate conference in Copenhagen, we will need to maintain our ambition, backed up by a wide range of measures. This report makes a particularly valuable contribution towards this.

Roger Helmer (NI). – Mr President, 500 years ago there was a consensus amongst learned men that the world was flat. They were wrong. In the 1970s, after three decades of global cooling, there was a consensus amongst scientists that we were facing a new ice age. They were wrong. In 1999, everybody believed that the millennium bug would create a global disaster by closing down computer systems across the world. Weapon systems would fail, commerce would stop, aircraft would fall out of the sky. They were wrong. Nothing at all happened.

Today we are told there is a consensus around catastrophic man-made global warming. It, too, is wrong. Nor is it a consensus. The myth of consensus is a propaganda triumph for the alarmists, but repeated surveys both of the scientific literature and of working climate scientists show a wide range of views on both sides of the debate, with many believing that the jury is still out.

It is true that the world has warmed slightly, although slowly and intermittently, over the last 150 years, but this is entirely consistent with well-established long-term natural climate cycles that gave us the Roman Optimum, the Medieval Warm Period and the Little Ice Age. There is clear evidence that, while the world has warmed slightly, other bodies in the solar system have also warmed. Ice caps have shrunk on Mars, yet nobody imagines that industrial emissions or 4x4s are to blame.

We are now planning to spend unimaginable sums of money on mitigation measures which simply will not work and which, by damaging our economies, will deny us the funds we need to address real environmental problems. As a British journalist, Christopher Booker, has remarked, global warming alarmism is the greatest collective flight from reality in human history.

Pilar del Castillo Vera (PPE-DE). – (ES) Mr President, firstly I would like to thank Mr Florenz for his work, and, of course, the chairman of the committee and all the coordinators and members of the committee as well.

This report is a further expression of what has become a permanent concern of the European Union, namely climate change and its consequences.

The latest set of measures was the recently approved energy package. The report that we are discussing today reflects that same approach to combating climate change and that same concern shown by the European Union.

The report that we have before us is, as has already been said, a set of recommendations. It is a comprehensive suite of different measures and recommendations which in turn contain different 'road maps' for various sectors, including fisheries, agriculture, water, forestry and so on. All of these 'road maps' lead in the same direction, but measures will have to be developed for each.

However, I shall confine myself to what I think is the basic principle required in order to have an effect. Faced with climate change, we have to improve efficiency; this, in my view, has to be the basic principle behind all the measures that are taken.

To make improvements in efficiency means giving priority to technological innovation; it means highlighting efficiency targets when awarding aid and subsidies; it means emphasising efficiency targets when granting certain fiscal advantages, and so on. The only way we can be really effective is to improve efficiency.

Guido Sacconi (PSE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, those Members who have spoken before me have demonstrated well how we have managed to bring together very diverse opinions, which have been merged into a common draft.

The Florenz report, which deserves recognition for its success in achieving this consensus by listening carefully to all points of view, is ultimately about energy reconversion and general change in production systems, lifestyles and consumption. It is more than just a philosophical statement and we know that it will not be an easy ride, but it envisages rapprochement in stages. For example, there are indications in the legacy that we are leaving to the next Parliament of what we believe should be the priorities for action in the next parliamentary term, in the run-up to Copenhagen and beyond.

I would, however, like to focus on the content. I feel it is my duty first and foremost to thank the key player in this work, the secretariat. I have here some statistics on our work. To give you an idea of how important their job was, I need only say that they organised eight thematic sessions with sixty of the world's leading experts.

Now, most importantly, I should like to make an appeal, that is express my hopes, for the new Parliament. President Pötering, you yourself demonstrated your belief that the gamble of this committee would pay off – even though, if the truth be told, it did not find favour with everyone in this Parliament when it was created 18 months ago. You appealed to the House on two separate occasions, illustrating your personal support for this subject and for our task, and so I will address you directly, if you will allow me. It would be a shame if the next Parliament did not create a similar instrument in the next parliamentary term, not least because in the meantime many national parliaments and governments have restructured their work, with climate change as a specific field. Therefore, I hope that the next Parliament will not go back to strict compartmentalisation, where connected areas are separated into different committees, but that, as we have recommended, it will prepare itself for the long ride to a lower carbon economy.

Vittorio Prodi (ALDE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank Mr Florenz for his work.

At last we are to vote on this report, which represents 18 months of work by the Temporary Committee on Climate Change. I personally would argue that it is a success, if only a modest one. A success because Parliament has shown itself to be one of the most responsive institutions, equipping itself with an ad hoc instrument – the Temporary Committee – to gather data and ideas on a question that affects us all and the impact of which we must face together, both now and in the future. A modest one because, despite all our efforts and the quality of participation and studies carried out, the result still lacks the bite that a resolution on this topic ought to have.

Climate change, as I have said many times, is an urgent and serious matter and requires targeted and effective instruments. Our key reason for creating this committee was to obtain cross-over between policies that have always been handled too separately. I hope that this cross-over can continue in the next Parliament and that this House will also continue to be involved in the Copenhagen negotiations.

What we need is global consensus, and for this we must have something to offer, above all to developing countries. At present the equal conditions that will convince people in developing countries to espouse this policy are still lacking. It is somewhat too Eurocentric and somewhat too compartmentalised as well. We are looking at a lifestyle change. Politically we need to make proposals that are focused firstly on this policy and then on a progressive de-materialisation of our lifestyle, since otherwise it will not be sustainable.

Alessandro Foglietta (UEN). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, my compliments to President Florenz. In calling him president, I do so out of esteem and consideration for the commitment he has always shown to our Parliament.

In adopting the climate and energy package, the European Union has equipped itself with a legislative framework that gives it the right credentials to take a leading role. The recent open-mindedness shown by the new US administration gives us cause to hope for a future shared commitment with the United States to halt the consequences of climate change.

However, the full success of the initiative will be determined by the involvement of the economies of all the developing countries, such as China and India. As the Chinese environment minister made clear when he met with the delegation from the Temporary Committee on Climate Change, this will only be possible with firm support from the richer countries in the form of adequate financial resources to encourage sustainable development.

Progress has been made in this area with the Poznań conference and the decision to put the adjustment fund into operation, as well as the EUR 50 million for research and technological development allocated to developing countries to support the evolution of green technologies at global level.

We must ensure that Copenhagen marks a turning point in terms of practical joint commitment by stronger economies to create a fund that will guarantee a continual flow of funding for sustainable development in emerging countries. Only through commitments agreed at international level with the involvement of emerging countries will we succeed in safeguarding the environment from irreversible effects, while at the same time protecting the competitiveness of European businesses from the effects and socio-economic costs of environmental dumping on the world market.

Caroline Lucas (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, I add my thanks to Mr Florenz for his report but I think, amidst all the congratulations to the rapporteur and to the committee for its work, we need to face some cold facts: the EU is still doing too little, too late.

I do not expect to be popular for saying so, but we need to be measuring the EU's progress not against what other countries are doing, but against what needs to be done. Against that measure we are still failing.

We are failing in not bringing sufficient ambition to this debate. The latest science tells us we need to be reducing emissions by around 9% year on year. The targets set out in this report and in the EU's climate package are simply not ambitious enough.

We are failing in not bringing enough urgency to this debate. If we are not well on the way to a zero-carbon economy in the next eight to ten years we will have lost the opportunity to have halted the worst of climate change.

We are failing in not being consistent. Today, we speak of renewables and energy efficiency. Yesterday, a majority in this House adopted the Laperrouze report which proudly upheld the role of coal in Europe.

We are failing in giving the impression that the climate change debate is all about giving things up, about doing without things. We need to get much better at showing real political leadership and demonstrating that action on climate change will bring us a better quality of life. It is not about shivering around a candle in a cave: it is about a future that can be more positive and attractive than today's.

So I commend to you the idea of adopting a green new deal for Europe, a way of addressing both the economic crisis and the climate crisis, with a major investment in energy efficiency and renewables, to create millions of new green jobs in Europe.

But that is not about kick-starting economic growth in a 'business as usual' direction. It is about an urgently-needed transition not to a Europe based on the ever-increasing consumption of natural resources, but to a steady-state economy for Europe; not more aggregate quantitative growth, but real qualitative development. That debate urgently needs to be begun, and the EU is very well placed to start it.

Roberto Musacchio (GUE/NGL). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to congratulate Mr Florenz on a job well done; this report is a tribute to his consistent presence, attention and contribution.

It reflects the input he has made to the work of the committee, which has been skilfully chaired by Mr Sacconi, and has looked at the issues in depth, debated, and above all contributed to the part this Parliament played in adopting the climate package. President Pötering, I too would urge you to consider how our work can and should continue in the run-up to Copenhagen.

For now, as regards the Florenz report, I think it would be a mistake to unbalance it with what are, at this point, ideological amendments on the question of nuclear power. They are unreasonable, out of context anywhere other than in the minds of their proponents, and alter our joint position. I would, however, ask my fellow Members to consider the inclusion of an amendment that I have tabled on the relationship between climate change and water. I believe this to be a valuable field in light of the growing attention it is receiving from international organisations such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United

Nations Environment Programme, which have highlighted this area as decisive for the future, and also in view of the upcoming World Water Forum in Istanbul.

Jim Allister (NI). – Mr President, I want to raise a voice of concern and caution in this frenzied debate about climate change, particularly as it could affect food production. We are told that the world population will spiral to nine billion by 2050, thus food production must correspondingly increase. Yet within this proposed climate change package we have emission-reduction demands which, if met, would reduce food production when we need it most.

I refer in particular to the targets on methane and nitrous oxide, and the assault on meat and dairy consumption. These reduction targets cannot be met without serious diminution in food production. Faced with the choice of feeding the world or ticking climate change correction boxes, I am afraid I am on the side of common sense and necessity.

John Bowis (PPE-DE). – Mr President, we head now to Copenhagen, and my honourable friend's excellent report is a good – if I dare say it – road map, or rail map, on how we should get there.

Twenty per cent by 2020 was a start – but only a start. The package of climate measures that we have taken perhaps could have been better, but they were a start – they were a step forward. Now, with the changes in administration in the United States, we can no longer hide behind the United States' refusal to cooperate. With the Obama presidency, we have the opportunity to stop exchanging words and start exchanging ideas. We hear that a meeting will take place on 6 March 2009. The following week we are back here and I hope we will have a statement from the Council on the result of its meetings in Washington. With the United States, we can now move to that 30% target and beyond.

We are moving on now to ecodesign, realising here, as elsewhere, that it means tremendous new opportunities in innovation and jobs. We need to move on to shipping and to agricultural emissions. The Commissioner has referred to the urgent need to talk to the low-income countries in the developing world. They will be devastated, but they did not cause this problem. Islands will sink beneath the waves; malaria, respiratory disease, skin cancer and eyesight problems are already happening. Devastation will come to agriculture. They must take action, but they need our help.

Scientists, of course, can be wrong and so can politicians, as we saw with Mbeki and AIDS. I may be wrong about the possible flu pandemic. I may be wrong about the probable impact of global warming. However, the majority of scientists may be right; the majority of politicians may be right. I and we will be culpable on both issues if I and we fail to take action to ensure that neither happens.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS ROURE

Vice-President

Riitta Myller (PSE). – (FI) Madam President, the initiative by the Social Democrats to set up the Temporary Committee on Climate Change in spring 2007 is now bearing fruit. The outcome of inter-group negotiations and discussions is an emerging, ambitious, long-term agenda for action to curb climate change. For this I would sincerely like to thank the rapporteur, Karl-Heinz Florenz, and the shadow rapporteurs from all the groups who have collaborated excellently on this.

Many are sceptical about whether the Committee on Climate Change will bring added value to Parliament's work. Today we can see the benefit of having Members of Parliament, who view matters from different perspectives, working and listening together to the world's top experts. That leads to credible results, as we can see.

I am also sure that the very existence of the Committee and its work separately contributed to the fact that the climate package was got through so smoothly and swiftly last December. I also strongly support the appeal made by Guido Sacconi, the Committee's chairman, that the post-election Parliament should address this issue and ensure that there is the most robust approach here to issues concerning climate change.

The mindset in the European Union has long been that we need action to prevent climate change. We have, however, lacked the financial instruments. The Climate Fund, which has now been proposed and for which money would be collected from the proceeds of emissions trading auctions, is an important initiative, and I wish it every success for the future. We need it to bring about change in our industrial structure and so that we can really get somewhere with this new green deal.

Lena Ek (ALDE). – (SV) This report promises a great deal. It contains virtually every issue that has been mentioned in the climate debate over the last two years or more. Nevertheless, I think this piece of work lacks the punch, drive and force that are actually needed to pursue the political line that we have initiated in Europe with regard to climate issues.

No measures are proposed with regard to the protection of land and soil. As regards water resources, there is a whole package of proposals in the World Water Forum that could have been included. When it comes to energy efficiency, there are options that have not been included in areas where we have the opportunity for decision-making in Parliament. Alternative fuels are also treated with far too much restraint. In the very important area of health, the report focuses on the collection of facts and the control of mosquito bites, where, instead, we need major strategic decisions in Europe to cope with the effects of climate change on human health.

There are options here, too. In this regard, we needed to come up with more with regard to growth and jobs. It is, of course, possible to create jobs in Europe. They are needed here.

We need to anchor the measures in economic policy. In a few weeks' time, the Council of Ministers will meet to discuss the funding of the decisions that are to be made in Copenhagen – extremely important decisions, which we in Parliament could have had a great deal of influence over. Without this anchoring in economic policy and in a policy for work and growth, there is a risk of this report becoming 'like a candle in the wind', a nice document, but one lacking the drive and decisiveness that we need when it comes to these issues.

Bogdan Pęk (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, I feel as if I am at the inaugural conference of a newly-founded religion, a false religion, teeming with false prophets and ideas.

The very political powers which are trying to drastically reduce carbon dioxide emissions, a move which has no scientific basis and comes at the price of restricted human development, are the ones responsible for this crisis. The blame for this situation lies with those who, along society's path towards progress, aim to build a global government which includes the very bodies which will make an enormous profit from carbon trading whilst simultaneously brainwashing the little people with threats of climate change.

We must create a basis for development in the field of energy. In order to survive and develop, mankind needs new, powerful sources of energy, and Europe needs balance and self-sufficiency in terms of its energy supplies. Do you not understand this? If you create that which has been approved today, you reduce Europe's chances of competing with the rest of the world.

Dimitrios Papadimoulis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Madam President, the Florenz report backs up the evaluations made by scientists and, to a large extent, shares citizens' concerns. It is a step ahead of the energy package approved by the Council in December, but we need to go beyond evaluations to specific measures, to regulations, to timetables, because climate change and its consequences are here and there is no time for further delay.

We must be careful not to allow the issue of nuclear energy, which is irrelevant to this report, to get into the report through the back door with cunning amendments, which is what some governments are seeking. We must ensure that this report, without changes that alter its balance, convinces the Council and the Commission to go one step further and not to use the economic crisis as an excuse to undermine the efforts made so far. Economic crisis and environment policy can go hand in hand to give us a positive result both for the environment and in creating jobs.

Urszula Krupa (IND/DEM). – (PL) Madam President, the main aim of environmental protection policies, much like the package of energy and climate policies involving dramatic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, is to control and change the national economies into what we recognise from past experience as a centrally planned economy. The abstract concept of human influence on our climate is set to restrict development, including the use of fossil fuels, and introduce dangerous CCS technology which, in Poland's case, will make it difficult to exploit our natural resources, including rich geothermal energy sources.

Now that Poland's industry has been shut down as part of its efforts to meet European Union requirements, attempts are being made to not only force Poles to emigrate, but also to ensure that those who remain become paupers by imposing the highest energy prices of all of the Member States. One rhetorical question remains: is the main aim of the European Union's policy to bankrupt my countrymen and wipe Poland from the map of Europe?

Irena Belohorská (NI). – (SK) Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to begin by thanking the rapporteur Mr Florenz for an excellent and extensive report. It covers all major areas of social life that have a bearing on the dramatic increase in climate change. It is high time for us to prepare necessary measures within an EU context.

As a doctor I am interested particularly in health-related changes such as increases in diseases typically associated with tropical areas. We should bear this fact in mind when supporting the pharmaceutical industry, planning hospitals and in-patient facilities, training health professionals and, above all, systematically raising public awareness. As these diseases are rare in our part of the world, we can presume that they will take a much more dramatic course.

The situation in agriculture and in securing sufficient food for human consumption will also become very serious. I firmly believe that this report is far more important than other own-initiative reports and that it will provide a good basis for future Parliaments which will have to tackle the actual impact of climate change.

Avril Doyle (PPE-DE). – Madam President, the time for talking is over and we know what needs to be done – at least those of us who accept the peer-reviewed science on the causes of the unprecedented rate of global warming and its critical impacts on all aspects of biodiversity, particularly on the poorest and most populated regions of our world. To my climate-sceptic friends, could I say that the precautionary principle should be considered. I would recommend it to them.

I should like to thank Karl-Heinz Florenz for his report. It adds to our sum of knowledge, representing, as it does, the horizontal views across a range of committees in this House, with one serious omission – that of the Committee on Fisheries, given the critical importance of the increasing acidification of our seas and oceans from increased CO₂ emissions in the atmosphere.

I have one question for Commissioner Dimas: following our first-reading agreement on my report on the revised EU-ETS six weeks ago, could the Commissioner put on record today exactly what work programme is in train for preparing the comitology decisions, particularly the timing and involvement of this Parliament and the stakeholders?

In conclusion, our target must be at least a 30% decrease in CO₂ emissions by 2020 as part of a post-2012 global agreement, with at least an 80% decrease by 2050 – and that is the more important target. The result of the next eight months of climate diplomacy will write the text of our history books for generations and, as political leaders in our own communities and collectively, we cannot renege on our responsibility.

Commissioner, our climate and energy package must be accompanied by realistic funds, and we look to the summit in March – in six weeks' time – for our 27 leaders of state and government to be on-message and not to let us, the citizens of the EU, and the poorest and most climate-vulnerable communities in our world, down.

Linda McAvan (PSE). – Madam President, as this is the end of the work by the Temporary Committee on Climate Change, I want to thank, firstly, Karl-Heinz Florenz for his work, but also – from my own group, the Socialist Group – Riitta Myller, Dorette Corbey and our Chair, Guido Sacconi. They have all done an excellent job and provided a good basis for the work in the future Parliament.

The report before us is long; it makes many points. I would just like to highlight one point, which some people have already touched upon, and that is the important link that we need to make between jobs and tackling climate change, and between getting out of the economic crisis and tackling climate change. Because, if we do not make that link and we do not get the economic recovery programmes right, people will start to say – and they are already saying it – that this climate change stuff was all very well when there was economic growth but we cannot afford to make all these investments now.

We have to argue very strongly, as people have here, that we cannot afford *not* to make those investments. I think those who talked about bankrupting their countries by doing this are very wrong. Their countries will become bankrupt unless we invest in renewable energies and unless we reduce our energy dependency on insecure sources of fossil fuels. So we have to get this package of measures right.

President Obama has already made this link in his talk about the economic recovery programme for the United States, and we need to do it here. Dorette Corbey talked about what can be done in the way of energy efficiency measures. If I look around my own constituency, Yorkshire, I can already see considerable investments in renewable technologies, in energy-efficiency measures in different companies. Now we have plans to develop carbon capture and storage in many of our power plants and major industries. This will

create jobs and it will also help us cut our emissions, which of course is the object of all the work we have been doing.

Johannes Lebech (ALDE). – (DA) Madam President, as also envisaged in the report, the prevention of climate change must permeate our whole way of thinking when we are working in relevant legislative areas such as agriculture, fisheries, construction, development and foreign policy. Climate policy cannot stand alone, but needs to be incorporated into all of our legislation.

The EU's Heads of State or Government decided nearly two years ago that the EU should take the lead in order to secure a global climate agreement in Copenhagen. There is not much time left. We have now adopted our climate package within the EU here in Parliament. It could have been more ambitious, but it is in place, and we must now support the European negotiators to enable them to achieve an ambitious goal in Copenhagen. The package takes us up to 2020, but in this report we emphasise the need to start planning now what will happen after 2020. This is something that the governments of the EU need to take note of. We need to think long term. The financial crisis is not making things any easier, but we must view this crisis as a dynamic challenge. Let us use the crisis as an opportunity to get the badly needed development of renewable energy and energy-saving technologies off the ground. Let us create new jobs in the green industries of the future, rather than protecting jobs in the old industries of the past.

Finally, I am pleased to see that the need to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon is emphasised, as the EU must make it a specific objective to tackle climate change at international level in accordance with the Treaty of Lisbon.

Inese Vaidere (UEN). – (LV) Ladies and gentlemen, drawing up a climate policy is very important both from the environmental viewpoint and also in view of the need to modernise the energy sector. We should welcome the way in which account has been taken of Kyoto progress for those countries that have reduced emissions by more than 20% since 1990, as well as the effect of the closure of Ignalina on Lithuania's and Latvia's energy supplies, by providing for the possibility of compensation, but each Member State must prepare a clear energy efficiency strategy. Extra quotas for industry, while fostering its competitiveness, nonetheless make it difficult to obtain funding. I welcome the plan to simplify the procedures for obtaining European Union funding, and to increase the extent of lending by the European Investment Bank, especially to small- and medium-sized enterprises. In order for the 2020 targets to be achieved, we must create an EU-wide effective incentive system, supporting businesses and individuals that use or introduce renewable energy resources. This could be done by centrally covering part of the costs of making the changes. The Commission must work actively to ensure that the rest of the world follows our example, and to make our technologies accessible to developing countries. Thank you.

Bairbre de Brún (GUE/NGL). – (GA) Madam President, I welcome the definitive and thorough report from Mr Florenz and from the Temporary Committee on Climate Change.

Climate change is challenging our views on transport, land use, waste management, building work and energy use. The developing world did not create the conditions that are leading us toward irreversible damage, but they are the ones suffering the most. Europe must act as a pioneer and take charge of realistic, necessary measures on an international basis.

Forces which are not so progressive have attempted to use the economic downturn as an excuse not to fulfil the necessary climate commitments. This is completely short-sighted.

Unfortunately, in my own constituency, the Minister of the Environment, Sammy Wilson, is one of these short-sighted politicians who does not understand the scientific and practical realities of climate change. I hope that the Minister will come to his senses and address the question, something which is already being prioritised by the rest of Europe.

Kathy Sinnott (IND/DEM). – Madam President, we have here an ambitious plan. A plan to do nothing less than save the world: a big job at the best of times. When the draft report was first presented by Mr Florenz to the committee, its first call to action was that we bear in mind that we humans are protectors of creation. This simple statement was the first to be attacked and removed. What was so objectionable to the committee? The word 'creation'. Why? Because creation has a creator.

It does not matter to me how the universe was created, or in what time frame. What is important to me is that there is a God and that we are stewards who must, as Amendment 22 puts it, safeguard creation. So, as I say, we are here today setting ourselves the task of saving the world, setting a course of action that will require the cooperation and sacrifice of everyone everywhere, a task which, to be successful, will also require

the cooperation of the winds, water and the sun. But, even knowing this, we are at the same time making it clear, as we have done in the past with other great challenges, that we think we can take on the enormous and urgent challenges that face mankind without help from above. Well, all I can say is: good luck with it, and may God spare us.

Jerzy Buzek (PPE-DE). – (PL) Madam President, I would also like to congratulate and thank Mr Florenz for his excellent report. I do not want discuss the details of this report. In my opinion, it should simply be adopted.

I would just like to return to the subject of the package on climate change, which was adopted in December, and to stress that the European Union really does have a very well-balanced package, which poses no threat to the economy. During numerous months of discussions on the subject, far-reaching amendments were made to this package. This has been our great achievement. I would now like to state what, in my opinion, are the biggest challenges facing the European Union. The first task that lies before us is providing adequate funding for the package we have approved, as well as the funding mentioned in Mr Florenz's report.

I was the rapporteur for the SET-Plan last year and we primarily discussed the fact that new technologies, which could introduce innovation and a new economic stimulus to the European economy, first need to be funded at European Union level. That is why I wanted to sincerely congratulate Commissioner Dimas, on behalf of the Commission, on the decision to earmark EUR 3.5 billion from unused funds for investment in research in the field of energy technology, which would also help to protect the environment. Commissioner, it is an excellent decision. We must now speedily examine it in Parliament. I would now like to turn to Minister Bursik: the Council also needs to speedily examine this initial decision of the European Commission.

Another very important issue is the fact that we need to base our work on a global agreement. That is the assumption behind Mr Florenz's report. Bilateral negotiations between two countries – Poland and Denmark – the hosts of COP 14 and COP 15, are not enough. We all have to contribute, and this includes European diplomats as well as the representatives of the Czech Presidency. Our diplomats should be involved in negotiations throughout the world, as without this global agreement, our package and Mr Florenz's report will have little meaning. That is what is most important to us today.

Catherine Guy-Quint (PSE). – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, the report by our fellow member, Mr Florenz, perfectly sums up the results of our long deliberations on this major problem of global warming.

We all know that the plans to be implemented are huge and that, above all, we must give ourselves the means to change our culture of unbridled development by promoting changes in our economy.

The problem now is to find out how we can implement all the report's recommendations. We must urgently find means of fighting global warming. The European Union's current budget is insufficient to achieve the related objectives; neither will we be able to resolve this major funding problem by calling on national budgets or private funds.

The European Commission estimates that an annual investment of EUR 175 billion is required to fight global warming. With a budget of EUR 76 billion, we are wide of the mark. The Commission will therefore draw up an inventory of all the existing instruments, but drafting proposals for the future financial framework will be a considerable undertaking.

To optimise all our actions regarding this climate crisis, we need new resources to create a European Fund on Climate Change, which can be funded by the emission quota exchange system and which will be used to support adaptation, alleviation, sustainable consumption and energy efficiency, and therefore a large part must be devoted to the poorest countries.

That requires political courage on the part of the Council, the Commission and members of this Parliament, but it is a necessary condition, essential if the planet is to take up this challenge.

There will be no future for our civilisation if we, as Europeans, do not take measures to impose self-discipline in order to preserve our climate. It is a major political act, a political act which is vital to give our continent and others a stable future....

(The President cut off the speaker)

Holger Krahmer (ALDE). – (DE) Madam President, I would like to thank Mr Florenz very much for his report, which, unfortunately, has not been a great success, probably partly as a result of the fact that it has been discussed very much in the shadow of the legislative package on climate change.

We must face up to the consequences of climate change; there is no question about that. It is only the means for doing so chosen by the report that I cannot fully support. Firstly, it is right that the EU should take the first steps to protect the climate, but it is not beneficial to rush on ahead alone without the involvement of partners. Europe leading the way is not enough to convince the rest of the world. A more viable approach must involve the industrial nations and at least China, India and Brazil, otherwise Europe's economy will remain unfairly burdened without there being any measureable effects on global CO₂ emissions. Secondly, with our current level of knowledge, renewable energies cannot completely replace fossil energy sources. It may be motivating on a political level to demand that, but it is not realistic. The political will, as great as that may be, will not nullify any physical laws. Thirdly, biofuels are hailed as environmentally-friendly alternatives. Their negative side effects on food prices, which are rising as a result of these biofuels, and rainforests, which are being deforested, are not as yet under control. Fourthly, a means of mobility that protects resources in the long term is a reasonable goal. Providing incentives may help to achieve this goal. However, we should consider at what point state intervention is going too far and at what stage we can claim to have knowledge that we do not have today.

No one currently knows which technologies will best meet the mobility needs of individuals in 50 years' time and politicians certainly do not have any better idea of this than engineers do.

Although it started with good intentions, what remains, unfortunately, is a report full of wishful thinking in written form, with moral appeals and pointing fingers. Unfortunately, the German liberals cannot give their support to this.

Bogusław Rogalski (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, it will take a good while yet until the politicians understand that it is not the burning of coal, but solar activity, which causes the phenomenon of climate change. It will take even longer to convince societies, which have been brainwashed by aggressive environmental propaganda, of this truth.

In view of the fact that the earth's climate is influenced by events which take place in space, we have to agree that human attempts to influence the climate are doomed to fail. The earth has experienced periods of global warming, and an increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide in the air, on numerous occasions. However, global warming has always started a dozen or so centuries before any increase in carbon dioxide levels. During a period involving dramatic drops in temperature, the cooling of the climate was never prevented by the fact that, at that point, the air contained up to 10%, or more, carbon dioxide, in comparison to today.

If we acknowledged this fact, mankind would save billions of dollars by giving up pointless activities. The money saved could be spent on the fight against poverty and on new technologies. If we do not know what the deal is, then the deal is money, and emissions trading. Bravo. What a climatic masterstroke.

Derek Roland Clark (IND/DEM). – Madam President, a mystique bordering on a religious creed has grown up around this alleged global warming. The environmental scientist has had a field day, but the natural world obeys the laws of physics and chemistry, subjects which I taught for 39 years.

The global warming theory has cast CO₂, a natural constituent of the atmosphere, as a demon gas. It does have the effect – slightly – of trapping heat around the world, but how? You need to draw a graph showing how CO₂ perhaps causes warming.

Is it an arithmetic graph – I must become technical – where equal rises in CO₂ cause equal rises in warming? Is it an exponential graph – a runaway – where CO₂ in extra amounts causes an ever-increasing rise in global warming? Or is it a logarithmic graph, where extra amounts of CO₂ cause less and less extra warming, eventually becoming a flat line?

I suspected it to be the last, and the Hadley Centre, the UK's leading authority on this subject, confirmed that it is the last graph. We are nearly on the flat line, if not already there. Extra CO₂ will have no more effect. There is no problem.

Anders Wijkman (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I would like to thank Mr Florenz. This is a rich report with a great number of concrete proposals. A specific call is made to use the stimulus packages all over the world

to promote clean energy and green technologies, stressing thereby that the financial crisis and the climate crisis have the same roots – unsustainable use of resources.

While I support the report, like Caroline Lucas I would have liked to see more attention paid to the most recent signs, which tell us that climate change is both more rapid and serious than we thought just a couple of years ago – contrary to what some colleagues here have said, in particular Mr Helmer. By the way, a recent screening of more than 900 climate articles in scientific journals – peer review – showed that not one of them questioned the main thrust of the IPCC.

What I am particularly concerned about is not CO₂ emissions per se, but the positive feedback mechanisms that are now happening in the planetary system, like the acidification of the oceans, reduced albedo and the possible leaking of methane from thawing tundra. All these factors will accelerate warming. We can control emissions but we cannot control these factors.

This is the main reason why, in my opinion, emission reductions have to be much more ambitious in the near future than what is currently being discussed in the EU and by the UN.

This means, by the way, that the 2°C target has to be revisited and that greenhouse gas concentrations have to be lowered, rather than continuing to increase. That is why some of us advocate very strongly the 350 ppm target. This dimension of the problem is referred to in the report but only in passing. I would have liked it to be at the core of the report. My guess is that, only a few years from now, the feedbacks I mentioned will be at the centre of the debate.

Finally, let me just endorse what Guido Sacconi said. In spite of its shortcomings, a temporary committee has been the right way to deal with a horizontal issue like this. I hope the next Parliament will build on our experience and deal with climate change and sustainability in a similar way.

Katerina Batzeli (PSE). – (EL) Madam President, Commissioner, we all agree that Copenhagen must be crowned with success, because both the credibility of the political world and the survival of future generations are at stake. Our proposals must be targeted on development, employment and solidarity: the three watchwords which will mark the future of coming generations. What is needed from us today? Responsibility and decisiveness are needed to ensure adequate funding for this major climate change development plan and new dynamic development agreements over and above and separately from restrictive trade agreements.

However, there is one concern about our tactics and we need, first of all, to convince society at large and then proceed dynamically to integrate certain productive sectors into the quantum leap by agriculture: that is why we need to remember that agriculture has already been included in the national commitments to reduce emissions by 10% by 2020, that there are already important proposals from the CAP for environmentally-friendly agricultural practices and that international agreements on agriculture must be reciprocal for all international partners.

Commissioner, the food model is directly connected to the climate model and all we have to do is conscientiously convince society itself. Climate change is bringing about broader democratic participation by society, a society which lives with different cultural values.

Lambert van Nistelrooij (PPE-DE). – (NL) It is with a great deal of pleasure that I worked with Mr Florenz and all the others in the temporary committee. We have laid the desperately needed foundation for a policy that will be more integrated and ambitious in future, and can count on widespread support, even here in Parliament in the framework of the 20-20-20 objective.

The answer lies in making the economy green and making businesses, households and the government sustainable. Entrepreneurs canvassing support for such an approach – the development of sustainable initiatives for this green technology – are still running into a huge number of obstacles. If they want qualifications for workers, they are up against policy that is very compartmentalised. This report calls for an integrated approach that also hangs together territorially. If you do not do this, you will lose out in the end.

Fortunately, my amendment on the use of regions and cities has been adopted. Next week, in the buildings of Parliament, 150 cities will be signing a mayors' covenant with the Commission. They will be following the conclusions of this report, close to the citizens and close to business. This is the right approach, in my view. As such, this approach can count on my backing. I am opposed to the over-simplified approach towards the agricultural sector in Paragraph 189, though. The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats is not against the consumption of meat, and rightly so. As such, we will oppose this paragraph.

Finally, I would ask the Commission, in future, to adopt a more integrated approach and reduce compartmentalisation to a minimum. In tandem with Parliament, a significant milestone could be achieved, in the combination of legislation, stimulating policy and activation at the decentralised level. A great deal can be done there.

Inés Ayala Sender (PSE). – (ES) Madam President, firstly I would like to thank Mr Florenz for his generosity and open-mindedness as well as all the groups that participated in this political exercise and debate on both background issues and the future. This has had the benefit of providing us with information and clarification and given us the necessary courage twinned with prudence to address other important, parallel legislative actions, also of high risk, such as the climate change package, the policy on vehicles, the Lisbon Strategy and sectors such as energy, transport, industry and tourism.

I think that this has been a good exercise and, more importantly, a way of irreversibly embracing the 21st century and, as the Commissioner said, of showing the example that we want to set for the future.

This exercise has been an example of comparison and generosity that has come at the right time, at a moment of crisis with significant social risks and the possibility of protectionism and a step backwards. There is also massive uncertainty which means that security is so important. However, we must also look to the future.

This is a new era for the United States, as has been said, and we hope for the European Union too after ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, which we expect soon.

It is also a new era, and this is important, in which there are risks but also immense opportunities in huge new areas and policies. This is the case in Brazil, China and Russia, the great emerging powers, and also in major regions such as Latin America and developing countries, in Africa in particular.

I think that this is a decisive step towards a new model for development and economic and social growth, but there is a need for sustainability and reduction of impacts. However, Commissioner, Madam President, we still have the challenge of putting it across to our citizens.

I would just like to end by emphasising the advances made in introducing adaptations regarding water supply and drought as well as in sustainable mobility that I think we have ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Markus Pieper (PPE-DE). – (DE) Madam President, the Florenz report actually contains a lot of good suggestions. One good thing about the climate debate is that it will act as a catalyst for the transition into the age of renewable energies. This is shown very clearly in the report along with many opportunities for new technologies and economic development.

However, I think it is a shame that we have excluded large areas of science. Studies and scientists that approach the subject of climate change with less gloomy scenarios or perhaps even positively, have simply been ignored. Corresponding applications were rejected by the majority, and that was that. Science is only what fits into the political concept. This will not work, because science does not allow itself to be manipulated. Thus, the report will, unfortunately, hit rocky ground in the end.

Anyone who, on this basis, demands a reduction in CO₂ of 80% or more is jeopardising the economy and social achievement. Anyone who, at the same time, demands the abandonment of nuclear power is consciously closing his eyes to reality. Anyone who demands accounting standards for all areas of human life is at odds with the fundamental idea of freedom. Anyone who demands new laws for soil and agriculture is abusing the climate debate for the purposes of implementing sanctions that he or she wanted to implement anyway but which have nothing to do with climate change. And anyone who demands protective clothing against the effects of the climate is deliberately stirring up anxiety.

I hope that these radical and misplaced ideologies will not be included in the report. I will then be able to support the report, as protection of the environment is very important to me, particularly when it can be combined with social achievement and economic competitiveness.

Matthias Groote (PSE). – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the Temporary Committee on Climate Change has done a very good job. Today we have in front of us the final report to be put to the vote. It indicates how we, as the European Parliament, envisage future climate policy and what measures need to be taken as regards adaptation to climate change.

I hope that, when the next legislative process is due, we in Parliament also reach such a high level of agreement so that what we have documented in this report will be put into practice. Through the committee's method of working, this report has also succeeded in achieving a horizontal viewpoint. I have to say that we ought to maintain this committee's method of working in the next parliamentary term, too, as Mr Sacconi has just suggested.

The fight against climate change cannot be waged by Europe alone. We must also get other continents and countries on board. The committee has also done a good job in this regard, because we, as Parliament, have for the first time become visible in matters of climate diplomacy and I would like to emphasise this once again in this House.

When we talk about adaptation measures then we are also talking about funding. In this regard, I would like, once again, to call on the other two institutions, the Commission and the Council, to give this matter top priority in the next Financial Perspective.

We can adopt the most wonderful reports here, but if there is no money available for the measures then the report will come to nothing. We should also look once more at the extent to which the financial measures that we are already taking are having an effect, and let us please have this summarised in an audit.

Zita Pleštinšká (PPE-DE). – (SK) Ladies and gentlemen, as the European Union has ambitions of becoming the leader in the international fight against global warming, it must not only formulate climate protection targets but it must also implement them through political measures. The cross-sectional report of Mr Florenz confirms that the fight against climate change must be based on a horizontal approach and it must be taken into account in all legal regulations.

Water plays a central role in climate change. We must realize that the consequences of climate change on the water regime may cause a domino effect and may impact on many sectors of the economy. The ever-increasing worldwide problems with water require a coordinated water management policy from the Member States and the introduction of environmental principles into an integrated management of water resources.

We must initiate programmes for creating surface storage facilities for rain water in forested, agricultural and urban areas through legislative instruments and through non-investment and investment measures which will make a fundamental contribution to rainwater storage in the countryside. Until now rainwater has been regarded as waste water which had to be disposed of as quickly as possible. The new approach for water is based on the principle that rainwater is the key to life. I am delighted that it will be introduced by an expert group of Czech and Slovak scientists. This is an interesting approach, Minister Bursík. I believe that it will win your support.

It is not possible to have a sustainable way of life without contributions from the economy, science, the media, voluntary sector and private citizens. It is important not to give up on such a complex problem. We face a challenge and we must act now because our actions today will determine our future. Our central aim must be not to deprive future generations of the basics of life which we have received from God.

We will prevail in global competition only if we can bring efficient, innovative and intelligent technologies to the market in a transparent manner and without bureaucratic obstacles. We will prevail only if we give the 'green light' to all progressive solutions in Europe.

Justas Vincas Paleckis (PSE). – (LT) I congratulate the rapporteur and all like-minded people, who are challenging the threat posed by climate change. Residents of Lithuania and the other Baltic countries really thirst for a European electric energy network. If it is not created within a few years, talk of energy security will remain nothing more than talk. The call to increase Structural Fund money, used to heat multi-apartment dwellings, is very important. Miracles rarely happen. However, the extension of Ignalina NPP's working life, a miracle still hoped for in Lithuania, would reduce pollution and would allow GDP to remain at 4-5% annually, which is particularly necessary for a state affected and damaged so much by the economic crisis. Confronted with the crisis, an increasing number of EU citizens are thinking more about survival than about halting climate change, but if we are able to give up our wasteful way of life and become thriftier, not only will we save the environment and stop the planet from overheating, we will replenish our pockets. By making strict savings in everyday life, when using resources, and by giving up short car journeys, it is possible to save as much as EUR 1 000 a year.

Françoise Grossetête (PPE-DE). – (FR) Madam President, one might have said that this report was redundant, following the vote on the energy and climate change package last December. However, this report has the merit that it is a very good summary of what we must consider for the fight against climate change, and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the rapporteur, Karl—Heinz Florenz, who demonstrated such vision in drafting this report.

Let us go beyond discussion. Let us make sure that the Member States make a solid commitment. I agree with my fellow Members who pointed out the need for a budget which is in keeping with our ambitions. After the success story of the energy and climate change package, under the French Presidency, we must do all we can to reach a satisfactory international agreement in Copenhagen.

Yet, there is something we should be worried about. 2009 is a European election year, when the European Commission will change. We are most concerned when we read the statements by the President of the Czech Republic, who maintains that global warming does not exist.

Even if he is right, our whole plan to fight climate change is a response to the serious economic crisis we are now experiencing. The decline in energy resources, the need for energy security, deforestation, the suffocation of our great cities which are home to the majority of the population, the necessity, therefore, to use sustainable transport, the endless famine throughout the world and the need to nourish the planet; everything supports the solutions proposed to fight climate change.

We are entering the era of sustainable growth, this third industrial revolution which is a great asset for research, innovation, employment and competitiveness in our businesses. As for energy efficiency, it should already be part of all the recovery plans, because it relies on innovative technologies. It is a way of reducing energy bills, which will please consumers. By reducing fossil energy consumption, the European Union regains more independence and emits less carbon, and there are thousands of new jobs at stake.

Yes, the fight against climate change is one of the responses to the economic crisis. It will become this through the development of a low-carbon economy, with the support of local communities, business, scientists and all citizens.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE). – (RO) The report presents both scientific data and recommendations for combating climate change, referring both to adaptation and the reduction in the causes of this problem. Combating climate change is not only an obligation so that we can guarantee the future for the generations to come, but it is also an opportunity for reviving the global economy.

I urge the importance of energy efficiency to be reflected in both the Community budget and in the financial instruments available. Making transport more efficient through the use of intelligent transport systems, promoting transport by rail and ship, ensuring intermodal development and investments in greener cars are measures which will help cut the emissions generated by this sector.

I have recommended the development of greener forms of tourism such as sports tourism or cultural tourism. I would also like to stress that the tourist destinations of excellence should be those which respect and protect the environment. I feel that we must consider creating an international fund for planting trees on unused landmass.

I would like to end by saying that we need to carry out research in the field of medical science and in the pharmaceutical industry aimed at producing medicines and vaccines which will be available to the entire population affected by certain illnesses at an affordable price.

Etelka Barsi-Pataky (PPE-DE). – (HU) Madam President, today, climate change and transport are inseparable while, at the same time, our hard-won and closely guarded mobility, the free movement of people, goods and capital, can only be continued in future if we make changes and resolve to take firm steps in this regard. As theme leader for the fifth key theme, transport, on the Temporary Committee on Climate Change, I encourage the adoption and simultaneous implementation of a comprehensive package.

What is needed? First, the economic environment must be transformed, with a two-fold goal: first, to support eco-innovation by means of taxes and public procurement, and secondly, to actually apply the 'polluter pays' principle. Eco-innovation is needed in motor vehicle technology to develop alternative fuels for that sector, for intelligent transport solutions and logistics management systems. The 'polluter pays' principle must be applied to all vehicles as well as in emissions trading and the incorporation of external costs.

Every initiative we have launched must be speeded up. It is not enough to talk about these things: we must make them a reality. What sort of things, for example? A common European airspace, a single European sky and our management systems. These must be effectively implemented because we will be able to regulate industry and consumption successfully once we have completed our own tasks.

Above all, we must deal with our cities and other difficult areas. Ultimately, this is perhaps the most difficult task. We must foster a new transport culture and strive for a much more effective use of the tools currently at our disposal. We would like to thank Karl-Heinz Florenz because with this report we now have a credible, multi-layered roadmap, providing the basis on which we can begin implementing our goals and sit boldly at the negotiating table in Copenhagen, asking everyone to join us.

Adam Gierek (PSE). – (PL) Madam President, in the preamble to Mr Florenz's report, which we are discussing today, he refers to his earlier report on the scientific facts behind climate change. Unfortunately, I found no facts in that report, only a belief in the infallibility of IPCC reports. Neither the present resolution nor the one of May 2008 can thus, in any way, legitimise the political decisions of the European Commission, as they lack an objective, scientific approach. Only a cohesive model of climate change, which takes into account all variables, such as the impact of greenhouse gases, suspended particles and, above all, solar activity, could provide a justification for these decisions.

The report, which contains one-sided information highlighting the hypothetical mechanisms behind global warming, such as CO₂ emissions, ignores the need for an international fight against the real impact of climate change. The Temporary Committee on Climate Change has focused, in a biased manner, on the problem of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and has only mentioned in passing the fight against the real impact of climate change.

Agnes Schierhuber (PPE-DE). – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, firstly, I, too, would like to thank the rapporteur, who has indeed tried to achieve as much as possible for all of us.

Agriculture is particularly affected by climate change, as its products are produced in the open air. We think of droughts and desertification, as we are seeing in southern Italy, for example, or of other extreme weather phenomena, such as unexpected rain and hail showers or floods, which often affect the livelihoods of our farmers.

Agriculture is often depicted as the big cause of climate change. Around 10% of global greenhouse gases are produced in agriculture, most of which, however, are gases of natural origin, such as methane.

In my opinion, agriculture is, on the contrary, leading the way in the fight against climate change. I would like to document the following with a study from Austria from 2008: through plants such as grass, maize and cereals and the soil, agriculture and forestry consume and bind considerably more greenhouse gases than they generate. According to the study from 2008, the emissions from agriculture and forestry of approximately 8 million tonnes CO₂ equivalent per year compare in total with a binding effect of 58 million tonnes CO₂ or CO₂ equivalents. This shows that agriculture should not be depicted as an environmental villain. Quite the opposite. Here are some more figures: since 1990, agriculture in Austria has reduced its CO₂ emissions by 1.3 million tonnes.

Energy is another important area in which agriculture contributes to the fight against climate change. For example, agriculture in Austria consumes approximately 2.2% of the energy generated. The proportion of renewable energy is 23%, a large share of which again belongs to agriculture.

Finally, I would like to say the following. Great importance must...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Satu Hassi (Verts/ALE). – (FI) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank Mr Florenz sincerely for the excellent work he has done as rapporteur. Our greatest challenge now is to establish the next international climate treaty. The two most awkward issues for the treaty are the emission reduction targets of different countries and how the industrialised countries will contribute to the financing of investments in climate mitigation in the developing countries. In both these matters the EU needs to raise its sights, although in theory we can be proud of the fact that we have always been leading on global climate protection.

The latest research suggests that a 30% reduction in emissions by 2020 will not be enough – the targets need to be made more stringent. As for financing climate measures in the developing countries, I regret that in its

new communication the Commission still made very general observations and did not propose sufficiently concrete models.

In different contexts, including the debate on the climate package, we in Parliament have shown we are prepared to contribute significantly to the effort to reduce emissions in the developing countries. This is one of those areas where the EU should also encourage the new President of the United States to adopt a new line. Up till now, the United States has not said anything about how prepared it is to support emission reduction targets in the developing countries. Climate protection can be accomplished, but the measures need to be swift and consistent.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I would like to thank the rapporteur. I shall be very specific in relation to agriculture and to two paragraphs in the report which I think are not necessary. The report would perhaps be better without them. They are very specific in relation to meat consumption and I do not think there is a place for these paragraphs in the report.

The following paragraph on feed rations ignores the reality of research that has been going on for a long number of years in many Member States seeking to do exactly what it says in this paragraph, which is therefore out of date with reality.

One of the areas that I think needs to be enhanced is the communication of how farmers and those who use the land can farm in a way that is more 'climatically friendly'. I think there has been a failure of the researchers to work with the farmers, and we need more effort in relation to extension services to get the message across, to encourage and not to coerce.

Marusya Ivanova Lyubcheva (PSE). – (BG) Ladies and gentlemen, obviously climate change is much the focus of European, and not just European, policy.

Neither one country, nor a union can separately and independently handle the challenges of climate change. Therefore we need to integrate policies on a horizontal and vertical plane. Policy, legislation and finances must work together. The report provides a fantastic platform for this.

I would like to shift focus to two facts, without which we are not able to do our work in benefit for the battle against climate change. Science: in the report special attention is made to new technologies, but we must talk more about science and target investments in science, through which solutions must be sought. Without this we are left to triviality and the mundane.

Scientific research is our basis. New technologies, developed by business and science in tandem, are our future. I appeal for investing in science and designating climate change as an important priority for all EU scientific programmes.

Danutė Budreikaitė (ALDE). – (LT) In the fight against climate change we must attach great importance to the transport sector which at present emits almost a third of the EU's CO₂ emissions. The transport sector must reduce CO₂ emissions by 20% by 2020. In striving for these goals it is essential to implement a stable package of transport policy measures, which would include ecological innovations, the taxing of CO₂ emissions, changes in driving and car use habits and other measures. I would like to draw attention to the fact that in some Member States VAT is being increased due to the financial crisis and the economic recession, and a situation has arisen where people find it cheaper to travel by car because of high public transport fares. Therefore, I would like to urge states to apply tax incentives and encourage people to use public transport. It is also important to encourage the use of trains, by investing in the development of rail infrastructure. Let me remind you that over a kilometre a train emits on average 3 times less CO₂ than a car and as much as 8 times less than a plane.

Marie Anne Isler Béguin (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, we can congratulate ourselves on the broad consensus here, but we nevertheless remain in isolation: Commissioner for the Environment, Ministers for the Environment, how important is the environment for the Commission and for the Councils and governments? We know how important.

I myself was not at all in favour of setting up this committee because I think that nothing is better at isolating something than creating a new committee. In France, we speak of a 'Théodule committee'.

I wonder about the future of this report from the point of view of its integration into European policies. I would just like to remind those Members who were there in 1992 that there was an excellent report on

sustainable development. No sooner had it been adopted – what is more, unanimously – this excellent report was buried completely. Perhaps if we had introduced it into European policies, we would not be here now.

I would like to speak to the rapporteur, who denies that he is presenting a political project. Mr Florenz, it is a political project you are presenting, because it is a complete reorientation of European policies, in terms of agriculture, fishing and transport. So, yes, we must be more ambitious and we await the results.

Herbert Reul (PPE-DE). – (DE) Madam President, taking the consequences of climate change seriously means listening to all of the various sides of the debate, including that of science. We had a lot of experts in the committee, that is true. Unfortunately, however, they represented only one view. We did not get the chance to hear all sides of the debate. I think this was a mistake.

We had an initial draft of Mr Florenz's report, which was considerably better than the one we have before us today on which we are to base our decision. Many of the suggestions that are currently included are fine, but, in my opinion, a lot of them are wrong. It makes no sense constantly to resort to new regulations and new measures. The only solution can be to say 'yes' to innovation and 'yes' to research. The solution lies in assuming individual responsibility and not in ever increasing state regulations. There are numerous nonsensical regulations, such as the accounting obligation, prevention of and sanctions on the consumption of meat, calumnies on agriculture and many others. In my opinion, this is the wrong way to go and I therefore find this report problematic as it currently stands.

Martin Bursík, President-in-Office of the Council. – Madam President, I have realised that the distinguished Members of the Parliament are using their native languages. I have no doubt that the interpreters speak one thousand per cent better English than me, so, if you will allow me, I will speak Czech and try to react to this debate in the European Parliament.

(CS) I would like to express my appreciation for the depth of the discussion in the European Parliament, for its businesslike approach and also for the responsible attitude of the MEPs. There are about seven points from the discussion which I would like to pick up on. Firstly, I would like to underline the role of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change since in some of the speeches the IPCC findings have been called into question. In my opinion, it is to some extent a disadvantage that the quarterly reports issued by the IPCC on material facts relating to climate change and on adaptations and mitigations are around 1 200 to 1 400 pages long, comprising a highly detailed scientific work complete with references to relevant scientific literature. However, a summary is later compiled from these reports and it ends as a 'summary for policy makers' which is about 20 pages long and no longer includes any references. In my opinion, many misunderstandings arise from the fact that we, as policy makers, do not have the time – and I apologise if this does not apply to you – to read those 1 200 or 1 500 pages. It is important to emphasise that the IPCC has not only been awarded a Nobel Prize, but at the Bali climate conference it was agreed by the 192 participating states that this was the most comprehensive and highest quality scientific resource, the most consistent information at our disposal for deciding on whether and how to react to climate change. This was the view of the 192 national representatives and this is also my response to some of the suggestions of alarmism, an argument I have become used to in my own country.

In my opinion, we have a very good starting point in 2009. On the one hand, we are speaking with one voice again as the European Union. The enormous value of this was brought home to me in Bali. We managed to achieve considerable progress in the negotiations with our G77 partners and other economies and we were in fact the only major global economy to press for the adoption of a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 % by 2020. The second hope at the start of this year is the change in the United States as many of you here have mentioned. The way I see the problem is that somewhere in Copenhagen is a room with around 200 locks to its door. If we manage to open all those locks then we will conclude a new global agreement on climate protection to run from 2013. In my opinion, we have now opened the first lock, which is the European Union. The second lock in the series is the United States and that is why we are putting so much emphasis on making contact as quickly as possible with the new US administration and why we are planning a joint visit in the Troika together with the upcoming Swedish presidency and the Commissioner for Environment Stavros Dimas. And that is my response to the comment from Jerzy Buzek, in other words we are definitely not intending to lead the international negotiations by ourselves. Not at all. We intend to coordinate the negotiations. Denmark obviously has an enormous interest in the success of the Copenhagen conference. In the closed ministerial sessions of the informal Spring European Council we intend to report on the progress of bilateral negotiations over the international climate change agreement. We will also jointly try to define a future strategy on how to coordinate international negotiations with, of course, the involvement

of diplomats. In addition to this, we will negotiate the adaptations, which will be the main theme of the informal Spring Council in Prague.

The next item in my response relates to the fact that we have arrived at an interesting juncture, as EU efforts towards an ambitious and active climate change policy have suddenly come up against the effects of the financial and economic crisis. In this context, I consider it very positive that the voices calling for a postponement of our long-term climate change targets are few and far between. On the contrary, the great majority of voices – here in the European Parliament too, for which I am very grateful – are calling for us to use this coincidence and treat it as an opportunity, since that would offer a ‘six-win’ strategy, in other words a ‘win, win, win, win, win, win’ strategy, because if individual economies are prepared to respond to the financial and economic crisis by investing – and even the most conservative economists are prepared to allow exceptions – then this represents an opportunity to transform our current economy into a low-carbon economy and to support modern environmental technologies. Why the six ‘wins’? Because we will save money on energy through energy-saving measures. Because we will reduce our dependency on imported energy, because we will reduce our consumption of non-renewable natural resources, because we will create new jobs – and do not forget that the various plans within Europe for responding to the financial and economic crisis will create new employment opportunities right in the area of ‘green jobs’ and around new environmental technologies for renewable energy sources and energy saving – and at the same time we shall reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Czech Presidency therefore views this situation as an exceptional opportunity for changing paradigms of behaviour and for directing our economy towards greater sustainability. The greatest opportunity for changing the economy is in the global market for carbon. Compared to the environmental policy in the 1970s, when we relied on banning and injunctions and mainly employed a so-called ‘end of pipe’ policy, we find ourselves in 2009 making far greater use of financial instruments to help the environment. In my opinion, the fact that the climate-energy package includes a new emissions trading system based on auctions provides an excellent foundation for creating a global market in carbon. Let us consider the ambition. In 2013, electrical energy auctions will gradually take place and by 2015, we want to see a global market in carbon at an OECD level. We are therefore very closely monitoring developments in the US and how the process for adopting the ‘Cap and Trade’ system will look in the US Congress.

Another point I would like to mention is the role of renewable energy sources and also energy saving. In our negotiations with developing countries we must offer something, we must offer these countries economic development but at the same time we must offer the sort of development that will ensure the fulfilment of the targets identified by the IPCC and adopted by us as politicians. And here renewable energy sources will play an absolutely key role as we basically have two possible options. There are billions of people without access to electricity but with a desperate wish for electricity simply because it is such an attractive prospect for consumers and an aspiration nobody can be blamed for. The fact is that these people will either have to go to the cities for electricity that is distributed in the current conventional manner – large centralised sources, distribution grids, a burden on the environment – or electricity will come to them in the places where they have lived for generations and where they can continue their traditional way of life in harmony with nature. The second option will be possible only through decentralised renewable electricity. In other words, we who are developing the technology for renewable energy sources in Europe are doing so not only for the developed countries but also in order to increase the number of installations worldwide, to reduce investment and operating costs and to make these technologies accessible to people in developing countries. This is an enormous political task facing us in relation to developing countries.

I would like to end by assuring you that the Czech Presidency has truly extensive ambitions for achieving progress in the climate change negotiations. We will be taking a very intensive lead in international negotiations. I would also like to assure you about the consistency of the Czech Presidency and if the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic defended the Czech President Klaus here in the debate in the European Parliament, then in the area of climate change and climate change policy I must distance myself from these statements and the position of the Czech President. I want and to assure that the position of the Czech Presidency is determined by the Czech Government. I ask you to bear in mind that in spite of whatever statements you might still hear over the course of the Czech Presidency – as our president is also preparing to visit the US – that the climate policy is formulated by the Czech Government and we are united in our view and we are working together with the Commission and the upcoming Swedish Presidency in the Troika. This concludes my statement. I would like to thank you very much once again for a highly productive, businesslike and, above all, responsible discussion at this honourable assembly.

Stavros Dimas, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, we are also looking forward to continuing to work closely with the Czech Presidency, the Czech Government and specifically with Minister Martin Bursík. I am sure that during the first semester of 2009 we will advance the negotiations considerably.

I would like to thank all the speakers in today's discussion for their positive contributions.

As the title of your report indicates, what happens to the world's climate in 2015 and beyond will depend on what action the international community decides now. Building on the solid scientific advice at our disposal, and insisting that negotiations must be guided by science, remains vital. We need to communicate the scientific findings to a broader public, and enhance consumer awareness of greenhouse gas impacts on lifestyles and consumption patterns.

Such increased awareness, however, needs to be accompanied by strong economic incentives for business to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the goods and services they provide. A transition to a low-carbon economy is needed at a global scale, and can only be achieved through comprehensive and integrated action to address emissions in all sectors.

Only by being ambitious now can we keep the door open to stabilising concentrations of greenhouse gases at lower levels, should the IPCC in future indicate that this is necessary. Together with the Commission, I am convinced that you also have an important role in echoing these important messages.

2009 will be a crucial year for the global climate change negotiations. For the Commission, 2009 will be a year of implementation: we are working on an implementation road map. There are about 15 measures that we need to take through comitology; there is a list of deadlines in the revised ETS that we are going to meet: for example, the list of sectors for carbon leakage should be ready by December 2009. There will be a big stakeholders' meeting on 30 March 2009. The bulk of the work will be done during the summer and, by the end of 2009, we shall have this list dealt with.

The harmonised rules on auctioning should be ready by June 2010. There will be a big stakeholders' meeting in February, and all these deadlines and work programmes are available to you. But 2009, as I said, is going to be a crucial year for the global climate change negotiations.

The world is expected to agree on further international action to tackle climate change at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in December. However, a deal in Copenhagen is by no means a given: much work remains to be done.

The climate change and energy package gave us a head start in this transition and provided an excellent basis to prove that ambitious climate policy is not only possible but also broadly beneficial to our economies and societies. The Copenhagen Communication is the basis for further elaborating the European Union's positions on those key elements, enabling us to maintain our leadership and help lead the negotiations to a success in Copenhagen.

It is clear that the climate change challenge cannot be solved without significantly stepping up the financing of, and investment in, clean technology, as well as measures to adapt to the inevitable climate change impacts. Required amounts for developing countries are estimated to go up to EUR 120-150 billion annually in 2020.

Until 2020, this financing can, for a large part, come from the private-sector households in developing countries. For instance, the major part of reductions in the energy sector will come from efficiency improvements that will pay for themselves. These may partly be supported by international loan arrangements in order to mobilise international private finance.

Another significant part of additional financing and investment will be mobilised through the carbon market, both from the proceeds of the future auctioning of carbon allowances and via carbon credits under the CDM. The European Union in its climate and energy package has created significant demand for CDM credits until 2020. This is likely to spur the deployment of clean technologies in developing countries.

However, the poorer the developing countries are, the more they will require further public financial assistance from developed countries. Without this assistance they will not be able to sufficiently reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Without this assistance the poorest and most vulnerable will suffer the consequences of climate change. Without this assistance there will be no deal in Copenhagen.

The question is: how can we make sure that these additional public financial flows will be predictable, be spent transparently and effectively, and that the contributions to those flows will be shared internationally?

In addition to our contributions to the United Nations negotiations, we see that, following the success of the European Union's emissions trading system, carbon markets are being established in many parts of the world. Australia has announced the core elements of its system. In autumn 2008, shortly after his election, US President Obama reaffirmed his goal to create a US-wide carbon market.

Together, these trading systems could form the nucleus of an evolving future global carbon market. As I have already stressed, the European Union's challenge now is to facilitate the development of such linked carbon markets, in particular among OECD countries by 2015.

In the Copenhagen Communication, the Commission has addressed these questions by putting forward concrete proposals – proposals that are not only ambitious but also realistic, and will make a significant contribution to the success in Copenhagen that our planet so desperately needs.

Let me conclude by taking this opportunity to thank the Temporary Committee on Climate Change, Mr Florenz and Parliament for their strong support for our proposals and for the seriousness and speed with which they have handled the package.

(Applause)

Karl-Heinz Florenz, rapporteur. – (DE) Madam President, President-in-Office of the Council, I am very pleased that, in the closing stages of this Temporary Committee, this issue has been met with such strong interest, and for that I am most warmly appreciative. I would also like to thank all those who have contributed to this debate and all those who have worked with us. We have produced a roadmap to take us to Copenhagen, which naturally contains signposts as well as stop signs and unrestricted travel signs, but also signs that indicate that there are difficult roads ahead. We have discussed this here today.

I am pleased that there have been critical comments, some of which we can take on board. The suggestion from Mr Holm for the citizens of Europe to stop eating meat is, I am sorry to say, quite ludicrous, but we all have our own opinions. There will be a successful outcome in the end and everyone will have contributed to this. Once again, you have my sincere thanks.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place today.

Written statements (Rule 142)

Constantin Dumitriu (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) Ladies and gentlemen, during the last few months we have seen what the credit crunch means, as the global economy is affected by an unprecedented crisis. However, climate, food and social crises are also making their impact felt just as much.

In Romania, we have faced falls in production in recent years due to external causes such as floods, drought and bird flu, with problems of an economic nature coming on top of this over the last few months. During the current financial crisis, it is going to be increasingly difficult for us to cover losses triggered by floods and drought using the state budget. During the whole time I have been on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, I have supported the idea of creating standalone intervention mechanisms at Community level, regardless of the value of the national ceilings.

I also believe that, faced with a challenge of this magnitude, we need to give priority to investments in clean technologies and renewable energy. These provide a solution to the climate crisis, while also revitalising the economy through creating new jobs. As part of our European mandate, it is our duty to persuade our governments to invest more in innovation and new environment-related technologies.

Gábor Harangozó (PSE), in writing. – Tackling climate change at this moment of deep financial turmoil and decreased confidence in economic systems may seem for many a mistake in terms of priorities. Going 'green' is costly, and the efforts necessary for the fundamental restructuring of many sectors in order to achieve ambitious targets are tremendous.

Nevertheless, there are many opportunities to be seized in 'green' investments and policies as elements favouring economic recovery and stability. The development of a low-emission economy is a genuine challenge we cannot afford not to deal with. We need ambitious but still feasible targets and we need not be afraid to walk the path of an inevitable industrial revolution. In order to secure economic recovery and better living conditions for our citizens, a complex and ambitious approach is required, fostering innovation and the development of new jobs and businesses in the framework of 'green' technologies.

Finally, sufficient financial means are of course necessary to make the required investments in 'green' innovation and, obviously, these costs cannot simply be made at the expense of other vital Community policies which cannot bear the burden of climate change without additional financial resources.

Gyula Hegyi (PSE), in writing. – (HU) One of the most serious long-term consequences of climate change is the decrease in fresh water sources and the increasing scarcity of clean drinking water. It is no exaggeration to say that water will be the most important strategic asset of the 21st century. Europe's environmental protection policy must therefore be applied more rigorously than it has been until now to protect water tables, prevent water and soil pollution and support appropriate handling of natural and artificial water habitats.

Alternating periods of flood and drought, as well as extreme weather conditions, demand better management of rainwater. There is no such thing as superfluous water, only poorly managed water. In the next parliamentary cycle and the new budget, the European Union must ensure that significant funds are available for flood prevention, protection of water tables, increasing urban bodies of fresh water and waste water treatment programmes. Hungary's water resources are excellent and Hungarian hydraulic engineers have been doing a wonderful job for nearly 200 years. Therefore, I am certain that our country will play an active and constructive role in drafting a unified European water policy.

Zbigniew Krzysztof Kuźmiuk (UEN), in writing. – (PL) In taking the floor during this debate on climate protection policy up to 2050, I would like to draw your attention to the following points.

Firstly, if the United States and the South-East Asian countries do not join the programme aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions, showing as much commitment as the European Union, then the enormous financial effort involved and the inevitable consequence of a slower rate of economic growth in the European Union will be a very high price to pay for a slight reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. The European Union is responsible for barely 14% of global emissions, while the USA and the countries of South-East Asia produce nearly 80%.

Secondly, the commitments of individual countries to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20% by 2020, along with the need to buy emission permits, will result in a significant increase in the price of electricity and heating for individuals and even higher costs for the industrial sector, especially in the new Member States, such as Poland, where the energy sector relies on coal. As a result, many industrial sectors which have a high level of energy consumption may be shut down in those countries, entailing a range of negative social repercussions.

Finally, the reductions in carbon dioxide emissions achieved by the new Member States, and by Poland in particular, should be taken into account. In Poland, the far-reaching restructuring of the economy between 1990 and 2005, resulted in reductions in carbon dioxide emissions of around 30%. This came at a very high social cost and unemployment remained at over 20% for many years during this period.

Adrian Manole (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I think that Mr Florenz's report '2050: The future begins today – Recommendations for the EU's future integrated policy on climate change' was timely and necessary, given the effects already observed and those expected as a result of climate change.

Romania was one of the first countries in Europe to have signed the Kyoto Protocol, which meant that it assumed its commitment to support the battle against climate change through reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 8% by 2012.

I am convinced that we need these measures, although, compared with many other European countries, Romania's level of greenhouse gas emissions is low. Agriculture and Romanian forestry can play an important role in combating climate change, whose impact has been strongly felt in recent years, especially through flooding, high temperatures and prolonged droughts. These natural phenomena affect not only agricultural and forest productivity, but also precious habitats and ecosystems.

Agriculture and forestry are expected to continue making an important contribution to the battle against the effects caused by climate change through forestation, with the aim of absorbing and retaining greenhouse gases, and the use of biomass as a renewable source of energy.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) The European Union has taken on a major role in the effort to find a compromise for adopting a global post-Kyoto agreement. It is possible that cooperation with the new US administration will enable it to come up with a specific way to implement this agreement.

Specific measures for combating the effects of climate change also offer opportunities for sustainable socio-economic development and for creating new jobs. They are targeted in particular at the new, dynamic sectors, offering major growth potential, where the level of investment made so far has been inadequate. These measures will have, apart from the beneficial effect of combating climate change, a positive impact and alleviate the effects of the economic and financial crisis and may contribute, in the long term, to reducing the European Union's dependency on energy imports.

We are talking in this instance about new, intensive investments in transport infrastructures, renewable energy sources, biotechnologies, waste collection and recycling, nuclear energy and the renovation of residential heating systems.

Reforestation and measures preventing desertification can also produce spectacular results in the medium term.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – I welcome the Florenz Report on climate change which aims to formulate policies for keeping global warming below 2° compared to pre-industrial times. I particularly welcome the call for a 20% improvement in energy efficiency, the call for binding targets for agriculture and the demand for the creation of a European Climate Fund.

These proposals plus the measures already adopted by the EU put us in a strong position to argue for global action on climate change at the Copenhagen summit.

Péter Olajos (PPE-DE), in writing. – (HU) I wish to congratulate Mr Florenz on his report, which is excellent material in preparation for the Copenhagen Conference to be held at the end of the year.

I consider very important the observation that the economic and financial crisis and the climate change crisis have the same roots. Therefore, the way out of these crises is also the same. To mitigate and halt the consequences of these crises, comprehensive innovation and a paradigm shift are needed in all areas of life.

I agree with Commissioner Dimas that the costs must be covered first of all from carbon dioxide trading, secondly from investments by private companies and thirdly from state incentives.

Everyone is looking for breakthroughs, for ways of stimulating employment, kick-starting the engine of the global economy as soon as possible and halting climate change. The concept known as the 'Green New Deal' was articulated by the UN Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon. What it means, in essence, is that global economic incentives must become part of the investment in environmentally-friendly technologies. The new logic of economic organisation based on innovations in environmental technology, which has the support of international capital markets, is also a fundamental feature of the US President Barack Obama's programme.

Innovations in green and future industrial technology would boost the effectiveness of the state and economy, heighten the interest of economic players, and increase consumers' price and cost sensitivity with regard to the products and services being offered.

Rovana Plumb (PSE), in writing. – (RO) The 12 points set out in the report provide a clear action plan for the future. However, to be able to implement it at a local, national, regional and global level, we need the support of well-informed citizens.

According to a special Eurobarometer survey in spring 2008 on 'climate change', approximately 41% of Europeans stated that they were poorly informed about the causes, consequences and ways to combat climate change. In Romania, over 65% of citizens said they had no information about this.

Raising the profile of this issue among the public through education and awareness campaigns implemented in areas of everyday life is a vital step in this direction. The Commission and Member States must finance public awareness campaigns and create conditions for training people for new careers adapted to the specific challenges of the labour market brought about by structural economic changes, which are accelerated by climate change and its effects.

In the current economic crisis, the EU must commit itself politically and financially in the key areas of maintaining and developing 'clean' technologies for combating climate change, supporting cross-border adaptation measures, boosting energy efficiency and providing assistance in the event of disasters, according to the EU's principle of solidarity. The upshot of all this is the creation of 'green' jobs in new, competitive enterprises.

Flaviu Călin Rus (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) Ladies and gentlemen, any debate about climate, ecosystems and energy is vitally important because any major change to these can affect life on this planet. Regardless of the types of causes or the scientific arguments put forward by various groups of researchers, one thing for certain is that we are facing global warming. This comprehensive, well-written report, apart from all the useful, valuable information it provides us with, also encourages us to ask the following question: What are we going to do for ourselves and for future generations?

Against this background of climate change, I feel that there are three kinds of projects which EU Member States should be working on and supporting, as a priority:

1. Projects involving standard policies for managing energy resources as efficiently as possible and finding solutions aimed at reducing pollution, especially in industrial areas and business parks.
2. Projects involving funding for scientific research aimed at developing clean technologies.
3. Projects which support immediate specific action aimed at recreating the ecosystem at both European level and in any other region of the world.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (PSE), in writing. – (RO) The European Union has assumed the leading role in the battle against climate change. Devising a long-term strategy for the effective management of the world's natural resources will help achieve a global economy with reduced carbon dioxide emissions.

This strategy must be based on the principle of solidarity aimed at reaching a balance between rich countries and developing countries, which need assistance in reducing their vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change. The signs of global warming are evident in poverty, shortages of food products and limited energy resources. It is a well-known fact that oil is no longer a sufficiently powerful source of energy to meet the level of demand, which is estimated to grow by at least 60% by 2030. Finding alternative sources and using existing resources sensibly are challenges which will face the EU in the future. Agriculture is one of the areas most vulnerable to climate change because of its dependency on meteorological conditions.

Bearing in mind that this sector provides the food resources for the world's population, sustainable management of soil and water resources, combined with protection of forests and biodiversity, will need to feature on the agenda of the long-term strategy for tackling the effects of global warming.

Richard Seeber (PPE-DE), in writing. – (DE) Europe and the world are currently facing considerable challenges. The capital market crisis is not the only pressing problem. We must also initiate a sustainable programme to combat climate change as quickly as possible. As large an economic and political association as the European Union is able to establish itself as the leading partner in the fight against climate change.

The first step has already been taken in this regard – the Union has agreed binding climate targets and, with the adoption of the climate change package in December 2008, it has got many appropriate measures for protecting the climate underway. The top priority must now be the conclusion of the international agreement in Copenhagen, whilst avoiding de-industrialisation and unnecessary burdens on the European economy. We should instead increase our investment in, and research into, green technology. In this way, Europe can move forward, not only in the area of the environment, but also in the area of the economy.

Theodor Dumitru Stolojan (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) The European Union has become the main actor taking specific measures by adopting policies which tackle head on the global challenge triggered by climate change.

European policy in this area can become more effective at a global level and within the EU if: a) the European effort is supported by the efforts of the other powerful industrialised countries outside the EU, along with countries such as China, India, Brazil, Russia and so on; b) the development of nuclear energy is encouraged and not discouraged, at least in the next 30-40 years, until technology capable of using renewable resources has been developed and the costs make it affordable to market without providing grants; c) the European Commission will give stronger support to projects aimed at saving energy and extracting energy from biomass, including the transfer of technology, in less developed EU Member States with a high agricultural potential.

Romania will continue to develop its nuclear programme for generating electricity. At the same time, it will modernise its coal-powered plants and will step up its efforts to produce energy from biomass. With this in mind, we need partnerships with Member States and we urge the European Commission to speed up the process of simplifying the procedures for committing European funds.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (PSE), in writing. – (HU) Green investments must play a key role in state economic stimulus packages intended to counteract the negative effects of the international economic crisis. These investments, which will be used to exploit renewable energy sources more effectively, moderate energy consumption and reduce the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases offer not only economic advantages but significant social benefits as well. It is in Hungary's interest for EU Member States to coordinate and mutually reinforce their efforts in this regard. When setting environmental goals, we also need to be attentive to the economic and social capacities of EU Member States. We must set only attainable goals, taking into consideration their effects on the economic crisis. These goals can only be attained if society shows solidarity. Government activity is not enough for this to happen; a gradual shift in attitude is necessary within society as well. The concrete recommendations for action in the Florenz report, such as support for the construction of zero energy, 'passive' houses, the creation of a European fund to support research into renewable energy sources, linking up energy networks at European level and raising awareness among EU citizens and children in particular, all contribute to this shift in social attitude.

Moreover, we need to strive to ensure that that we preserve Europe's technological edge in environmental protection developments in the 21st century and that we turn this into an economic and social advantage. Given Hungary's outstanding agricultural assets, serious opportunities may open up in energy generation from biomass or in the reuse of plant and animal by-products, waste products unsuited to other commercial uses, in the form of biogas.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS WALLIS

Vice-President

4. Priorities in the fight against Alzheimer's disease (written declaration): see Minutes

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Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL). – (SV) I hope now that the whole of Parliament will listen. During the part-session in January, we unanimously adopted a resolution on the Horn of Africa. It contained a specific paragraph stating that Dawit Isaak should be released. Dawit Isaak is now extremely sick and I would like to ask the President to write to the Eritrean authorities.

The news of his illness has been confirmed by several sources and has been mentioned in the Swedish media today. The situation is extremely serious and desperate and I would just like to remind you that Dawit Isaak is a Swedish-Eritrean journalist who has been imprisoned without trial since 2001. His health problems are so serious now that he is being kept in a military hospital, and I fear for his life.

I would appeal for support for the release of Dawit Isaak.

(Applause)

President. – Mrs Svensson, I can confirm that the President will write accordingly.

5. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

5.1. 2050: The future begins today – Recommendations for the EU's future integrated policy on climate change (A6-0495/2008, Karl-Heinz Florenz) (vote)

(The sitting was suspended at 11.55 pending the formal sitting.)

IN THE CHAIR: MR PÖTTERING*President***6. Formal sitting – Palestinian Authority**

President. – Ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased and moved to welcome here today Mahmud Abbas, the President of the Palestinian National Authority. A very warm welcome to the European Parliament, Mr President.

(Applause)

We also invited the Israeli President, Shimon Peres. Unfortunately, due to Israel's celebrations marking 60 years as a nation, the agreed appointment could not be kept. We hope that the visit by President Peres can take place soon.

Mr President, this is not the first time that you have visited the European Parliament. As I welcome you here in Strasbourg at an extremely difficult time for the Middle East and in particular for your people, the Palestinian people, I remember our last meeting in the Middle East, which took place almost two years ago – at the end of May 2007 – in Gaza. You received me at the official headquarters of the Palestinian National Authority. I will never forget our meeting, as the situation was extremely tense. At that time, you were leading delicate talks with the aim of rescuing the government of national unity, which you had formed with energy and foresight. Ten days later, an inglorious *coup* regrettably put an end to these efforts.

Today, you have come direct from Cairo following a stopover in Paris to meet the French President. In the last few days, some very promising talks have been held in Cairo on the formation of a Palestinian Government of national consensus.

With regard to the tragedy in the Gaza Strip, it is not without concern that the European Parliament has observed the suffering of the Palestinian people. The European Parliament has not remained silent. We demanded an immediate ceasefire. We denounced the disproportionate response taken, not only by the armed forces of Hamas, but also by civilians and international humanitarian organisations. We also decided to denounce the provocations and the rocket fire by Hamas, which regrettably – and we denounce that – continued to be aimed at Israel despite the ceasefire. This has to stop.

(Applause)

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to pay tribute to the staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for the exemplary courage and sacrifice with which they have carried out their task and with which they continue to do so. On behalf of the European Parliament, we thank these men and women of the United Nations most sincerely.

(Applause)

We are calling for the peace negotiations to be resumed as soon as possible, as we are convinced that there cannot merely be a military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As a political actor, we are now under obligation and have a responsibility to do everything we can to enable the people in the Middle East to live together in peace. A prerequisite for peace between Israel and Palestine is intra-Palestinian reconciliation. The European Parliament unreservedly supports the ongoing talks, led in particular by Egypt, to smooth the way to the formation of a Palestinian government of national consensus. Only this type of government will be in a position to ensure the required unity of the Palestinian people.

(Applause)

We urge and expect such a government to observe the fundamental principles of the peace process, to refrain from violence and to conduct peace negotiations with Israel with commitment. The European Union is prepared to work together with such a government.

The commitment of the new US President, Barack Obama, and the appointment of George Mitchell as special envoy to the Middle East are positive signs. The determination of the European Union – and I am pleased that the competent Commissioner, Mrs Ferrero-Waldner, is with us here, together with her colleague – to place all of its political and economic weight in the balance as well as the political will of numerous Arab partners indicate that a resumption and successful conclusion of the peace process on the basis of the resolutions of the United Nations and the Arab peace initiative should be possible.

President Abbas, we are grateful to you for being here today, and I say this on behalf of the European Parliament, but more particularly for myself. We have a great deal of respect and recognition for what you are doing under the most difficult of circumstances. We trust you, because you are a man of mediation, reconciliation and therefore also of peace. We wish you success.

I now invite you to take the floor and give your message to the European Parliament. A very warm welcome to the European Parliament, President Mahmud Abbas.

(Applause)

Mahmoud Abbas, *President of the Palestinian Authority (transcription of the English interpretation from the original Arabic)*. – In the name of God, most gracious, most merciful. Your Excellency, Mr Pöttering, President of the European Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, Members of the European Parliament, first and foremost I should like to extend my thanks to His Excellency Mr Pöttering, President of the European Parliament, and to you for giving me this opportunity to speak before this august Assembly.

I have come to you from Palestine, whose people are suffering from one of the longest military occupations in modern history. Palestine has been deeply wounded by the most violent, dire and horrific military aggression, an aggression that has targeted the lives of children, women and the elderly, as well as their houses, livelihoods, farms, plants and schools. It has targeted drinking water, sewage systems and electricity, as well as hospitals, facilities, roads and bridges.

Yes, the Israeli war has targeted first and foremost the livelihoods of my people, its infrastructure and its future, as well as the future of its Palestinian state for which we have long worked together and for the establishment of which we are still working.

You have witnessed, along with the rest of the world, the burnt and scattered remains of children. You have heard the calls of men, the appeals of children and women who lost most of their family members. Yes, you have seen the mother who was murdered while holding her babies in her arms. You have seen the father who lost the lives of his five children because of rocket attacks, and the girl Balousha who slept next to her sisters and woke to the sound of explosions that killed them all, and the hundreds of children whose houses collapsed and fell on their heads.

You have also seen the Al-Fahura school, which was considered to be safe by the people of Jabalia, who took refuge in it, and how bombshells claimed the lives of those innocent refugees, with the result that over 40 people perished. These people had families, they had names, they had stories, ambitions and hopes. In addition, over 100 people were wounded.

Along with those innocent victims fell the values of human conscience, the principles of the United Nations and its duties to protect international peace and security. You may also recall that the headquarters of the United Nations, its schools, clinics, food and medical warehouses were not spared this insane war against our peaceful and resilient people in Gaza.

I have come to you, ladies and gentlemen, from Palestine bearing a question by a boy named Luay who lost his eyesight because of bombs. He asked me who would give back to his eyes the light of hope, the light of life and to his people the light of freedom and peace.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, those were terrible scenes and pictures. This was the aftermath of this war which led to the deaths of over 1 400 martyrs, with over 5 000 injured, the majority of whom were innocent civilians, and a high percentage of whom were children, women and the elderly. About 500 of the wounded are still in a critical condition and are dying by the day, in addition to a total destruction of over 4 000 homes, buildings, and about 20 000 other homes.

This means that about 90 000 people became homeless and were displaced. In addition to wide-ranging destruction of electricity systems, water systems, sewage systems, in addition to roads and vital facilities, public and private buildings, this Israeli war has claimed the fruit of the blood and sweat of our Palestinian people, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian people who worked all their lives and lost the fruit of this work. It has also destroyed what the Palestinian National Authority has established over 15 years.

Much of this infrastructure and many of these facilities were thanks to the contributions of your countries and other friendly countries.

This is the scene of the aftermath of this war. This is in parallel to another type of aggression against our lands, our farmers and our national economy that happens on a daily basis in the West Bank.

The Israeli settlement has not stopped at all. The policies of settlement led to the continuation in building the wall of separation, as well as to an increase in roadblocks, checkpoints and barriers besieging the cities, villages and little towns and refugee camps in the West Bank, including Jerusalem.

On the contrary, bids for settlement units have increased 17-fold in the last year in comparison with the year that preceded Anapolis. The checkpoints have increased from 580 to 660.

Military incursions have not stopped, nor have the daily arrests and sometimes assassinations of citizens; the bullying by settlers and their armed incursions and burning of homes which happened in Hebron, Nablus and other areas; and the terrorist attacks conducted by settlers against farmers in the olive season, which is considered by our people the symbol of peace and life, and not just the livelihood for tens of thousands of Palestinian families.

This tragic scene of Israeli incursions and aggressions in the West Bank, including Eastern Jerusalem, confirms to us and to the world that what is going on is an aggression against the entire Palestinian people, its future and its legitimate national rights. It is an aggression and a war against the future of peace and dedicated international efforts that have been deployed for its establishment.

This unjust embargo on our people in Gaza and the war against it was but an episode in a continuous series of measures aiming at separating Gaza from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian lands, and also at marginalising Gaza and marginalising all of our people, and preventing our people from attaining their ultimate goal: an end to occupation, gaining freedom and the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the lands that were occupied in 1967, with Eastern Jerusalem as its capital.

This is confirmed by the escalating settlement policies, despite all the efforts and agreements, including the George Mitchell report in 2001, the last of which was the Anapolis Agreement, which promised the Palestinian people a state at the end of 2008. However, the culmination of this Anapolis Agreement was a destructive war in Gaza and a settlement war in the West Bank, including Jerusalem.

The world declared in Anapolis the failure of unilateral and military solutions. We also declared that Israel should be committed to putting an end to settlement activities in order to pave the way towards a political process that will put an end to occupation and will be the fulfilment of the right of a two-state solution – a Palestinian state and an Israeli state. However, reality proves to us that Israel is still governed by a military and settlement mentality, even though its leaders speak about the two-state solution.

We must not deal with Israel as if it were a state above accountability, above international law. We must put an end to such practices and we must hold the leaders of Israel accountable for their violations of international and humanitarian law.

(Applause)

At the same time, we should like to stress that the success of relief and aid operations, as well as resettling families whose homes were destroyed, necessitates the lifting of embargoes, opening checkpoints and crossings, as well as holding Israel accountable to its commitment in the Agreement on Movement and Crossing of 2005, which would lead to the flow of aid, equipment and materials necessary for reconstruction and the normal movement of goods and individuals. This applies to all crossings in Gaza – not just the Rafah crossing – and also applies to the freedom of movement in the West Bank and the security corridors between the West Bank and Gaza to stress the unity of the Palestinian land and its economy.

Here I should like to commend the efforts of UNRWA for its continuous work, in spite of all obstructions and obstacles, to help our people. I call upon your organisation and other organisations to support its efforts in all fields.

National reconciliation and the establishment of a national reconciliation government constitute one of our priorities. We have opened the door for this reconciliation that will put an end to divisions and upheaval, and also to calls for separation between Gaza and the West Bank. We warned against falling into this trap that Israel wants us to fall into.

Therefore, at the beginning of June we called for an unconditional dialogue. We accepted the Egyptian working paper. Our doors are still open; we will not allow the division of our people and of its geographical unity; we shall continue our dedicated efforts to deal with any attempt at separation.

We know the intentions and the plans of the regional forces and tendencies which support separation and encourage it. These forces obstruct the Egyptian solution that will put an end to internal disputes and divisions. This solution is seconded at an Arab level by the Arab League and by Security Council resolution 1860, in the drafting of which I personally participated, together with Arab and European ministers.

I should like to stress that we shall continue deploying our efforts towards reaching our most noble aim, which is to find a solution for the Arab-Palestinian cause, because the status quo leaves the future unknown and leaves our people victims of the policies of war, aggression and extremism.

Once we achieve a government of national reconciliation, based on a programme that is supported by Arab and international parties, that will allow us to oversee crossings, as well as reconstruction efforts, to the benefit of our people and of preparations for presidential and legislative elections.

I hope that will receive your support, and I also hope you will help us in organising such elections and overseeing them, as was the case in 1996 and 2006. We also hope to be able to count on your support in order to release the President of the Palestinian Legislative Council and all MPs who were arrested and are still prisoners of Israel.

(Applause)

The essence of the conflict in our region is the Israeli occupation. It is a conflict between the hopes and aspirations of our people to rid themselves of this occupation and the attempt by Israel to destroy these aspirations, as well as obstructing international efforts that aim towards establishing a Palestinian state by peaceful means.

Our people look to you and to all peace- and justice-loving nations and call upon you: the time has come for the international community to assume its legal, political and moral responsibilities in order to provide adequate international protection for it and enable it to get rid of this occupation and to live in peace and freedom. Here I should like to stress again our request and your request to send international forces in order to protect our people.

We have heard about international and Arab efforts to reconstruct Gaza. It is true that these efforts should be deployed as soon as possible in order for our people to regain hope and trust, but we wonder how long Israel will be given a free hand to destroy the assets and infrastructure of Arab people.

Therefore the international community must prevent the repetition of those past events, and should also call on Israel to stop its destructive policies. I should like to repeat my thanks to the European Commission for its help in reconstructing the establishments and the institutions of the Palestinian Authority. I should like to stress that serious and comprehensive negotiations cannot be continued without a complete halt to settlement – including what is known as natural extension – and to all settlement blocks and all types of embargo.

I should like to confirm to you that the achievements of the Palestinian Government with regard to strengthening peace, public order and stability cannot be ignored by any party. Israel should be committed to its deadlines and also should stop undermining the efforts of the Palestinian Government by means of incursions and arrests. It should also respect the legal and security status of the Palestinian authority, in addition to enabling the Government to implement its vital economic projects, without using pretexts such as the G areas and other examples.

We can no longer negotiate about the end of occupation. What we need is a complete end to occupation – i.e. of the land that has been occupied since 5 June 1967, as was stated by the road map. We cannot go back to negotiating over partial and ancillary issues, while a solution to the main cause – the end of occupation – remains absent and there is an escalation in settlement seeking to strengthen and deepen this occupation, as well as the arrest of 11 000 Palestinians prisoners. This, and only this, will enable the peace process to regain its credibility with regard to our people and the people of the area as a whole.

What we need, ladies and gentlemen, is the reconstruction of Gaza, but also the reconstruction of the peace process. This is our collective responsibility. Europe, which upheld in the past – and is still upholding – the principles of security and justice in our region and in the world, must stress today, more than at any time, its role in a comprehensive and clear partnership with President Obama's Administration, the Quartet and the international community. The election of President Obama and his declared stances, in addition to his initiative in appointing Mr George Mitchell as his special envoy, are encouraging initiatives that will smooth the path of negotiations and the entire political process.

I should like to say, in all honesty, that our Arab decision is to implement the Arab peace initiative – the Arab peace initiative which is part of the road map, and has become an Islamic peace initiative including 57 Muslim countries. This initiative should be fully complemented.

As I said before, this initiative is part of the road map that was adopted in the Security Council, according to resolution 1515. We cannot pick and choose and negotiate about its foundations that are based on international law. This is the last opportunity we have for true and just peace in our region. All parties, especially Israel, and the Quartet, should be loud and honest about this.

We must point out that the Arab peace initiative has become an Islamic initiative as well. It is an initiative that calls for land for peace. As soon as Israel withdraws from all occupied territories, 57 Arab and Muslim countries will be willing to normalise their relationships with Israel. This is an historic opportunity that must not be wasted.

Ladies and gentlemen, the scenes of death and destruction shook the conscience and the feelings of millions of people around the world, including European friendly countries. Our people appreciate this lively human conscience, but we must stress in this regard that the people of Palestine will not lose its will for freedom and life. They look forward to your support in their struggle to achieve their right to freedom and independence, to be able to build their future and to be able to give to their children their right to a safe life, a developed school and a bright future in their homeland – this homeland that deserves life and security.

Ladies and gentlemen, our great Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, said time and again, 'This land is worth living for'. In this regard, I should like to extend my deep thanks and gratitude to you, on behalf of the people of this great poet, for hosting the activities of his commemoration. This poet is the symbol of Palestinian patriotism. He is the poet of humanity.

To Mahmoud Darwish I say: 'Your poem, that has yet to be written, about the children of Gaza, their suffering and their hopes, will be written by a poet from among those children who upheld your spirit, just as you upheld their cause and their little dreams'. Thank you for listening.

(Sustained applause)

President. – President Abbas, I would like to thank you very much on behalf of the European Parliament for coming here to Strasbourg and speaking to us. We now have the joint task of working for peace. We in the European Union and the European Parliament want to be honest brokers of peace. We want the people of Israel to live within secure borders and we want the people of Palestine to live within secure borders. Our starting point is human dignity. Palestinian girls work just as hard in school as Israeli girls. Israeli boys love playing football just as much as Palestinian boys. The time must come for peaceful co-existence of the kind which we have in Europe. That is our wish for the Middle East.

We wish you, President Abbas, every success in all your efforts to bring about peace. A secure Palestinian state and also a secure Israeli state, and this comment is addressed to Israel, must not remain a future vision. This must become reality and it must happen within our lifetime. If we really want this to come about, then we will be able to achieve it.

(Applause)

Mr President, I would like to thank you. If circumstances permit, we will meet again on 23 and 24 February. The Bureau of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly has asked me to visit Palestine and Israel. I will head a delegation which will travel to Gaza and we will also visit areas of southern Israel. If your diary allows, and I hope that this will be possible, we will meet in Ramallah. I will, of course, also be visiting Jerusalem.

We want to help – and this comes both from our head and from our heart – to make peace possible between Israel and Palestine, between Palestine and Israel in the Middle East.

President Abbas, we would like to thank you for your hard work and to encourage you to continue on the road of reconciliation, compromise and peace. We would like to thank you for your visit to the European Parliament.

(Applause)

IN THE CHAIR: MRS WALLIS

Vice-President

Urszula Gacek (PPE-DE). – Madam President, four months ago a Polish engineer was kidnapped in Pakistan. He is being held by his Taliban captors, who threaten to execute him today if their demands are not met. I appeal to this House to support the Governments of Poland and Pakistan in their efforts to secure the release of my countryman.

7. Voting time (continuation)

7.1. Sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals (A6-0026/2009, Claudio Fava) (vote)

– *Before the vote:*

Claudio Fava, rapporteur. – (IT) Madam President, with your permission I would like to ask the Council, with support from the other groups, to annex the following formal declaration to the directive and therefore to postpone the vote on the legislative resolution. I shall read the declaration that I hope will be annexed:

‘The European Parliament and the Council state that the rules on subcontracting agreed upon in Article 9 of this Directive shall be without prejudice to other provisions on this issue to be adopted in future legislative instruments.’

Martin Bursík, President-in-Office of the Council. – Madam President, the Presidency takes note of the proposed declaration. However, it has to inform the Members of the European Parliament that it cannot make commitments on behalf of the Council without consulting it.

Claudio Fava, rapporteur. – (IT) Madam President, I understand that the Council must meet formally with the Permanent Representatives Committee. I ask the Presidency to propose officially that this declaration be added and for this reason I am requesting that the vote on the resolution be postponed until the next plenary session, in order to give the Council time to carry out its formal consultation.

(Parliament agreed to postpone the vote)

7.2. Challenge of energy efficiency through information and communications technologies (vote)

7.3. Resettlement of Guantánamo prisoners (vote)

8. Explanations of vote

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Reinhard Rack (PPE-DE). – (DE) Madam President, during the last formal sitting, I asked if the use of the camera could not be made easier by leaving one seat empty. Today that was once again not the case. The camera was not on me, but on General Morillon and then on Mr Grosch. Perhaps it would be possible to ensure that both the cameraman's job and our job are made easier.

President. – Thank you Mr. Rack, we will remind the services.

Oral explanations of vote

– **Report: Karl-Heinz Florenz (A6-0495/2008)**

David Sumberg (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I did, in the end, vote for this report because, as a whole, we are all in favour of preserving our environment. That is a noble tradition of my party – the Conservative Party in Britain – but I think I have to put two riders to it.

The first rider is that we can only have a proper policy on climate change if everybody joins in. It is simply a waste of time for the European Union, or an individual country, to have a policy. So we have to involve the countries of Asia.

The second rider is that, in the uncertain times in which we live, a policy of climate change has to be tempered with the need for energy security. We face a situation in the world today where all of our countries need a ready supply of energy. That must be predominant because, without it, the economies and the welfare and the well-being of our people will not be sustained.

Bogdan Pęk (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, I would also like to speak on the subject of this directive. I voted against the directive, as I am utterly convinced that it is extremely dangerous and poses a threat to Europe's development. It combines the obvious issue of the need to sensibly protect the environment with an utterly hypocritical idea, namely that humans can influence the cyclical changes in our climate.

It is precisely this part, that is, the issue of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, that makes up the most important section of this document. The enormous sums of money, estimated at hundreds of billions, that are to be spent on this objective, will be utterly wasted, when they could be used to create real environmental and energy security in the European Union instead. This is a very poor and tragically unfortunate solution.

Avril Doyle (PPE-DE). – Madam President, several paragraphs and sections of the Florenz report, especially paragraph 190, relate to agriculture's contribution to climate change. While low or conservation tillage is an option in most EU states and has economic as well as climate change benefits – and deserves far more support, in my view – the agricultural debate and research concentrate largely on the methane and nitrous oxide contributions of ruminant livestock.

While progress is being made, I do not support Member States having to meet their non-trading sectors' targets for emissions reductions by the compulsory reduction of Europe's cattle herds. Let us not forget that what we do not produce here in Europe we will import. One kilo of beef produced in Brazil results in six times the carbon dioxide emissions of one kilo of beef produced in Ireland.

Leopold Józef Rutowicz (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, the European economy is the largest importer of fossil fuels. An increase in the price of these fuels, due to greater demand and higher extraction costs, may have a significant, negative impact on the quality of life of our citizens and make the European Union's economy less competitive.

Efforts to save energy and introduce clean energy sources, which produce energy at a stable and relatively low price, could counteract this trend. Making use of scientific research and using it to develop technological solutions will automatically reduce carbon dioxide emissions. However, spreading controversial theories and scaring us with information on carbon dioxide has no added value and makes the technical and material process of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, and restricting the use of fossil fuels to produce energy, more difficult.

I support all technical and scientific activities aimed at reducing the use of fossil fuels. Unfortunately, however, I cannot agree with the theories expressed in Mr Florenz's report. I do not support the report.

Zuzana Roithová (PPE-DE). – (CS) Madam President, I would like to thank Karl Florenz for his efforts and for the democratic way in which he has managed the Temporary Committee on Climate Change. Although his original report was better than this compromise I have voted for it none-the-less. A very wide range of views was expressed in today's matter-of-fact businesslike discussion, some of them critical but all sharing the view that climate change is now under way and there is no doubt that with today's level of civilisation we can manage to influence it and our responsibility to future generations is to reach agreement on effective measures. None of them are panaceas and all of them must apply to all continents. I believe that the Czech Presidency, despite the extreme views of the Czech president, will manage to extract fresh undertakings from the US.

Hynek Fajmon (PPE-DE). – (CS) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I have voted against the Florenz report. The adoption of this report is bad news for EU citizens. The Earth's climate has changed, is changing and will change regardless of whether or not we want it to. This will not be influenced in any way by the absurd undertakings which the EU is imposing on itself in this area. The Florenz report asserts that the climate undertakings adopted by the EU in 2007 are insufficient and that they must be increased. I do not agree with this. As long as the EU is the only part of the world reducing its emissions then the target of reducing global emissions will never be achieved. All we will achieve will be that a large proportion of European businesses

will relocate and jobs will be lost. The report's authors want to change everything in Europe, from food menus to tourism, where social tourism is to become the official aim. Even Mao-Tse-Tung would feel proud of such a cultural revolution where everything old is chucked out and replaced with the new. No rational man could agree to such an approach and I have therefore voted against it.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE). – (PL) Madam President, although 70% of the earth's surface is made up of water, our water reserves, especially of drinking water, are shrinking at a frightening rate. Ever greater areas of our planet face the threat of water poverty. The faster the rate of development, the greater the demand for water. Research has shown that, as societies become wealthier, the demand for water increases. There is no progress without water.

Many regions of the world are teetering on the brink of disaster. Maintaining the *status quo* in terms of water management could lead to a situation where access to water will not only cause disputes, but will lead to wars. The material situation of countries, rather than the military capabilities they might possess, will determine their success. Water shortages will, in a very short space of time, lead to a food crisis.

We need a suitable, integrated policy, which will help to preserve and rebuild our water reserves. We need to rationalise water usage.

Ivo Strejček (PPE-DE). – Madam President, allow me to explain why I voted against the Florenz report on climate change.

Policies relating to climate change are based to a large extent on alarmist ideologies. The evidence for climate change is controversial. Hypotheses blaming man for this change are also, to say the least, disputable. Man is seen as a creature who is harmful to the environment without making a beneficial contribution. I do not share this view.

The content of the report is a direct consequence of an ongoing fashionable green ideology stating that we must put nature and the planet first, that we cannot take care of people, their needs and interests.

The few amendments to the report calling for further progress on nuclear energy, and supporting headway on nuclear fusion, can hardly mitigate its negative impact on the whole European economy and agriculture.

I voted against the report because it is a blueprint for substantial political problems. Instead of bringing forward ideas that nobody is interested in, we should take care of people and their needs.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I supported this report mainly because the paragraphs I had some concern about were either deleted or modified in a way which I felt was appropriate. They related specifically to agriculture livestock production. I would reinforce the point that the European Union has considerably reduced its livestock production due to CAP reforms in the past, that we are now net importers of beef and that beef is produced elsewhere with the climate change concerns attached to it.

This really shows us how important it is that there is global consensus on it and that, while Europe might lead the way, we must try to insist that others follow us because we will only do ourselves harm if we are seen to be the only ones stepping up to the mark.

Finally I support the idea in this report of a specific year targeted towards providing information and dealing with the issue of climate change in a way which brings people along with us. There is already good work being done in this area.

Nirj Deva (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I voted for this report because I feel, for the first time, that the European Union is in synchronisation with the United States. President Obama has been elected to office saying that he is going to put the environment first in his programmes.

But I do not know whether my constituents will accept that we are actually going to make any difference. Even if the United States and the European Union act in concert to limit the emission of carbon, we must consider what will happen if we do not do enough to encourage the emerging India and China to do the same – by transfer of technology and by helping the Chinese and the Indians to find the most modern low-carbon technology that we can export and help them to partner. The fact is that, as we speak, China is making the production of carbon-intensive coal-fired power stations come on stream every two weeks. So how are we helping ourselves limit this thing without helping the transfer of technology?

Daniel Hannan (NI). – Madam President, once again we see the European Union inhabiting a virtual world – a world that exists only in Parliament resolutions, in Commission communiqués and in Council press releases.

We condemn global warming, yet our monthly peregrination between Brussels and Strasbourg generates hundreds of thousands of tons of greenhouse gases. We cant about sustainable land use, yet the common agricultural policy encourages the felling of hedgerows, the use of chemical-based fertilisers and the dumping of surpluses on vulnerable Third World markets. We preach conservation, yet the common fisheries policy has created an ecological calamity, wiping out what ought to have been a great, renewable resource.

Colleagues, do you not think our voters have noticed? Do you imagine that, like Descartes's malicious demon, you can manipulate their reality by controlling their perception? The fact is that our voters saw through us long ago, which is why, at every opportunity, they vote 'no'. If you think I am wrong, prove me wrong. Put the Lisbon Treaty to a referendum: *Pactio Olisipiensis censenda est*.

– **Report: Claudio Fava (A6-0026/2009)**

Zuzana Roithová (PPE-DE). – (CS) Although I have voted for the Fava report, I have fundamental reservations over the title of the directive providing for sanctions against employers of illegally-staying third-country nationals. This is hypocritical when the black economy also includes millions of European workers, tradesmen, domestic servants and others and the harmonisation of sanctions must apply to work on the black market irrespective of where the employee comes from.

Emine Bozkurt (PSE). – (NL) The delegation from the PvdA (Dutch Labour Party) supports this directive's objective, namely to penalise the employment of illegal immigrants with a view to discouraging working illegally as one of the factors attracting illegal migrants, whilst at the same time aiming to prevent and control the exploitation of migrants.

Despite a number of positive elements in this compromise, we felt compelled to vote against it for a number of reasons. Initially, there was liability covering the entire chain right up to the main contractor. Unfortunately, this clause did not make it into the compromise between the Council and Parliament, which is now restricted to the first stage in outsourcing or subcontracting. This is counterproductive and encourages more outsourcing in order to avoid social liability.

Furthermore, there are insufficient guarantees that migrants will be protected and employers punished for breaking the rules. Migrants will not be entitled to receive any outstanding wages before they are deported, nor will they be allowed to wait for their pay in the European Union. The chances of them getting their money after they have been deported are non-existent. This means that illegal immigrants who become the victims of exploitation and want to fight for their rights hardly stand any chance at all.

David Sumberg (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I abstained on this important vote in this Parliament. I am, of course, not in favour of illegal immigrants coming into our countries and taking the jobs of those who have paid their taxes and paid their way over time, but I think the responsibility here should rest not principally with employers but with the national governments of the individual countries.

It gives me the chance, by that abstention, to put on record my view that our present British Government has failed lamentably to have a proper immigration policy in our country – an immigration policy that tracks those coming in as well as those going out, that ensures there is fairness between those who are entitled to come in and those who are not, and, above all, a policy which will maintain good race and community relations, based on the fact that the people of Britain feel there is a right and proper balance between those who come in, those who are here and those who go out.

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Francesco Enrico Speroni (UEN). – (IT) Madam President, I wanted to raise a point of order, because as far as I understand, we have not voted on the Fava report. I do not see how we can give explanations of vote when the vote has not taken place.

President. – We voted on the report, we did not take the final vote, so people may well wish to express themselves on the earlier votes.

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Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE). – (PL) Madam President, the demographic crisis is one of the most important challenges facing the European Union in the near future. A low birth rate and longer average life expectancy mean that our society is ageing. In the meantime, an ever smaller group of citizens will have to pay the associated costs.

A shortage of applicants for certain jobs means that illegal immigrants are being employed, as the cost of their labour is significantly lower. Illegal employment should be punished, and its negative consequences should, first and foremost, be felt by employers, and only later affect the workers themselves.

The Directive sets out appropriate administrative requirements to be met by employers. However, these requirements should not be excessive, as they might have a negative impact on the situation of people who have entered the European Union legally and hold valid work permits. Being obliged to examine the applicants' papers might discourage employers from employing foreigners and, as a result, lead to a drop in the employment rate and undermine the labour market.

Philip Claeys (NI). – (NL) I am going to vote in favour of the Fava report, though it is, of course, far from perfect. I would in any event like to express my support for the directive, which seeks to address the employment of illegal immigrants.

This is, of course, just the tip of the iceberg, because we should also address human traffickers, networks that provide support to illegal immigrants and also, of course, Member State governments that legalise illegal aliens on a massive scale. After all, it is precisely this impunity that is one of the major draws in this whole issue of illegal immigration. Illegal aliens can organise whatever protests they please, make demands, set up petitions, without running the risk of being caught or of being returned to their countries of origin. A return policy should be adopted that is effective and that does exactly what it says on the tin.

Daniel Hannan (NI). – Madam President, the right to determine who may cross your borders and settle on your territory is a defining attribute of statehood. For years this Parliament has been seeking to bestow that attribute of statehood on the European Union, doing so without the consent of the voters and, in so far as one can judge from the results of the French, Dutch and Irish referendums, in the face of active opposition from the voters. The question of illicit migration ought to be a national prerogative and the question of sanctions against employers of illicit entrants ought certainly to be reserved to the Member States.

If the European Union wants to extend its jurisdiction into this field it ought first to secure the wholehearted consent of the people for the legal basis on which it intends to do so. That means putting the Lisbon Treaty to a referendum. *Pactio Olisipiensis censenda est.*

Nirj Deva (PPE-DE). – Madam President, this is a dreadful piece of legislation. It is dreadful, because it criminalises the employer and does not criminalise the illicit immigrant. It is nonsense. This will create a sense of foreboding among all employers whenever they have to employ somebody. Can you imagine what will happen when a potential employer looks at a potential employee and starts asking questions which are of a very intrusive nature?

In addition, this has nothing at all to do with the European Union. This ought to be a matter for national legislation and national governments – for the national parliaments of individual Member States to decide whom they want and do not want in their countries. To criminalise national employers at a time of deepening recession is absurd. This piece of legislation should never see the light of day.

– Motion for a resolution: B6-0062/2009 (Energy efficiency)

Zuzana Roithová (PPE-DE). – (CS) The European Union can now see the first results of the common energy policy. The ETS auctions will begin in 2015 and the renewable energy programmes have started. Only the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty will enable the more effective management of European priorities in the energy sphere and these are now changing. Most important of all is political independence. Energy supply must not be a source of political blackmail. The second priority is to increase the share of clean energy and renewable energy. This is the reason why these technologies, as well as nuclear energy and its operational safety and waste issues must also be targeted in research funding. The most fundamental thing this discussion has shown is that we must also look for ways to limit consumption and show respect for natural resources. However, this starts with the education of our children.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I remember a lecturer once saying to me, when I was a young master's student, that technology offers many solutions, but, if you want to achieve things, you often need political and managerial will to achieve your goals.

Here it is once again in the European Parliament. We talk about climate change. We talk about energy efficiency. Yet, let us remember that 12 times a year we move this House from Brussels to Strasbourg, not to mention the extra buildings that we have in Luxembourg. Not only does that cost the taxpayers of Europe an extra EUR 200 million a year, but it emits 192 000 tonnes of CO₂ – equivalent to 49 000 hot air balloons. So it is time for politicians in this Chamber to stop emitting their own hot air over energy efficiency and climate change, cut out the hypocrisy and close down the Strasbourg Parliament.

Francesco Enrico Speroni (UEN). – (IT) Madam President, I drive a car, and as a driver I am constantly fed up with all the persecution we face. Some of the proposals made in this report are typical examples of this, which is why I voted against it.

Nirj Deva (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I reluctantly supported this, though I would have preferred not to have voted for it. The reason is that we cannot create efficiency without competition. Competition is the prime driver of efficiency in any market – energy or whatever – and here we are using a tool – technology – across the European Union to drive an energy efficiency market.

Surely we should drive energy efficiency through competition in the European Union. Had we done so and had we looked at how we can compete with each other to increase our energy efficiency, we would have the best efficient energy market in the world. That is why I said I voted for this reluctantly.

– Motion for a resolution: RC-B6-0066/2009 (Guantánamo prisoners)

David Sumberg (PPE-DE). – Madam President, before we bid goodbye to Guantánamo by a combination of a resolution of this Parliament and the executive decision of the President of the United States – a wicked combination of naked power – let me just put on record two facts.

First of all, Guantánamo was set up in order to protect all of our citizens. As far as the United States was concerned, it worked. Since 9/11 there has not been one single act of terrorism on the United States mainland. As he goes into retirement, let us salute the record of President George W. Bush as far as that is concerned. I realise I have spoken the ultimate heresy in this House by saying it, but it is true.

Secondly, let us remember too that, although we have been pretty free with our advice to the Americans, let us see what Europe does now to take the burden-sharing of some of these prisoners and protecting our people from future terrorist attack. I will not be holding my breath.

Jim Allister (NI). – Madam President, ever eager to jump on any passing bandwagon, today the European Parliament demanded that Member States throw open their doors to Guantánamo detainees, on the very day when security services reveal that Mullah Sakir, who was released last year, is now in the high command of al-Qaeda and directing attacks on British and NATO troops in Afghanistan. On that very day, we declare the EU is an open house for such terrorist activists. Are we mad? Remember, once admitted and regularised as citizens, such people can move freely through every Member State in the EU. I trust those who voted for this madness will stand over it when it all goes wrong.

Zuzana Roithová (PPE-DE). – (CS) Madam President, allow me to explain why I abstained from voting on the resolution concerning the closure of the Guantánamo prison. Yesterday's discussion showed that everyone welcomes this popular or populist plan of the US President, but that is all we can do. The resolution contains assessments for which we do not have sufficient verified evaluations or verified data. We devoted three hours of heated debate yesterday to the question of where to put the prisoners and those whose crimes have not been proven. Of course, the solution lies with the US Congress and with the individual governments of some European countries, but not with the European Parliament. Therefore I did not vote for the resolution.

Philip Claeys (NI). – (NL) Whilst the resolution on Guantánamo contains a number of elements that confirm the very foundations of the rule of law, I am not happy, of course, with the underlying tenor of this text, namely that the detainees of Guantánamo would be victims of some sort that deserve our sympathy. They are not exactly squeaky clean. They are people who are suspected of committing acts of terrorism but for whom conclusive evidence is lacking.

The Member States should make the necessary arrangements for the acceptance of Guantánamo inmates, or so the resolution claims. This is problematic, to say the least. The problem of radical Islamic fundamentalism

is, in my view, considerable enough in Europe, and it bears witness to a certain level of short-sightedness to want to fight terrorism but at the same time open the floodgates to people who are suspected of having ties with al-Qaeda, the Taliban and related groupings.

Daniel Hannan (NI). – Madam President, for years this House has criticised the United States over the suspension of civic freedoms inherent in the maintenance of the secure facility at Guantánamo. Mine was among the voices raised in concern.

I accepted – unlike some in this Chamber – that these were difficult and sensitive issues. A number of detainees were released only to be recaptured on the battlefields of Afghanistan. One blew himself up in a market in Iraq, killing dozens of people. Nonetheless, some principles are absolute and ought not to be sacrificed to expediency. One such is the principle that no one should be detained without being accused of an offence.

Colleagues, we prefaced each of our resolutions on Guantánamo with protestations of goodwill. We spoke, we insisted, as friends of the United States. Well, here is our chance to vindicate that boast. The US Administration, in doing what we have long urged, asks our assistance. Not to tender it would be mean, inconsistent, hypocritical and self-defeating.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). – Madam President, those of us who believe in freedom, individual liberty and the rule of law have for years sought to persuade our American friends to close Guantánamo Bay, or the detention there. So the country that calls itself the leader of the free world cannot put aside those values for its convenience, albeit understandable security concerns.

Now that President Obama has announced the closure of Guantánamo Bay, we should be helpful in any way we can. However, it is not for the European Union to determine who enters the European Union countries. It should be for Member States, and let us call upon the Member States of the European Union to do their bit to help our American friends at this time. They have shown the will. They have listened to us. It is about time we listened to them, just as the European political élite should listen to the voters when, in referendum after referendum, they have rejected the Lisbon Treaty. It is time for us to listen to the voices that count.

Nirj Deva (PPE-DE). – Madam President, Magna Carta and habeas corpus are the bedrocks upon which the American Constitution was written. They are also the bedrock upon which the laws of my country have been written. You cannot charge someone and lock him up without accusing him and having a trial. However, year after year in this Parliament, we condemned President Bush for what he did with Guantánamo Bay. Now we have a situation where President Obama has, quite correctly, decided to do away with it.

When the American executive President has listened to what we have had to say, surely it is up to us to encourage Member States to take on the burden of our American allies. However, that is not a matter that this Parliament can dictate to other parliaments. It is for the national parliaments to decide that it is in their interests to help the Americans in their time of need.

Written explanations of vote

– Report: Karl-Heinz Florenz (A6-0495/2008)

Šarūnas Birutis (ALDE), in writing. – (LT) Europe needs a single strategic energy policy, which would ensure the efficient use of resources and minimize environmental impact.

The EU and Member States must ensure the development of Europe's energy infrastructure, which is imperative as we strive to diversify the EU's energy sources and reduce dependency on fossil fuels.

Today in the EU, the heating of buildings accounts for the highest amount of energy used and the most CO₂ emitted – about 40% of all CO₂ emitted. In this area in particular there are many opportunities to save energy.

I agree with the rapporteur's proposal to organise an information campaign for citizens at a national level, aimed at increasing efficient energy use, during which home and flat owners would have thermal images taken of their property and would be given information on their energy efficiency and offered recommendations on the funding of possible modernization works by requesting microcredits. Poor energy efficiency is a sore point with post-Soviet era buildings and many owners do not know how and by what means they can save energy. I believe it is necessary to increase aid from the Structural Funds by up to 15% (currently 3%) for dwelling renovation.

John Bowis (PPE-DE), in writing. – British Conservatives welcome the broad thrust of the report of the Temporary Committee on Climate Change. We believe that the report offers a significant contribution to the debate, which will lead to an effective international agreement on climate change in Copenhagen in 2009. We support in particular the aim of ambitious medium and long-term emission reduction targets, the promotion of renewable energy and increased energy efficiency, and the call for a sustainable approach to forestry, rainforests and deforestation. We also believe that a low-carbon economy will trigger greater innovation, which will create new and competitive businesses and new jobs in the fields of clean technology, renewable energies and green enterprises.

However, we cannot support the concept that the European Security Strategy and the European Security and Defence Policy have a role to play in tackling the effects of climate change.

We also strongly oppose references to the Lisbon Treaty, in particular those which suggest that the competences of the European Union in the field of climate change are not already sufficient. We believe that the EU has all the powers that it needs to help the peoples of Europe work together to succeed and lead by example on climate change.

Nicodim Bulzesc (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I voted in favour of the Florenz report because I agree with the recommendations made with regard to the future integrated policy on climate change.

This report calls on the Commission to monitor closely and analyse the very latest scientific research findings in order to assess in particular whether the EU's 2°C target would really achieve the aim of preventing dangerous climate change effects.

At the same time, it emphasises the importance of the EU and other industrialised nations setting, as a group, a medium-term target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 25-40% by 2020, as well as a long-term target for cutting emissions by at least 80% by 2050, compared to 1990, while continuing to focus on the target of limiting the rise in the average global temperature to 2°C above pre-industrial levels, thereby giving a 50% probability of achieving this objective.

David Casa (PPE-DE), in writing. – This is a report that shows the way forward and sends a clear message to all to take action now, before it is too late. We cannot take risks where the prevention of nature and humanity is concerned. We need an integrated police so as to avoid overlaps in work and we need to harmonize our aims and strategies. The European Union should take the leading role in the battle against climate change and this report is a huge step towards that direction. The rights to life, security, health, education and environmental protection are fundamental and it is our duty to safeguard them for the generations to come. We are already aware of the huge damage that climate change is causing and we are duty bound to minimize this damage as much as possible.

Charlotte Cederschiöld, Christofer Fjellner, Gunnar Hökmark and Anna Ibrisagic (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SV) We have, today, voted in favour of the report on the EU's future integrated policy on climate change. In this connection, we would, however, like to emphasise that the revenues from the trade in emissions allowances should accrue to the Member States.

Călin Cătălin Chiriță (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I voted in favour of the report '2050: The future begins today – Recommendations for the EU's future integrated policy on climate change' because climate change may result in irreversible disasters and the era of cheap fossil energy is about to come to an end.

This is why the EU needs to join forces with its strategic partners in making every effort to reduce its current dependency on fossil fuels and increase significantly the proportion of renewable energy used.

With the appropriate investments, the European economy's energy efficiency must grow, while polluting greenhouse gases must be cut by more than 25% in the next 12 years.

The EU must take the necessary firm action to achieve the following objectives by 2050: a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, a 60% level of renewable energy use and energy efficiency.

The European Year of Creativity and Innovation can be a major benchmark in this respect, highlighting the fundamental importance of investments in scientific research and new technologies.

Konstantinos Droutsas (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) Climate change is the result of the irresponsible exploitation of natural resources by capital for the sake of profit.

The EU considers the workers, their way of life and their consumption habits to be at fault. It wants to put the wolf to guard the sheep, by placing responsibility for moderating climate change with precisely those who are causing it: the monopolies and the multinationals. Energy, water, forests, waste and agricultural production are being privatised and concentrated in the hands of a few multinationals, now in the name of the environment. The unimpeded operation of the 'free market', the liberalisation of markets and capitalist restructurings form the core of the measures proposed in the European Parliament report.

EU agreements with third countries demand the liberalisation of markets and public services in all these sectors. Targets are included such as, for example, for biofuels, which destroy huge forests. Mutations are being promoted and support is given to single crops, thereby destroying biodiversity.

Environmental protection is even being used as a pretext for imperialist interventions in accordance with the 'Solana doctrine'.

The green economy being promoted by the EU and the USA offers a way out for the purpose of over-accumulating capital, safeguarding profits for the monopolies and increasing the exploitation of workers and natural resources. Not only does it not solve anything; on the contrary, it exacerbates the problem of climate change.

Edite Estrela (PSE), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of the Florenz report on the subject '2050: The future begins today – Recommendations for the EU's future integrated policy on climate change' because it presents the European Union, the Member States and their citizens with a number of proposals for meeting ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets in the European Union.

I would like to stress that the climate change issue requires a cross-cutting approach at all levels of public policy making, and that investment in 'green' technologies is also a requirement of the current economic crisis, in that it will help create more jobs.

I believe the final report by the Temporary Committee on Climate Change, of which I was a member, is a highly positive contribution to the fight against climate change and clearly demonstrates the need to reach international agreement at the Copenhagen conference at the end of the year.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The report does not tackle the core issue regarding the causes of environmental abuse, which is the predatory nature of capitalism. It just tries to share out the responsibility among all parties so as to justify proposals that are essentially based on the liberalisation of markets, with users and workers bearing the costs.

Although the final text approved in plenary is more restrained than the original proposal and does have some positive aspects, we do not agree with other points, namely when environmental protection is used as an excuse for yet another opportunity to step up the ideological offensive, to lay the responsibility on ordinary people and workers, and to commercialise all environmental activity and make it profitable.

Thus we voted for certain proposals, including those tabled by our group, which sought to improve the report's content, but we had to show our disagreement with the attempts to commercialise everything that is essential to human life, including the air we breathe.

Glyn Ford (PSE), in writing. – Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing the world today. I am in favour of energy-efficient light bulbs, but frankly it is not enough. We will all have to make and put up with changes to our lifestyle and lives that are far more drastic and dramatic.

I was recently asked at a public meeting in Cheltenham in my constituency what I thought was the most important thing that could be done to combat global warming and climate change. My response was clear: ratify the Lisbon Treaty. Without a strong powerful EU with competence in Common Foreign and Security Policy I do not believe we will get the US and Japan, China and India, to take the necessary measures.

The backing and encouragement of a powerful EU speaking with a single voice will do more to combat climate change than millions of energy-efficient light bulbs.

Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) This report brings together the positions of several political groups and sectoral interests on the basis of the most recent and reliable scientific data. This document is therefore undeniably thorough, wide-reaching, up to the minute and relevant.

I agree with the report overall, but I voted against the more direct references to the impact of livestock farming on climate change, since I felt they were excessive. Agriculture must not be ostracised. Instead, the production

and consumption of local products must be emphasised, since transporting them results in lower greenhouse gas emissions.

On the other hand, I voted in favour of the references to the problems faced by agriculture as a result of climate change, as I believe that the most severely affected regions should be duly compensated. Still on the subject of adapting to climate change, I agree that there is an urgent need to implement the new framework directive on soil protection, and that cohesion policy, water protection policy and the Natura 2000 network need to be adapted to cope with the expected impacts.

Lastly, I voted in favour of the references to the need to avoid overusing the Kyoto Protocol flexibility mechanisms, since Europe must actually reduce its emissions if it wants to retain its leading role in international negotiations and secure a global agreement in Copenhagen.

Jaromír Kohlíček (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (CS) Climate change is a fact. Some scientists nevertheless express qualified doubts over it. Similarly, the effect of human activities, considered even by this report to be the main cause for climate change, is also questioned by some scientists. Either way, the 22 chapters of the report provide a good problem summary from the perspective of the majority opinion of experts worldwide. As far as the individual chapters are concerned, the Energy chapter is rather incomplete. It states quite correctly that fossil fuels are a finite resource while completely failing to deal with the key question of securing sufficient amounts of energy in the event that by the year 2030 the global consumption does indeed increase by 60 %.

It is therefore clear that an intensive effort to construct nuclear power stations will be necessitated in the very near future. At present this is the only recognised source of clean energy producible on a large-scale but it has its ideological opponents even in the EP. Until thermo-nuclear fusion has been mastered there will be no alternative to nuclear energy when seeking a clean energy source. With this provision I agree with the report.

Marie-Noëlle Lienemann (PSE), in writing. – (FR) The Florenz report establishes a very detailed list of the actions to be taken to combat climate change and to develop support policies. However, it suffers from structural weaknesses with regard to the vital and desirable reorientation of the European Union.

The major defects are financial.

Although the creation of a carbon tax is envisaged, the analysis and implementation of this and also of the systematic carbon offset per product are not included in the 2009-2014 Action Plan. Nevertheless, this is an essential element.

No budgetary figure has been mentioned for the definitive targeted activities and projects, for public infrastructure or innovative industrial policies, for regional development, for aid to local authorities or for research and development.

With regard to industry, the reference to 'legislative instruments' will not suffice.

Likewise, the setting-up of a European Climate Fund is subject to the requirement 'of allowing the market to determine which technologies should be used...'

Therefore, it will favour neither a long-term vision nor the general interest. This is absurd.

Therefore, it is imperative that the EU very quickly looks into the question of a carbon tax, public aid to support a green New Deal and the Community budget for the prevention of climate change.

Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing. – (SV) There is no doubt that the climate is changing. However, it is not clear whether this is mainly or largely due to human activity or if it is mainly or largely part of a natural process. There is considerable uncertainty with regard to what is happening and as regards what should be done about it. Yet it is precisely this uncertainty that indicates, for example, that we should take the first steps towards slowing down our carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. That explains why, on a previous occasion, I voted in favour of the proposal to reduce these by 20% by 2020.

The European Parliament's Temporary Committee on Climate Change has now submitted a report on how the EU should act in connection with climate change. The report is very sprawling. It seems as if the Members involved are engaged in appeasing particular interests, such as agriculture and tourism. At the same time, the report demands more funding and new mechanisms, and in practice is proposing major steps towards

a centralised planned economy with propaganda campaigns in schools and after-school recreation centres controlled from Brussels.

The report is so far removed from the key issues that I found myself forced to vote against it. We cannot carry on saying 'yes' to everything that is tabled in order to demonstrate our justified concern, uncertainty and willingness to act with regard to the issue of climate change.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – I support this report which reinstates the EU's short-term commitment of reducing emissions by 30% by 2020 if there is an international agreement. It also reinstates the target included in the Bali roadmap, that industrialised countries should reduce emissions by 80% by 2050. I welcome this report which urges the Commission and Council to adopt a leadership role in the upcoming post-Kyoto talks in Copenhagen and calls for minimum EU energy-efficiency standards for new and refurbished buildings. The report calls on ECONFIN to introduce reduced VAT rates for renewable energy and energy-saving products.

I support the call for economic incentives such as a carbon trading system for countries to protect their tropic rainforests, and a call for energy efficiency measures to be adopted at local and regional level to combat energy poverty.

Iosif Matula (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) The European Union's adoption of this report proves that it is actively involved in combating the adverse effects triggered by climate change. Global warming is one of the most complicated issues which the whole planet is facing. This is why a joint effort is required involving all countries. The more than 150 recommendations included in this report cover most of the areas where improvements can be made to achieve the European objective of reducing the rise in temperature to 2°C.

To ensure that this objective is achieved, every single person needs to be actively involved and properly informed about how to protect the environment and assume their responsibility towards future generations.

The European Economic Recovery Plan supports the battle against global warming not only by allocating funds for the development of innovative technology, but also by using ways which will boost energy efficiency. Investment in research and innovation will enable the development of clean technologies in response to the challenges posed by climate change.

I feel that the measures being proposed are achievable and can be implemented in the medium and long term. Even though most countries are facing a number of economic and financial problems, particular attention must be focused on halting the adverse effects of climate change.

Mary Lou McDonald (GUE/NGL), in writing. – I was happy to support the final report from the Temporary Committee on Climate Change.

Today's report from Mr Florenz is based on scientific principles and maps out the challenges that face our society in various fields like transport, land-use, energy and waste management. The current economic crisis should not be used as an excuse to row back on our climate commitments. Some less progressive forces have tried to use the economic downturn as an excuse to renege on the necessary climate commitments. This should be seen not only as the cynical ploy it is, coming from forces not in the least bit interested in facing up to the realities of climate change, but also as short-sighted in the extreme.

I specifically reject the notion that nuclear power has any role to play in the green economy of tomorrow and beyond. Ireland must remain a nuclear-free island. Clean and renewable energy sources should be the basis of our energy supply, not the dangerous short-term folly of nuclear power.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SK) I wish you all a good day. I give my full backing to the report and I would like to thank you, Mr Florenz, for a detailed report on the European Union's future policy on climate change. It is terrible that global climate change is influencing and will influence our environment and thereby our health and our society. We therefore have a duty to progress towards agreement on a policy that will help reduce the factors contributing to a future catastrophe.

Since the decision of Parliament in April to set up the Temporary Committee on Climate Change, the negotiations on assistance in integrating European responses within a global context have been successful. However, we must continually reassess our concerns with respect to reduction targets, energy consumption and the role of agriculture. Through cooperation we will perhaps be able to reduce carbon emissions and slow down the process of global warming in Europe and throughout the world.

As Mr Florenz has said, there is more than one way to tackle climate change but we know that it is right to begin with improvements in efficiency and in the management of resources. Global climate change is damaging to our environment, to our current way of life and to the opportunities of future generations. We must do our best to slow down this process if not to halt it. I thank you all.

Jan Mulder (ALDE), *in writing*. – (NL) Although this report received my backing during the final vote, this does not stop me from expressing serious objections to certain sections of it. I do not think that the cultivation of feed crops for intense livestock breeding adversely affects the climate. Nor do I believe that a European soil directive should be introduced to address the problem of climate change.

Alexandru Nazare (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (RO) In the current economic climate, it is becoming increasingly difficult to finance investments in clean technology and green energy, which are so necessary in the battle against global warming. This is why I would like to join with my fellow Members who support this report and propose measures aimed at increasing 'intelligent' investments, which is a solution not only for the climate crisis, but also for the credit crunch because it has the potential to generate new jobs.

One such measure is the Commission's draft regulation, being debated in Parliament, which stipulates that Member States may finance, from structural and cohesion funds, large-scale public work programmes for residential renovation. This can bring numerous benefits. For instance, low-income families can receive financial assistance to help them modernise their heating systems and can enjoy substantial savings on their maintenance bills. In addition, this measure will also help reduce Europe's energy dependency, which is a priority in light of the recent energy crisis Europe experienced.

James Nicholson (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – This report tackles key issues relating to climate change, such as a call to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote renewable energy sources and improve energy efficiency.

We are currently facing a situation where the effects of climate change and global warming are creeping up on us faster than we had previously imagined. For this reason, it is imperative that environmental policy remains a top priority for the EU and individual Member States.

Along with the Climate and Energy Package adopted in December, the EU clearly now leads the way in terms of environmental legislation and is in a position to encourage countries outside of Europe to follow suit and promote policies which seek to tackle climate change.

We simply cannot afford to ignore this issue and wait fifty years to see what the consequences may be.

Rovana Plumb (PSE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted in favour of this report because it provides a 'roadmap in 12 action points' of the future integrated policy on climate change.

The report emphasises the importance of the EU and other industrialised nations setting, as a group, a medium-term target for cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 25-40% by 2020, as well as a long-term target of an 80% cut by 2050, compared to 1990.

In order to achieve these objectives and adapt to climate change, funds amounting to approximately EUR 175 million per annum must be provided at EU level. This involves the creation of a climate fund, financed by the revenue from the emission trading scheme and/or equivalent private funds in Member States, in order to provide the investments and solidarity required for financing a future climate policy.

Particular attention must be focused on research to ensure scientific support for the development and implementation of 'clean' technologies. The environmental policy must be used as an opportunity for the strategy to adapt to the effects of climate change. It must also be applied correctly and across sectors in tackling the effects of the crisis through creating new 'green' jobs in competitive enterprises.

Zdzisław Zbigniew Podkański (UEN), *in writing*. – (PL) So far, during various legislative periods, thirteen European Parliament resolutions have been tabled on the subject of climate change. In spite of the efforts of both the Commission and Parliament, this matter continues to spark controversy. Mr Florenz's report does not change the position of those who are not convinced of the decisive influence of human activity on climate change which has, for millions of years, only ever been subject to the laws of nature.

A further problem involves the very idea of an integrated policy for all European countries. Bearing in mind that the report makes no reference to the specific circumstances of the new Member States or, more importantly, to the efforts they have made since 1989 to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions,

there can be no talk of an integrated approach. Different countries have the right to set different objectives. Countries must have the right to choose the technology they use to obtain energy. With regard to the recommendations to the Commission on establishing a binding 20% target for improving energy efficiency, it seems that the suspicion that expensive, foreign energy technology is being surreptitiously promoted is not unfounded.

Lydie Polfer (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) I voted for the Florenz Report. It is an excellent piece of work because this report details a wide range of measures to be taken in areas as diverse as energy, biofuels, energy efficiency, mobility, tourism, agriculture and livestock breeding, soil protection and water management, and also waste and resource management, future themes, education and training.

The excellent work of the Temporary Committee on Climate Change set up on 25 April 2007 is visionary and its proposals against climate change deserve to be supported by all those involved in political, economic and social life.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) A huge range of subjects is covered in the debate on Europe's future integrated policy on climate change and should guide us in the search for reasonable, feasible, science-based solutions. A bigoted debate, rejecting any science other than the official version, ignoring the need for research and forgoing the uncertainties of scientific research, turns science into dogma, and dogma is of little use to political decision makers.

Our priority must therefore be to focus on diversified and efficient energy production and consumption that can reduce our dependency and guarantee the quality of life that we want for everyone, Europeans and non-Europeans alike.

We are therefore faced with a huge scientific challenge, in which the public authorities have a duty to prioritise investment in research and development and also, in particular, insofar as they are market operators themselves, to foster the creation of profitable markets for more energy-efficient products. Climate change calls for us to take a step forward in development, not a step back. Let us make the effort.

Peter Skinner (PSE), in writing. – The targets set by the EU to reach a coordinated reduction are vital if there is to be corresponding change for the better in our environment.

I voted to improve the structure of this coordination by use of a variety of sources – including the beneficial effects of safe nuclear energy production – all of which needs to be reviewed in the light of advice from national inspectorates and changes in technology.

Given that funding is necessary I voted too in favour of ETS auctioning revenue to be used to meet the costs of any changes needed. This includes investment in new technology.

An Emissions Trading Scheme for aviation, whilst it may have only a marginal effect, is still an appropriate way ahead.

Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing. – The debate on an integrated policy on climate change is vital if we want a 50% cut in carbon emissions by 2050.

Andrzej Jan Szejna (PSE), in writing. – (PL) I voted to adopt Mr Florenz's report entitled '2050: the future begins today – Recommendations for the EU's future integrated policy on climate change'. This report was drawn up by the Temporary Committee on Climate Change, which was appointed in June 2007.

The report is a specific list of recommendations concerning reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, to be implemented by the Community bodies (mainly the European Commission) and the Member States. In order to achieve these objectives, it will also be necessary to take action at local level.

Changes in our climate are sudden and have serious negative consequences. The EU and the industrialised nations should adopt the target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by between 25% and 40% by 2020 and, in the long term, aim to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050, in comparison to 1990 levels.

The remaining recommendations contained in the report include partnership and cooperation, in the field of solar energy production, with third countries in the Mediterranean basin, achieving zero net energy consumption in new residential buildings by 2015, and in all new buildings by 2020, with the option of expanding this target in the long term and including renovated buildings. The plans also include the creation of a European renewable energy community, with the aim of supporting research and development activities to develop groundbreaking new technologies.

Thomas Ulmer (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (DE) I have abstained from voting on the climate change report. This does not mean that I believe the entire report to be bad. However, it did combine correct scientific data and false polemics. All the work done by the committee was one-sided and the wide range of scientific opinion was not reflected. It is not possible to produce a balanced report on this basis. Unfortunately this type of approach has become more common in the run-up to the European elections.

– **Report: Claudio Fava (A6-0026/2009)**

Guy Bono (PSE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the Fava report on the draft directive on sanctions against employers of illegal immigrants.

According to the Commission's figures, between 4.5 and 8 million third-party nationals are living illegally within the European Union and are therefore the favoured targets of unscrupulous employers benefiting from illegal labour.

It is imperative for us to highlight these practices, which are unworthy of a Europe where respect for basic human rights should apply to everyone. The time has finally come to emphasise the responsibility of those who profit from these particularly vulnerable people. We must stop criminalising these victims by stigmatising illegal immigrants. With regard to the measures we are advocating here, it is not only a question of penalising dishonest bosses but also of defending a specific number of social rights such as the right to be represented by a trade union.

However, we should not cry victory too soon because the threat of sanctions is not enough, rather we must have the necessary legal control instruments in place. Only then will we be able to implement an effective common immigration policy.

Charlotte Cederschiöld, Christofer Fjellner, Gunnar Hökmark and Anna Ibrisagic (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (SV) The European Parliament has today voted on the report (A6-0026/2009) by Mr Fava (Socialist Group in the European Parliament, Italy) relating to the consequences for employers of illegally staying third-country nationals in the EU.

Since the report charges Member States with the responsibility of imposing sanctions under criminal law, we Swedish Conservatives have chosen not to give it our support.

Gérard Deprez (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) I support the Fava report, which we will use to impose harsher punishments on employers using illegal labour.

Fines should henceforth include costs of returning workers to their country of origin and payment of arrears (salaries, taxes and social security contributions). Other proposed sanctions range from exclusion from public grants to temporary or permanent closure.

Let us emphasise three key points in the system: firstly, the signal sent to unscrupulous or dishonest employers by imposing criminal sanctions in the most serious cases of exploitation of illegal labour, such as the employment of minors in particularly unsuitable working conditions or where the worker is a victim of people trafficking. Next, the possibility of less stringent provisions for private individuals if the private employment conditions are in order. Finally, the liability of companies involved in the subcontracting chain, if it can be proven that they knew about the employment of illegal immigrants by the subcontractor.

Finally, let us not forget that it is a matter of minimum standards (every State is free to increase sanctions against employers and protection for illegal immigrants) and that there is a clause for revision every three years enabling us to adjust our aim based on experience.

Constantin Dumitriu (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (RO) The report drafted by our fellow Member is a first step towards combating illegal employment and reducing one of the most serious aspects of cross-border crime. Whereas until now, countries' policies have focused more on how to prevent illegal immigrants gaining access to the labour market, from now on, we are tackling the problem at its root by punishing employers who profit from the vulnerability of illegal immigrants.

The majority of these employees work in the agricultural sector and there are countless cases where the conditions that these people have to put up with are inhumane, very often without being paid. The regulations we are proposing will not only punish the employers, but will also ensure that workers receive any pay owing to them. We needed provisions of this kind to set out standard regulations at Community level for punishing

employers as, in the majority of cases, a steady stream of people is supplied by transnational human trafficking networks.

We must not interpret this report as meaning that the EU's borders are going to be closed, but as a reinforcement of the Community preference principle. Bearing in mind the demographic profile of the majority of Member States, we need to keep the labour market borders open, but with the proviso that the flow of workers is legal and suited to the Community's needs.

Patrick Gaubert (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) I am delighted with the adoption, by a very large majority, of the draft directive, which is of fundamental importance in the fight against illegal immigration and is essential for the implementation of a common global immigration policy.

Illegal employment is the principal source of attraction for those thousands of men and women crossing our borders every day imagining they will find a decent job to feed their families. In reality, they only become the slaves of certain employers who use and abuse their situation of vulnerability and ignorance of their rights in order to exploit them and use them as cheap labour.

This directive sends a double signal: one with regard to fraudulent employers who will no longer be able to abuse the situation with impunity, and the other with regard to potential illegal immigrants who will be discouraged by stricter conditions of access to legal employment.

The compromise negotiated with the Council is satisfactory and we can only hope for the rapid implementation of this directive by the Member States in order to put an end to this situation of vulnerability suffered by thousands of people in Europe.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) We can only endorse the general ban on the employment of illegal workers to discourage illegal immigration. In the same way, we can only endorse sanctions against employers who resort to this type of labour, often to abuse it, and who are nothing other than modern-day slave traders.

However, I have some reservations. Once again the European Union is benefiting from a case based on Community law (first pillar) in order to extend its competences with regard to the harmonisation of the criminal law of the Member States, with the notable exception of Ireland and the United Kingdom however, who have exercised their opt out recognised by the treaties.

I then recall what happened in France following strike action in a fashionable restaurant in Neuilly favoured by President Sarkozy: bosses claimed to be victims of a too rigid labour market or protectors of a workforce to whom they paid the legal minimum, and it became easy for illegal immigrants to obtain legal status through working – a situation that this directive will further reinforce by promising regularisation for those who report their employer.

I am afraid that in reality, in countries as lax as France in this regard, all this will not limit the influx of illegal immigration.

Carl Lang (NI), in writing. – (FR) This report has various merits.

The first is that it has an educational objective. It establishes the alarming fact of the increase in illegal immigration in Europe, immigration estimated at between 4.5 and 8 million according to the Commission's own figures, and it specifies the sectors of the economy where illegal labour is most concentrated: construction, agriculture, cleaning, hotels and restaurants.

The second is that it intensifies the fight against moonlighting, in particular by introducing financial and criminal penalties for employers of illegal immigrants.

Unfortunately, the limits to this report are also numerous. There is nothing about measures to stop these intermittent floods of illegal immigration. The re-establishment of internal border controls is not even being considered.

Furthermore, in times of social and economic crisis and sharply rising unemployment, the prime necessity for the countries of the European Union is to protect their jobs, and so it is essential to implement national and European policies of social protectionism. We must reserve jobs for French people in France and for Europeans in Europe. It is a question of applying the principles of national and European preference and protection as essential conditions for the economic and social recovery of the countries of the European Union.

Jörg Leichtfried (PSE), *in writing*. – (DE) I am voting in favour of Claudio Fava's report on sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-party nationals.

We must put a stop to the employment of illegal immigrants, both in order to protect them from exploitation and to prevent the economy of the country in question from being damaged.

The most important issue is not to punish the illegal workers from third-party states, but to penalise the employers, who are in a much stronger position.

David Martin (PSE), *in writing*. – I support the introduction and enforcement of sanctions against employers of illegally resident immigrants. This report includes minimum rules for criminal sanctions against employers, and inspections are to be made in the sectors of activity most open to abuse, though in Scotland we are already protected by the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality act 2006.

Lydie Polfer (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted for the draft directive, which tackles the widespread menace of illegal immigration which often gives rise to exploitation. There are in fact between 4.5 and 8 million illegal immigrants in the European Union working in construction, agriculture, hotels and other sectors. We must strengthen the fight against illegal immigration by introducing various types of sanctions against the employers of these illegal immigrants at European level.

It is in fact a matter of giving companies a sense of responsibility and thus contributing to the strengthening of the fight against illegal immigration.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) I am pleased that the European Parliament has today adopted, by a large majority, the draft directive seeking to impose sanctions against employers of illegal immigrants.

This 'sanctions' directive fits into the EU's strategy to combat illegal immigration, which includes the 'blue card' promoting selective immigration and the 'return' directive.

Moonlighting is a menace to the European economy, all the more so within the context of the current economic crisis.

The EU still seems to be an eldorado in the eyes of many illegal immigrants; they often find work and a quality of life here which they cannot find in their own country.

It is estimated that there are between 4.5 and 8 million third-country nationals living illegally in the EU, generally finding work in the construction, agriculture, domestic work and hotel sectors. They do poorly paid jobs, often bordering on exploitation.

Unscrupulous employers benefit from these illegal workers who are prepared to work for very poor rates and in dangerous conditions.

Thanks to today's vote, employing illegal workers will henceforth cost employers dear and may even put them in prison.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of Mr Fava's report providing for sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals. I share the concern expressed by the rapporteur over the social consequences of this phenomenon and the conditions of exploitation in which these migrants work.

Unscrupulous employers take advantage of illegal immigrants to fill poorly paid, unskilled jobs that no one else wants to take on. Furthermore, illegal work should be considered as nothing less than a social evil, since it can depress wages and working conditions, as well as distorting competition between businesses. I therefore applaud Mr Fava's initiative, aimed at protecting the rights of these vulnerable people.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The Commission proposal for a directive and the related report by the European Parliament on the imposition of sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals are a monument to hypocrisy and deceit. The real objective is not to impose sanctions against employers who barbarically exploit immigrant workers; on the contrary, it is to punish, arrest and violently deport immigrants to their countries of origin. It is one of a set of measures in the EU's anti-immigration policy, as expressed in the 'Immigration Pact', and follows on from the notorious 'directive of shame' providing for 18 months' detention of 'illegal' immigrants, their deportation and a ban on their entering EU territory for 5 years.

In fact, the proposal for a directive and the European Parliament report, which goes in precisely the same direction, intensify the repressive measures against immigrants, methodise their social exclusion and essentially facilitate their even more savage exploitation by capital.

The Communist Party of Greece votes against both the report and the Commission's proposal for a directive.

It supports the just demands of immigrants, their legalisation, the abolition of black and undeclared employment, an increase in wages and salaries, equal pay for an equal day's work and the full safeguarding of social and civil rights.

– Motion for a resolution: (B6-0062/2009)

Edite Estrela (PSE), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on addressing the challenge of energy efficiency through information and communication technologies (ICTs) because I believe ICTs play a crucial role in improving energy efficiency and may result in an estimated saving of over 50 million tonnes of CO₂ each year.

The Member States need to make full use of the potential provided by ICTs in order to meet the targets set by the climate and energy package of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20%, increasing the proportion of energy derived from renewable sources to 20% and achieving a 20% improvement in energy efficiency in the European Union by 2020.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) We voted in favour of this report by a Czech Member of this House from our political group because we believe it addresses a subject of the greatest importance: addressing the challenge of energy efficiency through information and communication technologies (ICTs). These technologies can be the driving forces behind greater productivity, growth and cost reductions that make for competitiveness, sustainable development and the improvement of EU citizens' quality of life. That is why we agree with the proposal to suggest to forthcoming Council presidencies that they make the topic of ICTs and their importance in combating and adapting to climate change one of their priorities.

We also think it important for more efforts to be made at every level of decision-making to use all available financial instruments for the deployment and take-up of new ICT-based technological solutions that enhance energy efficiency.

Similarly, given the delay in adopting a systematic approach to intelligent ICT solutions, it is important to raise awareness of these, placing particular emphasis on lower emissions in connection with the development of towns and cities, in particular through the development of intelligent buildings, street lighting and transmission and distribution networks and through the organisation of public transport.

Mieczysław Edmund Janowski (UEN), in writing. – (PL) I supported the motion for a resolution on the challenge of energy efficiency through information and communication technologies.

ICT should become the solution of the future for practically all energy-consuming equipment, helping to achieve significant savings in terms of energy consumption. Failing to undertake such action could lead to a significant increase in energy demand, as soon as within the next few years (around 25% in the space of four years).

The greatest savings might be possible in the sector dealing with the production and transmission of electricity. Efficiency should be increased by around 40% in the field of energy production and by around 10% in the field of energy distribution. ICT also contributes to better management of the energy grid, as well as facilitating the integration of renewable sources of energy. Thanks to the application of ICT, significant savings will be possible in terms of the heating, air conditioning and lighting of buildings. This will all contribute to a real reduction in CO₂ emissions, both in terms of energy units and on a global scale.

These technologies, including the components themselves, as well as micro- and nanoelectronic systems, and many modern technological approaches (for example, photonics), increase competitiveness and create new opportunities for businesses and the labour market.

Increasing energy efficiency involves reducing energy consumption during the production, transmission and distribution phases, as well as for the end consumer. Bearing in mind that this is achieved by means of technological and behavioural changes, as well as economic changes, aimed at ensuring that the same level of comfort and service is maintained, modern ITC technology should be implemented as widely as possible.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on addressing the challenge of energy efficiency through information and communication technologies.

I would argue, in fact, that alongside the target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020, we must also undertake to improve energy efficiency by 20% over the same period. For this reason, I support the motion tabled, which aims to increase awareness, for example through demonstration projects, of the importance of information and communication technologies for improving energy efficiency in the EU economy. These technologies are a driving force behind increased productivity and growth, as well as cost reductions that make for competitiveness, sustainable development and the improvement of EU citizens' quality of life.

Flaviu Călin Rus (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for the European Parliament's motion for a resolution on solving the problem of energy efficiency through information and communications technologies as I firmly believe that these technologies can offer viable solutions to this problem.

Energy efficiency is an extremely important topic because we are well aware that the natural reserves from which we obtain our energy are dwindling all the time and will run out at some point. Consequently, I feel that any technology which can be used to achieve energy efficiency is a benefit which society as a whole can enjoy.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PL) The issue of the European Union's energy security has been raised many times in this Parliament, especially by representatives of the new Member States.

The crisis which has, in recent weeks, affected many Member States, has clearly shown how real the danger of having our gas supplies cut off is, and how ill-prepared we are to deal with the consequences.

Europe must finally start to show solidarity in the way it thinks and acts. We must build a suitable transmission infrastructure, create support mechanisms for countries which will lack supplies of raw materials and diversify the sources from which we obtain them. We must seek to find alternative sources of gas and create a system for saving energy and making our consumption of gas more efficient.

I am aware that all of these points have already been raised on numerous occasions in the past, but what good is that if we are still stuck at the drawing board?

Catherine Stihler (PSE), *in writing*. – The importance of energy efficiency and its contribution to meeting our climate change targets cannot be underestimated. Energy efficiency programmes have the potential to create jobs.

– Motion for a resolution: (RC-B6-0066/2009)

Guy Bono (PSE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of this resolution on the return and reintegration of detainees from the Guantánamo detention centre.

It seems to me that Europe can only congratulate President Obama on his decision to close the detention centre, something that many of us have been demanding for several years. Therefore, this seems to me to be a good opportunity to respond to the request of the USA by putting forward a common position in line with the values of the European Union.

It is essential that we are also able to put our own house in order within our own borders and that the European countries that have allowed the CIA to covertly transfer prisoners are in turn made aware of their responsibilities.

Niels Busk, Anne E. Jensen and Karin Riis-Jørgensen (ALDE), *in writing*. – (DA) The Danish Liberal Party's MEPs voted against paragraph 4 of the motion for a resolution on the return and resettlement of the Guantánamo detention facility inmates, as we believe that it is the sovereign right of individual Member States to decide whether to accept inmates from Guantánamo should the US administration so request.

We are, of course, in favour of Member States consulting each other regarding possible effects on public security throughout the EU in the event that Member States wish to accept inmates.

Martin Callanan (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – For many MEPs the existence of the Guantánamo Bay prison became a stick with which to beat America. Personally, I am grateful that the United States yet again took on a disproportionate responsibility for protecting Europe from terrorism.

Nevertheless, I accept that Guantánamo Bay prison should close. That's not because I think that violent terrorists don't need to be locked up; quite the opposite, in fact. But clearly the legal issues surrounding the detention of enemy combatants need to be resolved, and the best way of doing so is by closing Camp X-Ray.

Much as I admire and support America, it must be said that the inmates of Guantánamo are essentially America's responsibility, not ours. They were captured or arrested under American command and should therefore be prosecuted for and detained for alleged offences against America, under American law and on American territory.

I do not support the idea of EU Member States taking responsibility for these extremely dangerous terrorists. However, nor do I think the EU should tell Member States what to do in this regard.

I therefore voted to abstain on this resolution.

David Casa (PPE-DE), in writing. – We have to be very careful when taking decisions like those proposed in this resolution. We cannot just open our arms and welcome everyone released from Guantánamo. Whilst assuring that the ex-detainees are treated with dignity we have to ensure that they are innocent beyond reasonable doubt before taking any decisions. Any haphazard decisions may be fatal if we do not pay the utmost attention.

Chris Davies (ALDE), in writing. – While welcoming the decision to close Guantánamo, I am concerned by the willingness of European countries to admit former detainees who may maintain terrorist links. Given the policy of free movement of people within the EU, the actions of one European country may have repercussions for others at a time when we already face complex terrorist problems. Furthermore, our ability to deport a terrorist suspect is constrained by international conventions (such as ECHR) whose revision is overdue.

Proinsias De Rossa (PSE), in writing. – I support this resolution which welcomes President Obama's closure of the detention facilities at Guantánamo Bay and his other important and related executive orders; Recalls that the United States must bear the primary responsibility for the closure of these facilities including the future of its inmates; However, calls on EU Member States, in the spirit of providing fair and humane treatment for all and reinforcing international law, to respond positively to any request from the United States to aid the resettlement of Guantánamo Bay inmates within the European Union.

However, I am deeply concerned by reports that the Obama administration is to retain the practice of rendition.

Edite Estrela and Armando França (PSE), in writing. – (PT) We voted in favour of the European Parliament's joint motion for a resolution on the possibility of receiving Guantánamo inmates who have not been charged with offences, since we believe that EU cooperation is essential to reinforce international law and respect for human rights, and to ensure that Guantánamo inmates receive fair, impartial treatment.

We therefore regard the Portuguese Government's initiative and willingness to collaborate with the US Administration in the process of closing the Guantánamo detention facility as an example to be followed by other Member States, in order to support the United States in resolving this complex problem within a framework of respect for human rights and the rules of international law.

Vasco Graça Moura (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) I voted against this joint motion for a resolution. In view of its recitals D (third item) and F, I consider it unacceptable that the EU should encourage its Member States to be prepared to take in prisoners released from Guantánamo in response to an ill-advised, demagogic suggestion by the Portuguese Foreign Minister.

In fact, we should not under any circumstances agree to EU Member States accepting detainees believed to be 'potential threats' (recital D); nor should we forget the precedent of the 61 former inmates who have been involved in terrorism since their release (recital F).

Since it is impossible to safely distinguish between those who pose a potential threat and those who do not, it is obvious that the precautionary principle should apply not just in the context of REACH.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Although the joint motion for a resolution includes certain points that we consider positive, particularly where it says that 'the main responsibility for the whole process of closing the Guantánamo Bay detention facility and for the future of its inmates rests with the United States',

it does not clarify the terms in which we should regard the extremely serious humanitarian situation in question.

As we have emphasised previously, we oppose any agreement between countries or between the United States and the European Union on the transfer of prisoners detained in Guantánamo. That does not mean that decisions and requests freely expressed by individuals, namely for asylum in Portugal, should not be considered within a framework of respect for national sovereignty, for the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and for international law.

The resolution, however:

- fails to denounce the fact that the detention and illegal transport of citizens have not been questioned by the new US Administration; and

- completely ignores the need to discover the whole truth about the violations of international law and human rights committed as part of the so-called ‘war on terror’, including the responsibilities of the governments of several EU countries regarding the use of their countries’ air space and territory for the rendition and transport of illegally detained prisoners.

Ona Juknevičienė (ALDE), in writing. – (LT) I warmly congratulate and support the decision of US President Barack Obama to begin the closure of the Guantánamo Bay detention centre. This is an important step towards a new beginning in US policy. I am sure that all EU Member States will support such US policies and will answer President Obama’s appeal for cooperation, or help in solving the question of released prisoners, if he asks for this. However, I voted against the resolution article, which urges Member States, ‘to be ready to accept Guantánamo prisoners’, as I believe this question should be decided independently by each country in the Community. I have no doubt that each one of them, once faced with a concrete case, will respond positively and offer support to the US administration. However, that will represent their own choice and good will and respect for humanitarian and international legal norms.

Athanasios Pafilis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) The Greek Communist Party MEPs voted against the joint motion for a resolution by the political parties in the European Parliament, calling for the immediate release of all detainees arbitrarily arrested and held by the USA at the base in Guantánamo and the immediate and definitive closure of the base which they also illegally maintain on Cuban soil, against the will of the Cuban people and its government.

Rather than this, the resolution calls for a ‘fair trial’ for anyone the USA considers it has evidence against, calling on the Member States of the EU to accept detainees in their prisons, within the framework of the joint fight against terrorism by the EU and the USA. It is an absolute mockery and complicity to agree to the trial and sentencing of detainees, when we all know the mediaeval torture which they suffered and hence the credibility of any such evidence following years of inhumane imprisonment.

The celebrations and salutations surrounding President Obama are making people delude themselves about the policy of imperialism. As far as this specific issue is concerned, the order for Guantánamo maintains the facility for the CIA to ‘abduct terrorist suspects’ and take them to secret prisons.

Tobias Pflüger (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (DE) I have voted in favour of the European Parliament’s joint motion for a resolution on the return and resettlement of the Guantánamo detention facility inmates, because I welcome the acceptance of Guantánamo prisoners by the countries of the EU. Many EU Member States are jointly culpable when it comes to Guantánamo because, for example, they granted overflying rights for the illegal transport of prisoners.

However, the report contains a few points which make it difficult to vote in its favour.

The torture practices in Guantánamo and, in particular, waterboarding are not explicitly referred to as torture, but instead as ‘harsh interrogation techniques which amount to torture and cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment’.

In addition, the amendments tabled by the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left and the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance asking for all secret prison camps to be closed, the right of compensation for the victims and an investigation of violations of human rights in relation to Guantánamo were all rejected.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) Europe's difficulty in dealing with the decision to close Guantánamo clearly illustrates the gap between intentions based on valid principles and reality, which is replete with difficulties.

The closure of Guantánamo is good news both in itself and symbolically. Closure, however, does not solve the problem for which the facility was created – and which it too failed to resolve – which is how to deal with a threat to national and international security that is marked by entirely different characteristics from those of traditional enemy combatants, for whom international law was designed and is prepared.

Rather than just cooperating in possibly accepting former Guantánamo inmates – a measure that may be necessary but must take account of a number of limitations – Europe, the United States and the international community must cooperate in seeking a stable and lasting legal solution to the challenge posed by international terrorist combatants. Without that, Guantánamo will be followed by another poor solution.

As for our taking in former detainees, not only should there be coordination at European level, but it would be advisable not to take in those who, in other circumstances, would not be granted visas on security grounds. Willingness and caution should be the criteria adopted.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) I voted against the joint motion for a resolution on the return and resettlement of the Guantánamo detention facility inmates. In particular, I am firmly convinced that the responsibility for the entire process of closing the Guantánamo detention facility and the future of its inmates rests solely and exclusively with the United States of America.

Moreover, I do not agree with the assertion made in the resolution that the responsibility for respect for international law and fundamental rights rests with all democratic countries, particularly the European Union. We cannot interfere in a matter in which the United States' Government has sole competence. In short, for the reasons cited above, I am opposed to the possible admission of Guantánamo inmates to the EU.

Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing. – All EU Member States must play their part in making possible the closure of the Guantánamo Bay prison. It is no good calling on the Americans to close the place, which the new President is doing, if we cannot shoulder some responsibility.

Andrzej Jan Szejna (PSE), in writing. – (PL) I welcomed the news of Barack Obama's decision concerning the closure of the Guantánamo Bay prison. During his election campaign, Mr Obama had already underlined that closing this notorious prison would be a priority.

The matter of the return and transfer of the Guantánamo inmates may be a sign of an important shift in US policy in the right direction, namely towards respect for fundamental rights, as well as humanitarian and international law. Now, each prisoner should stand trial. If they are found guilty, they should serve their sentence in a prison in the United States. Those who have not been charged and who voluntarily agree to be repatriated, should be sent back to their countries of origin as soon as possible. Prisoners who cannot be sent back to their country of origin due to a risk of torture or persecution should be allowed to remain in the United States, where they should receive humanitarian protection and compensation. There are currently around 242 prisoners held at Guantánamo. Some of them are there only because there is no safe country to which they can return. These people have not been charged with any crime.

The fight against terrorism is, and remains, a foreign policy priority for both the European Union and the United States. However, we must strongly emphasise that it must always go hand in hand with respect for fundamental rights and the principles of the rule of law.

9. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

(The sitting was suspended at 13.20 and resumed at 15.00.)

IN THE CHAIR: MRS ROTHE

Vice-President

10. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting

(The Minutes of the previous sitting were approved)

Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM). – Madam President, on a point of order, I refer to Rule 142(2)(a) and (b) on the allocation of speaking time. Yesterday when we were discussing the Guantánamo prison, here in the Chamber, I and several other speakers were interrupted without mercy when we had exceeded our speaking time by a few seconds. That harsh treatment was meted out by Mr Pöttering and Mr Siwiec, the Vice-President replacing him later in the afternoon.

Mr Schulz, the Socialist Group leader, on the other hand, was permitted by Mr Pöttering to exceed his time limit by far more than a minute. Now, I would not dream of insinuating that this was because Mr Pöttering and Mr Schulz are buddies – *alte Kameraden* as one might put it in German – but I do spot a recurring pattern here. Colleagues from big groups elaborating the political message the Chair wants to hear are treated with great generosity. Colleagues from smaller groups elaborating the political message the Chair does not want to hear are treated with great meanness. Now that is in breach of the Rules of Procedure, where it is clearly stated how speaking time should be allocated.

I want to remind Mr Pöttering and all his Vice-Presidents –

(The President informed the speaker that he had exceeded his speaking time)

I was sent here to defend subsidiarity and the sovereignty of member countries and the President and the Vice-Presidents of this Parliament have no right whatsoever to try and silence the voice of 15% of the Swedish electorate.

President. – Mr Lundgren, I am now cutting you off. You have exceeded your speaking time by more than half. I have taken note of what you have said. I believe that it is clear to everyone.

Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM). – Madam President, can I remind you that this would not have happened to Mr Schulz. He would not have been interrupted by you. This is the great difference. But you prove my point – thank you very much.

President. – Mr Lundgren, I am sure that you are mistaken. I will record what you have said and it will appear in the Minutes. It would certainly also be appropriate to discuss in the Bureau the question of differing behaviour, which is partly dependent on the amount of time available.

11. Kosovo (debate)

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

Hannes Swoboda (PSE). – *(DE)* Madam President, we are discussing Kosovo today against the background of a very detailed report by Mr Lagendijk, the rapporteur, which is, of course, linked to statements from the Commission and the Council.

In this case the rapporteur has no official speaking time, which I believe is an appalling situation. If the rapporteur were only to present the initiative report on Monday evening, he would have four minutes. I think that this is unfair. I would therefore ask the Bureau to consider whether someone who has worked for months as the rapporteur of the Committee on Foreign Affairs should not also be given official speaking time.

Now Mrs Kallenbach has given him her minute of time out of a sense of solidarity with a colleague from the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance. Perhaps it would be possible, Madam President, if this is within your power, to give Mrs Kallenbach one minute under the ‘catch-the-eye’ procedure. However, I would like to ask you to think about this carefully. We need to find a different arrangement in this type of case.

President. – It is certainly correct that the fundamental problem should be dealt with. As far as this specific situation is concerned, I recommend Mrs Kallenbach to request the minute under the ‘catch-the-eye’ procedure because that would make things significantly simpler.

Alexandr Vondra, President-in-Office of the Council. – Madam President, I am grateful for this opportunity to take stock of the latest developments in Kosovo. In two weeks’ time – on 17 February 2009 – Kosovo will celebrate the first anniversary of its declaration of independence, and this debate is certainly timely. Since then, Kosovo has adopted a constitution and a completely new legal and institutional framework. The declaration of independence created a new situation and new challenges for the international community and for the EU in particular.

The differing views of the Member States in reaction to the declaration of independence in no way undermine the Union's overall policy objectives. We remain committed to assisting in the economic and political development of Kosovo within the overall objective of ensuring long-term stability for the Balkans as a whole.

In the case of Kosovo, that means contributing in particular to strengthening of the rule of law, respect for human rights and the protection of minorities, as well as encouraging economic development and working for the protection of Kosovo's rich cultural and religious heritage.

It also means continuing to see Kosovo within the wider framework set for the Western Balkans at the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003. The policy of supporting a European perspective for all the Western Balkan countries, agreed on that occasion, has since been reaffirmed, most recently by the Council at its meeting of 8 December 2008.

Proof of our continued commitment lies in the rapid appointment early last year of Pieter Feith as EU Special Representative, who is based in Priština, and you will have a chance to meet him in the Committee on Foreign Affairs very soon. His task, and that of his team, is to provide valuable support on the ground in order to help us collectively meet all our political objectives.

More recently, EULEX, the most ambitious civilian ESDP mission to date, began its mandate in early December 2008. Its main aim is to assist and support the Kosovo authorities in the area of the rule of law, specifically in developing the police, judiciary and customs administration.

Our main challenge over the coming months will be to intensify our engagement in Kosovo, most importantly by moving to full deployment of EULEX. We are realistic enough to know that 2009 will present its fair share of difficulties and obstacles.

Kosovo institutions will also face many challenges in the implementation of their commitments to develop a stable multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo. The international community's assistance is crucial if Kosovo is to succeed in integrating fully with the rest of the region.

The Commission has announced that later this year it will present a study examining ways of furthering Kosovo's political and socio-economic development. This has been welcomed by the Council. It should offer new opportunities and build on what has already been achieved, adjusted in the light of our experience over the next few months.

The situation in the north of Kosovo will certainly continue to be difficult over the months to come, and will require particular attention. The most recent outbreaks of ethnic violence in Mitrovica in early January this year were potentially serious but were contained. It is particularly encouraging that the authorities in Priština acted with reasonable restraint. However, these incidents are a constant reminder of the constant risk of destabilisation there. We will continue to monitor closely the situation in the north of the country in particular.

The Presidency is grateful for the continuing interest of Members of Parliament and for your support for the role of the Union in the region. I particularly welcome the proposed resolution which has been tabled at this part-session. It is encouraging that Parliament is able to give its broad support to our efforts in the region, and to the Union's commitment to the stability of Kosovo within the wider region.

This Presidency is committed to keeping you informed, both through regular discussions here in the plenary, as well as more detailed briefings through the committees. We are planning various activities this spring, *inter alia* to dedicate the Gymnich meeting in late March to the Western Balkans. I also know that Pieter Feith will be meeting with the AFET Committee next week, and he will be able to provide a comprehensive update on the latest developments on the ground.

Meglena Kuneva, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, just one year after the declaration of independence, the situation in Kosovo, and in the whole Western Balkans region, is overall stable and under control, in spite of some incidents.

The European Union presence in Kosovo is progressively materialising, taking over from the United Nations. The EU special representative is residing in Priština, and the EU's Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) is deployed throughout Kosovo and will be fully operational at the end of March.

A stable and multi-ethnic Kosovo is a key priority for the European Union. The best way for Kosovo to move towards European integration is by creating a democratic and multi-ethnic society, with full respect for the rule of law, cooperating peacefully with its neighbours and contributing to regional and European stability.

This includes extensive measures to safeguard the future of all communities in Kosovo, thereby creating a basis for sustainable economic and political development.

The Commission's progress report of November 2008 was considered by the authorities to be an objective and fair assessment of what was achieved and of the challenges ahead. The Kosovo authorities have committed themselves to working and cooperating with the Commission in meeting these challenges. We allocate significant funding to Kosovo under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (EPA), as part of the overall pledge of EUR 1.2 billion reached at the July 2008 donors' conference.

In 2008, the Instrument for Pre-Accession supported projects worth EUR 185 million in Kosovo, a three-fold increase compared to the previous year. We will allocate a further EUR 106 million in 2009. The management of this funding is the exclusive responsibility of our Commission Liaison Office in Priština, which is now fully operational with all relevant control systems in place, and takes over from the European Agency for Reconstruction.

The Commission welcomes the draft resolution being discussed here today in the European Parliament. It touches on many issues that we agree are of crucial importance, such as the preservation of Kosovo's cultural heritage, the improvement of its public administration capacity, better integration among its communities, the importance of multi-ethnic education, and the plight of Roma families in lead-contaminated refugee camps in the north.

The Commission takes all these issues very seriously. Perhaps I can say a few words on each of them in turn.

Since 2004, the Commission has financed the reconstruction of religious and cultural heritage sites – its programme with a budget of EUR 10 million – with the close involvement of the Council of Europe. In 2008 and 2009 funding is continuing, with EUR 2.5 million more for further projects. We consider this a very important aspect of reconciliation and have supported the establishment of Kosovo's cultural heritage database. Graveyards could also be included in this debate so as to ensure their proper restoration and preservation.

I would like to express our gratitude to the European Parliament for the additional amount of EUR 3 million, within the 2008 EU budget, for cultural heritage reconstruction in the war-affected areas in the Western Balkans. The Commission has allocated half of this amount – EUR 1.5 million – to Kosovo, in a joint project with the Ministry of Culture, in the multi-ethnic town of Prizren.

We are grateful for the additional amount under this heading which is also allocated in this year's budget. Under the 2007 Instrument for Pre-Accession, the Commission is implementing projects to facilitate the return and reintegration of internally displaced people and refugees in Kosovo, for a total of amount of EUR 3.3 million. We have envisaged further funding – EUR 4 million under the 2008 Instrument for Pre-Accession, and EUR 2 million under the 2009 Instrument for Pre-Accession. This money will also contribute to improving the local capacity to reintegrate returnees into the local social and economic environment.

Gender equality is high on our agenda as well. The Commission has provided technical assistance to the Kosovo Gender Equality Agency. It has also supported the activities of several local NGOs working in the field of gender equality and women's rights through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

As regards public administration capacity, the Commission monitors the implementation of Kosovo's public administration reform strategy and action plan. We have stressed with the authorities the urgency of adopting the Civil Service Law. Through our involvement in setting up the regional school for public administration we also cooperate with the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration. Special attention is paid to the Ministry of Local Government and Administration, with a support project for almost EUR 1 million.

The Commission is making significant efforts to help reform the education system in Kosovo. Our financial assistance is comprehensive. It aims at improving both material conditions and the quality of teaching at primary, secondary and tertiary levels and in the vocational sector, as well as strengthening the multicultural aspects as a basic condition for reconciliation.

Following the July donors' conference, a multi-donor trust fund was set up by the World Bank for the broader social sector, including education. With EUR 5 million, the Commission is among the main contributors to the fund. Altogether, EU assistance to education in Kosovo, over the period 2006-2010, amounts to

EUR 30.5 million. The opening of a multi-ethnic European university college will receive our support once all local stakeholders reach an agreement to make this effort a sustainable project.

The plight of Roma families in lead-contaminated refugee camps in the north is an issue of serious concern. The Commission is actively assisting in finding a swift and sustainable solution acceptable to all. We have repeatedly called on all parties to refrain from politicising the issue, and to act only with the best interests of the Roma families in mind.

Finally, Kosovo also benefits from our multi-beneficiary programmes, covering the Western Balkans and Turkey, which fund the process of civil registration of Roma people. Our support for Roma in Kosovo also includes education. Together with the Council of Europe, we support quality education for Roma children, including in their mother tongue.

In my view, all this is very much in line with your proposals. I thank all honourable Members of this Parliament very much for their attention and look forward to your questions.

Doris Pack, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur and the shadow rapporteur, because I believe that together we have produced a very good resolution.

This resolution calls on the Council and the Commission to ensure that joint action is taken in Kosovo, that EULEX acts together with the High Representative of the EU and that synergies are created in the interest of the economic and social life of Kosovo which is in need of improvement.

The EULEX mission must also ensure that the court cases which have been going on there for years are finally addressed and brought to an end. There are still many atrocities which have not yet been exposed and brought before a court. Combating corruption in Kosovo is also important, as there are still many criminals at large who remain unpunished.

In addition to what we have already heard, the European Union should consider not only taking action on a large scale, but also focusing more closely on the daily life of the people there and the opportunities for local projects involving local people. This work is very important.

We must call on the government of Kosovo finally to begin the practical implementation of its constitution, which includes the Martti Ahtisaari plan. The people of Kosovo must become aware in their everyday lives that they all live together. In addition, Serbs, Albanians and all the other minorities in Kosovo must be regarded as citizens with equal rights.

The government of Kosovo must also push ahead with its decentralisation programme. I am, of course, very much in favour of establishing a multi-ethnic European college, which would be another joint institution alongside the University of Priština and the University of Mitrovica that focuses on a shared future.

In addition, I would like Serbia to realise at last that the Serbs in Kosovo do not want to be encouraged not to take part in the government. They must be allowed to take part in the government, in parliamentary work and in civilian life. This is the only way in which Kosovo will flourish.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, I am speaking on behalf of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament. We can confirm that the situation in Kosovo is improving. We are grateful to the Czech Presidency and to the Commission for their good cooperation. I am completely in agreement with Mrs Pack in confirming that the EULEX Mission is a very great challenge for the European Security and Defence Policy, one of the greatest challenges in the entire history of the European Union as a Community based on the rule of law.

It is a good thing that there is already a legal basis following the statement by the President of the Security Council, which has been welcomed by the Serbian Government. There was tacit agreement on the part of China and Russia, who had previously rejected any settlement of the conflict.

It is essential that EULEX cooperates well with the parties concerned in Kosovo. We must not repeat the mistakes made by MINUK, which wasted a lot of money and alienated the people of Kosovo. Mrs Pack has also touched on this subject. It is very important to clarify the division of competences between the Government and the Parliament of Kosovo, on the one hand, and EULEX, on the other.

We cannot take responsibility for the development of Kosovo. The presence of EULEX in the north of Kosovo is very important in order to avoid partition of this territory. Finally, the complete implementation of the provisions of the constitution in line with the Ahtisaari Plan is an essential matter for minorities.

Johannes Lebech, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DA) Madam President, first of all I would like to express my deep satisfaction with this motion for a resolution and to thank Mr Lagendijk for his sterling work. The result is a text that is well-balanced and to the point, while at the same time managing to deal with all of the important problems. With this resolution, we in the European Parliament are first and foremost sending out a signal to the people of Kosovo and to the peoples of the other countries in the Western Balkans that says 'you have not been forgotten, you are part of Europe'. These are not merely empty words with no real meaning. The EULEX mission, the largest mission under the common European Security and Defence Policy to date, is already underway. It is gratifying that the mission is supported by the UN and that it covers the whole country.

With our resolution, we in the European Parliament are supporting Kosovo in this mission. We also point out the areas in which the EU Member States can assist Kosovo. This relates to special aid for establishing the public administration, strengthening civil society and for educational projects. When we point out areas in which Kosovo's leaders need to improve, for example with regard to the protection of minorities, this is because we are serious when we say that we will stand by Kosovo in its efforts to create a democratic society. A democratic society with respect for minorities, coexisting peacefully with its neighbouring countries. This is not only about Kosovo's future, but about the future of the entire Balkans region and of Europe as a whole. The road ahead is a long one, and it will be difficult. There is only one way, and that is towards the EU and full and complete integration of Kosovo, as well as the rest of the Western Balkans, into the framework of European cooperation.

Ryszard Czarnecki, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. – (PL) Madam President, the original sin committed when this new country, namely Kosovo, was born involved the feeling, prevalent amongst the Serbian minority in Kosovo and Metochia, as well as in Serbia itself, that the new state, and the entire Muslim majority, were set against the Serbs. This must have had an impact on relations between Belgrade and Priština, and certainly also on relations between the people of Kosovo and the Serbs living in ethnic Serb enclaves.

If the cultural, educational and religious rights of the Serbian minority are not respected, not only will bilateral relations between Kosovo and Serbia, as well as in other parts of the Balkans, become more difficult, it will also make Priština's road to European Union membership longer.

I agree with what the honourable Mr Lebech, who spoke before me, stated. The government of Kosovo has to understand that respect for the rights of minorities is a European standard. We have to strictly adhere to these principles and, in this regard, keep a careful eye on our partners in Kosovo.

Joost Lagendijk, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (NL) It took EULEX nearly a year before it was able to carry out its original mandate. It is good to briefly remind ourselves today what this original mandate involved.

EULEX, the largest European mission to date – as someone already pointed out – was to develop, and be active all over, Kosovo, both north and south of the river Ibar. EULEX was also to take charge in three areas: customs, police and jurisdiction and crucially, there was to be no – and I mean no – ambiguous relationship between EULEX on the one hand and UNMIK, the UN organisation, on the other. Let alone that EULEX's activities would result in that country being split into north and south. That was absolutely not what was intended.

For a very long time, it looked as if it was impossible to carry out the original mandate on account of the notorious blockade in the Security Council. It is only since November last year, in fact, that it looks as if things will work out after all. It is good – two, three months on from the activities actually getting underway – to take stock and to see whether things are working out or, let me couch this in more cautious terms, things appear to be working out.

The Kosovar police are delighted with the excellent cooperation they are enjoying with EULEX. Customs offices are finally up and running again, also, and particularly in the northern part of Kosovo, after they were burnt down last year by Kosovan Serbs. Finally, a start has been made on the huge backlog of lawsuits in the fields of inter-ethnic violence and corruption, which demonstrates once more that EULEX's activities are in the interests of all the communities, not just the Albanians or the Serbs.

What I really hope is that EULEX's progress over the last couple of months will be sustained in a positive manner. I also sincerely hope that Belgrade realises that its current approach of constructively working with the European Union is far and away more effective than trying to re-write history all the time. Above all, I hope that the Kosovar authorities manage to solve this huge stack of problems that they still face. At long last, corruption will be tackled, as well as organised crime, which is still far too prevalent in Kosovo. At long

last, Kosovo will have a durable energy supply, based on EU legislation, and at long last, the Kosovan economy will take off.

Kosovo is an independent state and, whether this Parliament likes it or not, there is no going back. We, the European Union, stand to gain from Kosovo developing into a viable state. This is why we are there and why we need to remain there.

Tobias Pflüger, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DE) Madam President, my group, the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left, rejects the resolution that has been tabled on Kosovo. The majority of the Member States, but not all, have recognised Kosovo in contravention of international law. My group insists that all the regulations concerning Kosovo must be in line with international law and must be agreed with all the parties involved, including Serbia. The recognition of Kosovo has created a disastrous precedent, which is now being followed by other regions, such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The EU has launched the EULEX mission in Kosovo. The GUE/NGL Group rejects this mission as it is based on the recognition of Kosovo in contravention of international law and therefore creates something similar to an EU protectorate. EULEX has, and I quote, ‘certain executive responsibilities’. This means that EULEX officials can annul simple resolutions made by the Kosovan authorities. The EULEX mission also includes 500 policemen to combat insurrection. On 26 January EULEX and KFOR held a joint exercise on combating insurrection. This unfortunately indicates the close cooperation that exists between the EU and NATO in Kosovo.

At the same time, the EU and other organisations are promoting neo-liberal economic reconstruction in Kosovo, but this is not what the local people want. For this reason, we are calling for solutions which are in line with international law and a clear vote against the EU EULEX mission. If we really want to support the local people, the EULEX mission will not allow us to do so.

Bastiaan Belder, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group*. – (NL) When I paid Kosovo a working visit two months ago, I could see why many find it difficult to fathom the international presence in that country. Moreover, I got the impression that the different levels did not always work together that well.

The European institutions should not simply shrug their shoulders. We are caught up in this. Via the EULEX mission, Europe is responsible for the situation on the ground. EULEX should adopt a more assertive stance and should assist the Kosovar authorities wherever it can, whether this is solicited or not.

I should like to underline two things. First of all, I urge the Member States that have not yet recognised Kosovo to reconsider their stance. There is no way back for Kosovo within Serbia's borders. Secondly, I call for a master plan for the Western Balkans, which should work at a tangible level with all the countries involved to help them get ready to join the European Union. This is Europe's commitment with regard to the Western Balkans.

Bernd Posselt (PPE-DE). – (DE) Madam President, as shadow rapporteur for the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats, I would like to congratulate Mr Lagendijk on his excellent text. We support the reform programme in Serbia and we respect, of course, the tiny minority of EU Member States which have not recognised Kosovo under international law.

However, we want to discourage people from believing that this development can be reversed. Three-quarters of the Members of this House voted in favour of recognising Kosovo. The Commission has also declared itself in favour, together with 23 out of 27 Member States, all the G7 countries, four of the six former Yugoslavian republics and three of Kosovo's four neighbouring countries.

This demonstrates that this development is irreversible. This is why it is important to look to the future, which involves a number of risks. The first major risk is the division of Kosovo. Until now the former Yugoslavia has been divided along the borders of the old republics or along the old internal borders of the autonomous regions. If the map is to be redrawn, for example in Mitrovica, the result would be that, for example, the Albanians in the Preševo valley in Serbia, the people in Sandžak of Novi Pazar and others would begin to question where the borders should lie. This would give rise to a highly dangerous situation.

For this reason, it makes sense to follow the Ahtisaari plan, which respects the old internal borders of Yugoslavia while providing mutual and extensive protection for minorities. The protection for minorities offered by the former Ahtisaari plan, which now forms part of the Kosovan constitution, is the most comprehensive programme of protection in the world. The Serbs in Kosovo should take this opportunity and make use of this minority protection.

Mr President-in-Office of the Council, you know that I myself come from a minority which was once abused to suit the purposes of others. The Serbs in Kosovo must ensure that they avoid this type of situation. The other danger which threatens Kosovo is that of chaos and corruption. In this case I can only say that we must make EULEX stronger, because UNMIK was not the solution, but, in fact, part of the problem.

Hannes Swoboda (PSE). – (DE) Madam President, my fellow member Joost Lagendijk is in the same situation as Kosovo. He exists, but he is not recognised by everyone as a rapporteur, although, in fact, he is one. In this context I would like to thank him very much, together with Mr Tabajdi, for his report.

Of course, we have not made as much progress with the recognition of Kosovo as many people, including those in Kosovo, would have liked. We must acknowledge that this has been a painful situation for Serbia. We should not add fuel to the fire. Instead we should make every effort to ensure that the process is a peaceful one. I am very pleased that the leaders of Serbia, despite their many harsh words at the beginning, have attempted to legalise and neutralise the situation in order to give the EULEX mission a chance. I would ask everyone who is opposed to the EULEX mission what situation the Serbian and other minorities in the country would be in if the EULEX mission did not exist?

It is nonsensical from the standpoint of the Serbian minority or of Serbia to condemn the EULEX mission. I believe that the fact that someone here in Parliament who supports Serbia has condemned the EULEX mission is simply grotesque. However, it is true that there are some questions which remain unanswered. The political leaders in Kosovo must make an effort to get things done. One of our main tasks and demands is to implement all the aspects of the Ahtisaari plan, which we will vote on tomorrow as part of this resolution.

Finally, we should promote the integration of the entire region. Of course, all the countries will have to do their homework. However, the more progress which Serbia and Macedonia make in the integration process, the sooner we will be able to resolve the Kosovo question and the other related open questions. Only the integration of all the countries in the region will create the conditions needed by Kosovo for peaceful development.

Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck (ALDE). – (NL) Since all those who have taken the floor are familiar to very familiar or exceptionally familiar with the situation in Kosovo, there is no need to expand on this any further in an attempt to convince ourselves how familiar we are with the situation.

We should, first of all, rejoice at the fact that the first year of Kosovo's independence turned out quite well in the end, and better than many had feared. I should also like to express my delight and satisfaction at the fact that the EULEX mission finally got fully underway, thanks to the good will of many and the skill within the UN Security Council. A great deal will depend on the success of this EULEX mission, because Kosovo was a protectorate for ten years prior to its independence. What matters now is for all of us to guide Kosovo towards maturity.

Sylwester Chruszcz (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, a unilateral decision taken by the Albanian community resulted in the Serbian province of Kosovo being separated from Serbia. Personally, I view this move as an unprecedented violation of international law. Furthermore, this decision has had further repercussions, as events in the Caucasus last year have shown.

I would like to remind you that the United Nations did not recognise the decision taken by the Kosovar Albanians. UN Security Council Resolution 1244 remains in force. That is why I would warn against making any decisions before the International Criminal Court in The Hague rules on this matter. Only then will we know the real legal status of a province which, under international law, is still an integral part of the Republic of Serbia.

I would like to draw your attention to the dramatic situation still facing the Serbian community in the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo. Let us openly admit that the decision taken by certain European Union Member States to recognise that country was a fatal mistake. It is quite simple: Kosovo belongs to Serbia.

Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL). – (NL) Since Kosovo announced its independence nearly a year ago, the European Union has been hopelessly divided on this. Greece is undecided, while Spain, Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus reject this independence for domestic reasons. The joint EULEX project with which the European Union is hoping to gain influence within Kosovo seems more like an instrument to conceal this internal division than anything else.

EULEX might be beneficial to the European Union, but could this also be said of Kosovo? The people of Kosovo are keen to join the European Union soon and become an equal Member State. After nearly a century

of subjugation by Serbia, they certainly do not want any new interference from outside. A project such as EULEX could perhaps have been useful for a short while, in the first few months of 2008, in order to avoid any chaos. That phase is over, however. EULEX's late arrival now very much creates the impression that the European Union would like to turn Kosovo into a protectorate, with a military presence and administrative influence, as was previously the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where this policy had little success.

To secure a peaceful and harmonious future for Kosovo, it is necessary to involve not only the present government and the governing parties. Important forces are the movement for self-determination Vetëvendosje in the south, who consider the EU's initiative to be pointless colonialism, and the representatives of the Serbs in the municipalities north of the river Ibar, who do everything they can to maintain a permanent link with Serbia. Without these critics of EULEX, we will not have a long-term solution. Kosovo's future is better served by widely accepted domestic compromises than a demonstrative display of power by the European Union.

Patrick Louis (IND/DEM). – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, ten years ago NATO bombed Belgrade, no doubt in order to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary and to redefine its area of competence, which is restricted by the Washington Convention. These bombings were carried out in violation of international law, that is to say, without any prior UN agreement.

One year ago, the independence of Kosovo was declared unilaterally by Priština in blatant contempt of the sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity had however been reaffirmed by UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

Today, the European EULEX mission, in association with US experts, hopes that Kosovo can become a state based on the rule of law. If the situation were not so dreadful, it would be amusing to wonder how such a fruit can be obtained from such origins.

In the meantime, we ask this mission to ensure that the national Serbian minority is respected and valued on the land of their ancestors. This seems to us to be a good beginning for the re-establishment of the rule of law.

Anna Ibrisagic (PPE-DE). – (SV) I was born in the Balkans. I followed the troubles in Kosovo at close quarters at the end of the 1980s. I saw Slovenia and Croatia become independent states and experience war at the beginning of the 1990s. I, personally, experienced the war in Bosnia and finally left the country as a refugee. I know that it is extremely easy to start a war, but I also know that it is a lot harder to establish peace and restore people's trust in one another.

Kosovo is currently in a situation that will be decisive for the future generations of that region precisely with regard to this matter of restoring trust between different ethnic groups. I am pleased that Mr Lagendijk has been so clear in his resolution about the fact that we should put discussions about Kosovo's independence and the conflicts surrounding that behind us.

Our time and energy should now be put into discussions on how we are to strengthen the equal rights of all people to live in peace, to work to create a better future for Kosovo. We need to concentrate on the effective protection of minorities and on improving the economic situation and combating the widespread corruption and organised crime.

Everyone in Kosovo should make it a personal task to help to stop the violence between ethnic groups. The courts should ensure that war crimes are addressed. Some of the Members of this Parliament regret the EU's presence and involvement in Kosovo, but those of us who experienced the wars in the Balkans regret the fact that the EU did not involve itself both more clearly and more extensively.

There is an enormous amount of work still to be done and it will take time, but ultimately it is about restoring trust between people so that subsequent generations will have the chance to be educated and to live and work together, in peace, with respect for each other's differences. This is what the whole European idea is about.

(Applause)

Libor Rouček (PSE). – (CS) I would like to mention briefly the role of Serbia in particular. Despite a difficult domestic situation the Serbian Government has adopted a very constructive and responsible approach to the deployment of the EULEX mission in Kosovo. In an agreement with the UN it has also facilitated the appointment of a senior police official of Serbian nationality to the police force in Kosovo. I firmly believe that this is the way to achieve the gradual inclusion of Kosovo Serbs and also other minorities in the political,

economic and social life of Kosovo. In this context I would also like to invite the High Representative of the European Union to ensure that the Kosovo authorities devote sufficient attention to multilateral development in the Mitrovica area. And I share the view of Anna Ibrisagic that there is now a need to devote much more attention than before to the security and economic situation as well as to the economic development of Kosovo.

Nicholson of Winterbourne (ALDE). – Madam President, I should like to thank Mr Lagendijk, whose great political skills have produced a wonderful resolution for us to work from.

I thank him particularly for accepting paragraph 26, to which I wish to draw the Minister's and the Commission's attention. Here we note the exceptional ill-health of 1 500 Roma people, who are sitting on the edge of a lead mine and have been there through UN misjudgement for nine years. I fully accept that, as Minister Vondra has said, this is perhaps not quite the mission of the European Union. Nonetheless, I thank the Commission team for picking up this topic immediately I raised it and for visiting and for seeing the damage that the lead levels have caused. These people have monstrous lead levels in their blood, irreversible damage, and need immediate and urgent relocation and medical treatment.

Minister Vondra, you promised that you would keep this Parliament fully briefed. May I ask you, as President-in-Office, to give this matter your profoundest attention and to tell me what you do.

Alojz Peterle (PPE-DE). – (SL) I offer my sincere compliments to the rapporteur and the shadow rapporteurs on an excellent report. Its purpose is to contribute to the further stabilisation and normalisation of Kosovo.

Kosovo's successes over the past year have reinforced our hopes that multiethnic and multicultural coexistence is possible in Kosovo. The European aspirations of not only Kosovo, but also of the entire Western Balkans, can only become a reality if this prerequisite is met.

We have made progress, significant progress at that, and now we need to take that further. I welcome, in particular, the fact that the efforts of EULEX are also helping the situation in Kosovo to normalise. I welcome the recent establishment of Kosovan security forces and the participation of a section of the Serbian community in Kosovo's police force. If we are to make more rapid progress, we need to act on political, economic, security, social and other fronts and we need to pay particular attention to what is happening at a local level, where the issue of coexistence is most sensitive. We need to support projects which strengthen interethnic coexistence and cooperation. In that spirit, I welcome the European Commission's intention to employ all means at its disposal to achieve progress. That is exactly what Kosovo needs.

Richard Howitt (PSE). – Madam President, I welcome today's debate and resolution as the next step in the normalisation of relations between the European Union and Kosovo one year after independence.

It is important to stress that those, like Mr Van Orden and Mr Tannock of the British Conservatives, who oppose the move, have been proved wrong, with now 54 countries – including 22 of our own European Member States – offering legal recognition, and our own EU Rule of Law Mission has been deployed with the assent of Serbia. Indeed, all along we have argued that a resolved Kosovo helps Serbia's EU aspirations, and today we repeat that we want them to succeed.

Yesterday, the EU Justice Mission opened its first war crimes trial in Kosovo. Today, Her Royal Highness Princess Anne of Britain is visiting a school for disabled children in Gjilan, Kosovo. Surely, both together demonstrate Europe's commitment never to forget past injustices but to work today towards a better future for all.

Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE-DE). – (NL) I should first of all like to congratulate Mr Lagendijk on this very even-handed resolution, and take this opportunity to thank Mrs Pack, as she and her delegation have done a considerable amount of useful work in this area.

The EU's objectives are clear: Kosovo must not become a black hole. The primary responsibility for this lies with the Kosovar authorities. The population must gain confidence not only in the government, but also in the legal system. Corruption and crime undermine the state. Women and minorities must also be fully involved.

A second responsibility lies, to my mind, with the neighbouring countries, particularly the Serb authorities. A constructive dialogue and regional cooperation are in everybody's interest in that region.

Finally, the European Union also has a large responsibility to bear. With EULEX, the European Union has set its aspirations high. It is good that the real work has now begun. The next two years will bear out whether EULEX can really continue to make a difference in the long run. I very much hope so.

Stability, reconciliation and the development of the rule of law in Kosovo are of major importance for the Kosovars and all the ethnic minorities in Kosovo, but they are also in the interests of the European Union. The effectiveness of aid must be paramount in this. Mrs Pack and I visited Kosovo not so long ago. There is no lack of aid, but it probably could be coordinated even more and even more effectively.

Adrian Severin (PSE). – Madam President, how many recognitions are necessary for a state to be independent? This is not the question, since the quality of the recognitions matters more than the quantity. A declaration of self-determination does not lead to independence if the state in question is not recognised by those from which it wants to self-determine.

The independence of a state is not real as long as the United Nations Security Council does not accept it. Moreover, a state is not independent if it is not able to offer to all communities living on its territory a fair prospect of organic integration into a civic and multicultural society, and if it is not self-sustainable and self-governable.

For all these reasons, the Athisaari Plan failed. Asking for the *status quo ante* is not a solution either – one should move further. To this end, the European Union and the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council must convene an international conference which should find a sustainable solution for democratic security, geo-strategic equilibrium and social economic stability in the Western Balkans. Within this framework Kosovo should be put back on the track of international legality, and the region should receive a clear road map for its EU integration.

Unfortunately, the Legendijk report does not explore such ways thus abandoning any realistic drive towards a better future. Therefore, Romanian Social Democrats will be obliged to vote against this report.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE-DE). – (RO) According to the provisions of international law and having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1244 adopted in 1999, Kosovo cannot be considered a state. There are five EU Member States which have not recognised the act of unilateral independence declared by Kosovo. However, Kosovo is a reality and we must therefore deal with it.

Stability in the Western Balkans, the region with the most chance of joining the EU in the near future, is essential. This is why the EU must play the main role in managing the delicate situation in the area. The EULEX mission, which has already reached its initial operational capability, is an important first step in this direction as assistance and coordination are required to ensure, first of all, a climate of interethnic cooperation, making it possible to return to a normal way of life.

The protection of all minorities in Kosovo must be safeguarded, including that of the Serb minority. Institutions must be strengthened to avoid chaos and ensure stable development. Properties must be given back and refugees' right to return must be guaranteed. The financial instruments which the EU has, in particular the pre-accession assistance instrument, must be used to facilitate social and economic development, increase transparency and promote reconciliation between ethnic communities. Kosovo must not be isolated from the European processes in any way. It must enjoy the European perspective in a regional context. We need to apply the same standards in every region. Whatever is being asked of other countries in the region must also be applied to Serbia and Kosovo.

The European Union must insist on a resumption of dialogue between Priština and Belgrade. I feel that the resolution as it currently stands does not reflect the whole gamut of positions on Kosovo from the European Union's 27 Member States. This is why the Romanian delegation from the PPE-DE Group, apart from the MEPs of Hungarian origin, is going to vote against this resolution.

Csaba Sógor (PPE-DE). – (HU) Serbia had to be bombed to make it understand: the rights of minorities must be respected. It was a harsh lesson. Instead of granting autonomy to Kosovo, it has had to accept Kosovo's independence. Kosovo stands as a warning to EU Member States as well. Every Member State must ensure that the traditional ethnic minorities within its territory can live in security and feel at home. Satisfied minorities are the firmest foundation for a country's security, sovereignty and economic development. On 17 February 2008, I participated personally in the official celebrations in Priština marking the declaration of Kosovo's independence. I hope that I was able to ascertain as well that the cultural and territorial autonomy of the Serb minority is being recognised within Kosovo's territory. The Kosovo Albanians were given the

opportunity for a European-style solution. Serbia has one more chance: Vojvodina. EU Member States can also make efforts to grant cultural or territorial autonomy to the ethnic minorities living within their territories. It would be embarrassing if certain EU Member States were to lag behind Kosovo and Serbia in this respect.

Victor Boştinaru (PSE). – (RO) As an MEP and member of the Delegation for South-East Europe, I expect to hear, on behalf of our common values, which we call with pride ‘European values’, that the European Parliament and European Commission are requesting, with all their power and authority, the political parties in Kosovo to become open to multiethnic representation, and that any future progress in relations between Kosovo and the European Union depends on such a development.

I expected this report to tell us that the model which the EU intends to build in Kosovo, with European taxpayers’ money, as it happens, is truly multiethnic, multicultural and multi-denominational, and not based on segregation. In our discussions with MPs from Kosovo, they told us that this kind of model cannot be implemented for the time being.

I would like to end with the following question: if this model cannot be applied in Kosovo and if our European values do not have any place in Kosovo, what model then can the European Commission apply?

Gisela Kallenbach (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Madam President, I would like to thank Mr Lagendijk, as well as the Committee on Foreign Affairs, for having ensured, through this resolution and this debate, that the subject of Kosovo remains on our agenda. It is my opinion that the people of Kosovo have certainly earned this, after the European Union’s failure there in the 1990s.

We have a debt to pay there, namely that we owe it to the people of Kosovo and of the entire region to provide them with quite intensive help along their route into the EU. In this respect, the absolute number one priority is the preconditions for improved economic development, as without these, social unrest cannot be ruled out.

I would like to ask the Commission to bring its influence to bear to ensure that the CEFTA agreement is actually implemented by all the signatory States. I would also ask the Council to please ensure that the Member States handle the matter of the forced repatriation of asylum seekers in a sensitive manner.

Alexandru Nazare (PPE-DE). – (RO) EULEX is the biggest civilian operation ever launched via the European security and defence policy. I would like to highlight that the 1 900-strong international contingent includes 200 military and ordinary police from Romania. Romania is therefore participating in EULEX because it is Bucharest’s duty to support its partners in the European Union, even though it does not always agree with the decisions made by a majority of them.

Romania has not recognised the independence of the state of Kosovo, one of the reasons being that it wants to avoid legitimising any separatist unrest. A negotiated solution between Belgrade and Priština, possibly of a confederative nature, would have been preferable to the current situation. However, in the given circumstances, what is important is that the European Union successfully completes the mission. However, situations need to be avoided where the EU’s involvement is prolonged ad infinitum. Kosovo must not become a European Union protectorate, but needs help to run its own affairs.

This aspect is important for both Kosovo and the European Union, especially in the current economic crisis and with the limited resources we have.

IN THE CHAIR: MR COCILOVO

Vice-President

Călin Cătălin Chiriță (PPE-DE). – (RO) I agree with many of the ideas that have been expressed in the house, but this problem is much more complex. Romania is right when it expresses the view that the legal basis for Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence is highly dubious as, under international law, minorities do not have collective rights and do not enjoy the right to self-determination and secession either. What I would like to emphasise is that people belonging to ethnic minorities have rights.

Kosovo’s secession and its recognition as a state by other countries have set a dangerous precedent, which has been followed, just a few months later, by Russia’s unilateral recognition of the independence of the separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In both these cases, President Putin clearly referred to the Kosovo model. Separatist movements in regions such as Kashmir, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, Crimea,

Northern Cyprus and so on have immediately stated that these regions are just as entitled to independence as Kosovo.

I feel that in the future the European Union and its Member States will have to consistently support the principle of territorial integrity for all states and actively discourage separatist tendencies. The European Union must make special efforts to maintain stability in the entire region of the Western Balkans and give substance to their European perspectives.

Miloš Koterec (PSE). – (SK) Kosovo exists here as a fact accepted by some and not by others. Even if a majority of Member States are in favour of its independence or have recognised its independence there are five Member States which have not done so – not to mention the UN Security Council.

If we want the resolution to influence the foreign policy of the European Union then it must have a unifying effect. If we show that our common foreign policy has been forced through by majority, whether in the Council or in the European Parliament, then it will be counterproductive for the unity of the Union. Let us seek a unified solution and let us not push through decisions which are at best ambiguous or even confusing and sloppy in their wording.

Charles Tannock (PPE-DE). – Mr President, the international rush to recognise Kosovo was, in my view, hard to understand. There were plenty of older disputes to resolve that were worthier of the EU's efforts: Kashmir, for example, or Taiwan, or even Somaliland in the Horn of Africa.

Kosovo's declaration of independence has also exposed a schism amongst Member States. There is no way Kosovo can be part of the European Union or the United Nations while some Member States do not recognise its sovereignty. The precedent of Kosovo also provoked Russia's indignation and recognition of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as states last summer.

The people of the various parts of former Yugoslavia clearly have a right to live in peace and prosperity. We in the European Union have a moral duty to help, but this assistance should never be open-ended. We need to see real reform in Kosovo, genuine efforts to combat organised crime and people-trafficking, and proper protection and equality for minorities, such as the Serbs.

The Commission and the Council must remain vigilant and insistent on tangible progress.

Ingeborg Gräßle (PPE-DE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Committee on Budgetary Control is allowing itself to say a few words on high-level foreign policy. We have established that in Kosovo – the third state that receives the most aid from the European Union – there are extremely worrying cases of corruption with grave consequences for the certainty of our budget and the financial interests of the Community.

There is a final report from a United Nations task force, the Commission's anti-fraud office and the *Guardia di Finanza*. This final report has not yet been implemented. It dates from the end of June 2008 and exposes serious cases of corruption involving EU funds. We await an explanation.

This final report really is a final report. There is no follow-up organisation. There is currently no one representing our interests on this matter. In this respect, too, I would call on the Commission to finally appoint someone. EULEX itself cannot do this job. I am also opposed to us continuing to make excuses for the uncertain status of this State.

Alexandr Vondra, President-in-Office of the Council. – Mr President, I would like first of all to thank you for initiating this debate. I think it was the right move, to use the momentum of the upcoming first anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of Kosovo. I think it is a timely move, especially with regard to the current economic crisis, because there is the potential danger that it will somehow disappear off our radar screen, while we still bear a lot of responsibility for completing the work: not just in Kosovo, but also in the broader area of the Western Balkans. I guess that what has been said here by many of you – like Hannes Swoboda and others – deserves a lot of attention. I think that the position of the Council is exactly the same.

We have a lot of challenges ahead of us. I would like to stress the three most important pillars of our policy towards Kosovo. The first is the indivisibility and stability of Kosovo. The second is decentralisation and equal opportunities for all minorities there. The third – and probably the most important and the most challenging – is the involvement of Kosovo in regional and European mainstreaming: regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. Certainly, one day we should bring Kosovo closer to the stabilisation and association

process, but still a lot of work remains to be done, and it is no secret that on certain issues, unity in the Council will be difficult to attain.

I think our goal should be to concentrate on the future rather than on the past, and I really appreciate the statements of those who did so. Of course, dialogue with Serbia on the outstanding practical issues must be conducted with full transparency and a lot of intensity, but I think that realism should be the guiding principle for us.

The economic situation and its improvement is of paramount importance for achieving stability, so the effective management and mobilisation of Kosovo's own resources is a condition *sine qua non* there, as is sound administration and mobilisation of international resources. Also, fighting corruption and having transparent privatisation is an important element.

I think that Parliament's support for EULEX is very important here. Let me congratulate Joost Lagendijk on the work which he did. It was excellent. When I read the text, I personally had no complaints about it, though I would probably be a bit careful: we all know the economic situation in Kosovo and the energy shortages in Kosovo, as well as in the Balkans in general. Lignite and power generation is one of the few opportunities for them somehow to build a sustainable economy and to integrate this economy into the region. Yes, environmental concerns are important, but the booming of future economic stability is no less important.

Some of you mentioned the situation of the Roma families in the Trebca mines. We all know that this is a disastrous situation, and you are certainly aware of the Commission of work on this subject. There was a delegation led by Pierre Morel which visited the area in December, and they offered to meet with the Roma camp leaders in Trebca. There is no easy solution. We know there is an offer for them to move outside this area, but for the time being they are not ready to do that. In fact they are declining to do that, so a lot of work also remains to be done here. I think the meeting next week with Pieter Feith, who is also involved in this, will be an opportunity to discuss this further.

Once again, thank you very much. I think we had a very fruitful debate, and I hope that Parliament will continue to support all our efforts in Kosovo, as well as in the region.

Meglana Kuneva, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, the Commission congratulates Mr Lagendijk and welcomes his resolution: it provides for the further involvement of Kosovo in the ongoing process of bringing the region closer to Europe.

The Commission has established an effective mode of cooperation with all local actors working in Kosovo, including EULEX and the EU's Special Representative. We will continue this cooperation. It is the only way our work in Kosovo can bear fruit. Good cooperation so far has proved essential to maintain peace in this area.

The Commission financed a EUR 7 million project on the rule of law, including a component of EUR 1 million to fight corruption. To be more specific, in December 2008 we provided detailed and comprehensive answers to all the questions raised, both orally and in writing, to Mr Bösch, Chair of the Committee on Budgetary Control. They clarified the issues raised regarding EU funding and the way this has been managed in Kosovo. They also informed members on the financial management and control systems that the Commission has currently in place.

Since then, we have received no further requests for information. We can provide Members with copies of the material sent to the Committee on Budgetary Control, should they be interested.

I would like to refer to the remark of Ms Kallenbach concerning the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). We hope that an improvement in relations between Serbia and Kosovo may permit the integration of Kosovo in CEFTA. The Commission will do its best to facilitate it.

There are many important issues outlined in the resolution, such as the preservation of Kosovo's cultural heritage, the improvement of public administration capacity, the better integration of all communities in Kosovo, the necessity for multi-ethnic education and the plight of Roma families in lead-contaminated refugee camps in the north. The Commission intends to follow up these issues through existing instruments and in cooperation with other donors.

We will issue our study on Kosovo as part of our enlargement package in the autumn. I am confident it will include plenty of ideas to ensure that Kosovo remains firmly anchored in the European outlook it shares with the Western Balkans as a whole.

President. – I have received one motion for a resolution⁽¹⁾ pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 5 February 2009.

12. Impact of the financial crisis on the car industry (debate)

President. – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on the impact of the financial crisis on the car industry.

Alexandr Vondra, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – Mr President, I think that we are now moving into a really important issue. Under the current circumstances, this is something that must be discussed. Once again, we are grateful for this timely opportunity to discuss the effect of the current economic and financial crisis on the automobile industry.

As many of you are following very closely in your constituencies, the automobile industry is a key factor for the whole of the European economy. Over the years, we have promoted the competitiveness of the sector by establishing a single European automobile market and calling for fairer competition in trade with third countries. More recently, we have focused on reducing car emissions in order to combat air pollution and climate change. In all these areas this Parliament has given us its consistent support.

Thanks to these efforts, and in particular to the resilience and adaptability of the European automobile industry, European cars are today among the best, the most innovative and the most competitive, as well as the safest, most fuel-efficient and environmentally sustainable in the world. We should be proud of Europe's record.

Nevertheless, despite its resilience, and as a result of factors largely outside its control, the European automotive sector has been particularly badly hit by the global economic crisis. These difficulties were already apparent in November last year, when the Council agreed on an approach based on promoting even more sustainable and fuel-efficient cars, realistic targets for manufacturers, and effective incentives for stimulating demand.

In the short time since then, the situation has become more serious. The industry has reported that 8% fewer cars were sold in the Union last year than in the previous year, to compare 2008 with 2007. The situation is likely to remain as bad – if it does not get worse – in 2009, hitting not just the automotive constructors, but also the whole automotive industry supply chain.

Ministers met my friend, Günter Verheugen, the Commissioner and the Vice-President of the Commission, on 16 January to discuss the specific problems facing the automobile industry. They expressed particular concern that the current difficulties would put at risk a significant number of jobs and underlined the importance they attached to the future of the industry.

Of course, the primary responsibility for responding to these challenges rests with the industry itself. The industry must be encouraged to take all necessary steps to address structural problems such as overcapacity and lack of investment in new technologies.

However, the importance of this industry for the European economy, and the fact that the sector is hit particularly hard by the current crisis, means that some sort of public support is required. This is reflected in the European Economic Recovery Plan agreed by the European Council last December, as well as in the Member States' national programmes. Of course, we cannot allow short-term support for the industry to undermine its long-term competitiveness. This means focusing clearly on innovation.

Member States agree that public support for the automotive industry needs to be both targeted and coordinated. It also needs to respect some key principles, such as fair competition and open markets. It should not be about a race for subsidies, and it should not result in market distortions. In order to achieve this, Member States have confirmed their willingness to cooperate closely with the Commission on both supply-side and demand-side measures taken nationally. The Commission has, in turn, undertaken to provide a swift response in cases where it is required to react.

⁽¹⁾ See Minutes.

More generally, the Council's Presidency fully supports the Commission on the need to advance rapidly with the implementation of the European Economic Recovery Plan. The Commission has also been invited to explore, together with the European Investment Bank, how the utilisation of the loans envisaged for this sector can be further improved in terms of rapid availability, project financing and frontloading of the loans, without discriminating between manufacturers and Member States.

With regard to the global environment, we clearly need to engage in an early dialogue with the new US Administration as well as with our other global partners.

The Czech Presidency is determined to push forward with this overall policy of support for the industry, whilst respecting the principles and parameters to which I have referred. There is already a wide range of Community instruments which can play their part in providing support, not least in the area of new technology, for example in the development of clean cars. The full potential of innovative and environmentally sustainable propulsion technologies – fuel cells, hybrid, electrical, solar power – needs to be fully explored and put into operation.

On the other hand, there are also more ready-made and rapidly available instruments, such as, for example, the scrapping scheme for old cars. These instruments could combine the demand impulse for new cars with positive externalities in terms of transport security, reduction of emissions and others. There are now several Member States which already use this instrument. Therefore, the Presidency would like to ask the Commission immediately to put forward a proposal on how to encourage, in a coordinated manner, European car fleet renewal in the area of vehicle recovery and recycling, based on the analysis of the impact of these schemes in different Member States. Our aim is to have a proposal from the Commission some time ahead of the Spring European Council, in the context of the evaluation of the Recovery Plan, and to be able to discuss the issue during the Competitiveness Council in March. This will be headed by my colleague Martin Říman and Vice-President of the Commission, Günter Verheugen. Such schemes may provide an important demand stimulus for the automotive industry at Community level and should also ensure a level playing field within the internal market. I would like to underline the second half of the sentence, also in the current context.

To summarise: this is not just about supporting a key sector of our economy but is an approach from which we all stand to benefit in the long run.

Günter Verheugen, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Vondra has just informed you all of the outcome of the discussions that I held with the Ministers responsible for the motor industry on 16 January. I can but confirm everything that was said, although I would also counsel caution at the same time. We must be careful, now, not to raise hopes or expectations that we just cannot live up to. Allow me to go into some further detail about the position of the European motor industry at this time.

Experience shows that cars are an early indicator of economic trends. It was therefore no surprise that the heavy fall in demand in vehicles that we experienced last summer was then followed by an economic downturn in all the other sectors of the economy. Why is this the case?

The drop in demand is a symptom of a lack of confidence in the way the economy is heading. Consumers behave no differently to enterprises in this respect. In uncertain economic times, when people do not know what is going to happen to them, they cling on to their money. In a private household, the purchase of a new car is the largest investment, over a number of years. It is something that can be put off, however, as, of course, a European car can always last another year.

Everybody knows that the situation will only fundamentally improve when the general confidence and belief in the overall trends in the economy have returned. This means that the measures that we put in place together in Europe in order to combat this crisis overall are absolutely the most important thing.

I would like to give a few more figures in order to demonstrate how important this is. The European motor industry employs 12 million people directly and indirectly. That represents 6% of all the jobs in the European Union. It is the most important sector of the economy as far as European exports are concerned. Our biggest export surplus is in motor vehicles.

In 2007, we produced 19.6 million motor vehicles in Europe. Last year, this figure was nearly one million lower and it will fall again significantly in 2009. There are currently stockpiles of 2 million unsold vehicles. The motor industry is the industry in Europe that invests the highest proportion of its turnover in research and development. On average, carmakers invest 4% in research and development. This compares with an average of just 2% for European companies as a whole. In simple terms, then, it is a key industry for Europe.

The economic crisis has hit this industry in every sector at the same time. This has never happened before – it is a first – and I have to tell you that the public only think of the situation as regards passenger cars. The plight of commercial vehicles is much more dramatic. Here, new orders in the whole of the European Union have fallen to practically zero, and that when there is a production capacity of almost 40 000 commercial vehicles a month.

The negative impact on the employment situation is unavoidable, and for two main reasons. We have a decided overcapacity in motor vehicles in the European Union. The industry itself concedes an overcapacity of 20%. There are people who say it is much higher still. Twenty per cent, however, is still a very high figure, and when you compare this with the numbers of people employed by this industry, we are talking about more than 400 000 jobs. There is absolutely no doubt that European carmakers will be engaging in an accelerated implementation, during this year of economic crisis, of the re-structuring measures that have been planned for some time. This point I will make quite clearly: there is no guarantee that, at the end of this year, we will still have all the production sites in Europe that we have at the moment. There is a high probability that, by the end of the year, a whole series of those production sites will no longer be in operation. There is not even a guarantee that, by the end of the year, all the European manufacturers will still be in the market.

The pressure of international competition in the motor industry is very strong. As European legislators, we have heightened this competition still further by making considerable demands of the European motor industry over the coming years. The industry is required to make considerable strides in terms of innovation. So that Mrs Harms does not criticise me again straight away, I would like to make clear to her that I am not criticising this fact – I believe it is right and proper. Do not reproach me for describing the facts as they are. This is not criticism on my part; it is merely an observation. Our legislation has made European cars considerably more expensive and, in the coming years, they are to get much more expensive still. The primary effects of this are to increase the pressure of competition, to increase cost pressure and to increase the necessity for the companies in question to achieve higher productivity. That is the only way to survive this competitive situation.

We all know what greater productivity means in the motor industry. In any event, it does not have a positive impact on the job figures. That is the reality of the current situation.

Our policy now is pursuing two goals at the same time. Firstly, it seeks to get the European industry through this crisis – and I will stress each individual word here – with the aim of losing not a single European manufacturer where possible. Not one. The second goal is to increase the competitiveness of the European motor industry in the long term and to durably establish Europe as the world's leading car-producing region.

As far as the measures relating to the first of these goals are concerned, we have done everything that could be done. We have provided the European motor industry, especially badly hit by the credit crunch as it was, with access to financing. The European Investment Bank (EIB) is making EUR 9 billion available for this industry alone this year, and I have to tell you that there is no point in asking for more in this House today. Given the EIB's capital base, no more money can be forthcoming. Nine billion euro is already on the table.

Thanks to the hard work of my fellow Commissioner Mrs Kroes, State aid control now takes such a flexible form, and we have changed the rules to such an extent, that the Member States have considerably greater abilities to react quickly and in a targeted manner where assistance is needed in individual cases. The Commission is thereby taking on the role that it has acquired through legislation, which is to say that of ensuring that these measures do not give rise to any distortions of competition and that they do not jeopardise our policy goals. I would like to mention just one example in this regard. It is patently obvious that aid to the European subsidiaries of US companies can only be authorised where it is clear that the aid in question serves exclusively to retain European jobs.

We have implemented a range of measures to push forward the modernisation of the stock of cars on Europe's roads, by means of which we were, at the same time, pursuing the objective of having a positive impact on the environment. Not all the Member States are going to use the system of paying scrapping premiums, but those that do will be following the agreed principles, which is to say that these measures must not discriminate against other manufacturers. To mention one more example, Member States cannot say, 'I will give you a premium if you scrap your old car, but only if your new car is a German one', if you live in Germany, or a French one or a Czech one. It is just not possible to do this.

One thing that is possible, however – and I would welcome this warmly – is for such scrapping premiums to be linked to environmental targets. In other words, for instance, they would only be paid if the new car

bought met certain emissions standards. As far as we can see, this system of premiums is working well and is having the positive effect desired.

There is only one way to get the commercial vehicles market going again. Scrapping premiums, as you can imagine, are not possible in this sector. What is needed most of all here is to give small- and medium-sized enterprises in this sector access to finance. We are doing that. It is also necessary to ensure, where public money is being invested, that preference is given to the procurement of environmentally-friendly commercial vehicles, for example in the case of public transport or other public services for which vehicles are needed. We have already done all of this.

In the long term – something of which we have often spoken in this House – what is needed is to implement the recommendations of the Cars 21 process, namely to ensure the future of the European motor industry through greater efforts in relation to innovation, research and development so that the European car of the future is the world's leading car not only in terms of the standard of its technology, its finishing and its safety, but also in relation to fuel-efficiency – meaning low consumption – and environmental friendliness – meaning low emissions. The European industry is going with us on this, and we are supporting the associated projects as part of the European economic stimulus package, as you all know.

Allow me, finally, to say that the most important outcome of the discussions with the Member States was that we all pledged to prevent the occurrence of any race to protectionism in Europe. Such a race to protectionism would result in the financially weaker Member States losing out and would very seriously damage the provision of social solidarity in Europe.

Another thing that we can do to stimulate demand and to help and lead the motor industry through this crisis is to ensure that the conditions of international competition, too, are also not violated. That is a question that must be directed at the United States, in particular. We will see what measures President Obama puts in place to counter the crisis in the US motor industry. In this respect, I would like to point out that it is not in Europe's interest for the American carmakers to go under. The consequences for Europe would be catastrophic if that happened. However, it is likewise not in our interest for the US to institute a policy that would favour its motor industry at the expense of competitors from other parts of the world. I hope that we will get the opportunity to discuss this calmly with our American friends.

The European motor industry is not staring into an abyss. It is in a difficult situation, but it is our firm belief that the industry is capable and strong enough to get through this difficult situation and continue, in future, to play an important role in creating and securing jobs and prosperity in Europe.

Jean-Paul Gauzès, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I fear, unfortunately that the message just delivered cannot surely be a message of hope intended to restore confidence. Commissioner, I approved your last but one paragraph on what the car industry should be. Unfortunately, I fear that the proposals made are not up to the mark and in particular they encourage some Member States to manage all alone when Europe is unable to coordinate.

What are our fellow citizens expecting today? They are expecting a great deal from Europe, certainly much too much, but they are expecting us to do something else. The car industry, as you said, employs 12 million people in the European Union and is equal to 10% of GDP. In France, that means 2.5 million jobs or 10% of wage and salary earners, and 15% of expenditure on research and development.

The car industry today is experiencing an unprecedented crisis characterised by a drop in demand, by a need for finance for manufacturers and subcontractors but also consumers, and by a structural competitive challenge for companies facing ever-increasing competition worldwide. If I did not fear being politically incorrect, I would add that the requirements placed on the car industry and the encouragement not to use vehicles are also contributing to this situation.

A coordinated response at European level is essential and urgent to take over and enhance the actions already taken by various governments. It is essential, in the first instance, that the banking system lends normally to the car industry, that is to say at normal rates and conditions and at volumes corresponding to the needs of that industry. Despite the efforts of the EIB, we know that credit still has not started to flow again. Therefore, Europe should make a significant response.

Secondly, it is not only a matter of limiting the impact of the crisis but also of providing the car industry with a new future. A genuine industrial policy is essential. We must enter tomorrow's world and speed up the necessary developments with regard to the protection of the environment and the requirements of sustainable development in particular. We must develop a science-fiction culture. It is imperative that the

drive for innovation is not made to the detriment of the crisis and that public aid enables action in this domain.

Guido Sacconi, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank Mr Vondra and Mr Verheugen for their promptness in making these statements. I have to say that for the most part I share their concern and agree with the realistic approach they propose.

After all, we are all aware of the situation. I have seen one estimate saying that 2 million jobs could potentially be lost in the course of the year in the car industry as a whole, the majority of which would be in the parts sector. We are witnessing an extraordinary contradiction. On the one hand, we have a fleet of public and private vehicles – as you have rightly said – that is very obsolete and has high emission levels, while, on the other hand, demand has slowed down dramatically, if not collapsed entirely.

I therefore very much welcome the recovery plan decided on by the Commission, which has sought to use all the tools at its disposal, although we know that they are limited, and we understand the reasons why. There is a real need for a genuinely counter-cyclical move to stimulate demand and provide it with strong support, in line with the environmental targets that we have worked so hard on over the last few months.

And what happens? What happens is that each country acts independently. Some intervene while others do nothing; for example, my country has done nothing so far. Some do one thing, others do another. I agree with you, however, that we should make an effort ahead of the Competition Council next spring to maximise coordination, at least on principles, for example linking scrapping schemes to specific emissions targets. I think that France has come up with a good solution of varying the bonus awarded to purchasers according to the emissions level of the car purchased. This would, I believe, make for a 'win-win' situation in terms of employment, innovation, competitiveness and the environment.

Patrizia Toia, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the crisis in the motor industry has spread throughout the entire sector, to ancillary industries, other associated sectors, commercial networks and thus services, and has terrible prospects in terms of employment.

In my view, the appalling drop in the latest registrations – in some Member States this month they are down 33%, or 20%, and so on – shows that the crisis is not in a technologically obsolete sector, nor is it an internal crisis caused by managerial errors in this or that company. It is a systemic crisis, and as such must be tackled urgently and decisively by the European institutions.

Some solutions have been proposed, but the important thing is how, and with what resources and what prospects for innovation, they can be achieved. Of course we must support demand; consumption is the only route to recovery. However, while this consumption support measure is implemented, which is a medium-term measure, I think we have to say that we need immediate credit support to recommence production, pay for materials and retain employees despite the fall in orders and demand.

Credit, then, is the answer, but as we were saying, the important thing is how. I too call for Europe to take a stronger lead; it is important for the European institutions to send out a clear message. The United States are taking action, as are some European countries, and I hope that my country will move on from generic proposals to practical measures, but I hope for stronger European action both within and outside the recovery plan, because I believe, and have explained to the Commissioner at length, that the fate of the great European firms is our shared fate. Large European manufacturers should not encounter competition within the common market in the form of various kinds of State aid or special terms, but should see a response from a strong, decisive and coordinated Europe, since the fortune of the European car market will be measured by our ability to face global competition together.

There is also the other matter, which Mr Sacconi mentioned and I would like to point out once more: this support is not aid, or worse, relief, that maintains the status quo, but it is an incentive for the future competitiveness of the sector, in terms of innovation, environmentally-friendly manufacturing and technologies that better respect the environment and the safety of passengers and transport.

Guntars Krasts, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. – (LV) Thank you, Mr President. In car manufacturing, just as in the construction sector, resources have been focused on rapid future growth, but development in this area has been in the past and continues to be closely linked to the availability of credit. The financial crisis has therefore hit car manufacturing particularly hard. Stabilisation in the sector will be possible only once bank lending has normalised, and this in turn is linked with surmounting the financial crisis. I have no doubt that the financial crisis will give rise to significant corrections in the future structure of the car market. Our task

at the moment is not to preserve existing jobs, but to preserve the future competitiveness of Europe's automotive sector, and so public support for the automotive sector should be linked to two main goals: reducing dependence on oil and the price fluctuations connected with it, and significantly improving environmental indicators and emissions reductions. These tasks overlap with one another. They are also, on principle, important for the European economy as a whole, in order to reduce the risk that an increase in oil prices once the crisis has been surmounted, partly as a result of renewed car buying, might stand in the way of a joint economic recovery process. Thank you.

Rebecca Harms, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, in my opinion, the first priority should be to link the crisis management of the economic crisis with the global challenge that is the climate crisis. We would be making a big mistake if, with our economic measures, we were to pursue goals relating to climate protection and energy security as unambitious as those we have laid down in the regulation of CO₂ for cars.

We must not repeat the mistake of paying any attention to the inaccurate whisperings of the motor industry. The mistake made in that regard last winter can now be seen everywhere you look. The same groups that held us back from implementing the ambitious regulation of CO₂ for cars are now stuck with their stockpiles of huge gas-guzzlers which they are no longer able to sell. It is my belief that we really must aim to make it clear to the carmakers that the future of cars lies in small, efficient and climate-friendly models and that every effort must be made, in connection with incentive measures, to promote such models. It must also be made clear to what extent innovations such as electric engines are actually covered. However, this is only possible in conjunction with a coordinated plan involving energy policy.

What I would very much like to highlight in what a previous speaker from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats said, and it is something I absolutely agree with, is that I am completely convinced that, if we concentrate solely on cars without being aware, at the same time, of how we need to restructure the transport sector and of how the public transport sector will look in ten years' time, we will fall far short of what we need to deliver. This, too, can lead to securing and creating a large number of jobs. By hinting that it is not only cars, but also buses and railways, and so on that are produced, Commissioner Verheugen gave an important hint.

So, then, we must think beyond today and plan and promote future-oriented transport systems now.

Roberto Musacchio, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it has become clear that the financial crisis has deteriorated into a terrible economic and now social crisis.

We can see this from the car sector, where, I agree with Mr Sacconi, we can presume that more than 2 million jobs are at risk. There is a danger that the crisis will result in redundancies, especially among the most vulnerable, that is to say older workers and those who lack permanent contracts. Swift, firm action is needed. Assistance is available, but we have to decide – and I say this quite frankly to the Commissioner – whether it should be coordinated at European level or otherwise, as certain larger states seem to be proposing.

I would argue that European coordination is required, and that it should be directed towards two areas: innovation, in relation to the climate change package and, if I may mention it again, to the Sacconi emissions regulation, and the social sphere. It is my belief that no worker, from the old to the temporary contractor, should be laid off. Innovation cannot be achieved by getting rid of the workers.

The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund should also be adapted in this light; likewise the European Social Fund – why not? – which currently speaks of creating new jobs but should also seek to avoid redundancies. Labour must then be restored to its central place in Europe, to play its due role as the founder of democracy.

Patrick Louis, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we are aware of the structural causes of the crisis in the automotive sector and its subcontractors. This sector, as was the case for agriculture and textiles, is suffering social, environmental and tax relocations and dumping.

What are we going to do when the Americans, as the dollar is falling, sell their gas-guzzling, subsidised and highly promoted 4x4s on our market, which is also under siege from bottom-of-the-range vehicles from Turkey, India and China?

There is a solution. We must re-establish the common external tariffs abolished by the Maastricht Agreements. Only compensatory duties at the borders of the European Union can re-establish a genuine and fair

international exchange. Let us dare to do what common sense dictates before it is too late. However, as you know, Protocol 27 and Article 63 of the Treaty of Lisbon strictly prohibit any customs protection of the European market.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us be consistent. Let us no longer cherish causes which are so detrimental to us. Let us finally bury this damaging treaty and stop playing at pyromaniac firefighters.

Karsten Friedrich Hoppenstedt (PPE-DE). – (DE) Mr President, first of all, I would like to thank the Presidency, but also the Commission, for their very clear statements on this situation. I share Commissioner Verheugen's optimism that the motor industry has recognised the signs of the times and will find future-oriented solutions for many areas.

Of course, we live in the real world, however, and following a 5% fall in vehicle production over the last year, the industry is expecting a further 15% fall in 2009. That is the biggest fall in the European Union since 1993 and will mean 3.8 million fewer vehicles than in 2007. It is important to realise that for every job that is held in the motor industry itself there are another five in associated areas and industries that depend on it. That means that the financial crisis, clearly, has a particularly heavy impact on the automotive sector, as it affects both the manufacturers themselves and their customers. Both groups very much need better access to credit. The point has been made that the motor industry has access to EUR 9 billion from the European Investment Bank. However, both manufacturers and suppliers do need further credit in order to finance their businesses and so, too, do customers if they are to finance the purchase of cars. We therefore need to put our foot on the accelerator in order to shore up demand, as European passenger car registrations fell by 19% in quarter 4 of 2008, while those for commercial vehicles fell by 24%.

So far in this crisis, the banks have been backed to the tune of billions of euro in order to save the entire system. By and large, however, the motor industry's banks have been left out. As yet, these institutions have no access to State aid. Across Europe, as in the United States before it, the motor industry has had to reserve billions of euro for the residual balances on leasing accounts that are not covered. These losses – especially in the light of the 2 million stockpiled vehicles – are based on significant falls in the book value of leasing vehicles which then lead to problems in this respect, too. In other words, there is a need for very rapid action here in order to throw a lifeline to these banks, just as has already been done for the other banks within the system.

Stephen Hughes (PSE). – Mr President, Nissan has announced the loss of 1 200 jobs at its Sunderland plant in my North-East England constituency. That is about a quarter of its workforce, and to that will be added an as yet unknown number of jobs in its supply chain.

Nissan's Sunderland plant is widely acknowledged as the most productive in Europe. If the plant with the highest productivity in Europe needs to lay off a quarter of its workforce, then heaven help us when this crunch fully hits the less productive.

A recovery task force has been set up in my area involving all major regional actors. The measures they are planning – assisting job search, training and retraining, starting small companies, assisting self-employment – are all ideally suited for support from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. I welcome the Commission proposals to simplify that fund. It needs to be urgently simplified and mobilised on a massive scale as part of a coordinated European response to the crisis in the car industry.

Only a tiny fraction of that fund was used last year. Let us not hoard it. Let us put it to work to put our people to work.

IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

Vice-President

Josu Ortuondo Larrea (ALDE). – (ES) Mr President, unlike many others, the car industry does not work on the basis of speculation but rather operates on fine margins that only turn into profit if many units are sold.

Of course cars are a significant source of greenhouse gases, but it is also true that the industry, in conjunction with its support industries, is responsible for 10% of European GDP and provides 12 million jobs representing 6% of employment in the Union.

For this reason it is a very important sector for the well-being of our citizens. We cannot abandon it to its fate and to the hard and fast rules of supply and demand; these are the very reasons why we now have this crisis in the financial sector and consequently in all other sectors, including the car industry.

We must look for support solutions that respect the principle of free competition in the European Union and which offer the necessary aid to save this manufacturing sector. For this we need a European framework to ensure harmonisation across all Member States. Multi-million-dollar aid has already been approved in the United States and other places. Furthermore, some countries have adjusted their exchange rates and introduced other mechanisms to become competitive in our markets.

We must therefore not be concerned with what the rest of the world says, but rather adopt the necessary measures without further delay.

Michael Cramer (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we will only succeed in fighting climate change and restructuring the world economy if we tackle the two together. What we need is a green New Deal.

The crisis in the car industry is not a purely economic crisis. The carmakers' slump is also the result of their bigger-faster-heavier philosophy over recent years. Until just a few months ago, General Motors, Daimler and co were focussing on gas-guzzlers, whilst their marketing made out that SUVs were the new city cars. They were quite simply ignoring climate change. That is coming back to haunt them now.

If we are now to make billions of taxpayers' money available, the terms must be clear. The car companies must use the money to switch to a smaller, more efficient range of products, to alternative propulsion systems – not only for the environment, nor merely for the climate, but also for the long-term security of hundreds of thousands of jobs.

I will give you an example from Germany, my home country, of how not to do it. In Germany, if the CEO of Deutsche Bank, Josef Ackermann, decides to scrap his nine year-old third, fourth or fifth car and buy a new Porsche Cayenne, he will receive EUR 4 000. This is neither socially nor environmentally-minded. In fact it is simply crazy. We must not go along with this.

Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL). – (SV) Like many countries, Sweden, where I come from, is heavily dependent on the car industry. Volvo and Saab are well-known makes. The Swedish car industry has, like the rest of the car industry, been severely affected by the crisis. Several factors have contributed to this crisis, but one factor in particular is the failure to make the necessary switch in production at an early enough stage. The switch to the production of smaller, lower-energy and more environmentally-sound vehicles is necessary.

The EU has for a long time required a one-sided flexibility from workers. I and the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left demand that we also impose the requirement for flexibility on the part of the management of the large undertakings. The lack of flexibility and new thinking has, after all, contributed to the crisis we are seeing in the car industry and in other industries.

Finally, I would like to say that the car industry is an important workplace, an often predominantly male workplace, and it has our full support. I trust that the EU will show the same level of commitment when we have a crisis and downturn in what can be considered to be female workplaces.

John Whittaker (IND/DEM). – Mr President, you could have guessed what these reports would say. We have got a problem and the European Union has got to give its opinion. It has got to give the impression that it is in the driving seat to solve the problem. So we have a European Economic Recovery Plan of which the car industry is a part. But in reality each manufacturer is going to look after itself as best it can, and each country will look after its manufacturers as best it can.

There is of course a possible case for some support, some financial support to the car industry and other sectors to keep capital intact and to keep skills intact. But this can only be decided at the national level because the support – apart from the European Investment Bank mentioned by Mr Verheugen – can only be provided by national taxpayers.

But there is one thing that the European Union could constructively do here, at least until the recession is over, and that is to give car manufacturers a break from environmental restrictions. The industry is already in serious trouble. These environmental and other standard restrictions make cars more expensive. You are helping to kill off an industry which is already in serious bother.

Malcolm Harbour (PPE-DE). – Mr President, yesterday in my home city of Birmingham we held a car crisis summit. I was sorry I was unable to be there because I started work in the automotive industry 40 years ago. I have been through many crises, but nothing like this.

There has never been a situation where sales have collapsed so quickly. I want to say to my Green colleagues that if they go and look at the unsold cars they will find that the smaller, lighter, greener models are of a higher proportion sitting out there. This is not a failure of business models: it is a failure of the whole economic system.

One of the statistics from our summit – from Professor David Bailey in our Birmingham Business School – estimates that 300 000 consumers in the United Kingdom were refused a car credit application over the last six months. Now some of them would probably have been refused any way, but that is the nature of what we are facing.

As regards some of the things we have talked about – and I agree entirely with what Stephen Hughes said about Nissan, and he knows them very well – we can do things at a national and a European level to help the industry through this restructuring. It is much better to help the industry keep those core people on the payroll and retrain them than to let them go and then to hire them back again later.

We have the incentives to invest in those new cars that Ms Harms and others want. The fact that the Greens are talking about electric cars as being a solution shows simply how out of touch they are with the real world – those are 10 or more years away, and we all know that.

The problem is actually getting buyers and demand back into the economy. We need to tackle credit; we need to help public buyers back into the market to buy the green buses, the green trucks, the green cars – after all, there will be things following through there. We do not want a competitive race between businesses. Mr Vondra was absolutely clear that this is a single market, and we do not want competitive activities there.

But, above all, we need to face up to the fact that the car dealers have to be out there selling and looking after cars.

My final point is to you, Commissioner, and you talked about Ms Kroes working on this earlier: please tell Ms Kroes to take off the table this entirely unwanted and destabilising proposal to change the whole structure of dealer contracts. Nobody has asked for it, and we do not want it.

Monica Giuntini (PSE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we have heard the commitments of the Council and the Commission, but I would remind you that the overall drop in sales in this sector in 2008 was 8%. There are now thousands of workers who have lost their jobs and are reliant on unemployment benefit. Mr Sacconi gave us the statistics earlier.

This concerns not only the large car firms, but also all businesses associated with the car industry. I am thinking of Tuscany, where I come from. As I have had cause to mention recently, according to the European Association of Automotive Suppliers, one in ten companies will be at risk of bankruptcy in the coming months. I therefore believe that swift, assured and realistic intervention is needed, and I know that Mr Verheugen will be attentive and sympathetic.

There is no time to lose, Commissioner. Coordination between European countries is essential; otherwise we run the risk of ending up with a scattering of different measures that fail to bear fruit, either for the EU economy or in terms of support for workers. We must have incentives, coordinated at European level, such as those Mr Sacconi mentioned, that allow investment in clean cars and support for research and new technologies. We must act immediately to review the criteria of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund to be used to support European workers, and I believe that more funding is needed, from ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Ivo Belet (PPE-DE). – (NL) Commissioner, the rescuing of the European car industry is threatening to degenerate into an anti-European chronicle. Every Member State is doing its own thing and launching national support measures. There are Member States – as you know better than we do – that promise cheap loans for car manufacturers, provided that these car manufacturers buy parts from local suppliers in that country. This, of course, is completely mad, and it is good that you stated here a few minutes ago that you will not tolerate this and intend to clamp down on this practice.

What manufacturers need today – as Mr Harbour has already stated – is measures today and investment support for the future for new environmentally-friendly and hybrid cars. That is all well and good, but it does not solve today's problems. That is why it comes as very good news and as a ray of hope that the Czech Presidency is announcing a new initiative here today ahead of the forthcoming Spring Summit, namely a proposal to implement a measure across Europe that would provide a dramatic stimulus to the purchase of environmentally-friendly cars.

In addition – and this is nothing new – there is a need for fresh credit and credit guarantees for car manufacturers. The European Investment Bank has freed up a considerable amount of money, but much more is needed to get through this difficult time. In many cases, the companies in question are SMEs in the supply industry that need credit now in order to survive.

On a slightly different note, Commissioner, we should also seize on this crisis as an opportunity to finally force a breakthrough in the area of car tax. We have been squabbling for years about the Commission proposal to adjust car tax. The time has come to finally make the switch right across the European Union and transform car tax permanently into a system in which those consumers who opt for environmentally-friendly cars will be rewarded for doing so.

Mia De Vits (PSE). – (NL) The car industry is a very important sector for employment in Belgium. In and around Opel Antwerp Belgium, there are 2 700 direct jobs on the line today. The decisions are taken in Detroit, and all Opel sites are faced with overproduction. Needless to say, the relevant authorities are ready in the wings with rescue packages consisting of State aid and bank guarantees. To ensure that this aid is effective, though, I would urge the European Commission today, in the form of Commissioner Verheugen and your colleague Mrs Kroes, to sit round the table with the authorities and the sites involved to secure a maximum number of jobs at European level and to guarantee a coordinated approach at European level before 17 February, the day on which the decision will be made in Detroit. This is to be done, as you said yourself, in order to prevent a race amongst the Member States to enact protectionism.

Marie-Noëlle Lienemann (PSE). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, we must revive the great industrial policies on which the European Union was founded. This was the case for coal and steel.

The strength of these policies lay in the fact that that they were modernisation tools – as must be the decarbonisation of the automotive sector – while, at the same time, being social policies for the support, defence, training and protection of employees. Therefore, I would like to put forward four proposals.

Firstly, the creation of a European Support Fund for Employees in the Automotive Sector that exceeds the Modernisation Fund because it is important to retain employees in companies during these crucial periods by supporting their level of remuneration in the event of short-time working and by supporting their training within the company. We cannot be content with hypothetical retraining of employees who have been made redundant.

Secondly, we must create an agency for innovation and accelerate the funding of research and development in order to advance very quickly and close the technological gap between clean vehicles and safe vehicles.

Thirdly, accelerate the renewal of the vehicles on the road. Premiums for scrapping vehicles can be effective. They need to be harmonised at European Union level in order to avoid the effects of unhealthy competition.

However, I would like to close on this point. I fully understand the meaning of the word competition, but it is also necessary...

(The President cut off the speaker)

President. – Ladies and gentlemen, it is now time for the President to receive additional requests to speak but we have a problem as many Members have requested the floor. I am therefore going to adhere very strictly to the Bureau's decision to give the floor to five Members. They will be automatically cut off as soon as the minute assigned to each is over.

Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE-DE). – (RO) Amidst all the debates about the crisis in the car industry and the decisions which will arise from this, we must not overlook the problems for car component producers. They, in turn, have been affected by the crisis as a result of the domino effect because they are at the mercy of the customers' production stoppages.

In Romania, for example, there are more than 400 companies involved in producing car components, which achieved a total turnover in 2008 of EUR 8 billion. Three-quarters of these companies are small and usually work for a single customer. This is why the effects of the crisis are being felt extremely hard. In these circumstances, companies need to resort to redundancies or find solutions such as reducing working hours or giving unpaid leave. Tyre manufacturers are just as severely affected.

Bearing in mind the large number of employees within these companies, I feel that car component and tyre manufacturers must be included in any future solution for providing economic support during this crisis.

Matthias Groote (PSE). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner Verheugen has just set out for us how dramatic the figures are and what the current situation is in the automotive market. Dramatic events, then, require harmonised action. In 2006, we, in the European Parliament, launched an own-initiative report on the harmonisation of vehicle tax, which we hoped would be based on CO₂ and consumption. I believe that this would represent an economic programme through which the Council could show, as one – as this would have to be decided unanimously – how consumption-based vehicle taxes could be brought on-line.

With regard to what my colleague, Mrs De Vits, was talking about, which is to say General Motors, I would like to ask the Commission whether it is taking precautions for the eventuality of the collapse of the parent company. In such an event, would the Commission act harmoniously to find a European solution for General Motors' subsidiaries?

Zbigniew Krzysztof Kuźmiuk (UEN). – (PL) Mr President, I would like to draw your attention to three issues in this debate.

The governments of European Member States are providing automobile manufacturers with significant financial support, amounting to tens of billions of euros. The German Government, in addition to supporting German manufacturers, has decided to assist vehicle users. Anyone who decides to send their old car to the scrap yard will receive EUR 2500.

The European Commission, which has, to date, strictly monitored compliance with the rules for providing State aid to companies, has been very quick to grant its consent in all these cases, generally adapting its decisions to earlier decisions made by Member State governments concerning these matters.

Without calling into question the principles behind the action taken to aid the car manufacturing industry in Europe, I would like to once again remind you of how painfully unfair the European Commission's decision, namely that State aid given by the Polish Government to Polish shipyards must be repaid, was. As a result of this decision, around 50 000 jobs are now being cut in the Polish ship-building sector itself, while over ten thousand jobs will be lost in related industries in the future.

Zita Plešinská (PPE-DE). – (SK) Commissioner Verheugen, the European Commission must take concrete steps towards getting the automobile industry back on its feet. First and foremost, we must prevent distortions of the internal market. The protective measures proposed by some states are no way to tackle the current crisis. I call on the Commission to submit measures for a European scrapping scheme as quickly as possible.

Mr Vondra, I expect from the Council that the Member States during the European Council's meeting in March will approve a scrapping scheme that will directly boost the purchasing power of consumers intending to buy new cars.

I firmly believe that if the EU wants to be the largest exporter of cars and at the same time wants to be a global leader in the fight against climate change then it must help its car industry, which is the largest private investor in research and development. Through funding research and development, through supporting investment...

Ivo Strejček (PPE-DE). – Mr President, I was listening to the debate quite carefully and I am not going to bring forward anything new. I would just like to stress a few remarks that were made, which in my opinion should be overarching the whole debate.

I refer to Mr Vondra's words that we should take care to take into account fair competition and we should avoid market distortion, and the Commissioner's remarks that we should be fair and not raise false expectations. Above all, Commissioner, thank you for saying that we should allow our manufacturers to be more flexible through less regulation, less law and less exorbitant bureaucracy.

President. – Let me take 30 seconds to explain the rule established by the Bureau to you, because I recognise that it is most disagreeable for Members to request the floor but not to be given it.

The Bureau decided that the fundamental debate time is that assigned to Members who speak using the time allocated to the different parliamentary groups. Subsequently, in the 'catch-the-eye' procedure, the floor is given to five Members for one minute each, in order from the largest to the smallest group. However, if there are six requests, and we have six minutes available, they can all be heard. It can be stretched to six minutes, possibly seven. However, in this case, 12 Members requested the floor. Only five of them had their request granted, as laid down by the Bureau for this point in the debate. I am clarifying this so it can be taken into account on subsequent occasions.

Mr Vondra now has the floor to respond to the various speeches on behalf of the Council. Minister, you have the floor.

Alexandr Vondra, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, I should like to thank Members for a very useful debate. The Council appreciates all your contributions to the debate and will try to do its best to play its part, with the Commission, in fixing as many problems as we can in the automotive industry.

There is no doubt that there should be some short-term measures, and they are already happening at Member State level. So I think we are in agreement that those measures must be realistically sustainable financially, as well as in other respects. They should be targeted, effective and, most of all, must be carried out in a way that would be compatible with the strict state aid rules under Community law. I informed you, for example, of our initiatives regarding the scrapping scheme; so it is really important that the steps being taken are in conformity with the competition and state aid rules and avoid distortion of the single market.

My second point is that we should still bear in mind that the European automobile industry leads the world – we are exporters, those who are producing the cars – and, in this light, we should bear in mind the need for maintaining the long-term effectiveness, as well as the competitiveness of this industry. So the measures being taken must fulfil certain criteria regarding the long-term viability and competitiveness of the European industry, including investment in innovation and clean cars etc.

So the Council is making all the necessary efforts to ensure that all those efforts for RTD and innovations in the automotive industry, but also short-term measures in this report, are fully coherent with the overarching goals of the Lisbon Strategy.

My third point is that we must follow developments outside Europe. We are certainly aware that the crisis in the US automotive sector is structural and deep, and US producers are in a much worse position than European car makers. So it is obvious – and Günter Verheugen mentioned this – that the US cannot allow its automotive industry to simply die, because it would not be beneficial for us.

But we still have to work politically with our international partners, in particular through the WTO, in order to ensure that a level playing field is maintained as far as possible. The same applies to the other automobile makers and industries in Asia. We are also watching developments in Korea and Japan etc.

We are now in the run-up to the Competitiveness Council, which will take place in early March, and we hope to produce a high-quality and, of course, consensual decision for the European Spring Council, which will deal mostly with economic issues.

Günter Verheugen, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – (DE) Mr President, I agree with what a lot of speakers have said, in particular Mrs Harms. The short-term measures that we are now putting in place must in no way run counter to our long-term goals. That is the bottom line.

As you have been so nice, I too will now be nice and say something that will definitely please you and that I said here back in 2006, namely that the future of the European motor industry will be a green one or this industry will not have a future in Europe. Let me make that quite clear. People can argue about whether the choice of models produced by European manufacturers, especially the German manufacturers, was responsible for the crisis we are now in. I do not know. There have been environmentally-friendly cars in the past, and low-consumption models too – think of Mercedes' Smart car, which led to billions in losses for the company. It is not quite as black and white as you might think, therefore. From an environmental point of view, the choice of models was clearly wrong and the fact that the changeover is being made now, in a crisis, does not make it easier, but that does not change the fact that this changeover is necessary and needs to take place quickly. On this point, then, we are in complete agreement.

A tariff barrier against cars from the US, Mr Louis, is definitively not something that we will be introducing. If there is one thing we will not be doing, this is it. American cars play no real role in the European market, whereas European cars play a large role in the US market. If there is a voice here in the European Parliament

calling for us to protect our market against American cars, I fear that there will be a voice in the US Congress in Washington saying that they should protect their market from European cars. Our position would not look too good in such a situation. I would ask you in all seriousness not to pursue this idea any further.

I can only lend my complete support to what Mr Groote had to say about vehicle tax. I also thought that the pointed observations made specifically on this topic were sound. The reshaping of vehicle tax according to a CO₂-based principle is something the Commission has been calling for for some time and it saddens me that progress in this matter has been so sluggish.

Mr Groote, you will understand that I cannot express any public view about the question you put to General Motors and Opel. You will have to make do with me saying that we are keeping a very close eye on this development and we are in discussions with all the relevant parties.

I would also like to make those people who have quite rightly put particular emphasis on the employment issue aware that the Commission has, in fact, already tabled a proposal on how the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund can be made more flexible and effective. If the Commission's proposals were implemented quickly and rapidly realised – and I would issue a pressing request to all of you to do that – we would be in a position to provide help, in particular, for temporary workers in the motor industry and unskilled workers, who are ultimately the ones at the front on the cliff edge.

The rules for the scrapping premiums – this has been addressed numerous times and I would like to say it one more time – are clear cut. There cannot be a European regulation forcing every Member State to take part in this. That is absolutely impossible. Similarly, there can be no European regulation that the level of the premium must be the same everywhere. The reference values must be laid down at European level, and that is the case. We agreed on this at our meeting of 16 January in Brussels.

Finally, I would like to emphasise, once again, what many of you have said, which is that we must think beyond the motor industry when we discuss the current crisis. It is, in fact, absolutely right to say that intelligent traffic systems, intelligent traffic management systems, cutting-edge, innovative solutions for the personal and mass transit of the future must be found and that this crisis perhaps offers an opportunity to push such solutions forward more strongly. Personally, at any rate, I would very much like to see that happen.

Christoph Konrad (PPE-DE). – (DE) Mr President, you have just made a statement about the Bureau's decision, explaining why the 'catch-the-eye' debate system has been changed. In this regard, I would like to make a formal protest against this change. This procedure was introduced in order to invigorate our debates, to generate dialogue with the Commission and to strengthen the debating culture. What the Bureau has now decided is completely counter-productive and I would like to ask you, please, to bring this matter up at the Conference of Presidents and to answer this protest.

President. – Yes, Mr Konrad, of course you have every right and we take note of your protest. However, you belong to a very responsible group in this House and you will understand that what cannot happen is that individual Members have more time than the groups. The groups have a statutory responsibility to participate in the debates.

The Bureau took this decision unanimously. I consider this to be a common-sense decision, precisely to prevent Members who have not been put forward by their group – because the group does not want them to speak at that time – from speaking afterwards. That is why the time has been restricted: five minutes for five speeches, in order from the largest group to the smallest, while also making sure that not all the speakers are the same nationality.

That is what was decided. Of course, this rule can be changed. If the Conference of Presidents proposes a change in the procedure to the Bureau, the Bureau will consider it with all due care.

Thank you very much, Mr Konrad, for your contribution; it has been well noted.

The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 142)

John Attard-Montalto (PSE), in writing. – I would like to draw attention to the fact that the economic crisis in the car industry in the Maltese Islands is being compounded because of a serious administrative blunder. Cars in Malta are subject to a heavy registration tax, on which the Government was also collecting VAT. It has now been established that the Government was appropriating money from thousands of car owners

which was not due. The Government is refusing to reimburse thousands of vehicle owners who have paid substantial amounts when these were not due.

The Government of Malta is claiming that reimbursement will amount to millions of Euros. It is exactly because of this that the Government has a duty and an obligation to return taxes irregularly imposed. This is such a serious blunder that if it happened in any other member state of the EU, the Government would have been forced to resign. In Malta the Government has not even had the decency to accept responsibility and apologize to the thousands of Maltese and Gozitans who have been affected. Solutions could be found by offering rebates to the owners of these vehicles on such issues as annual licences. It appears that the Government is completely deaf to any such suggestions.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) If we look at the European Union as a living organism, the European car industry is its backbone. It accounts for 3% of the EU's GDP and generates a commercial surplus of EUR 35 billion. However, 2008 was a difficult year for this industry, where during the first half of the year, car sales dropped due to a rise in the price of fuel, while during the second half, sales fell by 19.3% as a result of the financial crisis.

These are not the only problems which this sector is facing. Between 2009 and 2015 the car sector must implement new standards for polluting emissions, fuel economy and so on, while all of this is adding billions of euros to the industry's costs.

The figures given above are also relevant because the car industry provides for the incomes of more than 12 million families. One job in a car company is linked to another four jobs at suppliers and another five in related sectors and sales. It is therefore clear that the health of this sector of the European economy is vital to the EU economy as a whole. In these circumstances, rapid, coordinated intervention by European governments and institutions is an absolute must, such as introducing programmes for returning old cars against a consistent reduction in the purchase price of a new one, financial assistance and so on.

Elisa Ferreira (PSE), in writing. – (PT) The financial crisis has paralysed credit; it has affected businesses and families; and demand has plummeted, with disastrous consequences for economic growth and employment.

Such a situation justifies exceptional measures, particularly in the case of strategic sectors such as car manufacturing, which represents 6% of jobs.

Even so, almost all the European Economic Recovery Plan, for which I have the honour of being this Parliament's rapporteur, is based entirely on national initiatives.

In reality, how can the Commission guarantee that it is out there checking coordination and that countries are not embarking on a war of support measures?

What mechanisms are out there to safeguard jobs in countries that do not have the financial structure to guarantee the jobs that are vital to them?

For some countries, textiles or electronics may be just as important as car making. What action can be expected?

Will the Commission be more alert to the role of European industry in Europe's survival?

There are limits to what can be expected from the European Investment Bank. Will we have a budget equal to the challenges facing Europe?

Krzysztof Hołowczyc (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PL) The European Union's economy is reputed to be the greatest economic power in the world. On the one hand, this makes us particularly responsible for any action taken in terms of our internal market. On the other hand, a global economy, with the Union at its forefront, has specific consequences. One of these consequences is that it is difficult to define which car manufacturers are truly European. Numerous company mergers, the creation of global manufacturing groups and the presence, for a number of decades, of American or Asian companies on the European Union's internal market, have provided the foundations for a diverse and competitive European car manufacturing sector.

It seems right that our efforts to create a European Economic Recovery Plan, should be primarily guided by the principles of the free market and its competitiveness. We should also remember that the motor industry, which has been so badly affected by the financial crisis, is one of the many links in the chain of the European economy. This induces us to adopt the plan of action proposed by the Presidency, namely that of drawing up a general approach, involving all the stakeholders on the internal market.

This approach should stimulate market demand, which determines the state of the economy. The mechanism for providing aid should also make use of money earmarked for targeted investment in technological innovations, in accordance with guidelines for improving road safety and environmental protection.

Alexandru Nazare (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) The economic crisis has had a powerful impact on the car industry, a sector which makes a significant contribution to the GDP of many European states. Even though the EU does not have any direct intervention mechanisms, Member States must be allowed to take the necessary measures to prevent the collapse of an industry on which the jobs of thousands of European citizens depend. The Romanian car industry has also been severely affected by the crisis. I only need to mention the cases of Dacia Renault, which is restricting its activities, and Ford, which has requested support from the Romanian state.

The serious situation at European level requires the immediate introduction of suitable measures. I am not referring, in this instance, to protectionist measures, which distort the market, but to measures which offer equal opportunities to European industry and allow employees in this industry to keep their jobs.

It is not enough for us to take action nationally, as we need to act at European level too. The economic recovery plan allows this to happen because it proposes new credit regulations in the European banking system which facilitate access to credit. It is also important that the State aid schemes which Member States apply for can be accessed rapidly and easily. This is a key aspect for strategic investors, such as those in the car market.

13. Consular protection of citizens of the European Union in third countries (debate)

President. – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on consular protection of citizens of the European Union in third countries.

Alexandr Vondra, President-in-Office of the Council. – Mr President, this debate on consular protection is, once again, a timely one. A series of events over the last few years have highlighted the importance of consular cooperation among the EU Member States. From Lebanon in 2006, through Chad to the recent tragic events in Mumbai – all have demonstrated the growing risks to citizens of the Union when travelling abroad. The extent of these risks is even greater as increasing numbers of people take advantage of low-cost travel to visit more remote regions of the world.

Cooperation between Member States in this area is therefore important. It offers a better service and an enhanced level of consular assistance. This is of direct benefit to EU citizens.

The Treaties provide us with a basis for this cooperation. Article 20 states clearly, and I quote: ‘Every citizen of the Union shall, in the territory of a third country in which the Member State of which he is a national is not represented, be entitled to protection by the diplomatic or consular authorities of any Member State, on the same conditions as the nationals of that state. Member States shall establish the necessary rules among themselves and start the international negotiations required to secure this protection.’

The rules mentioned in this article are set out in a decision which was adopted in 1995. This decision specifies that assistance within a third country may be requested from a Member State other than one’s own, on condition that there is no accessible permanent representation or accessible Honorary Consul competent for such matters.

In practice that means that a consul who is asked by a citizen of another Member State for assistance should refuse such assistance if that citizen’s authorities (consulate or embassy) are also represented.

The 1995 decision is a decision between the Member States, reflecting the fact that consular assistance and protection is an exclusive national responsibility and that consular relations are governed mainly by the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

The rules on cooperation in this area also reflect the fact that consular assistance and protection are viewed differently in different Member States. Some, for example, consider it to be a fundamental right of all citizens. Others consider it to be a service provided by the state. That is why the Treaty refers to consular protection as an ‘entitlement’ and not a ‘right’.

Since the Jolo crisis in 2000, consular cooperation has been further developed to include aspects of crisis management. The terrorist attacks in the US showed that even third countries with sophisticated infrastructure can find it difficult to cope under extreme circumstances.

Member States subsequently drew up guidelines to handle such crises. Although non-binding, they have been used effectively on a number of occasions and have been refined in the light of experience.

The Council has recently developed the 'Lead State' concept. This means that, in the case of a significant incident, particularly in a country where few Member States are represented, one or two Member States can take the lead in coordinating action in matters of protection and evacuation.

There has also been increased cooperation with some countries outside the Union, for example the US, with which we have annual consultations on consular issues. Norway, Switzerland and Canada have also cooperated with the EU on specific incidents, for example during the Lebanon, Chad and Mumbai crises.

The Commission and Council Secretariat are also part of European Consular Cooperation. Several years ago the Council Secretariat set up a secure internet forum through which consular authorities exchange information on issues such as updating travel advice. The Council has also put at the disposal of Member States a sophisticated teleconferencing system which has been widely used during consular crises.

About three years ago, a platform for exchange of information and political coordination of action at EU level was established. This platform is called Crisis Coordination Arrangements (CCA). The two main actors of CCA are as follows: first, the Presidency, assisted by the Council Secretariat and the Commission, decides whether to trigger the CCA; second, COREPER II is the 'action platform' responsible for coordinating Member States' action or preparing any decisions that may need to be taken at EU level.

The main operational tool is the EU Joint Situation Centre (SITCEN) of the Council Secretariat. SITCEN provides logistical and information support.

In addition, successive presidencies have organised regular consular crisis management exercises which have proved particularly valuable. A European Consular Training Programme was launched at the end of 2008 with the aim of improving cooperation between consular officials, both from capitals and in the field. The co-location of consular facilities is also under consideration.

There is certainly more that could be done. Many other issues, for example prison conditions, parental child abduction and consular information policy, are discussed regularly. But we also have to accept the reality that, whilst expectations and demands from citizens grow continually, resources for consular authorities are always limited. Support for improved cooperation in the consular field is not always matched by adequate budgets at the national level. Squaring this circle will remain a challenge.

Experience shows that cooperation in the consular field is valued, and there are a number of cases where we can be pleased with the results. The successful evacuation of over 20 000 EU citizens from Lebanon in 2006 is just one example. The Presidency is committed to taking this work forward, and I would like to thank Parliament for its support.

Günter Verheugen, Vice-President of the Commission. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am standing in, today, for my fellow Commissioner Jacques Barrot, who would have liked to have been here in person but has an institutional commitment to attend to.

Under Article 20 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, every citizen of the Union, when in the territory of a third country in which the Member State of which he is a national is not represented, is entitled to protection by the consular authorities of any Member State, on the same conditions as the nationals of that State. Article 20 also provides that the Member States are to establish the necessary rules among themselves to secure this protection. Mr Vondra has already gone into this. In light of this, the Member States have introduced coordination mechanisms for consular protection, in particular through the guidelines laid down in 2006 and 2008, which are not legally binding but which help missions to build their cooperation on the ground.

In addition, Article 20 of the Treaty on European Union obliges the diplomatic and consular missions of the Member States to step up their cooperation.

In December 2008, the Council agreed guidelines for the implementation of the Lead State concept in relation to consular cooperation. Under the guidelines, in a future major crisis with consequences for consular protection in the third country in question, one Member State is to be nominated as the 'Lead State' and

assume responsibility for the protection of EU citizens on behalf of the other Member States. The Lead State is to coordinate all the measures implemented by the Member States on the ground and is responsible for ensuring that all EU citizens receive support. Anyone who is entitled to consular protection from their own Member State is entitled to ask the Lead State for assistance.

This is intended to facilitate cooperation between the Member States on the ground, with the idea being that additional resources in the form of staff, funding, equipment and medical teams will be made available. The Lead State is also to be given the responsibility for coordinating and leading measures to provide assistance, reunite people and, where necessary, evacuate citizens to a safe destination, with the assistance of the other Member States affected. However, the Member States need to agree on what exactly is meant by the wording 'in which the Member State [...] is not represented' under Article 20 of the EC Treaty. This should cover situations where an EU citizen, for whatever reason, is unable to reach any mission of his/her own Member State. The Member States are currently working on drawing up joint criteria for this.

That, then, is the situation on paper. The fact that the practical reality can be quite different is something that a few Members of this House can testify. I have seen on the list of speakers that Mr Guardans Cambó, Mr Karim and Mrs Mann intend to speak on this issue. They will certainly be telling us something of their experiences in Mumbai last December. I have the impression, even though only three Member States do not have an embassy in New Delhi and that only seven do not maintain a consulate in Mumbai, that it was still very difficult – and I will express this very carefully – for affected European citizens to obtain adequate protection.

I am pointing this out now because it is, of course, right to learn from experiences such as this. In the light of this experience, the Commission takes the view that there is still much work to be done to ensure that the citizens of the European Union are able to claim – to the full and in real life – the right guaranteed them under Article 20 of the EC Treaty. The citizens expect the European Union to provide added value in their protection in a third country. Protection provided by diplomatic and consular missions is not, at the end of the day, limited to crisis situations, but also covers the provision of assistance in everyday situations.

The Commission proposes, amongst other things, better information for EU citizens – we have already proposed that the wording of Article 20 be printed in every passport and displayed on posters in airports and travel agencies, and we are also working on a consular protection website with the General Secretariat of the Council, which would contain an up-to-date list of the Member States' embassies and consulates in third countries.

As part of its mission of better providing EU citizens with what citizenship of the Union means to them, the Commission is ready to tackle every problem in this field that the citizens bring to its attention and to do everything in its power to realise the rights of protection to which EU citizens are entitled under Article 20.

The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon would provide a clear legal basis for EU legal provisions in this area. The new wording of Article 20 of the EC Treaty (Article 23 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) allows for the adoption of directives 'establishing the coordination and cooperation measures necessary to facilitate such protection'. This means that the Commission could be tabling legislative proposals for this field in the near future.

Ioannis Varvitsiotis, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.* – (EL) Mr President, I welcome this debate and I thank both the Council and the Commission for their information and presentation to us. I was the rapporteur for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on the Green Paper on diplomatic and consular protection of Union citizens in third countries and I therefore continue to take a keen interest in developments in this sector.

At the time I maintained that Article 20 should be applied more broadly and should include more rights for European citizens, because this would strengthen the concept of a European nationality and would demonstrate in practical terms the advantages offered by the European Union on a daily basis and would ultimately strengthen European solidarity.

The recent terrorist attack in Mumbai demonstrated the usefulness and the need for reinforced coordination of protection for citizens of Member States of the European Union at such times. The publication by the Council last December of guidelines on the implementation of the consular Lead State concept in the event of a crisis is a first positive step and they contain important ideas. However, we are waiting with a great deal of interest for legally binding proposals.

I realise that there are huge practical difficulties. However, I consider it extremely important that it should be clear how European citizens on the scene of a crisis are to be informed as to who is the Lead State. I do not think that what has been said to date is satisfactory. In all events, I welcome the importance which the French Presidency attached to this issue and I expect the initiatives to be continued by the Czech Presidency.

Martine Roure, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, the right to consular and diplomatic protection is one of the pillars of European citizenship. Minister, you cited Article 20 of the Treaty. It is very clear. Every citizen has the right to consular protection. It is not an option, it is a right.

The dramatic events in Mumbai show us, in actual fact, that this right is far from being guaranteed. Levels of protection vary from Member State to Member State, resulting in discrimination in the treatment of citizens who are never given information about the consulate to contact in the event of need. Financial support is visibly lacking between the Member States. European citizens who have lost everything must often face consular offices that are very reluctant to bear the financial costs.

Member States have a duty to put an end to this situation. It is necessary to make guidelines binding and to make information available to citizens. The Union must start negotiations with third countries in order to ensure the necessary diplomatic protection.

However, as you said, Commissioner, the events in Mumbai have also shown the unacceptable absence of a guarantee of diplomatic protection for Members of the European Parliament. The European Union and the Commission in particular must negotiate without delay, and we heard what you told us, Commissioner, and the Council must conclude ad hoc agreements with third countries in order to ensure specific diplomatic protection for Members of the European Parliament. This is the least we can do.

Ignasi Guardans Cambó, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (ES) Mr President, today in Europe citizens can travel without crossing borders, can vote in a Member State other than their own, can collect their pension and can benefit from social security in any Member State in which they choose to live. Furthermore, police forces co-operate with each other. A public prosecutor in Stockholm can have somebody arrested in Seville by means of a Euro-warrant, without needing to become directly involved in local procedures.

When it comes to reprimanding citizens for their actions, Member States have been willing to concede sovereignty. However, for the protection of these same European citizens outside the European Union, it is as if they have travelled by time machine; they find that time has stood still once they have left the Union.

Outside the Union, we are just 27 States, 27 administrations, 27 flags and 27 consular systems, or in some cases, not even that. In a crisis, a European citizen loses his or her European status. There is no such thing as European citizenship.

The 180 million Europeans who travel around the world find that they can only receive protection if they change themselves back into Germans, Spaniards, Poles or Italians. As Europeans, they do not exist outside the European Union. This is a serious non-fulfilment of the Treaty and, with all due respect, makes the Council's statement of a few moments ago a piece of science fiction.

All of what the Council said on the supposed implementation of Article 20 of the Treaty, the 'Lead State', video conferences and joint centres, is pure science fiction in an emergency. Moreover, as the Commissioner said, some of us have had cause to experience this state of affairs at first hand.

Article 20 of the Treaty is ineffective: there are no protocols for implementation; there are no legal regulations; there is no information for citizens whatsoever; there are no consequences for anyone who disregards the article.

In the best-case scenario, consuls help each other. There is goodwill, as there may have been in the 19th century, as there may have been in Peking in the 1800s. The situation is this: there is collaboration between consuls who dine together rather than an obligation to jointly serve citizens in respect of a provision of European law.

For that reason, the European Commission has the obligation, including before the Treaty of Lisbon enters into effect and obviously afterwards, to implement Article 20, to make European citizens proud of their passport and to make sure that certain officials understand that the 19th century is over and Europe does exist whenever a European citizen is in trouble in New Delhi, Beirut or wherever else.

Ryszard Czarnecki, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. – (PL) Mr President, I would like to state that I do not share this highly critical stance towards the proposal made today by the Vice-President of the European Commission, on behalf of the Council. I do not think that this is a question of having, or not having, a treaty, but rather whether European solidarity is a concept that only features in political statements or whether it is a specific political practice, one that applies to the citizens of various Member States. If the latter is the case, then the treaty is not an indispensable requirement.

During the Slovenian Presidency of the European Union, France represented the European Union in many countries, such as Asia, Africa and Latin America, as Slovenia had no embassies in those places. I am curious as to whether Slovenian citizens, as well as those living in the smaller Member States, would now receive suitable assistance if they applied to the French consulates in those countries. It is a pertinent question.

We should expand the concept of European solidarity. It seems to me that, in reality, the Treaty of Lisbon is not a *sine qua non*.

Irena Belohorská (NI). – (SK) According to Article 20 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, every citizen of the Union in the territory of a third country shall be entitled to protection by diplomatic or consular authorities under the same conditions as nationals of that State. It is important to stress the need for the Union to develop cooperation in consular services for these purposes.

Europeans are among the most mobile societies in the world, with almost 9 % of citizens travelling to countries where their home country does not have this level of representation. For example, Slovakia, the country I represent in the European Parliament, has a very weak consular presence in Central and Latin America, which are regions that many of our citizens travel to. I must add that despite the obligations on consular services most Europeans do not know their rights and it is a sad fact that even the employees of these organisations are unaware of this.

In order to ensure that people are better informed about consular protection, we should aim for standard European passports to include an extract from Article 20. The importance of consular protection in third countries became apparent in crisis situations such as the tsunami of 2004 or the Lebanese conflict of 2006. Due to differences in consular regulations, citizens of the EU have to cope with as many systems as there are Member States and these systems may have varying legal force and scope.

The recent events in Mumbai show that we have a long way to go in the area of consular services. The establishment of joint European offices would ensure the functional coherence and at the same time would cut the structural costs of diplomatic and consular networks operated by Member States.

IN THE CHAIR: MR DOS SANTOS

Vice-President

Sajjad Karim (PPE-DE). – Mr President, it has been stated already that citizens of the Union travel widely. Well, there are approximately 180 million trips made outside of the European Union every year, and – in theory – they are protected under Article 20, as the Commissioner and indeed the Council Presidency have already provided for in this debate.

Under Article 20, there is a requirement for Member States only to provide consular assistance to unrepresented EU nationals on the same terms as their nationals. This difference in approach between Member States is recognised within the action plan of 2007 and 2009.

Of course, there needs to be a criterion as to when and how other consular services should become involved, and these break down basically into three. I am not going to go through them, but the first two are perfectly sensible. The third puts forward a requirement for that citizen to provide proof of his or her nationality, either by means of passport, identity card or other document, for the diplomatic or consular representation to be provided.

There is a real problem here, because for any European citizen who is fleeing a situation, it is perfectly feasible that they may not actually be in possession of such documentation.

Assistance is provided in the event of death, serious accident, serious injury, arrest, detention, assistance to be provided to victims of violent crime, and relief and repatriation of distressed citizens of the Union. It is extensive but not exhaustive. More work needs to be done there.

To make all this happen, we have heard about the concept of a Lead State, which will endeavour to ensure that all EU citizens are assisted and that it will coordinate between Member States.

That is all very good in theory, but in practice I certainly did not see this happen in Mumbai. There was no real sharing of information and intelligence, not the sort of cooperation I expected to see. Instead I saw only competition between Member States, and further centralisation or consolidation of consular services will risk taking away the flexibility missions require on the ground in rapidly changing circumstances.

Erika Mann (PSE). – (DE) Mr President, Mr Karim is absolutely right. The problem is in the very wording, in the fundamentals of Article 20 itself. It is necessary to take account of the reality on the ground. Of course it is. For one thing, not all Member States have consular protection and in many cases what consular protection there is is very limited and the security structures are insufficient even for the consuls themselves.

I have personal experience of this in relation to the German consul, who drove through the night in order to gather his colleagues, with his driver but no security, on roads that were by no means safe. Quite simply, such conditions are unacceptable. You cannot go to countries such as India or to Latin American countries – there are many other countries where a presence is required in such a critical place as Mumbai – and then have only a small number of staff and inadequate security structures. Intelligence is not passed on at all, the Member States have no access to the information, and so on. This means that there is no end to the limitations and it is no wonder that Member States are unable to provide the degree of protection for their own citizens or for their officials to anything like the degree they may wish.

That is why it is important that the Council and the Commission undertake a careful analysis of this issue. You cannot preach about always being present all over the world and seeing Europe as a global partner and then fail to even have in place a security structure and not be in possession of any intelligent information systems. We are simply opening ourselves up to ridicule if we do not thoroughly analyse our own structures and ensure the requisite level of additional protection.

I would thus offer you the urgent advice that you really must carry out a thorough re-evaluation of the structures, that you must carry out simulations, as other States do, and that you must not concentrate solely on the key capitals, the metropolises, but that in these megacountries and megacities you just have to realise that you also need appropriate representation in the other large cities of the world.

Mumbai will happen again. There will be another Mumbai, just as past disasters have been repeated. Realise this and, I urge you to be prepared for it.

Sarah Ludford (ALDE). – Mr President, Mr Guardans Cambó and others such as Mr Karim and Mrs Mann have illustrated the gap between rhetoric and reality. We cannot even actually agree on what Article 20 means. The minister, speaking in English, said that it was only an 'entitlement' and not a right, whereas Mrs Roure cited the French, which says '*un droit*'. But it is certainly in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, where it is enshrined as a right.

We will surely not make progress, unless it is legally confirmed that it is a right with binding EU decisions and common standards and the right to challenge a refusal of protection in the courts.

The minister talked about co-location being under consideration of consular officials. My experience in the field of visa policy is that it is like pushing a boulder uphill trying to get Member States to co-locate.

Commissioner Verheugen referred to practical measures as being in development. But these were promised in the action plan in 2007: a reference in passports, posters, a website in development. Where are these? I searched consular protection on the Europa website and found nothing.

On the Council travel website it says 'under construction', which I think is a metaphor for the fact that we are failing our citizens in failing to put flesh on the bones of the promise of European citizenship.

Eoin Ryan (UEN). – Mr President, I think it is very important – and I agree with many of the previous speakers – that EU citizens need to feel secure, and I think it is a priority that we look after the security of our citizens when they are outside the European Union, especially in crisis situations such as we had in Mumbai.

I think it is absolutely essential for European citizens to be able to get information in any crisis situation, whether it be a general crisis or a crisis for themselves, and there needs to be an awful lot more clarity in the situation.

Mumbai is a good example of how it does not work. I welcome the idea of a Lead State which was announced recently. I think that is very important, but it is very clear at the moment that the system is not working. I think it should be seen as a priority by all of us to get the system working because, as somebody else said, you really would feel far more European if a Member State embassy looked after you if you were in trouble when you were in the Far East or in South America or somewhere outside the European Union, and I think that that feeling of Europeaness is very important.

(The President cut off the speaker.)

Luca Romagnoli (NI). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the ever-increasing mobility of European citizens clearly means that consulates must work together.

The Commission's proposal is welcome, above all because it seeks to simplify the procedures for granting pecuniary advances to citizens in difficulty. Without a doubt, the right to consular protection is currently fragmentary and unevenly distributed. European citizenship often does not exist abroad and people may wish that they were citizens of another country, or even of the Union. I would like to see appeals made to European pride not only when it suits the institutions, but also when it suits the citizen, who may be in difficulty and hoping that his European citizenship may at last be of use to him.

Javier Moreno Sánchez (PSE). – (ES) Mr President, ladies and gentleman, consular protection is a fundamental part of European citizenship. Citizens want to feel European when they are inside the Union, but also when outside Europe. They want the Union to respond to their needs, especially in the event of an emergency.

The Union did not respond properly in Mumbai, as has been the case in other crisis situations. Let me take this minute to explain an idea, an idea that will not be a panacea but will offer genuine assistance to European citizens in third countries.

I would like today to repeat the proposal to set up a European emergency freephone number. This number, which would be printed in passports, together with Article 20, would allow citizens to have access, in their own language, to essential information on the consulates of Member States of the Union which, I stress, would have to help them.

Citizens expect actions and not just words from the Union.

Gay Mitchell (PPE-DE). – Mr President, when we become Members of Parliament, we are issued with a laissez-passer – as are a lot of other people who work for the institutions of the Union. I wonder whether the Presidency and the Council understand the worthlessness of this document in Member States.

I had an extremely difficult situation in the Netherlands, when travelling back on the business of this Parliament from Africa. I know of another Member – a British Member – who had difficulty in Dublin. We really need to bring home to our own Member States that this is a travel document of Parliament, the Commission and of the Union and should be fully respected. Those dealing with travel arrangements at airports and ports should be fully briefed as to the worthiness of this document.

I would ask you to take that up with each of the Member States and ensure that it is implemented, because that sort of protection should extend to officials and to Members of Parliament travelling on the business of Parliament.

Kathy Sinnott (IND/DEM). – Mr President, as an MEP I have had several occasions to contact embassies and consuls because someone was injured, lost, robbed or abducted, or because, tragically, someone died. I am sure this has been the experience of many other MEPs. I am happy to say that, where I was able to deal with an Irish embassy, the work and the cooperation have been excellent. But my own country was not represented in every country, and we had to rely on the embassies of other European countries.

I would just say from experience that, without going into stories, I would like to see more coordination, more help between embassies in the bigger countries where they do have embassies and consuls in almost every country, so as to help all other Member State embassies with their constituents.

Alexandr Vondra, President-in-Office of the Council. – Mr President, I think it was, again, a very useful debate. I have a considerable understanding of how important this is for you as Members of the European Parliament because this is an extremely sensitive issue, where you are confronted with the expectations of your citizens,

who are going to elect you in the next few months. So I have a full understanding of the issue that you are considering with care and that you are approaching with such critical insight.

The second reason why I have an understanding is that I come from a medium-sized state, the Czech Republic, which is not a former imperial power so it does not have an embassy or a consulate in every corner of the world. So what the Irish and others are expecting from the European Union here is, I think, very logical.

But now I have to speak here on behalf of the Council so you need to respect certain legal grounds which are available to us, and the fact is that the budget and all those issues are important. And we also have to be able to recognise and to differentiate what is the real problem on the one hand and what is the question or issue which needs more clarification.

I was not in Mumbai, and I was listening very carefully to the critical remarks of Mr Guardans Cambó and some others who took part in the European Parliament mission to India at the time that this tragic attack happened. When I was getting ready for the special hearing yesterday, my first question was: is there a Spanish consulate in Mumbai? I have never been there so I do not know this personally. I was repeatedly assured that the Spanish have a consulate in Mumbai and those that were there know this. I think it was simply a matter of a formal obligation for the Germans to assist Mr Guardans Cambó and his delegation, if we are quoting Article 20 and the decision as a whole.

The Spanish sent a plane, as I was informed, to help evacuate its citizens, as did the French and the Germans. For some reason, which I do not understand, Mr Guardans Cambó refused the offer to fly back on the Spanish plane but instead subsequently returned on the French plane.

So I do not know. I just have the information which is available to me. In general I think we all share the opinion that any improvement within the legal framework is certainly desirable, so let me inform you about at least some partial activities of the Czech Presidency to strengthen the consular protection within the current legal framework.

For example, there is a project on including a message in national passports which would inform the holders that they can ask for consular protection from any other Member State embassy or consulate in a third country, provided their country is not represented there. So that is at least an attempt to clarify the situation on the ground.

Second, the Presidency is to intensify and unify the use of emergency travel documents, the ETDs which can be issued by any Member State representation to any Member State citizen who has lost his passport or had it stolen.

Third and finally, the Presidency will also organise the two consular seminars or training courses in order to contribute to this consular protection team in a very practical and effective way.

These events will deal with the CCA system, simulating a real consular crisis. The training will define and carry out practical testing of all relevant mechanisms in the CCA cadre, including cooperation between all authorities and institutions involved. The experience will even, by means of field work, teach the participants how to behave and promptly react in a situation of extreme psychological and time pressure. I do not know whether this will amuse us enough before the elections, but at least it is a contribution which we are bringing to this important issue.

Günter Verheugen, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, the Treaties do not confer any power of initiative on the Commission in the field of consular protection. Within its limited powers, the Commission is trying to boost, as much as it can, the effectiveness of the citizenship rights European citizens are entitled to – see, for example, the Commission Action Plan 2007-2009.

I repeat that the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty would certainly very much improve this situation. I hope that Mrs Sinnott, who shared her experience with us, will use the fact that the Lisbon Treaty would change the situation and her experience to help to organise support for the Lisbon Treaty in Ireland.

The deplorable events in Mumbai show that, already today, there is a clearly a huge margin for improvement if we are to fulfil the legitimate expectations of EU citizens.

Erika Mann (PSE). – Mr President, I have just a short recommendation to the Council. I appreciate very much what you said, but can you make sure that, once you foresee this kind of simulation today, that you invite some of the people who were actually in Mumbai, because it could give you some insight?

President. – The debate is closed.

Written Statements (Rule 142)

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (PSE), in writing. – (PL) The increasing mobility of EU citizens requires us to adapt our current principles of consular protection to take new circumstances into account. EU citizens must have access to protection and assistance from their own countries, via their diplomatic missions and consulates (Article 3 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and Article 1 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations) and, under the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty, additional diplomatic and consular protection beyond the borders of the European Union, which stems from their status as EU citizens. In practice, this means that, while staying in a third country where the Member State of which he is a citizen has no representation, all EU citizens have the right to diplomatic and consular protection from any of the other Member States, according to the same principles as the citizens of that country.

Unfortunately, the critical situation in Mumbai following the bombings last year revealed the shortcomings of many diplomatic offices, in terms of the practical application of Community decisions concerning the security of EU citizens. Dozens of Europeans, including the European Parliament delegation which was in India at the time, encountered administrative problems and disproportionately long waiting periods for receiving copies of lost documents. This proved that it is not easy to implement the concept of European solidarity.

The right to consular protection in third countries is one of the main features of European Union citizenship. The Member States should do all that they can to ensure that it is properly implemented, and guarantee equal treatment and care to all EU citizens.

Toomas Savi (ALDE), in writing. – According to Article 20 of the Treaty establishing the European Community 'every citizen of the Union shall, in the territory of a third country in which the Member State of which he is a national is not represented, be entitled to protection by the diplomatic or consular authorities of any Member State, on the same conditions as the nationals of that State'.

At the end of November last year, our colleague, Ignasi Guardans Cambó was in Mumbai during the terrorist attacks and he witnessed several violations of the Treaty by diplomats of some Member States, as citizens of the European Union were differentiated and discriminated against on the basis of their nationalities.

The conduct of the diplomats of some Member States in Mumbai did not only violate the rights of the EU citizens, but also pointed out deficiencies in the EU integration process. Therefore, it is crucially important for the EU to investigate this particular case and take action to ensure that such a situation does not occur again.

I would appreciate it, if the Council and the Commission could assure that the implementation of Article 20 of the Treaty is closely monitored and that every deviation is investigated thoroughly.

14. Question Time (Council)

President. – The next item is Question Time (B6-0006/2009).

The following questions have been submitted to the Council.

Question No 1 by **Marian Harkin** (H-1034/08)

Subject: SMEs

Given that the economy is one of 'the 3 Es' of the Czech Presidency's priorities, what specific steps will the Council be taking to enhance the confidence of small and medium-sized enterprises in the market economy in light of the current economic situation?

Alexandr Vondra, President-in-Office of the Council. – Let me begin by saying that I appreciate the question on SMEs, because during this current economic crisis the big businesses and the big companies are always strong enough to lobby for some relief, but it is much more difficult for SMEs and it certainly requires a systemic approach.

On 1 December 2008, as you know, the Council endorsed the European Economic Recovery Plan, which was presented by the Commission on 26 November 2008. As a response to the financial crisis, the Council

supported a stimulus which is equivalent to about 1.5% of the EU's gross domestic product to restore business and consumer confidence. Furthermore, the plan contains specific measures to support SMEs, the most important of which are those aimed at improving access to finance for SMEs and reducing the administrative burden.

The Council also agreed that improvements in the framework conditions for European businesses, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, was essential to counter the effect of the crisis on competitiveness and to support and enhance job creation.

The Council also adopted two sets of conclusions related to providing support for SMEs, in the context of overall competitiveness. Firstly, conclusions endorsing proposals to support SMEs presented in the Commission Communication entitled, as you probably know, 'Think Small First: a Small Business Act for Europe', this so-called SBA, including an action plan outlining the priority measures requiring particular attention.

Secondly, conclusions from the Commission communication entitled 'Towards world-class clusters in the European Union – implementing the broad-based innovation strategy'. Although clusters are not exclusively meant for the SMEs, they play an important role in many clusters that have been set up throughout the EU.

At its meeting in mid-December 2008, the European Council approved this European Economic Recovery Plan and supported the full implementation of the Action Plan for the Small Business Act. It has specifically supported an increase in the intervention by the European Investment Bank to the tune of EUR 30 billion for the years 2009-2010, especially for loans to SMEs, which amount to an increase of EUR 10 million over the EIB usual lending in this sector.

The Council also supported a temporary exemption for two years beyond the *de minimis* threshold for state aid in respect of an amount of up to EUR 50 000 and the adaptation of the state aid framework as required to increase support for enterprises, especially the SMEs.

The Council also called for the use of accelerated procedures for awarding public contracts provided for EC legislation, as well as for reducing the administrative burden on businesses.

The Czech Presidency will continue to pursue this effort, because our economy is broadly based on SMEs, so we have our own experience with that. Therefore, both of the forthcoming Competitiveness Councils under the Czech Presidency – one will take place very soon in early March, as well as the informal one which will take place in Prague – will tackle the question of reducing the administrative burden, since we believe that better regulation is an important factor for improving competitiveness, in particular for SMEs, and it plays an even more important role in times of economic crisis.

Moreover, the Presidency will try to make progress in the implementation of the action plan and put this SME policy at the forefront of society as well as linking the implementation of the action plan to the national reform programmes of all the Member States.

The Presidency will also continue with the increased effort of discussing legislative proposals related to SMEs, such as the regulation on the Statute for a European Private Company, which would offer SMEs a form of business enabling them to take advantage of their potential and develop cross-border activities.

Another legislative proposal I should mention is the proposed directive for reduced VAT rates for labour-intensive services, which will be discussed at the upcoming ECOFIN Councils.

In addition, the Council will be concerned with the review of the Late Payment Directive, which is now being prepared and which is to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises are paid in time for all business transactions. Again, that is pretty important in the current situation.

President. – Since we are running rather late, I propose that the Council reply to all the supplementary questions together. As you know, I can only accept two supplementary questions in addition to the original author's. That being the case, I have selected two of the five questions tabled based on the criterion of choosing different political groups and nationalities. The Members I have selected are Philip Bushill-Matthews and Silvia-Adriana Ţicău.

Olle Schmidt, author. – Normally I use my own mother tongue but, as I am replacing Marian Harkin, I will try in broken English. This is a common language in this Parliament.

You mentioned, Minister, the administrative burden and the goal of reducing it by 25% by 2012. Do you really think that is an ambitious goal? Could we not do more, and could you perhaps be more specific about what has been done so far? What are your aims? Could you not say 25% by 2010, for instance? That would be rather ambitious.

Philip Bushill-Matthews (PPE-DE). – You mentioned the review of the Late Payments Directive, which I think is extremely important. I was concerned, though, that the consultation period for that finished at the end of August, just before the real financial crisis hit. Had the consultation period been extended I think we might have got much more robust answers as a basis for a better review of the Directive. Is it worth considering whether we should open a further short period of consultation, so that we get the most up-to-date information possible, on which a review could then be based?

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE). – (RO) I would like to ask the Council a question about the European Economic Recovery Plan. This plan is providing a sum of EUR 30 billion for small- and medium-sized enterprises. The Commission advised us that grants will be awarded on the ‘first come, first served’ principle.

I would like to ask the Council about what measures it is taking so that all Member States develop national programmes to support their small- and medium-sized enterprises so that they can access these funds.

Alexandr Vondra, President-in-Office of the Council. – I will try. On the first question on the targets for the reduction of the administrative burden, my country, with some other like-minded countries, has already started with the process somewhat in advance. Along with the Netherlands and some other countries, we have a national goal of a 20% reduction by 2010. We will have to see whether we can do more by 2012.

The Commission has announced a road map for the end of January 2009 showing how it will ensure that all the proposals needed to achieve the 25% reduction in the administrative burden at Community level are tabled before the end of 2009. Proposals tabled during the first half of this year in this area will be responded to by the Council under the incumbent Presidency, so we will certainly be dealing with that. We will evaluate the process during the Spring European Council. I hope that we will be able to act as thoroughly as we can. Certainly this is what the Presidency wants to do.

On the Late Payment Directive, the Commission intends to publish the proposal at the end of February 2009. The Presidency will start discussing the issue at the Council's preparatory bodies.

The last question – which I missed – was related to the European Recovery Plan. It was specifically about the amount of the possible EIB loan. I hope that SMEs will be able to compete with those other big industries. We had a substantial debate on the automotive industry just an hour ago, so certainly I think that the general wish is that the SMEs would be able to benefit from that.

President. – Question No 2 by **Manuel Medina Ortega** (H-1035/08)

Subject: Grounds for a new world trade agreement

Following the stalling of the Doha Round multilateral trade negotiations last summer and the agreements reached by the Group of Twenty at the Washington summit last November, does the Council feel that there are grounds for the European Union making new proposals on trade that would satisfy developing countries?

Alexandr Vondra, President-in-Office of the Council. – In response to Mr Medina Ortega's question, which relates to the WTO, I think it is an important issue. We have all read the reports of – some of us even took an active part in – the Davos World Economic Forum, and have listened to the recent comments by Pascal Lamy and others. There is no doubt that there is a fear of rising protectionism, so we are all very well aware of the challenges ahead of us.

I would like to point out that on 15 November last year the members of the G20 emphasised the importance of establishing the modalities for an agreement by the end of 2008, which has already passed. In this context the delegations of the WTO members, including the European Commission on behalf of the EU, intensified their work in Geneva with a view to providing a political impulse.

A lot of work has been done, and the effort led to the new revision of the AGRI and NAMA texts. Moreover, in the light of the current political and economic development, the European Council in mid-December last year stated in its conclusions that it endorsed the objective of arriving this year, within the WTO, at an agreement on the modalities leading to the conclusion of the Doha Round with an ambitious global and balanced report and result.

The Council and Commission stood ready for constructive EU participation at the ministerial talks, if and when convened. However, on 12 December 2008, the WTO Director-General, Pascal Lamy, at an informal meeting of the heads of delegation, indicated that he would not convene the ministers to finalise modalities by the end of the year, because the conditions did not yet exist for a successful ministerial meeting, despite intensive consultation.

The aim of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) is to achieve transparent liberalisation of trade at multilateral level which will bring about long-term advantages and a major boost for the world economy, in particular for developing countries, due to the development-oriented character of this round.

Therefore, despite the fact that no conclusion was possible by the end of 2008, the Council remains fully committed to the multilateral trade system, as well as to the conclusion of an ambitious, balanced and comprehensive outcome of the WTO Doha Round. This is even more important given the current economic and financial situation.

Although the Presidency is well aware of the obstacles that exist on the way toward successful completion of the whole process, it will undoubtedly seek to give an effect to these commitments by working on the renewal of discussions on the DDA as soon as the conditions allow. It will also support more intensive work within the framework of other WTO agendas, in particular in the areas of services and TRIPS.

Manuel Medina Ortega (PSE). – (ES) Thank you, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, for that response, which I consider quite comprehensive. I would, however, like to remind the President-in-Office of the Council that, in the summer of 2008, the Doha Round was about to conclude but an agreement could not be reached because some BRIC countries were not disposed to make any kind of concession.

Considering that the BRIC countries played a greater role at the Washington meeting, it is possible that the previous unwillingness of these countries to make a concession was due to their considering that they had been afforded a secondary position, whereas at the Washington meeting they were given a priority role. Does the Council Presidency have any information that the BRIC countries, as a result of the commitments made in Washington, may be disposed to adopt a more active role and contribute to the successful outcome of the Doha Round?

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). – I just wondered, as a supplementary to this question, if, looking at the European Union's new proposals, or if the European Union were to come forward with new proposals, he agrees that any such proposals should include moves to remove the inequities of the common agricultural policy so we can unlock the negotiations in NAMA and then unlock the negotiations on services, which account for about 70% of the EU's GDP. Would he also agree that it is time for the EU to show a true commitment to free trade?

Gay Mitchell (PPE-DE). – I would like to ask the Minister if his attention has been drawn to the protectionist elements in the plan for recovery in the United States, particularly as put forward by members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and if he has, on behalf of the Council, communicated the concern of the European Union to the American Administration about this.

This does not augur well for a new Doha Round. Would he ensure that our concerns are communicated before the necessary legislation passes through the US Congress?

Alexandr Vondra, President-in-Office of the Council. – I think we all know where the problem lies. It does not lie in the European Union. I think the European Union is very much in favour of completing the Doha Round and we did all that was necessary for it in the course of the last year and we almost, almost made it.

Where, then, is the problem? First we have to wait for the US Administration, and, while some appointments have already been made, some others are still to come, and it remains to be seen whether the current US Administration will remain committed to trade liberalisation. We may have some doubts about a fast-track approach under the current circumstances. Another country to discuss this with is India, which, as we know, is expecting elections in the spring.

So as a representative of the Council who is coming from a small- or medium-sized country which traditionally has an open economy, I would like to promote this, and would like to tell you that our primary goal is to finish the talks successfully, as soon as possible, but I am afraid we also have to be realistic, and I cannot promise you castles in the air.

The optimistic scenario is this: a clear favourable message from the G20 meeting which will take place in London early in April, and then the fulfilment and implementation of the commitment, which could be

followed by a ministerial meeting in Geneva in June or July. There agricultural and NAMA (non-agricultural market access) modalities could be concluded. So we are all hoping for that. We will be working hard to do that, but we will see when we meet here at the end of our Presidency whether we have been successful or not.

President. – Question No 3 by **Silvia-Adriana Țicău** (H-1038/08)

Subject: Measures to improve the energy efficiency of buildings

The Council has set itself the target of achieving a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and a 20% increase in energy efficiency by 2020, with 20% of the energy used coming from renewable sources. Forty per cent of overall greenhouse gas emissions stem from buildings. Improving the energy efficiency of buildings could significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In November the Commission proposed a revision of the directive on the energy efficiency of buildings.

Bearing in mind how important the energy efficiency of buildings is for citizens, given the potential for reducing their electricity and heating bills, can the Council say how much priority will be given to this area in the period from January to April 2009?

Alexandr Vondra, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – I would like to thank Mrs Țicău for her question, which is also timely. Housing, or the issue of increasing energy efficiency and the commitment to increase energy efficiency by 20% by 2020, has to be taken seriously.

The Council shares the view that the draft revised directive on the energy efficiency of buildings is of fundamental importance for the achievement of the Community's targets on increased energy efficiency, renewable energy and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. The recent gas crisis has once again unveiled the vulnerability of the EU vis-à-vis energy dependency. Should we succeed in meeting an ambitious reduction goal, while not increasing energy security risks, we must adopt a series of short-, medium- and long-term measures that will decrease our energy dependency.

Increasing the energy efficiency of buildings is definitely among the most important of them. As a result, the Presidency is beginning to examine this draft directive at working party level. The aim of the examination is to explore difficulties in the proposal. We expect that the question of the scope of the directive will be put on the table first. This question of scope is the most important, not only in relation to possible energy savings, but also regarding the administrative burden of households. Therefore, the Czech Presidency will ensure that work continues intensively over the coming months. I have regular discussions with Martin Bursík, my colleague in the Government and the Minister of the Environment, who chairs the respective Council.

The Council will also follow closely the work on this issue in the ITRE Committee. For your information, I am meeting the Chair of the Committee after this Question Time. The Presidency is committed to making as much progress as possible, with a view to the early adoption of the directive. To that end, it plans to submit a progress report to the TTE Council in mid-June. The adoption of the Council conclusions on the Second Strategic Energy Review is envisaged for the first TTE Councils, which will be held on 19 February, and which will form the input for the March European Council meeting.

Adequate attention will also be paid to the recent Ukraine-Russia gas dispute and its consequences. A policy debate will be held on the draft Council directive on the oil stock. So, in general, the Council considers it important that the highest priority be given to the finalisation of the negotiations with the European Parliament on the third internal energy market legislative package over the coming months. The Council also recalls that energy efficiency will be addressed in relation to the wider question of energy security, the protection of the environment and, indeed, the context of the examination of the Second Strategic Energy Review.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE). – (RO) I would like you to know that in my report I am going to propose setting up a European fund for energy efficiency and renewable energy to help raise the public and private funds for implementing specific energy efficiency projects across the European Union, and I would like to have the Council's support for this important initiative.

Zita Pleštinská (PPE-DE). – (SK) The energy efficiency of buildings can lead directly to savings for European consumers. I see a solution in the wide-scale introduction of automated intelligent consumption metering systems and of systems providing up-to-the-minute snapshots of energy consumption, including ones for household use.

What can the Council do to implement this solution? What sort of timetable do you consider to be realistic? Can the Council inspire the European Technology Institute in Budapest to address itself to the problem of the energy efficiency of buildings?

Colm Burke (PPE-DE). – Has there been any discussion in Council about trying to get Member States to provide financial incentives for increasing energy efficiency, in particular for elderly people? On the one hand it would increase energy efficiency, and on the other hand it would provide employment.

Alexandr Vondra, President-in-Office of the Council. – I fully share the view that energy efficiency is an important instrument for handling both environmental concerns and energy security needs.

In fact, we have just been discussing this at home – now I will just step out of my Presidency role – and in Prague we consider two measures to be really important. The others are also important, but either in the long term or without such a huge impact. One is housing and energy efficiency. The second one is nuclear energy, but I know this is a sensitive issue for some Member States. Those are the most important in combating climate change and dealing with energy security. Therefore, finding the proper instruments to promote energy efficiency and housing is the challenge of our time.

I would like to deal with the questions on financing. The European Regional Development Fund, as was proposed by the Commission, could be used to find resources for investment in housing and energy efficiency, so this is one instrument which will be available now, also within the framework of the recovery plan.

Another possibility for countries like Romania – I know this from my own country – is just to use the emissions trading scheme, which is within the current Kyoto, so it is possible to use the income from that.

I think we have the instruments. With regard to this new directive, we will consider the debate about the scope to be the most important. Certainly, we in the Czech Presidency, in cooperation with the upcoming Swedish Presidency – for them it is a priority – will try to do our best and not to waste too much time.

President. – Question No 4 by **Colm Burke** (H-1040/08)

Subject: Energy, external relations and the economy under the Czech Presidency

In light of the Presidency's stated priorities for its term in office, can it please specify how it intends to integrate the three priorities in terms of concrete initiatives? I refer specifically to discussions with partners to the east over strategic energy corridors which could serve to guarantee the EU's energy security and economic competitiveness into the future.

Alexandr Vondra, President-in-Office of the Council. – I want to thank Mr Burke for his question concerning the southern corridor plans and the meetings during the upcoming Czech Presidency. We will ensure that these are the three priorities – energy, external relations and the economy – which are fully integrated and interconnected and focus on the concrete initiative; this is one of them. It will in particular concentrate on the objective of ensuring reliable supplies of energy through the development of a range of energy relationships with third countries and regions and by working towards greater diversification of energy resources, as well as the transit routes.

The Presidency intends to take this work forward on the basis of the elements contained in the Commission communication on the Second Strategic Energy Review. The Council is expected to adopt a conclusion on this communication in February and energy security will be of particular focus in the spring 2009 European Council.

As part of its work, a large number of meetings with third countries or third-country organisations are planned. These meetings will deal either exclusively with energy-related themes or will cover energy among the other issues. As regards the specific discussion on energy strategic corridors to which the honourable Member refers, the Presidency is organising the following meetings. The most important are, first, the international investment conference on the Ukrainian gas transit network, which will take place in Brussels on 23 March 2009. Second, the so-called Southern Corridor Summit meeting, which we plan to organise together with the Eastern Partnership event; that will take place in Prague in early May. The aim of that meeting is to launch a mutually beneficial dialogue between the EU and both the transit and producing countries from the Caspian region. This should lead to a greater diversification of energy supply routes, suppliers and sources, and will thus strengthen the energy security of the EU. One of the specific purposes is to promote the Nabucco project.

The issue of the strategic energy corridor is also likely to be addressed during the meeting of the EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council on Energy, which will also be organised under the Czech Presidency, probably in May, just to create a run-up to the summit meeting between the EU and Russia, which we are planning for 22 May 2009. So the importance of the strategic energy corridors referred to by the honourable Members has been clearly underlined by the Ukrainian-Russian gas dispute in early January.

The Council, at its extraordinary session of 12 January 2009, which was devoted to this subject, adopted conclusions outlining a number of measures to be taken in the short, medium and long term. So the Presidency will work to ensure that appropriate and concrete follow-up is given to these measures as a part of the high priority it attaches to the issue of energy security.

Colm Burke (PPE-DE). – I would like to thank the President-in-Office for his very comprehensive reply. In fact this question was tabled before the Russia-Ukraine dispute arose. I had a feeling that it might arise at the time it did. I would like to ask him this: under Lisbon, we were talking about a common energy policy; maybe he could outline, in his capacity as President-in-Office, his opinions on the improved tool kit which Lisbon provides to address these challenges in the future and the advantages of adopting the whole Lisbon approach and Treaty.

Justas Vincas Paleckis (PSE). – (LT) Thank you for your explanation of a very important subject. I would like to ask how the Czech Republic, the presiding country, views the *Nordstream* project, which has both positive and negative aspects, and we know that there are certain doubts about its ecological impact. Thus, as you begin the Presidency, how do you evaluate this project? Thank you.

Paul Rübzig (PPE-DE). – (DE) It would interest me to find out whether there is an initiative in ECOFIN and on the part of Commissioner Kovács to initiate a progressive tax write-off across Europe for those energy projects that are currently imminent, such as the Nabucco pipeline or the building of new power stations, in order to create incentives and thus drive these strategic initiatives forward.

Alexandr Vondra, President-in-Office of the Council. – All these questions are about issues which we are discussing almost on a daily basis now. On the Lisbon Treaty, we all know that it contains solidarity formulas which should help us to enforce the legal framework for better cooperation in the area of energy within the EU. That is one part of the story.

At the same time I think we have learnt some lessons during the current crisis. One thing is the solidarity as a political slogan. The other one is the need to react quickly in a time of crisis and to respond, for example, to a difficult situation which we had in Bulgaria or Slovakia during the crisis. So we need to have some improvement of the interconnections in particular in Central and Eastern Europe in the area of gas supplies. We need to have a compressor on the pipeline to be able to reverse the flow. For example, my country has it because it modernised and invested, but the Slovaks did not.

So that brings me to your question as to whether there is some investment programme to cover short- or medium-term needs – there is. In fact, today I had some meetings with the respective chairs of the Committee on Budgets, the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy as well as the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, because EUR 5 billion remains, which was not spent last year, and it has been agreed within the European Economic Recovery Plan to allocate that for some infrastructure projects. As far as the Commission has proposed late last month, EUR 3.5 billion out of those five should be allocated to the interconnection projects which can be realised in the next two years, 2009 to 2010, in the area of gas connections, electricity grid interconnections and connecting gas with the offshore wind turbines in the north of Europe.

So, yes, there is a plan and my view on Nord Stream is that there is a debate, we all know that. I think one lesson of the current crisis between Moscow and Kiev is this: that we should have the means to make it possible to solve these problems if they are repeated, both regarding Russia and Ukraine.

There is the Nabucco project, which should be able to bring gas to Europe from countries other than Russia, in other words the Caspian Basin. But we also should be able to diversify the transit route of gas to Europe so that this is not just one country. I think, in this respect, Ukraine is serving us as the only terrestrial supplier.

So there are some concerns about the possible environmental impact. Some Member States are raising the question, so there is no secret about that, but I think that at the end of the day we need to have diversification of both routes and suppliers.

President. – Question No 5 by **Avril Doyle** (H-1044/08)

Subject: Tobacco control and smoking cessation

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is the first international health agreement signed and ratified by the European Union and all Member States except one, the Czech Republic. As the Czech Republic will be leading the discussions on the FCTC, what plans has the Czech Presidency to ratify the treaty itself?

Alexandr Vondra, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – I see Avril Doyle and I am asking myself whether I am the other side of this question: the last time we discussed this was in the only place in this building where I as a heavy smoker can smoke. I guess that you observed that, and that is one of the reasons why I now have the obligation to answer your question. My mother was always advising me to speak truthfully at every opportunity so now I have a dilemma: to read this or to speak my mind.

But I shall use this opportunity to start at the personal level. I am a member of the 30% minority in Europe: I am a heavy smoker, and I feel terribly discriminated against in this building. I appeal to you as a person, not on behalf of the Council, to provide better conditions for appeasing our habit. But now I have to respond to this question.

The question is about the state of the ratification process in the Czech Republic. I can assure you that the ratification process of the framework convention in the Czech Republic is in progress. It has been in progress since 2003, and the new attempt to find approval in the Czech Parliament is ongoing. The new Czech Minister for Health – who, like her predecessor, smokes – has the new proposal aimed at renewing ratification and will send it to the inter-agency process, so it will reach Parliament pretty soon.

The ratification process should be concluded if we find enough votes in Parliament. In the Senate I can assure you that this is not easy when our senators are travelling in Europe and are facing the same problem as I do in this building. But I think one thing is important: that the legislation is fully implemented so all laws abide by those commitments which are part of the convention.

Regarding our approach as the Presidency: the next formal meeting in the framework of the FCTC will be the third meeting of the international negotiating body on a protocol on illicit trade in tobacco products. Here my country, as well as the Presidency, is fully committed to fighting the illicit trade in tobacco products. That will take place from 28 June to 5 July in Geneva, so we will share this somehow with our friends the Swedes, because that is the time when we, the Czechs, will hand over the Presidency to our friends in Stockholm. That is the substance of my response.

Avril Doyle (PPE-DE). – I would like to thank the President-in-Office. I do not mean to make him paranoid with my question. It was tabled, after all, last December.

I am anti-smoking, not anti-smokers. We all agree they need all the help they can get: nicotine replacement therapies etc. But we must recognise the damage that passive smoking does to those who do not enjoy smoking, so please do not feel personally under the spotlight here.

Could you guarantee me then that, before the end of the Czech Presidency, you will have ratified the framework convention – yes or no? It would be extremely important if you could give me guarantees on that. After all, cigarettes are the only legal product on our shop shelves that, if used by consumers according to instructions, kills one in two of the consumers. They are amazing really.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE). – Thank you, President-in-Office, for your honesty. You quoted your mother – well, as a mother, can I urge you to stop smoking, while sympathising with your plight in the building? If you were in Ireland, you would be completely out in the cold.

My question is: have you ever considered giving some leadership and quitting the bad habit and encouraging your senators to follow suit?

Alexandr Vondra, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – To conclude this rather unusual evening's debate, my mother smoked when she was pregnant, and here I am as the Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, and my brother and sister are both in very good condition. My wife smoked as well and she still smokes. We have three nice, very intelligent, kids – so those are my private views.

I notice that this issue attracts particular interest in Ireland, and I know that you have adopted the measures. The date of our ratification is in the hands of the Members of the Czech Parliament and the Senate. Parliament is sovereign.

I am now fighting in my country for the earliest possible ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. During the debate on Lisbon, I am often asked by the members of the Senate whether the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty will lead to keeping their freedom of smoking in some public spaces.

So I have a dilemma. What is more important: the Lisbon Treaty or this? But I can assure you that the Government will do whatever it can to obtain ratification of both Treaties. We signed both Treaties, and the responsibility of the Government is to do the best it can.

President. – The questions that have not been taken due to lack of time will be answered in writing (see Annex).

President. – That concludes questions to the Council.

(The sitting was suspended at 7.15 p.m. and resumed at 9.00 p.m.)

IN THE CHAIR: MR ONESTA

Vice-President

15. The dramatic consequences of the 'Klaus' storm in Southern Europe (debate)

President. – The next item is the Commission statement on the dramatic consequences of the 'Klaus' storm in Southern Europe.

Androulla Vassiliou, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, the European Commission wishes to express its sadness at the number of lives claimed by storm Klaus and sends its condolences to the French, Italian and Spanish families that have lost loved ones. This is indeed a human tragedy, which has had a devastating impact on people's lives, homes and businesses. It is also an ecological disaster.

While this storm was extremely powerful, it only affected a narrow band of territory, and national resources have been able to cope with the immediate disaster response.

For this reason, the Community Civil Protect Mechanism was not activated. However, the Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre has been in close contact with the concerned Member States from the first moments when the storm was forecast.

Other Member States were aware of the situation and were getting prepared to provide support to the affected regions. For example, the Czech Republic spontaneously offered its assistance.

The Commission is now cooperating with the authorities of the Member States affected in order to identify options for EU support. Possibilities may include through the EU Solidarity Fund or a reprogramming of the structural and rural development funds.

Storm Klaus is an unpleasant reminder that natural disasters are a growing threat for all EU Member States. Devastating floods hit Central Europe in 2000 and 2002, the UK in 2007, and Romania and EU neighbours last year. The 2003 heatwave claimed tens of thousands of lives. In 2003 and 2007 forest fires ravaged Portugal and Greece. These events give us an idea of how climate change is likely to affect the EU's future because, as the climate changes, we can expect more extreme weather events.

The Member States and the Community need to combine their strengths to prevent disasters, to limit their impacts and to improve the Union's disaster response capacity.

The Commission will shortly adopt a Communication on 'a Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters'. We look forward to receiving feedback from Parliament on the ideas that are set out.

The Commission would also stress the importance of moving forward on the revision of the Solidarity Fund regulation. The proposal helps to accelerate the rate of response by allowing for advance payments, and it contains simpler criteria for an activation of the Fund in less time. While Parliament largely supported the Commission proposal, there has been no progress in the Council.

These initiatives are contributing to shape a genuine European disaster management policy, and the Commission hopes that the European Parliament will continue to support its efforts to reinforce the EU's capacity to deal with natural and man-made disasters.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU

Vice-President

Christine De Veyrac, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.* – (FR) Madam President, I am speaking also on behalf of my colleague, Alain Lamassoure. In November 1999, I took the floor in this very Chamber following the storm which had raged in south-west France, to call for European solidarity when wide-scale natural disasters lay waste to our countries. Ten years ago I was told that there was no European fund to help our fellow citizens in such times of need.

Since 1999, while natural disasters have unfortunately continued to cause death and major destruction in Europe, EU action has fortunately been strengthened with the creation, in 2002, of the EU Solidarity Fund, an initiative of the Commission and Mr Barnier. This Fund allows us to take swift, effective action within a flexible framework.

As things stand, I feel that we need to mobilise this Fund to assist the affected regions, and in this regard I support the French Government's calls to do so as quickly as possible. I took note, Mrs Vassiliou, of the Commission's wish to speed things up. There is indeed an urgent need when it comes to the damaged infrastructure.

There is also an urgent need with regard to the forest. I would like to stress this point, since the storm has devastated between 60% and 70% of the forest in the south of Gironde and Landes, whereas this forest, one of the largest in Europe, was already barely managing to recover from the damage caused in 1996 and 1999. You are aware that there is no insurance for this kind of damage, and foresters are now completely penniless in the face of this disaster. We must show them our solidarity and assist with rebuilding the natural heritage of these regions.

Before ending, allow me to spare a thought for the victims of storm Klaus, in France, Spain and Italy, and express my support for their families.

Kader Arif, *on behalf of the PSE Group.* – (FR) Madam President, Mrs Vassiliou, ladies and gentlemen, the images of the 1999 storm, which was just mentioned and which hit south-west France causing tremendous damage, are still engraved on our collective memory.

It is an understatement to say that Europe was not prepared to endure such a tragedy again, so soon. There are those who view it as a blow dealt by fate, but I see it rather as a horrendous example of the climate change which you have just referred to, Mrs Vassiliou, for which we merely propose rough solutions whereas in fact urgent action is needed. This is a situation that we must handle responsibly. Unfortunately, we need to be prepared to face even more natural disasters.

On 24 and 25 January this year, storm Klaus, which hit southern Europe, killed 11 people in France, 14 in Spain and three in Italy. It caused significant damage, destroying schools and many homes, depriving thousands of people of electricity, heating, drinking water and a telephone service and leaving certain economic sectors in a critical situation, as in the case of the timber industry.

While I am keen to express my solidarity with the families of the victims and all those affected, and my support for local councillors, I would like to take advantage of this forum to call on the European Community since, it has to be said, this kind of situation requires a European response and, first and foremost, European solidarity.

Admittedly, in France a state of natural disaster has been declared, which will facilitate aid to disaster victims, but this does nothing to detract from the need to take coordinated European action to supplement the Member States' efforts to protect people, the environment and property in disaster-stricken towns and regions.

In practical terms, this primarily entails centralising information at European level in order to make a precise assessment of the damage. We must then release the necessary funds to provide support for local authorities that are facing huge challenges. In particular we should support the public services, which have been doing

an exceptional job, and which we desperately need in order to repair infrastructure and equipment in the energy, water-supply, sewage, transport and telecommunications, health and education sectors.

Past disasters showed that action at European level is urgent and enabled the prevention of natural risks to be included as one of the goals of the European Regional Development Fund. From now on, Europe must prove its ability to react and to translate its solidarity into practical measures. I therefore hope, although you have just said so, that the Commission will take this message on board and mobilise all means necessary to respond to this urgent situation, in particular through the EU Solidarity Fund and the Civil Protection Financial Instrument.

Lastly, in conclusion, I would like to remind you that, as with the fires in Greece in 2007, this violent storm has demonstrated the need for a civil protection force that can be mobilised in all crisis areas. I would like to hear your opinion on this subject, Mrs Vassiliou, as well as your response to Parliament's request in its resolution of 27 April 2006, seeking the creation of a European observatory on natural disasters to ensure a more effective European response when these unfortunate events occur.

Jean Marie Beaupuy, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, Mrs Vassiliou, on 18 November last year, I said the following in this very place: 'we do not know what the next disaster will be or on what scale it will be, but we are sure of one thing, and that is that there will soon be another disaster again. When that time comes, our fellow citizens, who for 50 years have been used to seeing a supposedly united Europe being built, will turn round and ask us: "what have you done?"'. I repeat, I said that here, to this House, last November.

In this same Chamber, in November 2006, two years before, I said more or less the same thing: 'if there is one area in which all Europeans expect effective Community responses, it is that of large-scale natural disasters'.

I said that everyone could see this whenever disasters such as the tsunami occur, and continued: 'that is why, together with my group, I am in favour of implementing preventative actions and of putting in place the capacity to respond very quickly to the consequences of tragedies. In this connection, I should like to draw attention to the quality of the Barnier report, which states the problem well and proposes solutions that are constructive not only in terms of efficiency but also of subsidiarity'. Mrs Vassiliou, we have all remained enthusiastic about this report as it contains highly practical and concrete proposals. It even contains budgetary items and explains that 10% of the Solidarity Fund can provide funding. It explains in a most pragmatic way how to work with the stakeholders in each state.

With the twelve proposals contained in the Barnier report, we had everything necessary to take action at European level which, a few weeks prior to the elections this coming June, would have provided an additional indication of the usefulness and effectiveness of true European operational solidarity.

You have just told us, Mrs Vassiliou, that you hope to receive Parliament's support. You had this support, and continue to do so. What is the Council doing, since you say that it is the Council which is the issue? The Council is not here this evening. We hope that over and above this debate, it will listen attentively to our call, which is not a call for help, nor another expression of surprise at the recent tragedy, but a call for it to clearly hear the question which I recently asked: 'what have you done?'.

Gérard Onesta, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, Mrs Vassiliou, ladies and gentlemen, I would like us to reflect for a moment on the nature of this evening's exercise. It seems to me that we do this often, too often. Each time there is a disaster, we meet here, in this Chamber, and begin our chorus of lament where naturally we say that what has happened is a tragedy, and we bow our heads in respect for the victims.

Of course, I do this along with everyone else, but I do not believe that our role ends there. Our role is perhaps, as my fellow Member was just saying, to plan for the future, since there will be other environmental disasters. We said this again this morning, with our vote on the Florenz report. We know that the climate is increasingly unsettled. Storms of the century now come each decade and soon will come each year. When there is no storm, there is flooding, and when there is no flooding, there are severe forest fires.

Faced with all this, what is Europe doing? I am well aware that the Council is incapable of contemplating anything beyond its national navel. The juxtaposition of 27 navels does not yet make for a great continental project. We suffer the consequences of this during every tragedy. We are told to 'call for solidarity', but using which funds? I remember in the Committee on Budgets, when we discussed funds, precisely for the climate, we were talking about a few tens of millions of euros. This storm alone has cost EUR 1.4 billion. How much

will we have to pay in insurance bills before we realise that protection of the environment and the climate is not a burden, but an investment in the future?

Still today, we are continuing to discuss the need to mobilise European stakeholders when a tragedy strikes. But we already said that, as I recall, here in this Chamber following the AZF factory explosion in my city, in 2001. We said that we had to consider a European intervention force to show that in Europe, in the event of a human catastrophe, the word 'solidarity' is not just a meaningless concept, but that we take practical action. All these years later, what has become of this European intervention force?

I was actually at my home in Toulouse, ladies and gentlemen, when the storm struck. I now know what a major environmental disaster entails. If I needed to learn, I have now experienced it in the damage to my home, in the tiles that were ripped off and in the trees that were uprooted. Therefore, I now know what these populations have been through: people who, in just one night, have seen their life's work completely destroyed.

However, as long as we, here in Parliament, and you, Mrs Vassiliou, members of the Commission, and also those absent this evening from the desperately empty Council benches, as long as we fail to realise that we must make real budgetary resources available to combat disasters, and not content ourselves with hollow words, as long as we fail to implement European solidarity through the actual establishment of a rapid-reaction, continental-scale civil intervention force, we shall continue here, tragedy after tragedy, to simply perform, once more, our chorus of lament.

The real response to storm Klaus may have come this morning, in our preparations for Copenhagen, and may come tomorrow, Mrs Vassiliou, by finally releasing funds and at last creating this civil force which is so lacking at European level.

Jean-Claude Martinez (NI). – (FR) Madam President, Mrs Vassiliou, the storm called 'Klaus' in German, or 'Nicolas' in French, has devastated eight 'départements' in my south-west France constituency, and Landes in particular, hence the main impact being on the forest. The equivalent of six years' harvest of timber is lying on the ground, that is, 50 million cubic metres of windfall or windbreak over 300 000 hectares.

The first thing to do is clear the forest to prevent the timber rotting. There needs to be payment of EUR 5-10 per cubic metre of timber removed, that is, in the region of EUR 500 million, namely the amount of aid France has given to the press. Afterwards, the forest will need to be reseeded and replanted, leaving a 20-year hiatus in the timber industry. Now, this industry ranges from the woodcutters and cafés where they have a drink, to hauliers, nursery gardeners, vendors and so on.

The second industry affected is that of poultry, sheep and cattle farming. Roofs have been ripped off, animals lost and feed stores destroyed. We can see a need for a European agricultural insurance fund against climate and health risks. The French Presidency talked about this, and the Czech Presidency should do likewise.

The third set of victims is silent, since these victims are never mentioned: the elderly and the isolated in villages in France which are still without electricity. We need to create a European 'Fourth Age-Climate' strategy, like the 'Climate-Energy' one, that is to say, we must tackle the impact of the climate on the millions of people aged over 80 or 85. We have to create a modern fourth-age economy in order to emerge from the crisis and avoid the geriatric European Rwanda we are heading for, an economy with a modern construction industry, pharmaceutical and medical research, and a new network to avoid Europe having Gabon-style healthcare. Above all, we must prevent these climatic incidents providing an opportunity to play at Darwin and natural selection, while we should be building a Europe for life.

Maria Badia i Cutchet (PSE). – (ES) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, first of all I would like to thank the Commissioner for her words of solidarity.

As has already been said, on 24 and 25 January, several countries in the south of the Union suffered the effects of a severe storm with winds reaching speeds of nearly 200 km per hour over many parts of the Iberian peninsula as well as some 30% of total annual rainfall falling in just a few hours.

The result of the storm was serious damage to property, services and public facilities, both in rural and urban communities, as well as widespread power cuts. The most serious consequence, however, was the loss of 11 lives across Spain as a result of falling masonry and accidents caused by the fierce gusts of wind.

One of the most tragic events was the death of four children, aged between nine and 12, in Sant Boi de Llobregat in Catalonia, when the wind destroyed a sports hall in which they were playing baseball.

Apart from lamenting the loss of so many irreplaceable human lives and expressing our solidarity with the families in their grief, the European Union must act, as it has on other occasions, by mobilising either the Solidarity Fund or another more appropriate fund, to repair the material damage caused by this natural disaster.

Twenty thousand hectares of forest have been affected in Catalonia, 75% of which is either seriously or very seriously damaged. Action is required in order to reduce the future risk of fire; clearly this task must be completed before the summer.

Furthermore, a lot of debris of all kinds has been deposited in rivers, streams and other watercourses. This may block water flow and there is a risk of local flooding.

In view of these and many other effects and aware of the fact that we do not yet have a final figure for the material damage, which, of course, Spain will provide through its request for assistance from the Fund, we think that the European Commission should help these regions return to normal. This would complement the immense public effort in the affected Member States and would give priority to repairing the serious damage with the objective of restoring living conditions and economic stability in these areas as soon as possible. The affected regions are facing a downturn in economic activity, degradation of the environment, loss of agricultural production, cessation of activities by many companies, a massive loss of trees and so on.

Given the characteristics and effects of the storm, I request that the Commission make these funds available as soon as possible. They are mainly intended for natural disasters with serious repercussions for life, the environment and the economy of a Member State or region of the Union. The objectives of the operations that would receive subsidies include the restoration of infrastructure to working order, the repair of power and water supply equipment and the clean-up of affected areas.

Commissioner, for these reasons I ask you to mobilise these funds as soon as possible once all the necessary information has been received.

Anne Laperrouze (ALDE). – (FR) Madam President, as my fellow Members have reminded us, this storm has exacted a heavy toll. There are victims in France and Spain and this evening we think of them and their families. 200 000 hectares of forest have been destroyed in the south west of France.

In fact, this storm has ravaged 60% of the Landes forest. 1.7 million homes were without electricity at the height of the storm, and 3 200 of them in the Landes are still without electricity. Thousands had their phone lines cut and also their water supply disrupted. Many roads are still impassable due to obstacles such as fallen trees, power lines, floods or landslips. The services are endeavouring to restore everything as quickly as possible.

While I am pleased that the French Government has formally committed itself to submitting an application so that the areas of France affected can benefit from this fund, I deplore the fact that the French Presidency did not deem it necessary to press for a review of this fund.

This fund, as you, Commissioner, and my fellow Members have said, is still blocked by the Council of Ministers. As far as Parliament is concerned, it is about covering any major natural disaster which causes serious harm to the population and the environment, like floods, fires and droughts. However, we are going further by also including man-made phenomena, like catastrophes caused by terrorist attacks.

Our Parliament has also declared itself in favour of lowering the threshold for assistance. Now, if we question whether this Solidarity Fund is working for the affected regions, we can see that we risk being below the damage threshold. Now, this is a situation where, ultimately, several countries are affected. Therefore, I think that this threshold should also be reviewed to show that European solidarity really can exist.

As you have said, Commissioner, and my fellow Members have underlined, this sort of event will be repeated due to the results of climate change. The Commission has already announced a Communication on adapting to climate change.

It is important from now on for this Solidarity Fund to be a genuine European instrument for protecting citizens. It is time Europe showed that, in tragic situations, it is there to protect its citizens.

Gilles Savary (PSE). – (FR) Madam President, first of all, I too would obviously like to express my condolences and offer my sympathy firstly to those families who are in mourning, and to all those who are victims, in particular the many who have been cut off and who today still lack electricity, water or public services.

Commissioner, I listened to you promise us – and I think you were right – that crisis prevention measures would be consolidated, but the issue this evening, if I may say so, is compensation for the last crisis.

This is the third catastrophic storm in 20 years. The first one, as you will remember, was in July 1988, in Brittany. It still holds the wind speed record: over 250 km/h. The second, which was on an unprecedented scale, was the storm of 27 December 1999. It flattened most of our forests, for the first time. The third storm was on 24 January 2009. The reason I remember it is that I live in Gironde, very close to the Gironde forests.

The first thing we need to do is ask ourselves what the European Union's added value might be. In forestry the situation is catastrophic and what threatens us is that foresters have stopped foresting, by which I mean that some of them believe this profession has become unsustainable.

We must therefore put a plan in place, and I am among those who were ready, almost 10 years ago now, to consider a joint crisis organisation, so that we can sell all the wood which has now been placed on the market rather involuntarily, without affecting the price: we could do this by blocking supplies from other European regions, by funding transport and by making sure that this land can be replanted very quickly; otherwise, I think it will become subject to speculation, or even abandoned. Here we have a problem which is of direct interest to the European Union.

Secondly, I am also thinking of the oyster-farmers. Today the profession is in dire straits. It was already in trouble in 2002 after another disaster which was not at all natural, the sinking of the *Prestige*, and at present the oyster-farmers of the Arcachon Basin are losing all hope of being able to get back on their feet.

Finally, I would like the European Union Solidarity Fund to be mobilised. Obviously, I sympathise with what Mrs Laperrouze has said. Today, the Council is not here. It will do it no harm and I think it is extremely disappointing that it has refused to change the rule and that this fund today is so difficult to mobilise.

I ask you, moreover, whether the French Government itself has mobilised it. I am among those who will strive to see that it does this, because I believe it is very important, a few months from the elections, that our citizens know that European solidarity does exist and that Europe is not just dominated by the market.

Rosa Miguélez Ramos (PSE). – (ES) Madam President, Commissioner, on 23 January I was in Galicia when winds of almost 200 km per hour struck my region: over 40 000 hectares of forest were devastated, Commissioner.

Galicia has the highest density of forested land in the European Union. After the passage of the storm, hundreds of thousands of trees had been blown down, roads were blocked and more than 500 km of high- and low-tension electricity cables were down and have still not been fully repaired.

Over 300 000 subscribers, including myself, suffered power cuts, in some cases for several days, as well as a loss of telephone services.

The storm caused injuries and badly damaged homes, infrastructure, farms, businesses, industrial plant, sports facilities as well as public and municipal buildings.

The response of the Government of Galicia to the storm, the worst in recorded history, allowed aid of EUR 17 million to be quickly approved for initial compensation of those affected and to subsidise repair of the damage.

As we know and as has been mentioned here, on 26 January the two worst affected Member States, France and Spain, requested European aid for the damage caused by the storm. As the damage that we have suffered can be defined as an extraordinary disaster under the terms of the prevailing Solidarity Fund Regulation, the governments of the two Member States announced that they had commenced work to apply for assistance from the Fund.

However, once again, as in the recent floods in Romania, we find that the requirements of the regulation are so restrictive that in actual fact they prevent this disaster being considered severe, Commissioner.

I would like to recall, as you and other Members have already done, that the Commission presented its proposal in 2005 and that Parliament issued its opinion in favour of reform of the Fund Regulation in 2006. Since then, the matter has been blocked in the Council, which has sat on the proposed reform for over two years.

For all these reasons, Commissioner, and given that these circumstances are exceptional and that the disaster has had serious repercussions for the living conditions and economic stability of the affected regions, I would ask you to trigger the Fund as proof of solidarity with the Member States concerned and above all with the citizens affected. They should be given financial assistance, as I believe, even though the sum involved is not so great, this would be a direct and urgently needed expression of European solidarity.

Flaviu Călin Rus (PPE-DE). – (RO) First of all, I would like to express my support for the families who have suffered as a result of this disaster. I saw, along with everyone else, what the dramatic consequences were in the wake of storm Klaus. I also watched the first intervention efforts on the scene, made by the countries affected as well as other European countries.

As we have been talking mostly about effects and relief funds, I would like to ask the Commission about specific projects which are actually able to implement prevention mechanisms for incidents like this so that, at least in the future, we will not have any more loss of human life.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE). – Madam President, can I just add my sympathy, as others have this evening, to the families who are deeply and sadly affected by this storm, and offer my support for calls for greater flexibility in the Solidarity Fund.

But there is a wider question as well to which I would draw your attention. It is not as grave as what you are discussing here but in all Member States there are occasional natural disasters and I think of counties that I represent – Offaly, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/County_Laois – or “County Laois” and Louth – where there was very unnatural and unseasonal flooding. A small number of families were deeply affected by it, not enough for anyone to notice, but they will suffer serious consequences. Perhaps we need to look at funding under rural development or the common agricultural policy and establish a hardship fund to look after cases like this which are there and which need assistance.

Kathy Sinnott (IND/DEM). – Madam President, the Commissioner mentioned several disasters in her opening speech, and among them the heatwave in France several years ago which claimed the lives of between 12 000 and 14 000 people. Just to set the record straight on this, it was not a storm or a flash flood, or anything like the other natural disasters. That heatwave lasted five to six weeks, and the deaths came over a period of five to six weeks. Almost all of the people who died were either disabled or elderly and in nursing homes or residential care, or in respite while their families were on holiday. The French Government at no time recalled the families or recalled staff from their holidays, nor did it call in the army or any other rescue services. They just allowed people to die, week after week.

I have spoken to many people in France about this incident, as I am involved in the Commission-funded project on rescuing people with disabilities in disasters. It was a scandal, and a scandal that no one has put their finger on or identified. I would ask the Commission to investigate that heatwave, investigate the level of deaths and realise that France did nothing about it, and yet when the autumn came and all those people had been buried, there were 14 000 fewer people on their social services register.

Androulla Vassiliou, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, let me say that all of us have at some time experienced environmental, natural or man-made disasters in our respective countries. That is why I fully share both your sentiments and your concerns.

The Solidarity Fund has to date offered assistance to 20 Member States, including four times to France, to Germany, Greece, Cyprus, Portugal and many others – 20 altogether – but I know, and I share your view, that we should improve. We should make it even more practical and give greater assistance to Member States. We shall continue our efforts to have those improvements approved by the Council. I am glad that we have Parliament’s approval for this, and your support will be a great help in our efforts.

As I said in my introduction, the Commission is fully committed to assisting France and Spain, which were hit by winter storm Klaus, and will mobilise all relevant European instruments to express European solidarity towards them. The Commission is ready to examine the possibility of mobilising the Solidarity Fund but, as a first step, we need an application for this from France and Spain. They have 10 weeks to apply for that assistance.

I was asked whether we have in the pipeline other measures to improve the system of solidarity to Member States for natural disasters, and so would also like to mention that, apart from the review of the Solidarity Fund, we have an upcoming communication whose objective is to identify measures that could be included in a Community strategy for the prevention of natural and man-made disasters.

To sum up, it is the view of the Commission that the Solidarity Fund is already a very useful instrument but, of course, there is scope for improvement, and we shall continue our efforts to that end.

President. - The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 142)

Zita Pleštinšká (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SK) The Klaus storm blew across south-west Europe on 23 – 25 January and caused significant damage. During the storm, winds gusted at speeds of up to 194 km/h. The storm claimed 18 victims in Spain, France and Germany and the number of victims would have been even higher if the early warning system had not been operating.

In Slovakia, we watched our television screens with feelings of profound sympathy as the terrible tragedy unfolded in the village of Sant Boi de Llobregat where four children lost their lives after the roof was blown off a sports hall. I would like to express my sincere condolences to all families that have lost family members.

The Solidarity Fund is a useful instrument. It was established in the EU after the floods in August 2002. Assistance from the fund is designated for Member States and Accession States that have suffered major natural disasters. This applies to disasters causing damage estimated at more than 0.6 % of the GDP of the affected country. Following the November 2004 storm which destroyed 2.5 million cubic metres of timber, Slovakia received EUR 5,667,578 from this fund.

Disasters are steadily increasing in number as a result of climate change in Europe, forcing us to adopt rules to ensure not only the rapid and flexible provision of financial assistance in the immediate aftermath of a disaster but also the implementation of preventative measures against various natural disasters.

16. Use of PCB waste oils in an Irish food recycling plant (debate)

President. – The next item is the Commission statement on the use of PCB waste oils in an Irish food recycling plant.

Androulla Vassiliou, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, the Commission is fully aware of the high risks of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) for human health and the environment.

Incidents like those in Belgium in 1999, and in Ireland last year, have demonstrated once again that even small amounts of PCBs can cause severe contamination of the feed and food chain.

Over the past three decades, the EU has established legislation to decrease the release of PCBs and dioxins into the environment, with the objective of reducing human exposure and protecting human health and the environment.

Nevertheless, as equipment containing PCBs typically has a long life expectancy, even after the ban of PCBs in 1985 significant amounts remain in use and are one source of possible human exposure.

In particular, the Directive on the disposal of PCBs, Directive 96/59/EC of September 1996, provides the appropriate tools to ensure the disposal of equipment and waste containing PCBs as soon as possible, and for large equipment before the end of 2010.

However, there remain significant gaps in the full implementation of this legislation. The Commission had to launch infringement procedures against most Member States concerning the obligation to establish inventories of large PCB-containing equipment and PCB disposal plans.

As a result of these infringement procedures, the overall situation has improved. Currently only two such cases are still open, but are about to be closed.

All Member States have communicated their plans for the decontamination and/or disposal of inventoried equipment and the PCBs contained therein, and for the collection and subsequent disposal of equipment containing less than five cubic decimetres of PCBs (as required by Article 11 of the Directive).

Nevertheless, additional efforts are needed. In order to ensure the efficiency of PCB disposal plans, Member States have to further improve the implementation of existing legislation on PCBs and of European waste legislation in general.

The Commission is placing increasing importance on the proper implementation of EU waste legislation, and is actively supporting Member States in enhancing the implementation of their national waste legislation.

The feed hygiene Regulation No 183/2005 lays down minimum requirements for feed hygiene which apply from the primary production of feed (at farm level), through the production, the processing and the distribution, to the point of feeding the animals.

Feed business operators (FBOs) should put in place, implement and maintain procedures based on the HACCP principles. This means the identification of critical control points and the identification of, *inter alia*, possible chemical contamination when using the direct heating process to dry feed materials.

The responsibility for compliance with these requirements rests with feed business operators, although the adequacy of the measures put in place by FBOs must be verified by the competent authorities of the Member States. In most cases, this must be done by an on-the-spot visit.

Furthermore, general principles on the organisation of official controls laid down in the Official Control on Food and Feed Regulation require Member States to ensure that controls are carried out regularly, on a risk basis and with appropriate frequency. These official controls must include controls on feed businesses.

The role of the Commission is set out in Article 45 of the Official Control on Food and Feed Regulation (EC) No 882/2004. Commission experts carry out audits of the competent authorities in the Member States to verify that controls take place in compliance with Community law.

A general audit of Ireland under this article was carried out across a number of sectors in 2008 and a report will be available shortly. The list of establishments to be audited is jointly decided between the national competent authorities and the auditors from the FVO.

The plant mentioned in the question was not one of those subjected to inspection in the 2008 general audit.

In the Irish dioxin contamination incident, the use of contaminated breadcrumbs as animal feed was identified to be the source of contamination. The breadcrumbs were produced from bakery waste (out-of-date biscuits), which are dried using a direct heating process. In a direct heating process the combustion gases are in direct contact with the feed material to be dried. The fuel used was apparently contaminated with PCB transformer oil. The relevant responsibilities of the different actors, from the breadcrumb producer to the fuel supplier, and so on, will be identified by an ongoing legal investigation.

I would like to stress the major importance of a comprehensive approach to be adopted for the risk classification, which includes possible risks related not only to the nature of the incoming material, in this case breadcrumbs, but also to the process itself.

Mairead McGuinness, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – Madam President, I would like to thank the Commission for that very detailed statement on this subject.

I think the reason we are debating this tonight is because we want to learn lessons and ensure that it does not happen again. The difficulty is that, back in 1999, when we discovered a problem in Belgium, we thought then that we had tightened up our rules sufficiently so that there would not be another incident. However, we are where we are now, and we know the consequences of the system's failure, in terms not just of money – although that is hugely significant for the European Union, for the Irish Exchequer, for taxpayers – but of the loss of confidence among consumers, and the damage done generally to the Irish food producing sector in terms of markets.

I am happy that we have made progress now and are restoring our name on the international marketplace, but I am also acutely aware that farmers throughout the European Union also face problems because of the Irish difficulty. That is why I think that tonight's debate is not just about Ireland. In my view, it is clear from your statement that this problem that occurred in Ireland has the potential to happen in other Member States. So that is, I suppose, where the starting point for this debate must be.

We know that this oil should not have got into the animal feed chain. What we are trying to find out is how that happened and – as you rightly say – that is the subject of a police investigation with a cross-border dimension to it. We will, I hope, find out the exact trail of events so that we can avoid a similar occurrence.

But it also raises another question, which you have alluded to, and that is how we handle waste or surplus food. Recycling is now 'the thing to do'. Everybody is in favour of it because we all want to be environmentally friendly and sustainable. So there are two issues here: first of all the issue of recycling of oils – to which you

have alluded – and I think that needs more careful attention in relation not only to PCBs but more generally to the collection, distribution, handling and so on of waste oils, though obviously there is a particular worry about PCBs.

Regarding surplus food – or waste food as it is sometimes called – my own view is that it is appropriate that we use this product in the animal feed chain, but I want to say very clearly that, if we cannot guarantee its safety and how it is processed and handled, then I am afraid we may need to look at banning this in the food and feed chain.

I would not like to see that happen, but then again I would not like to see happen again what occurred in Ireland and the subsequent consequences of it. What we want is for this surplus or waste food to be used because it is good quality, not because the animal feed chain is a dumping ground for it – I think that is an important point.

We need to talk, too, very openly about the whole issue of the mixing of animal feeds. Farmers like to buy ingredients and to mix their own rations, and generally larger farmers do this. That is appropriate if we have tight controls on it. I understand that there are regular checks carried out, but in this case there were clearly some gaps in the checks on that market. Indeed, those farmers who were caught and suffered consequences because they used this product were saying to me, ‘Why was somebody not coming and checking what was coming into our yards?’

On the issue of regulation, I believe that there are very tight controls on licensed animal feed operators – the compound feed industry of the European Union – and they came in because of practices in the past which we needed to tighten up on.

I have a sense that, in Member States, we regulate the compliant particularly tightly and we do not keep a lookout for the potentially non-compliant. We do not think outside the box. There is perhaps a tendency, once the paper trail is correct and the boxes are ticked, to put it all to bed and not look underneath the surface.

I think we need to look again at regulation. We are looking at it again in the financial sector, and we also need to look at it in the food sector. I also think that, at farm level, inspectors are sometimes regarded as the devil incarnate coming on to farms. Why do farmers not welcome inspectors in, seeing them as protectors of their businesses?

I think we need to change the mindset now in the entire food chain, based on this experience. I welcome very particularly the announcement of the Irish Farmers’ Association that they are setting up a food taskforce. It is high time that farmers took some control of the food chain that they are the first step on.

Lastly, the issue of low-cost ingredients is not one for now, but the pressure on producers to produce ever more cheaply is part of this issue and needs to be addressed.

Proinsias De Rossa, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – Madam President, I have a number of points to make in relation to this issue and of course I would disagree slightly with Mrs McGuinness in relation to ‘this is not about Ireland’. Of course, this is about Ireland. This is the most recent scandal in relation to food risks.

The protection of human health has to be the primary concern on this issue and what we are talking about here is the implementation of a 1996 directive. Indeed, unfortunately, Ireland was one of those Member States which had to be forced by threats of legal action to actually implement this directive, five years later, in 2001. Of course, the process of implementing it is still, it would appear, under way, and the inspection procedures for ensuring that it is being complied with appear to be quite weak. From what I understand from what I have read about it, one of the surprising things is the lack of information about what precisely occurred in this particular instance with regard to the contamination of pork. It would appear that the factory concerned which produced the feed had not inspected for some time.

I also have to say – and I am sure the Government would be surprised to hear me say this – I do believe they took the right decision in clamping down immediately on the distribution of pork and indeed the withdrawal of pork from the shop shelves. Of course it hurt many innocent and compliant producers and butchers and so on: 90% or more of products were not contaminated at all. The factory concerned was only supplying something like 10 outlets, so it was a big move to make, but it was the right move to make. The most important thing is that we try and ensure that the public and the consumer can be certain that the food they are buying in the supermarkets, in their local corner shops is safe to eat. If we do not take immediate and drastic steps to guarantee that, then I think we are failing in our responsibility.

I have two questions for the Commissioner. One is, as I say, we are talking about the implementation here of the 1996 directive. Is there not an argument now for that directive to be reviewed? Are the standards that were set in that directive not now adequate or inadequate? Should we not be looking more seriously at taking these PCBs out of circulation much more quickly than is envisaged, particularly because of the late way in which many Member States actually implemented the directive?

My other question relates to the management plan which the Environmental Protection Agency in Ireland is belatedly putting in place in 2008 where it talks about the code of practice, which the plan also includes, for the in-use management of PCBs and PCB containing equipment. What I want to know is whether a code of practice is in fact compliant with the directive. Should we not be looking for a more stringent application of the rules in terms of the management of PCBs? I am not in favour of charging everybody who breaks a rule here and there, but I do think that, where food safety is concerned, there should be criminal sanctions for those who carelessly abuse their position.

Liam Aylward, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. – Madam President, the Irish pigmeat industry plays a vital role in the Irish agri-foods sector. That industry is valued at approximately EUR 1 billion and is responsible, directly and indirectly, for the employment of 10 000 people.

Against the backdrop of the current economic climate and the rising cost of food prices, it is critical that we do our utmost in Ireland to defend the Irish pigmeat sector, which operates to the highest European Union and international standards.

The detection of dioxins above the minimum threshold in a sample of pork fat under the National Residue Monitoring Programme enabled the source of the contamination to be quickly traced to an individual feed manufacturing plant. While any contamination of our food is always regrettable, what this incident shows is the very high level of food safety controls which the Irish authorities have in place to guarantee the integrity of the food chain. In other words, those controls worked.

I would therefore like to acknowledge the competence and swiftness of the action taken by the Irish Government and the Department of Agriculture regarding the decision taken for a total product recall. This was very well received by European and international markets, and indeed by the European Commission. It highlighted how seriously we as a country view food safety matters, and helped maintain our reputation at home and abroad as a quality food-producing nation.

Irish consumers continued to buy pork as it became available on the supermarket shelves, and there was an early resumption in trading in most European and international markets. Obviously, additional work needs to be carried out to resume full trading, such as enhanced marketing campaigns and so on.

I would like to commend the Oireachtas Agriculture Committee for its comprehensive investigation of the dioxin incident, which involved a series of hearings that involved government departments, state agencies and representatives of the pork industry. I am glad also that the Department of Agriculture is carrying out a further investigation, under the chairmanship of a very well-known individual in European circles, Professor Patrick Wall.

Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, at least this was discovered, in the Irish case, by means of inspections. Ten years ago in Belgium, the cases came thick and fast. In both cases, we hear talk of accidents that took place, but these accidents have never been proven. After 10 years, the case is now closed in Belgium. One person got a suspended sentence of one and a half years. However, how the substance got into the products is not clear. We must therefore continue to assume that toxic substances were deliberately mixed in, that feedstuffs were used to save on disposal costs. Thus, the oil is diluted and added to the feedstuffs. In both cases, the oil in question is transformer oil.

As long as these accidents have not been reconstructed and it remains unproven that it really was the result of burning, it must be assumed, in Ireland, too, that a criminal act took place whereby these toxic substances, this PCB, were admixed. This means that we must increase the frequency of inspections so that criminal efforts are not focused on such feedstuffs with the impression that this is an easy way to cut costs.

For that reason, the open declaration that we will be adopting here tomorrow represents a further opportunity not to increase the focus against criminal efforts but to increase the frequency of inspections. Risks, furthermore, must not be determined merely in terms of which plants are involved but also in relation to who on earth is running these plants and from what murky sources this oil is obtained. We do know the sort

of people we are dealing with here and the institutions thus need to be aware, in relation to inspections, that they represent a higher risk and must therefore be subject to stricter inspections.

Bairbre de Brún, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (GA) The incident involving high levels of dioxins in Irish factories is creating large economic difficulties for farmers in the North and in the South. This is bad news in the current difficult economic climate. Because such fast action was taken the market can be assured that Irish pork is safe. Be that as it may, it should not be expected that those affected should deal with these consequences by themselves. I know that some of these economic questions relate to other commissioners but it is important that the following points be raised.

The aim of the Pigmeat Recall Scheme announced by the Irish Government in December 2008 was to remove contaminated Irish pork from the market. Be that as it may, it does not appear that this scheme is providing for the 4 000 contaminated pigs sent to the Vion pig processing plant in Cookstown, County Tyrone, in my constituency, between the 1st of September and the 6th of December 2008.

Fortunately, we can state unconditionally that Irish pork is completely safe. If this factory is not entitled to compensation under the EU support scheme, however, there is real danger that it will not be able to continue operating.

The EU must ensure that this processing plant will not be left to deal with the consequences of accepting 4 000 contaminated pigs.

If they will not be entitled to compensation under the Pigmeat Recall Scheme agreed between the Commission and the Irish government, a similar type of scheme must be agreed between the Commission and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in the Assembly in Belfast.

In the spirit of solidarity, the European Union should approve the co-financing of the necessary compensation for those who were affected. 2009 will be a difficult year for everyone – let us not forget the highly exceptional circumstances that left a lot of people in the food sector in a predicament they did not create.

The Ministers in the Assembly in Belfast and in the Irish Government will soon provide an all-island animal health strategy.

We must have an all-Ireland approach that goes further than animal health and that includes a single regulatory approach for the island. That is to say, EU regulations should be managed and implemented on an all-island basis. Every Irish farmer would benefit from a situation like this and the lack of duplication would increase the effectiveness of monitoring of EU regulations.

Kathy Sinnott, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group.* – Mr President, my colleague mentioned the murky channels by which PCBs came into the food chain in Ireland. I think maybe it is worse, sometimes looking back at the history of PCBs. Polychlorinated biphenyls are almost 100 years old. They are man-made and from the very beginning it was obvious they were very dangerous.

They were used for many years in capacitors, hydraulic fluids, wood floor finishes: clearly not something we want in the food chain. But almost from the early 1900s until 1966, when a Swedish scientist actually established their danger, people looked the other way and allowed them to be used, even though numerous industrial accidents happened over and over and over again.

But even once the science was in place it was really not until the 1970s – 1972 – before PCBs in public areas were banned; even then, they were still allowed to be used and their use was not fully banned until 2000. So there are a lot of PCBs out there and they were left out there almost 100 years after we knew there was a problem.

So, despite the Commission's directive of 1996 which required the disposal of PCBs, we find them coming up again and again, in particular in Belgium and in Ireland recently.

But I have found that one thing really confused people in Ireland. I remember visiting a butcher around that time and he just could not understand. He said, we have put into place so much traceability. We can know exactly where this egg comes from, what day it was laid and if we really want to delve a little bit further we can find out exactly what farm and so on. And yet, even after we knew the source of the PCBs, this butcher, who sources all his own pork, who had all the code numbers etc. was still being forced to throw away and destroy pork.

I do not understand how that happened, because we have really worked so hard on the Committee on the Environment; you have worked so hard to achieve traceability, and yet when the chips were down, those systems were not used. Maybe they were used to find the farms, but they were not used to clear the reputations of the innocent and this cost people an awful lot – and it cost my country an awful lot, for it was not these particular supply chains, it was the whole country that was blackened.

And there is confusion about other things. We are talking today about PCBs and dioxins and rightly so, but are we going to spend 100 years before we realise the connection between dioxins and incineration? This is something that I am also constantly trying to do, namely to keep dioxins from incineration out of the food chain.

Jim Allister (NI). – Madam President, several farmers and a processing business in my constituency face millions of pounds of loss through no fault of their own because contaminated feed bought in good faith was supplied from a food mill where wanton disregard – never mind good practice – was shown. It is no surprise that there is considerable anger amongst those affected constituents.

I have a series of questions for the Commissioner. If they are not answered tonight, I would like them to be answered in writing if that is possible.

Firstly, what is the history of the culpable recycling feed mill in terms of compliance with EU regulations? Is it a law unto itself as has been suggested?

Secondly, did Millstream have a licence to use the oil in question? If not, was it not the responsibility of the Member State to ensure that such defiance of basic regulatory requirements was discovered and dealt with?

Thirdly, was Millstream implementing an HACCP-based risk analysis and an auto-control plan as required by the food hygiene regulation?

Fourthly, is the Commission satisfied with the level and frequency of inspections and supervision imposed by the Member State on this plant and its produce, given the Member State's obligation to have a risk-based official control plan? Was there negligence on the part of the Irish authorities in enforcing with rigour the feed law and food safety requirements?

Fifthly, in my constituency legitimate food mills have to comply with rigorous controls and standards under quality assurance schemes. Why was there no equivalent scrutiny of the Millstream recycling?

Sixthly, was there any reliance upon self-certifying of safety of feed mills and, if so, why – since that should only be permissible on small-scale operators – was it allowed to apply here?

Finally, if I might, what is the precise legal basis upon which the Commission agreed a large payout to the Irish state, as initially the Commission spokesman said that no such basis existed? Will there be a follow-up in terms of infringement if that Member State is found to be in breach of its requirements?

Maria Petre (PPE-DE). – (RO) It is useful that we can have a debate this evening based on the declaration which the Commission and you, Commissioner, have already made concerning the use of waste oils in feed preparation in Ireland.

I would like to extend the debate slightly to tell you that a very large number of Member States, including Romania which I am going to speak about, have been affected by this incident, or to put it more precisely: the incident has affected the meat industry but, above all, consumers. It has affected the industry, which has recorded major losses in an extremely short space of time, and consumers at a time when, at least in Romania, there is usually a significant consumption of pork, in keeping with the tradition of celebrating Christmas.

The one thing which has functioned extremely well is the notification of the veterinary authorities via the European rapid alert system. However, apart from this measure, all the information has disappeared. What quantity of contaminated meat was involved, where was it distributed and where are the food products were the questions to which partial answers were given, although, in some cases, none at all. What has been the effect of this? A panic reaction among consumers and huge losses for producers, as well as the fairly poor ability on the part of the responsible authorities to manage such an incident effectively.

In my view, we have at least two problems. The first is the dioxin contamination as a result of using waste oils, given that dioxin is, as we all know, a substance which poses a major hazard as it is highly toxic to the human organism, even in tiny quantities. What can we do to ensure that such an incident never happens again?

The second problem is: how do we improve the ability of the responsible authorities in the Member States to respond and take action in such dangerous situations?

On a final note, I hope that this debate will give us some answers, at least to these two questions.

Petya Stavreva (PPE-DE). – (BG) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the problem of the use of waste oils containing polychlorinated biphenyls at a food waste recycling plant again has posed the question of the need for guaranteeing food safety in the European Union.

First of all, we must underline that the problem does not stem from some animal disease but from the inadequate monitoring of stipulated measures carried out for fodder hygiene and safety in the European Union. Despite the controls in place, a high level of dioxin was intersected by the time it had reached the pork meat. The logical question is: why did this not happen earlier?

Many European citizens today are asking whether the European Union has the necessary legislation available which would require Member States to apply adequate monitoring on the safety of fodder fed to animals. The answer to this question is urgently needed, taking into view the fact that not applying safety norms at even just one food processing plant can have fatal consequences and bring about losses amounting to hundreds of millions of Euros.

I would like to call upon the European Commission to undertake the necessary measures to intensify monitoring, which is an inseparable part of European Union policy for consumer safety protection. Pork meat containing high dioxin from Ireland also reached Bulgaria as well as many other European countries. However, such incidents must not be allowed in future as the financial and social price that must be paid afterwards is exceedingly high.

Finally, I would like to welcome Mrs McGuinness on her initiative to put this issue to scrutiny before the Commission.

Elisabeth Jeggle (PPE-DE). – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, we are, tonight, discussing the use of PCB waste oils in an Irish food recycling plant. Tomorrow, we will be debating the placing on the market and use of feed for animals. Tomorrow, we will observe that we have, together, already achieved a series of important and expedient measures in this sector. Yet there are still problems in this area. That is why the five questions posed by Mrs McGuinness in her oral question must be taken seriously and must be given a serious answer.

Commissioner, you, yourself, talked of gaps that are still to be closed in the implementation of our legislation in a number of Member States. It is true that the feed sector overall has thoroughly proven its reliability in recent years, but certain businesses are either unaware of the risks or do not wish to see them. It would seem, furthermore, that there is still much room for improvement in many Member States in terms of inspection on the appropriate risk basis.

All of us – Parliament, the decreasing number of farmers and also consumers – expect the proper application of EU legislation with inspections to that effect. For that reason, I believe that general food law, food and feed hygiene and the licensing conditions for food recycling plants needs to be looked into.

Yes, we do want to make use of surplus foodstuffs. I, personally, at least, would like this to happen and for the surplus foodstuffs in question not to be destroyed. Traceability, however, must be ensured. Unwanted substances and products must be excluded in a secure and controlled manner. When feed companies are licensed, the professional competence of their staff in the area of food and feed safety must be ensured.

Feedingstuffs are the basis of food safety and there must be certainty on the part of farmers so that consumers can be ensured of safe and sound food.

James Nicholson (PPE-DE). – Madam President, first of all can I say I welcome the opportunity for this debate. It has been brought home to farmers how vulnerable they are to what others do.

This is something that occurred in the Republic of Ireland, but the ironic thing is that the waste oil which was the supposed cause of the problem originally came from Northern Ireland. But it manifested itself in the compound feed from the Republic of Ireland.

The problem that has arisen as far as I am concerned is that the farmers in the Republic of Ireland, be they of pig or beef, have been compensated, aided and assisted by Europe. Farmers in Northern Ireland at this time stand high and dry with no help and no support. Northern Ireland farmers have been destroyed and

many of them stand to lose their farms and be put out of business through no fault of their own. They have done nothing wrong, committed no offence, and I have to state straightforwardly to this House tonight, and to the Commissioner, as far as I am concerned the farmers in Northern Ireland have been seriously let down, not only by our own Department of Agriculture, the DARD as it is known in Northern Ireland, and most especially by the Minister, who seems incapable, weak and unable to solve the problem.

The Minister of Agriculture in the Republic of Ireland has shown clearly that he takes care of his own first. That I understand. Can I ask this question to the Commissioner: are you going to receive any information from an inquiry that is supposed to be carried out by the police both sides of the border? Will you be prepared to act on the information that you receive, and will you be prepared to ensure that Northern Ireland producers have the same support as farmers in the Republic of Ireland and that they are not disenfranchised in any way financially? And, above all, and this is my last point, will you ensure that such a problem can never again occur? All this achieves is a loss of confidence for the consumer and above all else the destruction of the producer.

Avril Doyle (PPE-DE). – Madam President, one source of human exposure to PCBs is through the food chain, as the Commissioner says. However, open fires and cigarette smoke are far greater sources to a far greater number of people. Let us be proportional and let us keep the hysteria out of this debate, and more light and less heat on it.

Minimum requirements for feed hygiene are indeed very important and must be rigorously enforced, but they must also be accompanied by full identification and traceability for all meat products – not just beef but also poultry, pigmeat and sheepmeat. I have put down amendments to current legislation to that effect, and we will be discussing these in this House shortly.

The pig feed concerned was indeed contaminated by breadcrumbs because, inadvertently, Millstream Recycling used fuel to dry the breadcrumbs after buying this in good faith from a company it had dealt with for years and with which it had had no previous problems. There is an ongoing police investigation and the company concerned is cooperating fully with them.

I would like to refute completely Mr Allister's claim that the company showed wanton disregard. That will be proven not to be the case, so let us be careful what we say here.

The biggest problem was that we had to have 100% withdrawal of all pigmeat products, and their destruction, albeit only in the short term. The livelihoods of many Irish farmers, and indeed the reputation of Irish food products abroad suffered because we had to have such a disproportionate response, when only six to seven per cent of our pig farms were contaminated, since the Irish system of identification and traceability failed at the point of the slaughter-house. All pigs are supposed to be eartagged in Ireland, or slap marked, but somehow, at the slaughter-house level, we could not differentiate those pigs that had had the contaminated feed from the vast majority of other pigs that had not.

We need to look at that issue. The Commission needs to look at the whole role of identification and traceability, and above all let us wait for the police investigation, which I think will surprise people.

The companies concerned are extremely sorry, and have said so publicly, for the damage caused to the food chain and Ireland's reputation, and indeed for the economic damage caused to the many farmers who have purchased their excellent feed products up to this point. They are now back in business and again producing, I might say, an excellent feed ration for farmers to mix.

This has been an appalling episode. No one would have wished it to happen.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I have tried not to be judge and jury on this Irish case, because that is not why we are here tonight, but I would like to ask the Commissioner three questions: what volume of PCBs is still in circulation; can you guarantee that none of these will contaminate the food chain in the next 23 months, when they are still in the process of disposal; and would the Commission present a report on the status of implementation of the Feed Hygiene Regulation, which this House would like to hear?

I would also like to point out to Jim Allister that this is a cross-border issue. The contamination, as we understand it, came – as Jim Nicholson rightly pointed out – from across the border. That is why I do not agree with Proinsias. This is a European issue because it has a cross-border dimension. What happened in Ireland could happen in any Member State because there are – as I understand it – thousands of tonnes of PCBs in circulation. Perhaps the Commissioner could clarify that point.

Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, has the Commission investigated or reconstructed the course of events leading to the accident? I find the idea that the burning of waste oil and the smoke that then seeps through a few breadcrumbs could cause dioxin contamination on this scale, where a 200-fold increase in dioxin levels occurred in the pigmeat – not in the feed, but in the pigmeat itself – quite laughable. I shall continue to assume, until or unless it is proved to the contrary, that this was a case of a deliberate admixing.

Every road accident is reconstructed and it is investigated how such an accident could have occurred. This accident – if that is what it was – too, must be reconstructed and it must be investigated whether this type of combustion and the smoke which it passes through the meat really can cause so much dioxin to end up in the meat. As a practitioner, I would say that everything that is being said in this regard is nonsense. What we are talking about here was a deliberate admixing and we are being made into repositories for this poison, one which does not break down by itself and which therefore continues through generations of people.

Jan Mulder (ALDE). – (NL) This has been an extremely interesting debate. I fear that we will have cases like this again in future. We can never rule out criminal behaviour and people taking advantage of the system.

One of the issues that were not discussed this evening is the system of private hallmarks. Why does the Commission not give the industry more encouragement to carry out its own inspections, and to develop private quality hallmarks? The Commission can then say, 'we can carry out checks at the end, but, in the first instance, it is up to you to ensure that you check your fellow professionals and to ensure that these things do not happen. If you develop a reasonable system, we will encourage it and recognise it.' It appears to me that we need to encourage from the bottom up so that practices of this kind do not occur in future.

Jim Allister (NI). – Madam President, there is no dispute about the fact that the oil apparently came from Northern Ireland. That is not the issue.

The pertinent point is that Millstream chose to buy in that oil, knowing it was looking for oil to use in dryers – to deal with feedstuff, to dry the breadcrumbs – so why was it buying oil of that sort, no matter where it came from?

Why was it not checked by state inspectors and by the company itself? The use of oil in that circumstance is, as I understand it, illegal, a breach of the food and hygiene regulations. So where it came from is not the issue – it is why it came there and why it was used for the purpose for which it was used.

Avril Doyle (PPE-DE). – Madam President, Mr Graefe zu Baringdorf's allegation of deliberate mixing of this contaminate into feed is contemptible and unworthy of any professional politician. Let us allow the due process of the legal investigation to take its course.

The company concerned, Millstream Recycling, are cooperating fully. They have a full paper trail to prove they bought this oil from a licensed company in Dublin that supplies oil. They bought it as a recycled light fuel oil which would have been the correct oil to use in this particular drying process. They were sold it by a licensed company and, as far as they were concerned, it was recycled light fuel oil they bought; they accept, however, that they were given transformer oil which caused the dioxins.

There is a legal and police investigation. Let us let due process take its course and stop these allegations flying because this is a very serious issue, which is not helped by hysterical and over-the-top reaction.

James Nicholson (PPE-DE). – Madam President, everybody agrees – no one denies – that, yes, the oil came from Northern Ireland. We cannot deny that. But, while we argue, there are eight farmers in Northern Ireland going out of business, and in the Republic as well. They have suffered as well, I accept that. This is not political. This is ordinary people suffering, and it is our farmers who are suffering financially.

The truth is – and we have to face up to this, and you, Commissioner, have to face up to this – there were tonnes of pigmeat that were untraceable. Nobody knew where it had come from, what pigs it came from or where it came from. Commissioner, it is time, long past time, that you brought in straight, clear labelling of origin of where this comes from. At least if that had been the case, we would have known where we stood and where it is.

I do not want to make this political because for me this is not political. I talk to my farmers every day, and some of these people are most probably going to lose their farms. So this is serious stuff. If we have to follow the legal investigation to its ultimate conclusion, I want to see that happen – but I want to see my farmers

protected, and I do not want to see them sold down the river. I want to see them properly protected by you so that they get the same position and protection as farmers in the Republic of Ireland.

Androulla Vassiliou, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, this discussion has been really lively, and many questions have been put. Many assumptions have also been made, and I would agree with Mrs Doyle that we have to be patient and wait for this investigation to finish. Then we can draw our conclusions and take decisions for the future. One thing I have to say – I was not involved at the time but have heard about it – is that similar incidents happened in Germany and in Belgium, and there was wide information about those incidents in all the Member States. So I would have thought that a prudent Member State would have taken more stringent control measures. But even with the most stringent control measures such a thing may happen, either because of fraud, or because of negligence, or whatever. Our responsibility is to see to it that we have legislation – which I believe is now satisfactory – and to see that Member States comply with that legislation. Our duty as the Commission is to have controls and to see that Member States do their duty.

FVOs make their inspections, and FVO reports are open to the public, so the extent to which there is a compliance with our laws can be implied from those reports, which are even prepared on a country by country basis.

A number of you raised the issue of traceability, which is indeed one of the main pillars of general food law and is the responsibility of the food business operators, who must be able to indicate from whom they have purchased and to whom they are selling. However, the level of detail or specificity of internal traceability chosen by the food business operator determines the final economic loss to be borne by food business operators in the case of recall. In this particular case, what the traceability rule in Ireland required was simply the date of production, and not the farm where the meat came from. That was why it was necessary to recall all the meat produced in those two months. If stricter traceability rules were applicable (which would have costed more, of course) only the meat which was identified as originating from that particular farm would have been recalled. So one has to decide: pay more and have better traceability rules or pay less and, in the final analysis, bear the loss.

It was mentioned that we have provided aid, as a Commission – although the payment of compensation is not my responsibility, but that of Commissioner Fischer Boel – and I must say that what was paid in this case was paid on the same basis both in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland. I have here some figures. The Commission has introduced a private storage aid scheme for Northern Ireland, and under this scheme up to 15 000 tonnes can be stored for a maximum of six months. The budget for that measure is EUR 6.9 million. A similar private storage scheme was also adopted in the Republic of Ireland. Under that scheme, up to 30 000 tonnes can be stored for up to six months, with a maximum budget of EUR 13.9 million. In the Republic of Ireland there was also a disposal scheme which was cofinanced by the Community and which cost EUR 20.6 million. No payments were made by the Commission directly to farmers either in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland, because there is no legal base for such compensation.

Summing up, I would say that we have good laws, but in the future we have always to be vigilant. We must make sure that those laws are applicable by the Member States, and we need the cooperation of the Member States. On the Commission side, we have to keep up our controls and make sure that Member States comply with our regulations.

Moreover, once we receive the results of the inquiries and investigations, we can then think about the future. If we believe that there is scope for improving our regulations, we shall have no hesitation in doing so.

President. – The debate is closed.

17. Agenda of the next sitting: see Minutes

18. Closure of the sitting

(The sitting was closed at 10.45 p.m.)