

## WEDNESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2009

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

*President*

### 1. Opening of the sitting

*(The sitting was opened at 09.05)*

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**Göran Färm (S&D).** – Mr President, at the beginning of this week's part-session, you answered a question from my Austrian colleague, Jörg Leichtfried, on the new Members joining this Parliament as a result of the Lisbon Treaty and when that could take place. You answered that this is now up to the Council. I agree as regards them joining this Parliament as full Members, but I am not sure that this is the case when it comes to their status as observers as an introduction to actually becoming full Members.

I interpret the decision we took recently on David Martin's report on our own internal rules so that we are actually free to let them start working as observers as soon as they are elected and their election confirmed by their Member State, and that we as a parliament can decide ourselves on the conditions for their position as observers.

Mr President, could you please discuss this with the rapporteur, Mr Martin, in order to come to a solution as soon as possible? It would be unreasonable if new Members who are already elected and whose election has been confirmed by the national authorities have to wait for months and months before they can actually start working. Many of them are prepared to start immediately.

**President.** – As I said before, I have asked about the decision of the European Council, and the Committee on Constitutional Affairs should also take into account and study the problem. There is no final decision yet about the number of new seats and from which country they should come. There is no final decision. I know it is the decision of the European Parliament, but it is not final, so it is not so easy to take observers without having the final decision about the number and from which country they should come. So we must wait. I am thinking about that and taking care about that very strongly.

**Rebecca Harms (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I agree that this is a difficult matter to settle. I do not think it is impossible, but, from the point of view of my group, I would like to say that, with regard to the discussion in France, we find it unacceptable for observers, whatever their status, to at the same time remain members of their national parliaments. We believe that those who come here as observers should relinquish their national mandates.

**Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, in accordance with Rule 110 of the Rules of Procedure, we are gathered here to debate the results of the Swedish Presidency – I applaud Prime Minister Reinfeldt, who has given us a courageous, useful and effective Presidency – but we are also here to examine the results of the European Council of 10 and 11 December.

On this matter, I would like to draw the attention of the President of the Commission, which is the guardian of the treaties and their application, to Article 15(6) of the Treaty on European Union, which stipulates that the President of the European Council must present a report after every European Council meeting.

It seems certain that Mr Van Rompuy, the new President of the European Council, will not be joining us, and I regret that. Indeed, he has been in office since 1 December 2009, he carries out an intense diplomatic role, and I believe that his first political act should have been to come and present himself to the European Parliament. It was therefore up to him to come and present the conclusions of the European Council of 10 and 11 December 2009.

**President.** – If I may explain: an understanding was made between the President of the European Council, Mr Van Rompuy, and the President-in-Office of the Council, Mr Reinfeldt, that this last month of the Presidency will be conducted according to the old principles. That understanding is in force. The President of the European Council, Mr Van Rompuy, will take up office on 1 January 2010.

**Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, it is not the responsibility of the Heads of State or Government to deal with the application of treaties that have been ratified by the peoples.

**President.** – I will explain in greater detail: inviting and working with the President of the European Council and the serving Prime Minister who represents the rotating presidency is a decision which belongs to all Members of Parliament. We, too, will decide who is invited and in what order. We are also going to agree between the institutions – the European Parliament and the European Council – how we are going to work together. In addition, I think your remarks are premature.

An interinstitutional agreement must be made. The European Commission is also involved in this. It is too early to discuss this. It is very important that we maintain an appropriate balance between the current presidency and Head of Government, and the President of the European Council, Mr Van Rompuy. Our presidencies change, while the President remains the same, but we also need to cooperate with the Heads of Government. We need cooperation with governments, because as a legislative body, we must have permanent contact with the government of the country which has the presidency.

Furthermore, the way in which we are going to work together, and whom we invite, is also our decision – in consultation with the European Council, of course. We are going to hold talks about this. I would like to tell you that it is far too early to be doing this. Meanwhile, Mr Reinfeldt is giving the report of the last six months' activity of the European Council. Mr Van Rompuy was not involved in this work, because he was nominated only a few weeks ago, so he could not discuss this matter at all today. The matter is absolutely clear.

## **2. Implementing measures (Rule 88): see Minutes**

### **3. Results of the Swedish Presidency - Outcome of the European Council on 10 and 11 December 2009 (debate)**

**President.** – I would like to warmly welcome Prime Minister Reinfeldt, who has been with us for nearly half a year as President-in-Office. I would also like to welcome President Barroso.

The next item is the joint debate on:

- the Council statement on the results of the Swedish Presidency;
- the European Council report and Commission statement on the outcome of the European Council on 10 and 11 December 2009.

**Fredrik Reinfeldt, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Mr President, I am grateful for this opportunity to address the European Parliament once again and at such a crucial time.

As we speak, representatives from 193 countries are gathered in a conference centre in Copenhagen, talking, arguing, negotiating and trying to meet the expectations of millions of people around the world. In just two days, the UN climate conference will be over. Soon we will be looking back at a meeting that was crucial, not only for the EU but for the world; a meeting that was decisive for those who cannot grow their crops because of a lack of water, decisive for those who have lost their homes in tornadoes or floods, and decisive for those who are vainly building walls against a sea level that rises every year.

We know what is at risk, so why is it then so difficult to act? Is it because we fear any change of our way of life? Still, we know that if we keep on using the world's resources the way we do, our current way of life will no longer be an option and we will face even more drastic changes. We have much greater things than our everyday comfort to fear.

The fight against climate change has been at the top of the agenda throughout the Swedish Presidency, at all our European Council meetings and in all our summits with the Union's major partners. As you probably know, we adopted a comprehensive mandate at our October European Council to keep the EU's leading position in the climate negotiations. We agreed on a long-term goal for emissions reductions of 80-95% by 2050 and we renewed our offer to reduce emissions – 30%, provided that others make comparable efforts. We agreed on emission reductions for international transport and, despite resistance from some corners, we put figures on the global financial need in developing countries to fight climate change. Last week – after weeks of bilateral consultations – we took yet another step: a collectively put-together financial package

earmarked for the 'fast start' of climate action in developing countries, offering EUR 7.2 billion for the coming three years.

I know that this is not enough. Therefore I must say that, while I am satisfied that the European Council could agree to this step, the time is now ripe for other developed countries to join us.

So, what do we need to do in Copenhagen? We need binding commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, not just from the developed countries, but also from developing countries, to ensure that global warming keeps below the 2 °C target that science tells us is necessary.

I have sat down with the Indian and Chinese leadership. I know what they say about this. Why should they agree to develop clean and green, when we have polluted the world for decades? That is one way of looking at it, but the problem is this: the developed world cannot solve the problem alone. Emissions from the developing world are already starting to exceed those from the developed world. That is why we must work together to solve the problem. From our side, we can compensate for years of irresponsible behaviour. We can help finance climate action in the developing world. The European Union took its responsibility last week. It is not the form that matters in Copenhagen but the substance. We can be satisfied if we get a deal on emissions reductions and on financing, and a commitment to start immediate action and, more importantly, we can start fighting climate change.

Last year, we were suddenly faced with the most serious financial crisis since the 1930s. The ground was literally shaking under our feet. Suddenly it became clear to us how interlinked the financial markets were and how interdependent we all were in finding a common response. In the course of only a few months, governments in the EU adopted extraordinary support measures. It was a fast and impressive response but it came with a price. Our aggregated deficit in public finances now amounts to almost 7% of GDP – over three times more than last year. Twenty Member States are experiencing excessive deficit procedures. So the follow-up to the economic and financial crisis has, quite naturally, been another main priority throughout this autumn.

Let me briefly touch on what we have done. At the end of October, we agreed on a fiscal exit strategy, and at last week's European Council, we agreed on principles for exiting from financial support schemes. In addition, we agreed on a fundamentally new structure for financial supervision in Europe. When financial flows are international, supervision can no longer be national. Now it is up to the European Parliament to agree to the final steps.

It was also clear to us that the 'bonus culture' could not continue in the way in which people had become used to. I am pleased that the EU managed to convince the G20 to agree on far-reaching changes to this policy. The new rules will reinforce the need for a link between result and reward.

The economic and financial crisis hit us hard but we have shown the ability to act and we have strengthened our resistance. Once we have secured our recovery, the EU will stand stronger, thanks to the measures we have adopted.

The Swedish Presidency took place during a period of institutional change. When we took over on 1 July, this Parliament was newly elected. We had not yet appointed a President of the European Commission. The outcome of the then pending Irish referendum was uncertain. It was not clear whether the Treaty of Lisbon would be ratified by all Member States. It was not even clear whether it could enter into force during the Swedish Presidency.

Then the drama unravelled. In close consultation with this Parliament, José Manuel Barroso was appointed President of the European Commission for a second term. The Presidency now had a stable counterpart in the Commission to work with. The outcome of the Irish referendum was a victory for Ireland. It was a victory for European cooperation. It brought us one step closer to the Treaty of Lisbon.

But then the unexpected happened. At a late stage, the Czech President came with new conditions before he would sign. We had to handle these requests in a way that did not trigger similar conditions from other Member States and we managed to do this at the European Council in October. A few days later, the Czech President signed. Immediately after the signature, I started to consult my colleagues again. We had to agree on high-ranking positions – on the President of the European Council, and to nominate the High Representative. I am not exaggerating when I say it was a relief when all preparations were finalised on 1 December. The Treaty of Lisbon could finally enter into force.

Now, the European Union will be more efficient. It will have better tools to fight climate change and influence the global economic agenda. The new President of the European Council will ensure continuity. The High Representative will assure coordination in our external relations. We will have a more democratic Union with the greater involvement of the European Parliament and of our national parliaments. A new era for the European Union has begun.

When I stood here before you on 15 July, we were still in the throes of the financial and economic crisis. There was uncertainty on the transition of the new treaty. We did not know whether we would manage to unite ourselves and encourage others on the not so long – but very winding – road to Copenhagen.

With the European Council meeting last week, the Swedish Presidency has delivered on all five of its priorities: a strong EU mandate for climate change; follow-up of the economic and financial crisis; the EU Baltic Sea Strategy; the Stockholm Programme for justice and home affairs; reinforcing the EU as a global actor, including enlargement, and a new external action service. As I said, with the Treaty of Lisbon in place, a new era has begun in the European Union.

I would like to end by thanking all of you. The Presidency needed the help of the European Parliament in tackling the challenges we were facing. Thank you for giving us that help.

I would also like to thank the Commission, and especially José Manuel Barroso. I have probably spent more than a healthy amount of time with José Manuel this autumn. He has been a tremendous support to me and to the Swedish Presidency.

Finally, I would like to thank the Member States for their will to put aside differences and start compromising – with the best for Europe at heart – to find solutions that are not only of benefit to them, but to Europe as a whole. This unity is our strength.

**José Manuel Barroso**, *President of the Commission*. – Mr President, Prime Minister, during the past six months, we have seen a new treaty come into force, ending almost a decade of debate and opening the door to new opportunities for this new, enlarged European Union we have today. We have seen the first evidence that decisive action taken to stabilise the European economy in the face of crisis is bearing some results. And as we enter the end game in Copenhagen, we can be clear that the European Union has been working hard to maintain the momentum it has championed towards decisive global action on climate change.

I would therefore like to pay a very sincere tribute to Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt and all the team of the Swedish Presidency for a highly successful presidency. It is particularly important that the Swedish Presidency has been so effective in ensuring the completion of the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty, managing the transition to this new treaty while achieving all the other objectives. We have seen the appointment of the first President of the European Council and of the first High Representative, the Vice-President of the Commission, by the European Council. And let us not forget – because it was a very important moment for this Parliament, following the unanimous designation by the European Council – we have seen the election by this Parliament of the President of the next Commission with a qualified majority.

Last week's European Council was the first time that it has met as a fully fledged institution. It was also the first time that the new High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission, Catherine Ashton, has attended. The new President of the European Council will be fully functioning by 1 January 2010 and has presented his ideas on how to organise the European Council in the future. I very much welcome all the proposals to give the European Council more consistency and more continuity in its work. I also welcome the ideas of having more political, frank discussions and short and punchy conclusions.

There were many other issues that were the object of the European Council. I would like to highlight just some, not forgetting one very important one, the definition of the Baltic Strategy, which can be a model for other regional cooperation inside the European Union and with some of our partners.

On the economy, we are keeping the right balance between maintaining the stimulus and preparing our exit strategies. I presented the scene for our European 2020 Strategy. I hope the European Council will focus on the discussion of this very important agenda for the future of Europe, namely through discussions in the next meetings, in the formal European Council in February and in the spring European Council. I would like to reiterate here my offer to come to this plenary so that Parliament can organise a specific debate on this very important issue. I think it is extremely important that there is full ownership by the European Parliament and, on the side of the Council, by the European Council, of this European Union 2020 Strategy, which is where our future will be played.

On the Stockholm Programme, the Commission's proposals have now been translated into an agreed approach for the next five years. I know that many in this Parliament share our determination to use this springboard to seize the opportunities of the Lisbon Treaty for a step change in European action on freedom, security and justice. That was one of the major reasons why I decided to reorganise the portfolios of the next College in this area. It is going to be one of the most important areas of the European Union's work in the next five years.

The European Council had a particular significance for climate change. In the past few years, the European Union has developed a consistent and ambitious approach on climate change. I am very proud that the Commission has been the initiator of this very ambitious agenda. The impact of reduced emissions may only be felt in several decades' time, but we are already taking concrete steps, giving our targets the force of law.

Let us be frank about this. Some of our partners are announcing their intentions by press statements; but we have announced our intentions by law, law that is already agreed by all the Member States. The developed world must act, but it must also help the developing world to decouple growth and emissions. I think that it is right that the European Council last week centred on how we can put this global leadership at the service of an ambitious deal at Copenhagen: by promising help to developing countries not in some distant future but already next year; by making clear that the deal must be comprehensive and must have the verification mechanisms to make it stick; by maintaining our readiness to up our targets, but only if others put ambitious commitments on the table as well.

I think the European Council achieved very important results, namely on two matters. First, on finance, the Council was able successfully to put together a fast-start finance package, bigger than expected and, critically, with every Member State involved. Of course, some have said that this is not enough coming from the European Union, but EUR 7.2 billion, more than USD 10 billion in the current circumstances, and for three years, is a very serious commitment. I hope the money is now guaranteed, not just an aspiration. It is now for others to match it. The European Council also reiterated its commitment for medium-term financing, to ensure it gives the fair contribution that is necessary for 2020.

Second, action on climate has sometimes been a divisive point for the European Council. However, the atmosphere this time was different. There was a strong shared sense that everyone has an interest in the European Union pulling its weight. We should now be getting the benefits from the investment we have made as the pioneers in this agenda.

What I did find generally encouraging was recognition that the European Union has to stand together. Let us hope that this determination holds firm under the pressures of the next two or three days.

What can we expect over the next few days? Prime Minister Rasmussen of Denmark will probably put forward a text today – but with a lot of the key numbers still left blank. The leaders' task will be to move this forward to a deal. This is why I am going to Copenhagen immediately after this debate. Together with Prime Minister Reinfeldt, we will do our best for the European Union to lead this debate.

We know that the atmosphere at the moment is not easy at Copenhagen. We also know that this is part of the usual rhythm of a top negotiation. However, the arrival of so many Heads of State or Government will be a powerful driver to reach a deal. If that deal includes real commitment to cut emissions from both developed and developing countries; a clear commitment on financing to make this happen; and an agreement on how this is to be applied and verified – if this agreement includes the different elements of the Bali road map and can be seen to be in the right ball park to respect the 2 °C limit, then I think we will say rightly that it will be a major achievement. We are not there yet, but I believe it is possible to reach that agreement.

The next few days will show whether the ambitions we have discussed in this Parliament so often are going to be realised, but I sense already that there is a compelling need for change and that we need to make this success in Copenhagen. There is a huge amount at stake. There is, of course, a balance to be found, but there is also a sense that today's generation knows that there is a challenge which cannot be avoided. I believe last week's European Council left the European Union ready to meet the challenge. I hope that with European leadership, we will achieve success at Copenhagen.

**Joseph Daul**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Mr Barroso, Mr Reinfeldt, ladies and gentlemen, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) identifies with the way in which you, Mr Reinfeldt, have managed the rotating presidency, in accordance with the Treaty of Nice. It also identifies with the latest proposals by the European Council, whether on climate change, the crisis or the creation of a Europe of security, of a Europe that protects.

Indeed, my group supports the honest and responsible management of European affairs, which has been the hallmark of the Swedish Presidency. Honest management, because, at a time when so many of our friends, neighbours and relatives are being hit by the crisis because they have lost their jobs or their jobs are still under threat, Europe has not made false promises to them. It is building the future, our future, by making sure that businesses once again have the means to create, to innovate and thus to create jobs.

Responsible management, because, on climate change, on security, but also on employment and the economy, Europe is implementing the social market economy model. It is organising the timetable, the arrangements for a concerted, gradual but also difficult exit from the crisis. It is cleaning up the disastrous practices that we have seen on the financial markets over the past few decades. It is supporting SMEs and strengthening social cohesion, without which nothing lasting can be achieved.

Let us be careful, however, not to repeat the mistakes of the Lisbon Strategy which, by setting unrealistic goals, has been more disappointing than anything else. Let us be careful to ensure that the new economic strategy, dubbed 'European Union 2020', does not become yet another complicated beast. Mr Reinfeldt, Mr Barroso, on climate change, too, Europe is showing a sense of responsibility. With its decision to release EUR 2.4 billion in aid each year for three years, Europe is setting an example by providing a third of the international aid earmarked for the poorest countries.

I now expect our partners to do the same. From Copenhagen I expect balanced commitments, short- and medium-term commitments, and verifiable commitments, together with financial penalties in the event of non-compliance. In other words, I expect Copenhagen not to mislead Europe.

To conclude, the PPE Group supports the Council's guidelines on security under the new Stockholm Programme. Our fellow citizens want more security, but also respect for public freedoms. They want to be protected in their daily lives, they want to know what they are eating and what they are consuming but, at the same time, they expect – and this is only natural – to live in a fairer society that is more respectful of others. This is precisely the kind of Europe that we, the PPE Group, defend and promote.

Ladies and gentlemen, now that the acute crises and the institutional ups and downs are over, the time has come to take big decisions, and our margin for error is small. In a few days' time, we will see whether Europe's courageous stand on climate change has paid off. We will see whether the United States, China and the others are simply playing for time or whether they want to qualify for the final to become the world's responsible stakeholders.

I wish to thank the Swedish Presidency for its efforts and, above all, now that Christmas is here, Mr Reinfeldt. You have worked hard over the last six months; it was not easy, as we all know. I also wish the best of luck to Mr Van Rompuy, who will take over for two and a half years, and I ask the Council not to forget that, from now on, the Council and Parliament are playing in the same league under somewhat more transparent circumstances.

**Martin Schulz**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the concept of transition has been mentioned several times today and I believe that it is an appropriate term to describe the Swedish Presidency. It was a presidency of transition from one treaty, the Treaty of Nice, which had proved to be totally impracticable, to the Treaty of Lisbon, which is overloaded with expectations, not all of which, in my opinion, can be met, as the Treaty of Lisbon cannot be the end of institutional development in Europe. In this regard, we must be careful not to expect the Treaty of Lisbon to fulfil all of our wishes for all solutions to all of the problems of the world, because we can see how difficult it is to work with the Treaty of Lisbon by all the points of order that have been raised.

I would like to begin with the institutional problems that this treaty has created. We still have the Swedish Prime Minister here today. Who will represent the Council Presidency next time? Mr Van Rompuy, the rotating Council Presidency, then the President of the Commission, then Baroness Ashton – if they all speak then at least, for the first time, for the first four speeches we will not have this permanent PPE conference, and we will then have Baroness Ashton and hence a proper socialist, who will stir things up. That is definitely one benefit.

(*Heckling*)

Of course, I do not know whether it will be Mr Van Rompuy or Mr Zapatero who will attend, but thank you, Mr Langen. If you already know that it is Mr Zapatero who will attend, you have made a useful contribution for once. Thank you very much.

The Swedish Presidency was a presidency of transition, but also a presidency that once again had to experience Mrs Merkel and Mr Sarkozy playing their cards very close to their chests to the very end, letting the current Presidency run its course – while the public said ‘it does not know what is going on, it cannot do anything’ – and has to pay the price for their tactical game. That has been the fate of Mr Reinfeldt over the last few months. Thank goodness, that has now come to an end. That is the progress we have made with the Treaty of Lisbon: a bit more transparency in our institutional structures. And surely something else, too: the enhancement of the power of the European Parliament. However, more power for the European Parliament also means that the other institutions will have to deal with Parliament. For the President of the European Council, this means that he will have to coordinate decisions that he wishes to prepare in the Council – legislative decisions at least – with Parliament. He would be wise not to view the President of the European Parliament as a spectator at the Council meetings, but as the representative of an institution that has been given greater power. That is what I expect from Mr Van Rompuy, for example.

The Council, and the Commission, too, would be well advised to try to seek a majority in Parliament, on the basis of this new treaty, that will also be able to meet the social, environmental and finance policy challenges that they themselves formulate in their programmes because, for legislation, they ultimately need a qualified majority in this Parliament if they want to push through their initiatives. Therefore, the Commission would be well advised to seek a majority throughout the whole breadth of Parliament, which is perhaps something that does not go well with the fact that Members of the Commission are deputy leaders of European parties and are therefore evidence of the one-sidedness of certain political trends. That is something, Mr Barroso, that you need to think very seriously about.

The Swedish Presidency has put in a lot of effort. I will gladly admit that here. However, ultimately – and this is not your fault, Mr Reinfeldt, but the fault of the system – it has had no influence on the big decisions, including those that are currently being made in Copenhagen, because a single rotating presidency cannot influence very much at all, it can only coordinate, and there is a difference between coordinating and influencing. Influencing the supervision of the financial markets, climate change, the efforts for economic recovery – these are things that only Europe as a whole can do, with its institutions in collaboration. I therefore believe that the Treaty of Lisbon represents progress. The fact that the Swedish Presidency ultimately put it in place seems to me to have been the big success of this transition Presidency.

**Guy Verhofstadt**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, firstly, I will not be talking this morning about institutional matters, as others before me have done. We will certainly have time to discuss these matters, since the Council is apparently going to implement a protocol that requires an intergovernmental conference. We must think about whether or not we want a conference. I believe that we in the European Parliament will nonetheless have a few ideas on this subject to ensure that we make progress with European democracy and that we compensate for the lack of transparency and democracy in the cooptations being proposed.

That being said, I should especially like to thank the Presidency, Prime Minister Reinfeldt and Mrs Malmström for the excellent relations they have maintained with Parliament and for their fine management of what were, after all, very difficult issues – I am, of course, talking about the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon. We even had to overcome the ‘Klaus obstacle’; from now on, we will talk about the Klaus obstacle and the excellent way in which the Swedish Presidency solved that problem.

Secondly, I believe that the other most important element is the Stockholm Programme, which has been adopted and which now needs to be implemented. However, for you, Mr Reinfeldt, the Presidency does not end here of course, since there is still the Copenhagen Summit, where you must gain some ground.

I would like to send out, today, before this House, an optimistic and purposeful message, which somewhat contradicts what we read in today’s press. Today’s press is characterised by pessimism: will an agreement be reached or not? I believe that an agreement is possible because serious partners are out there, and we must try to find and motivate them.

The fact that President Obama and the Chinese Prime Minister are arriving tomorrow and the day after tomorrow testifies to their will to reach an agreement. I believe that we must follow a strategy. Which one, though, ladies and gentlemen? I believe that we must follow a strategy whereby we try to establish three-way cooperation between the United States, China and Europe.

If, in the next two days, these three reach an initial agreement, then we will have a serious basis on which to convince the others – India, Brazil and the other countries – to join in this effort. I therefore call for a proactive approach. The most important thing is to strive for this three-way alliance, which is necessary in order to

reach an agreement, and to propose, from the outset, a 30% reduction in emissions. A sense of purpose must be shown in this proposal.

In my view, we must let ourselves be guided, in this final phase of the negotiations, in Copenhagen, by Hegel, who said that it is not the impossible that drives one to despair, but what was possible but was not achieved. I believe that, with the Swedish Presidency's persistence, we will achieve success at the Copenhagen Summit.

**Rebecca Harms**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Barroso, Mr Reinfeldt, after having spent four days in Copenhagen, I find it extremely difficult to listen to the words 'leading role of the European Union'. Leadership – and I learnt this back in nursery school – is primarily achieved by setting a good example. I would now like to ask you, Mr Reinfeldt and Mr Barroso, whether you actually believe that, with a strategy based on lies, self-deception and large-scale international deception, we can achieve a leading role in an international process such as that in Copenhagen.

You should know, Mr Reinfeldt – and Mr Barroso certainly knows this because he has been involved long enough – that the two-degree goal is a 'mission impossible' if the Europeans stick with the offers that they have so far brought to the table. The reduction target is inadequate. At the same time, we Europeans have opened all the back doors in order to avoid a reduction policy at home. There are no limits to off-setting any more. Hot air has become the order of the day not only for Poland, but for Sweden, too. The inclusion of forests, which you and your government in particular have been promoting, Mr Reinfeldt, is another contribution from Europe to avoiding having an active reduction policy.

It has been assessed by many experts in Copenhagen that what you, yourselves, have so far proposed as being the best we can do would not result in emissions in Europe falling by 2020, but rising. So, Mr Reinfeldt, please explain how we are to achieve the two-degree target if you stick to what has so far been offered.

To make matters worse, a German newspaper, the Financial Times, announced today that you have given up on the 30% target for 2020 and now want to offer this for 2025 instead. If you really want to promote this process, I would ask you, as a matter of urgency, to take back what has been published in the newspaper today as the European line.

I will say one last thing to finish. There will be thousands of official observers standing outside the doors of the Bella Centre over the next few days – even though they have accreditation for the conference. These are people who have been working extremely hard for climate policy for years, some of them for decades. Please ensure that, because these people are suddenly no longer able to be involved, they do not end up in cages or having to sit for hours with their hands bound on the frozen ground.

There are a lot of leading roles to lose in Copenhagen. However, the way in which the rule of law in the EU is presented there – I do not care for disruptive crowds, not one bit – and the disproportionate treatment of the peaceful demonstrators – Cecilia Malmström is, of course, an expert in law – is also something that you really ought to explain in Copenhagen.

**Michał Tomasz Kamiński**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Mr President, it is a pity you only spoke about keeping to time just before my speech. I will try to observe the time limit.

Mr Reinfeldt, you do, of course, deserve our thanks. As has been said, the Swedish Presidency came at a difficult period of transition and turbulence associated with adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon. That is behind us now, but the presidency also came at a time of economic crisis. I would like to begin my speech, which is not going to be all complimentary, by thanking you that the Swedish Presidency avoided the temptation of populism, so easy to fall into, in these difficult times of crisis.

Mr Reinfeldt, you have proved there are no easy answers to difficult questions. The Swedish Presidency has shown that in times of crisis, the European Union is able to look for good and non-populist solutions which can help not only Europe, but the whole world, to get out of this difficult situation. I would like to thank you very sincerely for doing that difficult work, for your respect for the Member States, and also for the respect you have shown for the European Parliament. It was a difficult time, and I think you have passed the exam here. You will be able to end your mission in two weeks' time with complete satisfaction.

I think it was not without reason that in your speech, you did not mention foreign policy. Unfortunately, I am forced, here, to say some severe words. I think that in the field of foreign policy, particularly in two areas, the Swedish Presidency and the last six months cannot be accounted successful.



Firstly, what I think was a completely unnecessary crisis related to the unfortunate article about Israeli soldiers in a Swedish newspaper, and the whole unnecessary aggravation of relations between the Swedish Presidency and Israel cast a shadow over the last six months. I want to say it was wrong that the presidency did not unequivocally condemn the article in the Swedish paper. I and my entire group think Israeli soldiers are not only defending Israel, but the whole of our civilisation. I think the last six months have been lacking in unequivocal support for our main ally in the Middle East, Israel. Evidence of this is the outcome of the last European Council concerning the Middle East, which, although it is, in my opinion, better than what was proposed, does not give us a leading role in the Middle East. The European Union should be leading the peace process, and should be the main force striving for peace in the Middle East. If we want to play this role, we must overcome our own differences. We cannot adopt unilateral pro-Palestinian positions. The last six months of foreign policy have, unfortunately, not put a stop to this.

We spoke about this yesterday during the debate on Georgia. I think that rising Russian imperialism is one of the European Union's most serious problems. It is dangerous not only for Russia's neighbours, but for the entire European Union. Nevertheless, I would like to thank you, Mr Reinfeldt, for your leadership and for the Swedish leadership of the European Union. The role of Parliament is to draw attention to that which is not always, in our opinion, the best. I think that, on balance, in spite of the negative comments I have made, the Swedish Presidency has been a positive one.

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

**Zoltán Balczó (NI).** – (HU) I would like to ask Mr Kamiński whether he considers the actions carried out by Israeli soldiers in Gaza as part of the fight for human civilisation. It is you who is biased, because anyone who wants peace in this region should primarily stand up, in accordance with the UN resolutions, for the Palestinians' right to an independent state. You are the one unfairly calling Sweden to account for a stance which it adopted.

**Michał Tomasz Kamiński,** *on behalf of the ECR Group.* – (PL) I think Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. The state of Israel is a shining example to the countries of the Middle East in the area of democracy. War is, of course, a difficult thing, which always brings painful consequences. This is why we are for peace. In my opinion, our role is to support the peace process in the Middle East and to oppose terrorism resolutely.

**Lothar Bisky,** *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (DE) Mr President, my colleague, Mrs Svensson, will speak on the subject of the Swedish Presidency. I would like to highlight two points from the conclusions of the first summit following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. Firstly, I regret the fact that the European Council did not communicate any clear messages with regard to the future strategy of the EU. On the contrary, it fell into line with the old Commission, which wanted to hold on to the basic principles of the failed Lisbon strategy.

However, even though it has been acknowledged that a new political approach is needed, where is it? I have not seen it. With the new Commission, the new Parliament and the President of the European Council, however, there would now be a chance to start a totally new debate. Of course, there is the new treaty and the still to be implemented opportunity for the citizens initiative, too.

Our starting point is clear: our priority, above all others, in particular, above the interests of profits, must remain the social and environmental concerns of the people. That needs to become the new basic principle of the European Union's strategies and legislation, as only then will the citizens perceive the EU as representing progress in the long term.

My second point is that we on the Left in the European Parliament welcome the fact that the Council is finally fulfilling the request for a capital transfer tax. In yesterday's debate, we were pleased to hear Mr Barroso promise that the new Commission under his leadership would table the relevant proposals in the near future. We will continue to bring this subject up and we remain of the opinion that the European Union can and must take the first step in cases of doubt. Waiting for someone else at a global level to take this role away from us is not something we can continue to do.

**Mario Borghezio,** *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, on the subject of the financial crisis, it certainly cannot be argued that the Swedish Presidency has behaved logically and adopted a clear-sighted and clear-cut stance.

Why did you lack the courage to give the names and surnames of those responsible for the financial crisis, clearly stating measures to clip the wings of speculation, or spell out to European citizens that our banks

and our financial institutions are still peddling many of the financial products subject to speculation, and polluting our market?

Why did you not offer a clear gesture of support to the real economy, which is represented above all by the archipelago of small and medium-sized enterprises, by the world of production, by the healthy world of our European economy, to which, I repeat, it is and always will be necessary to offer signs of encouragement and of true support?

Perhaps the most significant challenge that the Swedish Presidency had to face concerned freedom, security and justice, and that also applies to implementation of the Stockholm Programme. What conclusion can be drawn from this? I believe that this Presidency has not taken sufficient action against illegal immigration, and that the action it has taken has been extremely ineffective. The Presidency has not been active in opposing illegal immigration even with regard to integration projects and dealing with the problem of refugees.

It appears that Europe has spoken out feebly, not merely in general about foreign policy – and I am fully in agreement with those who have objected to this – but also on this specific topic. Europe has apparently lacked authority on such a key subject as immigration, however you look at it; whether from the viewpoint of people like me who are very concerned about illegal immigration, or from the perspective of those who are more concerned with implementing integration policies.

We have high hopes that the new Spanish Presidency will implement the ideas that have already been disclosed in some influential statements, which argue that Europe must not think of immigration as a problem exclusive to countries bordering the Mediterranean.

This is evidently a problem that concerns all of Europe, but there is one point on which the government of my country expressed a clear request, which was nonetheless disregarded. It suggested adopting a serious Europe-wide strategy to fight the legacy of organised crime; a strategy that has yielded exceptional results in Italy. This legacy is present throughout Europe: the Mafia, the organised Mafias have invaded all of Europe, infiltrating the real economy and particularly the financial economy.

We are still awaiting a clear signal that we will see the introduction of a European legal system against this type of organised crime, which is so very powerful in several countries – if not in all the countries of the European Union. Since this type of crime can operate too freely, it has taken advantage of our freedoms, moving as it pleases between financial marketplaces, tax havens and markets dealing in property and other assets. It is precisely on this point that we could have done with a much greater degree of clarity, a more clear-cut line of action by the Swedish Presidency. We accuse the Swedish Presidency openly.

And then we come to the statements of certain representatives of this Presidency on another important and symbolic question, that of the Swiss referendum on minarets. The Swedish Foreign Ministry defined a 'no' to the building of minarets as the 'expression of a prejudice'. It went even further, claiming that Berne's very decision to hold a referendum on a matter like this was questionable. So here we have a question that lies outside the scope of the referendum, and that is the question of whether or not to hold a referendum.

How can the European Union lawmakers bring themselves to reproach a small country that has always been democratic, ever since the Middle Ages? Should it really be us, the slaves of a bureaucracy elected by nobody, teaching the Swiss people about democracy? Should we be the ones to deny them the right to hold a referendum on an important question, on which everyone is entitled to their own opinion?

On the contrary, the European Union should learn from Swiss democracy how to tackle the most sensitive problems, by giving a voice to the people, the people, the people, not the bureaucracies, the lobbies and the banks of this European superpower, which always makes decisions about citizens' lives without consulting them!

**Barry Madlener (NI).** – (SV) Mr President, I am glad that the spineless, cowardly Swedish Presidency is over.

(NL) Thankfully, this weak Swedish Presidency has come to an end, as not much good has come out of Sweden. There has been no tough line on Turkey, which continues to occupy Cyprus illegally. Sweden has left Israel in the lurch, and its proposal to divide Jerusalem illustrates its naivety about the objectionable, barbarous ideology that is Islam. Sweden would have done better to strongly support the holding of European referendums in all Member States, as Switzerland did on the minaret ban. That is what the European public wants.

The travelling circus between Brussels and Strasbourg has not even made it onto the agenda, Mr Reinfeldt. We did ask you for this, but obviously you did not dare comply, no doubt scared off by France. Then you go squandering money on climate policy in Copenhagen even though climate change is not a scientific certainty.

The Netherlands pays out a large amount of money. Its net contribution per capita is still two to three times that of other rich countries. This situation must be rectified as soon as possible. We hope that the next presidency will show more courage.

**Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE).** – Mr President, I have noticed that you have given almost one minute more speaking time to some of our colleagues. I would like to remind you that we from small countries, as newly elected Members, have only one strict minute for ‘catch the eye’, and this time has been taken away from our opportunity to express our views. Please respect us as well.

**Fredrik Reinfeldt, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Mr President, I have two brief remarks to make. Firstly I would like to thank Members for their kind words – also other words, but mainly kind words and kind comments. We now have a new European Union based on the Lisbon Treaty, and I could say, being involved in the rotating presidency, that, to make this Europe work for the future, it will be a combination of taking responsibility on the part of Member States, the Commission and this Parliament. It will be very difficult, without full responsibility taken by all these parties, to get this work on track.

Just a few comments on trying to coordinate 27 Member States. That takes time, but, without doing that, we get a situation where this European Union is managed by just a few or by someone else. We have taken that time. I know how much time you need to make this coordination, and I think that will be obvious also for Herman Van Rompuy and also the still ongoing rotating presidency.

My second comment concerns Copenhagen. I frequently hear this: Europe is not leading, and in my country the opposition says that Sweden is not leading; it is the will to bash on ourselves. Then show me who the leader is. I would like to know that, because it would be perfect to see that leader and to follow their initiatives. I have not seen that yet. We are committing ourselves to reductions, legally based, earlier on the table, with concrete financing that I have not seen from other parts of the developing world.

Also, when it comes to Copenhagen, I think it is very important to remember that we need to keep the 2 °C target. I am not sure that we will be able to deliver that. I know that Europe has done its part and is ready to move to 30%, but we cannot solve the problem alone. We only stand for 13% of global emissions. If this is to be a global answer, it must be a global response, and then we also need the other major emitters to make bigger commitments.

A few words on Sweden, since that was mentioned. I think it is very important, after making these kinds of commitments – whether it is Kyoto or now an agreement in Copenhagen – to go home and do your job. We updated just yesterday the reduction of emissions that has been done in Sweden since 1990. We are now down to -12%. We are following how this is internationally respected, the way it is presented. We could always say that that is the wrong way of dealing with it, but that is the global agreement the world has. Concerning that, we have presented these kinds of figures.

Of course, it is troublesome that some other countries are going in the other direction, and they are getting criticised for that. So it is not just striking a deal: it is also about making the changes in your economy using emission trading and other means to get the change in place. That is also an area where you see a lot of European countries acting in a way that is lacking in other parts of the world.

**José Manuel Barroso, President of the Commission.** – Mr President, just two remarks: the first on Copenhagen, and the other on the successful Swedish Presidency. First of all, regarding Copenhagen, I am also very surprised when I see many European colleagues with a self-defeating rhetoric. In fact, if there is a field where we can be proud of the leadership role of the European Union, it is precisely on climate change. Show me one relevant player or a group of countries that have committed as far as we have been committing ourselves.

As I said earlier, some others have announced their intentions through press statements. The European Union has announced its intentions through legislation which is already binding: legislation which originated from the European Commission, which received the support of the European Council and of this Parliament, and – unilaterally and unconditionally – the European Union has already put the reduction of greenhouse gases at 20% by 2020. No other player has done anything comparable so far. So let us ask others to do something similar to our effort.

(Applause)

Is this enough to reach the 2 °C? No, it is not enough. That is why we are telling others that we can negotiate with each other. Politicians and diplomats can negotiate, but we cannot negotiate with science; we cannot negotiate with physics. So let us have a global deal which allows us to reach an agreement compatible with what science tells us. That cannot be done only by Europe, because Europe is responsible for about 14% of global emissions, and the trend is to go down in relevant terms. So, even if Europe, tomorrow, stops completely its greenhouse gas emissions, it will not solve the problem.

So we need Americans on board, we need Chinese on board, we need Indians on board. During these six months, together with Prime Minister Reinfeldt, we spoke with Obama; we spoke with Hu and Wen; we spoke with Singh; we spoke with Medvedev; we spoke with Lula. And I can say that, in all those meetings, we were the ones asking them to come with more important offers.

This is what we are now doing at Copenhagen – not to forget – because sometimes people tend to forget – that it is not just a game between those players but also with developing countries: the poorest, most vulnerable, the African countries. We also spoke with Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia and others. That is why the European Union was the first to put some money on the table.

So let us be honest with each other. We can always have more ambition, and the European Union has been showing its ambition. But let us ask also for more ambition from others, because only with this ambition can we have a deal which is compatible with our ambition. It is a global problem and we need a global solution.

Finally, let me say a word to Prime Minister Reinfeldt and the Swedish Presidency. This is the last time we will have a President of the European Council only for six months, so it was the end of many years of European Union work. I want to say – and I said it to President Reinfeldt during these six months – that he was the 11th President of the European Council with whom I have worked, so I really welcome the fact that now we are going to have a permanent President of the European Council.

But I would like to say to Prime Minister Reinfeldt that he was the 11th in the order of working with the Commission, but certainly he deserves a place on the podium as one of the best presidencies we have had during this period for the European Union. Thank you for everything you and the Swedish Presidency have been doing during these six months.

**Rebecca Harms (Verts/ALE).** – Mr President, transparency towards Parliament is very often highlighted now that the Lisbon Treaty is in place. Is there a new proposal of the European Council for Copenhagen with a 30% target – a greater offsetting than the 20% target – for 2025? There is a leaked document circulating in Copenhagen and I want clarification now, based on contacts with the Commission, whether this is the true strategy of the Council. Please tell us the truth.

**Gunnar Hökmark (PPE).** – Mr President, I hesitate to phrase it in this way because it does not sound very modest as a Swede, but I think it is fair to say that the European Union and Europe will not be the same after this Presidency. It is a different European Union – a stronger and a better Union – for a number of reasons, some of which I as a Swede am very proud to mention.

First of all, of course, the treaty that is now in place is changing the institutional balance of this Union, but it is also making it more capable of achieving our political goals. I would like to point to the fact that we have opened up the process of enlargement by the agreement between Slovenia and Croatia, which is important for Croatia, but also in the perspective of the Western Balkans and their ongoing future process of enlargement. This is one of the strengths of the European Union, but it is also an opportunity for all of us.

I think it is also important to point to the fact that, during this Presidency and while we are standing here, the European Union is, for the first time, a leading global actor in one of the most important international issues mankind is facing. This is new and it gives great responsibilities for the future because it is obvious that, whatever is achieved in Copenhagen, the European Union has been playing a fundamental and crucial role in setting the agenda for the things that we should achieve. However successful we are, the job will not be finished, but it underlines the great responsibilities of the European Union.

Then we have the economic recovery, with strict rules for getting public finances in order and for hindering protectionism. I am a Swede, so I may be a little subjective on this issue, but I think we all have a reason to be proud of what we have achieved during this period. But we should, in all modesty, also remember that those achievements give us a great responsibility for the future.

**IN THE CHAIR: MR PITTELLA***Vice-President*

**Åsa Westlund (S&D).** – (SV) Mr President, I want to start by saying that the Presidency has lived up to the high expectations placed on it as an efficient, diplomatic machine. That is much appreciated, particularly in view of the chaos that sometimes prevailed during the Czech Presidency. The concluding rounds relating to the Treaty of Lisbon were also dealt with in a very positive way. Finally, the Presidency also succeeded in introducing the permanent President of the European Council and the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Unfortunately, its direct political impact on people's everyday lives has been somewhat less substantial. Europe's wage-earners have been given no support with bringing about an end to wage dumping in the wake of the Laval ruling, neither have they seen any new initiatives to deal with unemployment and create more jobs.

The environmental movement is disappointed with Sweden for not standing up for environmental issues. In fact, Sweden has taken a step backwards rather than taking the opportunity to push for more challenging objectives in the area of the environment and climate change.

The fact that Sweden does not have a more significant role at the climate conference currently taking place in Copenhagen, however, is more likely to be due to Prime Minister Reinfeldt himself, for party political reasons, having played down expectations of the conference at an early stage. This was contrary to the EU's negotiating strategy and exasperated a significant number of other European leaders. More serious than this, however, is the fact that it undermined the opportunity to bring about a good agreement on climate change.

Finally, I would like to mention the Stockholm Programme – one of the few things that will live on after the Swedish Presidency is over. As a native of Stockholm myself, I am concerned that my home town may come to be associated with a political programme based more on a fortress Europe than on safeguarding human rights.

We Swedish Social Democrats are nonetheless pleased that, in the end, you did listen in part to the demands from us and from Parliament to include more about the rights of women and children in this programme. We have great expectations that Mrs Malmström will do her utmost to reinforce these elements further in her new role.

**Silvana Koch-Mehrin (ALDE).** – (DE) Mr President, Mr Barroso, Mr Reinfeldt, your calm and steady Presidency was a success. You had difficult political issues to resolve and overall you did a good job. The people chosen by you for the important new EU posts can now define these without any preconceived ideas, as they are as yet largely unknown to most European citizens. As an aside, if I may say so, your best decision is sitting on your right.

Nevertheless, Mr Reinfeldt, I cannot give your Presidency full marks. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, you increased the development towards making the European Council into a kind of EU 'supergovernment'. Its comprehensive jurisdiction is increasing, from the environment to financial policy. At the same time, you are closing the doors ever tighter. This is not what transparent debates by representatives of the people look like.

The second reason is this: the fact that you pushed SWIFT through the Council just hours before the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon demonstrates a clear disregard for the European Parliament and hence a lack of respect for the citizens.

Nevertheless, I would like to thank you for the last six months.

**Carl Schlyter (Verts/ALE).** – (SV) Mr President, the Swedish Presidency has functioned well in practical and institutional terms. It has been like a well-oiled, efficient machine – and yet it never got into gear. What happened to the social legislation? Work on anti-discrimination has come to a standstill. The proposal to introduce a Eurovignette to stop emissions from heavy goods vehicles has stalled, as has climate policy. On these matters it is researchers and the European Parliament that are showing leadership – the Council has failed!

The Council has provided a loophole for forestry, shipping and airlines in the climate negotiations. Where is the money for the developing countries – the specific EUR 30 billion called for by Parliament? What happened to the emissions targets? Parliament called for reductions of 32-40 percent. Now we hear that the

documents the Council is working on water down our emissions targets even further. The Council's climate policy has such large holes in it that it can only be compared with a fishing net for catching whales!

Finally, I would like to mention Vattenfall. Stop Vattenfall's legal proceedings! They are obstructing our work on climate change. You have power over this enterprise. At the very least, you should make sure that Vattenfall minds its own business and stops calling into question the environmental legislation of Germany and the EU.

**Timothy Kirkhope (ECR).** – Mr President, first of all, I would like to congratulate the Swedish Government for its Presidency of this Council. It took office with a very heavy agenda and has been able to achieve a great deal, much of which we welcome.

I have spoken in this Chamber repeatedly of the need to reinvigorate the Lisbon strategy; the European Union has, for far too long, pursued political and institutional reform with a degree of energy and determination which it has simply been unable to muster for economic reform. Yet our global trading position, relative economic weight and international competitiveness are in jeopardy. I therefore welcome the Commission's EU 2020 initiative, now endorsed by the European Council, and I congratulate particularly Mr Barroso for his part in this.

The future prosperity and well-being of our citizens depend on a dynamic economy able to generate jobs and wealth by unleashing the creative energies of entrepreneurs and by stimulating the growth of successful businesses. Part of this economic regeneration will be the greening of our economies, and we all hope that an agreement in Copenhagen this week will draw up a realistic framework to tackle climate change whilst facilitating economic growth and development.

On the adoption of the Stockholm Programme, we support the principle that the Member States of the Union must cooperate more to combat problems related to immigration, cross-border crime and terrorism. But these are also areas which lie at the heart of national sovereignty; and defending the laws and ensuring security and protecting the public are amongst the most important duties of a democratic state. We must therefore balance the need for joint action with respect for the rights of our Member States. Parts of the Stockholm Programme simply fail to get the balance right. Some of the proposals will simply centralise power, create unnecessary expense and add further bureaucracy for very little added value. Our priorities must lie in the direction of fitness to compete, deregulation, innovation and job creation. The people of Europe deserve nothing less.

**Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL).** – (SV) Mr President, I would also like to give the Swedish Presidency top marks for its organisational skills. The Swedish national administration has lived up to everyone's expectations. Unfortunately, I cannot be as positive when it comes to my political evaluation.

Two areas in particular must come in for criticism. Firstly, the matter of transparency and openness. Sweden is usually seen as setting an example in this area, but instead it has taken a passive approach – and that is a particularly serious matter when our citizens' freedom of communication is at stake. Allow me to mention in this respect the directive on data retention, the telecoms package and the secret ACTA agreement. There have been demands for the Presidency to act to make the documents available, as has been possible since the 2001 amendment to the Regulation on transparency – which states that the public shall have access to all the documents relating to ongoing international negotiations. Why has the Swedish Presidency not acted on this?

The second area is climate change and, in my opinion, the way that poor countries are being betrayed by our use of aid funds to mitigate the worst of the damage for which the rich world has been, and still is, responsible. This despite the fact that the climate convention, the Bali Plan and the Kyoto Protocol all state that funding to finance climate measures must be new funding. Once again, it is the most vulnerable who are having to foot the bill for the actions of the rich countries. It is those who do not have clean water, those threatened by malaria, those suffering from HIV and, above all, the poorest women and children of the world who are now having to pay the price. This policy is a shameful way to treat the poorer parts of the world.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, the Swedish Presidency is now coming to an end – with no great disasters, but, in my opinion, without any outstanding successes, either. In any case, the ambitious goal of getting the economic crisis under control could not be achieved. We have pumped billions into a system from which only a few benefit, whereas the public has to bear the risks and the costs. It is unacceptable for European taxpayers' hard-earned money to end up in the bonus pots of bank managers.

If we are already holding a climate summit, then, in my opinion, we also need, at long last, a truer reflection of costs and some honesty in the debate about nuclear reactors. If we are looking for climate protection solutions, we also need to put a stop to the deception surrounding emissions certificates.

In the case of the SWIFT negotiations, the Swedish Presidency has, in my opinion, allowed itself to be dictated to somewhat by the US with regard to the disclosure of bank data. As a result of this and of the Stockholm Programme, citizens are becoming ever easier to manipulate and ever more transparent.

With Sweden, Turkey is also losing an advocate for its accession. In my view, it is time to stop the accession negotiations and offer Turkey a privileged partnership.

**Werner Langen (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, first of all, I would like to say thank you. Despite many problems, the Swedish Council Presidency has done a splendid job. Sweden is a medium-sized country in the European Union and we should view that as a positive thing in all respects. I would like to thank you and your entire government, Mr Reinfeldt. With the climate, the financial market crisis, the Treaty of Lisbon and the new Commission, you have had really difficult tasks and issues to deal with. I would like to single out two issues.

The first is the financial market crisis. The fact that, together with the Commission, Sweden remained firm with regard to the consolidation efforts of individual Member States is extremely positive. The fact that you did not say 'we will now release Greece from its responsibilities within the euro area' is something that I can only wholeheartedly support.

The second area is climate policy. We have listened to the criticism from the Communists and the Greens. They do not have any actual responsibility anywhere in Europe. We can pursue climate policy in the style of China or the US by making grand proclamations but not achieving any results. Europe has achieved results. I reject the claim that Greenpeace is the yardstick for European climate policy. We must remain realistic! Here, too, the Swedish Presidency surprisingly achieved very good results during its term, together with the Commission. I would like to express my sincere thanks for this, too.

With regard to the subject of the Treaty of Lisbon: Mr Schulz is not here at the moment. He said that the Commission is influenced by it being made up of deputy leaders of European parties. I am only surprised that the chair of a political group wants to make an issue of the political commitment of individual members of the Commission. What is the point of that? I can only reject that argument.

Finally, I would like to encourage you – as I did when you took office – to finally join the euro. Can I say 'Sweden *ante portas*', Mr Reinfeldt?

**Adrian Severin (S&D).** – Mr President, in all fairness, I believe the Swedish Presidency can be satisfied with its achievements, and I think that Sweden can be proud of the performance of the Swedish Presidency. However, as always with the short-term presidencies, when they are good, they leave us with a bitter feeling of a somehow unaccomplished job.

Therefore, I believe the most important question now is: how and what could we further build on the achievements of the Swedish Presidency? The first thing is the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. A treaty is never enough for solving a problem. Political will is always needed in order to enhance it properly but, in this case, I think that we need even more than will. We need courage and imagination – imagination to fill the gaps or to clarify the ambiguities of the treaty. Therefore, I hope that, starting with the experience it has accumulated, the Swedish Presidency will still remain involved in supporting the building of the new institution which the Lisbon Treaty has created, namely the permanent – or long-term – President of the European Council and the office of High Representative with the External Action Service.

One of the priorities of the Swedish Presidency was, of course, the management of the economic and financial crisis. This was very important. Against this background, I think two phenomena which are quite threatening have been observed: firstly, the temptation of national protectionism and national egoism, and, secondly, the economic and social disparities between our Member States and the lack of economic, social and territorial cohesion within the European Union.

Should we call into question the wisdom of enlargement? Certainly not. These disparities were already there before, and interdependence is valid not only within the Union but globally. Therefore, these disparities were able to undermine or to put in jeopardy the stability of the whole continent and the Union. Therefore, I think that enlargement made it possible for the new Member States to cope with these disparities better inside the Union, for the profit of all Members of the Union.

But the conclusion is as follows, and I will end here. I believe that the next step is to pursue bolder and more substantial policies of territorial, economic and social cohesion in Europe – and not fewer policies of this kind – together with bold reforms, financial and economic reforms which would allow us not to repeat the crisis, and, certainly, with policies for post-crisis rehabilitation. In this context, the last statement of the Commission concerning economic support for eastern countries, as well as the readiness expressed by Mr Barroso to debate the 2020 Strategy, should be commended.

**Charles Goerens (ALDE).** – (FR) Mr President, I, too, would like to express my gratitude to the Swedish Presidency-in-Office of the European Council, but there remains one problem. On Thursday, the European Council took the decision to grant EUR 7.2 billion to finance developing countries' partial adaptation to climate change, which is all to the good.

From my point of view, this amount should be in addition to the development aid that the European Union has pledged to increase to 0.7% of gross national income by 2015. Why? Let us suppose that the EUR 7.2 billion comes from the package that has already been allocated as official development aid; this sum will not be enough to finance the Millennium Development Goals. It would be a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul.

We await clarification from the European Council and the Commission on this matter. Any ambiguity surrounding the complementary nature of the amount announced by the European Council of 10 and 11 December would undermine the European Union's credibility at the Copenhagen conference, which we have no hesitation in describing as crucial to the future of mankind.

(Applause)

**Ian Hughton (Verts/ALE).** – Mr President, I represent the European Free Alliance part of my group which includes the independence parties of Wales, Flanders, Catalonia and Scotland. We seek independent status so that our nations can contribute to European Council meetings and to world events such as the Copenhagen conference on climate change.

The government and the parliament of Scotland have adopted the world's most ambitious climate change act, with emission reduction targets of 42% by 2020 and 80% by 2050. These are targets which we mean to achieve, and yet the UK Government refused a reasonable request for a Scottish minister to be part of the official proceedings in Copenhagen. Such behaviour only underlines the fact that it is only with independence – the normal status of independence – that Scotland can properly contribute to the international community, and I hope that the European Council will very soon be discussing internal enlargement of the European Union, with Scotland leading the way.

**Hans-Peter Martin (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, we need a revolution in democracy. That fact that I admire so many Swedish traditions made me all the more disappointed by the overall balance sheet of their activities. Unfortunately, it was not a presidency of the people, but rather a presidency of the Council and also a large-scale investor presidency in the style of Mrs Wallström rather than that of Mrs Malmström.

Mrs Malmström, I remember you well from the time you were an MEP here. During this presidency, you have been a rather different person. I very much hope that when you return, you will pick up where you left off when you were here, namely being inspired by the parliamentary system. Why did you adopt SWIFT at such a late stage? Why do we now have a kind of executive board at EU level – this being one of the objectives of the Swedes, of all people, with their transparency? Please use your future to return to your roots.

**János Áder (PPE).** – (HU) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, during the last two and a half hours of this debate, quite a great deal has been said about Copenhagen and the Copenhagen negotiations. I must say that, in this respect, the Swedish Presidency has not been entirely successful as there is no common position being presented in Copenhagen for the European Union. This is not necessarily the Swedish Presidency's fault, but rather the European Commission's. What is going on and why is there no common position? There is no common position on at least two issues. One of these issues is whether carbon dioxide quotas can be transferred after 2012 and whether they can then be sold as well.

The European Commission criticises this position in an incomprehensible, short-sighted and narrow-minded manner. Hungary, Poland, Romania and other former socialist countries have fulfilled their Kyoto commitments. In fact, not only have they met them, but they have even overfulfilled them. We are entitled to the right to sell excess quotas. However, the Commission still wants to take this from us. In other words, they want to punish contractual compliance, which Hungary has also shown. Others have failed to keep



their commitments, even increasing their harmful emissions, but no one wants to punish them. After this, how can we expect the signatories to comply with a new agreement, that is, if there will be a sequel to Kyoto in Copenhagen?

I urge the European Commission, and if he were here, I would urge and emphatically call on President Barroso to change the narrow-minded attitude he has shown so far and stand for a position which complies with the current Kyoto Protocol in force. I would also like to draw your attention to a fact that we should not forget, namely, that without the new Member States, the EU15 would not have been able to meet their 8% emission reduction commitment. In fact, if this had been the case, the European Union would have a much poorer and weaker negotiating position in Copenhagen.

**Catherine Trautmann (S&D).** – (FR) Presidents, Minister, the Swedish Presidency has had what may be described as some historic moments: the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the appointments of the first President of the European Council and of the High Representative, but also the climate change conference and the appointment of a new Commission, as well as – please allow me this brief reference – the telecoms package.

These events have created hope. All things considered, however, there remain one or two mixed results. Firstly, our Parliament, being committed to the introduction of European supervision of the financial markets, welcomed the proposals made by Mr de Larosière's group of wise men as a crucial step. However, the conclusions of the ECOFIN Council of 2 December are well below this realistic level of ambition.

I wish to mention at this point that Parliament will be sure to restore some balance to the proposals that have been referred to it, in order to make the financial markets more robust. The same applies to the financial commitments pledged to the countries of the South to help them combat climate change. Even though, in Copenhagen, poor countries require real commitments concerning long-term financing, the Council has only managed to pledge EUR 7.2 billion over three years. This is a first step, true, but it falls far short of the requirements, all the more so since part of it comes from a restructuring exercise.

Lastly, in the financial field, we welcome the will to impose rules and to act forcefully with regard to both supervision and taxation. I note in particular, in the Council conclusions, the reference to a global financial transaction levy. This is something for which we socialists have been hoping and praying for more than 10 years. There is still work to be done. Seeking out new financial resources to promote employment, solidarity within and outside Europe, and the financing of the fight against climate change, is a major challenge. As it will soon be Christmas, I invite the Council to give us a decision on own resources in the years to come.

**Olle Schmidt (ALDE).** – (SV) Mr President, it is rather odd to hear some of the whiners – including some of my fellow Swedes – criticising the Swedish Presidency. With what is Carl Schlyter comparing this Presidency? With the Czech Republic, or some other great presidency?

Neither should anyone expect to get good marks from Mr Borghezio. In fact, getting poor marks from Mr Borghezio is a good result.

A lot has been done. The Treaty of Lisbon has come into force. The two highest posts in the EU have been filled. A number of important proposals have been laboriously pushed through: the Stockholm Programme, future financial supervision and especially the telecoms package. The climate summit in Copenhagen could also move in the right direction if we in the European Parliament want it to.

On the minus side, I would mention the failure to implement patient mobility. It represents continued legal uncertainty and unnecessary suffering as people wait for treatment.

Overall, however, all credit to Prime Minister Reinfeldt, to Mrs Malmström, the Minister for European Union Affairs, and to all the other members of the Presidency team. You all deserve a Happy New Year!

**Judith Sargentini (Verts/ALE).** – (NL) Mr President. Mr Reinfeldt, there is one serious blemish on your Presidency, and that is the decisions taken regarding SWIFT. The Treaty of Lisbon entered into force on 1 December, and on 30 November, you and your fellow Heads of State or Government rushed through an arrangement giving our bank details to the United States. If this is an indication of the future development of the Stockholm Programme – a programme intended to guarantee our civil rights, security and freedom – then my impression is that its implementation will really tip the scales and put freedom and civil rights under threat.

This is a blemish on your Presidency. I also think it besmirches the launch of the Treaty of Lisbon, which gives the European Parliament more rights, and I should like your assurance that, in future, you will show more respect for civil rights, citizens and Parliament.

**Zoltán Balczó (NI).** – (HU) Mr President, we would like to assess the results of the Swedish Presidency retrospectively from a 10-20 year perspective. The most important event that will be mentioned is the Treaty of Lisbon's entry into force. This Treaty creates the legal framework for a super state, with the lives of 500 million people being controlled from a central point and the nation states withering away. The path leading us to this was antidemocratic. Three referendums rejected this concept until the imposed second Irish referendum and the acquisition of Václav Klaus's signature created the opportunity for it to happen. The majority of Europe's population rejected this concept, and they want to hold on to the nation state. This is why I am confident that history will portray this period as a frustrated attempt to create an empire.

**Othmar Karas (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, in debates about the Council Presidency, we often talk as if the Presidency was the European Union. The Council Presidency is not the EU; it is an important manager of a European institution. I would therefore ask everyone to be a bit fairer and calmer.

The Council Presidency has done a good job over the last six months. It has helped to open a new chapter in the history of European Union success. However, none of us wants a Europe of governments. We are working towards a Europe of the citizens and towards greater cooperation between the institutions and the various parts of the European Union. Each one of us is a part of the European Union.

The institutional debate has been closed, the new posts have been filled and, on a few important points, the Council has moved into a position that will enable us to continue to work. Let us look to the future. Someone said that we have a major problem because the Treaty of Lisbon has not yet been taken into account in the working methods of the Council. The Council has more opportunities to influence the European Parliament and the committees of the European Parliament than the European Parliament has to influence the working groups and the Council meetings. In this respect, too, we demand the equal treatment of the two institutions, as we have equal status as legislators.

Yes, it was a mistake – we can argue about the content – to push SWIFT through in advance of the change in Parliament's power of codecision one day later. The decision on financial market supervision has still not been finalised. We need to make improvements, we need executive power, we need more European supervision where cross-border institutions are concerned and we need to achieve better coordination between the Member States, the Commission and the European Central Bank in the Basel Committee, because otherwise, a parallel structure will be created.

**Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, I want to congratulate the Swedish Presidency on its work, particularly with respect to the area of freedom, security and justice.

The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon represents a qualitative step and requires the next presidencies – Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian – to continue the difference made by the Swedish Presidency with the Stockholm Programme in drafting the action plan.

In the context of the cooperation that is required under the Treaty of Lisbon between the European Commission, Council and Parliament and the national Parliaments of the Member States (Article 17 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 295 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union), I would like to draw attention to the importance of three points that have been emphasised by the Swedish Presidency.

The first is related to the ambiguity surrounding the coordinator on anti-terrorism and illicit trafficking in persons and the extent to which this official is dependent on the Commission and, conversely, subject to control by the European Parliament.

The second is the external dimension of fundamental rights, which will now be a cross-cutting dimension of European politics. While there is a Commissioner dedicated to fundamental rights and justice, the European Union also has an External Action Service which must commit to human rights and to strong involvement in the defence of fundamental rights.

The third relates to the Schengen area for the free movement of persons. We believe that the fact that importance has been attached to evaluating and monitoring the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum and to the external border control policy (asylum, immigration and prevention of organised crime) will lead

to success in creating this area of free circulation of persons and human rights, thus completing the internal market and realising our European project.

**Lena Ek (ALDE).** – (SV) Mr President, building bridges is never easy. It is particularly difficult when we need to get 27 Member States and 500 million people across those bridges, making the transition from the old EU to a more open, more transparent and more democratic EU under the new Treaty of Lisbon, with the European Parliament now having a much greater influence.

This autumn, we have had both a climate crisis and a jobs crisis to contend with. Despite this, the Swedish Presidency has succeeded in putting in place a number of pieces of incredibly important legislation on energy efficiency. I am particularly pleased that the EU has now introduced energy labelling of domestic appliances. Other examples of legislation that has now been introduced include energy efficiency requirements for buildings and environmental labelling of vehicle tyres.

Finally, I would like to thank the government for its effective, coherent Presidency. I would particularly like to express my respect for EU Ambassador Ulrika Barklund Larsson, who was taken from us so suddenly this autumn. She did a fantastic job and we greatly miss her.

All that remains now is to conclude the climate conference in Copenhagen – the last and most important task, with the greatest long-term impact. Good luck!

**Mario Mauro (PPE).** – (IT) Mr President, Mr Reinfeldt, ladies and gentlemen, there are a number of points in the conclusions arising out of the latest European Council on which we should be able to agree and which we could describe as encouraging for the immediate future.

Firstly, immigration: the need to make access to European Union territory more efficient in terms of guaranteeing the safety of its citizens was highlighted. To do this, we need an integration policy. In other words, we need to strike the right balance between the needs of the Member States and the human drama, the productive potential of migrants.

Reference was then made to a Europe of responsibilities and solidarity where immigration and asylum are concerned. In this sense, I am encouraged by the way the Council stressed the urgent need to combat illegal immigration, starting with the border Member States, particularly in the south. This means sharing resources and problems. Unfortunately this aspect is all too often overshadowed by selfishness and a lack of courage.

The second aspect that I consider to be a priority, at this time of economic crisis, when we still cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel, is the relaunch of the Lisbon Strategy. We must be able to get back to competing with the emerging powers on a financial and commercial level as quickly as possible: only a state-of-the-art research and information system will allow us to take this step, which is so vital for us and, above all, for new generations.

I am pleased to note that the new method invoked by the Council aims to strengthen the link between national measures and European Union measures and to strengthen national ownership through more active involvement of management and labour and of the regional and local authorities, which can be summed up in one word: subsidiarity.

I still feel that we must do more in this direction: the family, people and intermediate groups must be at the centre of Europe's economic recovery. Only people, in fact, only men and women possess the original dynamism that can reactivate the many sectors of our social lives, now bowed down by the pessimism that all too often comes from the institutions.

**Ivari Padar (S&D).** – (ET) Mr President, first I would like to praise the chair for the approval of the Baltic Sea Strategy, which is certainly very important for my home country. I would, however, like to speak a bit longer on three points regarding the subject of finance.

First, I would like to express thanks for the efforts made on the regulation of the trans-European financial system, and also to call on the European Parliament, for its part, to give maximum support to this.

Second, in order to control the financial crisis, the European Union and its Member States have implemented a large number of exceptional measures, which is very positive. It is already possible to see stabilisation in the economy. At the same time, I agree with the Council that the situation is not yet secure enough for us to give up the support measures. The consequence of the crisis, for me, is definitely the fact that banks are necessary and the services they provide are necessary. It is not necessary, therefore, to go too far in punishing

them, but banking activities should be based on what is happening in the real economy, not on an inter-bank virtual market, which was the main reason for the recent crisis. At the same time, we need to consider the payment of bankers' bonuses, an issue which has become a particularly important topic in Estonia.

Third, in relation to this, I support the appeals to the International Monetary Fund to consider instituting a charge on global financial transactions – the Tobin tax – in order to give back money to society in the boom times. I support the necessity of renewing economic and social agreements between financial institutions and the society they serve, and to increase the benefits to society in good times and protect it from dangers.

**Paulo Rangel (PPE).** – (PT) Mr President, I should like to begin by congratulating the Swedish Presidency, particularly Prime Minister Reinfeldt, on behalf of both the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and the Portuguese delegation within the PPE Group.

Our verdict on the Swedish Presidency is that it has been an almost total success, basically in four fundamental areas. Firstly, in the institutional area, the Swedish Presidency's contribution to the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, to the highly successful election of the President of the Commission and to everything associated with ratification was extremely professional and at the level that we expect for best practice in the European Union. Of course, for a country like Portugal, which played a decisive role in the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon, the Swedish Presidency's contribution was invaluable.

My second point is the climate agenda, where, of course, the Commission's efforts have also been extremely important. In my view and that of many of my colleagues in the PPE, the climate change area is where the European Union has been most successful. It is at the very forefront of the global fight, and that is due to the efforts of both the Swedish Presidency and, in particular, the Commission Presidency. We consider these results to be very positive as well.

My third point is financial regulation. Especially with this latest Council, there has been a step forwards that we regard as decisive and which may have a great impact on our emergence from the crisis. I would therefore also like to pass on our congratulations for having achieved an agreement in that area. Lastly, I would like to mention an area that is very important to me personally: the Stockholm Programme and, therefore, the area of freedom, security and justice. I followed both the Tampere process and subsequently, in particular, the Hague process. I regard the Stockholm Programme as absolutely essential and would like to congratulate the Swedish Presidency and Prime Minister Reinfeldt on it.

**Marietta Giannakou (PPE).** – (EL) Mr President, the results of the Swedish Presidency are truly positive. They coincide with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which marks the end of the intergovernmentalism which has caused us problems for so many years and the exercising of a more integrated and cohesive policy.

The Swedish Presidency is also characterised by the creation of the Stockholm Programme and the decisions taken during the financial crisis, which are truly important, pivotal points in further developments in this endeavour.

At the same time, the election of the President of the European Commission and the appointments made, all of which are hugely important to developments in the endeavour we are making via the Lisbon Treaty, are especially important and interesting to the European Parliament and are positive and essential elements.

The European Parliament is taking on a new role as a legislative body alongside the European Council. This marks a new development in which we must all make greater and more cohesive efforts.

**Agustín Díaz de Mera García Consuegra (PPE).** – (ES) Mr President, I congratulate the Swedish Presidency on its commendable leadership over the last six months.

Regarding the Stockholm Programme, I would highlight the fact that it is trying to give impetus to longed-for common immigration policy. However, certain essential issues have been relegated to secondary status.

Within the European Union in 2008, there were 515 terrorist attacks in 11 Member States. Combating terrorism and protection of victims must therefore be included among the priorities of our political agenda, and must constitute a separate, specific category of the Stockholm Programme.

Secondly, eight million irregular immigrants live within the area of freedom, security and justice. In that regard, we must strengthen policies for development and cooperation with countries of origin and transit. The European Union must promote the conclusion of repatriation and readmission agreements with countries

such as Morocco, Algeria and Libya. The future action plan of the Stockholm Programme, to be presented in mid-June 2010, must consider these aspects.

**Andrzej Grzyb (PPE).** – (PL) I, too, would like to add my voice to the expressions of thanks which are being made to the Swedish Presidency, and to Mr Reinfeldt personally for his efficiency, and also for the excellent way in which he has achieved the priorities of the presidency.

Of course, what is important for European Union citizens is, in particular, action intended to reduce the effects of the economic and financial crisis. This is related to support for the business sector, in order to restore jobs and create conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises to develop, as well as to eliminate the causes of the crisis, particularly in financial markets, so that they will not be repeated in the future. It seems to me that European supervision in this area is insufficient, and that here we must also influence, as a democratically elected institution, the ethical standards followed by those who supervise banks and financial institutions.

Concerning the Copenhagen Summit, I fully endorse the position stated by Mr Barroso. Here, there is, indeed, a need for partnership on the part of other important economic players for the effects of the summit to be truly attainable.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D).** – (RO) I was the rapporteur for the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, which I negotiated on second reading with the Swedish Presidency of the European Union Council. This is an extremely important report for the future of the European Union and the battle against climate change. It is also significant for the Copenhagen conference, but especially for the 2.7 million jobs which may be created in this sector by 2020.

With regard to comitology, in accordance with the Treaty of Lisbon, negotiations have started on an institutional agreement on powers and procedures delegated by the Commission. Bearing in mind that the Treaty of Lisbon creates a new basis both for climate change and a common energy policy, I hope, and we also expect it from the European Commission, President Barroso, that you will present to us a programme of work for the next five years, so that the commissioners we listen to can respond to these challenges as well.

As a final point, I would like to mention the lifting of the barriers to free movement of labour in the case of workers from the new Member States, which should be a final action by the Swedish Presidency.

**President.** – I must apologise to Mr Balčytis and Mr Luhan: I cannot comply with their request because we already have numerous other speakers and we do not have enough time to let everyone speak. They will have to save it for another time. I apologise once again.

**Ivo Vajgl (ALDE).** – (SL) I should like to congratulate the Swedish Presidency for leading the European Union fairly and responsibly at a time, as you said, of institutional change and of economic and financial crisis. However, you may have missed the opportunity during this period to promote a broader European discourse on a socio-economic model different to the one which led us into this crisis. Sweden knows much more about this than some other countries.

You have also experienced the bitter realisation of the limitations of the European Union when it comes to unity of action, especially at the time we were electing the EU's leadership. You have set a few new standards in the field of foreign policy, in the Middle East, for example, and I congratulate you on that achievement. Thank you also for the attention you have paid to the enlargement of the European Union and for resolving, together with the Commission, some unfinished issues which stood in the way of this process. A job well done!

**Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, Mr Barroso, Mr Reinfeldt, I would like to know your view, Mr Reinfeldt, on the conclusions of the Troika, since the Heads of State or Government decided to create this troika concept in order to give a sense of continuity to the Presidency. Furthermore, since you are concluding the Troika between the French Republic, the Czech Republic and the Kingdom of Sweden, what is your view on this instrument and what conclusion do you draw from it?

**Mirosław Piotrowski (ECR).** – (PL) Mr President, We meet here in Parliament every six months to summarise the achievements of another country as it ends its leadership of the European Union.

The Swedish Presidency will go down in history because its term saw the pushing through of the Euro-constitution, for which some had been agitating for nearly 10 years, and which in its current form is

known as the Treaty of Lisbon. This was done against the will of many nations. The results of referendums in France, the Netherlands and Ireland were ostentatiously brushed aside. The principle of a democracy deficit was introduced, which allows control from above, ostensibly to improve EU administrative mechanisms. The first changes related to the selection of people for new positions in the Union have, for the time being, brought in organisational chaos and caused general amusement in Europe and around the world. The Swedish Presidency is, in fact, leaving the European Union in a state of uncertainty and chaos.

**Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE).** – Mr President, I would like to congratulate the Swedish Presidency for the vision of a citizen-centred Europe laid down in the Stockholm Programme. We can never underline enough the historic importance of finally having a vision that meets our citizens' concerns for security and, at the same time, for respecting individual rights. Finally, we can move forward to a Europe for the citizen, by the citizen.

I also would like to welcome the Asylum Support Office, which is an important and concrete step towards meeting the concerns of countries that want to fight illegal immigration while, at the same time, providing for a more humane migration policy. The Stockholm Programme will remain with us for five years, and I hope we can move forward to implementation. I thank the Swedish Presidency. Your footprint will remain with us for five years.

**Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D).** – (HU) The Swedish Presidency has done an excellent job, and I would like to congratulate the prime minister for this. The final completion of the Treaty of Lisbon's ratification resolved the regrettable and disgraceful mini-crisis involving the Czech President Klaus. This situation resulted from the political mistake made during the enlargement process where the European Union did not declare earlier that the 13 discriminatory Beneš Decrees were morally untenable. The second major event is that the EU managed to establish a united position for the climate change negotiations. The US and China have still not realised this fact, but the European Union clearly understands that the future belongs to whoever now leads the way in green economic development. Let us not forget that the only reason the EU was able to achieve its targets was that the new Member States had reduced their emissions significantly. Finally, the third major event was that accession negotiations got under way with Serbia, and Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro were granted visa-free travel. I would like to thank the Swedish Presidency for creating an excellent opportunity for the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Trio Presidency.

**Rachida Dati (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, Mr Barroso, Mr Reinfeldt, first of all, I would like to congratulate the Swedish Presidency on the six months of relentless and very ambitious work it has done, notably by securing, alongside the Heads of State or Government and within the scope of the G20, a common and ambitious position on financial regulation matters.

When it comes to the Copenhagen conference, too, we see that the European Union has an ambitious, very elevated, very proactive and common position. I would like therefore to endorse its positions and its decisions. Europe has been a driving force behind the proposal, negotiation and conclusion of major agreements concerning this financial crisis, which affects the whole of Europe.

The European Council also gave its verdict, last week, on the new financial supervisory architecture, and negotiations with the European Parliament have been opened since, from now on, the responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the decisions taken in Pittsburgh will also be shared by the European Parliament.

The financial crisis has revealed the weak points in our financial supervision system. The idea was to ensure better coordination, but also to renew and strengthen the powers of European authorities; these are urgent requirements.

I hope – and I am addressing the Commission here – that we remain vigilant and maintain this level of ambition when implementing our decisions.

**Diane Dodds (NI).** – Mr President, this morning I want to express my extreme disappointment, on behalf of the Northern Ireland fishing industry, that yet another cut has been imposed upon the industry. Last night's announcement from the Council that there will be a 9% cut in nephrops in Area 7A is a bitter blow to the fishing industry in Northern Ireland.

It is a fragile industry because of the cod recovery programme and because of the cuts in the days at sea. It is an industry that has had to rely on nephrops. This 9% cut will be devastating, and it is particularly galling since the science this year should have allowed the Commission to have a roll-over.

I think that the priority for the Spanish in the next term must be the reform of the common fisheries policy and for decisions like this to be taken at regional level by local, accountable people, and not Brussels bureaucrats.

**Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE).** – (PL) During the Swedish Presidency, a great deal of good has happened in the Union, in what has been, of course, a difficult period of crisis and expectations concerning acceptance of the Treaty of Lisbon. I do not, however, share the opinion that we have a different Union or a new Union. I think we have, at most, a renewed Union. In fact, the general provisions of the treaty must be supplemented, not only with detailed content, but also with specific practical solutions. It is important to clarify the division of competences between key posts, and how we establish relations between EU institutions, including the new role of the European Parliament

My fears are aroused by possible restrictions on the function of the rotating presidency held by successive Member States. This leadership role is something Member States prepare for and discharge with great determination. If, alongside the permanent President of the European Council, we do not also have the leader of the country which currently has the leadership giving reports here, the Union will be incomplete and will lose some of its diversity. The countries which lead must still creatively inspire new action, and the permanent President of the European Council will have to ensure coordination, continuity and cohesion of the Union's work.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

*President*

**Fredrik Reinfeldt, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Mr President, coming to the end of this debate, we are also coming to the end of the last presidency on the rotating principle, as has been mentioned. Soon, José Manuel Barroso and I will leave for Copenhagen, so just a comment on financial resources, because I think that will be at the heart of the discussions we will now have with the developing countries.

We were able to put a figure on the table – EUR 2.4 billion annually – between 2010 and 2012. The importance for us was to say that this is directed to these years, earmarked for 2010 to 2012, and it will also be available for support when it comes to climate protection.

The discussion on how to meet the Millennium Development Goals is an important discussion. I want to point out that the Member States have agreed that we should commit ourselves to disbursing collectively 0.56% of EU GNI by 2010, that is, already next year, and coming up to the UN percentage level of 0.7 in 2015 when it comes to official development assistance.

This is very much in the hands of the Member States. To point out the obvious, very many of the Member States are below these figures today. Sweden is in a very exclusive club, almost alone at 1% of GNI when it comes to development assistance. This should also be remembered when we discuss these levels: that there are differences between the countries.

We made it voluntary for the Member States to give the resources that they were able to give. I am very happy to report back that all 27 Member States made contributions to these fast-start resources. In some cases, they were very small contributions, but the European voice is heard in the sense that everyone actually contributed.

Thank you again also for the cooperation we have had with Parliament. It is the fourth time during the Swedish Presidency that I, as Prime Minister, have addressed this Parliament. That does not even come close to Cecilia Malmström's number of engagements with Parliament, because she has been here 25 times to speak to you. In all, the Presidency has addressed Parliament in plenary on 43 occasions during our term in office and we have been in committee on 44 different occasions.

That is also important when it comes to the discussions on transparency and good cooperation between the institutions. We knew of the importance of having a good link with the European Parliament. We prepared ourselves to be present, to be here, to be able to answer questions, and we thank you for that very good cooperation.

**President.** – Prime Minister, in two weeks' time, your presidency of the European Union will come to an end. Thank you for your activity and for your energy. It has not been an easy presidency; we know that. As we heard from our Members, and the many points of view expressed, it has been a successful presidency. I wish to thank you personally and, indeed, the entire Swedish Government. For the first time in history, we experienced, over the last few weeks, new relations as a result of the Lisbon Treaty.

Thank you very much. We will remember your presidency.

**José Manuel Barroso**, *President of the Commission*. – Mr President, I would just like to answer some of the concrete questions from the Members of Parliament who are still here.

For instance, Mr Severin spoke about economic, social and territorial cohesion, and I want to underline the point he made. In fact, in the first exchange of views which we had in the European Council on the future European Union 2020 Strategy, it was agreed – see point 18 of the conclusions – that every effort should be made to ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion as well as gender equality. I think it is important to have this from the beginning of the discussion of the European Union 2020 Strategy. Of course, the emphasis is on competitiveness and the need to respond to the global challenges which we are now facing, but we should do that in conjunction with promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union. This is going to be very important, not only for the definition of this strategy, but also for the next financial perspectives.

Another concrete point regarding the European supervisory authorities was raised, namely by Mr Karas and also by Ms Dati. Let me be clear on this matter. We very much welcome the fact that the European Council was able to reach a unanimous agreement. Frankly, some time ago, it would have been inconceivable to have all the Member States agreeing on a text on financial supervision at European level. Having said this, while I respect the delicate nature of some of the issues addressed by our proposals, I believe the Commission's text has been diluted a bit too much. The Commission, in its proposal, had foreseen a simple and workable fiscal safeguard clause, precisely because this is a very sensitive matter. Anyway, I regret the removal of the proposed powers of the authorities to address decisions directly to individual financial institutions in two out of the three situations where the Commission had proposed it.

I regret the fact that the issue of emergency situations has been politicised by giving the Council the responsibility of declaring that an emergency exists, and I also regret that the potential scope of direct supervision by the European supervisory authorities has been limited to credit-rating agencies only. I hope the European Parliament will reinforce and rebalance the regulations in these areas in the next negotiating phase.

Coming to the issue of Copenhagen, and let me be clear about this: it was very important that the European Council confirmed the previous commitments saying that we are ready to move to a 30% reduction by 2020, compared to 1990 levels, provided that other developed countries commit themselves to comparable emission reductions and that developing countries contribute adequately according to their responsibilities and respected capabilities.

We will continue to assess mitigation plans from other countries and take this decision at the appropriate time in Copenhagen. In fact, during the European Council, I had mentioned the possibility of having some modulation in our offer, namely the possibility of constructing some pathways beyond 2020. This discussion is not just about 2020; it is for after 2020. So we should have some flexibility on the pathways that we can define after 2020. It is in this spirit that we go to Copenhagen not only to achieve the most ambitious agreement but also to have a real global agreement.

**President.** – President Barroso, thank you once again. I would like to thank Prime Minister Reinfeldt, Minister Malmström, a former Member of the European Parliament, and the whole of the Swedish Government for their very active cooperation with the European Parliament.

That concludes the debate.

*Written statements (Rule 149)*

**Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (LT) I would like to congratulate the Swedish Presidency on constructively and effectively implementing the goals of its programme. Sweden put considerable effort into ensuring the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December this year, and this means that the European Union will become more democratic, more efficient and more transparent. I am sure that the treaty will improve continuity and will strengthen the EU's role in the international arena.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region was endorsed during the Swedish Presidency. I am delighted that financial support has been earmarked for the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. As a Lithuanian, I know all too well the challenges that the Baltic Sea region faces today. One of these is how best to resolve the urgent and serious problem of protecting the Baltic Sea environment. Another is how to transform the Baltic Sea region into a more powerful engine for economic growth and development.



We can already find preliminary answers to these questions today in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region adopted during the Swedish Presidency. It is the first of several European macro-regional development plans, through which we hope to improve the region's environment and strengthen its competitiveness. The strategy of the Stockholm Programme is one of the most important priorities achieved by Sweden. This five-year programme will create conditions to further develop an area of freedom, security and justice.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The six months of the Swedish Presidency under Prime Minister Reinfeldt have been a great success and marked by excellence.

The Swedish Presidency played a crucial role in the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. It thus ended almost a decade of debate and institutional stalemate, opening the door to new opportunities for the European Union.

The fight against climate change is a topic that has always been at the top of its agenda. The EU is a leader in this field, as shown by its ambitious proposal to cut emissions by 80% and 95% by 2050. It also reached agreement on providing EUR 7.2 billion in funds for developing countries for the next three years.

The Swedish Presidency has faced the economic crisis and financial turmoil with sound, realistic measures. Faced with the worst financial crisis since the 1930s, the EU swiftly adopted special support measures. The work of 'preventing' further crises has also been carried out through a new financial supervisory structure.

The Swedish Presidency has helped to address the crisis and has made Europe stronger, allowing it to continue to forge a path of peace, success and modernity.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (PT) It is a fact that it was during the Swedish Presidency that significant institutional changes were made, particularly the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, after that whole process of pressurising and blackmailing the Irish people into changing their vote in the second referendum they had to hold.

However, even for someone who really wants an increasingly neoliberal, militaristic and federalist form of European integration, it is unacceptable that he had not a word to say about the terrible social situation that the European Union is experiencing, which can clearly be seen in the rise of over 5 million unemployed in just one year, so that there are now over 23 million people out of work.

It was quite symptomatic, however, that the spotlight was put on the start of the debate on the EU's strategy for 2020, quite forgetting the evaluation of the so-called Lisbon Strategy, which was approved 10 years ago and promised an oasis in the EU. That was doubtless so as not to have to mention the causes of the greatest economic and social crisis in recent decades, fed by liberalisation and labour flexibility, which has created precarious and poorly paid work and increased unemployment.

**Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PL) Mr President, assessment of the Swedish Presidency yields a very positive result. Of course, its greatest success was bringing the ratification process for the Treaty of Lisbon to completion. As a member of the Committee on Legal Affairs, I also consider a success the compromise reached in the Council on EU patents and the integrated system of patent jurisdiction.

Debate on a common patent for the entire Union has been going on for a long time. It is high time to establish specific rules on this, because the lack of uniform regulations constitutes a barrier to the development of European businesses, and makes it difficult for them to compete, for example, with American firms. Many times in the past, we have seen how difficult it is to reconcile the interests of all Member States in the matter of the EU patent, and so I am all the more grateful to the Swedish Presidency for the compromise, for the moment, only at the political level, which has been achieved.

The Treaty of Lisbon gives the Union legal grounds to establish intellectual property law, and provides that suitable standards will be adopted under the Ordinary legislative procedure. Therefore, during the forthcoming Spanish Presidency, there will be a very interesting debate in Parliament concerning the compromise worked out in December this year.

**Zita Gurmai (S&D)**, *in writing*. – The green light has been given to the Lisbon Treaty, which has created all necessary circumstances for institutional reforms. The Swedish Presidency's role was to pave the way for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty's provisions. It coped with this challenge. The next Presidency's task is to ensure that the new structures function effectively. In this context, every effort should be made to ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion and gender equality. I find it important to emphasise that with the

treaty, the Charter of Fundamental Rights will be binding, so human rights (including gender equality) and anti-discrimination issues will have a better chance to be upheld via the law.

Another success was the drawing-up and approval of the Stockholm Programme, targeting core issues, which can be regarded as a pragmatic action plan for a more secure and more open Europe, based on common values, principles and actions.

I would like to underline that although gender equality was not a priority, the Swedish Presidency also played a role in increasing the number of women Commissioners and in the appointment of a female High Representative.

**Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) The Treaty of Lisbon has strengthened Parliament's role in the European decision-making process and, by extension, the legitimacy of this institution in the eyes of Europe's citizens. Consequently, I congratulate the Swedish Presidency for the outstanding efforts made to bring about the new treaty's entry into force. I equally welcome the developments in the areas of justice and internal affairs. The Stockholm Programme, which was drafted during recent months and voted for at the European Council on 10-11 December, outlines the new reference framework in this area for the 2010-2014 period. I am pleased to note that consideration was given to Parliament's recommendations by the Council. I am referring, in particular, to the extension of the Schengen area to all EU countries, which now becomes a priority for the European Union's internal policy, following the amendments we tabled.

**Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) I wish to congratulate the Swedish Presidency for the six months of ambitious work it has carried out in the difficult climate of the economic and financial crisis, the preparations for the Copenhagen Summit and the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon. Thanks to the Treaty of Lisbon, we finally have the clear institutional framework for tackling all the challenges facing the modern world. The new treaty enables the EU to firmly assume a pioneering role in the battle against climate change, as well as the status of a global player, not only in relation to the United States and the Russian Federation, but in relation to the emerging countries as well. In addition, the new permanent President of the Council and High Representative will ensure continuity in the EU's foreign policy activities, which marks progress in consolidating the EU's role on the world stage. As a result of all these institutional changes, the EU will be more efficient and have available a wider range of methods for resolving the major problems facing the international community, such as combating terrorism, adapting to climate change, ensuring energy security and combating the effects of the economic and financial crisis. I am sure that the Spanish Presidency will be able to meet expectations and successfully continue the actions and activities initiated by the Swedish Presidency.

**Véronique Mathieu (PPE), in writing.** – (FR) I should like to congratulate the Swedish Presidency on its work, particularly in those areas that come under the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs. The challenges were huge: there was the transition from the legal system of the Treaty of Nice to that provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon and also the drafting of the next multiannual programme, which will define the priorities to be given to the area of freedom, security and justice for the next five years. I wish to commend this Stockholm Programme, which will boost the ambitious political efforts to enhance this area by 2014. However, considerable progress remains to be made, and this mainly in the area of asylum. I welcome the creation of the European Asylum Support Office, since it is vital to approximate not only the laws but also the practices of the Member States. Nevertheless, the other proposals in the asylum package will have to be adopted as quickly as possible so as to prevent a third phase of the European Common Asylum System from having to be developed. With the major institutional changes introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, we can now look forward to the imminent adoption of more ambitious and higher quality legislative instruments under the forthcoming presidencies.

**Rovana Plumb (S&D), in writing.** – (RO) The Swedish Presidency has signified progress through three major actions: - the election of the EU President and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy after the Treaty of Lisbon came into force; - the adoption of the 'Stockholm Multiannual Programme for the 2010-2014 period'; - the preparation and coordination of the COP 15 negotiations on climate change in Copenhagen. I welcome the Council's decision on the EU and its Member States being prepared to make a contribution with rapid initial funding of EUR 2.4 billion a year for the 2010-2012 period in order to support developing countries in adapting to the effects of climate change. However, I call on the Commission to devise a suitable mechanism for distributing the financial burden between Member States according to each one's economic power.

**Joanna Senyszyn (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PL) The 2010 Strategy marks out the direction of the Union's operations and its main priorities for the next 10 years. As we come to the end of the Lisbon Strategy, it is important, while continuing with current socio-economic priorities, to find effective means for evening out the effects of the economic crisis.

In connection with the consultations which are currently under way on the future strategy, I would like to draw attention to two aspects: improvement of the education system in Europe and equality of the sexes in the labour market. The education system in Europe must change. Building a modern, knowledge-based economy is not possible without young, well-educated workers. We should ensure greater financial support for current EU programmes (Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Leonardo da Vinci) and establish new initiatives which will help young people to learn and to gain experience abroad, and will also provide the financial and administrative possibilities necessary to use this support at work in their own country.

The Union, in making a priority of the citizens' needs, should adopt a programme which, in every area of its operation, promotes equality of the sexes, and particularly in the fight against unemployment. When planning the new strategy, we should place special emphasis on raising the proportion of women in employment, for research carried out by Eurostat shows that the crisis has affected working women more than men, among other reasons, because they work in jobs which are much less secure. Discrimination in the labour market remains a serious problem, and the new strategy must face up to it.

**Nuno Teixeira (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Despite the difficulties resulting from the delayed entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the Swedish Presidency achieved some notable successes. They include the energy efficiency package and the telecoms package, the creation of a prudential financial supervisory body, agreement on the 2010 budget, particularly as regards financing the economic recovery plan, the Baltic Sea strategy and alignment for this week's Copenhagen climate conference. The Spanish Presidency to begin in 2010 will guide the transition from Nice to Lisbon and will continue the strategy of promoting employment by stimulating and promoting European economies, as well as addressing other major challenges such as financial regulation and climate change. Because of its geographical and historical proximity, Portugal and especially the outermost regions such as Madeira, which are looking forward to seeing how the Spanish Presidency performs, must try to make the most of the opportunities that will surely be generated. The pioneering EU-Morocco Summit, for example, will be an ideal forum for promoting the Euro-African Atlantic Cooperation Area, which will include Madeira, the Azores, the Canaries and neighbouring countries, especially Morocco. I shall put all my efforts into it and will monitor it closely.

**Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (EL) Mr President, the decisions made by the summit signal an escalation in the anti-grassroots policy of the European Union and the bourgeois governments and harsh measures against the working class and grassroots sections of society in order to strengthen the profitability and position of European monopolies, both within the framework of the single internal market and in international imperialist competition. The EU strategy for 2020, a deeper version of the Lisbon Strategy, sets as priorities faster capitalist restructurings and the demolition of the workers' remaining wage, labour and social rights. The cornerstone of the EU exit strategy from the capitalist crisis is to impose sweeping changes in social security systems, to increase the retirement age and to drastically cut wages, pensions and social benefits. Deficits and public debt and the procedures for supervising the economies of various Member States, including Greece, are being mobilised in order to ideologically terrorise the workers. This anti-grassroots EU policy also bears the hallmark of the PASOK and New Democracy parties, which continue to support the choices of capital, while shifting the consequences of the crisis on to the workers' shoulders. The Greek Communist Party calls on the working class to organise its counterattack, to condemn the parties of the European one-way street and to participate *en masse* in the unemployment rally on 17 December being organised by the class forces of the All Workers Militant Front.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR LAMBRINIDIS

*Vice-President*

### 4. Voting time

**President.** – The next item is voting time.

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

#### **4.1. Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: Sweden - Volvo; Austria - Styria; Netherlands - Heijmans (A7-0079/2009, Reimer Böge) (vote)**

- After the vote on Amendment 2:

**Hans-Peter Martin (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, while we were voting on Amendment 8, the small screen – at least over here – and the screen on the left were still displaying 7d. I just wanted to make sure that the votes have been recorded correctly.

#### **4.2. Draft amending budget No 10/2009 of the European Union for the financial year 2009, Section III – Commission (A7-0081/2009, Jutta Haug) (vote)**

#### **4.3. Verification of credentials (A7-0073/2009, Klaus-Heiner Lehne) (vote)**

#### **4.4. Prospects for the Doha Development Agenda following the Seventh WTO Ministerial Conference (vote)**

- on Amendment 2:

**Harlem Désir (S&D).** – (FR) Mr President, I just wanted to say that, if I understand our fellow Member Mr Papastamkos's amendment correctly, it is about recalling the commitment made in Hong Kong by all the WTO members to abolish export subsidies. Therefore, contrary to a mistake made on our voting papers, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament does indeed endorse this amendment.

#### **4.5. Restrictive measures affecting the rights of individuals following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (vote)**

### **5. Explanations of vote**

#### **Oral explanations of vote**

##### **- Report: Reimer Böge (A7-0079/2009)**

**Jan Březina (PPE).** – (CS) I voted against the Böge report on releasing resources from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund because, particularly in the case of the Austrian request, it involves a highly unsystematic approach which is reflected in an unprecedented high level of support per person. If there must be time limited individual support aimed at assisting workers affected by redundancies as a result of globalisation, such support must relate to real individual needs and the real economic context. However, this is not happening and, on the contrary, the procedure for determining this support has been haphazard and arbitrary. In my opinion it is therefore necessary to set out firm criteria. Using the funds in this way is no solution to the problem but is actually a waste of taxpayers' money.

##### **- Motions for resolutions: Prospects for the Doha Development Agenda following the Seventh WTO Ministerial Conference (RC-B7-0188/2009)**

**Syed Kamall (ECR).** – Mr President, the reason that I think many of us are interested in trade is really the idea of how we help those in the very poorest countries to get out of poverty. We know that one of the best ways to help them out of poverty is to help the entrepreneurs in poorer countries. Entrepreneurs in many poorer countries are crying out for help and open markets and it is important that we support them.

But we also have to look within our own borders to see how we are setting up barriers to facilitating trade with poorer countries. In many cases, poorer countries see the trade rules as skewed against them and they look at things like the common agricultural policy, cotton subsidies, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, and the tariffs on higher value imports to the EU. It is important that we show that the trading system is truly open and that we help the poorest countries as much as possible to eradicate poverty.

**Nirj Deva (ECR).** – Mr President, if we are to alleviate poverty in the world, we have to increase global trade. If we go down the path of protectionism because of the world's current financial crisis, the only thing we will do is delay bringing millions of people out of poverty, and millions of people will die. If we do not grasp this challenge right now and look forward beyond this crisis, we will leave behind a legacy of such awful proportions that a billion people will find themselves unable to live.

We have a food crisis, we have climate change, we have global warming, we have floods, earthquakes and all sorts of catastrophes which call for our help, and the only way we can uplift everyone is to actually increase global trade, and I am very grateful that the new Trade Commissioner-designate is listening to me.

**Marc Tarabella (S&D).** – (FR) Mr President, concerning this resolution on the World Trade Organisation, and contrary to the opinion voiced by the previous speaker, I believe that it is not international trade that will ensure that fewer than one billion human beings die or suffer from malnutrition, but subsistence farming. It will ensure this long before international trade does.

I have already had an opportunity to speak on this issue during the debate, and for no other reason than because the amendment concerning public services and the need for governments to be able to control public services relating to fundamental problems such as water and energy has been rejected, I have voted against this resolution.

### **Written explanations of vote**

#### **- Report: Reimer Böge (A7-0079/2009)**

**Andrew Henry William Brons (NI), in writing.** – We are not laissez-faire capitalists and we do believe in state help for workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. We would want that help to be provided by sovereign states to their own workers. We are not, of course, even in favour of EU membership. However, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund exists and has had money allocated to it.

This fund is an unwelcome substitute for help by Member States. If it were to be proposed that British workers should be helped from this fund, I would obviously support it. Therefore, I must reluctantly support Swedish, Dutch and Austrian workers being supported from it. If there should be a No vote, the money would not be handed back to the taxpayer. It would be retained by the EU and then perhaps spent on a much less deserving cause.

**Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund was set up to grant additional assistance to workers affected by the consequences of major changes in the structure of international trade. Portugal, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland and Austria have already applied to it, which shows that this problem affects Member States in different geographical areas and with different economic models and trajectories.

Such situations, which are happening at an alarming rate, require decision makers to think carefully about the European economic and social model as well as its sustainability and its future. They also mean that it is absolutely crucial to promote ways of creating quality new jobs. For these to succeed, we must provide support, remove burdens and cut out unjustifiable red tape for those who are still willing to risk starting new businesses and joining innovative projects, despite the difficulties.

No matter how much assistance is granted to workers, it will be worthless if companies keep closing down one after the other and if we cannot reverse the investment drain in Europe.

The cases in question, which I endorse, concern Sweden, Austria and the Netherlands, and they have won broad support in the parliamentary committees concerned, both for tabling the motion for a resolution and for issuing an opinion.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) Although we maintain our critical position regarding the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, since we believe it would have been more important to adopt measures to prevent unemployment in the first place, we voted in favour of the mobilisation of this fund to provide further assistance for workers affected by the consequences of company restructuring or the liberalisation of international trade.

This case concerns the mobilisation of approximately EUR 16 million for Sweden, Austria and the Netherlands in order to provide assistance for workers made redundant in the car making and construction industries.

This is the fifth time the fund has been mobilised in 2009, making an overall amount of EUR 53 million that has been used out of the EUR 500 million planned. It is quite symptomatic that little more than 10% of the planned amount has been used during a period of severe social crisis, and that in itself at least demonstrates the need for a review of the regulations governing the fund.

**Françoise Grossetête (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the Böge report on mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. Its aim is to protect jobs and to make it easier for workers who have been made redundant following changes in the structure of international trade and the global financial and economic crisis to re-enter the labour market.

Three years on from its creation in 2006, and in the current context of global economic and financial crisis, it was crucial to ease the conditions governing use of this European fund. Sweden, Austria and the Netherlands are today the target of these more effective and rapid measures, and I look forward to all the EU Member States having greater access to this finance. Linked as it is to the financial framework for 2007-2013, the maximum annual amount of the Fund may not exceed EUR 500 million, but it is crucial that these resources are implemented in full, which is not the case today.

The European Union must use all the resources at its disposal to deal with the consequences of the economic crisis.

**Jörg Leichtfried (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (DE) I am voting in favour of the report on the provision of EUR 15.9 million in assistance to Austria, Sweden and the Netherlands. As a consequence of the global economic crisis, a total of 744 workers have had to be made redundant in the automotive supply industry in Styria alone. The application rightly submitted by Austria for assistance totalling EUR 5 705 365 from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund has now been approved by the EU.

That is absolutely justified, as Austria has been hit particularly hard by the slump in exports. For example, exports of road vehicles and cars have fallen by 51.3% and 59.4%, respectively. As a result of the close interconnection between the companies in the automotive industry and the low-level of diversification of many suppliers, the crisis is being felt throughout the automotive industry.

**Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (FR) Swedish, Austrian and Dutch workers are being sacrificed to globalisation. We reiterate our strong opposition to the philosophy underpinning this fund, which makes European workers mere 'adjustment variables' enabling the smooth running of a form of neoliberal globalisation that is never called into question. The interests of giants such as the US company Ford, the current owner of Volvo Cars, which cleared a profit of almost USD 1 billion in the third quarter of 2009, or Aviva, Axa and BlackRock, the main shareholders of Heijmans NV, today supplant the general interest of European citizens. The fund is contributing to this despoilment.

**Nuno Melo (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The European Union is an area of solidarity. That spirit is the context for the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. The fund provides essential support to help the unemployed and victims of the relocations that occur in a globalised context. That is even more the case when we realise that an increasing number of companies is relocating, taking advantage of the reduced labour costs found in various countries, particularly China and India, often at the price of social, labour and environmental dumping.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Once again, the consequences of globalisation are having to be cushioned through the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF). This time, unfortunately, Styria has also been hard hit. A total of 744 people from nine different companies have lost their jobs over the last few months, and that is why the Province of Styria has asked the EU for assistance. As with previous applications, everything has been examined very thoroughly and I am pleased that the people of Styria meet all of the requirements. Especially during the current financial and economic crisis, we are being very clearly reminded once again of the negative effects of globalisation.

With that in mind, it is even more incomprehensible that Parliament has today adopted a resolution promoting more liberalisation and the breaking down of trade barriers, and hence more globalisation. Until a change of thinking occurs in the EU, we can only work to reduce the damage caused by globalisation in the countries concerned. Therefore, I have voted without reservations in favour of releasing aid from the fund.

**Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PL) I endorsed mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, because the situation in labour markets today demands that we act on behalf of workers. Previous crises were characterised by the fact that they affected specific regions, and were concentrated in

one place. At such times, all those who lost their jobs or faced financial problems were able to go abroad to find work or could have several jobs. Today, in relation to the global character of the financial crisis, such options are not available.

The current situation in the financial markets requires that we support many millions of people who have lost their jobs over the past year. I am not, of course, talking only about help in looking for work, but also about using the elasticity of the labour market, helping workers to gain new qualifications and organising appropriate training, for example, in the use of computers or giving careers advice. Most of the money in the EGF should be designated for promoting entrepreneurship and giving assistance with self-employment because, when people have lost their job, setting up a business and generating an income on their own account represents an opportunity to maintain financial stability and to develop.

I think that programmes like the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund are very much needed, because they respond to a specific situation and help directly those who have suffered most from the effects of the crisis.

**Aldo Patriciello (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur on his excellent work. The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund is a tool that is now being increasingly used by the European Parliament due to the difficult stage of economic convergence our continent is experiencing.

This shows that, in the face of the crisis, the European Parliament has been able to adopt political measures to benefit the citizens we represent through a synergy of wide-ranging political objectives. For this reason, I voted in favour of this Fund in the certainty that it will constitute a fundamental tool of professional and hence social integration for workers who have lost their jobs.

**Marit Paulsen, Olle Schmidt and Cecilia Wikström (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (SV) Sweden has applied for assistance from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in respect of redundancies within the automotive sector in Sweden.

We are convinced that free trade and the market economy benefit economic development and we are therefore, in principle, opposed to financial assistance for countries or regions. However, this economic crisis has been deeper than any crisis that Europe has experienced since the 1930s and has hit car manufacturers in Sweden, and Volvo Cars in particular, especially hard.

The redundancies made by Volvo Cars are considered by the Commission to have a 'significant negative effect on the local and regional economy' in western Sweden. Volvo Cars is a very important employer in western Sweden. If the European Parliament does not take action, workers at Volvo Cars and its suppliers will be badly affected. The risk of social marginalisation and permanent exclusion is very great, which is something that, as Liberals, we cannot accept. We strongly sympathise with all those affected by unemployment and would very much like to see training made available for them.

Sweden is a net contributor to the EU and it is therefore important that employees in firms operating in Sweden also receive assistance from the EU if they are affected by the economic crisis.

**Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I abstained from the vote on further mobilisation of the Globalisation Adjustment Fund.

The vote concerns, among other things, two payments of almost EUR 24 million in total to the car industry in Sweden and Austria. Another request concerns a construction company in the Netherlands.

The car industry is the main beneficiary of this fund, even though it is constantly closing factories, relocating its production, laying off a substantial amount of its workforce and placing its subcontractors in a vulnerable position. In addition, it has received other types of financial aid from the Member States within the context of economic recovery plans, as well as other forms of support granted specifically in connection with the policies to combat climate change.

These funds, which are intended to be used to train people who have been made redundant – a necessary measure if they are to find a new job – are not being granted in return for a commitment by the European car industry not to lay off any more of its workers.

There is no question of my supporting a policy such as this, since it actually endorses relocations.

**- Report: Jutta Haug (A7-0081/2009)**

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT)** This amending budget clearly reflects the contradictions in the European Union's budgets. On one hand, its global values are low in comparison with the needs of the economic and social cohesion policies. On the other hand, the funds have not been spent, because the countries that were most in need of that money found it difficult to budget for the required cofinancing.

Yet they rejected the proposals we tabled for reducing the cofinancing requirements, especially at a time of crisis. Such contradictions and irrationalities of Community policy only favour the richest and most developed countries and end up exacerbating social inequalities and regional disparities. That is why we voted against it.

The report itself justifies our position when it stresses that 'there are different reasons for the apparent slow-down in payments compared to the expected rhythm depending on the Member State concerned. Firstly, the current economic situation has, in some cases, caused difficulties for the provision of national cofinancing. Secondly, the fact that Rural Development implementation in 2009 shows a less dynamic profile than the relevant year of the previous programming period is explained by the late approval of certain programmes as well as, in the case of Romania and Bulgaria, a lack of sufficient previous experience in the implementation of Rural Development programmes.'

**- Motions for resolutions: Prospects for the Doha Development Agenda following the Seventh WTO Ministerial Conference (RC-B7-0188/2009)**

**Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL)** I voted against the motion, because overall, it promotes the liberalisation of markets and a trade system which is solely to the detriment of poor and developing countries and shows no real concern for the environmental needs of the planet. I consider that the liberalisation of trade and its catastrophic results, which have contributed to the current financial, economic, climate and food crisis, and to job losses, poverty and deindustrialisation, should be rejected. I also voted against the motion because it does not safeguard full respect for the rights of governments to protect their ability to regulate and provide fundamental services, especially in the field of public goods and services such as health, education, culture, communications, transport, water and energy.

Unfortunately, amendments tabled by the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left were rejected. We shall fight for genuine reform of the international trade system orientated towards the introduction of rules for fair trade which comply with international rules in the field of social justice, respect for the environment, food sovereignty and security, sustainable agriculture, viable growth and cultural diversity.

**Anne Delvaux (PPE), in writing. – (FR)** I voted against the joint motion for a resolution on the prospects for the Doha Development Agenda following the Seventh WTO Ministerial Conference. I did so from a general perspective because it clearly lacks vision in terms of promoting development and respect for developing countries, but more specifically because, while it is vital to successfully conclude the Doha Round, this cannot be done at any price. International trade must take account of Europe's longstanding tradition of cooperating with the poorest countries. Moreover, on the subject of agriculture and the liberalisation of services, I do not support the approach recommended by this resolution, all the more so since not all of the amendments that were designed to balance the text have been accepted. For example, agreeing to step up the negotiations in the services sector (in order to achieve a greater degree of liberalisation) is out of the question.

Lastly, I regret that the resolution has endorsed the strengthening of bilateral free trade agreements. This type of agreement is often far more unfavourable to developing countries. Having to face the EU on their own, they have a far weaker negotiating position and tend to be backed into a corner.

**Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT)** In my view, the Doha Round is fundamentally important for international trade and may greatly help to reduce poverty in developing countries and to share out the benefits of globalisation more fairly. It is therefore important that the Doha Development Agenda take account of that effect and make a real contribution to meeting the Millennium Goals.

It is vital for WTO members to continue to avoid adopting protectionist measures, which could have an extremely onerous impact on the world economy. I am convinced that not adopting protectionist measures has led to a better, albeit slow, recovery from the economic crisis we are currently experiencing.



It is therefore crucial for WTO members to fight protectionism in their bilateral and multilateral relations in future agreements.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I am in favour of the European Union playing a leading role in the current WTO negotiations, so as to conclude the Doha Round while bearing in mind the new global challenges, such as climate change, security and food sovereignty. I hope that the outcome will result in new market opportunities and a strengthening of the rules on multilateral trade, so as to place trade at the service of sustainable development. The WTO could manage globalisation better. I recognise, however, that in the context of the current economic crisis, the rules and commitments adopted within the WTO have largely prevented its members from turning to restrictive trade measures and have led them to adopt economic recovery measures.

WTO members must remain committed to actively fighting protectionism. I hope greater cooperation will be achieved between the WTO and other international organisations and bodies, such as the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). I therefore voted in favour.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (PT) This resolution stresses Parliament's neoliberal positions on the Doha Round, which began in 2001, albeit with an occasional reference to social issues and the Millennium Development Goals.

Its main thrust, however, is the emphasis on total liberalisation of the world market. It refuses to accept that it is time to change priorities in international trade and to reject free trade on the grounds of the negative contribution it has made to the financial, economic, food and social crisis that people are now experiencing, with growing unemployment and poverty. Free trade only serves the interests of the richest countries and the main economic and financial groups.

By rejecting our proposed amendments, they said no to a sea change in the negotiations, which would have prioritised development and social advancement, the creation of jobs with rights, and the fight against hunger and poverty. It is deplorable that they did not consider it a top priority to abolish tax havens, promote food sovereignty and security, support quality public services and respect governments' right to preserve their economies and public services, particularly in the areas of health, education, water, culture, communications and energy.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI)**, *in writing*. – (FR) No, global free trade is not a solution to the current crisis. On the contrary, it is one of its main causes. The Doha Round negotiations have faltered from the start and have been at a standstill for a year because of a fundamental problem, namely, the system has reached its tolerable limits for everyone – be they developed, emerging or least developed, which is the international jargon for those countries that are poverty stricken and forced to integrate into an ultra-competitive global market that swallows them up. In Europe, we live according to the paradox perpetuated by the pseudo-elites who govern us and who want us all to be rich and poor at the same time: poor, because we have to be underpaid to compete in the trade war that pits us against countries with low levels of pay, and rich, so that we can consume the cheap and often low-quality imports that are flooding our markets.

It was some decades ago that a French winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics came up with the obvious solution: free trade is possible and desirable only between countries or entities that have the same level of development. That way, it is mutually beneficial to the partners involved. For all the rest, trade must be regulated, whether the prophets of ultra-liberalism like it or not.

**Sylvie Guillaume (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I hope that the Doha Development Round will lead to our establishing fair and equitable trade relations. That is why I have endorsed the amendments by my political group, which are aimed at improving this resolution in order to strengthen the demands relating to development; to request that public services not be called into question in the negotiations on services; to request, in relation to industrial tariffs, that the need to take account of each country's development level and not to suddenly open these sectors up to competition be recognised; and, lastly, that special and differential treatment for certain types of production in the agricultural sector be preserved.

**Nuno Melo (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The various imbalances in the system of international trade unfairly help to accentuate the asymmetries between the continents. In this respect, anything that helps correct the current imbalances is of benefit to everyone and certainly contributes to creating a multilateral system based on

fairer and more equitable rules. That will give us a fair trading system of service to everyone. That is the spirit of the Doha Development Programme.

**Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (ES)** After 30 years of free market fundamentalism, the global economy is facing the worst crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The neoliberal agenda of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), involving deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation of services, has brought further poverty for the majority of the world's population, both in developing and industrialised countries. My group has always rejected trade liberalisation and its devastating effects, which are contributing to the current financial, economic, climatic and food crisis.

For these reasons, I have voted against the Parliament resolution on the WTO ministerial conference and my Group has proposed that a new mandate should be demanded for WTO negotiations. Such a mandate must be adapted to the current state of the world. It must aim at achieving real reform of the international trade system and ensuring the adoption of fair trade regulations that respect international agreements and national regulations in the areas of social justice, the environment, food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE)** The joint motion for a resolution from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), the European Conservatives and Reformists and the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe on the Doha Development Agenda and the WTO continues the trend of global liberalisation in all economic areas. There is no doubt that breaking down barriers to trade and increasing trade in some areas brings greater prosperity. We have also seen that free trade, in particular, between similarly developed countries, is also beneficial.

However, if the trading partners are too different in terms of their stage of development, there are, in many cases, negative effects for both parties. The complete opening up of the markets of the developing countries to exports from industrialised countries has sometimes resulted in the destruction of the local economic structure, an increased level of poverty for the people and, as a consequence, more people wanting to migrate to Western countries. On the other hand, Europe has been inundated with cheap goods from the Far East, the manufacture of which has, in many cases, involved the exploitation of workers. Domestic production has been relocated or shut down, which has resulted in unemployment in Europe. From this point of view, therefore, certain barriers to trade, for example, to maintain food sovereignty in Europe, make perfect sense. It should not be forgotten that the liberalisation of services on the financial markets played a huge part in the current financial and economic crisis. Nevertheless, the motion for a resolution speaks in favour of continuing the process of liberalisation and of giving the WTO a greater role as part of a new global order policy and, for this reason, I voted against it.

**Evelyn Regner (S&D), in writing. – (DE)** I have today voted against the resolution on the Doha Development Agenda because I am opposed to any kind of liberalisation of public services. I am thinking in particular of the liberalisation of the water supply, health services and services in the energy sector. For the cohesion of society, it is essential that all citizens have access to public services. These services must be provided to a high quality, with respect for the principle of universality and, above all, they must be affordable. In this regard, the national authorities should have a great deal of discretionary power and broad opportunities to shape their services.

**Frédérique Ries (ALDE), in writing. – (FR)** In this era of globalisation, an effective system for regulating trade is more relevant than ever. This is the role of the World Trade Organisation, which was created in 1995 to replace GATT. As is emphasised in the joint motion for a resolution tabled by the right of Parliament, which I voted for this lunchtime, the WTO has an essential role to play in ensuring that globalisation is managed better and that its benefits are distributed more evenly. Clearly, those who are in favour of protectionism, of turning in on ourselves, are picking the wrong target when they make the WTO the deadly weapon of uncontrolled liberalisation. It was the current Director-General of this United Nations body, Pascal Lamy, who indicated the path to follow in 1999: that, conversely, of controlled globalisation.

In order to follow this path, the European Parliament proposes some practical solutions: completely tax-free and quota-free access to the market for the least developed countries, a successful outcome to the Doha Round for developing countries, demands in terms of environmental and social standards, and a Commission-controlled mandate for agricultural matters. In proposing these solutions, we are also pointing out that the European Union must give priority to its political objectives, and not just focus on trade objectives.

**Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), in writing. – (PL)** It is with pleasure that I welcome the resolution about the WTO, because it is an exceptionally important problem at the present time. The crisis is global in nature, and getting out of it as quickly as possible is in the interests of all of us. I think one way of effectively limiting

the crisis is to expand world trade. Restricting the reform of economies to a regional or national level is easier, but in the long run, it is not a good way to fight the crisis, which is global in extent, and fighting it requires common instruments used on a world scale. Therefore, we should do everything to speed up negotiations within the framework of the World Trade Organisation because these negotiations are liberalising trade. At the same time, we must adopt sound principles of competitiveness. In these principles, product quality standards and conditions of production are especially important, including in the context of fighting climate change and reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Highly sensitive goods, such as agricultural and food products, require an exceptionally sound approach. In the future, we should think about whether, along with liberalisation of trade in agricultural goods within the framework of the WTO on a world level, we should not also introduce standardisation of some elements of agricultural policy at world level. The specific nature of the agricultural sector should be taken into account – its dependence on climatic conditions, questions of quality related to food security, conditions of production and the problem of safeguarding the world's food supply. In the WTO negotiations, we need to show greater understanding of others and more goodwill.

**- Restrictive measures affecting the rights of individuals following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (B7-0242/2009)**

**Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (EL) I voted against the motion, because it is predicated entirely on the doctrine and policy of the 'war against terror', which is still being used to justify restrictions on rights and freedoms and to legalise military intervention and actions introduced under the Lisbon Treaty. Also, the European Parliament has ultimately been excluded from co-legislation, examination and control of measures relating to individual rights and anti-terrorist policies, thereby weakening its role on crucial issues. Finally, I would emphasise that, apart from anything else, unfortunately an amendment was passed distorting the role of NGOs, converting them into information providers and a vehicle of the various 'anti-terrorist' security services, instead of helpers in the societies in which they are active.

**Carlos Coelho (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) Public access to documents is an essential factor in ensuring that there is democratic control of the institutions and that they operate effectively, thus increasing citizens' trust. In the framework of the Stockholm Programme, the Council reaffirmed the importance of transparency and invited the Commission to examine the best way to ensure transparency in the decision-making process, document access and good governance, in view of the new opportunities offered by the Treaty of Lisbon. I am in no doubt that the legal basis for the regulation applicable to document access needs changing, as does the legal context in which it should operate, particularly with regard to the relation between the Union's institutions and the citizens.

Improvements are also needed in substantive terms, as, for example, in something I regard as fundamental, which is Parliament's ability to exercise its right to democratic control through access to sensitive documents. Transparency, whether in relation to the public or in interinstitutional terms, is a fundamental principle of the EU. The actions and decisions taken by all the EU's institutions, bodies, services and agencies must be guided by the fullest possible compliance with the principle of openness.

**Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) The issue under consideration concerns the Treaty of Lisbon, in particular, how to reconcile its Articles 75 and 215 with regard to Parliament's competence in the procedure for adopting restrictive measures against certain persons and entities.

Whereas Article 215 seems to exclude Parliament from the decision-making process, Article 75 lays down the ordinary legislative procedure and hence this House's participation in defining and adopting measures to prevent terrorism and associated activities.

Since the rationale behind the restrictive measures provided for in Article 215 is often precisely the fight against terrorism, it is important to determine whether this is an exception to Article 75 and, if so, whether it is acceptable for Parliament to be systematically excluded from the procedure to adopt them.

I believe it is clear that the legislator intended to entrust adoption of such measures exclusively to the Council. That move may be based on grounds of swiftness and unity in decision making. Nonetheless, in any non-urgent situation, I believe there would be an advantage in consulting Parliament when such measures are to be adopted.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) The fight against terrorism is once again being used as an excuse to provide for restrictive measures and sanctions against governments of third states, natural or legal persons, groups or non-state entities. That is unacceptable, because the report itself acknowledges that in practice, it is difficult to distinguish between types of threats, even though it makes some attempts to do so.

We realise that another framework of compliance with international law is needed. We do not accept the policy of double standards in relation to governments of third states, natural or legal persons, groups or non-state entities, assessed according to the interests of the United States or the major European powers. There is no lack of examples. To mention just a few, we have the cases of the illegal occupation of Western Sahara, Aminatou Haidar and other Sahrawis detained in Morocco, and Turkey's actions against the Kurds and against Cyprus.

We therefore voted against this report, even though we agree with some paragraphs in it, particularly where it asks for clarification from the Commission.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI)**, *in writing*. – (FR) This Parliament's resolution constantly wavers between the need to take certain measures against terrorist organisations and states that support them, such as freezing their assets or imposing diplomatic and economic sanctions, and so on, and respect for the rights of individuals and organisations to defend themselves against such accusations and sanctions.

Clearly, this Parliament has chosen to prioritise the rights of suspects over the defence of the nations. If, however, democracies cannot, in fact, combat terrorism by denying their own values, then they cannot allow themselves to give the impression of being lax or weak, either. I fear that this is exactly the impression that this resolution is giving. That is why, the institutional aspects aside, we voted against.

**Sylvie Guillaume (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of this resolution because it is important for we MEPs to exercise our parliamentary control over decisions to impose sanctions against persons associated with al-Qaeda and the Taliban, as well as persons who threaten the rule of law in Zimbabwe and Somalia. The chosen legal basis is unacceptable; we ask to be consulted under the ordinary legislative procedure and to be kept informed of developments in the work of the UN Sanctions Committee. Lastly, on this matter, I regret the highly administrative approach that the Council is maintaining even though we are talking here about measures relating to individual rights.

**Timothy Kirkhope (ECR)**, *in writing*. – The ECR Group are the strongest supporters of measures against terrorists in the EU and especially believe that national governments within the European Union must work together to tackle the constant threat from terrorism. The ECR Group have nevertheless decided to abstain on this resolution for two specific reasons: First, we oppose any legislation moving us towards a common European foreign and security policy but secondly, we instead want to see improved and strengthened coordination and cooperation between the EU and national governments, and are very disappointed that this resolution did not sufficiently reflect that.

**Nuno Melo (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The common sense behind the questions that have been asked goes beyond a mere evaluation of doctrine and the consistency between declared intentions and their interpretation. There is also a practical consequence, which arises from the old saying that he who can do the greater can certainly do the lesser, and it concerns the following: what sense is there for a body that has competence in criminal matters and in preventing and combating terrorist attacks, through being involved in a codecision process, to be subsequently excluded *a priori* when other measures are at stake which, by affecting citizens' rights, may even be important in this context as well?

It is fundamentally important that the way the Treaty of Lisbon is interpreted in legislation corresponds in reality to the stated strengthening of Parliament's powers and competences. At the very least, in some cases, as was raised in the question, it should be possible to have a dual legal basis when the rights of citizens are at stake and anti-terrorism policies are threatened. In other cases, such as Zimbabwe and Somalia, optional consultation should be envisaged, as in fact is enshrined in the Stuttgart Declaration on the European Union, which was also mentioned in the question.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) In recent years, more and more liberties have been curtailed in the name of combating terror. With the SWIFT Agreement and the Stockholm Programme, in particular, the 'transparent person' is becoming ever more a reality. Of course, in a time of modern technology, globalisation and a borderless EU, it is important for the authorities to work together and also to prepare themselves accordingly. However, the state must not sink to the level of the terrorists. We only have to think of the questionable role of the EU and individual Member States in connection with CIA overflights and secret US prisons.

The monitoring of legality is an important counterweight to ensure that an accused is afforded the minimum rights according to the requirements of a modern democracy. The report in question is not clear enough in

terms of its approach and also says too little about past failures and data protection issues. I have therefore abstained from the vote.

## 6. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

### IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

*President*

## 7. Award of the Sakharov Prize (formal sitting)

**President.** – Dear honoured guests, dear colleagues, dear friends, there are days when I am particularly proud to sit in the chair of the European Parliament as President. Today is such a day. Today we are honouring the winners of the 2009 Sakharov Prize, the prize for freedom of thought.

It is an enormous honour to recall that the Conference of Presidents decided to award the prize to Oleg Orlov, Sergei Kovalev and Lyudmila Alexeyeva, on behalf of Memorial and all other human rights defenders in Russia. I am proud that this decision was taken unanimously.

*(Loud and sustained applause)*

With this prize we, Members of the European Parliament, honour those still among us who fight for human rights, but we also honour those who lost their lives in this very struggle. Natalia Estemirova should have been among us today, as should Anna Politkovskaya. Their killers have yet to be brought to justice.

*(Applause)*

We in Europe know what the price of freedom is; what the price of freedom of thought is. On 16 December, exactly 28 years ago, strikers were killed in the Wujek coal mine by the Polish communist police because they fought for solidarity; that is, for basic human rights, for dignity. Twenty years ago, on 16 December in Romania, a revolution started which claimed the lives of over 1 000 people because they fought for their freedom.

This happened in countries which are now members of the European Union; countries which today are together with us. We in the European Parliament will never forget the past. It is our duty to safeguard those values which are so dear to all of us. In Europe, we enjoy our daily human right of freedom of thought because of their highest sacrifice.

It is a great honour for me to be presenting this prize today to the Memorial organisation. Yet, at the same time, I feel angry that it is still necessary to be presenting such awards in Europe – on this occasion to our Russian friends for their work in defence of human rights. This year we commemorated the 20th anniversary of the death of Andrei Sakharov, one of the founders of Memorial. If he were here today, would he feel pride, or more a sense of sadness, that today's Russia still needs such organisations?

Andrei Sakharov lived to see the start of the changes in Central and Eastern Europe, he saw the Berlin Wall coming down and the beginnings of the freedoms for which he had fought. It is our belief that today's human rights activists in Russia will see genuine and lasting freedom; the type of freedom that we enjoy in the European Union. That is what we wish today for all of Russia's citizens.

*(Applause)*

Every year we, the Members of this House, award the Sakharov Prize as a reminder that throughout the world, people's fundamental rights must be guaranteed. People must have the right to freedom of belief and freedom of thought. For, as Andrei Sakharov himself said, and I quote: 'freedom of thought is the only guarantee against an infection of people by mass myths, which, in the hands of treacherous hypocrites and demagogues, can be transformed into bloody dictatorship.' That is why the European Parliament upholds the right to freedom of thought, and will continue to do so, both within and outside Europe.

In awarding the Sakharov Prize today, the Members of this House, directly elected by the citizens of the EU's 27 Member States, wish to show their support to everyone throughout the world who is fighting for basic values. The European Union has a noble mission: it is our task to act in defence of freedom of expression and thought in every corner of the world. We hope that, in this area, Russia will be a partner on whom we can rely.

**Sergei Kovalev**, on behalf of Memorial, winner of the 2009 Sakharov Prize. – (translated from the original Russian)  
Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Memorial organisation, let me thank the European Parliament for this high accolade – the Sakharov Prize.

Memorial views this award as being not only for our organisation: the prize is being awarded to the entire human rights community in Russia and, more broadly, to an appreciable section of Russian society. For 40 years now, first in the Soviet Union and then in Russia, human rights defenders have been standing up for 'European' – that is to say, universal – values. This struggle has always been tragic and has, in recent years, claimed the lives of the best and the most fearless. I am sure that, in awarding the Sakharov Prize to Memorial, the European Parliament had them in mind, first and foremost – our dead friends and comrades-in-arms. This prize belongs by right to them. And the first name I should cite is that of Natalya Estemirova, a fellow member of Memorial, murdered this summer in Chechnya. I cannot go on without mentioning other names, too: the lawyer, Stanislav Markelov, and journalists, Anna Politkovskaya and Anastasia Baburova, murdered in Moscow; ethnologist, Nikolai Girenko, shot in St Petersburg; Farid Babayev, murdered in Dagestan; and many others – sadly, this list could go on for a long time. I would ask you to rise to honour the memory of these people.

*(The House rose and observed a moment's silence)*

These people died so that Russia could become a genuinely European country, where public and political life is based on the primacy of the life and freedom of each single individual. That means they also died for Europe, since a Europe without Russia is incomplete.

I hope everyone understands that, when I speak of 'European values' and 'European political culture', I do not ascribe to such terms any geographical content or any 'Eurocentrism', because a political culture based on freedom and the rights of the individual embodies a universal system of values that is equally fitting for Europe and for Africa, for Russia and for China.

Today's event is symbolic and interconnected: the award itself, the day on which it is being presented, those making the award and those receiving it.

Andrei Sakharov, who died 20 years ago, was a distinguished champion of human rights as well as a distinguished thinker. He advanced two major propositions. The first was that only by overcoming political disunity and enmity does humanity have the chance to survive and develop, and the opportunity to cope with the global challenges of the age and to secure world peace and progress on our planet. The second proposition was that the only reliable support for our efforts to overcome the political disunity of the modern world is human rights and, first and foremost, intellectual freedom.

The European Union, whose Parliament instituted this prize while Sakharov was still alive, is, perhaps, today the closest model to that future united humanity dreamt of by Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov.

In recent times, Russia and Europe have been increasingly set in opposition to one another. In Russia, it has become fashionable to talk about 'Russia's special path', about 'Russia's special spirituality' and even about 'special national values'. And in the Euro-Atlantic world, one often hears opinions of Russia as an 'odd man out' among countries, one whose political development is determined by its history and specific characteristics, and similar speculative constructs. What is there to say in this regard? Russia, just like any other country, has its own path towards ordering life on the basis of universal human foundations. No nation in the world organises its life according to ideas and designs entirely borrowed from outside, but Russia's connection with Europe is far from being determined only by who borrows and from whom. The question can be put another way: has Russia brought something to the pan-European and universal civilisation taking shape before our eyes? And here I would like to recall Russia's unique contribution to the spiritual and political progress of Europe and humanity: the key role played by the Soviet human rights movement in forming modern political culture.

Sakharov rethought the role of human rights and intellectual freedom in the modern world as far back as 1968. His ideas were transferred to the practical level by the human rights organisations created by Soviet dissidents – first and foremost, the Moscow Helsinki Group, represented here today by Lyudmila Alexeyeva. These organisations were the first to declare publicly that fine-sounding declarations about international protection of human rights could not just remain declarations. We succeeded in mobilising world public opinion and the Western political elite was forced to move away from its traditional pragmatism. Naturally, this development also gave rise to a multitude of new problems that are still not fully resolved – an example being the doctrine of humanitarian intervention. Nevertheless, over the last 30 years a considerable amount

has been achieved, although much more still lies ahead to be done. Russian human rights defenders of the 1970s were at the origins of this process and, if only for that reason, Russia cannot be struck from the list of European countries.

In Russia, in the last third of the 20th century, as nowhere else, the human rights movement became synonymous with citizenship and Russian human rights thinking was able to develop as far as Sakharov's global generalisations and take on the quality of a new political philosophy. This is linked to the unique nature of Russia's tragic history in the 20th century, to the need to comprehend and overcome the bloody and dirty past. If the Second World War was the impetus for the post-war political modernisation of Western Europe, having become the logical conclusion of the relatively short period of domination by the Nazi regime in Germany, then for the USSR and Russia, the need for reconstruction was dictated by the experience of 70 years of domination by the Communist regime, the culmination of which was Stalin's terrorist dictatorship. The two key components of resurgent Russian citizenship were legal consciousness and historical memory. The human rights movement positioned itself, from the outset, first and foremost as a movement for overcoming Stalinism in the public, political and cultural life of the country. In one of this movement's first public texts – a leaflet distributed by the organisers of the historic meeting of 5 December 1965 in defence of the law – it was said in this regard, with the utmost simplicity and brevity: 'The bloody past calls us to vigilance in the present'.

In essence, this special connection between two components of civil consciousness – legal thinking and historical memory – is inherited in its entirety by Russia's modern human rights community, and perhaps also by Russian civil society as a whole.

I believe that the paramount importance that Sakharov attached to Memorial in the final years and months of his life is linked to the fact that he understood clearly this specific aspect. In the activity of Memorial, these two basic components of Russian public awareness have merged into one whole.

It is my view that now also, on the 20th anniversary of Sakharov's death, the Members of the European Parliament, in choosing the recipient of the Prize, also felt and understood this specific aspect. We all remember the resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, adopted by the European Parliament in April. This resolution, like the OSCE resolution that followed in July, on divided Europe reunited, demonstrates that a united Europe understands the sense and thrust of our work. Memorial thanks you for this understanding. The absurdity of the present-day political situation in Russia is illustrated clearly by the fact that our own Parliament – the Parliament of the country that suffered most and longest of all from Stalinism and Communist dictatorship – instead of warmly supporting these resolutions, immediately declared them 'anti-Russian'!

This shows that, even today, Stalinism is not, for Russia, simply a historical episode of the 20th century. We let slip a few years of confused and incomplete political freedom. The main feature of Communist totalitarianism – the attitude to people as an expendable resource – was not eliminated.

The aims of state policy are determined, as before, regardless of the opinion and interests of the country's citizens.

The establishment of a regime of 'imitation democracy' in today's Russia is connected precisely with this. All of the institutions of modern democracy are resolutely imitated: a multi-party system, parliamentary elections, separation of powers, an independent judicial system, independent television broadcasting, and so on. But such an imitation, going by the name of 'socialist democracy', also existed under Stalin.

Today, mass terror is not needed for imitation: there are enough stereotypes of public consciousness and behaviour preserved from the Stalinist era.

On the other hand, terror is also used when necessary. Over the last 10 years, more than 3 000 people in the Chechen Republic have 'disappeared' – that is to say, been abducted, tortured, summarily executed and buried no one knows where. At first, these crimes were perpetrated by representatives of the federal authorities, but they then handed this 'work', so to speak, over to local security structures.

How many Russian security officials are punished for these crimes? A mere handful. Who ensured they were called to account and judged? First and foremost, the human rights defender, Natalya Estemirova, the journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, the lawyer, Stanislav Markelov. Where are they all? Murdered.

We see that the violence routinely taking place in Chechnya is extending beyond its borders and threatening to spread to the whole country. Yet we see that, even in such circumstances, people are found who are

prepared to oppose a return to the past. And this is a basis for hope. We all understand that nobody can return Russia to the path of freedom and democracy but Russia itself, its people and its civil society.

What is more, the situation in our country is not as straightforward as it might appear to the superficial observer. We have many allies in society – both in the struggle for human rights and in the struggle with Stalinism.

What can we expect here from European politicians and from European public opinion? Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov formulated these expectations more than 20 years ago: 'My country needs support and pressure'.

A united Europe has opportunities for such a firm and, at the same time, friendly policy based on support and pressure, but is far from making full use of them. I would like to mention just two examples.

The first is the work of the European Court of Human Rights with respect to complaints by Russian citizens. The very possibility that victims may appeal to Strasbourg compels Russian courts to work in a qualitative and independent way. The main thing is that enforcement of the judgments of the European Court should remove the causes leading to violation of human rights.

In recent years, more than 100 judgments have been delivered in Strasbourg in 'Chechen' cases, concerning serious crimes by representatives of the state against citizens. Yet what happens? Nothing. Russia duly pays the victims the compensation ordered by the European Court, as some sort of 'impunity tax', refusing to investigate the crimes and punish those guilty. Moreover, not only are all the generals mentioned by name in the Strasbourg judgments not brought before the courts, but they are put forward for promotion.

So what if the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe is called upon to monitor enforcement of the Court's judgments? In Strasbourg they shrug: 'What can we do?' – and remain silent.

The second, more general, example concerns relations between Russia and the European Union in the area of human rights. Today they virtually boil down to the fact that the European Union holds consultations with Russia on this subject once every six months. How is this opportunity used? Officials, not of the highest rank, talk for a few hours behind closed doors – Europe asks about Chechnya, Russia answers with a question about Estonia or Latvia, and they go their separate ways for another six months. Both Russian and international non-governmental organisations hold fringe events and hearings, and present reports. In meetings with human rights defenders, the representatives of Brussels sigh sadly: 'What can we do?' – and remain silent.

So what should Europe do in relation to Russia? From our point of view, the answer is simple: it should act towards Russia just as it does towards any other European country that has taken on certain obligations and has a responsibility to meet them. Alas, today, Europe increasingly rarely formulates its recommendations to Russia in the area of democracy and human rights, sometimes even preferring not to mention them at all. It is not important why this is the case – whether it is a sense of the futility of efforts or pragmatic considerations linked to oil and gas.

It is Europe's duty not to remain silent but, again and again, to repeat and remind, and insist respectfully and firmly that Russia meet its obligations.

*(Applause)*

Of course, not only are there no guarantees, but there are also no particular hopes that these calls will achieve their objectives. However, failure to remind will certainly be understood by the Russian authorities as indulgence. Taking sensitive issues off the agenda unequivocally harms Russia, but it also harms Europe just as much, since it places in doubt the commitment of the European institutions to European values.

The prize you are awarding today is awarded 'For Freedom of Thought'.

One would think, how can thought not be free, who can limit its freedom and how? There is a means – it is the fear that becomes part of a person's personality and makes that person think and even feel as required. People are not only afraid; they find an outlet in 'loving Big Brother', as described by George Orwell. So it was when Russia had Stalin, and so it was when Germany had Hitler. This is now being repeated in Chechnya, under Ramzan Kadyrov. Such fear can spread throughout Russia.

Yet what can stand up to fear? However paradoxical it may be, purely and solely freedom of thought. This quality, possessed by Sakharov to an unusual degree, made him impervious to fear. And watching him also freed others from fear.



Freedom of thought is the basis of all other freedoms.

That is why it is so appropriate for the Sakharov Prize to be awarded 'For Freedom of Thought'. We are proud to receive it today.

*(The House accorded the speaker a standing ovation)*

*(The sitting was suspended at 12.30 and resumed at 15.00)*

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

*Vice-President*

## **8. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting: see Minutes**

## **9. New EU action plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on the new EU action plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) Madam President, the problems facing Afghanistan and Pakistan are naturally a concern of the whole world. Violent extremism is spreading beyond the region. Drugs that are grown and produced in Afghanistan find their way onto the streets of Europe. One of the driving forces behind our commitment is the need to prevent Afghanistan and Pakistan becoming safe havens for terrorist activity and organised crime. At the same time, of course, we want to help create better countries for the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan to live in.

A lot of attention is focused on Afghanistan. Many of our countries have troops and significant numbers of civil personnel in the country. Turning around the situation in Afghanistan represents a major challenge. Pakistan, too, faces serious challenges. There will be no solution to the conflict in Afghanistan if we do not also get to grips with the situation in Pakistan, and vice versa.

An overall initiative is required. We all need to do more and to do better. In June, the Council asked the Council Secretariat and the Commission to put forward specific recommendations and political priorities to strengthen and enhance our commitment in the region. The result was the EU action plan for strengthening the EU's involvement in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This was adopted in October. I believe that this action plan is a good tool. The basic strategy is already in place. The action plan will allow us to adapt the instruments currently being used to meet our political priorities.

The plan is based on our current commitment and lays down a number of priorities. These are the areas in which we believe EU measures can be most effective. In so doing, we are strengthening our commitment and presenting a united response to the challenges faced by Afghanistan and Pakistan. It also sends out a message to the region that we are prepared to stay the course. The regional perspective is important, which is why the action plan places great emphasis on regional cooperation in particular.

Afghanistan is entering a decisive period. There is no need to discuss the election process further. That is behind us. It left much to be desired and we hope that it will not be repeated. I believe that is also the opinion of the Afghan people. The EU is prepared to support the work that remains to be done, based – among other things – on the recommendations made by the EU's election observers. We hope that a new government will soon be in place. This represents an opportunity to agree on a new agenda and a new concord between the Afghan Government and the international community. President Karzai made a welcome promise of a new start in his inaugural address. We hope that the conference to be held in London shortly will create some momentum.

The EU expects a strong commitment and leadership from President Karzai and his government. Five years with no change is not an option. The focus must now be on ensuring that the Afghan state gradually takes on more responsibility, with the international community adopting a supporting role. By this I do not mean withdrawal. Next year, there will be significantly greater numbers of international personnel in Afghanistan. The US is sending an additional 30 000 personnel to supplement the 68 000 already in the country. Other NATO countries and allies have promised an extra 7 000 personnel at least, in addition to the 38 000 already there.

This military commitment must be matched by civil initiatives. There can be no lasting military withdrawal from Afghanistan unless a civil framework for stability is in place. Effective state institutions, better forms of government, access to basic welfare, the rule of law and a functioning civil state are at least as important as hard security. Nobody would question this. Security, good governance and development must go hand in hand. We are making a long-term commitment to Afghanistan. However, the Afghan people must ensure that it is their own government, not international organisations, that bring about an improvement in living standards. That is the only way for the population to regain trust in their leaders. The international community is there. We will need to do more and to do better. We need to support the process that is under way – the Afghanisation process that is so essential for the country.

That is the core of our action plan. We are strengthening efforts by the EU to improve Afghan capabilities and we are cooperating with the government to promote effective state institutions that can be held responsible, at both local and regional level. We place great importance on the principle of the rule of law, good governance, the fight against corruption and on improving the human rights situation. Agriculture and rural development are a further priority area for Europe. It is very important that the standard of living is increased for the great majority of Afghans who live in rural areas. We are also prepared to support an Afghan-led rehabilitation process for former militants. Those who have taken part in conflict in the past must be offered alternatives. Support for the electoral system will naturally also be high on the agenda.

I would also like to say a few words about Pakistan. Pakistan is a country that has been through major changes in recent years. The 2008 elections re-established democracy and civilian rule. The transition to democracy has been impressive. However, democracy is currently in a fragile and unstable state. At the same time, the Pakistani Taliban has become a real threat to peace and stability in the country. Scarcely a week passes without media reports of further suicide attacks. In the past week, more than 400 people have been killed in attacks carried out by militant groups.

The EU wants to help support Pakistan's civil institutions. It is particularly important to follow up the recommendations made by Michael Gahler, our 2008 election observer. These provide a basic framework for future democracy, electoral reform and institution building. The Pakistani Government knows that this must be done. It must indicate to us the areas in which it wishes to cooperate. The EU will develop the strategic partnership with Pakistan that resulted from the successful special summit in June 2009. We want to strengthen democracy and achieve stability. That is why we are working on the civil state, the fight against terrorism and trade. Naturally, a functioning government that accepts responsibility for its people and demonstrates the leadership required to take the country forward is a central element of this.

In partnership with the government of Pakistan, the EU will support the strengthening of the country's democratic institutions and structures. This will also be brought about through economic development and trade. We welcome the fact that Pakistan is taking greater responsibility for its own security. We expect the country to take the same approach in respect of all forms of terrorism, including militants that use Pakistani territory to launch attacks inside Afghanistan. The government's efforts against the Pakistani Taliban represent a positive move. At the same time, civilians must be protected and international law complied with. The government should also be attentive to the need for humanitarian aid and reconstruction in the areas affected.

We need to take further steps in our operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The EU is already making a substantial commitment to the challenges of the region and this will continue. Much has been achieved in both countries – both by the efforts of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and by the international community. Strategies and documents will not in themselves improve the situation. It is now time to put them into action, together with our partners in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**Catherine Ashton, Vice-President designate of the Commission.** – Let me start with Afghanistan. We are at an important point in our relations here. Our future support must help build a government that is responsive to the needs and the concerns of the Afghan people. As the situation is volatile, we need to both work with, and to influence, the situation on the ground. That is what the international conferences, which begin with a conference in London next month, are all about.

We are ready to put in more resources. The Commission is raising its development assistance by one third to EUR 200 million. We need these extra resources to repeat the successes, like the extension of the primary health care system to 80% of Afghans – including far better treatment for women and girls – and recent success in turning provinces poppy free. Our Member States have also committed to help get our police training programme up to strength.

But that is all just the start. We need to deliver this as part of a coherent EU contribution within a coordinated international response. This response must have the Afghans working with the UN at the centre of it.

The action plan agreed by the Council in October gives us the opportunity to do this. Together with the US efforts and NATO security operations, it sends a strong message to the region and international community about our commitment. It also, of course, dovetails the priorities set out by President Karzai, particularly in the fields of improved governance and anti-corruption.

The plan confirms that we will continue to place key sectors such as the rule of law and agriculture at the centre of our engagement.

We are already assisting the government to improve the skills of administrators in Kabul. We will now start to roll these skills out across the provinces to help the Afghan people manage their own affairs and ensure the government provides – and is seen to provide – services to them.

The plan sends a message that we will support the integration of insurgents who are ready to respond to President Karzai's call to work with his government.

The European Electoral Observation Mission also presents its report in Kabul today and I would like to pay tribute to Mr Berman and his team for a job well done in extremely difficult circumstances. We will ensure follow up, since it is clear the credibility of the government and the political system rests upon a major overhaul of the electoral system.

Finally on Afghanistan, but perhaps most importantly, we are streamlining our structures on the ground. Member States will align policies with the resources to back them, and I hope to merge the EU Special Representative and the Head of the EU Delegation into a single post as soon as possible. That will help us to build a coherent approach that can serve as a model for elsewhere.

Turning to Pakistan, our overriding concern and interest is that Pakistan should be a stable democracy free from terror and able to join with its neighbours in defence against common threats.

The action plan underlines this and builds on existing commitments made at the June EU-Pakistan Summit, including humanitarian aid, reconstruction support, assistance to the police and judiciary and strengthening democratic institutions and civil society to improve human rights, as well as agreements on trade and socio-economic development. We will continue to support the implementation of the recommendations of the 2008 election observation mission.

The action plan is backed up by a substantial financial resource of just under EUR 500 million from the Commission until 2013, plus a EUR 100 million renewable energy loan from the European Investment Bank, as well as commitments to deepen our trade and political relations. The action plan also specifies intensified dialogue on all these issues and there should be a second summit next year within the Spanish Presidency.

The action plan also makes clear that the European Union will use its expertise in regional integration to help Afghanistan, Pakistan and their neighbours to kick-start economic relations, particularly with India. There will be no overnight solution to current tensions but we must make a start to overcoming distrust. The potential gains from this kind of regional cooperation in terms of trade and investment would dwarf anything we can do as the European Union.

In conclusion, implementation of the plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan is central to our future engagement in these countries. It is a joint endeavour between Member States and the EU institutions and it is the first of its kind, which, if successful, can help shape the international civilian response to crises that have so far largely been defined in military terms.

The action plan amounts to a major commitment not only to Afghanistan and Pakistan, but to south and central Asia as a whole. But we need more than ideas to deliver: we need the right people and the right skills, and they need security in order to work. There must be stronger political engagement by the host governments, and stronger coherence among donors, including internally among Member States.

South Asia faces extremism every day, whether on the battlefield in Helmand or on the streets of Peshawar, Lahore and Rawalpindi. We will not tackle this through military action alone but by helping build a secure and safe environment free from the tensions and inequalities that feed extremism.

Europe has much to offer from our own experience. The action plan provides us with the opportunity to use this experience to help others, and I hope Parliament will support it.

**Ioannis Kasoulides**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Madam President, the goal in Afghanistan was to fight the Taliban, who offered a safe haven to al-Qaeda. Afghanistan is no longer a safe haven but the Taliban insurgency has not been defeated because it was proven that victory cannot be achieved by military means alone and that over-reliance on military power by killing insurgents was counterproductive.

The shift in strategy is for the protection of the population, building the Afghan security capacity, facilitating good governance at central, and particularly local, level, and promoting development. In this context, encouragement is needed for an Afghan-led reconciliation process for those layers of Taliban who got on the wrong side due to special circumstances.

The EU Action Plan addresses all these challenges, and the EU can play an important role in non-military areas. However, I would have expected much more emphasis on the issue of narcotics – you mentioned it, Minister – and tougher words of warning on corruption and bad governance.

As for Pakistan: ‘yes’ to the action plan. Both cases are interconnected, and success on either depends on success on both. Pakistan should be in a position to adequately fight the influx of insurgents from Afghanistan. Finally, diplomacy is needed to avoid the eternal mistrust between India and Pakistan becoming an impediment to overall success.

**Roberto Gualtieri**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (IT) Madam President, Minister, High Representative, ladies and gentlemen, with this debate, the European Parliament is seeking to contribute to the discussion on the role of Europe within a region that is crucial to the safety and stability of the entire planet.

The new military strategy announced by President Obama, and even more clearly set out in the subsequent statement made by the foreign ministers of ISAF countries, has linked the sending of new troops to the primary aim of protecting the population and strengthening the capabilities of the security forces and the Afghan institutions. This welcome sea change takes into account the pointlessness, I would even go so far as to say the counterproductiveness, of a conventional type of military effort, focusing entirely on repressing Taliban guerrilla action.

However, in order to ensure that this new course is productive and sparks a transition towards a safe, prosperous, stable and therefore self-sufficient Afghanistan, it is very clear that the military dimension of the intervention by the international community must be accompanied by growing commitment on the civil and political front. On the one hand, we must promote economic development and strengthen the institutions, governance and the rule of law and, on the other, we must facilitate the process of internal reconciliation and help to stabilise the situation in Pakistan.

This is where the European Union’s place and role lies. Europe has been considerably committed in the region for some time: EUR 1 billion per year in Afghanistan, EUR 300 million in Pakistan, the EUPOL mission, which is doing an invaluable job despite its staffing problems, the international observation mission and also, naturally, the commitment of individual States to the ISAF mission.

Europe’s ability to make a substantial difference in the region nevertheless seems to be decidedly low considering the amount of human and financial resources committed. For this reason, we need to strengthen our undertaking, in other words, Europe’s leadership, and make it more consistent and effective from the viewpoint of civil strategy and political undertaking. From this point of view, the action plan constitutes an important step forward, and the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament supports it and demands its firm implementation.

At the same time, we wonder whether the objectives stated in the plan also require the identification of ad hoc measures and call for thought to be given to extending the aims and reinforcing the tools of the ESDP EUPOL mission. The European Parliament is ready to offer its support to the action of the European Union on all these fronts.

**Pino Arlacchi**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Madam President, we are here to deal with the EU plan of action for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Committee on Foreign Affairs of this Parliament has given me the opportunity to be the rapporteur on a new strategy for Afghanistan.

We need a new strategy – or maybe we just need any strategy at all – on the civilian side because, until now, the EU intervention in that country has not had enough coherence and seems to have had a very limited

impact. I am afraid, Mrs Ashton, that I cannot share your initial statement on Afghanistan because it is too generic, too bureaucratic, too unfocused – like the current action plan. I believe Parliament must contribute to making this strategy stronger and more coherent.

I am putting together all the necessary bits of information. First of all, I have to say that it is turning out to be very difficult to get even the most basic data on how much was spent by the EU in Afghanistan after the 2001 occupation, where the EU aid arrived and how much of it can be accounted for. We know that almost EUR 1 billion is spent every year there, which is a big sum. The Afghan GDP is just EUR 6.9 billion. Our civilian aid therefore amounts to more than 20 percent of the yearly Afghan GDP, a figure that has the potential to reverse the destiny of the country if properly used.

Secondly, my attempt to draw a new strategy for Afghanistan will start with an effort to identify what has been, and what should be, the EU interest in the area. I will focus part of my report on the elimination of the opium poppy through the alternative development strategy.

**Jean Lambert**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Madam President, I think there are certain things to be welcomed in the action plan but, as colleagues have correctly pointed out, there are a number of questions there that have not been answered.

I think that, when we are looking at this, we are always looking at it from the point of view of the problem that we have and sometimes tend to underestimate the daily reality for people in both Afghanistan and Pakistan of the many deaths, the targeted killings of the Hazara population, for example, in parts of Pakistan, the attacks on girls' schools, on the police and so many others.

The Afghan police were described to us recently as basically cannon fodder for the Taliban. I think many of us are still wondering, really, what it was that we ever thought we would achieve by going in. In terms of the international response, I welcome hearing the Commissioner talking about kick-starting cooperation and particularly mentioning India. The regional approach is important, and I look forward to hearing how we are going to deal with other areas of real tension, such as Kashmir, which the Afghan Ambassador told us the other day really provides a problem for everything that people try to do in the region.

We also need, in Pakistan particularly, to be looking at what effective support we are offering in terms of the many thousands of displaced people, and learn from our lack of engagement with those who were displaced to the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan in the past that a vacuum will be filled. Therefore, we really need to be paying attention to education and meeting the needs of the population who are also looking after those displaced people.

**Charles Tannock**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Madam President, we cannot afford to let the NATO-ISAF military mission in Afghanistan fail. With sufficient political will, the right military equipment and more troop numbers on the ground from all the Member States, NATO can defeat the Taliban and, of course, this must be coupled to a hearts-and-minds campaign as well. But next door, Pakistan is potentially a catastrophe in the making – a nuclear arms state plagued by Islamist radicalisation, corruption and feeble leadership, which, nevertheless, we have to help for strategic reasons.

But, for instance, elements of the Pakistani ISA have long been suspected of granting tacit support to the Afghan Taliban and are only now reluctantly realising the domestic dangers of such an approach. The threat posed by Pakistan, particularly by harbouring terrorists, to India over Kashmir also poses a grave threat to the whole region.

If Pakistan is to continue to receive military aid from EU countries for counter-insurgency operations against terrorist jihadis, and also EU economic assistance, it must give cast-iron guarantees that such aid will not be diverted to strengthening its conventional forces on the Indian border.

Finally, the instability of Pakistan and Afghanistan contrasts greatly with the stability and moderation of our democratic ally and partner, India, which deserves the EU's full backing.

**Willy Meyer**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (ES) Madam President, Madam Vice-President designate, my group has never supported the strategy of the previous President of the United States, Mr Bush, in relation to Afghanistan. We never supported it and time has proved us right.

Afghanistan currently has a corrupt, illegitimate government, there are innocent victims and the situation of women has not changed at all. It would therefore have been logical to change strategies, and we regret that President Obama has opted for a military solution, and intends to deploy an additional 30 000 troops.

I believe that the European Union should not follow this line of action, because there is a real risk of creating a new Vietnam in the 21st century in Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, history has demonstrated that there can be no military solution. Cooperation must be increased and all efforts to find a diplomatic solution must be intensified. In the conflict zone itself and in geostrategic terms, we must opt for respect for international law through internal solutions in Afghanistan.

**Nicole Sinclair**, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – Madam President, I had the pleasure a few weeks ago of meeting some of the UK returning forces from Afghanistan and I heard the same story over and over again that they were ill-equipped. Yet the UK pays GBP 45 million a day into this corrupt institution. Some of that money could be better spent in arming our forces in Afghanistan, forces that actually train the Afghan police force, etc.

It is quite right, as some of you have said; this is an important area in the world and an important area that we may need to make progress in.

My problem is with the lack of experience of our High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Cathy pass-the-bucket Ashton, with more than a few roubles in it, no doubt. We need someone more experienced. She has not had any Foreign Office experience; she has not been a foreign secretary and I do not think she even had a part-time job in a travel agents'. Come on! This is a delicate job; a job that needs to change things for the better and she is simply not experienced enough.

**Andrew Henry William Brons (NI)**. – Madam President, at first sight, the Council's conclusions about Afghanistan appear to be a welcome contrast to the belligerent attitude of the United States and the United Kingdom. When looked at more closely, it is actually a mixture of naivety and complicity in their methods. The Council is thoroughly naive in trying to plant the delicate flower of Western democracy in the inhospitable soil of Afghan tribalism. The vertical divisions in society and the domination of tribal loyalties over personal judgment would make that impossible. It wants to remove corruption but simply does not understand that the bureaucratic model of objective judgment and financial and resource decisions would not stand a chance of being respected. This is not because Afghans are endemically dishonest but because Afghan tribal society sees looking after one's own family and tribe as a self-evident virtue.

The Council would like to counter the production of opium poppies. However, removing the Taliban from government was not the best way of reducing that production. The Taliban government reduced it by 90% but, since the invasion of Afghanistan, Afghanistan is again the world's leading opium producer. The report says 'Insecurity in Afghanistan cannot be addressed by military means alone'. That can only mean that military action has a legitimate part to play. In my view, it does not. We have had three failed wars against Afghanistan in the 19th and early 20th centuries; we really ought to have learnt our lesson.

The Taliban oppresses women, has contempt for democracy and is killing British soldiers: it is a thoroughly unpleasant organisation. But we could stop it from killing British and allied soldiers tomorrow by removing our troops. It is a murderous, pointless war that simply cannot be won.

**José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE)**. – (ES) Madam President, the international community, and not just the United States, has a problem in Afghanistan. President Obama has taken three months to establish a global strategy in response to General McChrystal's alarming report.

It is well known that that new strategy involves short-term reinforcement of military presence, withdrawal in 2011, progressive transferral of aspects of security to the Afghan forces, better coordination between civilian and military efforts and concentration on large cities.

Now, Mrs Ashton, the great challenge is to articulate and identify a European response, mainly at the London Conference. In your statement, you referred to two key words. You said that our response must be coordinated with other international bodies and we support coordination with the United Nations. You also said that our response must be coherent.

I have two comments in this respect, Mrs Ashton. In 2005, I had the privilege to lead a Parliament electoral observation mission and I had the opportunity to meet the head of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Lieutenant-General Graziano, whose tour of duty in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is coming to an end. The 44 countries in ISAF today (28 of them NATO countries) constitute a heterogeneous force that is not providing an effective response in the current fight against insurgents.

The second vital aspect, Mrs Ashton, is that a war cannot be won – and there is currently a war in progress in Afghanistan – without having the civilian population on our side, on the side of the international coalition. I believe, Mrs Ashton, that one of the European Union's main objectives should be to concentrate our efforts, which involve EUR 1 billion of the European Union's money, on ensuring that the civilian population is on our side.

**Richard Howitt (S&D).** – Madam President, let me start today by remembering Lance Corporal Adam Drane, 23, of the Royal Anglian Regiment, from Bury St Edmunds in my constituency, who died in Helmand province on 7 December, the 100th member of the British armed forces to be killed this year.

Our thoughts should be with Adam's family and all those families, European, Afghan and Pakistani, who have suffered such loss.

In the face of such sacrifice, we in this House have our own duty to ensure that we do all we can to promote peace and prosperity for Afghanistan. If we are to take seriously the new Lisbon changes and a proper common EU foreign policy, there is no more urgent place to prove ourselves than in the sands of Afghanistan, first to ensure proper alignment of individual Member States' activities behind this new strategy and, second, to welcome High Representative Ashton's commitment today to have a formidable new double-hatted representative in place in Afghanistan very early in the New Year. This is both a litmus test of more efficient EU working under the treaty and a marker of our future resolve for Afghanistan.

Finally, allied to this, Member States must ensure that EUPOL recruits the 400 officers promised; this is absolutely necessary to ensure Afghanistan's own law-enforcement services can do their job properly.

**Charles Goerens (ALDE).** – (FR) Madam President, I should like to make it clear straight away that I totally disapprove of the remarks that Mrs Sinclair has just made against Mrs Ashton.

Madam President, one in four children does not reach the age of five in Afghanistan, a country marked by social and health deficits, to which democratic and, above all, security deficits can be added. The likelihood of a confrontation with Pakistan provides an incentive for the Taliban to mobilise and highlights the need to address Afghanistan's problems from a regional perspective. We should add to that the fact that the inability to overcome the situation by military means alone predestines the European Union, with its extensive range of tools, to play a special role.

NATO, which is primarily responsible for the military aspect, is reaching its limits in the face of the Afghan challenge. The European Union's humanitarian action, its cooperation and development instruments and its more highly effective diplomacy are certainly not a guarantee of success, but deprived of this support, NATO's action is doomed to failure.

A new combination of all these elements will – it must be hoped – result in a more promising outlook for Afghan citizens. Although the European Union's responsibility in the current situation is great, that of Afghanistan, which is still too corrupt, divided and disorganised, is overwhelming.

Let us not forget that the partnership offered to Afghanistan can only succeed if a sufficient number of citizens support the reconstruction of their country. Although this is a huge task, it is not a reason to sit back and leave countries prey to all manner of fundamentalists.

**Nicole Kiil-Nielsen (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Madam President, yes, we will have to emerge from the Afghan trap into which we fell because of the policy pursued by George Bush. However, the question is not when, but how, we pull out of Afghanistan.

If the countless mistakes made by the international community are not called into question, we are in danger of completely losing the confidence and support of the Afghan population, for the benefit of the Taliban. The militarisation of humanitarian aid and development aid must stop because it is creating confusion in people's minds and discrediting the NGOs.

We must rely more heavily on the emerging civil society and on the Afghan reformists. Why is Europe in Afghanistan? Because the United States said so, or to deliver that country from obscurantism and violence? We need to strengthen the most effective Afghan structures, to prioritise investment in public services – education, health and transport – and to support good governance of local powers, since the culture of these countries requires us to reflect on the relevance of the nation state. Europe should, for instance, support Habiba Sarabi, the governor of Bamiyan Province. Her appointment is a first in the history of this country where, you will recall, we went in 2001 to help the female population.

**Geoffrey Van Orden (ECR).** – Madam President, to read the EU action plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan, you would imagine that the whole situation depended on what the EU does.

I believe the European Union could make a useful, practical contribution, but this needs to be set in the context of the wider, international effort and it should be focused on some specific activities where EU involvement might add real value. It is too serious for EU posturing. In a document of over a dozen pages, I found only four brief references to the United States and, more significantly perhaps, only one to NATO, and it is after all the NATO ISAF mission which is central to the success of all endeavours.

Without security and stability, it is not possible to ensure good governance or any meaningful programme of reconstruction and development.

On the civil side, European countries and the EU itself have pumped EUR 8 billion into Afghanistan since 2001, but this huge sum seems to have made little difference; do we have any idea how much of it has gone astray?

There needs to be a comprehensive international plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan, but I have yet to see where the EU contribution fits into this wider, international commitment.

**Cornelia Ernst (GUE/NGL).** – (DE) Madam President, today, after eight years, we all essentially know that the previous Afghanistan strategy based on military force has failed. The imbalance between military operations, on the one hand, and the insufficient resources for civil purposes, on the other, is directly preventing any improvement in the living conditions in Afghanistan.

Thus, the most important message from the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left is that we need a radical change of strategy. We need a radical change of strategy away from the military and, above all, towards a more people-centred strategy. Forty percent of Afghans are unemployed and more than half of them live in utter poverty without any health care or adequate education. The focus must be placed on the social issue, and that is what I expect from the Council, the Commission and all the actors involved here.

This, of course, includes increasing good governance, strengthening agriculture and integrating former Taliban fighters. However, I say this to you most sincerely: if we only go half way to doing this and once again rely on military force, we will squander our chances. Time is running out!

**Philippe Juvin (PPE).** – (FR) Madam President, I believe that we must try to come up with some simple ideas with regard to these very complicated matters.

My first question is simple: Why did we go to Afghanistan? We went to Afghanistan with one objective: to dismantle the al-Qaeda training camps, the support base of international terrorism, which were threatening us and threatening stability in the region. Today, those camps no longer exist.

My second observation is that, unfortunately, whether we like it or not, troops from the West deployed in Afghanistan are increasingly being regarded as occupation forces and no longer as friendly forces. This is a major, everyday problem that we must bear in mind. I invite those who tell you otherwise to go and see what is going on in that country.

The third point is that the security situation has significantly deteriorated. In 2004, it was possible to walk around Kabul. Today, Kabul is a huge entrenched camp. Therefore, in failing to learn lessons from an operational failure on the ground and, ultimately, in applying only old methods, we are heading for a repeat of such failures.

What are the consequences of all this? I believe, in fact, that it must be recognised that we have dismantled al-Qaeda – that is a genuine finding – and that we must pull out. Can we pull out straight away, today? No, because if we pulled out, it would undoubtedly cause chaos, and would perhaps lead to the return of those camps that we are combating. Our withdrawal must therefore come with some conditions attached.

Firstly, as everyone says, we must hand over the keys to the Afghans themselves; we must ensure that the conflict is an Afghan conflict. Secondly, a dialogue must be established with all the insurgents, and note that I did not say 'with the Taliban', because the word 'Taliban' is very restrictive. Thirdly, a social level must be accepted that is not perfect. Let us not think that our European criteria are criteria that should be adapted to Afghanistan. We must accept that.



Madam President, it is always more difficult to conclude a military operation than it is to start it, and in order to be able to conclude it, we must keep in mind the initial objective, which was to ensure that the al-Qaeda camps were dismantled. This has been done today.

**Ana Gomes (S&D).** – (PT) The Council says that the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan has a direct impact on Europe. That, in fact, is the principal message that we have to be able to put across honestly and courageously to Europe's citizens. In that respect, I welcome the EU's new action plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan, which includes investing in a huge programme of capacity building at all levels in the Afghan administration.

Effectively implementing this action plan, as a means of unifying European efforts in Afghanistan, is the only way to contribute to the state building that is necessary to put an end to the war and to underdevelopment. Europe cannot abandon the Afghans, and it is not there because the Americans have so decided. The international military and civilian presence will continue to be needed there for many years to come.

To conclude, I strongly condemn the French Government's decision to forcibly repatriate Afghans who have fled the war in their country.

**Reinhard Bütikofer (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Madam President, if there is one thing that we really do not need in the bitter reality being experienced in Afghanistan, it is pretentious speeches. I am looking in your direction, Baroness Ashton, when I say that. You talked about the Member States being committed to the police training mission EUPOL. Is that really the case? If so, how can it be that we still do not even have the 400 police officers in place? That is a mixture of disingenuousness and absurdity. Are we being honest in what we say?

As far back as two years ago it was stated in the European Security Review that the low number of police instructors calls into question the reality of Europe's commitment. Why are we not financing the trained police officers to prevent them from joining the warlords or the Taliban? It would not cost much and it would be very efficient. I have the impression, Baroness Ashton, that Europe is full of high-sounding talk, but it is shameful how small and inadequate its actions are.

**Michael Gahler (PPE).** – (DE) Madam President, the heading chosen here of a 'new action plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan' is an appropriate one. However, what has been presented here seems to me to be more like two separate action plans presented one after the other.

I essentially support what has been said about both countries. In Afghanistan, I hope that we have learnt from the mistakes of the past and that we will adapt our policies and structures accordingly. As regards Pakistan, I am pleased that the new policy is seen as a follow-up to my election observation report. In the countries in which we have carried out election observation missions, I believe that it is only right that we incorporate the recommendations into our specific policies towards those countries.

In the response to this debate from the Council and the Commission, I would like the joint strategy for these two countries to be explained more clearly, as we have to acknowledge, for example, that we have a thousand kilometre border in this region that cannot be controlled properly on either side, while the policies that we pursue on one side of this border will have direct effects on the other side. Therefore, what structures do we actually want to set up? How do we want to establish the dialogue between the Afghan and the Pakistani Governments? How can we ensure that our policies are accepted by the local people there? These are questions to which we still need answers, and I hope that we will get them.

**Ioan Mircea Pașcu (S&D).** – Madam President, the plan of action on Afghanistan and Pakistan adopted last October is, in itself, a good document. Its aim is to create the conditions for returning responsibility from the international community, including the EU, to the Afghan state, with the former in a support role. The same is envisaged by the US in the security sector. It is hoped that the additional 30 000 US troops will create a situation in which responsibility could be handed over to the Afghan forces by 2011 when the US withdrawal will commence.

Even if both the EU and the US have similar aims, namely creating the conditions for the Afghan state to take responsibility for its own affairs, the timeframe for achieving those aims is inevitably different. Adequate security will have to be achieved by 2011, while state building will inevitably take longer.

The question, then, is: supposing adequate security is either not achieved by 2011 or deteriorates again after the US pull-out, will the EU, already involved in state building, be ready to take over the task of providing security too? I think not – and then we have a problem.

**Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE).** – (ES) Madam President, I am delighted that the Swedish Presidency has strengthened the European Union's commitment to stability and development in Afghanistan through the action plan. I would, of course, like to know more about funding for this plan as far as Afghanistan is concerned.

Another very important moment for Afghanistan will be the London Conference in January. At that conference, we will hear about the specific pledges made by the European Union and its Member States. We should also hear from the new Afghan Government about the many commitments it must make in areas such as combating corruption and drug trafficking. I am rather alarmed at reports in today's press of the speech given yesterday by President Karzai on the corruption issue.

Ladies and gentlemen, President Obama's decision to increase his military contingent by 30 000 troops is very recent. In short, Afghanistan is at a crucial stage and the United States and Europe must work in a very coordinated manner.

What is at stake in Afghanistan is not only the prosperity and freedom of Afghans, but also the stability of the region, including such an important country as Pakistan. Our own security is also at stake, given the continuing threat posed by al-Qaeda, as has already been said.

The credibility of NATO and of what we call the West also depends to a large extent on the results in Afghanistan. We cannot fail. In order to succeed, though, as has also been said, we need the support of our own citizens. This support is conditional on transparency and clarity. We must explain that our compatriots in Afghanistan are in serious danger, but we must also stress the importance of the mission there and that failure cannot be an option. As I have said, many important factors are at stake.

**Elmar Brok (PPE).** – (DE) Madam President, an Afghan friend once said to me that it is a good thing that the West invaded Afghanistan, but remember that, in Afghan history, anyone who stayed longer than a year became an occupier, even if they previously went there as liberators. That was in 2001. We are now in 2009 and exactly that has happened.

The Taliban governs de facto 80% of the country and the US military leadership as well as the European defence ministers are saying that this war cannot be won by military means. What, then, is the goal? A country that we do not have under control cannot be turned into a democracy and whatever else from the centre if that country has never had a centralised form of government. In other words, would it not make sense to concentrate on al-Qaeda and terrorism and then get out of there? These questions need to be answered.

We also need answers to the questions that were, quite rightly, raised by Mr Van Orden in connection with the integration of this action plan with the general strategic goal, the London Conference, President Obama's Afghanistan plan and so on. Are these things consistent with each other? It is therefore very right and necessary to have a combined approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan here, and also to include what was ultimately said in connection with India.

Most importantly, we need to keep an eye on internal developments. When foreign military pressure leaves a country having trained soldiers and police officers who have no goal of their own, I have never known these soldiers and police officers to then leave behind the ideology of the civil war, which does indeed have a goal. It always wins! History shows this, too, and therefore I am deeply concerned that what we are doing here may lack continuity. We really should consider what sort of plan would enable us to get our troops out in a reasonable manner and, at the same time, to put an end to terrorism.

**Lara Comi (PPE).** – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the security situation in Afghanistan recently became much worse due to the lack of full control on the ground. Vast areas of the country are governed by tribal rule and no longer, therefore, by national law. The sense of insecurity has also spread to the main cities, despite the ongoing commitment and monitoring action of the ISAF forces.

Since the fight against terrorism is closely connected to activities carried out on the ground, it is clear that the United States, allied countries and NATO cannot withdraw. Our continued presence and the achievement of success in Afghanistan depend greatly on a political and military approach that is shared at international level and aimed at a regional approach on the ground within both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In this sense, the new European Union action plan represents a significant step in the strengthening of security and in the delicate process of capacity building where democratic institutions, human rights and socio-economic development within the region are concerned.

**Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D).** – (PL) Madam President, I think the European Union action plan is going in the right direction, because our assistance must concern two areas. The first is an improvement in security. The second is an improvement in the conditions under which people live. It can be said that progress in the first area – concerning security – will have a beneficial effect on the conditions under which people live, while progress in the second area – concerning an improvement in the conditions under which people live – will foster an improvement in security.

I think, however, that we should continually ask about the effectiveness of our assistance. In my opinion, it could be much more effective if we could count on support from the states which surround Central Asia. I would especially like to encourage the European Union, Mrs Ashton and Mrs Malmström to make contact with Russia and Tajikistan, because these are countries which could be very helpful, especially concerning logistics and the transportation of supplies for the population.

**Sajjad Karim (ECR).** – Madam President, today, terrorist bombings are a daily occurrence in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Schools, shopping centres, town centres and even military headquarters are under attack.

The Pakistani military is successfully pushing back infiltrators into Pakistan from Afghanistan, but I have to ask myself: from where are these terrorists continuing to get their weapons? It is far too simplistic to argue that it is a Pakistani internal issue in itself. It is much more complex than that.

Minister Malmström, quite rightly, raised the issue of regional cooperation. Through our new foreign affairs role, High Representative, will we be speaking to Pakistan's neighbours to encourage them to do all that they can to help Pakistan through this difficult time?

It is also quite right that, whilst mutual mistrust exists between Pakistan and India – and I am a great proponent of bringing these two countries together – there is very little progress that we will make. As long as the core issue of Kashmir is not dealt with, I am afraid that we will not make a huge amount of progress.

**Ivo Vajgl (ALDE).** – (SL) In my opinion, the action plan for Afghanistan will only make sense if it underlines our European policy, that is, the European approach to Afghanistan. We are already deeply involved there and we cannot just go along with the decisions of our major allies, surprising us as they do with some of their strategic decisions.

What I think is important about this action plan is that it clearly gives priority to civilian initiatives. We should bury the ideas of a military victory once and for all. We cannot win in a territory whose population considers all of us who are there to help as occupiers and the Taliban as so-called freedom fighters.

I should like to join those of you who have stressed the need for a regional solution and the need for greater involvement of the countries in the region which border Afghanistan. They have the greater confidence of the people.

**Arnaud Danjean (PPE).** – (FR) Madam President, much has been said about the action plan on Afghanistan. Speaking for myself, I regret that the presentations given to us today did not place slightly more emphasis on the link between the EUPOL mission and the NATO mission in Afghanistan. This is a mission that we must carry out. The quantitative and qualitative problems that it is encountering are mainly due to the link with NATO and, in order to be effective, we must solve them as quickly as possible. I would have liked more to have been said about this.

My question concerns Pakistan, the chronic instability of which is, as we all know, a factor in the crisis for the entire region and for Afghanistan, too. I see, in the action plan, that cooperation with Pakistan is envisaged in the areas of counter-terrorism and security. In that country there is, as we know, a significant ideological and sometimes structural and organisational connection between radical Islamic movements that operate in Kashmir and at the Afghan border. I wanted to be sure that the methods, the nature and the timeframe of the assistance that we envisage are gauged properly, in order to prevent this connection from having extremely adverse and harmful effects.

**Corina Crețu (S&D).** – (RO) For well over eight years, our countries have been wasting human lives, energy and huge financial resources in a country ravaged by war where two empires, the British and Soviet empires, had already been bogged down. Unfortunately, the political and military reinforcement of the Taliban's influence, the poverty devastating this country, the status of women, the opium trade and widespread corruption are all facts of life which highlight the failure of the operations currently being conducted in Afghanistan.

I believe that the European Union's strategy must counter the growing prospect of chaos and violence through strengthening the military presence and making it more effective, as well as through stepping up the efforts for reconstruction, development and democratisation in Afghanistan. Increased development assistance in Afghanistan basically means an investment in our own security. This is why we must make every endeavour to keep this failed state afloat and guarantee its citizens a minimum level of physical and material security.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR McMILLAN-SCOTT

*Vice-President*

**Piotr Borys (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, the situation in Afghanistan is, today, the most important problem facing international institutions and, now that the Treaty of Lisbon has come into force, the European Union in particular. This challenge cannot be met without three elements in our strategy: firstly, the success of a very ambitious, two-year military mission, which must end in defeat of al-Qaeda and reception of part of the Taliban leadership to the government side. Secondly, stability in Pakistan and the entire region, including India – this is a second, key challenge – and thirdly, the need to build civil society. Thirty years of war is a huge problem. It is an uneducated society – over 90% of the people cannot read. In relation to this, a huge amount of social assistance is needed in order to build a state of law, good governance and social care.

I want to say that, today, the number of children attending school in Afghanistan has risen from 700 000 to 7 000 000, and in relation to this, one of the key matters facing Mrs Ashton is, in particular, the need for effective financial aid to build civil society in Afghanistan.

**Martin Ehrenhauser (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, perhaps you would allow me, as a member of the Iran Delegation, to just make one brief comment. A while ago, the European Parliament in Brussels held a debate with the Iranian ambassador in Brussels. When asked why the number of death sentences in Iran had quadrupled since the Iranian President took office, he put it down to the increase in the drugs trade in the border region between Iran and Afghanistan. I wanted to mention this statement to you in order that, alongside corruption, this problem might also be given adequate consideration in the action plan.

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) Mr President, the Council is genuinely grateful for the huge commitment shown by the European Parliament on this issue. I will answer some of your questions.

Mr Kasoulides: the action plan takes the regional perspective as its starting point. It is absolutely central. Enormous emphasis is placed on good governance, combating corruption and the principles of the rule of law, and this is the work that is guiding the EU. In these areas, Afghanistan and Pakistan will need our support for a very, very long time to come. Mr Kasoulides is right in saying that we have not given sufficient attention to the drugs issue. We support the efforts being made, for example, the UNIDOC cooperation and technical assistance. This must continue. Most important of all, of course, is to support the work that the Afghan government is doing to create greater prosperity and good social governance.

To Mr Arlacchi, I would say that we agree that the efforts made to date have not been sufficiently coordinated. That is a problem for the EU, and that is why it is so important for us to have this plan now. The Swedish Presidency has also struggled hard during the autumn to obtain the type of information that you ask about – who is doing what, and how much – and to get an overall view of what is happening. We now have a better picture and we are very much looking forward to your report, which can help us as we move forward with this work, as well as to cooperating with you and the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

I would say to Mr Danjean that EUPOL is a very important element in our cooperation and the most important element for the Afghan Government as regards civil police work. It has emerged that there is very strong leadership in place. The qualities of EUPOL are recognised by all parties – the Afghans, the US and other parties. We have increased the workforce by 280 international personnel. We regret that the Member States have not been able to provide the 400 personnel that we require, and we are currently calling for further contributions because we want the Member States to be involved.

As things stand at present, EUPOL is consolidating its activities into six strategic areas where we believe value can be added: police intelligence, investigating crime, the command structure in the police, links between police and prosecutors, combating corruption and also human rights and equality. These are the Afghan priorities. NATO is now to become involved in police training through its training mission and naturally, we need to intensify our cooperation in this area.

Finally, I would like to say that the action plan is incredibly important in enabling the EU to use its resources in a better, more coordinated way. We must now focus on implementing all these good ideas. We can do this through the regional perspective, through the responsibility taken by the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan themselves and by focusing on our political priorities, the rule of law, democracy and human rights.

The EU is one partner. A very important partner, but there are other partners in the region, too, and naturally, we must cooperate with them. We are looking forward to the London conference at which we hope President Karzai will present his plans, and we are looking forward to increasing our support after that.

The EU's support is long-term and enduring, and it must be sustainable. That is the signal we must send out. This is going to take time. We have to be realistic. We have an enormous amount of work ahead of us. That is why we need the EU to be committed. We need to send out a signal that we are in it for the long haul – not least for the sake of the women and children, as many Members have mentioned.

**Catherine Ashton**, *Vice-President designate of the Commission*. – Mr President, I will just pick up, if I may, a few key points which were raised by honourable Members.

Agreeing with the Presidency on the issues of narcotics, what we have sought to do is develop a comprehensive response which really brings together the rural development aspects of it with social issues and, of course, the rule of law. It is very important to tackle it from all of the different perspectives.

I agree with what honourable Members were saying about the importance of civilian issues. We have actually made significant progress; a number of Members were concerned about that. Just one example: in 2002, we had health care take-up support of around 7% of the population; it is now at 85% in 2009. I can give other examples; that is just one where I think we can absolutely show what we are doing and how effective it has been on the ground. I agree, too, with what was said by Members such as Mrs Lambert about education being absolutely core to what we do in terms of support for children and also of course in terms of training for employment with adults.

The funds: I am pleased to say that actually, these are very well-run funds. They are managed through the UN or through the World Bank and I think honourable Members receive a state of play report. The last one I have here is dated July 2009. For those who have not seen it, we can make sure you receive copies. It demonstrates in very clear terms exactly where the money is going, exactly what it is being spent on and what we hope to achieve by that. But I do agree that we need to be more efficient. There is always room for that. One of the challenges of my role is to bring together what is happening on the ground, to make it more coherent and make it work more effectively. A number of colleagues have mentioned the need to make sure we fulfil the commitments on EUPOL.

It was mentioned that we have to work collaboratively with NATO; I have already had one meeting with the Secretary-General of NATO and I was at the meeting with General McChrystal and Richard Holbrook and with Secretary of State Clinton, to talk about Afghanistan. We are already building up to the London Conference in our dialogue with those important and key partners on the ground.

Of course, what has been said about the regional aspects is extremely important. We do want as part of the action plan to pull together that regional cooperation. There is work going on: very practical work to develop that, particularly rail links and trade cooperation and so on. But I agree absolutely: there is more that we should be doing on that.

The London Conference on 28 January is the next significant milestone and will raise issues of security, governance, and social, economic and regional development – very important issues. Issues that I have identified are education, health, economic development, trade, justice and human rights, all of them issues on which I can say that I have a great deal of experience.

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

*Written statements (Rule 149)*

**Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (EL) The new EU action plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan is designed to implement the EU's strategic ambition to play an even more active imperialist role in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the area as a whole. In Pakistan, it is promoting a free trade agreement which will allow greater penetration of the euro-unifying monopolies in southern Asia. In Afghanistan, it is seeking to stabilise its presence even further, both independently, with the EUPOL policing mission in Afghanistan,

and within NATO, with the development of the European Gendarmerie Force. Imperialist infighting for a share of the spoils is hotting up, despite the strategy of cooperation with the USA and NATO. The EU is endeavouring, with a package of money worth EUR 1 billion a year and various 'development programmes', to strengthen the position of European capital in plundering the occupied country and acquiring a springboard for the exploitation of the peoples and wealth in the area as a whole. At the same time, the 'democracy export' policy is trying to expand support for democracy to the imperialist occupying structure. The peoples cannot choose the 'better imperialist'. They must step up their fight against the plans of all the imperialists, in order to shake off the yoke of occupation in Afghanistan and the area as a whole.

**Elena Băsescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO)** The problems affecting Afghanistan and Pakistan are not confined only to these countries. They actually affect us all. The mission launched in Afghanistan must be brought to a conclusion. With this in mind, Romania is openly considering the possibility of increasing its involvement in this country, including reinforcements for training the army and providing medical and institutional support. Romania currently has 1 020 soldiers stationed in Afghanistan whose involvement in guaranteeing peace and stability is unanimously appreciated by our allies. We need to be involved not only on the military front, but also in strengthening the Afghan state's institutions, providing governance at local and regional level, combating corruption and drug trafficking, training police officers and providing technical assistance for agricultural development. In this regard, I would like to mention the announcement made by Catherine Ashton about increasing the funds which the European Commission is allocating for development in Afghanistan. The European Union's actions in Afghanistan and Pakistan must be coordinated. The situations in both countries are closely linked and success in one depends on the other. The European Union must continue its partnership with Pakistan and help this country in its battle against extremism and terrorism, as well as with regard to commercial relations and promoting human rights.

**Ricardo Cortés Lastra (S&D), in writing. – (ES)** Sufficient international presence must be ensured to help establish basic conditions of peace and security in order to enable the capacity of the country's government to be strengthened, the rule of law to be reinforced, corruption to be combated and human rights respected.

When I speak of government, I am also referring to the subnational level, the level nearer to citizens, and to governance in the broad sense, including all stakeholders in Afghanistan. The country's development and the development of agriculture, infrastructure and the commercial fabric urgently require a climate of peace and stability and, above all, the protection of citizens by combating impunity and the legal insecurity that directly affects them.

Nonetheless, the daily, urgent problems faced by the citizens must not be overlooked. These problems are not limited to security and relate to food, health and education. Afghanistan will survive, and it will do so thanks to the strength and efforts of the Afghan people themselves. We must, however, lend them a hand and, in particular, we must not take it away before time, when they need it the most.

**Jaromír Kohlíček (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (CS)** If there is a striking example anywhere in the world of the inability of the EU to adopt an independent position on a problem created by the United States, then it is the current unhappy situation in Afghanistan: a shattered infrastructure, several generations with minimal chances of obtaining an education, mediaeval conditions in terms of gender equality and the global standard for absolute corruption. It is a situation which, together with production of more than 70% of the world's opium output and increased activity from terrorist groups, shows the complete impotence of the occupying power. The well-known examples of injustice, even against elected representatives, together with the unlawful practices of the US administration, have created an unstable environment. The constant references to the lack of respect for human dignity under Soviet occupation are a futile attempt to cover up the current chaos and anarchy. With more than two million refugees in Pakistan and a porous border between the states, there are excellent preconditions for the penetration of armed groups into the southern and eastern parts of the country. The Pashtun tribes have long lived on both sides of the border and it is difficult in the current chaos to find out who comes from where. The EP resolution of 2008 describes this situation accurately but it must be said that the optimistic assertions are out of place. In the current situation, a strengthening of the military presence and further transfers of financial resources and teams of experts is completely nonsensical. The situation has deteriorated markedly over the past year and the optimistic assertions of the European Commission are not based on the current reality in Afghanistan.

**Krzysztof Lisek (PPE), in writing. – (PL)** It is imperative we take action to improve the situation in Afghanistan. In particular, important measures are: training of police officers, military personnel, people employed in the justice system and teachers, as well as combating the production of and trade in drugs. This will enable stabilisation of the social system in Afghanistan. Undoubtedly, it is also necessary to increase the military

and police contingent and redouble efforts in the areas bordering Pakistan, to prevent the flow of arms and drugs between the two countries. It is already worth thinking about the direction in which the Afghan economy should develop in the future, so that the people will be able to give up growing poppies and trading opium. In a word, military and police action should be accompanied by civil measures: support in establishing the structures of an Afghan state and development aid.

## 10. Belarus (debate)

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

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) Mr President, honourable Members, the EU's relationship with Belarus is not without its complications. I would like to begin this debate by explaining why the Council took its decision in November concerning the EU's relations with Belarus. I know that this issue is one that is of great interest to many Members.

When we discussed this, we focused on two important aspects. On the one hand, the EU wanted to send a clear signal that we are not happy with the lack of positive progress in recent months. On the other, we wanted to establish the subsequent steps within the framework of our dialogue with Belarus, with the aim of encouraging Minsk to take action in a number of areas.

I feel that the result was a well-balanced decision that takes these aspects into account. It has three main elements.

Firstly, we are extending our sanctions while, at the same time, suspending the travel restrictions for almost all the individuals concerned. The exceptions are four people directly linked to the political disappearances and the chair of Belarus's Central Electoral Commission.

Secondly, we are open to the possibility of visa facilitation and readmission agreements between the EU and Belarus.

Thirdly, there is the prospect of a partnership and cooperation agreement between the EU and Belarus. Naturally, this would require positive developments as regards democracy, human rights and the principles of the rule of law. The Commission has been asked to carry out some preparatory work based on these action plans, which were developed within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

In our discussions, we took into account the fact that the situation in Belarus is better than it was 18 months ago, despite the fact that there have been some backward steps. The expulsion of a student from university after taking part in an Eastern Partnership forum is a very serious example of this.

The transition from an authoritarian society to democracy – as many Members of this House know extremely well – is a gradual process. It will take time for Belarus and there will be many obstacles along the way. Our full support is therefore required.

The global financial crisis is actually providing opportunities for influence. Belarus's economy is on its knees and Russia is no longer prepared to underwrite the country. In the energy sector, the low gas prices are just a memory.

Can we then exploit this situation to encourage Belarus to change track? There is no other way than through dialogue. We must help to strengthen the cautious movement towards greater openness. We have to consider how effective our sanctions policy is. Last year's decision to suspend visa restrictions after Minsk had released the final prisoners in August 2008 helped bring about some progress in our dialogue.

The use of sanctions is an important way for the European Union to exert pressure. At the same time, the Commission has taken a number of steps aimed at cooperation with Belarus and the country is part of the Eastern Partnership. Our support for Belarus within the International Monetary Fund has also been a positive step.

We have set out the conditions, and now we must proceed reasonably and prudently. The decision to extend the suspension of the visa prohibition list sent a signal that we are serious about rewarding positive steps that are taken. If things continue to develop in this direction, we can go a step further.

At the moment, discussions are focusing on two possible alternatives. One is the development of a formal agreement and the other is the possibility of visa facilitation and readmission agreements. The position taken by the Council has laid the foundation for more specific consideration of these issues.

A partnership and cooperation agreement could result in us formalising the relationship between the EU and Belarus in a new way. It is a way of combining conditionality with our various means of exerting pressure within the framework of a legally binding agreement. A partnership and cooperation agreement would also allow Belarus to participate fully in the bilateral element of the Eastern Partnership.

Where visa facilitation is concerned, the intention is that this will be aimed at ordinary people, the general public, rather than at the political elite. It would represent an important opportunity to encourage contacts between civil society and the citizens of Belarus and the EU. It could become a crucial factor in opening up and influencing Belarusian culture. It is entirely in line with the aims of the Eastern Partnership.

Visa facilitation is linked with readmission. This should not be a great problem, since Belarus has demonstrated its ability to cooperate on matters related to border controls.

Belarus is in an important location on the eastern border of the EU. Consequently, we have an interest in seeing Belarus modernise, develop and move towards becoming a democratic, free country. The importance of having democratic neighbouring countries is a cornerstone of our security strategy.

We must work to instil our values – such as democracy, a market economy and respect for human rights – in Belarus. There is a clear parallel here with how we develop partnerships with a number of countries to both the east and the south.

I would like to end by emphasising that naturally, we must continue to set clear conditions in our relations with Belarus. The country must continue to move forward. President Lukashenko's repressive policies must be replaced by greater democracy and greater tolerance. The principles of the rule of law must be respected. This is the message that we are sending in all the bilateral contacts that take place between the Member States and Belarus.

Dialogue is essential if our demands are to bring results. That is why we on the Council have also welcomed the increased contacts aimed at strengthening a transition to democracy. We will continue to develop our support for the democracy movement and civil society which are working for reform and European integration in Belarus. We are very grateful for the significant support and commitment demonstrated by the European Parliament in this work.

**Benita Ferrero-Waldner**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, dear colleagues, Council President, honourable Members, it is a pleasure to discuss with you today our very important but also our very challenging relationship with Belarus. I think it is important because Belarus lies at a crossroads on our continent; and it is challenging because Belarus' own choices for its own future, and for its relationship with the EU, remain unclear. It still remains to be seen what they will be, so we will have to go on working with them.

Over the last two years, the European Union has sought gradually to engage with Belarus and to encourage further reforms, to build on the, I have to say, modest measures taken so far. I am convinced that the most productive approach to Belarus will be one based on pragmatism. Our engagement with that country needs to reflect positive steps by Belarus itself, but we also have to show at least some flexibility.

We have signalled clearly that we would like to see Belarus take its place as a fully fledged participant in the European neighbourhood policy, and that the bilateral track of the Eastern Partnership can be opened to Belarus if it shows through sustained action its wish to make irreversible steps towards democratic reform.

In the meantime, we have shown our goodwill in a number of important ways. A number of EU high-level visits to Belarus this year helped strengthen political exchanges. We launched a dialogue on human rights issues in June 2009. The Commission is engaged in a growing number of technical dialogues with Belarus on issues of mutual interest.

Last month, for instance, the External Relations Council decided to extend existing restrictive measures, notably the visa ban and the assets freeze, till October 2010, given the lack of significant progress on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

However, to encourage democratic progress, the Council also extended the suspension of the restrictive measures. And the Council also took two further decisions to encourage Belarus to stay on the path of



reforms. I very much welcome that the Commission can now start working on the visa facilitation issue, and on a shadow ENP action plan, the 'joint interim plan'. These steps provide an incentive for moves towards democracy in Belarus, which I am confident will be well understood, on the one hand, by the government, but, on the other hand, particularly by the people.

The joint interim plan will be developed with both the authorities and civil society in Belarus, and I hope it will open the door to deeper dialogue with Belarus, including on delicate political issues.

My services are preparing recommendations with a view to negotiating directives on visa facilitation and readmission agreements. Visa facilitation is a priority for the Belarusian people, and I would like to see more Belarusians visiting the European Union, travelling freely, studying and doing business. But naturally, the final decision on the negotiation directives will lie with the Council.

In addition, the Commission is prepared to increase the allocations of financial assistance to Belarus for the period of 2010-2013. We have proposed a package of macro-financial assistance worth EUR 200 million, for which we are seeking the approval of Parliament. The Commission is supporting the idea of the EIB including Belarus in the Bank's new mandate. I really hope this will go further.

However, if Belarus wishes to come closer to the EU, it is clear it must show this through its actions. There must be an end to political prisoners and politically motivated prosecutions. Reform of the electoral legislation in line with OSCE/ODIHR recommendations is sorely needed. The liberty of the press, freedom of speech and of assembly should be permitted and become the norm. The European Union also encourages Belarus to abolish or declare a moratorium on the death penalty. We call for improved conditions for NGOs, civil society and human rights activists. All these steps could play their part in accelerating the development of a closer partnership between Belarus and the European Union.

In conclusion, therefore, our offer to Belarus is clear. The European Union is ready to work closely with Minsk and support its political and economic development. But we would welcome significant positive steps from the Belarus leadership which would allow us to develop our relationship in the same way as we do with other eastern partners if they play their part.

**Jacek Protasiewicz**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, why has my political group insisted on having the resolution after the debate? Not only to express our support for the decision taken by the Council – because this is a wise decision and a proper decision and I agree with both your arguments – but the main reason is the increase in repression that has happened in Belarus quite recently. The resolution will refer to all those cases and, if any are abandoned during the drafting of the resolution, you may be sure they will be proposed as an amendment, either by the EPP in written form or by me in oral form tomorrow.

There is another issue which has been revealed by the media only today, namely a new draft law prepared by Alexander Lukashenko designed to totally control the Internet, as in China or even in North Korea. I think that we should also refer to that.

Why are these issues happening in Belarus? My private opinion is that it is partly due to the unconsidered – let me say, unwise – visits by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who met Alexander Lukashenko and praised him as a democratically elected leader but did not find time to meet with the opposition, and also, a little earlier, by the President of Lithuania, who has invited Lukashenko to Lithuania, in an ill-considered way, I would say.

Finally, let me refer to this morning's speech by Sergei Kovalev who said, citing Sakharov, that the Western world should offer and demand. This is the issue. We should offer deep cooperation with Belarus, but we should also demand from the Belarus authorities real progress in the area of human rights, democracy and freedom.

**Kristian Vigenin**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (BG) Minister, Commissioner, I cannot but agree with the assessment that Belarus is a difficult partner for the European Union.

However, we cannot support the approach which the Commission and Council have been adopting in relation to this country during the last year. This approach, based on a gradual opening of the door to Belarus, linked to appropriate decisions made by the authorities in Belarus, does not seem to us to be the best way for this country to gradually turn into or, at least, come as close as possible to our idea of a democratic country.

We would like to see slightly more substance in the measures which the European Commission and Council are adopting, as well as slightly more focus on the actual citizens of Belarus, because this is the way to get the citizens themselves to rally behind the cause which we are trying to promote there in dialogue with the Belarusian authorities, namely, democratisation, openness and the holding of free and democratic elections. In present-day Europe, it is inconceivable that this process cannot happen in a European country.

The problems we have with regard to the Eastern Partnership are linked to this issue as well. You are aware that the European Parliament does not support official relations with the Belarusian Parliament because we consider that MPs in Belarus are not elected in fair and democratic elections, which means that this parliament cannot be our official partner.

Also connected with this is the imminent establishment of an Eastern Partnership Parliamentary Assembly, which is facing certain problems. However, our approach will be to try, along with the Commission and Council, to pursue a common strategy so that we are ready at parliamentary level as well to implement appropriate measures for Belarus, if the Belarusians, on their side, implement their measures and fulfil the demands which we are making of them.

In this regard, I urge the European Parliament, the European Commission and Council to join forces in their efforts in order to avoid independent actions, such as those of Prime Minister Berlusconi, which harm the general cause and give further encouragement to Lukashenko. This must be avoided.

**Ivars Godmanis**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, I would like to put forward one more proposal, because relations are really frozen between the Parliament and the authorities, but we do have relations with the opposition. My proposal is that I will propose to organise a conference, in Latvia or somewhere else, at which there would be participants from the authorities and from the opposition. The themes of the conference would be, firstly: energy, security, economy, transit problems, which, in Belarus, are very significant, as also for the EU; secondly: visa questions, neighbourhood questions regarding citizens; thirdly: the problems with the democratic situation, party problems and human rights; and fourthly: the real view from the Belarus side – how they see the Eastern Partnership in the near future. At the end of the day, I believe that this is one of the ways in which we could bring about a thaw in the frozen situation that we really do have. It has to be a two-way street, because with a one-way street, we will not succeed.

**Werner Schulz**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, about two weeks ago, the Italian Prime Minister became the first Western Head of Government for many years to visit Belarus. He praised the work and policies of President Lukashenko and acknowledged the high election turn-out as being an expression of the high level of admiration and love of the people for their president. Unfortunately, he forgot to visit the opposition, which would otherwise be customary. The response was not to acknowledge the fact that steps had been taken towards liberalisation in Belarus; instead, the line taken towards the opposition became less tolerant. It resulted in repression and there was jostling, brawling and the like.

This is also why we have tabled this resolution today, in order to make it clear which powers and which civil society approaches we support and to clarify the fact that we will only be able to talk about a partnership – something that is, of course, as yet on ice – once we are also able to fully continue the human rights dialogue with Belarus. This means freedom of speech, freedom of expression, the freedom of the opposition to work, the allowance of opposition parties and so on. We believe that this is important and that it must define our partnership in the future. We hope that the European Union will find a common line here and that the future High Representative will also put a lot of effort into promoting it.

**Valdemar Tomaševski**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (LT) Mr President, Belarus, a Central European country, is the historical cradle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Duchy defended the values of Western civilisation in its north-eastern periphery. Therefore, it is good that the Council's conclusions of 17 November this year provide for new opportunities for dialogue, as well as greater cooperation between the European Union and Belarus.

However, we must move from words and gestures to something concrete. Let us begin with people-to-people relations. These must be strengthened by including Belarus in processes at European and regional levels. I call on the Commission to speedily prepare recommendations on directives for the simplification of visa regimes, and on the complete abolition of the visa regime within the 50km border zone. People in the centre of Europe must have rights and opportunities to move freely to both sides.

**Jiří Maštálka**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (CS) I have read through the draft resolutions on the issue in question carefully and I have listened with interest to the discussion. It seems to me that most of the drafts

submitted attempt to make a positive change to the hitherto cool relations between the EU and Belarus. I regard the Eastern Partnership project as a good opportunity to bring about a significant improvement in our relations. I would like to emphasise firstly that in the economic sphere, a pragmatic approach predominates but it cannot be merely a one-sided process. The EU must also open up to Belarusian goods and services. Secondly, it is essential, in my opinion, to release rapidly the financial resources for Belarus within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. Thirdly, dialogue could be assisted through a relaxation of the EU's visa policy. Fourthly, we should give more support to the environmental component of our cooperation. We all know that Belarus suffered from the Chernobyl disaster and our assistance will be more than welcome. Although I understand the historical and political circumstances of Belarus, I firmly believe that the time has also come for Belarus to join the ranks of those countries that have outlawed the death penalty.

**Fiorello Provera**, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, in response to the previous speaker, I wish to reiterate the right of any Head of State or Government to visit governments within or outside Europe, provided that this is consistent with the wishes of the Council. I therefore find this preventive censure of the Italian Prime Minister very annoying.

However, to return to the matter in hand, in signing up to the Eastern Partnership, Belarus has demonstrated its will to throw in its lot with Europe on the road to economic development and reform. The Commission has recognised certain progress made in Belarus, such as the release of political prisoners, reform of the electoral code and the possibility for certain opposition newspapers to circulate, albeit under government control. This does not mean full-blown democracy but is certainly a departure from the past.

The European Union is therefore faced with the choice of encouraging reform through dialogue within the Eastern Partnership and within Euronest and, at the same time, maintaining a policy of vigilance over the results achieved and steps taken. I therefore agree that Mr Vigenin should be given the task of reaching agreement with Minsk over a satisfactory representation in the Euronest Assembly that is not limited only to civil society but includes members of the Belarus Parliament.

This would enable us to engage in a dialogue with the political decision makers on subjects including human rights and to establish a channel of communication with the government to support the process of reform. They would then have no excuse for failing to respond or providing unsatisfactory answers.

**Peter Šťastný (PPE)**. – (SK) Belarus deserves more attention, both from the EU and the European Parliament. I definitely approve of our offer of a helping hand as long as the response of the other side is specifically measurable and adequate. We must, however, be principled in our demands. The beneficiaries will then be democracy, good relations between the EU and Belarus and definitely the citizens of that country.

I therefore welcome the invitation to Belarus to join the Euronest joint parliamentary assembly on the clear condition of a 5+5 format for delegates, which is strongly supported by the European Parliament. On the other hand, the gross breach of principle in relation to official visits of EU member representatives is regrettable. One such principle which is required on an official visit to Belarus is a meeting with the opposition. It is precisely this principle that was flagrantly breached through the absence of such a meeting in the recent visit by the leader of an influential Member State of the EU. Behaviour of this sort deals a blow to our efforts, damages the good name of the European Union and its institutions and definitely does not help to strengthen democracy in Belarus.

**Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D)**. – (LT) For six years in the European Parliament, I have maintained and continue to maintain that the European Union will do most good for the citizens of Belarus and the EU, especially those living in neighbouring countries, not by implementing sanctions or restrictions, but by opening the doors as wide as possible to cooperation among people, in particular the young, and to closer contacts in business, culture, science and other areas.

It is very good that for a second year, Brussels is pragmatically striving for change by moving closer to Belarus and its people. Yes, that policy has yet to yield all the positive results expected, but to return to the past would really be wrong. Therefore, I support the actions of the Council and the Commission, in particular, the prospect of an action plan for Belarus.

When the new EU countries joined the Schengen Agreement two years ago, the remains of the Berlin wall, metaphorically speaking, shifted to the East. Whereas before, residents of Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Belarus, often related, were able to travel to each other without any taxes, now Belarusians must pay almost half their monthly salary for a Schengen visa. Such bureaucratic and financial walls must be torn down as

soon as possible. On the other hand, Minsk's actions to delay the agreement with Lithuania and other states on facilitated passage for border inhabitants casts doubt over the authorities' goodwill.

According to surveys, in Belarus around 30% of residents are in favour of better relations with the European Union. Meanwhile 28% of residents would like better relations with Russia. This is not a contradiction. The European Union really does not aim to tear Belarus from Russia or to make them enemies. It is not the West that needs reforms, but the Belarusians themselves.

Well, dynamic economic modernisation and participation in the Eastern Partnership policy may help to carry out that task.

**Paweł Robert Kowal (ECR).** – (PL) Mr President, while listening to our debate, I have the impression we are saying too little about our main objective, which is free elections in Belarus. We should always give attention to this. As MEPs returned in democratic elections in our countries, we cannot ignore this main objective.

I am convinced that both in the opposition and government camps, many people are waiting for us to talk about free elections. They, too, are waiting for this signal. I know this from my own experience. They deserve a clear and plain answer. We are fighting for Belarus to have free elections, and for Belarus to be a free partner in Europe. Yesterday, we were able to obtain a declaration from Mrs Ferrero-Waldner on the Sarkozy Plan, for which I thank her.

Today, I have another idea. I would like Mrs Ferrero-Waldner to make a clear declaration that until free elections are held in Belarus, there will not be any political contacts with the country in areas for which she is responsible, except for the opposition, which will not be excluded in this way. Please say this publicly. We will be much obliged to you for this. It will be a Christmas present for us.

**Bastiaan Belder (EFD).** – (NL) Mr President, at the start of this year, on Wednesday 14 January to be precise, I also had the honour of taking part in a debate in this House on Belarus, at which Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner was also present. At the end of the parliamentary year, it is natural to look at whether there have been any significant changes in EU-Belarus relations; and, to my mind, 2009 has been characterised by the status quo between Minsk and Brussels. What conclusions should the European institutions draw from this? First of all, the danger remains of President Lukashenko's regime in Belarus simply continuing to vacillate between Moscow and Brussels, or between feigned integration with Russia and feigned rapprochement with the European Union. On the one hand, there is Europe's economic affectivity; on the other, the desire of the Belarusian political elite to consolidate its power. The latest changes in position at the top political level in Minsk point to a harder line.

The European Union should use a balanced strategy to seize the opportunity to bring about a gradual change in mentality at population and elite level, an opportunity arising from the dialogue and cooperation structures now established, combined with the global economic crisis, that also impels the Lukashenko Government to act.

In short, all European institutions need to contact all Belarusian target groups to this end, including the state authorities, the opposition forces, civil society, and even the civilian population. Naturally, the European Parliament will also seek substantive contact with the Belarusian Parliament.

**Konrad Szymański (ECR).** – (PL) The experiment with a thaw in relations between the Union and Belarus continues to yield ambiguous results. Political pressure from the European Union is, therefore, an essential condition for maintenance of the very weakly outlined direction of change in Minsk. Opening channels of communication with the authorities must go hand-in-hand with rejection of the undemocratic parliament in Minsk. We must also take scrupulous care that free Belarusians do not feel rejected, and so the thoughtless omission of meetings with representatives of the opposition is extremely irresponsible.

Minsk must realise that our policy has one objective – democracy in Belarus. Political changes will be possible only when we ensure that Belarusians have access to independent information. A project which, today, demands our support is, in particular, the television station Belsat, which has, for two years, been broadcasting the only Belarusian-language channel giving access to uncensored information about the situation in the country, and is enjoying growing interest among Belarusians.

**Paul Rübzig (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, Mrs Malmström, Commissioner, I am particularly pleased that Mrs Ferrero-Waldner, as our Commissioner, has always supported democracy and the market economy and has also set new standards in this regard in Belarus. In this connection, I would like to thank her most sincerely

for her work as the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy and to wish her all the best for the future.

**Marek Siwiec (S&D).** – (PL) Mr President, we have found ourselves in a situation which points to a kind of schizophrenia in our contacts with Belarus. For European leaders are talking with the President and with a Belarusian Government which represents the Belarusian Parliament and political system. This is good. However, we do not want to speak to a parliament which was returned in elections which were badly run and were neither free nor transparent, because we have our principles. This schizophrenia must come to an end at some point, and this should be said clearly.

The definitive moment for us to say what our policy towards Belarus is are next year's local elections. Either they will be held in accordance with standards which we accept and will indicate significant openness, or they will not be held in this way and we will simply have to stop thinking about openness from Belarus, because it will be obvious that Mr Lukashenko knows what he wants, while we do not really know what we want.

As for Mr Berlusconi, however, he has revealed a lot about himself, because if ideal leadership is, for him, what Lukashenko is doing, it means it is a model of leadership which impresses him, and we can only fold our arms and express regret that such a leader is to be found among the 27 leaders of the countries of the European Union.

**Charles Tannock (ECR).** – Mr President, as a long-term Belarus watcher, it is important that the EU remains engaged with Belarus, which is a medium-sized European country and which is becoming increasingly self-isolated and turning itself into a kind of Cuba of Europe. President Lukashenko, who is a quintessentially *Homo sovieticus* type, nevertheless understands fully what power politics are all about and therefore we need to have a reasonable EU-Belarus trade and political contact and relationship. I therefore do agree that the targeted sanctions need to be eventually lifted and a PCA eventually ratified.

So, after years of the EU isolating Belarus, I now agree that a pragmatic stick and carrot approach is the correct one. We must facilitate contacts with Belarus civil society and cheaper visa arrangements, and grant Belarus observer status in the Euronest Assembly, as well as access to the programmes of the Eastern Partnership.

We have made a generous start, and I now call upon Minsk to meet us halfway by improving its human rights and democracy record.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, the policy of the European Union towards Belarus is certainly an example of a sensible neighbourhood policy. We ought to thank the outgoing Commissioner, Mrs Ferrero-Waldner, for her successful work in this regard.

Belarus certainly should be supported by the European Union in its reform process and also in its democratisation. However, the European Union and the Member States of the European Union should not be so arrogant as to believe that their own democratic standards should be a model for the rest of the world.

One thing is certain in relation to Belarus: if we want our relations with Russia to flourish, we will be obliged also to respect the historical and geopolitical interests of the Kremlin somewhere. That is probably the most sensitive issue in connection with European policy towards Belarus.

**Filip Kaczmarek (PPE).** – (PL) There has been talk here of the need for youth and cultural exchange between the Union and Belarus. I am afraid this will be very difficult. On 3 December, Tatiana Szapučko, spokesperson for the opposition organisation Young Front, had her name struck off the list of students at the Faculty of Law of the Belarusian State University. Why was her name removed? For taking part in a forum on the Eastern Partnership in Brussels. The university authorities took the view that she had left without their consent, and for this she was thrown out of the university.

Perhaps for a woman in Belarus, this is not all that dangerous, but for men thrown out of university in Belarus, the results can be much more painful, because military service there is treated as a punishment, as a substitute for prison. There are young soldiers, such as Franek Wiczorka, head of the youth organisation called the Belarusian Youth Front, and Ivan Szyła, also from the organisation Young Front, who are being persecuted during military service, where they are cut off from access to information, and this is treated as a punishment. We should fight against this and should support those who are punished in this way.

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, Commissioner, honourable Members, I think it is extremely valuable that we have such strong support among all the European institutions for the approach towards Belarus.

It is, indeed, a very difficult partner, but it is our neighbour, a country with which we share borders. Some countries here have close and historic relations with the people there, so we must do our utmost to support the development towards democracy, human rights, the rule of law and market economy.

We are concerned about certain backlashes lately, for instance, the young student who was expelled. The Swedish Presidency has reacted very firmly in Minsk and also issued lots of statements: it is, of course, something that we deplore and it should not happen.

We have had lots of contact with civil society during this year. There was a conference just a few weeks ago in Brussels with civil society. I personally met opposition representatives in Stockholm a few weeks ago and there are continuous efforts to liaise with civil society and the opposition. They are weak but they are there and they need our support, and that support will continue.

I think Mr Godmanis' idea on the conference theme is a very interesting one. It certainly merits being explored to see if we can move forward.

This dual approach towards Belarus – the 'stick and carrot', as I think Mr Tannock called it – is hopefully the one that will succeed. It shows that we are truly committed, we stuck out our hands. We can show Mr Lukashenko and the Belarus regime that, if you move towards democracy, if you move towards respecting international values, there is another way for you. There is a way towards European integration; there is a way towards engagement with the European Union, towards visa facilitation and deepening of the Eastern Partnership.

Now it is up to them to respond. We have given them our hand and, with the full support of all the European institutions, please, Minsk, take it, because you and the Belarus people have a lot to win.

**Karel De Gucht**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, in conclusion, I would like to stress that I found – and I am also speaking on behalf of Benita Ferrero-Waldner, of course – our exchanges today to be very frank and extremely useful. I wish to thank you for a constructive and forward-looking debate.

The EU is, in principle, ready to work closely with Minsk and support urgently needed political and economic reforms. Should there be significant steps from the Belarusian leadership in terms of democratisation, the EU would be prepared to see Belarus as a full member of the Eastern Partnership. In the meantime, the EU is, and will be, urging Belarus to take further irreversible steps towards democratic standards, without which our relationship cannot develop to its full potential. I sincerely hope that in 2010, we will be in a position to engage gradually and intelligently with Belarus and offer the Belarusian people a vision and tangible benefits of a close relationship with the EU.

The EU expects Belarus to take a series of accompanying measures in the area of democratic reforms, with a view to coming closer to the EU and together help expand the area of peace, stability and prosperity involving all six Eastern Partnership countries, as well as Russia, the EU's strategic partner.

There are five measures we expect Belarus to take resolutely and irreversibly.

Firstly, to ensure there is no backtracking on political prisoners and politically motivated criminal prosecution. Secondly, carry out a thorough reform of the electoral legislation in line with OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. Thirdly, embark upon the liberalisation of the media environment, uphold freedom of speech and of assembly. Fourthly, improve through regulatory and legislative measures working conditions for NGOs. Fifthly, abolish or declare a moratorium on the death penalty.

A significant move in showing Belarus' commitment to shared values would be the immediate introduction of a moratorium on the death penalty and its subsequent abolition as a crucial step forward on its path to Council of Europe membership. In its November conclusions, the Council of the EU urged Belarus to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty. Moreover, the Commission has carried out communication actions in the wake of the 10th International Day against the Death Penalty.

What could the EU do for Belarus? What is on offer? The Commission believes that the most productive approach to Belarus will be one based on pragmatism. Progressive EU engagement with Belarus needs to reflect positive steps by Belarus itself, but we also need to show flexibility. The November 2009 conclusions

of the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) allow the EU to offer incentives to Belarus for steps we want to see, while remaining true to our principles. This is what I mean by pragmatism.

Our message to Belarus is clear. First, the EU is ready to work closely with Minsk and support its political and economic development and, should there be significant positive steps from the Belarusian leadership, we would be prepared to see Belarus as a full member of the Eastern Partnership. This would entail the development of our relationship through the bilateral track of the EAP, the launching of a thorough political and economic dialogue, as well as enhanced sectoral cooperation.

In the meantime, Belarus was invited in May 2009 to join the multilateral dimension of the EAP. It is participating constructively at deputy minister level in the four multilateral forums – democracy and governance, economic integration, energy security and people-to-people contacts.

Secondly, we expect Belarus to take further irreversible steps towards democratic standards, without which our relationship cannot develop to its full potential.

Thirdly, the absence of a PCA is not only a loss to Belarus; it deprives us of a legal basis for structures like a formal human rights dialogue and addressing trade or energy transit issues. In the Commission, we continue to believe that the ratification of the PCA will be a useful step forward, but clearly we will continue to use this as an incentive lever to encourage further moves on the Belarusian side.

Fourthly, and lastly, the Commission has started working on the implementation of the November 2009 GAERC conclusions, and will come back to the Council of EU Ministers with proposals as soon as possible.

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

I have received seven motions for resolution<sup>(1)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The vote will take place tomorrow (Thursday, 17 December 2009).

*Written statements (Rule 149)*

**Cristian Silviu Buşoi (ALDE), in writing.** – (RO) Democratic values and respect for human rights and individual freedoms provide the bedrock on which the EU has been built. As our basic objective is to help neighbouring countries become democratic and Belarus is one of the last countries in Europe with an authoritarian regime, I believe that we should set very clear, stringent political conditions for Belarus before any political contact is established. Belarus has carried out some reforms, but they pale into insignificance in relation to the problems which exist, especially with regard to respect for human rights, press freedom and freedom of expression. Support must be given to the activists campaigning for respect for human rights and individual freedoms. I support the idea of establishing contacts with the opposition and am particularly in favour of individual contacts between citizens from the EU and Belarus. As a result of this, the citizens from Belarus will be able to speak freely with people who share democratic values. This would contribute to the development of civil society and facilitate a process of democratisation, which would enjoy popular support and be initiated by the people itself. This is the only way that a healthy democracy can be created where everyone's rights are respected. Therefore, the use of sanctions as a means of exerting pressure needs to be combined with facilitating contacts between citizens from the EU and Belarus.

**Kinga Göncz (S&D), in writing.** – (HU) I would like to welcome Belarus's constructive involvement in the Eastern Partnership process, as well as the fact that a human rights dialogue has been initiated between the EU and Belarus. During the past year, positive processes have been initiated in the country with the release of political prisoners, but we see that this process has since come to a standstill. This is due to problems with the registration of political parties and the authorisation of independent media and civil organisations. As a result, the EU was obliged to extend the travel restriction measures. I sincerely hope that Belarus will continue along the path of positive change it embarked on last year, thereby offering the opportunity for the EU also to be able to respond positively. Until then I think it is also important to consider whether we can move forward in the area of visa facilitation, as human contacts can make a major contribution to more political openness and the democratisation process as well.

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<sup>(1)</sup> See Minutes

**Bogusław Sonik (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PL) When debating respect for human rights in Belarus and the decision of Member States to extend sanctions against some representatives of the Belarusian regime until October 2010, it should be said that the situation in Belarus is gradually changing.

In the outcome of the European Council of 17 November 2009, we read that new possibilities for dialogue and increasing cooperation between the European Union and Belarus have emerged. Wanting to encourage the authorities in Belarus to carry out reforms, the Member States agreed to a temporary lifting of sanctions on freedom of movement which had been applied to high-ranking representatives of the Belarusian authorities. The European Commission is preparing a directive to make it easier for Belarusians to obtain EU visas and an agreement on readmission.

However, we must not forget that human rights are still being violated in Belarus, and the promising and favourable steps taken since October 2008, such as the release of most political prisoners and the permission for distribution of two independent newspapers, are still not enough. A flagrant example of the violation of human rights is the continued use of the death penalty: Belarus is the only European country which still uses capital punishment, and in recent months, further death sentences have been passed.

Therefore, we address the following demands to the decision makers in Belarus: that, at least, they respect human rights, including introduction of a moratorium on carrying out the death sentence, amendment of electoral law and guaranteeing freedom of speech and of the media.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR SCHMITT

*Vice-President*

### 11. Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on the violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) Mr President, the Presidency attaches great importance to discussing with the European Parliament the highly problematic situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Infringements of human rights, and particularly increased sexual and gender-related violence, are a huge problem. It is high time for a debate on the situation in the country, particularly in view of the recent UN report. The report from the UN group of experts emphasises that a number of armed groups active in the country are supported by a well-organised network that is partly based within the European Union.

I do not need to remind you of the EU's long-term commitment to the Democratic Republic of Congo and the entire African Great Lakes Region. The EU has long made efforts to bring about peace and stability in the country. It is important that this commitment continues, both politically and in terms of development. I am sure that the Commission will say more about this later.

This support has been manifested in various ways, including the appointment of the first EU Special Representative for the region as far back as 1994. Both military and civil ESDP instruments have been used. We have had Operation Artemis in Ituri province, the temporary EUFOR deployment in the period leading up to the 2006 elections, as well as EUSEC RD Congo for reform of the defence forces and EUPOL RD Congo for reform of the police. Bearing all this in mind, there have been both positive and negative developments. Diplomatic relations between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda have been restored. That is to be welcomed. Peace agreements with most of the armed groups in the eastern part of the country were signed in 2008 and 2009. These now have to be implemented.

The situation is unstable in many ways. Many armed groups in the east are in the process of being integrated into the army and some uncertainty pervades this integration work. Military operations are continuing against other armed groups, including the FDLR and the Lord's Resistance Army. These groups are directly responsible for targeting civilians and for an enormous amount of human suffering. At the same time, armed groups are re-emerging in other parts of the country. The eastern part of the country remains an area in which international law and human rights are being infringed. There are high levels of murder, acts of violence and sexual attacks. These crimes are spreading throughout the country on an alarming scale, despite President Kabila's announcement of a so-called zero tolerance policy.



The illegal exploitation of natural resources is a further major problem. It is important that the country's rich mineral deposits are brought under legitimate national control, both as a source of much-needed income for the state and in order to cut off economic support to illegal armed groups. The Council is also concerned about the preparatory work and arrangements for the planned local elections. Management problems, insufficient transparency and infringements of citizens' and political rights represent serious obstacles to the democratisation process.

Since there are many significant problems that still provide cause for deep concern, the Council has taken a tough stance as regards the serious crimes against international law and human rights in North Kivu and South Kivu. The Council recently condemned these acts in its conclusions and emphasised that the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo must ensure that all those responsible are brought to justice.

The EU is firmly committed to continuing to help bring about peace, stability and development for the population of the country. In this regard, reform of the security sector is crucial to the country's stabilisation. All players within this sector, including the Congolese authorities, must strive to ensure that the common interest in reform of the security sector is genuinely safeguarded. We must also encourage continued specific improvements in regional relations through firmer political and economic partnerships between the countries of the region.

I can assure you that the Council and the European Union will stand by its commitment to the Democratic Republic of Congo and is concerned about its future. We will continue our wide-ranging commitment in the country and will continue to speak plainly wherever international law and human rights are infringed. We are very grateful in this respect for the constructive and persistent role played by the European Parliament, and I am looking forward to hearing your views in this debate.

**Karel De Gucht**, *Member of the Commission*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, a year or so ago, the situation in Goma, a city besieged by the CNDP troops led by Laurent Nkunda, was the primary concern of the Congolese authorities and the international community.

Every effort has been made to prevent the worst. Promoting a political agreement, firstly between the DRC and Rwanda, and then between the Congolese Government, the CNDP and the other armed groups has made it possible, in the short term, to defuse the ticking time bomb of violence, although its potential for destabilisation today remains intact. It remains intact because the underlying causes have been addressed superficially and on the basis of a short-term, purely political rationale. Being faced with only poor solutions, the international community has opted for the least serious one; that is not a criticism, just an obvious fact, an observation.

The international community and the European Union have been unable to take the decision to deploy a protection force. The MONUC reinforcements that we have been requesting for over a year now are only just starting to arrive. The recent report by the United Nations group of independent experts and that by the Human Rights Watch organisation provide a damning account of the current situation that cannot be ignored or passed over in silence.

It is time now to address and to deal with these underlying causes, and to come up with lasting solutions. If this is to be done, however, it will require everyone's cooperation – the cooperation of the Congolese and Rwandan governments in the first instance, and of MONUC, the United Nations, the rest of the international community and the European Union in the second instance.

There is no doubt that the political and diplomatic *rapprochement* between Rwanda and the DRC can be beneficial in terms of creating stability in the region and, if the will exists on both sides, can help establish a situation of peaceful coexistence and profitable cooperation between the two countries within a revitalised Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries.

However, this is only the start of what remains a long and problematic journey. The FDLR issue is at the heart of the problem, as are all the associated sets of problems that it entails and which complicate the situation: the illegal exploitation of natural resources; the lack of protection for minorities; the impunity in a vast stateless area where the public authorities are not only incapable of controlling the territory but include representatives who are often part of the problem.

The Rwanda-DRC agreement has meant that the CNDP and the unacceptable demands of Laurent Nkunda have been temporarily brought under control. The agreement has simply resulted in the replacement of Laurent Nkunda by Bosco Ntaganda, who is more easily influenced and willing to reach any compromise

whatsoever in exchange for immunity, which is in violation of all the international provisions on crimes against humanity and which neither Rwanda nor the DRC are entitled or able to grant him.

So far, the hasty integration of the CNDP into such an ineffective and totally chaotic army as the FARDC; the obtaining, by Bosco Ntaganda, of increased autonomous power resulting from the implementation of a parallel chain of command within the FARDC, for which the irregular payment of the soldiers and the absence of any form of discipline or hierarchy provides fertile ground; MONUC's insufficiently controlled and gauged support for the military operations against the FDLR; and the non-existent response to the demands of the Rwandophone minorities are factors that are liable to create even more serious problems than those which we faced a year ago – problems that neither Rwanda nor the DRC will be capable of managing any longer.

The situation has scarcely improved against this backdrop: the humanitarian crisis continues without any obvious signs of improvement, as do the human rights violations, the sickening trend of violence, indeed of sexual atrocities, the impunity for all manner of crimes, and the pillaging of natural resources. One need only read the United Nations and the Human Rights Watch reports that I mentioned to understand the scale of this never-ending tragedy. It is clear that the actions aimed at preventing the FDLR from doing harm must continue, but not at any price, not without first having done everything it takes to minimise the risks that military pressure entails for innocent civilians.

This requires better planning, the redefining of priorities and greater protection of the populations by MONUC, which is the main task stipulated in its mandate. The conditions in which MONUC may operate must also be clear and unambiguous. This is not about calling for MONUC to withdraw or disengage. A hasty withdrawal by MONUC would be disastrous, as it would create an even greater vacuum: the recent events in the Equator region, which are essentially one more symptom of the Congolese disease, prove this.

Clearly, it is also important to stop the political and economic collusion from which the FDLR continue to benefit in the region and elsewhere in the world, including in our Member States. The FDLR's campaign is not a political campaign, but a criminal act of which the Congolese population is the main victim, and this is how the campaign and all those who are directly or indirectly associated with it must be treated. This is why a firmer stance is needed against all forms of trafficking. At the same time, beyond the disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement (DDRRR) process, the Rwandan and Congolese authorities must be more perceptive with regard to individuals who are not necessarily criminals.

That being said, the solution to a large part of the problem must also be found in the DRC. I am, of course, thinking of the local origins of the conflict. In this regard, the agreements of 23 March must be applied in full, otherwise, sooner or later, we will see the frustrations of the local populations gain the upper hand. This is absolutely essential if the stabilisation efforts and the will to revive economic activity in the Kivus are to succeed. At that point, the international community really will have a role to play.

However, the Kivus aside, I am also thinking of the huge mess that the DRC has become over the last 20 years or so. It is a country in which practically everything needs to be rebuilt, starting with the state, the absence of which is at the heart of all the problems.

In order to achieve this task, certain elements are crucial. Firstly, democracy must be consolidated. I am, of course, thinking of the local, legislative and presidential elections announced for 2011. Elections are one element of democracy, but we must not forget the need to continue to support the political institutions and forces in a dialectic relationship with the opposition. Without this, we would not be operating in a truly open political system.

The second element is without doubt the need to strengthen good governance. While it is true that, given the extent of its problems, the DRC cannot do everything at once, it clearly must demonstrate a solid political will if it is to have a chance of success. Parliament raised the issue of impunity. This is a good example, because it is a matter of political will and it also underpins the whole business of affirming the rule of law. The problem is that things cannot be done in isolation. The rule of law also requires a reform of the security sector and real progress in economic governance terms.

The scale of the challenges implies the need for long-term policies. However, that must not be an excuse for any lack of immediate action. I am thinking in particular of the issues of sexual violence and human rights, which Parliament has highlighted. Political will can play a crucial role here, and in this regard, we must welcome the commitment made by President Kabila to take a zero tolerance approach. This approach must now be applied.

The Commission, which, by the way, is already doing a great deal of work in this area (supporting the judiciary, helping victims), is prepared to continue to support the DRC. In this connection I have also expressed my wish for the International Criminal Court and the Commission to cooperate more closely in practice with regard to the fight against sexual violence.

A consolidated democratic system, good governance and political will: those are the key elements on which we would like to build our partnership as equals with the DRC.

**Filip Kaczmarek**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (PL) Mr President, practically every journalist who writes about Africa would like to be the next Joseph Conrad. This is why journalists most often concentrate on unfavourable aspects, because they are looking for the heart of darkness.

However, Congo does not have to be a heart of darkness. It can be a normal country. There are normal countries in Africa, where rich natural resources serve the good of the people, the public authorities care for the common good, children go to school, and sex is associated with love and not rape and violence. I am certain that the key to success in Kivu and the whole of Congo is the quality of government. Without democratic, just, honest and effective government, peace and justice cannot be achieved. Without responsible government, the country's riches serve only a few, leaders look after themselves, schools are empty and violence becomes a part of everyday life.

I remember the optimism of 2006. I, myself, was an observer during the elections, and we were all pleased because, after a gap of 40 years, democratic elections were taking place in that large and important country. However, our optimism has turned out to be premature. It is hard not to ask the question why this has happened, and why the elections did not result in a better life for Congo. In my opinion, it is a question of money, as Mrs Malmström and Mr De Gucht have said. They spoke about the illegal use of resources and how this is used to finance arms, which serves to continue and escalate the conflict. If we can put a stop to this, we will be closer to our goal.

**Michael Cashman**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, I thank the Commissioner for his statement, which certainly reassures me.

Can I say, Commissioner, that I agree with you absolutely: we cannot pull out; we cannot create a vacuum, because a vacuum exists there already and that is a vacuum of political will, and we need political leadership to resolve this according to international obligations as well as according to the rule of law.

Let me just deal with the reality of this. In the conflict since 1998, over 5 000 400 people have lost their lives and, indirectly or directly, as many as 45 000 deaths occur every month.

It is reported that there are 1 460 000 internally displaced people, most of them facing violence, and let me give a voice to those who do not have a voice, those who suffer such violence. The armed actors in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have perpetrated gender-based violence through various forms, including sexual slavery, kidnapping, forced recruitment, forced prostitution and rape. The Congolese victims of sexual violence include women, men and boys who have also suffered rape, sexual humiliation and genital mutilation.

Resolution after resolution has been passed. The time has come for us internationally to demand an end to these atrocities.

**Louis Michel**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Mrs Malmström, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, as you know, I have always kept a close eye on events taking place in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite the promising progress made thanks to the recent *rapprochement* between Rwanda and the DRC – a *rapprochement* without which there will be no solution in the east and which must therefore be consolidated – despite the agreements of 23 March between Kinshasa and the Congolese rebel group, which the Commissioner spoke about, the situation in the east remains deeply concerning.

I would like to make seven observations. The first is that peace certainly cannot be established in the east of Congo until the FDLR are prevented from doing harm. Unfortunately, the main victims of the military pressure that the DRC is exerting at present and which is aimed at cutting these extremists off from their bases and their sources of income are the civilian populations, who are victims of collateral damage but also of the condemnation of some and the violent acts of others.

This risk was foreseeable and, as the Commissioner said, MONUC's capabilities needed to be strengthened from the outset, as today it is still sorely lacking in resources suitable for coping with all the requests and its organisation on the ground is also not always ideal.

Even though we must demand a greater degree of coordination and a greater, more active presence on the ground, it would be dangerous to make judgments or comments about MONUC that could be used by certain negative forces as an excuse to demonise it. Clearly, that would be even more serious.

Another element concerns the acts of violence by the FARDC. The context of war cannot, of course, in any way justify such behaviour, and thus, I welcome the decision taken by the United Nations to stop providing logistical support to those Congolese units that fail to respect human rights. The zero tolerance policy recently introduced by President Kabila clearly must be welcomed, but whether it is respected and implemented or not is another matter.

The shortcomings of the Congolese judicial system are creating a widespread feeling of impunity. That is why I encourage the efforts made by the Commission, in close cooperation with certain EU Member States, to work on restoring a judicial system, including in the east.

Lastly, my final point: the one thing that still has to be rebuilt in Congo is a rule of law with real governing powers. Today, these powers are completely non-existent and thus create an extremely serious vacuum.

**Isabelle Durant**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Mrs Malmström, Commissioner, as you have both said, the situation in the Kivu region is extremely worrying, despite the presence of almost 20 000 MONUC troops.

The civilian populations and, in particular, women, are the main victims of the conflict strategies employed by the armed groups and even, as someone said, by certain units of the Congolese army, which have made systematic rape a weapon of war. Moreover, last month, a group of Congolese women came here to remind us of this – and rightly so – with the aim of enlisting our support against this scandalous strategy.

The pillaging of resources, as you said, Commissioner, is another factor that is exacerbating this conflict. I agree with what was said just now: it is highly dangerous to discredit MONUC, to discredit it unnecessarily, to make it solely responsible for the situation in the eyes of the populations, who are already worn out by so many years of war and massacres.

I entirely agree that it is not MONUC's mandate that must be reviewed and that it should obviously not be asked to withdraw. What must be reviewed are its rules of engagement, its operational directives, so that it cannot in any way be associated with or support a Congolese unit that has men in its ranks who violate human rights or commit acts of violence.

The Congolese authorities, too, have a big responsibility in this fight against impunity concerning acts of sexual violence, crimes which, I might add, should be brought before the International Criminal Court. These same authorities must also ensure that the soldiers are quartered in barracks immediately. If they were quartered in barracks, things would no doubt be different.

Lastly, I believe that we must revisit the Amani programme. This programme offers the possibility of building a dialogue and peace everywhere, since these alone are the guarantees of lasting reconstruction. In any case, I welcome your intervention, which I broadly support, and I hope that the European Union will remain active. This is crucial, even though, regrettably, it did not want to put a force together. That would have been a possibility a little less than a year ago. Nevertheless, I believe that European Union action is crucial.

**Sabine Lösing**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DE) Mr President, in no other country in the world have there, as yet, been more European Security and Defence Policy operations than in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As always, the question arises of whose security is being defended. Is it the security of the Congolese civilian population, the women and children? The UN mission MONUC did not prevent thousands of people being killed, tortured and raped and hundreds of thousands of people being expelled – atrocities in which the government forces supported by the EU were involved.

So what is being defended in the Congo? Humanity? Or are we safeguarding a regime that, between 2003 and 2006, for example, concluded 61 contracts with international mining firms, not a single one of which was judged by international NGOs to be acceptable from the point of view of the Congolese people? President Kabila changed course for a while and concluded fewer contracts with Western firms. This change was suspended when the war escalated once again. My question is, why are the people who pull the strings of

the largest group behind the murders in eastern Congo – the FDLR – reputed to be in Germany? I am referring here to the resolution that I have tabled on behalf of the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, the expulsion of millions of people, thousands of rapes and hundreds of murders must not be the sad legacy of the largest UN peace-keeping operation in the world. The Congo operation was decided on ten years ago, but nothing much has been achieved. Militias continue to plunder the rich supply of natural resources in the region, terrorise the inhabitants and commit crimes against humanity.

Embargoes have been ineffective so far. Rebels are simply changing sides and they carry out their crimes in the safe uniforms of Congolese soldiers. Two war criminals were recently brought before the war crimes tribunal in The Hague and development projects and elections were able to take place – a partial success, at least.

We also succeeded in striking a small blow against the global Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR). However, we have not been able to put an end to the cruel civil war. The fronts are always changing.

It is particularly disturbing when accusations made against the UN mission turn out to be true. UN soldiers must not stand there and do nothing when atrocities are being committed and, even more importantly, the army's logistics support must not be associated with support for human rights violations. The Congo mission simply must not turn into some kind of Vietnam for Europe.

Essentially, we need a coordinated European security policy and peace-keeping operations, but above all, in the area surrounding Europe and not in far-off Africa, where the ethnic fronts are unclear. In my opinion, the EU must concentrate its peace-keeping operations on the crisis regions in its own backyard, such as the Balkans or the Caucasus. Therefore, we should, perhaps, end the EU's involvement in the UN mission in Africa.

**Gay Mitchell (PPE).** – Mr President, that the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is deplorable and that the effect of the conflict upon the people there is tragic goes without saying.

However, there are a number of important points that must be reiterated here and in our joint motion for a resolution. We must remember that the violence in the DRC, like so many conflicts of its type, is often driven by greed but also stems from and is fuelled by poverty. Fighting over territory, ethnicity, resources or politics are but branches of the same rotten tree of want.

Increase a man's prosperity and give him purpose and you will reduce his desire to kill or be killed. That is our development challenge as a Parliament.

Secondly, we must ensure that any military presence in a foreign country is designed and implemented to reduce suffering and violence, not exacerbate it. We must stand as pillars against impunity rather than agents of it.

If there is evidence that Western missions are not living up to this standard, then their presence and practices must be urgently reassessed.

Finally, history has shown us that, in internecine conflicts such as in the DRC, a political solution is the only hope for peace. Dialogue and engagement are the only roads toward such a solution.

With the post-Lisbon creation of our External Action Service, the European Union must take its place on the international stage as a more proactive facilitator of dialogue and a sponsor of peace.

**Corina Crețu (S&D).** – (RO) As has been emphasised so far, millions of civilians have been deliberately killed during military operations in the eastern part of the Republic of Congo. There is a risk of this kind of news becoming quite routine due to the unprecedented frequency with which acts of violence are committed in this country. The victims of these actions include children, young girls and women, not to mention civilians involved in protecting human rights and journalists.

The humanitarian crisis is deepening with every day that passes. The lack of security in the area means that humanitarian organisations can no longer provide any intervention. More than 7 500 cases of rape and sexual violence have been recorded in the first nine months of this year alone, which is more than the figure for the whole of last year. All these incidents have taken place against a backdrop of famine and extreme poverty affecting millions of people. The blame for this whole tragedy lies both with the Congolese army

and Rwandan rebels. Unfortunately, however, there are indications that the UN troops in the Congo bear a large share of the responsibility as they are allowing serious violations of human rights to take place. This is why I believe that the European Union must discuss urgently how the UN forces in the Congo are going to achieve properly the mission objectives that have been assigned them.

Measures are also required to put an end to money-laundering activities, arms trafficking and gold trafficking, which results in more than 37 tonnes of gold being illegally removed from the Congo every year, with a value in excess of EUR 1 billion. The money from this is used to procure weapons and encourage crime in this country.

**Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE).** – (NL) Mr President, I have just listened to the speech by Mr Mölzer, who has now left, the gist of which was: it is so hopeless that we should just give up and concentrate on our own neighbours. I must say that, if one really looks at the situation, one is almost tempted to call it a day. On the other hand, I then think of the group of women who visited us here last month, to whom Mrs Durant also referred, and I wonder whether we could look them in the eye and tell them that we are simply giving up, or that it is not one of our priorities, or that we mean to just adopt yet another resolution and consider our job done. When I think of those women, of their despair and bitterness and the feeling that they have been left in the lurch, I do consider it eminently possible to hold such a debate.

The resolution contains very many positive elements, and I hope that we shall indeed lend force to them with action, but I just wanted to emphasise one aspect. We frequently talk about rape, or sexual violence, but in fact, these terms scarcely cover the reality of the situation. The women with whom we spoke said it goes far beyond attacks on individuals; it is not individual violence but rather an attack on the community, aimed at destroying its fabric. It is my view, therefore, that there is now a most urgent need for us not only to take action, put an end to impunity, pay on the nail and provide the resources for the actions we have announced, but also to show that we are extending a hand to the people there, that we stand in solidarity with them and are not leaving them in the lurch; that we are shouldering our moral responsibility.

**Cristian Dan Preda (PPE).** – (RO) At the present juncture, which also coincides with the moment when the United Nations is preparing to announce the extension of MONUC's mandate, I think we need to reflect on the international community's actions in light of the situation on the ground in the RDC, which is, unfortunately, continuing to deteriorate. As is also borne out by the experience of Operation Kimia II conducted by the Congolese army with MONUC's support, military success is not sufficient when the cost in humanitarian terms is high and if it is paid through the suffering of the Congolese civilian population.

I believe that the recent military operations conducted against the FDLR have had disastrous consequences, resulting, which we should be aware of, in large-scale human rights violations and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. On the other hand, impunity offers an invitation to commit these crimes over and over again. I believe that protection of the civilian population must be the number one priority. The European Parliament must strongly assert that acts of violence, particularly sexual violence, and human rights violations in general, as well as the abuses committed in Kivu, must stop immediately, along with the climate of impunity.

**Luis Yáñez-Barnuevo García (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, other Members have already spoken of the tragic situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They have spoken of the millions of deaths and cases of rape and abuse against the civilian population. They have spoken of the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and of cooperation by the European Commission on the ground. Less has been said, however, about the need to control the illegal flow of raw materials, such as diamonds, gold and other products, to the rest of the world. These products are being 'laundered' through legitimate accounts and companies in our own countries or in the United States.

This is important work for Mrs Ashton. With the authority conferred on her by the Treaty of Lisbon and the support of the 27 Member States and of this Parliament, she could coordinate a whole programme of action to prevent this wealth from ending up in the hands of the warlords who are responsible for the killing and rape.

**Anne Delvaux (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, in the light of the recent alarming reports coming out of North and South Kivu, and in the light of the extremely violent nature of the attacks perpetrated against civilians and, more specifically, against women, children and the elderly, urgency – a word so often used by the European Union and by the entire international community with regard to Congo – seems to me to be an immediate requirement. Everything must be done to ensure the protection of the civilian populations. The mandate given to the MONUC personnel on the ground will no doubt be extended, but it absolutely must be re-evaluated and strengthened, too, so that this rising tide of violence can be stemmed.

For many years now, international communities, NGOs and Congolese women have made constant efforts to combat the use of sexual assault as a weapon of war. Today, systematic and widespread use is made of this weapon in peaceful areas, and always with total impunity. I welcome the recent determination shown by the Congolese authorities to put a stop to this impunity, but this zero tolerance policy must be ambitious – all perpetrators of violence, without exception, will have to answer for their actions – and truly effective.

The opening, at the International Criminal Court, of the first trials of the alleged perpetrators of sexual crimes committed during an armed conflict must result in the Court being able to identify all the culprits so that they can be sentenced without delay.

Lastly, all this, needless to say, goes hand in hand with the strengthening of state structures, the maintenance of law and order, the promotion of gender equality, and the protection of human rights and, hence, of the rights of women and children, whose dignity, childhood and innocence are often sacrificed on the altar of another form of humiliation: indifference.

**Michèle Striffler (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, the humanitarian situation in the east of the Republic of Congo – and, more specifically, in the eastern province and in the Kivu region – is disastrous, as we now know. The security situation of the civilian populations deteriorated following, among other things, the joint military operations conducted by the Congolese army and the Ugandan and Rwandan troops against all the rebel armed groups, operations which left countless massacres and human rights violations in their wake.

Sexual violence is a very disturbing and very widespread trend, and is now part of everyday life for the people of Congo. What is more, numerous acts of violence are being committed against humanitarian workers.

According to official figures, there are 2 113 000 displaced persons in the east of the Republic of Congo. Since 1 January 2009, more than 775 000 new cases of displaced persons have been recorded in the Kivu and 165 000 in the districts of the east of the eastern province.

Currently, it is estimated that humanitarian aid is required for almost 350 000 vulnerable people: children, widows and victims of sexual violence. A rapid response by the European Union is therefore crucial.

**Marc Tarabella (S&D).** – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, all the speakers have rightly emphasised the terrible situation in which the Congolese people, and especially Congolese women, are living in the east of that country. They have talked about the rapes and the barbaric acts that these people suffer and about the murders of which they are victims. Rather than talk about them, however, I invite you to visit the UNICEF and V-Day websites, which obviously say all there is to say about this subject.

Today, I am going to talk to you about the real consequences that these barbaric acts have for Congo; I am going to talk about the physically and mentally wounded women, who must be cared for; and I am going to talk about the murdered women, who will no longer be able to contribute to the economic development of Congo and whose unborn children will never be able to contribute to it either. I would also like to talk about the spread of AIDS, a trauma suffered by the entire Congolese population, which paints a negative picture of Congo to the international community – one, in short, of a country that is getting into more and more of a mess.

Encouraging a lasting peace and promoting the economic development of Congo are only achievable if the Congolese Government and the UN are successful in their efforts to combat sexual violence against Congolese women and, more broadly speaking, if they ensure that a genuine rule of law is established in that country.

**Frédérique Ries (ALDE).** – (FR) Mr President, Minister, Commissioner, I, in turn, would like to refer to the tragedy of the sexual violence suffered by women in the DRC and, more specifically, in the east of the country. The phenomenon is not new. It is extremely complex. It is multidimensional. The physical and psychological suffering of the victims is made even worse by this social exclusion, which is tragic for them. President Kabila's zero tolerance policy is today tentatively beginning to bear fruit, but everyone is aware that only a global strategy can combat this scourge in the long term.

I know, Commissioner, that the Commission is already intervening, and is doing so via a multitude of projects and budgets, too. However, faced with these figures and with the terrible, dreadful accounts we are hearing, do you not think that we in this House are entitled to have our doubts about the results of this strategy? Women, Commissioner, are the main vehicle for peace and reconstruction in a country. They are the future of Congo. How do you intend to act more effectively and more promptly?

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Mr President, I, too, wished to speak in this debate, since it concerns a subject that I have been following for a long time. Unfortunately, in the light of the constant acts of violence and the human rights violations in the east of the DRC, we are obliged once again to strongly condemn the massacres, the crimes against humanity and the acts of sexual violence committed against women and girls that are still taking place in the eastern province.

That is why I join with my fellow Members in calling for all the competent authorities to intervene immediately in order to bring the perpetrators of these crimes before the courts and in calling on the United Nations Security Council once again to urgently take any measures that have the capacity to actually prevent anyone else from committing further attacks against the civilian populations in the eastern province of the DRC.

Similarly, I call on all the parties involved to step up the fight against impunity and to enforce the rule of law by combating, among other things, the rape of women and girls and the enlistment of child soldiers.

**Franz Obermayr (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, in November 2009, there was an exchange of ambassadors between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo – a tiny ray of hope for this ravaged country and its ravaged people. In addition, the leader of the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda was arrested. These are both signs of improvement in the situation in eastern Congo. My question for the Commission is this: what measures are you intending to take to bring about further rapprochement between Congo and Rwanda?

With regard to the UN mandate, a great deal has been said here today about taking all forms of action. Let us be frank: if there is a UN mandate, then it should clearly be for the protection of those who are oppressed, tortured, violated and abused, in particular, the women and children of this country. In this regard, one thing must be quite clear: if a UN mandate is issued – and we Austrians are a bit restrictive in this area – then it should be consistent and, if need be – including for the protection of the oppressed people – those on the ground must be armed.

**Seán Kelly (PPE).** – Mr President, I think it is unfortunate that in this Christmas season, we have spent the last two days discussing violence around the world, be it in Chechnya or in Afghanistan and now in the Congo. But, nevertheless, that is the reality.

At the same time, taking the message of the festive season of peace and goodwill, we must, as my colleague Mr Mitchell put it so well, become sponsors of peace. And this is a great opportunity for the High Representative, Lady Ashton, to use the power and support of the European Union in a way that could not have been done before, to bring these countries to order and to try and alleviate the terrible suffering in these places.

The long-term solution, though, will come not from economic improvement but from education, and we have to try and ensure free access to proper education in these countries, because that is really the way to peace in the long term.

**Jim Higgins (PPE).** – Mr President, in 1960, the Swedish Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, asked the Irish troops to go as peacemakers into what was then the Belgian Congo, which became the Congo. They did a tremendous job.

I am extremely worried about the role of the United Nations troops in the Congo at present: the Moroccans, the Pakistanis and the Indians. We are talking about rape, violence, trading and so on, but the United Nations troops there are not covering themselves in glory and are actually doing a disservice.

I agree completely with Mr Mitchell, that the European Union needs to take a firmer hand. We are a European Union, totally united. We did excellent work in Chad. We need our own peacekeepers in there and we cannot rely on the United Nations. The situation is that we have a beautiful people, victims of European colonisation, victims of tribal conflict, victims of international blindness, and we cannot be blind any longer. We simply have to go in and save those people.

**Alf Svensson (PPE).** – (SV) Mr President, it is almost impossible to grasp the terrible statistics being mentioned, and yet we know that they are true. Nonetheless, there is a feeling – perhaps shared by many – that when it comes to the poorest of poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa, our commitment is not as strong or as specific as it should be. There has been mention of military power. I think we all realise that we have to fight poverty and corruption if we are to make any progress towards relieving and improving the situation of this country's population, which has suffered so appallingly.



We are happy to talk about Afghanistan and spend a lot of time discussing the terror there and what the Taliban are doing, and rightly so. Here is another people, however, who have suffered and are still suffering the most appalling conditions. I would like to stress that there are non-governmental organisations which can carry out work if they are provided with state support and with EU support, but that often seems to be very difficult to bring about.

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) Mr President, as this debate has shown, there are incredibly good reasons for continuing our commitment to the Democratic Republic of Congo. The EU is already highly committed to achieving long-term stability, security and development in the country. Commissioner De Gucht gave a long account of the EU's operations.

Taken together, the contributions of the Member States and the Commission make the EU one of the largest contributors of aid to the region, and therefore we can have an influence. If stability is to be maintained in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in the region, however, it is crucial that the standard of living of the Congolese population is improved, that human rights are safeguarded, and that vigorous action is taken against corruption in order to establish a society based on the principles of the rule of law.

The appalling sexual violence that many Members have borne testimony to here and that we unfortunately hear about in far too many reports is naturally entirely unacceptable. The perpetrators must not be allowed to go free. They must be brought to justice. The Congolese Government has a great responsibility to ensure that this happens and that President Kabila's zero tolerance policy does not just consist of fine words but actually results in action.

As far as the Council is concerned, the mandate of the two ESDP missions was reviewed following the investigation mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo in early 2009 with a view to helping to combat precisely this kind of sexual violence. As a result, EUPOL DR Congo is to send two multidisciplinary teams to the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, with a mandate covering the entire country. These teams will provide various types of specialist expertise in areas such as the investigation of crimes and the control of sexual violence. Recruitment for these missions is currently under way.

Of course, this is only a small contribution. In such a large country, it is modest. Nonetheless, it is important and this new specialist force will be able to support the implementation of correct investigation procedures for sexual violence, particularly where the acts are carried out by those in uniform.

We are about to embark upon question time, but this is my final debate in this House as a representative of the Swedish Presidency. I would like to thank you for the many good debates, the enjoyable times and the very good cooperation that I have enjoyed with the Members of the European Parliament and with you, Mr President.

**President**. – I too would like to express, on behalf of all my fellow Members, our sincere thanks for your efficiency and your efforts which gave us all so much pleasure.

**Karel De Gucht**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, first of all, I would like to thank all the Members who have contributed to this debate. I am not going to revert back to my initial statement. Let me just focus on three things.

First, the European Commission is doing a lot with respect to humanitarian aid and programmes for re-establishing the rule of law. We are speaking about tens of millions and even more than EUR 100 million initially. But the problem is, of course, how effective is all this in the end, if you do not have a proper counterpart in the political arena?

Secondly, I would like to comment on the mandate of MONUC because, although MONUC may be criticised and has to be criticised for what recently happened, I think it would be the ultimate mistake to ask that they leave the DRC. This would be the worst thing one could imagine.

Let me just read to you some sections of the mandate adopted by the UN Security Council at the beginning of last year. It states that 'the Council also decided that MONUC shall, from the adoption of this resolution, have the mandate, in this order of priority, working in close cooperation with the Government of the DRC in order to ensure, firstly, the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel and facilities; to ensure the protection of civilians, including humanitarian personnel, under imminent threat of physical violence, in particular, violence emanating from any of the parties engaged in the conflict'.

Another very relevant paragraph is paragraph G regarding the coordinated operations. It states 'coordinate operations with the FARDC – the army – integrated brigades deployed in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo and support operations led by and jointly planned with these brigades in accordance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law with a view to', etc.

So the mandate is, in fact, very clear and what should be discussed are the rules of engagement. In fact, what MONUC should do is look at its own rules of engagement, because it is up to them to decide how they will proceed.

Lastly, there is a lot of criticism also of international criminal justice. People are questioning whether this is compatible with politics. Can you have international criminal justice, on the one hand, and proper political management of a crisis, on the other? That is a very interesting question.

In the Congo, you see one of the answers. We have allowed Bosco Ntaganda to take over the leadership of the CNDP from Laurent Nkunda, although there is a warrant against Bosco Ntaganda, and you see what happens. There is no such thing as a free lunch. You cannot choose between, on the one hand, management of a political crisis and, on the other hand, putting international criminal justice into practice. I think that, as the European Parliament and as the European Commission, the pre-eminence should go to the due application of international criminal justice.

**President.** – I have received six motions for resolution<sup>(2)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 17 December 2009.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MRS WALLIS

*Vice-President*

### 12. Question Time (Council)

**President.** – The next item is Question Time (B7-0236/2009)

The following questions are addressed to the Council.

Question 1 by **Bernd Posselt** (H-0425/09)

Subject: Ethnic minorities in Serbia

How would the Council assess the situation of the ethnic minorities in Serbia, especially the Albanian community in the Preševo Valley, where civilians have again come under attack?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – (SV) Thank you for your question, Mr Posselt. At the General Affairs Council meeting on 7–8 December this year, we adopted conclusions on enlargement and the stabilisation and association process. In these conclusions, the Council welcomed Serbia's commitment to EU integration and its work in implementing key reforms in line with European standards. The Council also stressed that the reform agenda must be continued.

We noted the Commission's communication of 14 October, which states that the general legal and institutional framework for respecting human rights is in place in Serbia and that progress has been made as regards improving compliance with international human rights legislation. The new Ministry of Human and Minority Rights in Serbia is playing an important part in this work. However, further efforts are needed to increase understanding of international standards. The Council also noted that Serbia has ratified all the major human rights instruments.

With regard to the specific situation in southern Serbia to which the honourable Member referred, some very violent incidents did indeed take place in July, including an attack on the gendarmerie based there. Several arrests were made, after which there were no more incidents. The atmosphere within the Coordination Body for Southern Serbia has since improved. It is fragile, but the main ethnic Albanian political parties from

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<sup>(2)</sup> See Minutes

the region are involved in this work. There are also positive developments with regard to the sensitive issue of education. In this regard, I would particularly like to mention the opening of a university department in Medveđa, where teaching will be undertaken in Serbian and Albanian.

A national minority council for the Albanian population of Serbia will be set up in the near future. This will give the people greater influence on education, culture and other issues. The region's weak economic and social development presents an obstacle for the ethnic minorities in southern Serbia. The international community, and the OSCE in particular, is continuing to monitor the situation in southern Serbia and it is playing an active role in promoting peace and stability in the region in close cooperation with the Serbian Government and local leaders.

**Bernd Posselt (PPE).** – (DE) Mrs Malmström, thank you for your excellent reply. We are, of course, talking about three regions: two border regions – Vojvodina and the southern Serbian region of Preševo, in other words a tri-border area. I would also like to ask you, in your future role as Commissioner, to ensure that these countries are developed further within the framework of the cross-border support programme. Inner Serbia, in particular the Sandžak of Novi Pazar, is, of course, completely cut off. This area must also be supported in order to improve the economic conditions so as to help resolve the problems in relation to the minorities. However, there is a great deal of violence in southern Serbia in particular. I would ask the Council to continue to address this explosive situation.

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Mr Posselt, you may be assured that we will continue to survey the situation very closely, and that is also part of the Commission's constant work. They will do that, of course. We are aware of the improvements, and the situation is fragile. But there are improvements, and these institutional arrangements that I refer to, that have been done, are a good step in the right direction. We can only hope that, with our support as well as the support from OSCE, this development will continue in that direction.

**Franz Obermayr (NI).** – (DE) Violence, incidentally – and I say this to the previous speaker – is unfortunately not only occurring in Serbia, but in Kosovo, too. On the one hand, there is an Albanian minority in Serbia and, on the other, there is a Serbian minority in Kosovo.

My question is this: with regard to the visa facilitation for Serbia, how will the EU ensure that there will be no grey areas and no abuses of the system? Does this procedure of granting facilitation to one population group in Kosovo not run counter to the controversial recognition of Kosovo as a sovereign state?

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – I was not exactly sure about the question. When it comes to Kosovo, there is further work, independent of the fact that not all Member States have recognised Kosovo. There is work being conducted by the Commission in order to see how we can facilitate the situation for Kosovo, and that will take some time. There are still difficulties there. They are also subject to visa facilitation in the future but not all the conditions have been met yet.

**President.** – It is clear that it did wander off the subject a little, but it was very much related.

Question 2 by **Marian Harkin** (H-0427/09)

Subject: Unemployment levels

What initiatives has the Council put in place to deal with rising levels of unemployment across the EU-27, other than measures to retrain and upskill workers?

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) Thank you for your question, Mrs Harkin. The present crisis is having a very severe impact on millions of people. As a result, dealing with the consequences of the economic crisis is one of the major challenges facing the EU. In view of our ageing population, the Member States of the EU must bring down current levels of unemployment and ensure these high levels of unemployment do not become permanent.

Employment policy is primarily the responsibility of the Member States. However, some years ago, certain guidelines were adopted by the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council. We underlined the fact that since the labour market situation varies so much between different Member States, the measures taken must also differ. We have an annual joint report on employment, in which the Council and the Commission monitor the situation in the various Member States. During the current crisis, the European Council has paid particular attention to precisely this issue of unemployment. In December 2008, an Economic Recovery Plan was agreed for Europe, providing uniform frameworks for the measures to be

taken. As part of this Plan, in June 2009, the Council and the European Parliament adopted a Regulation amending the Regulation on establishing the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. This amendment allows resources from the fund to be used to combat the crisis.

Various measures may be implemented, depending on the situation of the country concerned: temporary adjustment of working hours, lowering of social security contributions, reducing the administrative burden on enterprises, improving the processes used by the labour market authorities, targeting measures at unemployed young people and facilitating mobility. These were highlighted in the Presidency's report following the informal summit on employment.

In its conclusions from the June summit, the Council specifies a number of measures that should help the Member States – and the parties in the labour market if necessary – to deal with the effects of the global crisis through the application of flexicurity principles. This may mean offering enterprises alternatives to redundancies, giving opportunities for flexible forms of working and temporary adjustment of working hours, improving conditions for entrepreneurs by providing a flexible, secure labour market and making available benefits systems that provide an incentive to work, appropriate levels of social security contributions, expanded and improved back-to-work measures, income support and free movement.

During the debate in November, the ministers took the general view that an active employment policy that includes short-term measures must be maintained. These are measures such as short-term employment, improved employability and training aimed at integrating people into the labour market. At the same Council meeting, ministers agreed that employment is an important factor for the avoidance of exclusion. The link between equality, economic growth and employment is very important, and consequently, the Member States were called upon to expand child care and to reduce pay differentials and other gender-related differences.

In particular, measures must be targeted at those most severely affected by the crisis: older people, young people, people with disabilities and workers without a permanent employment contract. Creating more opportunities and equal opportunities for young people in education, training and employment is one of the principal aims of the new framework of European cooperation in the youth field during the period 2010-2018 that was adopted by the Council on 27 November 2009.

**Marian Harkin (ALDE).** – Thank you for your answer. I must say I am delighted to see you, Minister, and hopefully will be seeing more of you next year; you will be well used to answering our questions.

Two points which I feel are important but which you did not raise in your answer were: first of all, the encouraging of entrepreneurship; and, secondly, increased spending in R&D. But the real question which I want to ask you related to the fact that up to now, we have relied on the open method of coordination, which was really quite a weak instrument and did not work well in trying to achieve the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda. Have you any suggestions at all for strengthening that mechanism?

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – This is, indeed, a very important question and, as you know, the Council has already received the Commission proposal and has started to discuss the future of the Lisbon strategy or Europe 2020. That will be decided by the Spanish Presidency later next spring.

One issue is how do we, on a long-term basis, come out of the current situation? How can we create a Europe that is more competitive, with more entrepreneurship, and avoid social exclusion and unemployment? How do we invest in research and development in order for Europe to be the strong global player that we want it to be in the economic field? All that will possibly fit into the new strategy.

One very important aspect of the strategy is the governance method. I think the open method of coordination has advantages but it needs to be improved. We need to involve much more local and regional authorities because they are the ones who do the real implementation. We need to have national ownership of the process and we need to look at governance. That is also explained in the paper from the Commission, which is now out for consultation among the Member States. I think very good proposals will come up for that as it is indeed one of the weak points of the strategy.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI).** – (DE) As we know, the so-called micro-financing instrument planned by the EU is not going to be financed by new money, but from the Progress programme. In this connection, what plan is there to prevent the new instrument from being detrimental to the employment and social solidarity programme, which was adopted before this one?

**Paul Rübig (PPE).** – (DE) My question is this: would it not be sensible to prevent unemployment in the first place? Do you see any public jobs that could be given to the unemployed? In particular, how could we boost small and medium-sized enterprises so that new ones are started up? Are there opportunities here to apply cross-border methods and best practices to create more new companies?

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – As I said, the ultimate responsibility to create jobs of course lies with the Member States. But there is a lot to do and – as I referred to in my introductory remarks to Mrs Harkin – the Council has made a lot of recommendations regarding how you could work in increasing the flexibility, work with the different support systems and activate people in order to avoid the exclusion mechanism. It is very important that we continue with these meetings at a high level with the social partners and the Member States in order to exchange best practices. They do vary between the countries, but we need to give each other examples and to monitor the best ways that could be used thereafter. So it is a combination of the Council giving recommendations and the Member States needing to take their share of responsibility and adjust a little, depending on the circumstances in the countries.

Referring to your question, sir, I am not really sure that I understood it. Maybe there was a translation problem. I did not refer to any micro-authority. I referred to the Globalisation Fund which we have now, with the help of the European Parliament, made more flexible in order to obtain support for Member States and for companies who run into difficulties to help with people who are unemployed or who are dismissed.

**President.** – Question 3 by **Nikolaos Chountis** (H-0431/09)

Subject: Negotiations for Turkey to take part in joint Frontex operations

On 21 October 2009, Ms Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council, told the European Parliament meeting in plenary sitting that negotiations were being held 'with a view to a possible agreement which would also cover exchanges of information and the possibility for the Turkish authorities to take part in joint Frontex operations.' Article 8e, paragraph 2, of Regulation (EC) No 863/2007<sup>(3)</sup> establishing a mechanism for the creation of Rapid Border Intervention Teams and amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2007/2004<sup>(4)</sup> provides that 'any amendments to or adaptations of the operational plan shall require the agreement of both the Executive Director and the requesting Member State.'

In view of the above, will the Council say what stage discussions for Turkish participation in joint Frontex operations have reached? What demands is Turkey making as a condition for its participation? Is Greece, a Member State which hosts the Frontex mission, aware of these discussions?

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) An important element of the EU's strategy for better management of migration is to establish partnerships with third countries on matters of border control. This is a central tenet of the concept of integrated border management that was adopted by the Council in December 2006. I would also like to mention that operational cooperation with third countries is an important element of the work carried on by Frontex.

Under the terms of the Frontex Regulation, Frontex may facilitate operational cooperation between Member States and third countries within the framework of the European Union's policy on external relations and may cooperate with third countries within the context of bilateral cooperation. A number of such arrangements have already been concluded and others are currently under discussion.

The mandate for the negotiations is given by the Management Board, on which all the Member States are represented. The discussions being conducted between Frontex and the competent Turkish authorities concerning operational cooperation have now made significant progress.

Since the negotiations are still in progress, it is difficult for the Council to comment in more detail on the content of and developments in the discussions.

**Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL).** – (EL) Madam President, Minister, I understand from your reply today that there are three points: firstly, that negotiations between Frontex and Turkey are at an advanced stage; secondly, that all the Member States of the European Union, hence including Greece, are – I imagine – aware of the negotiations; and finally that, according to the conclusions of the recent Foreign Ministers meeting, the readmission agreement is linked to border control.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 199, 31.7.2007, p. 30

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ L 349, 25.11.2004, p. 1

In other words, for the purpose of cooperation, for the purpose of the readmission agreement with the European Union, is Turkey demanding joint operations with external border control? If that is the case, how do we get round the serious issue of protection of the human rights and dignity of immigrants and the highly sensitive issue, not so much of border control, but rather of border definition.

In other words, does Turkey accept the external borders of the European Union? Does it accept that Frontex is acting on the external borders of the European Union?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – This is, of course, a very vast question. Negotiations with Turkey have just started. The representative from the Commission, Commissioner Barrot, and Mr Billström, the Swedish Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, were in Turkey just a few weeks ago in order to start those discussions. The first discussions were fruitful but they have not yet reached an end so it is very difficult to give you an update. All Member States, including Greece, are of course kept informed of the discussions.

In general, the respect for fundamental rights and European values are always mentioned in this regard so there is no exclusion for Turkey in that respect. But, as I said to the honourable Member, discussions have just started; they are making good progress but they have not been finalised yet. They have been carried out openly in the way that all Member States are involved via the board of Frontex, where Greece is also represented.

**Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE)**. – (EL) Madam President, Minister, from what I have understood, the understanding we have entered into with Turkey in the aim of ultimately arriving at a readmission agreement on immigration issues will also include issues in connection with cooperation with Frontex.

The second thing I want to say is that we have noticed in Greece recently that Frontex aircraft are being harassed by the Turkish authorities. The Commission's replies say nothing specific about the communications which take place and whether this ultimately constitutes harassment.

Do you have any comment on this?

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**. – (DE) In order to master the situation, it is certainly sensible to cooperate at an international level if – and I say this very clearly – this cooperation does not need to be bought with EU financial assistance. With which other States are we currently negotiating or planning to negotiate and was the Turkish State offered financial incentives for its participation in this FRONTEX operation?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Vessels have been the subject of questions during Question Time on numerous occasions. The Council has informed the Turkish authorities and the Turkish Government and its representatives that good cooperation in the region is a prerequisite for further discussions on this. It has also asked the Turkish authorities to refrain from different provocative actions. It has been very clear, and you can find those answers, some of which have been given by myself very recently.

Discussions are ongoing. They have been mandated. As I said, I cannot tell you exactly at what stage they are because they are ongoing, but they follow the usual procedure and, to answer your question, we are also having discussions with Senegal and Cape Verde. We have started, but have made very little progress, with Morocco, Egypt and Mauritania.

This is the usual procedure. They are being followed. The Frontex board has been mandated to start those negotiations. Some are more successful than others. We have, for instance, cooperation with Russia, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, etc., but less progress has been made in other areas.

**President**. – Question 4 by **Seán Kelly** (H-0434/09)

Subject: Climate negotiations in Copenhagen

Can the Council give an update on the negotiations nearing conclusion in Copenhagen? Can it specify, in the absence of a legally binding agreement in Copenhagen, when it expects a legally binding successor to Kyoto to be in place?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Developments are ongoing as we speak in Copenhagen, but I will try to give you the latest.

They are two major issues as you are well aware: mitigation and financing. As the Prime Minister said this morning, we are still confident that we can have a successful outcome in Copenhagen which allows us to keep the global temperature increase below 2 °C above the pre-industrial level.

The EU is playing a key role – a bridge-building role – in a process with a view to ultimately reaching a legally binding agreement: hopefully, a politically binding agreement now, with a clear timetable to reach a legally binding agreement for the period starting 1 January 2013.

But reaching an agreement requires convergence on the following essential building blocks.

Firstly, deep and ambitious emission reduction commitments by the developed countries by 2020. Some countries, Japan and Norway, have upped their pledges but it is clear that what is currently on the table is not enough to reach the 2 °C target.

In this context, the EU will reiterate its demands to other developed countries to take on an ambitious agenda, and to continue to seek measurable, reportable and verifiable mitigation actions by developing countries.

The larger developing countries have put their bids to limit their growth of emissions on the table – China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa and South Korea – and this accounts for significant contributions.

However, the Council believes that there is a larger potential for actions to come from these countries, especially China and India. It is also clear that more is needed if we want to stay within the 2 °C warming.

The EU will therefore ask them to increase their efforts further in the context of an ambitious agreement.

We also need a framework for adapting to climate changes as well as for technology transfer and capacity building. We need financing in the framework of a fair and equitable governance system for mitigation, adaptation, capacity building and technology transfer to developing countries.

In this context, the last European Council concerning the figure for fast-start financing for the first three years gives an important impetus to the ongoing negotiations; that also strengthens the credibility of the European Union.

Heads of State or Government are now approaching Copenhagen. We hope that they will provide the necessary political impetus on the crucial issues of mitigation and financing. So hopefully, an ambitious deal can be struck.

The EU has put forward proposals that the negotiation for a legally binding treaty for the period starting 1 January 2013 should be finalised as soon as possible after the Copenhagen conference.

When this can be achieved is too early to say, but we should aim for a deal within six months after the finalisation of the conference.

**Seán Kelly (PPE).** – I would like to thank you, Mrs Malmström, for your concise, precise and logical response, not just to my question but to all questions since I came here to this Parliament last June. You have been a star performer.

I am also proud to say that I am part of a European Union that is leading the climate change debate and influencing others to do the same. I suppose the best example of that is the arrival today in Copenhagen of the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of China, something unthinkable a few years ago.

However, in the absence of a binding agreement, what would our *modus operandi* be going forward?

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – I think, as the real political negotiations will start tomorrow with, as you say, Prime Ministers and Presidents coming from all over the world, we should not talk about a Plan 'B' already. I think they can assert the input, strength and dynamics to create an ambitious, political commitment.

Should it not be possible to reach it – well, we will just have to continue to talk. There is no way we will give up. The world is expecting results from us. This is the most important question of our generation; we cannot fail. If we do not reach a deal tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, we will keep on talking until we reach a deal.

**President.** – Question 5 by **Gay Mitchell** (H-0436/09)

Subject: Climate change funding for the developing world

The upcoming climate change talks in Copenhagen are set to define global attitudes to climate change in the short to medium term. It is crucial that agreement is reached and that rich countries front up the money to pay for the effects of climate change in the developing world. We cannot reasonably expect developing countries to pay for the effects of a problem that the Western World has caused.

The agreement reached in October at the European Council Summit estimated that developing countries would need EUR 100 billion in order to adapt to climate change, whereas developing countries argue that the cost would be three to four times as much.

How does the Council intend to reach a compromise between such disparate figures?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – As the honourable Member rightly points out, climate financing for developing countries is an essential element of the negotiations in Copenhagen and it will be key to reaching an agreement.

To start with, I would like to point out again that at the October European Council, we stressed the importance of fast-start financing in order to initiate immediate actions and to prepare for collective and efficient action in the medium and longer term with a special emphasis on these developed countries. At the December Council a few days ago, the EU and its Member States expressed their readiness to allocate EUR 2.4 billion a year for the years 2010-2012 to help developing countries in their fight against climate change. With this commitment I think we did send a very strong message to the negotiators at their ongoing conference and strengthened our credibility.

The European Council furthermore recognised the need for a significant increase in public and private financial flows up to 2020. The current financial architecture needs to be revised and, where necessary, reformed in order to ensure its capacity to meet the challenge. As you have pointed out in your question, the October European Council has endorsed the Commission estimate that a total net incremented cost of adaptation and mitigation in developing countries could amount to around EUR 100 billion per year by 2020, to be met through a combination of developing countries' own efforts, the international carbon market and international public finance; and this is what the Commission has estimated the need to be. It is not an offer or a bid from the EU.

There is also a wide range of other estimates from other sources, but it is the Commission estimate that the Council has endorsed and believes to be the best assessment. The overall level of international public support required is estimated to lie in the range of EUR 22 billion to EUR 50 billion per year to 2020. The EU and its Member States are ready to take a fair share of that amount, but all countries except the poorest ones should contribute to international public financing through a comprehensive distribution key based on emission levels and GDP. And as the European Council stressed in October, the Copenhagen agreement needs to include provisions on the objective that global warming should not exceed 2 °C, ambitious emission reduction commitments by developed countries, adaptation technology and a deal on financing.

**Gay Mitchell (PPE).** – I join with Mr Kelly in expressing my appreciation for the Minister's replies in the House and for the conduct of the Swedish Presidency in general, which has been exemplary.

Minister, we have noted in recent days that the President of the United States has been in discussions with certain leaders in the developing world. Has the European Union joined in those discussions in trying to bridge the gap with the United States and others to try to bring the remaining issues to a resolution? Can the Minister assure the House that, if there is to be funding for this, for the developing world, that it will be new money, that it will not be money that comes out of existing commitments to the developing world in terms of the hunger and development agenda?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – Regarding the first question, there have been numerous bilateral meetings during the autumn in order to try to facilitate and prepare for the negotiations. The EU is in constant contact with the United States of America trying to push and to call for a more ambitious statement from them. They, in their turn, have their own bilateral contacts; on some of these occasions, we have been involved and in some not, because we are trying to push from different corners. We have also had six bilateral meetings during the Swedish presidency with important stakeholders such as China, India, Ukraine, South Africa, Russia and the United States. Climate issues have been top of the agenda on all these occasions, so there has been a wide variety of meetings.



Regarding financing, it is a combination of old and new money, I must say. Some countries have made a mixture. Some have already allocated parts of their development budget. As the least-developed countries are the ones who will suffer mostly from climate change, therefore it is logical that certain parts of the development budget are pinpointed to different kinds of climate actions.

Now, as a consequence of the economic crisis, many Member States have lowered their ambitions on their total development budgets, and that is deplorable.

It is a combination, and that is also very much due to the fact of the economic crisis.

**President.** – Question 6 by **Ádám Kósa** (H-0440/09)

Subject: Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment for persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation

It is absolutely vital to underline the importance of the general principle of access for all. This will bring benefits not only for people with disabilities, but for the majority of people in Europe's society within 10 years. Will the Council consider establishing a uniform basis for an anti-discrimination policy, without exemptions (e.g. for the design and manufacture of goods), in order to create a sustainable society and eliminate the hierarchy of legal provisions on combating discrimination?

Given that access to infrastructure and services is a very real challenge for many people in many countries, I regard it as totally unacceptable to postpone for 10 or 20 years the imposition on Member States of a requirement to adopt new rules providing for genuine, better accessibility of (new) infrastructure and (new) services. Is the Council in any way considering a further extension of the deadline for transposition of the accessibility requirement for existing and/or new infrastructure? If so, why?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – (SV) As the honourable Member states in his question, measures to improve access are vital in the fight against discrimination. During the Swedish Presidency, we have continued to study at a technical level the proposed Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment. This covers four reasons for discrimination that are not currently included in the area of employment: religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation.

On 30 November 2009, the Council studied a status report from the Presidency which calls attention to the need for further work on this issue, particularly as regards the scope, provisions concerning disability and the timetable for implementation. The Presidency further reported that the specific issue of the 'design' or 'manufacture of goods' should also be covered by the proposal. This needs to be discussed further.

According to the status report, there are other issues to resolve in respect of the financial consequences of the directive. If we are to achieve political unity, we need to produce a text acceptable to every Member State. We need all the Member States to be in agreement before we can proceed further in the Council.

I cannot anticipate the results of the negotiations, however. Discussions concerning implementation, dates and scope are still in progress and will continue for some time yet.

**Ádám Kósa (PPE).** – (HU) Thank you very much, Minister, for your answer. The initial steps which have been taken are very encouraging, but I would like to highlight three matters. There are 50 million people with disabilities living in the European Union. This issue does not only affect them because European Union society is also ageing drastically. Therefore, this problem does not only affect people with disabilities, but also the future of any elderly person, as well as all those in wheelchairs, for instance, if they need a ramp. This means that, overall, this quickly becomes an issue for the whole of society, which is why it must be dealt with as a priority, as this is the future we face. Access to services has been postponed for 10 years. It is important that this deadline remains in place, precisely because it is in all our interests.

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – I definitely agree with the honourable Member about the need for such a directive. There are still millions of people in the European Union who do not have access to the most ordinary things in life. This hinders their freedom and the possibility of their living a normal life and I deplore that very much.

The Council discussions are taking a lot of time. It is a ground-breaking proposal and it has a broad scope with enormous practical and financial implications. Unanimity will be needed between the Member States and, after that, the consent of the European Parliament, before the directive can be adopted. We have had negotiations. We had lots of working groups within the Council. We have made progress but, unfortunately

– I have to be very honest with you – we have not reached the consensus that is required yet. But we will continue until the end of our Presidency, and I am quite optimistic that the Spanish Presidency will do their utmost to reach a solution.

**President.** – Question 7 by **Vilija Blinkevičiute** (H-0445/09)

Subject: Safeguarding the rights of disabled people

When economic conditions are complicated, it is very important to ensure adequate social protection for the most socially disadvantaged. Disabled people constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in society. It is highly regrettable that attempts are being made to balance national budgets by reducing social benefits and programmes for disabled people. This not only runs counter to the principles of solidarity and social justice but weakens the processes and mechanisms integrating disabled people into society and increases their social exclusion.

Has the Council made provision for additional measures to help disabled people during an economic recession? Will not the unfavourable economic situation slow down consideration in Council of a proposal for a Council Directive putting into practice the principles of equal treatment for disabled people?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – (SV) We are all aware of the social problems following in the wake of the economic crisis. It is essential to provide special protection for people and groups who are particularly vulnerable and to combat exclusion. We know that there is often a failure to exploit the potential of those with disabilities and other vulnerable groups of people because of discrimination. In view of this, the Council has consistently stressed the importance of promoting access to the labour market for people with disabilities.

This has been done within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy, including the current guidelines on employment. In March 2008, the Council – together with the governments of the Member States – also passed a resolution on the situation of people with disabilities within the EU. The importance of integrating vulnerable people and groups into the labour market is further endorsed by the Council in its conclusions of 13 November 2009, which I made reference to in relation to the previous question. Facilitating access to the labour market for these groups is also a prerequisite for long-term growth.

I would like to remind you of the joint agreement by the European Parliament and the Council to designate 2010 as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. I believe that this decision will also include access to education for all. Moreover, the decision involves working to achieve equal access for all to information and communication technology, giving particular consideration to the needs of disabled people. A further priority that will be addressed concerns the needs of disabled people and their families and of other vulnerable groups. We are looking forward to the many initiatives that I am sure will be taken in the year ahead.

As regards the proposed Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, we realise that life for people with disabilities would be very positively affected were the Commission's proposal to become a reality. The Council's working group on social issues is still working on the text. As I mentioned, we held a discussion on 30 November and prepared a status report, but we did not succeed in reaching a decision.

We cannot anticipate the result of negotiations that are still in progress, but it is essential that we get the wording right because it is a matter of legal certainty and defining the scope of the directive. As mentioned previously, the Member States must be in agreement on the proposal. It is their job to assess any repercussions of the economic recession in this context. Once unanimity has been achieved, the European Parliament will naturally be asked to give its consent in accordance with Article 19 of the new Treaty of Lisbon.

**Vilija Blinkevičiūtė** (S&D). – (LT) Thank you, Madam President and thank you, Minister Malmström for your response. I would also like to thank Sweden, because it was precisely during the Swedish Presidency that the EU's Council of Ministers ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. This is a great step, but it is only one step.

In truth, the lives of our disabled vary incredibly from country to country. Some deaf people are unable to use sign language, while some blind people do not have access to blind assistance services. There are no adjustments for persons with movement disabilities. Also, a significant number of disabled people are simply unemployed. All this when disabled people actually account for around 10% of our residents in the European Union.

Minister, I know that there are certain problems and difficulties with the directive on anti-discrimination (this is how I would summarise it), but perhaps it would be possible to have a separate directive on the rights of the disabled sooner. Our directive would be binding for all EU Member States, so that disabled people would not face discrimination.

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Let me underline that it is not a lack of political will. We do understand the importance of this directive and we have been working really, really hard to get it into place.

But, as I have said, I cannot change the fact that we need unanimity, and the unanimity is not there. The Swedish Presidency and presidencies before us have worked to try to propose different compromises, different ways forward. There are lots of working groups meeting and working all the time; and they still are meeting. We will work on the issue until the end of our presidency. But, unfortunately, we do not have the unanimity yet.

It would be unfortunate to separate the different parts of the directive because the whole purpose – and this was very much also encouraged by Parliament – was to have a comprehensive directive on discrimination. If we start to pick up pieces, I think that thought would be lost and I think it would be deplorable. So let us try a little bit more to get the whole directive into place because that would be very valuable in the fight against discrimination, for disabled people, but also for other discriminated people all around Europe.

**Christa Klaß (PPE)**. – (DE) We must prevent discrimination, which is a social problem. It is up to all of us to prevent discrimination of any kind.

Do you share my opinion that there are no clear standards for determining whether discrimination has occurred, an example being a situation where a landlord rents out a flat and an applicant claims that he had been discriminated against because he did not get the flat?

Do you agree that a European directive can only lay down requirements that the Member States would then have to transpose into national law? It is very difficult for Europe to establish a European law in this area.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE)**. – Could I just acknowledge, since we are talking about the rights of disabled people, that our colleague, Mr Kósa, has just been elected president of the Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament. We wish him well in that.

Specifically regarding the economic crisis, on which we had a debate yesterday and you were nodding in agreement: we have huge concerns about institutional care of children and young adults, and I worry that the economic crisis – and perhaps you share this – will slow the process of de-institutionalisation, and that this is an issue we need to be very careful of, both within and outside the EU.

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – In times of economic crisis it is always the most vulnerable who suffer the most – children, young people, old people, people with disabilities – and that is why we, as responsible politicians, have to be very aware of this. It has been added to the conclusions of various Council formations and recommendations that Member States should be encouraged to take particular consideration of the fact that the most vulnerable groups are always those who suffer most, so I do agree with that.

In response to your question, without first having the general overall far-reaching directive, it is very difficult to set standards of a European character in the area of discrimination against disabled people. We need to have the overall directive first and then work from there.

I realise that a great deal of work has to be done, and I am well aware of the massive discrimination and the difficulties that disabled people face in ordinary life, which hinder them in fulfilling their life's possibilities and potential. I think we need to work on the overall directive first.

The decision to have next year as the year for combating social exclusion presents the possibility to come up with new concrete proposals and organise common events to reinforce this issue and awareness in all Member States.

**President**. – I am sure that in the context of this discussion, the House would wish me also to congratulate Mr Kósa on his election to the Intergroup chair.

Questions 8 and 9 have been withdrawn.

Question 10 will not be taken as the subject to which it refers already appears in the agenda for this part-session.

As the author is not present, Question 11 lapses.

Question 12 by **Charalampos Angourakis** (H-0455/09)

Subject: Appalling murders of poor Peruvian farmers for profit

Articles in the international press report that, in recent years in Peru, dozens of peasants in the Huánuco and Pasco regions have been murdered by a gang known as 'Los Pishtacos' in order to sell their body fat - reportedly amounting to 17 kilos - to European cosmetics manufacturers for 15 000 dollars per kilo. The Peruvian authorities consider that the disappearance of numerous people, including children, is attributable to this appalling practice. We condemn the practices of European multinational companies which have been killing people and plundering the wealth of Latin America for profit for many decades.

What is the Council's overall view of this criminal act by European multinational companies and what is the level of EU funding for these companies operating in Latin America?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) As the honourable Member knows, respect for human rights is one of the founding values of the European Union. In all its relations with third countries, the Council always pays particular attention to ensuring that basic rights and the rule of law are respected.

With regard to the specific incidents mentioned by the honourable Member, the Council was not aware of these and they have not been discussed in the Council. The Presidency has also read the newspapers and is aware of the reports in the media, but also notes that the latest reports suggest that the original story was a hoax.

Since the media reports are contradictory and as the Council does not normally comment on reports in the media, the Presidency cannot and should not speculate on this story or respond to this question.

**Charalampos Angourakis** (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Madam President, I must say that the Minister's reply does not satisfy me in the slightest. This is an horrendous crime, an unprecedented crime, I would say, and in any event, I consider that the European Union, when it wants to, has the resources to investigate issues of this sort in greater detail.

Because we have relations with Peru, we demand official information on the part of the Peruvian Government about this specific incident and that measures be taken. Otherwise, we shall see a repeat of the same situation.

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) The reports on this have been extremely contradictory. It has emerged both from the authorities and from reports by journalists that there is no evidence to indicate that these terrible events actually occurred.

Since there are no certain indications and there is much to suggest that in actual fact, they did not happen and that instead it was a hoax, the Council is unable to take action in this area; neither is it competent to do so.

**President**. – Question 13 by **Ryszard Czarnecki** (H-0458/09)

Subject: Discrimination against the Polish minority in Lithuania

Does the Council intend to compel the Lithuanian Government to respect the rights of national minorities, given that discrimination against the Polish minority in Lithuania has a long history and manifests itself in the obligation to use the Lithuanian spellings of Polish surnames, discrimination in education, the ban on bilingual place names and the failure to return property seized from Poles by the Soviet authorities? When does the Council intend to take action in these matters?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – The Council reaffirms the primacy of fundamental and human rights as recognised in the treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Council is – and will remain – committed to the prevention and eradication of all forms of degrading and discriminatory treatment.

I would like to note that questions concerning the protection of minority rights are also dealt with by the Council of Europe under its framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The issues raised by Mr Czarnecki are currently being examined by the competent organs of the Council of Europe. In

particular, under Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, all persons are protected against discrimination on grounds of race or ethnic origin, regardless of their legal status. The scope of legal protection of this directive includes the areas of employment, social protection, education and access to goods and services. It is the responsibility of the European Commission to monitor the implementation of, and compliance with, European law in the Member States.

Finally, in the Stockholm Programme approved by the European Council on 10 and 11 December this year, the need for an additional proposal as regards vulnerable groups is assessed in the light of the experience acquired from the application by the Member States of the 2000 Hague Convention on the international protection of adults, to which they will become parties in the future.

**Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR).** – (PL) Thank you very much, Mrs Malmström, for your answer, and especially for emphasising that the Council will oppose all forms of discrimination against national minorities in the European Union, including the Polish minority in Lithuania. This is a very important statement. Thank you for this. I would like to stress that we are dealing, unfortunately, with the systematic activity of the Lithuanian authorities concerning the education system and bilingual place names, and at various levels of the administration. It is, therefore, an extremely significant matter, and I would ask for it to be monitored by the Council.

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – I can only reiterate the principles and the values that the European Union stands for and that the Council, of course, defends.

Also, the particular events that Mr Czarnecki refers to are being examined by the relevant authorities of the Council of Europe and, should there be any other form of discrimination, it is the Commission's task to make sure that the Member States comply with the treaties and with the laws of the European Union.

**President.** – Question 14 by **Brian Crowley** (H-0462/09)

Subject: Persecution of Buddhist monks and nuns in Vietnam

Following the adoption of the European Parliament resolution on the situation in Laos and Vietnam on 26 November 2009 (P7\_TA(2009)0104), what concrete measures have been taken to address the persecution and harassment of Buddhist monks and nuns in Vietnam?

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) Thank you for your question. The Council is extremely aware of the human rights situation in Vietnam and we are monitoring developments in the country closely.

Twice a year, the Council and the Commission make an assessment of the situation within the framework of the human rights dialogue that we have with the Vietnamese authorities. The latest dialogue meeting was held in Hanoi last week, on 11 December. Many urgent issues were discussed, such as freedom of expression, reform of the penal code, including the death penalty, as well as freedom of religion and religious tolerance, including the situation of the adherents of Plum Village. An EU list of persons and prisoners whose situation is of particular cause for concern was given to the Vietnamese Government. In addition to the human rights dialogue, the EU also regularly raises issues of particular concern with the Vietnamese Government.

On 10 November, the Council and the Commission held a long discussion with the members of the Plum Village community. On 26 November, the resolution from the European Parliament concerning the issue was published. The same day, the Commission held high level talks with the authorities in Hanoi and this meeting took place within the framework of the Joint Committee for the negotiation of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which we hope will be concluded next year. Our main message at the meeting was to express how pressing we consider the human rights situation in Vietnam to be.

We mentioned the expropriation of church property, we mentioned the attacks on campaigners for human rights and blog writers – as brought up by Members previously in this House – and we also mentioned the situation of the adherents of Plum Village. We called upon our counterparts to safeguard and respect human rights and to meet all the commitments set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international conventions to which Vietnam is party. The Parliamentary resolution made this message particularly forceful, and I would like to thank the European Parliament for that. We also informed Vietnam of the new and important role of the European Parliament, particularly as regards the future Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

On 8-10 December 2009, an EU delegation visited the Bat Nha monastery and the Phuoc Hue temple, to which nearly 200 remaining members of Plum Village have fled. We spoke to the religious representatives there and the local authorities in order to obtain more information on the current situation. The EU will continue to monitor the situation at the Phuoc Hue temple very closely.

**Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE)** *deputising for the author.* – I would like to thank the President-in-Office on my own behalf and on behalf of Mr Crowley for her very comprehensive response and to say that I am very pleased with the approach of both the Council and the Commission. I hope that you will continue to monitor developments in a pragmatic way.

**President.** – Question 15 by **Pat the Cope Gallagher** (H-0463/09)

Subject: Iceland's application to join the European Union

Can the Council provide an updated assessment on the status of Iceland's application to join the European Union?

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Madam President, I think this a question dear to you as well.

(SV) Let me begin by reminding you of what was stated in the Council's conclusions of 8 December, where the Council writes the following: 'Iceland is a country with long and deep democratic roots, with the potential to make a significant contribution to the EU, both strategically and politically. The country is already closely integrated with the EU in several areas, through its membership of the European Economic Area and the Schengen area.'

Iceland's application for membership of the European Union was officially submitted to the Swedish Presidency in Stockholm on 16 July 2009. I myself was there and received the application, which was immediately forwarded to the members of the Council.

At its meeting on 27 July 2009, the Council gave a reminder of the renewed consensus on enlargement that was described in the conclusions of the European Council meeting in December 2006, including the principle that each country is to be assessed on its own merits, and we decided to initiate the process stated in Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union. The Commission was therefore asked to submit an opinion on this application to the Council.

The application will be assessed according to the principles set out in the treaty, the criteria established at the European Council meeting in Copenhagen in 1992 and the conclusions of the European Council's meeting in December 2006. In accordance with the conclusions adopted by the General Affairs Council last week, it will take up the matter again when the Commission has submitted its opinion. This should make it possible for the Council to make a decision on the possible opening of negotiations with Iceland during the initial months of the Spanish Presidency.

**Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE).** – I want to thank the President-in-Office for her response. As Chair of the Delegation for relations with Switzerland, Iceland and Norway and to the European Economic Area (EEA) Joint Parliamentary Committee, I fully understand that, of course, every application has to be dealt with on its own merits and progress is being made. I think an indication of that is that Iceland responded to the many questions within a reasonably short time and, of course, it was helpful that it is a member of the EEA. That is an indication of the Icelandic Government's commitment. I believe it would be another major step in the further expansion of Europe if Iceland were to become a member of the European Union.

However, you mentioned the old democracy as a matter for the Icelandic people to take this decision, but I look forward to further progress at the next Council meeting and, hopefully, a major step will be taken there and that there would be an announcement by the Council.

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – The Icelandic application has to be dealt with in accordance with the rules and procedures, and the Commission has not yet finalised its scrutiny and its elaboration of the opinion. They are making progress, as is Iceland, and they have already appointed their negotiation teams and are prepared to be very thorough but quick in their work. I think therefore that we can count on the Commission presenting an opinion at the beginning of next year and hopefully, the Council can take a decision on further measures.

**President.** – As the author is not present, Question 16 lapses.

Question 17 by **Mairead McGuinness** (H-0470/09)

Subject: Biodegradable waste

Can the Council comment on Member State progress with regard to diverting biodegradable waste from landfill, as outlined in the Landfill Directive (1999/31/EC<sup>(5)</sup>)?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) Every day, large quantities of waste are produced in the EU's Member States. How we deal with this waste naturally has a major impact on the environment. The Commission's recently published report on the implementation of the EU's legislation on waste concludes that although some Member States have made progress, huge implementation efforts are required in a great many States if the infrastructure for waste management is to meet EU requirements. The Directive on landfill is particularly difficult to implement.

As regards diverting biodegradable waste from landfill, the Commission's report states that only nine countries achieved their target reductions in 2006 – according to the fairly limited information available. The Council has stated previously in its conclusions of June 2009 that it agrees with the Commission. It is very important that the EU's targets for diverting biodegradable waste from landfill are met. The Council also called upon the Commission to continue with its impact analysis in order to prepare a proposal for EU legislation on biodegradable waste if appropriate.

The Council stated that the need for EU legislation should be noted, and particularly the need for legislation on the recycling of biodegradable waste by means of composting and energy recovery in biogas facilities with subsequent recycling of residual material. The Council also stated that better management of biodegradable waste would contribute to more sustainable management of our resources, increase land protection, help combat climate change and, in particular, enable targets for diverting waste from landfill, recycling and renewable energy to be met.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE)**. – I think everyone in this House supports the efforts. If you stand, as I have, on a landfill and inhale, it is pretty awful, and I think the public who dump should perhaps take a visit.

Could you, if you have any, give reasons that you could elaborate on as to why only nine Member States are at this stage? We know we need to do this; I agree we need to do biogas. Everybody agrees with the principles, but why are we failing to achieve the objectives?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – I have to confess that I am not an expert on this theme, but, as far as I understood from the Commission statements, the appropriate infrastructure to deal with it is missing and it is quite costly to put into place. It is of course beneficial in the long term, but Member States have not invested in the appropriate infrastructure and that is why it has taken so much time.

**President**. – We will now take what will be the last question this evening, and indeed the last question of your presidency. It comes from Mr Hans-Peter Martin and concerns successes by the Swedish Council Presidency in matters of transparency where, I dare say, we have something to report.

Question 18 by **Hans-Peter Martin** (H-0472/09)

Subject: Successes by the Swedish Council Presidency in matters of transparency

On 16 September 2009, the Swedish Presidency stated in its answer to my question H-0295/09<sup>(6)</sup> that it 'shares the Honourable Member's view on the importance of increased transparency in the work of the Union'. It went on to state that 'the Presidency intends to give full effect to the relevant transparency provisions, set out in Article 8 paragraphs 1 - 4, of the Council's Rules of Procedure. In principle, all deliberations on legislative acts to be adopted in accordance with the codecision procedure will be open to the public, as provided in the Council's Rules of Procedure'.

Now that it has reached the end of its Presidency, what specific successes were achieved by the Council and in which fields?

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) As the honourable Member points out, increasing transparency in the work of the European Union is an important priority for Sweden as a Member State and

<sup>(5)</sup> OJ L 182, 16.7.1999, p. 1

<sup>(6)</sup> Written answer of 16.9.2009

as the holder of the Presidency. Increasing transparency in every area of the Council's work was one of the clear aims that we set out.

I would like to mention, for example, the Presidency website, where information on meetings, background documents and webstreaming links can be found in three languages.

In the last few months, the Presidency has also done its utmost to ensure that the provisions on transparency in the Council's Rules of Procedure are applied.

In July, September, October and November 2009, 20 public debates were held on the initiative of the Swedish Presidency, in accordance with Rule 8.3 of the Rules of Procedure. Moreover, a public debate was held on the Presidency's work programme for the work of the Ecofin Council. That makes 21 public debates held over four months.

As regards the number of public deliberations, 59 items of legislation were adopted publicly as A items within the ordinary legislative procedure and nine proposed items of legislation were discussed as B items during a public Council meeting. Furthermore, one public deliberation was held on the initiative of the Presidency. If the honourable Member thinks that does not sound like much, it should be borne in mind that the number of items on the Council's agenda for which public deliberations must be held varies somewhat depending on the number of items that are subject to the ordinary legislative procedure. Moreover, the new parliament has not had as many items as usual. The new Commission will no doubt increase the number of legislative proposals that are to be dealt with by the Council and the European Parliament and the number of items will then increase.

Furthermore, now that the Treaty of Lisbon has entered into force, all Council meetings dealing with the part of the agenda that concerns deliberations on legislation are also public. The Swedish Presidency welcomes this improvement. It will make the European Union more effective and democratic.

In conclusion, I would like to mention that yesterday, the Swedish Presidency took the initiative for a meeting with the interinstitutional working group on transparency with Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström and Vice-President Diana Wallis. We discussed a great many specific proposals for providing Europe's citizens with better, more user-friendly access to information in the EU institutions.

**Hans-Peter Martin (NI).** – (DE) It is rare for there to be cause in plenary for a certain kind of emotion. I think it is an honour and a pleasure that we, specifically, are able to hold the final dialogue. Mrs Malmström, you know, yourself, that it is a slow, narrow path towards more transparency, which we, unfortunately, often only progress along at a snail's pace, if I think about where we were ten years ago and where we are today. Nevertheless, as a critical but passionate pro-European, I clearly cannot be satisfied merely with what we have achieved thus far.

I would be interested to know what message you would leave us with as regards what your successors could actually improve. I am thinking in particular of the Council working groups. I am actually not happy about the number of agenda items that have been publicly accessible up to now, nor about the manner in which access to the documents is obtained. Taking a long-term perspective from your ten years of experience in European politics, do you think that we will ever reach the stage in terms of transparency that Sweden reached decades ago?

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – It is indeed a very important question. I would say that access to documents and transparency has increased considerably over the last ten years. This is due to Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, which is a very important regulation, and I am proud to have been able to take part in the birth of this regulation.

It is also how we implement it and it is about attitudes. They have improved during the last 10 years. Lots of people in our European institutions have realised that transparency and openness is not dangerous. It is good. It is efficient. It is good for legitimacy and it also decreases the possibilities of wrongdoings and corruption.

We still have work to do. The Lisbon Treaty presents us with new possibilities. I hope all incoming presidencies will use those possibilities in the best possible way. The Commission said yesterday that they will come back with proposals arising from the Lisbon Treaty as to how we can move forward with transparency.

There is still a lot to do, but we have come quite a long way. As the honourable Member says, it is a constant fight, and I look forward to going along that fighting path together.



**President.** – It therefore remains for me to say, Minister, dear Cecilia, thank you very much for your cooperation and such full participation in Question Time during the Swedish Presidency. We look forward, subject to the approval of this House, to seeing you on that side. Thank you very much, and thank you to your team.

That concludes Question Time.

Questions which have not been answered for lack of time will be answered in writing (see Annex).

### **13. Agenda for next sitting: see Minutes**

### **14. Closure of the sitting**

*(The sitting closed at 19.10)*