

## WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2007

IN THE CHAIR: MR POETTERING

*President*

*(The sitting was opened at 4.30 p.m.)*

### 1. Resumption of the session

**President.** I declare resumed the session suspended on Thursday 26 April 2007.

### 2. Approval of Minutes of previous sitting: see Minutes

**Paul Rübiger (PPE-DE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, it was actually planned that today's sitting should include a debate on the roaming report, since this House, in the trilogue on 2 May, presented the Council with a package of compromises, and I might add that it did so with the agreement of all groups here and of all the countries represented in the trilogue. It is unfortunate that the Council has not, to date, indicated its agreement to it, and it is for that reason that we are unable to have the debate today or to vote on the report tomorrow.

**Brian Crowley (UEN).** – A Uachtaráin, ba mhaith liom comhghairdeas a dhéanamh le Rialtas na hÉireann, le Rialtas na Breataine, agus leis an Rialtas nua i mBéal Feirste.

Mr President, yesterday saw the installation of a new government and the re-establishment of the devolved assembly in Northern Ireland, representing what would have previously been called the extreme opinion of unionism and the extreme opinion of nationalism, brought together to form a new government for Northern Ireland. As we have heard from the Nobel laureates, this is a great opportunity for us not only to congratulate those people who have been involved and to encourage them in finding a new way forward in solving conflict and resolving the difficulties that occur between different communities, but also to congratulate the European Union for its ongoing commitment and help to the people of Northern Ireland over the last 20 years.

The reasons such greatness took place yesterday was that the people there were standing on the shoulders of giants – not just the shoulders of John Hume and Lord Trimble, who are here today, but also the shoulders of Jacques Delors, who first came up with the plan and the idea of a peace programme for Northern Ireland, and of Helmut Kohl and others.

We should reflect on this today in making sure that we continue our commitment. As chairman of the UEN Group and a representative of a government party, I extend my thanks to all my colleagues here and to all my colleagues from Ireland who worked together towards this common cause and common goal.

We should also reflect on and remember the loss of life, the harm, the impairment and injury to so many, but, rather than allow those losses to continue to fester and to poison our dialogue, let us understand: that was one of one time, this is of another. Our task and our role now is to ensure that our grandchildren have better prospects for the future in Northern Ireland.

Let us also remember the words of the old poet who said: 'Even though my bones may break and even though my body may bleed, within my heart still beats the hope of mankind to find and fulfil all its needs'.

*(Applause)*

**President.** Thank you for that statement, Mr Crowley. I would like to inform you that I have sent a letter to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to congratulate them. We look forward to a good future for Northern Ireland, Ireland, Great Britain and the European Union.

### **3. Membership of the temporary committee on climate change (deadline for tabling amendments): see Minutes**

#### **4. Agenda**

**President.** With the agreement of all the groups, a corrigendum to the order of business adopted for today and tomorrow at the sitting on Monday 23 April has been circulated, and I have received a number of motions for its amendment, which are as follows.

*Wednesday:*

The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats has moved that the report by Mr Brok on the 2005 annual report on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (A6-0130/2007) be deferred to the May part-session in Strasbourg.

**Joseph Daul, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.** – (FR) Our colleague, Mr Brok, has undergone an operation. He thought that he would be here this week, but that will not be the case. Nevertheless, I can assure you that he is in good health – as we know, he takes care of his health – and he will be with us for the part-session in Strasbourg. That is why I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, to postpone the debate on this report.

*(Parliament adopted the motion.)*

**President.** The Socialist Group in the European Parliament has moved that the report by Mrs Lulling on the approximation of the rates of excise duty on alcohol and alcoholic beverages (A6-0148/2007) be deferred to the May part-session in Strasbourg.

**Hannes Swoboda, on behalf of the PSE Group.** – (DE) Mr President, first of all, let me, on behalf of our group, wish Mr Brok all the best and a good recovery.

Moving on to the Lulling report, I spoke with Mrs Lulling today. There are a number of problems – let me be frank about it, particularly in Bulgaria – in connection with the changes that the Lulling report would bring in its wake, and, since we would like to have more talks with Mrs Lulling and also with representatives of the other groups on whether we might not find some consensus on this thorny issue, we move that the debate be deferred to the next part-session in Strasbourg. This is not a matter of party politics, as all political groupings in Bulgaria are affected by this. We would be ill-advised to send out a negative signal now if there is a chance of us after all finding a solution through consensus one or two weeks down the line.

**Astrid Lulling (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – (FR) Mr President, there is no objective reason why we should not debate my report today in order to put it to the vote tomorrow. This report was adopted within the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs after several months of discussion, since the Commission proposal was referred to us on 28 September 2006, as is written down. We debated the proposal at least five times within the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs. Everyone was able to voice his or her opinion. The amendments were tabled within the timescales set. They have been translated.

Things being what they are, I obviously understand why the Socialist Group in the European Parliament is proposing this postponement: the Socialists are in favour of increasing the minimum rates of excise duty, while in Bulgaria, they are against doing so. The Socialists are therefore afraid of adopting a position before the European elections. That is why this request for postponement is a blatant lie: in reality, it is based on a political, not objective, reason. I therefore call on my fellow Members to vote against.

**Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM).** – (SV) Mr President, we should not show the contempt for democracy entailed in postponing the debate on this report until after the Bulgarian election. It is a hugely important democratic principle that the people, in this case the Bulgarians, should have as much information as possible when they go to the polls. The whole purpose of the proposed postponement is the opposite of that, namely that we should debate this issue only after the Bulgarians have voted. I am resolutely opposed to this move, and all good democrats should oppose it for the same reason.

*(Parliament adopted the motion.)*

*(The agenda was thus determined.)*

**5. Declaration of financial interests: see Minutes**

**6. Written statements (tabling): see Minutes**

**7. Written statements (Rule 116): see Minutes**

**8. Texts of agreements forwarded by the Council: see Minutes**

**9. Action taken on Parliament's positions and resolutions: see Minutes**

**10. Strengthening European legislation in the field of information and consultation of workers (tabling of motions for a resolution): see Minutes**

**11. Statement by the President (Estonia)**

**President.** I have been asked to make a brief statement on Estonia, and have been informed that the Group chairmen wish to do likewise once I have finished. That does indeed seem to be so. The Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950 gave Europe the foundation on which it would be possible to build partnership in peace and freedom between nations that had formerly been at enmity with one another and, when our continent, formerly divided, had grown together, the European Union became the guarantor of peace, freedom and prosperity throughout Europe. We take pride in being able, today, to celebrate Schuman Day together with 27 Member States of the European Union, but 9 May is, for other reasons, a controversial date, as we have seen most recently in the dispute concerning the Soviet soldiers' memorial in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, and it is for that reason that we call to mind our resolution of 12 May 2005, in which this House remarked upon the fact that there were some nations for whom the end of the Second World War meant the dawn of another tyranny, that of the Soviet Union. We remind ourselves that controversies on matters of history must never be an occasion for violence, and we firmly condemn affray and looting.

The current President of the Republic of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who was formerly a Member of this House, said the right thing in response to the events outside the Estonian embassy in Moscow, and this was what he had to say about them: 'In Europe, it is not customary to demand the resignation of the democratically elected government of a neighbouring country; in Europe, it is unthinkable that the Convention of Vienna on the protection of diplomatic missions be disregarded'.

We call to mind our resolution of 8 June 2005 on the protection of minorities and against discrimination against them, in which we declared, *inter alia*, that national minorities enrich Europe. The European Union is founded upon values, the protection of which is our common task. Putting a Member State of the European Union under pressure constitutes a challenge to all of us, and Estonia can count on our solidarity.

*(Applause)*

**Tunne Kelam, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.** – Mr President, I wish to thank you for your support and solidarity.

I should also like to express my gratitude to all colleagues for their extraordinary demonstration of support and solidarity with Estonia, because what is happening between an EU Member State, Estonia, and the Russian Federation is not a bilateral case but a case for the EU as a whole – it is a test case of whether the EU is a real political Union rooted in solidarity and unity. Today, the clarity, timing and unity of the EU reaction are being tested. What we expect is a strong EU commitment to unconditional solidarity.

First of all, we need to be free of wishful thinking. The way the Russian Federation is treating an EU Member State is clearly not an aberration. President Putin presented a programme of a new, much more assertive Russian foreign policy in his Munich speech. This approach could be termed neo-imperialist

or revanchist. The aim is to regain, at least partially, its past influence over its former Baltic colonies, and then over the former Warsaw Pact part of Europe, relying on the current energy boom that has boosted Russian influence, as well as misusing parts of the Russian population living outside Russia.

I would like to make it very clear that President Putin calls these Russians his compatriots. I would like to dispute that strongly. Russians living in Estonia are my compatriots, and I am proud of them because 99 % of them remained loyal not to President Putin but to the Estonian state.

*(Applause)*

Therefore, the question is not only about solidarity; the key word is the 'sovereignty' of the new Member States of the European family. We can succeed in achieving it only when we speak with one voice and demonstrate unity in action. When a Member State that decides to be clearer about its own past, and does so in an open and dignified way, suddenly becomes an object of concentrated pressure from its huge neighbour; when its embassy in Moscow is practically held hostage for a whole week; when riots to destabilise law and order are organised with clear inspiration and assistance from a foreign state; when there are calls by Russian officials for a democratically elected government to step down; when an economic blockade is being implemented; when websites of the Estonian state institutions are still being blocked by massive cyber attacks – an innovative form of propaganda war; then one has to be really worried about the sovereignty of the state in question.

In conclusion, there is still another form of sovereignty we must defend: our right to decide on and assess our past. You quoted the resolution of the European Parliament two years ago concerning the many European countries that fell victim to the renewed tyranny inflicted by Stalin's Soviet Union. There is still a dividing line in Europe, between all the western democracies, which have never recognised the illegal annexation and occupation of the Baltic States to the Soviet Union in 1940 as a result of the Hitler-Stalin pact, and the Russian Federation, which still denies this pact and also tries to deny the right of its former victims to assess their past. Therefore, we need your solidarity, and I am very thankful to all of you for demonstrating it.

*(Applause)*

**President.** Thank you very much, Mr Kelam. As a citizen and an honourable personality from Estonia, I gave you twice as much speaking time as you had been allocated, but this should not be an example for others.

**Hannes Swoboda, on behalf of the PSE Group. – (DE)** Mr President, I hope I am honourable, even though I am not from Estonia. I asked the leader of our Estonian delegation, Mr Tarand, to speak. Since he will be speaking later on, he asked me to make it clear that the Socialist Group in the European Parliament as a whole is giving its full backing to Estonia, to our Members from Estonia and to the people of Estonia, and that we reject all outside intervention and every intervention on the part of Russia.

We affirm not only the principle that embassies and diplomatic premises should be treated with respect, but also that the sovereignty of a country and its people should be respected.

If I may add a personal remark, I was born a few months after the end of the war in what was then the Soviet-occupied zone in Eastern Austria. I remember my parents, relatives and friends relating how they were glad that Russian soldiers had come to free us from the Nazi regime, and also know from personal experience that these same people feared the possibility of the Soviet troops staying on as occupiers. It was our good fortune in Austria – a good fortune bestowed on us by history – that our country was liberated. Many others, such as the people only 20 kilometres to the east of my home, experienced occupation rather than liberation.

That is why we believe that Russia should at last come to acknowledge that, while many Russian soldiers came as liberators, they did bring with them a regime under which the same liberators remained as an occupying power and that many peoples – not only in the Soviet Union but also in many neighbouring countries – suffered oppression. If this were to come to be accepted, it would make dialogue so much easier. I hope that all citizens on either side of the former border with the Eastern bloc accept that this dual truth was once the case.

Our group was very sad to lose Mr Ilves as a member, but we are, today, very glad that such a level-headed man as he is President of Estonia. Here are two short quotations from him. He drew attention to the website of a young Russian woman, who had written on it, '*We are Russians, but our homeland*

is Estonia', to which he added, 'Thank you, Maria'. The last sentence in his speech, which really is most remarkable, goes like this:

'It is customary in Europe that differences that occur now and then between states are solved by diplomats and politicians, not on the streets or by computer attacks. Those are the ways of other countries, or, I would add, other times, somewhere else, not in Europe.'

*(DE)* What we in Europe need is dialogue and conversation rather than attacks on embassies or demonstrations in front of them, because it is this dialogue itself that is of the essence of Europe.

**Siiri Oviir**, on behalf of the ALDE Group. – *(ET)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, allow me first of all to reply, in the hope that, since I am speaking on behalf of my group, I shall not be given significantly less time than the previous speaker.

Today we are discussing relations between Estonia and Russia and, in talking about these, we must definitely discuss the events that took place at the end of April in Estonia. Nor can we ignore the cause of these events – the Bronze Soldier. This statue was erected by the Soviet authorities in honour of the liberators of Tallinn. The liberation of Tallinn actually consisted of the bombing of Tallinn on 9 March 1944, when 40% of Tallinn's residential areas was destroyed and hundreds of people died.

This was referred to as liberation, but Estonians were deported to Siberia, with one wave of deportations following another and no family left untouched by the repression. My father was deported to Siberia in 1941 and only returned home 21 years later. After Stalin's death my great-grandmother, who had also been deported to Siberia, set out alone and on foot for her home country of Estonia. When my family came home from work one day, they found her sitting on the steps of our house, but unfortunately my great-grandmother was already dead. I can still remember that time.

As a monument erected to a liberator, the Bronze Soldier was a symbol of very painful experiences for many Estonians. Nevertheless, it stood in the central square of our capital city for another 15 years, that is to say for the 15 years after Estonia regained its independence.

What was it that happened on 26 April? What happened that night? The monument crisis actually began about a year ago, when a gathering of extremists waving Soviet flags transformed this monument from one that honoured the dead into a symbol of the victory of the Soviet occupation, and as such it became a continual source of tension. Up to that time, veterans had gathered there every year, and despite the fact that alcohol was sometimes consumed on the grave and that those present even at times danced on the grave, the police never intervened.

On the night of 26 April, however, riots broke out in the downtown area, and these later spread to some border cities where, however, they were less severe. The rioters destroyed everything that stood in their path including cars and bus pavilions, but mainly windows. Bands of youths broke into shops and stole everything. Off-licences, in particular, were targeted, but also some other shops. For example, Armani and Hugo Boss shops, as well as jewellery stores, were looted.

Since we live in a media age, all of this was recorded and also broadcast live on television. Today there is a great deal of video material documenting the events. The police only intervened when the gangs of youths became too aggressive. Truncheons and water cannons were used; firearms were not. That night, the Bronze Soldier was transported from Tõnismäe to the military graveyard, where it was yesterday made accessible to the public again. After that, the attacks from Russia began – the propaganda offensives mentioned by the previous speakers, culminating in the Russian Duma's demand for a change of government in Estonia. I will stop now. Please accept my apologies, Mr President.

*(The speech was interrupted)*

Finally, I would like to thank all who have supported, and who continue to support, Estonia. This is a great honour for us and a great help to us. Thank you, Mr President, and please accept my apologies.

**Brian Crowley**, on behalf of the UEN Group. – Mr President, I would like to join my colleagues in firstly giving our solidarity and support to the Estonian Government and to the Estonian people, and secondly, in denouncing the bully-boy tactics of the Russian Government in its attempt to create uncertainty and instability, not only within Estonia but in all the Baltic States.

In many ways what we are witnessing is a new form of totalitarianism or authoritarianism by the use of mobs in Moscow to attack an Embassy, by the use the power or strength of energy to try and make people kneel before the influence of the Russian Government, and, most importantly of all, by a continuing desire to keep imposing symbols of domination and of subjugation in areas that have gained their independence from totalitarian regimes.

Our task and role today is to listen to our Estonian colleagues and to hear their cries and their pleas for assistance and solidarity. Most importantly of all, however, because we value Russia as a partner for future developments, we should call on Russia to take the proper steps to ensure that the rights of all European Union Member States are respected equally – whether large or small, whether a neighbouring country or not, whether a former dominion or not.

Finally, our most ardent call should go out to the citizens of Estonia, to show them that now that they are part of the European Union, they will not be abandoned as they were abandoned previously.

**Daniel Cohn-Bendit**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we have had this sort of argument about European history many times before; the last time we did so, it was in a debate on what to make of the Sudeten problem in the Czech Republic, when we said – and I repeat – that what was needed was a European interpretation of the war and that the national interpretations of it had to be put to one side. In this instance, the European interpretation is a simple matter; it is that the Red Army played its part in freeing Europe from National Socialist Fascism. That is what it did, and this playing of its part demanded great sacrifices. Let us leave to one side the argument about what responsibility Stalin bore for Hitler's rise to power, for that is another debate.

After that, though, the Red Army became an army of occupation, an army that made freedom impossible. That, too, is part of European history. Removing hideous bronze statues, far from presenting a problem for the cultural landscape of a city, tends to help make the place more beautiful, but, in this debate, we have to make it abundantly clear – and I hope that we will hear this said in the debate on Russia – that the fact of the matter is that what the Russian leadership – Putin – is trying to do here, with all its and his might, is to foment division. We must all affirm our solidarity with the governments of Latvia and Estonia.

At the same time, though, whatever our solidarity, we have to acknowledge that the Baltic states do have a problem with the rights of the Russian minority. What history teaches us all is that social conflict arises when a minority – and that is what 30% of the population amounts to – wants to belong but feels deprived of their rights.

I know that all majorities always deny that: the Turks have always told us that there is no Kurdish problem in Turkey, yet a Kurdish problem is just what there is in Turkey, and there is a problem with the Russian minority and their rights. This is not to say that the Russian minority is good, but that, as a minority, they have to have rights, and that it is difficult to build consensus in society if those rights are not recognised.

**Gabriele Zimmer**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it is quite true that 62 years ago today, the representatives of Nazi Germany signed the instrument of unconditional surrender, thus bringing to an end one of the darkest chapters in European history. The peoples of what was then the Soviet Union played a decisive part in bringing this victory about, and they also had to pay an enormous price; all these things we ought to properly appreciate and, of course, reflect upon them, and it is for that reason that I thoroughly endorse what has been said about the events in Tallinn by the head of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Jerusalem, in these words, which I found very moving:

‘Whilst the Centre unequivocally condemns crimes committed against Estonians of all faiths and nationalities under Soviet rule, it must never be forgotten that it was the Red Army which effectively stopped the mass murder conducted by the Nazis and their local collaborators on Estonian soil until the final day of its occupation by Nazi Germany. Thus the removal of the monument from the centre of Tallinn by the government reflects a regrettable lack of sensitivity to the depth of Nazi criminality and is an insult to its victims.’

(DE) My group finds it extremely regrettable that disagreements in Tallinn on matters of domestic and foreign policy should have reached this crisis point, and we urge all the parties involved to exercise moderation and enter into dialogue. That a peaceful demonstration in the Estonian capital should

degenerate into a riot and that the police should act in such a way that one person is killed and many others injured is very disturbing, and that it should happen at all testifies to the lack of dialogue between the Estonian majority and the Russian minority. What I want to highlight, then, is that we in this House also share in responsibility for this, for having expressed too little opposition to the discrimination against the Russian minority in the Baltic states.

The disproportionate responses from Russia are no less disturbing. My group strongly endorses the demand made of Russia that it discharge its international obligations in accordance with the relevant conventions and protect not only the premises but also the staff of the Estonian embassy and allow unhindered access to it. We also call on the German Presidency of the Council to help de-escalate the situation and bring Estonia and Russia together in dialogue. With the EU/Russia summit in the offing, this is a time for building bridges rather than barriers.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR ALEJO VIDAL-QUADRAS

*Vice-President*

**Nils Lundgren**, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group*. – (SV) Mr President, the first and most important thing to state is that Estonia is an independent nation, not a Russian satellite state. This means that we cannot begin to talk in muted tones about the need to understand Russia and its history. Rather, we must understand that Russia is mounting a blockade against Estonia and demanding that another country's government resign etc. Emphatically, these are not matters for which we should be showing understanding. The Russian Government, the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia and everyone else do, of course, have the right to criticise activities such as the removal of a bronze statue. However, Estonia is not a Russian satellite state within Russia's sphere of interest, but a free and independent nation.

The instances offered by Mr Cohn-Bendit when he begins to talk in this House about quite different issues, notably the situation of the minority populations in the three Baltic republics, are unhelpful. Obviously, that is another, albeit worthwhile, discussion. What, however, we are talking about now is Russia's being entitled – or, rather, not being entitled at all – to do what it has in fact done. The fact – in itself extraordinary – of the Red Army's having defeated Hitler is irrelevant. That victory is something that we can celebrate. Subsequently, the Red Army settled down to the long-term bullying of Estonia.

In 1939, Finland lay north of the Gulf of Finland and Estonia south of it. The two countries had approximately the same standard of living and were in many respects quite similar. When the Russian occupation came to an end, Finland was one of the world's richest and most successful countries, while Estonia – which is now very successfully working its way up – was in the doldrums. These costs must not be forgotten. We are not now required to understand Russia. What we have to remember now is that it is the independent nation of Estonia that we are talking about, not a Russian satellite state.

**Bruno Gollnisch**, *on behalf of the ITS Group*. – (FR) Mr President, history has yet to be written with the sole aim of getting close to the truth. Until now, it has been written in an ideological way. Consequently, it constantly omits this essential fact, namely that the wicked alliance between Molotov and Ribbentrop, between Stalin and Hitler, that is, between communism and national socialism, resulted in the violent invasion of Estonia, where the presence of the Red Army took the form of arrests, deportations, arbitrary executions and decades of denial of all civil rights.

Today, everyone is in favour of the Baltic countries having their freedom, but when, in October 1987, in the French parliament, Mr Le Pen and the members of the group that he was chairing wanted to exclude the Baltic countries – the annexation of which we felt was illegal because it was achieved by violent means – from the scope of the treaties concluded with Russia, all the other political parties were against. In reality, ladies and gentlemen, the Estonians and the Russians were victims of communism. Admittedly, given the enormous sacrifices subsequently made by the Russian army, the humiliation felt by the Russian minority and, above all, by the former soldiers, is understandable. The great French poet, Baudelaire, once said: the dead, the poor dead, have great sorrows.

Let us leave Estonia free to find its own methods of being able to honour those whose sacrifice ultimately has no other legitimate meaning than that of having defended their respective nations – the independence, sovereignty and identity of each of those nations.

**President.** The debate is closed.

## 12. EU-Russia summit (debate)

**President.** The next item is the Council and Commission statements on the EU/Russia Summit.

**Günter Gloser**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. (DE) Mr President, Mr Vice-President of the Commission, honourable Members, before turning to our actual theme, I should like to say something quite brief about the preceding debate. The Council Presidency, and hence too the European Union, responded to the conflict, not least because it touched upon the sovereignty of a Member State of the European Union, while also showing solidarity and – as Mrs Zimmer pointed out – helping to cool the situation down, and both these things were done in good time. We shall, of course, have to carry on doing these things.

Today, the ninth day of May, we celebrate Europe Day, a day symbolic of European integration. Ever since Robert Schuman proposed the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community, Europe has had a long and difficult road to cover – and I believe it has done so successfully – in order for the present European Union of 27 Member States to come into being, a European Union that has now achieved a level of stability and prosperity that is the envy of the world, and that historic achievement would not have been possible without a far-sighted view of policymaking and a patient approach to strategy.

Both of these are called for when it comes to developing relations between the European Union and Russia, which the European Union rightly sees as a partner and neighbour with which it is yoked through strategic cooperation. With scarcely any other country does the European Union maintain relations as wide-ranging and deep as with Russia. One of the fundamental lessons of European history is that Europe depends on Russia for long-term stability and prosperity; nor, indeed, in the final analysis, can we meet the great global challenges unless we do so together: challenges such as the war on international terrorism no less than the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or the dangers of global climate change. Close cooperation between the European Union and Russia is indispensable, too, if we want to prevail in conflicts such as those in Kosovo, with Iran or in the Middle East.

In an age of globalisation, both our common interests and the ways in which we are dependent on each other are far more important than that which divides us, in the sphere of energy, for example, where it is often forgotten that Russia is dependent on us, who consume 80% of its gas exports, and needs cooperation with the European Union if its economy is to get the modernisation it so urgently needs, and the European Union itself has a pre-eminent interest in fostering closer ties with Russia. Contrariwise, President Putin is right to constantly refer to the European Union as Russia's ideal partner, and by 'European Union', he does of course mean all 27 Member States.

Since our cooperation with Russia is characterised by interconnection and founded upon the 'four areas' policy that we agreed on with it, the German Presidency of the EU wants to use the EU/Russia summit in Samara on 18 May to further cement and extend the partnership with Russia. In so doing, we do not want to limit ourselves to a mere exchange of views, but rather the intention is that this summit should send out positive signals in favour of our greater partnership and cooperation with Russia, and so that is what we are continuing to push for. We know that this summit represents the last opportunity to begin, as we must, negotiations on a successor to the existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

The German Presidency of the Council is still, to the utmost of its abilities, working together with the Commission to find a solution to the outstanding issue of the Russian ban on the import of Polish agricultural products. After the many discussions that have been held involving the Commission, Poland and Russia, the time has now come for Russia to name a day for the end of the import ban. The commencement of negotiations on a new and strategic agreement would be an important political signal to the effect that both sides were continuing to be committed to working on the further development of their partnership, and, at the end of the day, that must not be allowed to be frustrated by a technical issue.

Putting relations between the European Union and Russia on a new footing and defining new shared perspectives is in the interests of all of us; I am thinking here of such things as the development of an energy partnership between the EU and Russia on the basis of trustworthy rules and framework conditions. In Lahti, last October, President Putin gave an assurance that these principles would be incorporated into the new Treaty, and the EU/Russia summit presents us with a welcome early opportunity to talk with the Russian Government about how we might, in future, avoid points of friction in our dealings



with them on energy and be able to prevent interruptions to the power supply, in which respect the establishment of an early-warning system would appear to be important.

It is because policies on energy and climate are closely interconnected that climate change and security are among the issues that should be discussed at the summit. As you will be aware, the European Union is prepared to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2020, provided that other industrialised states enter into comparable undertakings, and so winning Russia over to this cause would be a major triumph.

It has to be said, though, that partnership between the EU and Russia is about more than energy and economic matters. There is great potential for deeper relations between the EU and Russia in education, research and cultures, and that potential is far from having the fullest possible use made of it; it is in forward-looking fields such as these that both sides can benefit from becoming more enmeshed and interlinked, and it is because this represents a particular opportunity for the European Union to guide Russia's transformation by helping it to adopt European values that we would like to use the summit to promote closer cooperation in these areas, through such things as more academic exchanges and cooperation in research.

Making Europe more secure calls for good and trusting cooperation between the EU and Russia. We are aware that talking to Russia about this issue has not always been a straightforward business in recent times, and we have noted with concern Russian utterances about a moratorium on the CSCE Treaty; like the discussion on the anti-missile system, this is where everything possible must be done to avoid a new spiral of mistrust, for it is only through mutual trust and practical cooperation that we will succeed in endowing Europe with long-term security.

We will, then, continue to try to persuade Russia to support a solution for the future status of Kosovo on the basis of the Ahtisaari plan; for it to do so would be a crucial contribution to European security, as also would be its constructive cooperation in dealing with what are termed the 'frozen conflicts' in Moldova and the Southern Caucasus.

Real partnership includes dialogue on contentious issues, and that is why I want to stress that one of the things we will be talking about in Samara will be Russia's internal development, which, particularly recently, has been the subject of critical questioning and concern in the EU, especially where the condition of the media and of civil society has been concerned. The hard-hitting approach adopted by the Russian authorities to the demonstrations in Moscow, St Petersburg and Nizhni Novgorod is just one example of a trend that many see as problematic and cannot be accepted as it stands.

At the fifth human rights consultations between the EU and Russia, which took place on 3 May in Berlin, the European Union voiced its particular misgivings with specific reference to the right of free expression of opinion and assembly, particularly in view of the forthcoming parliamentary and presidential elections in Russia, and also expressed its unmistakable concern about the situation of Russian non-governmental organisations and civil society following the entry into force of the law on the activities of non-governmental organisation and the law on extremism. The issues raised did of course include reference to specific cases of human rights violations and the situation in Chechnya, as well as the combating of torture and mistreatment. Here too, it is also the case that we are not being critical for the sake of it, but because we care deeply about the way things are going in Russia and want the country to flourish.

The EU has a pre-eminent interest in a stable and strong Russia that is guided in the way it develops by European values without denying its own traditions, which involves a flourishing relationship with its own neighbours, one characterised by frank dialogue and good cooperation rather than by pressure, and it is with that in mind that our Presidency of the Council has been working for successful de-escalation that will benefit not only us but also our Russian partners. It was our mediation that put an end to the intolerable state of affairs surrounding the Estonian Embassy in Moscow, and we will maintain this dialogue with Russia – a dialogue that does not always run smoothly where its Baltic neighbours are concerned.

Ultimately, Russia will be successfully modernised only if those values and principles associated with democracy and the rule of law are entrenched – those values and principles to which both the EU and Russia have committed themselves in the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the OSCE. Since it has been Europe's experience that good governance is conditional upon the rule of law and the presence of a critical and living civil society, the future development of Europe as a whole depends to a crucial

degree on the successful development of an all-embracing strategic partnership between the EU and Russia.

This is an historic project, and one that will call for strategic patience and realism on both sides, and this realism will involve gaining an insight into what is feasible and working at chalking up triumphs step by step, which – in this area as in many others – will not be without its problems, yet neither the European Union nor Russia have any realistic alternative to going down this road of cooperation and partnership, and so it is a matter of our shared responsibility as Europeans that we should do just that.

*(Applause)*

**Günter Verheugen**, *Vice-President of the Commission*. *(DE)* Mr President, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, honourable Members, in view of the somewhat unsatisfactory state of relations between Russia and the European Union, the Commission thinks it necessary that a number of remarks be made in this debate about principles.

Firstly, Russia is our number one strategic partner in Europe. Secondly, we have every interest in Russia being a stable and reliable partner to us, just as we also want to be that sort of partner to it. Thirdly, we are persuaded that our partnership can grow best if it is supported by both sides in an unambiguous commitment to democracy, the rule of law and human rights and the constant effort to make them a reality. Fourthly, our dealings with our neighbours and with other peoples outside Europe are not value-free; on the contrary, they are founded upon the values on which we have agreed and which we have systematised; that is why Europe has become a continent of hope for so many outside our own borders, and we want to keep it that way.

The summit is being held at a crucial juncture, when Moscow, with its mind on the imminent elections to the State Duma and to the Presidency, is concentrating on the smooth handing over of power, and that is why relations with the West in general and the EU in particular have got stuck in a difficult rut.

We take quite different lines on many items on the current agenda – the future of Kosovo, the anti-missile shield and Europe's conventional armed forces for example – and all of these issues are, at the moment, close to the top of the agenda, together, of course, as so often, with the security of energy supply to all Member States of the European Union.

A situation such as this demands that we should not lose sight of the European Union's longer-term interests in its relations with Russia, for not only are we neighbours with a long shared history behind us, but we are also dependent on one another in many respects, in that we are by far and away Russia's biggest export market, while it is our principal supplier of energy; no major foreign policy issue in Europe can be resolved without our common consent, and for that we need constant and constructive dialogue within which we can make a determined case for our own interests and values, while at the same time having to work towards consensus.

At the summit, we will continue to strive to get negotiations started on a new agreement between the EU and Russia as a replacement for the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that is currently in place. Both parties should have a strong common interest in such an agreement, which can and should lift our relationship to a new and higher level, making it possible for them to develop fully.

The Commission has worked very hard at getting the Russians to lift their ban on the import of Polish meat and vegetable products, and I would like to say, further to that, that the Commission takes the view that the Russian import ban is disproportionate and unjustified, so what we now expect of Russia is an unambiguous and constructive signal in the shape of a clear timescale for the complete cessation of these measures, even though this may well have to involve several steps.

The summit will not draw a line under this, but forms part of a long development, and we will continue to work towards the progress in the establishment of the common areas on which we agreed so many years ago. The summit will also be an occasion on which we will have to express our concern as to the state of human rights and the rule of law in Russia. A great deal was said, at last week's human rights consultations between the EU and Russia, about the restrictions placed on the freedom of the media and the attacks on journalists, the hampering of non-governmental organisation and opposition politicians and the situation in Chechnya and the Northern Caucasus; it is particularly significant that Russia is inviting OSCE observers to the elections.

Free expression of opinion, freedom of association and of assembly are cornerstones of democracy, by which I mean democracy without further qualifying attributes, and we expect Russia, as a member of the family of democratic nations, to guarantee them.

I would like, at this point, to say something about the debate that you have just had in this House on crisis in relations between Russia and Estonia; since many speakers described what had happened, I do not need to repeat it, but Estonia, in any conflict or dispute with Russia, can rely on the solidarity of its partners in the European Union and on that of the EU's institutions, which, I do believe, has been demonstrated. This solidarity needs to be maintained in the event of any further interference in Estonia's internal affairs, whether through cyber-attacks or calls by delegations from the Duma for the resignation of the Estonian prime minister.

Never again will we allow anyone to attempt to drive a wedge between the European Union and one of its Member States. What is evident from this crisis is the way in which the wars of Europe's past continue to cast their shadows over us, with all Europe's peoples having their own experience of history and their own ways of getting to grips with them, and one can always only hope that they do this with respect for the experiences of others, because, where views diverge, the only thing that actually helps is talking – nothing else works.

The summit offers an opportunity to inject new life into the process of Russia's accession to the WTO, an objective that is certainly in the interests of both sides, and of which the EU is a leading advocate. As regards energy, it will see us striving to achieve agreement on the establishment of an early-warning and consultation mechanism that will ensure that information on the risk of potential interruptions to energy supplies will be exchanged early enough to avoid a supply crisis, with the transit countries being involved in this wherever necessary.

The summit should also see agreement being reached on the prioritisation of action to deal with climate change; it is important that Russia should approve and set in motion joint implementation projects with investors from the European Union under the Kyoto Protocol, and we also want to pave the way for our cooperation at the Bali conference in December in getting international negotiations started on a comprehensive climate agreement for the post-2012 era. It is in our common interest that countries that produce a great deal of pollution – the USA, China and India, for example – should be involved in this important negotiating process so that the global challenge can be faced.

Russia is an important partner when it comes to the resolution of problematic foreign policy issues, and it is likely that discussion of international issues at the summit will focus on the subjects of Kosovo, Iran and the Middle East, long-term solutions to which are dependent on both sides making constructive contributions in the relevant multilateral fora.

In our dealings with Russia as a neighbour, we want to make it plain that the Republic of Moldova and Georgia are neighbours to the European Union, and our interest in finding solutions to these conflicts – which are described as 'frozen' – is greater than ever; this will require cooperation by Russia, the EU, and many of the latter's Member States within international frameworks, and it is our especial hope that progress will be made concerning Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh.

I would like to stress once more that the Commission remains committed to a policy of constructive cooperation with Russia as a strategic partner and neighbour, a policy that must be founded on common interests and values. We believe that it is in Russia's own rational interests to cooperate constructively on this basis not only with the European Union but also with its Member States.

**Joseph Daul**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Mr Gloser, Mr Verheugen, ladies and gentlemen, can we at once be firm where our values and principles are concerned and work closely on matters as crucial as energy, climate change, accession to the WTO, visa policy and cooperation in our shared neighbourhood? The answer to that question should not vary according to the partner about whom we are talking when we talk about the European Union's relations with it. Yes, in its relations with Russia, Europe must adopt an open, dialogue-focused attitude, but it must also share its concerns – serious as they often are – on the subject of human rights and, in particular, on the subject of freedom of expression and of the treatment of minorities.

Today, 9 May, we are commemorating the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration. What significance do these celebrations have if Europe, in its reunified form, is unable to uphold its humanist rights? In our relations with such a strategic partner as Russia, the latest developments in that country are a source

of grave concern. Thus, my group feels that Moscow's attitude after the movement, by the Estonian authorities, of a Soviet monument, is totally unacceptable. This act, on the part of Russia, is a genuine infringement of the sovereignty of an EU Member State, which requires us to react very seriously. That is what we have done today. Russia must not think that, by adopting such an attitude, it will succeed in dividing us: today, we are all Estonians.

Furthermore, my group has unreservedly condemned the clampdowns on demonstrations in Moscow. It denounced the assassination, at the end of 2006, of the journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko and the repeated attacks on freedom of expression and also on freedom of the press. Finally, serious violations of human rights in the Chechen Republic, assassinations, forced disappearances, torture, hostage-taking and arbitrary detentions remain realities that the European Union must not accept.

Ladies and gentlemen, on all of these subjects, the European Union has a duty to speak frankly and to obtain clarifications and, above all, a change in attitudes and policies. Our mutual duty is to create the conditions for balanced relations and to work towards establishing a stable geopolitical environment that is as harmonious as possible. The world has changed. We are no longer in an era of cold war, but of cooperation, of the creation of practical policies. These policies can only be beneficial for growth, jobs and the long-term stability of our continent.

I call on the Commission and the Council to develop joint initiatives with Russia in an effort to step up security in the neighbourhood: co-management of the crises in Ukraine and Belarus and joint efforts to resolve the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Moldova and Georgia, while guaranteeing the absolute territorial integrity of the States. I should also like the negotiations to be re-opened as soon as possible on a new EU-Russia framework agreement, insofar as Russia agrees to behave like a genuine partner. I congratulate the German Presidency on the intensive efforts that it is making to that end and I call on our Russian partners to stop putting economic pressure on our Member States.

I should like to stress the importance of Russia's acceding to the WTO in the near future. This accession will send out an important sign of confidence to investors, it will stimulate growth in Russia and also strengthen our trade, and it will force Russia to comply with the rules. However, the Union will only be able to support this development if it sees more of an improvement being made and calm in the relations. Let us not miss this opportunity!

I should also like to stress that the strategic issue of energy talks with Russia is very important. I should like to congratulate Commissioner Piebalgs and the Russian energy minister on the agreement that was reached recently on the re-organisation of these talks. It is our duty, and it is in our common interests, to guarantee the security of supply and of the demand for energy in a context of increased interdependence. This cooperation – we emphasise this point – must be based on the principles laid down in the Energy Charter and, in particular, in the protocol on transit annexed to it.

It is by taking such practical action to help the peoples of Russia and Europe that we will overcome our differences. It is by means of true dialogue that we are going to rise to the challenges of globalisation, the key aspects of which will emerge strengthened. I hope that we are going to strengthen them on a mutual basis.

**Jan Marinus Wiersma, on behalf of the PSE Group.** – (NL) Mr President, is it not, in some way, symbolic that 9 May should be the day on which we debate the relationship between the European Union and Russia? It is a day of historic reflection and, in the European Union, the day on which we celebrate Europe Day. This year, we can more specifically look back on 50 years of European cooperation, and 9 May is the day on which Russia celebrates the end of the Second World War – a war that divided Europe, but was also the motive for European unification. In actual fact, 9 May should be a day on which we reflect on the common experiences that unite us and that, moreover, can also be used as a basis for a common future.

The situation is not as bright, unfortunately. If we look ahead to the half-yearly EU-Russia Summit that is to take place in Samara next Friday, we have to conclude that the prospects for a constructive dialogue – which we all want – are not good. There is, of course, enough to talk about, and we are still persuaded – something that has been underlined by the previous speakers – that close cooperation between the European Union and Russia really is the only viable option for the future, given the shared interests on both sides of our continent.

There are also areas in which we joined forces in recent years and which we would like make a point of mentioning, for example, the importance of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Iran's and North Korea's nuclear ambitions and how to counter these, or cooperation surrounding the Kyoto Protocol.

Turning to the business and economic relations between Russia and the European Union, I often get the feedback that these are developing according to plan. How we further develop our partner relationship, however, remains to some extent uncertain.

There are important areas in which we have not yet managed to make any progress. How, for example, can we guarantee the clear and transparent energy relations that we seek? How do our common values of democracy and respecting human rights fit into the strategic EU-Russia partnership? These are of fundamental importance to us and my group, and cannot be the subject of concession in the dialogue. It is, as I see it, up to the European Union to make clear in Samara where we stand, particularly also in the run-up to fresh negotiations about a future partnership agreement. We, like others, are concerned that this summit will produce less than what we would have expected a while back.

I could list a ream of other things that have also been included in the joint resolution. Something which, not least on behalf of my group, I should like to stress is that the increasing polarisation in the run-up to the Duma elections later this year fills us with fear and concern. It is of key importance for the European Union to stress that we want the elections to be held in a free and democratic context and that it is unacceptable for the opposition parties to be thwarted in the way this is currently being done.

I do not wish to repeat what has been said on the Estonia issue, and, in actual fact, I endorse everything that the previous speakers have said about it. Let us hope that Russia's attitude and behaviour in this matter is not symptomatic, and we must hammer home the fact that a repeat occurrence would be unacceptable to us.

Until 1991, Samara was a closed city, because part of it was located in a strategic zone of the Soviet Union. We hope that this is not indicative of what we can expect from next week's meeting. I think that both partners would benefit from reconsidering our common interest, not least with the EU in mind, without overlooking the values on which our partnership must be based, namely democracy, human rights and respect for other countries.

**Graham Watson**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, on this day in 1945 Europe fêted Russia's День Победы – their Day of Victory – and the victory of freedom, law and human dignity over the forces of Nazi hate. Then, we stood together in common cause. Now, a symbol of that same war that brought us together has locked us in a destabilising dispute.

I know the Commission advises dialogue to end the stand-off between Tallinn and Moscow over the Russian War Statue. However, 'a dialogue is more than two monologues', as the former US Ambassador to the CSCE, Max Kampelman, once said.

When intimidation triumphs over negotiation, it can no longer be business as usual between the European Union and Russia. That is why my group decided this morning to withdraw its support for the motion for a resolution on the EU-Russia summit. The problem is not what it says, but what it does not say. The Russians need a clear signal that enough is enough.

*(DE)* Mr Gloser, Commissioner Verheugen, what you have given us are fine words, no more than soft words, but no action.

*(Applause)*

So let me make you a direct proposal: postpone the summit until Russia is prepared to cement a constructive relationship with the Union and condemn all violence against EU staff and property.

*(Applause)*

We must stand together with Estonia. We must stand together with Poland. Democratic solidarity is more important than bilateral oil and gas deals.

*(Applause)*

And we must not blink first if we are serious about maintaining pragmatic cooperation with Putin's government and garnering consensus on Kosovo's final status.

Of particular concern to Liberals and Democrats is Russia's record on Human Rights. Only when an independent judiciary and freedom of expression and democracy cease to exist solely as sound-bites, and when journalists, opposition parties, and NGOs are able to operate without fear of retribution, will Russia have proved its commitment to establishing a common space of freedom, security and justice, as implied in its membership of the Council of Europe and as it signed up to at the St Petersburg Summit.

The arrest and detention of opposition voices, whether Kasparov or Khodorkovsky, has done nothing to indicate that times are changing. December's elections to the Duma, not to mention next year's presidential elections, will be a litmus test in this regard, as will Russia's actions in Chechnya, where torture and secret detention continue to give cause for concern.

Dialogue requires progress on energy security, where, with Gazprom more about politics than profit, the prospect of further strong-arm tactics lingers. We owe it to Member States like Latvia and Lithuania, which have fallen victim to energy politics, to deliver a response that has more bite than bark. That means insisting that future agreements between the European Union and Russia be linked to the principles of the Energy Charter Treaty and the Kyoto Agreement to ensure a more secure and sustainable future.

Yes, there are some signs of progress in justice and home affairs, where we are negotiating border agreements with the Baltic States, visa-free travel and the readmission of illegal migrants in line with our joint strategy.

However, the fruits of constructive dialogue are too few and far between. Today's 'Victory Day' should remind us that, only 60 years ago, interdependence helped us face down common challenges. It can do so again, provided we have the courage to act!

*(Applause)*

**Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka**, *on behalf of the UEN Group.* – (PL) Mr President, as a sovereign state, Estonia is fully entitled to decide how to view its own history by itself. It is also entitled to move the monument and ashes of Soviet soldiers to a cemetery – where they rightly belong – while showing all the necessary respect for the dead. Russia's hysterical reaction to the sovereign decision of the Estonian Government is a carefully thought-out ploy. On the one hand, the Kremlin wants to see how far it can go in putting pressure on Europe, while on the other hand provoking conflicts such as the ones with Poland, Georgia or Ukraine. The aim is to create the impression of a fortress under siege, and therefore to rally Russians around Putin. The coming summit in Samara will therefore be a test to see how unified Europe is. I have said this from this platform many times before, and I repeat: the European Union must be united, it must speak in one voice, it must stand up for its members at all costs, and it must meet whatever challenges Putin places before it.

**Daniel Cohn-Bendit**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, while I do think Mr Daul was trying to do the right thing, it has to be said that he did, quite simply, miss the mark. The question is how one is to maintain a relationship with a political power such as Russia, which, in essence, understands all relationships as no more than means to an end. Russia may no longer be the Soviet Union, but it does, in many areas, want to have the same policies as did the Soviet Union; it wants to play power politics – not, however, the politics of military power, but of economic power, and one of the means it uses to do this is energy supplies.

That does not mean that we should not enter into political relationships with Russia; what it does mean, and nothing else, is that we should not take things as being other than they actually are. Political relations with Russia through the Commission and the Council are not a dialogue. Dialogue is what happens when people can talk to one another, when they can travel, when there is interchange between civil societies. Political structures do not engage in dialogue; they conduct political negotiations, and the two must not be confused. Mr Watson, I think, chose to adopt the right approach. Is there any chance of us in the European Union, given Russia's present power politics, which is motivated only by Russia's interests – by which I do not mean the interests of the country itself, but those of the power structure, of the Putin system, and of the economic system – being able to send out some signal that that is not the sort of politics that we want?

That is difficult. I do not claim to have any solutions to hand, but what is clear is that, if a former German Chancellor can assert that Russia is a democracy without spot or blemish, that exemplifies the feeble-mindedness that is weakening our policy so much, for we are not in a position to see what sort of system is in control in Russia. We have to have political relations with Russia or with Saudi Arabia. No politician with any sanity would claim that Saudi Arabia was a faultless democracy in which you could end up having only one hand chopped off if you had transgressed in some way, in contrast to having two hands chopped off in other fundamentalist Islamic states.

What that means is that we will be able to achieve a proper relationship with Russia only as and when we, here in this House, have managed to gain a proper appreciation of Russia, of its power politics and of Putin's authoritarian policies. Only then will we be able to do the right thing, and that does not mean that we should not negotiate; what it does mean is that we and the Russians are not on friendly terms.

I do not want political friendship with an authoritarian and dictatorial leadership such as Putin's. We can and must maintain political relations with Russia, but the relationship cannot be one of friendship, with us saying, 'OK, Putin, you can carry on doing the same things to your people.' That is where we have to say 'no!'

*(Applause)*

**Esko Seppänen**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (FI) Mr President, in a way this is a question of trying to square the circle, since some EU Member States want to maintain both good and bad relations with Russia at the same time. Good relations are needed for cheap gas and oil, bad for domestic policy.

Our group wants the EU to negotiate a new partnership agreement with Russia. As there are 27 Member States they will have different interests to look out for in the talks. It is difficult, however, to understand the kind of nationalism which prevents our Community of half a billion people from managing relations with the EU's next-door neighbour in some organised way.

Certain Member States should not throw a tantrum at Russia, trusting in the solidarity of other Member States, if at the same time they prevent other countries from promoting common interests in relation to Russia. Europe must not become polarised, though that is a mood which is perceivable in this House. For our group the joint resolution is acceptable.

**Bastiaan Belder**, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group.* – (NL) Mr President, I should like to address the Commission's recent initiative for a Black Sea Plan which plays an extremely important role in relations with Russia; at the heart of which are hard and soft security risks, in that the Commission's initiative for a Black Sea Synergy deals with the frozen conflicts in Transnistria, South-Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno Karabakh, as well as such topics as arms and drugs smuggling, human trafficking and migration, all of which are important. That means that this initiative on the part of the Commission and Council, which will be the subject of further discussion under the German Presidency, is a good one.

The Commission's initiative, however, could also be seen in the light of European attempts to diversify energy supplies and pipelines. It is reported that the Russian Government is less than enthusiastic about the present Black Sea Plan put forward by the Commission. Incidentally, the German Presidency's document shows – the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* carried an interesting article about this very subject – that Moscow's cooperation is indispensable if Europe's plans are to succeed. In short, Moscow is less than enthusiastic but its cooperation is indispensable. How do the Council and Commission intend to address this geopolitical dilemma in Samara?

**Jean-Marie Le Pen**, *on behalf of the ITS Group.* – (FR) Mr President, it goes without saying that Estonia's rights must be respected. Having said that, the harshest critics of today's Russia are often those who were the most obliging towards the Soviet Union.

For decades, they have denied, on the one hand, the danger that Soviet imperialism represented for peace and for the independence of our nations and, on the other, the totalitarian nature of communism. The communists, of course, but also many Western European leaders, hailed as a benefactor of humanity the founder of that horrendous system: Lenin. Mr Giscard d'Estaing and Mr Chirac went so far as to lay flowers in front of his mausoleum. In contrast, the anti-communists who showed their solidarity with the peoples of Europe and the East were demonised. This obligingness, I am sorry to say, did not disappear with the USSR. A large number of our fellow Members, such as Mr Cohn-Bendit, would therefore like to ban the people of Poland from 'de-Communising' their country.

Today, Russia is a free nation and no less democratic than the Europe of Brussels, which is seeking to impose a constitutional text that was rejected in 2005 by the Netherlands and France, by the electorate. On the other hand, unlike the people of Turkey whom the same Europe of Brussels wants to integrate into the Union, Russians are a great European nation that is exposed to the threats hanging over all the nations of Europe: immigration and falling birth rates, Islamism and globalisation. We can rise to these challenges, provided that we create a different Europe, the great Europe of the nations, founded on the principle of national sovereignty, extending from Brest to Vladivostok.

Almost 18 years ago, the destruction of the Iron Curtain represented the first stage in the reunification of our continent. Another gap must be filled: that which, for more than a thousand years, on both sides of the line of Theodosius, has separated the heirs of Saint Benedict in the West from those of Saint Cyril in the East.

**Gunnar Hökmark (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, there is no better way to celebrate 9 May than to make it very clear that the European Union stands up for each one of its members when they are threatened and harassed.

This must be a leading theme when we are discussing the upcoming Summit. There is no other way, because Estonia was one of the leading countries in the transformation of the old Europe into the new, peaceful, democratic Europe. We all owe them gratitude for that. But it is not only that, because their freedom and independence is today an indivisible part of our freedom and independence. Without their independence, we have no independence. That must also be a leading theme when we discuss European-Russian relations.

The upcoming Summit is important, but there are four things that the European Union must secure. The first is an understanding that if you do not respect Estonia, you do not respect the European Union, and that erodes all sorts of agreements that we can achieve. There must be a mutual understanding in all sorts of discussions. Otherwise, the goals we can achieve will not be worth the paper they are written on.

Secondly, you cannot threaten and harass one of the Member States and at the same time develop relations with others. You cannot reach agreements on energy, trade and other areas if they do not relate to all the Member States with equal rights and equal opportunities. We must ensure that Russia has no belief at all, and no room for believing, that it can divide us in this sense by providing energy to one country while harassing another.

Thirdly, the discussion about Russia and Estonia is not about Estonia. It is about the political developments in Russia. We need to secure progress in Russia in order to secure progress in the relations between the European Union and Russia. If we do not defend our independence, we will all lose a part of it.

**Reino Paasilinna (PSE).** – *(FI)* Mr President, I understand that the Estonia debate is to take place in the next part-session in Strasbourg. I would therefore like to focus on the economic issues on the agenda at Samara.

Firstly, Russia's objective is to go from being a seller of raw materials to a buyer of processed products. First of all, modernisation of the energy sector needs to be invested in, and Russia cannot do that alone: it needs our help. Secondly, the export industry needs promoting to international level, and, again, it will need our help for that too. Furthermore, the infrastructure has to be modernised, which is also an area in which we are the natural partners.

These are Russia's objectives, then, but it will not achieve them quickly enough without the European Union: it will, instead, lag behind even further in international development. Moreover, we want Russia to embrace our common values, the rule of law and democracy. That is what we are asking for, and Russia needs a wealthy buyer, which is us. We need energy. Mutual dependence has grown, not diminished.

I do not believe that Russia's modernisation will succeed without civil society and evolving democracy. Why would it not? Because modern technology and a society driven by information technology require a good deal of creativity, and creativity does not work well if the political climate is problematic or under a dictatorship.



Creativity, democracy and a free media are vital for the development of a modern society, which is precisely what Russia wants. I therefore suggest that this set of objectives should be made very clear in our relations and at Samara too, where Commissioner Verheugen is travelling to, hopefully with the message that the development which Russia wants to see is consistent with our objectives and that it is vital for that development to succeed.

**Toomas Savi (ALDE).** – *(ET)* I should like to draw your attention to Russia's behaviour towards the European Union in recent years. What took place in Estonia, that is to say the moving of the Bronze Soldier and the exhumation and reburial of the remains of 12 fallen soldiers, was in keeping with the Geneva Conventions and was an internal matter for Estonia.

The Russian Federation has responded to this with a propaganda war using cyber attacks and trade restrictions. Statements by Russian politicians have provoked violence both in Tallinn and near the Estonian Embassy in Moscow, culminating in the physical assault on our ambassador.

The demand made by the delegation from the Russian Duma that visited Estonia, namely that the Estonian Government should resign, is particularly worrying. Such behaviour is yet another sign of Russia's Europhobic foreign policy, expressed in President Putin's view that the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 20th century was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe.

In his Munich speech, Putin referred to Russia's attempts, notwithstanding the European Union, to establish itself as a superpower, especially in the context of relations with the new Member States.

Mr President, if an EU–Russia summit is indeed held in Samara on 18 May, the European Union must represent the interests of all of its Member States there, that is to say speak with one voice.

**Inese Vaidere (UEN).** – *(LV)* Ladies and gentlemen, sixty-two years ago at this time Europe was rejoicing, freed from Nazi occupation, but for the three Baltic States at the same time a further 50-year period of Soviet occupation began, and its effects are still being felt today.

In Russia, the successor to the Soviet Union's rights and duties, democracy is now being constantly squeezed out. Violations of civil rights and the suppression of freedom of speech are becoming an everyday occurrence. Russia's domestic policy is becoming ever more aggressive. The same is happening with Russian foreign policy, especially with regard to those states that it has long wished to consider as parts of its empire. Confirmation of this comes from the visit by a delegation from the Russian Duma to Estonia, demanding the resignation of Estonia's government, and by the Russian security forces, with whose blessing the Estonian embassy was surrounded and attacked. It is a fact that in Estonia there are people involved in the activities and actions of the so-called Pan-European Russian party who are active opponents of the independence of the Baltic States. These are chauvinists who refer to themselves as minorities and anti-Fascists, thus devaluing this word. This fact arouses suspicion concerning this party's real goals and its role in stirring up disorder.

The Russian-inspired situation in Estonia is a test: can the European Union protect its Member State? If the European institutions, the EU Presidency and Member State governments do not react quickly and decisively enough, and that includes reminding Russia of the need to acknowledge the facts of the occupation of the Baltic States, and if they are not able to speak with one voice, we can expect a repetition of events of this kind in other states too. Thank you.

**Bart Staes (Verts/ALE).** – *(NL)* Mr President, as a Member and former chairman of the Delegation for relations with Russia, I bemoan the weak, lacklustre and at times spineless attitude which the European Union has displayed towards Russian leaders. Although we are in favour of human or international rights, more freedom of press, the freedom of association and assembly, we very often look the other way, or we baulk at tough measures. How mild is the Council's and Commission's criticism of violence against the *Another Russia* protests in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Whether this is set to change during this summit is a matter of doubt.

Take Chechnya, for example. The precarious situation in that region is obviously a topic of discussion in the resolution on which we will be voting tomorrow, but we fail to plead in favour of, and commit to, a real peace process and a serious dialogue with all elements in Chechen society, including therefore the so-called rebels.

Under no circumstances can the mob that surround a criminal and corrupt figurehead such as Kadirov be recognised as legal representatives of the Chechen people. One of the tasks of the President-in-Office of the Council and Commissioner during the summit in Samara is to raise issues of this kind.

### IN THE CHAIR: MR DOS SANTOS

*Vice-President*

**Vladimír Remek (GUE/NGL).** – (CS) Ladies and gentlemen, there is surely no dispute that relations between the EU and Russia should move forward to the benefit of both sides. It would thus be good to cultivate these relations further, on the basis of carefully considered steps taken without emotion and without recklessness.

If we react hastily to any message from Russia aimed principally at the national political scene, we will be showing neither common sense nor strength, but rather our own insecurity and weakness.

Negotiating with a partner means not only sitting at the negotiating table, but also holding meaningful dialogue. Such negotiations are hardly made easier by demands being made on the other partner before attempts are made to resolve genuine problems sensibly.

For example, in the case of resolving – or rather not resolving – the issue of what are referred to as non-citizens in some EU Member States, we do not adopt such an uncompromising approach as we do when we put pressure on Russia. I feel that we should finally build relations with Russia on firm foundations, without prejudice and unburdened by the past.

**Georgios Karatzaferis (IND/DEM).** – (EL) Mr President, I have listened to all the speakers very carefully. What is happening in Estonia is indeed wrong and good for us that we are defending Estonia.

Why do we not demonstrate the same sensitivity about what is happening in Cyprus? There too an autocratic state staged an invasion and no one says a word. A few days ago, the socialists even called for the status of the invaders to be upgraded. The same thing is happening with China and Taiwan. Taiwan cannot join the World Health Organisation and get the medicines it needs. There again we did not react. The United States of America did the same thing when it went into Iraq without asking us and then faced us with the serious dilemma of ‘whoever is not with us is against us’. Again we said nothing to this fascist approach on the part of President Bush and when some of the leaders of Europe distanced themselves from the invasion, I would remind you of the response they got once Mr Bush had exerted his influence. Perhaps I should remind you of President Chirac or talk about the German Chancellor? Why do we take such a one-sided view of things?

How will Russia be satisfied, when we allow American rockets to be located on its borders? Will they not be suspicious? As we say in Greece, get on well with your neighbour so that he will get on well with you. Are we doing the right thing or are we – for the moment at least – simply catering to America’s desires? America wants Russia to be its enemy and wants to force us to be its enemy. No, we must enter into dialogue, respect the state, respect the government, respect the people of that country. I think that everything else diverges from democracy.

**Dumitru Gheorghe Mircea Coșea (ITS).** – Fără îndoială, relația cu Federația Rusă nu poate să nu aibă în vedere faptul că 60% din exporturile ruse de petrol și 50% din exporturile ruse de gaze ajung în Uniunea Europeană. În pofida acestei situații, țin să subliniez necesitatea eliminării din politica Uniunii și mai ales din politica unor state membre a concepției conform căreia Europa este condamnată să fie dependentă de Rusia și obligată, ca, în schimbul aprovizionării cu energie, să accepte unele compromisuri sau cedări în fața unor tendințe hegemonice ale Rusiei, în exterior, sau a încălcării unor drepturi democratice în interior.

Am convingerea că Uniunea Europeană are capacitatea tehnică și de inovație pentru a micșora din ce în ce mai mult nivelul aprovizionării din Rusia. De aceea, relația de energie nu trebuie să depășească limitele cadrului relațiilor comerciale și de cooperare tehnică. În niciun caz ea nu trebuie să fie privită ca un argument politic în acceptarea de către Uniune a încălcării de către Rusia a unor principii și valori europene dedicate libertății, democrației și toleranței.

În relația cu Rusia, nu trebuie uitat că Europa nu are petrol, dar are principii iar principiile nu se schimbă niciodată pe petrol.

**Charles Tannock (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, EU-Russia relations ahead of the forthcoming summit are at a critical juncture: we are facing a serious crisis over the relocation of the Soviet Memorial Statue in Tallinn.

Coming from the UK, a country that has mercifully never had to face Soviet hegemony directly, it is easy for me to question the wisdom of the political decision to relocate the statue, and with it the fallen Russian soldiers, to a military cemetery. Nevertheless, it is clearly a sovereign right of the Estonian Government and was conducted lawfully under international law. It is neither acceptable for Russia to call for the resignation of the Estonian Government nor for it to foment unrest – through the extremist nationalist grouping *Nashi* – against the Estonian mission in Moscow. I personally protested to the Deputy Foreign Minister when I was in Moscow a few weeks ago about the same treatment meted out to the British Ambassador, Anthony Brenton, who was harassed for attending the Kasparov rally.

Russia must now wake up to the new geopolitical reality that the so-called ‘near abroad’, where it calls the shots, no longer exists. It must now respect the sovereignty of these new countries, like Estonia, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, etc.

I consider myself a friend of Russia and, particularly, its very rich culture, and believe the EU needs a strong, united Russia, as it needs us, but also a Russia that upholds its international obligations, as a member of the OSCE and of the Council of Europe, to respect democracy and human rights, particularly in Chechnya and over press freedom. Bullying its neighbours is not helpful, particularly when they can now call on the support of an EU and NATO firmly resolved to show strong solidarity over issues like the ban on meat from Poland and the Estonia statue issue we are discussing today.

We need Russia, not only as a reliable trading partner for its oil and gas, but also for its support in containing nuclear proliferation by Iran and North Korea in the Security Council, restarting the Arab-Israeli peace process, finding acceptable solutions to the frozen conflicts from Transnistria and Georgia to Nagorno-Karabakh and containing the despotic regime in Belarus. We also need Russia to sign up to an emissions limitation strategy as a signatory of Kyoto, as we all face the common perils of global warming, and Russia, of course, has a large Arctic presence that would be seriously affected by global warming.

We support Russia’s desire to join the WTO, as we believe making it subject to a rules-based system of multilateral trade will enable complaints to be lodged if it attempts again to arbitrarily impose trade bans, as it did on the issue of the wine ban against Moldova and the mineral water ban on Georgia.

I am sensitive to Russian worries; indeed, they are almost paranoid over their demographic population crisis in future – they are losing some 700 000 citizens every year – and many EU Member States also share the same future challenge. However, I also believe strongly that allowing Russia to probe our weaknesses by splitting the individual EU Member States is not in any of our long-term interests.

**Andres Tarand (PSE).** – (*ET*) I would like to speak briefly about Article 4 of the resolution. Some Members have referred to the moving of a statue in Tallinn as an act of provocation against Russia. I must state that it was indeed an act of provocation, but from the Russian side. I will briefly list the evidence.

Firstly, Russia’s preparations began five years ago, although it was one year ago that the celebration of Russian Victory in World War II Day on 9 May at the Tallinn statue was transformed into an event involving vodka drinking and the waving of the Soviet flag, and this in order to provoke scuffles, which indeed to some extent took place. Until then, the statue had stood there for decades without causing any problems, and if our neighbouring country had not initiated acts of provocation near the monument, it would most likely still occupy the same place now.

Secondly, the demonstrations of 26th and 27th April were organised by employees of the Russian Embassy in Tallinn. Over the past few months, numerous meetings have been documented in which the organisers of the recent demonstrations met with employees of the Russian Embassy, apparently in order to obtain directions from professionals in that sphere for sowing instability.

Thirdly, the demonstrations by youths in front of the Estonian Embassy in Moscow were organised and equipped directly by the Kremlin. Russia has deliberately ignored the Vienna Convention and shown no desire to protect Estonian diplomats in Moscow.

Fourthly, the trails from numerous cyber attacks against Estonian information systems led straight to the Kremlin and Russian governmental institutions.

Fifthly, economic sanctions were initiated against Estonia. Whereas until now Russia has exported 25% of its oil using the Estonian railways and ports, last week it transpired that the railway line between Russia and Estonia would need unforeseen repairs. This transparent excuse is naturally a cover for the desire to influence Estonia economically. Such a sanction could also have a direct influence on the European Union's energy supply. Let us also ask in whose interests it was to stop the St. Petersburg-Tallinn train from running.

Finally, allow me to thank all of Estonia's many supporters.

**Alexander Lambsdorff (ALDE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, Commissioner Verheugen just described Russia as our number one strategic partner in Europe, but any strategic partnership is conditional upon the presence of common interests, goals and values, which, I believe, are distinctly conspicuous by their absence in this instance. What, in any case, does a strategic partnership mean to the Russians if such conditions are attached to it? Do the Russians have any kind of conception of what a constructive strategic partnership with the European Union actually is, considering the way they are behaving towards Estonia, and have already done in Kosovo and Moldova? What kind of constructive foreign policy agenda do the Russians have?

You, Commissioner, went on to demand of a strategic partner of the EU an unambiguous commitment to democracy and human rights and the constant effort to make them a reality. Did you not see the pictures of the demonstrators in Moscow and St Petersburg? You are also having talks with the Russians about the human rights dialogue, which has now been hived off from the main summit on the grounds that it would be too difficult and would put too much of a strain on the ordinary summit agenda if one were to talk with the Russians about human rights there.

You say, Commissioner, that we want Russia to be a strong partner. Now, I am no less a friend of Russia than Mr Tannock, and I want Russia to be strong, but strong in the true sense of the word, a Russia that respects human rights, the rights of minorities, the right of assembly, the freedom of the press, rather than a Potemkin Russia whose strength is founded on oil and authoritarianism. If we want to take seriously the underpinning of European foreign policy by certain values, then the least we must do is to bring together the two summits – that is to say, the real summit between the EU and Russia and the human rights dialogue between the two, which has hitherto always taken place, shamefully hidden away, a fortnight before the summit proper.

I would like to see dialogue. So would the Russian opposition, who were with us in this House last week; they too would like dialogue between the EU and Russia, and I hope that such a dialogue will bear fruit, but past experience tends to make me sceptical. I will conclude by saying how glad I am that we are having this debate in Brussels rather than in Strasbourg.

**Gintaras Didžiokas (UEN).** – *(LT)* When will the European Union finally understand or recognise that the Polish meat (exports to Russia) issue is not a veterinary or trade issue, and that it is a purely political issue? Likewise, the inspired conflict in Estonia is not an issue about moving monuments. All of these are just political tools being used to try to fracture European Union solidarity. To some countries we promise a bonbon in the form of some economic benefit, while we create a villain of other countries – accusing them of obstructing the development of partnerships. The aim is to weaken the European Union.

When will European Union politicians understand what Russia is really doing? One way to resist such intrusive tactics is to speak unequivocally with one voice. We need to demonstrate real European Union solidarity, not just pay lip-service to it. We need to clearly tell Russia that the European Union will not allow its unity to be manipulated, that the European Union will not betray its ideals and that Russia is making a big mistake in trying to get it to do so. We seek the partnership that is civilised and based on bilateral respect, democracy and the rule of law.

**Angelika Beer (Verts/ALE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to explain with reference to three points why my group will not be supporting the joint motion for a resolution that is to be voted on tomorrow. We shall be tabling the relevant amendments. As the spokesperson on security policy for my group, the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, I should like to state our view

that it is high time there was some straight talking. After all, we are not talking about a strategic partnership, but at best of agreeing and deepening a pragmatic partnership.

Russia's blocking of a peaceful settlement for Kosovo without good cause in these difficult times by threatening to use its veto in the United Nations Security Council is just as unacceptable as its threatened withdrawal from the CSCE treaty, an important element of arms control and disarmament in Europe.

I should like to raise a point about which I am extremely concerned, and which I expect the Council and the Commission to endeavour to clarify. If the eyewitness accounts, the written reports by Amnesty International and the voices of others working locally – in Darfur, that is – are to be believed, in 2005 alone, Russia supplied EUR 15.4 billion worth of weapons of war to Sudan. According to eyewitness accounts, some of these weapons are being used in Darfur.

We may be at a loss as to how to stop the genocide in Darfur, but we have to make every effort to intensify dialogue and negotiations, to strengthen human rights and put an end to the genocide, and to ensure that individual Member States can no longer assert their oil interests. I would appeal to us all not to permit this, and to show Russia the red card in this regard. This situation is unacceptable.

**Gerard Batten (IND/DEM).** – Mr President, I heard a comment earlier that Russia is a leading strategic partner, but really, should it be? Russia is a gangster state heading for complete dictatorship. Russia has nothing much of international value but its energy resources and it is skilfully using those resources to engineer its resurgence as a world power. Russia is using those energy supplies to further its international geopolitical ambitions by locking the West into those supplies and by establishing international supplier alliances with states unfriendly to the West.

The democratic, energy-hungry West is sleepwalking into a Russian trap baited with energy supplies. Look at what President Putin said in 2003 to *Novaya Gazeta*: 'The European Commission had better forget about its illusions. As far as gas is concerned, they will have to deal with the Russian State'. We should be very concerned about what kind of state that is. It is a state where the security services have transformed themselves into a gangster class that rules unrestrained; a state where over 300 journalists have been murdered to discourage those who remain from reporting the truth. It is a state where Russian citizens can murder a critical British citizen on British soil and remain protected in Russia without fear of justice.

The European fly should not accept any invitations into the Russian spider's parlour. The United Kingdom should ensure its own independent energy supplies by further investment in nuclear energy without delay.

**Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, there is a real need for constructive engagement with Russia, but not at any price, nor at the price of EU or Member State sovereignty. We must move beyond broad cooperation schemes and pure rhetoric. Above all, we should avoid complacency and creating false appearances. We should speak the truth, and the truth is that the EU and its Member States cannot focus solely on economic interests, disregarding the worsening situation in Russia with respect to democracy and human rights, and disregarding Russia's discriminatory policies against its neighbours, including several Member States.

We all wish to see Russia become democratic. Russia is our genuine partner. We have to build trust, but trust based on complying with the values and obligations we sign up to. Above all, Russia must realise that its efforts to play some Member States of the European Union against others are totally counterproductive. The policy of dividing the EU will not work. The Union is founded on the principle of solidarity. Solidarity means 'one for all and all for one'. Today the 'one' is Estonia. Russia's behaviour towards Estonia is one of a series of unacceptable practices employed by Russia, and there may be more to come. The Union stands behind and with Estonia. The Council and the Commission should be clearer, more vocal and more active.

Make no mistake about it: if one Member State is being treated in a way that is contrary to all the rules of the international community in whatever area – be it trade, energy or political discrimination – our Union as a whole will intervene on its behalf. Our Parliament is the guardian of this solidarity. This is a test not only for the Union as a political project, but also for the common foreign and security policy, and we are going to pass that test.

If Russia wants to be treated as an important player and a great nation rooted in Europe, it must learn to fulfil all its international obligations stemming from Council of Europe membership, being a signatory to the Energy Charter, binding disarmament agreements or eventual – and there is a question mark here – World Trade Organisation membership duties. If we want to develop fruitful and meaningful cooperation with Russia – and we do – we have to open a new era with a new Russia and not go back to the Cold War era of Soviet Union times.

**Justas Vincas Paleckis (PSE).** – *(LT)* Even in the twenty-first century, paper is still the fundamental element in the building of bridges between nations. The lack of this element, and the difficulties in drafting a new EU-Russia partnership and cooperation document, are, alas, a reflection of this gloomy reality. From Moscow we hear statements that such an agreement is basically unnecessary. The contrived crisis in Estonian-Russian relations, and therefore in EU-Russia relations, bears witness to an important lack of understanding that all the European Union Member States are both equal and equally sovereign. Nonetheless, dialogue is now all the more necessary, because the alternative is a return to the still-not-overgrown trenches of the Cold War. Such an option would not be helpful to anyone in today's already unstable world. The difficult talks in Samara should be a step forward toward a clearer and franker statement of positions and the formulation of political rules of play that correspond to the new realities.

The document we are considering correctly stresses that a new agreement would be very important for deepening economic cooperation and strengthening security and stability in Europe. Strategic partnership with Russia remains a European Union goal, as emphasised in the draft resolution. However, both parties need to seek this goal by strengthening human rights, democracy and free speech, and renouncing great-power and imperial ambitions.

**Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert (ALDE).** – *(NL)* Mr President, 'Moscow is being obstructive because it can afford to be' was the headline of a recent article in a well-known Dutch newspaper, and it is true: we are being messed about! During our recent visit in Moscow, I was reminded of the fact that while Europe has its truth, the Russians deliver their own truth, bolstered, among others, by the Union's incapacity to speak clearly with one voice, as a result of which we come across as diffident and even divided.

We appear to be gradually casting aside the role as an example which we in the EU could have. Nobody is doing that for us; we are doing it entirely on our own. Mr Putin, backed by his country's fast growing economy, is cashing in on this. He turns the EU into a caricature when it suits him. Russia is once again a force to be reckoned with, and the EU should know it. Russia is being provocative.

The list of controversial issues, which have all been mentioned, is growing, and includes the American plans for a rocket shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, Mr Putin's announcement of his intention to suspend the disarmament treaty, major international issues such as Kosovo, but also the Middle East and Sudan, energy policy as a geopolitical instrument, the democratic deficit, the violation of human rights, Chechnya, and of course we should not forget the crisis in Estonia and the import ban on Polish meat. Finally, there is sovereignty of third countries. The list is growing, and so is the level of distrust.

Whilst the wishes and expectations are varied, increasing mutual dependence and Russia's closeness turn the setting of priorities into a necessity. It is of crucial importance in this respect – and this is at the same time an express appeal to the Council President – for the EU to retain its internal unanimity. We should not give Russia the opportunity to turn the EU into a caricature. We should put our own house in order. Only then can the Union adopt effective and firm policy in respect of that country.

**Mirosław Mariusz Piotrowski (UEN).** – *(PL)* Mr President, it is clear to all of us today the furore Russia is raising regarding the embargo on Polish meat exports is purely political in nature. There is no doubt that the Polish side has been fulfilling all the sanitary requirements.

The Russian Government has no intention of compromising, but is methodically increasing the divisions within the European Union. Furthermore, it has taken the liberty of interfering in the internal affairs of Estonia, a sovereign state which is a member of the EU. Russia is also applying such methods against other neighbours that used to be Soviet satellites.

Dialogue and negotiation are important values. But in the present circumstances, a mandate for negotiation at the European Union-Russia summit would signify not just a return to the political practices of the cold war, but would set a dangerous precedent for the future.

**Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE-DE).** – *(NL)* Mr President, it is absolutely vital for the European Union to make headway and deepen relations with Russia. Good partnership, however, also means that problems and differences can be discussed out in the open and that partners are prepared to learn from this in order to keep their relationship viable. In a relationship, the channels of communication should be kept open at all times. I hope, for our sake, that the negotiations about a new partnership agreement can start soon – a fresh agreement, which, whilst it should be based on experience of the past decade, must also clear the path for a fresh dialogue in the next few years.

We have to stop talking in statements, and instead, hold talks in a structured dialogue, without – whatever else we do – avoiding problems in the process. Russia is not short of them as it is; the freedom of the media, the way in which democracy is working, the way in which rules for elections and being elected are laid down, the position of NGOs as well as the human rights situation – and I would refer the House to the Council of Europe's report on Chechnya – all these things should be on the agenda.

Internationally, too, Europe and Russia need each other; Kosovo is a case in point. Russia cannot simply issue a veto; it is not in the interests of the region. We also need each other, though, when it comes to dealing with Iran and North Korea.

Finally, I should like to address the tension between Estonia and Russia, for tension is not only running high in both countries, but now, not least thanks to Russia's reaction, has also become a European problem. The list of problems between the Baltic states and Russia is still getting longer. Problems are there to be solved, but what is entirely lacking is any sense of caution and tact in dealing with each other.

I am all for an active policy on Eastern Europe, but this policy cannot be adopted unless we in the EU are in agreement with it. That means, then, that the Baltic Member States too must support it too, so it is unacceptable that we, as a European Union, should accept action in the shape of penal sanctions directed against a member of our family. It is certainly not in our interest, or in Russia's interest, to let tension run high.

It is now up to the European Union to finally make a move. The Council and Commission must join with Parliament in spelling out with one voice that whilst the European Union repudiates threats to EU Members, we are also prepared, where possible, to commit to improving the dialogue and setting up constructive cooperation. The German Presidency has set the right tone for this, and I think that the summit provides a good opportunity to develop this further.

**Józef Pinior (PSE).** – *(PL)* Mr President, today's plenary session is taking place on the anniversary of the end of World War II. As a Pole, I would like to remember all the Soviet soldiers who perished during the war fighting fascism. We all remember their self-sacrifice, we all remember those simple soldiers, those grey infantrymen, as Bulat Okudzhava so beautifully described them in his song.

We in the European Union are united by a desire for good relations with Russia. These good relations are based on economic, strategic and geopolitical necessity. At the same time, Russia is not an easy partner for the European Union. Obviously, we cannot and will not tolerate any expressions of Russian neo-imperialist policy of the type Russia has shown in recent days towards Estonia. For this reason we must give our full support and show complete solidarity with the Estonian Government and the people of Estonia in the coming days.

Commissioner, Minister, I would like to remind you of the letter Amnesty International wrote to the leaders of the European Union before the Samara meeting drawing their attention to need to bring up with President Putin human rights violations such as restrictions on freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and in particular press freedom, as well as the growing number of journalists being killed in Russia. These are problems which our leaders have to put directly before the Russian Government at the Samara summit.

**Guntars Krasts (UEN).** – *(LV)* The European Union sees Russia as a good long-term partner, but is it using its influence to encourage Russia to become a democratic and predictable neighbour? Since Russia acquired the status of a big energy player, its domestic and foreign policy is taking on increasingly unattractive forms. The European Union, however, confronted with Russia's new policies, is not functioning as a united force but as individual Member States, and in situations of conflict with Russia, EU Member States are directed to resolve the conflicts bilaterally. The most recent example of this is Russia's gross interference in the internal affairs of the European Union Member State of Estonia, even

extending to demands for Estonia's democratically elected parliament and government to resign. The European Union did not let the opportunity pass to remain silent, in contrast, for instance, to the US president and senate, who expressed strong support for Estonia. The European Union Presidency is trying to make the conflict into an issue to be resolved bilaterally between Estonia and Russia. Russia may be allowed to divide the European Union into small and large states, new and old states, partner states and ungrateful states across the border. The next summit meeting between the European Union and Russia will, in many aspects, be a significant test of the European Union's ability to work as a union. Thank you.

**József Szájer (PPE-DE).** – (HU) Russia is a European country, with which we share a common culture and social, cultural and intellectual roots that go back more than 1 000 years. The European Union needs a democratic Russia. What the European Union needs is a democratic Russia. The main condition for a partnership, however, must be democracy and the rule of law, and unfailing respect for the principles of equal rights.

This is irreconcilable with what Russia is currently doing to our Estonian brethren. It is irreconcilable with this interference in Estonia's own affairs in violation of international norms and law. Estonia is the Union – and the Union is Estonia. This is not simply the affair of one country, but of the entire Union. This is not simply a question of solidarity, but of sovereignty.

Ladies and gentlemen, is it not absurd that the Union is now preparing for a high-level summit meeting with the leaders of such a country and is talking about a relationship of balanced partnership, seeks to relax visa requirements and supports the membership in the World Trade Organization of a country that behaves in this way with one of the EU Member States, as if it could interfere with impunity in its internal affairs. This is unacceptable and, I have to say, a matter of principle, a matter of principle on which we cannot compromise.

Therefore I call upon, I urge the European Commission and the Council to halt preparations for the EU-Russia summit until Russia has stopped applying pressure on Estonia. The Union must send a clear message. So far and no further.

**Monika Beňová (PSE).** – (SK) In 1945 we were liberated by the Red Army. I believe that we owe a certain respect and gratitude in return.

The problems, however, began when parts of that Army stayed on in our countries, including my own, under all sorts of noble pretexts such as 'economic aid' or 'protection', and those pretexts eventually ended in our countries being fenced off by barbed wire and our economies lagging so far behind that in the early 1990s we had to start building them up from scratch.

The reason why I am making this brief historical reference is that when we speak today of the EU-Russian summit we tend to use many noble phrases; we need, however, to keep in mind that the European Union's gains over the past 10 years have been Russia's losses over the same period. Russia is keenly aware of this and not at all pleased about it. If we are to speak about an equal partnership with Russia, we would be well advised to see to it that the partnership is genuinely equal and not let ourselves be misled by fine phrases as the generations before us were 62 years ago.

**Wojciech Roszkowski (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, relations between the EU and Russia have become more difficult since Russia reverted to its old imperial policy, best illustrated by the recent events in Estonia. The sovereign government in Estonia has a right, indeed a duty, to remove traces of Soviet oppression, and Russia's response puts that country in a poor light.

The Kremlin has also stoked up a smear campaign against Poland, and unfortunately in Strasbourg some members of this House have succumbed to it. Although Poland has bent over backwards to show its good will, Russia has not raised the ban on Polish meat imports, but is actually widening the embargo.

President Putin even wants to issue a decree protecting the sites of monuments outside Russia. Does this mean that Russian law will extend to the territory of the European Union? This debate has shown that at the Samara summit the European Union must be much more decisive, particularly when it comes to standing up for the interests of all, and not just a few, Member States.

**Christopher Beazley (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I have two questions for Minister Gloser in his reply to this debate.



It is quite clear that, at the Summit in Samara, on the assumption it goes ahead, the Council, the Presidency – his colleagues – and the Federal Chancellor will also have to reflect the views expressed in this Parliament. It quite clearly cannot be ‘business as usual’ with President Putin’s Russia. Could he explain in his reply how the Summit will reflect our concern and our refusal to agree that Estonia is the cause of this crisis?

We have been told that we must not escalate the crisis, we must de-escalate it. But we, the EU, did not begin this crisis. If you look at the transcript of the film of the so-called ‘riots’ in Tallinn, you see pictures of desultory groups of youths smashing windows and stealing luxury goods. What on earth has that got to do with respect for the millions of Russian dead in the Second World War? We simply cannot accept the version which President Putin is putting out, as opposed to his predecessors, Yeltsin and Gorbachev, who began the reform movement within Russia.

So, Minister, in your reply could you please say what specific *démarches* the Presidency would take during the Summit to underline the fact that, without mutual understanding, there can be no successful negotiations? It is not a question of Estonia, as has been said before: Latvia has been attacked by President Putin, as have the Czech Republic, Poland and indeed my own country’s Ambassador. So, could we have some specifics as to how the Summit will differ because of the way the Russian Government has presented this problem?

**Marianne Mikko (PSE).** – *(ET)* The attack by hackers based in Russia on the IT infrastructure of a European Union Member State, Estonia, has lasted for nearly two weeks. This cyber attack means that access to Estonian media web pages has been either completely obstructed or seriously hampered. The hackers also sought to block the web pages of Estonia’s ministries. On 3rd May, the server for the Prime Minister’s office received 90 000 queries in one hour. Estonia was able to fend off the attack, but Russia’s toleration of the event is an act of aggression that demands a response.

The Russian secret services have used information blackout as a tool for the manipulation of the masses ever since the Cold War. In the 21st century, a situation in which it is impossible to communicate with a country via the Internet is more serious than the breaking of a window at that country’s embassy in Moscow. I welcome the fact that a strongly worded article supporting Estonia has been added to our resolution.

The topic of cyberspace security must definitely be discussed with Russia at the Samara Summit. Our strategy must be to avoid a cyber war with our strategic partner, Russia. The European Union must treat a cyber attack against one Member State as an attack against the entire European Union. This must be made very clear to the Russians.

**Jan Tadeusz Masiel (UEN).** – *(PL)* Mr President, let the EU-Russia summit be an occasion for improving our relations, and let it also be an occasion for deeper integration within the EU by showing solidarity with Estonia and Poland. We must give Russia credit where it is due and praise it for its successes but criticise it for injustice. We must not be afraid to stand up to Russia when the truth is on our side. We are highly critical of the Belarussian Government, when in fact the Russian Government is actually not that different. Russia must acknowledge the occupation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and, at a different level, of all countries in the Soviet bloc. I call upon those in charge of the negotiations at the summit to finally let Russia know that Poland is a European Union Member State just as much as Germany or Britain are.

And finally, Commissioner, I would like to thank you for all your efforts, but more decisiveness is needed. Russia must promptly lift the Polish meat embargo and not gradually over time. Please inform President Putin of the will of this House.

**President.** I have received six motions for a resolution<sup>(1)</sup> in accordance with Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow at 11 a.m.

**Written Statements (Article 142)**

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(1) See Minutes.

**Athanasios Pafilis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL)** The debate on events in Estonia on 9 May, the day of the anti-fascist victory, not only disrespects the memory of the tens of millions of people who sacrificed their lives to crush fascism. It is not merely an effort to falsify and distort history. It is not what is the now familiar anti-communist invective of the servants of capitalist barbarism.

It is a conscious policy to support the revival of fascism in the Baltic and other states of Europe with the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats, the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, the neo-liberals and the Greens all going along with the far-right group.

In a uniform tirade, right-wingers, social democrats, Greens and Le Pen launched a vitriolic anticommunist attack on the Soviet Union and the heroic Red Army. Together they expressed their solidarity with the Estonian Government which, for years now, has been replacing the fascists by condemning communists and anti-fascists.

Together they demonstrated what is historical and political record: that fascism is a pure child of capitalism. In this debate it was also expressed formally, thereby revealing the nature of the EU as a union of the interests of capital.

Moreover, fascism constitutes the same power as capital, without a parliamentary cloak.

We would point out that the more the people doubt, condemn, resist and fight against imperialist barbarity, the more anticommunism will increase.

History has proven that those who temporarily appear to be very strong were crushed by the grassroots fight.

9 May 1945 will always be just such a symbolic date.

**Alexander Stubb (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FI)** The row over the statue cannot be ignored.

Today it was Europe Day. We are celebrating the European Union and the peace process which European integration has brought with it.

There are, however, two sides to this day. For the Russians it is a celebration of victory in the Second World War. The moved statue is a symbol of this. For many of the present EU Member States, however, the celebration of victory, and the statue in Tallinn, symbolise the start of a long period of oppression in the Soviet Union.

It is no wonder, then, that they wanted to remove the statue in Tallinn. You do not need to be a fascist to want to move a symbol of oppression which is still fresh in the mind.

This is no longer a matter of Estonia's internal affairs. Russia, and the stance it has taken with its 'next-door neighbour policy' have made the row over the statue a matter for the EU.

We talk a lot about solidarity. It would be shameful of us to appeal to the agenda and put the matter off until the Strasbourg part-session. The rules have been made for us, not us for the rules. If we cannot deal with this right away because of the rules, I want the rules changed.

We can make speeches about solidarity, but now it is time for action: 'Estlands sak är vår sak!'

### **13. EU strategy for reform in the Arab world (debate)**

**President.** The next item is the report by Mr Rocard on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on EU strategy for reform in the Arab world (2006/2172(INI)) (A6-0127/2007).

**Michel Rocard (PSE), rapporteur. – (FR)** Mr President, I should like to commend the willpower of the Minister and of the Commissioner: I know what it is like to attend debates without being able to leave the room, and I hope they will not be too bored. I come now, with this debate, to a topic that is rather a new one for us.

The title of the report is not appropriate. It is not so much about the European Union's relationship with reforms in the Arab world as about a relational process of the European Union with the Arab world for the purpose of facilitating reforms.

For the sake of speed, I shall set out my comments as a number of points. The first point, as you all know, is that all is not well in the various Arab states. We all receive vast amounts of information and hear complaints about failure to observe human rights, about often dictatorial governments, about huge, scandalous financial inequalities in the various countries and about the lack of economic take-off, even in places where there is oil. There is indeed a malaise in the Arab world. A Lebanese Arabic writer even spoke about an Arab malaise. Behind this malaise, there is a long history of humiliation: colonialism, independence, lack of control of resources, of oil in particular, intellectual decline and, as a result, a corresponding rise in religious fundamentalism.

My second point is that it is in this context that belonging to the Arab world is perceived in most of these countries as an awareness of identity, a search for collective empowerment. That developed in the second half of the 20th century and particularly towards the end. Now, it is the League of Arab States which, internationally, is taking a stand on behalf of the different States and is being respected. It is the League's resolutions that have brought about some progress in what is called the Middle East peace process, which is still not a peace process but from which it is hoped some results will emerge through the Arab League Summit. There is also, thanks to the media, something of a growth in Arab public opinion that is much more homogeneous than the diplomatic positions of the various States. It is also at the pan-Arab level that many intellectuals, especially Egyptians, but also Lebanese, even Algerians, pitch their message, rather than within their national context. Finally, it has to be said that the Arab League has never had to deal with religious problems. They are referred to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, which is a different world. Arab identity is a secular concept, which can make our relationship easier.

My third point is: how do we, the European Union, deal with this Arab identity? By ignoring it. We have a strong, dense relationship with Iraq, and talk about it a great deal. We deal with the Israel-Palestine conflict, making very little reference to the preceding one. We speak about Algeria. We have strong bilateral relationships with Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, too. In short, we have relationships with all these countries that are of the public, state, bilateral kind, but we ignore the fact of their Arab identity.

The question that this own-initiative report puts to the Commission and to the Council is this: is there not good reason to move away from that and to do a bit more, in the light of the observations I was making in my second point? There is now an intellectual life, a political life and a diplomatic life in the Arab world at the level of its community. Is it not in the European Union's interest to establish relations at this level also? The numerous standstills that we find in the Arab world, which are of course economic, financial, political, institutional and religious, are also to a large extent intellectual and cultural.

It is through intellectual and cultural relations that other relations will develop, and the purpose of this report is to suggest that we take note of that. Firstly by recognising that Arab identity is compatible with democracy and with modernity, even if the facts do not demonstrate it. There is, intellectually and politically, and in the speeches of the League, a real possibility. It is, moreover, the Arab League which, by slightly forcing the hand of many of its Member States, has produced an Arab Charter on Human Rights. We all know that it is not a great advance, that it is well behind our own European Convention on Human Rights and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Nonetheless, it is real progress compared with the situation we had a short time ago. And then, in the face of the great contemporary problem of the fight against terrorism, I think that we all wish to reach a relationship of complicity and alliance with the Arab nations against extremists and killers, rather than to condemn them all and to make this fight impossible.

It is in this context that the report suggests that we, the European Union, should strengthen our relations with everything that has a collective character in this matter: of course, the League of Arab States, but also, why not, the Gulf Cooperation Council and even the Arab Maghreb Union, if it were to be revived. Through these bodies, it is possible to develop a network of cultural and intellectual relations and to organise discussion seminars, which will bolster our support for the reforms.

This report, Mr President, is somewhat subtle. We are extending the hand of friendship to countries about which there is seemingly much to criticise. Our amendments debate will be between the extremism of the condemnations and the moderation of the hand of friendship which, while indeed recognising that there are strong criticisms to be made, would prefer to keep quiet about them as long as this hand of friendship can contribute to a process of reform that we all need.

**Günter Gloser**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. (DE) Mr President, Mr Vice-President of the Commission, Mr Rocard, ladies and gentlemen, the present debate on the position of the Arab world in international politics is timely. As we see it, one of the issues here is how to further improve cooperation between the West and the Arab states, so that both sides can benefit from it. I should like to extend the warmest of thanks to Mr Rocard, with whose report the European Parliament, too, underlines the importance of EU-Arab cooperation.

Greater dynamism has been apparent in the Arab League's regional involvement for some years now – the Beirut Peace Initiative of March 2002 being just one example. Recent weeks, in particular, have seen a massive interest on the part of the Arab world in reaching out beyond the borders of the region for closer coordination and cooperation – including on its own initiative.

On the one hand, this development strikes me as resulting from a return, to a certain extent, by the Arab world to the Arab League as an instrument of cooperation that has been neglected over time. On the other hand, I see it as representing a response to the quest on the part of non-Arab states and organisations for a reliable regional partner in an unstable region.

The ongoing involvement of the Arab League in Lebanon, which started immediately after last summer's war, is very important; and so we encourage the Arab League to continue its present endeavours.

Nevertheless, I believe that the clearest illustration of the new quality of international involvement by the Arab League, under the powerful leadership of Saudi Arabia, was the confirmation of the Arab Peace Initiative at the Riyadh Summit in late March. This Initiative shows the prospects of a return to normal for relations between Israel and the Arab States. The continued debate within the Arab League substantiates the view that the Arab world has the will to make genuine progress.

The EU, too, has increased its involvement in the Middle East in recent years and months; the Quartet remaining its key actor.

Recently, both sides – the Arab world and Europe – have stepped up discussions on their ideas for intensifying political cooperation. In this regard, I should just like to mention the meeting of the EU Troika with an Arab League delegation in Sharm el-Sheikh, and also to point out that Frank-Walter Steinmeier, in his capacity as President of the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, has invited a ministerial delegation of the Arab League to a meeting with all the EU Ministers for Foreign Affairs in Brussels on 14 May.

This alone does not reduce the internal political, social and cultural challenges facing the Arab world, of course; but I should like to emphasise clearly that Europe offers Arab countries and societies cooperation in all fields. It is my hope that this cooperation can contribute to greater understanding and tolerance between Europe and the Arab world. These two values: understanding and tolerance – characteristics that the Council President Angela Merkel described as constituting Europe's soul in Strasbourg at the start of the German Presidency – are the vital ingredients for successful dialogue.

For this reason, I welcome Mr Rocard's inclusion of cultural aspects, too, in his report. These play a major role in determining the EU's scope for supporting reform processes in the Arab world. Ignorance, stereotypes and hostility on both sides hinder a productive partnership with prospects. Dialogue and understanding of the culture of its relevant opposite number are a precondition for the EU's taking the right approach to promoting reform processes.

Last year, in the context of the 'caricature conflict', there was much talk of the need for more 'dialogue between cultures'. We must use this term with caution, however, as the idea of a dialogue between cultures could accidentally promote cultural relativism. The idea that standards and values are in principle attributable to an individual's culture runs counter to our understanding of universal human rights. I fully agree with the report in this respect, emphasising as it does the importance of intercultural dialogue whilst coming out clearly in favour of the universality of human rights.

We must avoid falling into the 'culturism trap' in all respects, not only with regard to human rights. Human beings have diverse identities. We are not only Muslim or Christian or atheist, but also member of a profession, student, father, member of an association and much more. The problem with Islamic fundamentalism, as with any other kind of fundamentalism, is that one element of personal identity – the religious – is placed above all others, and the complexity of the world is ultimately reduced to the idea of an opposition between 'Islam' and 'the West'. Our policies must avoid everything that promotes

this reduction. We must emphasise what unites us rather than what divides us. We must select joint EU-Arab forums, particularly the Anna Lindh Foundation, for our discussions and projects.

Political Islamism is an expression of the modernisation crisis of Arab societies, as Mr Rocard's report also points out. Tackling this is primarily a task for Arab societies themselves. There, too, there are secular and liberal forces. What is often missing, however, is dialogue within these societies on the issue of how the relationship between state, religion and society should be shaped in political terms.

Dialogue within society will make clear that the religious neutrality of the state and the enforcement of human rights are not a reform agenda being forced on the Arab world by 'the West', but rather are in the interests of Arab societies themselves. We can support this process of dialogue within society by providing forums for dialogue. This is an important task, for example, of the various political foundations found in countries such as Germany.

**Günter Verheugen**, *Vice-President of the Commission*. (DE) Mr President, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, the Commission welcomes the report by the honourable Member Mr Rocard, which basically discusses what relevance developments in the Arab world have to us and what we can do to exert our influence over these developments.

At a time when we are rediscovering our common cultural and historic heritage, the European Parliament's willingness to resume a key role in the promotion of closer relations with our Arab neighbours is important. The European Parliament resolution on reforms in the Arab world underlines very clearly that we peoples and countries surrounding the Mediterranean are dependent on each other. We are mutually dependent in political terms as partners endeavouring to pacify the Middle East and working to promote pluralism and democracy; dependent in cultural terms with regard to the promotion of the urgently needed in-depth dialogue between cultures and religions; dependent in environmental terms because, with a shared Mediterranean coast over 46 000 kilometres long, problems such as climate change, marine pollution and the challenges of improving the environment are the same for all; dependent in terms of energy policy because of the supplies of oil and natural gas originating from or channelled via the Mediterranean area; and dependent particularly in demographic terms, as dialogue with North African countries is needed on the solution to issues surrounding both legal and illegal migration.

As a response to our dependence on each other, we launched the Barcelona process together, which is now complemented by the European Neighbourhood Policy. In addition, the Cooperation Agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council, the agreement with Yemen and the Cotonou Agreement with sub-Saharan Arab states have further developed relations.

Progress has been made recently thanks to the Barcelona process and to the neighbourhood policy. To give two examples, association agreements have been concluded with nearly every country in the region and Neighbourhood Action Plans launched. A Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area is gradually taking shape, which is intended to function as an interface between an increasingly globalised world and the open, integrated regionalism practised by Europe.

The year 2007 could certainly signalise our relations with a region undergoing radical change; a region with great expectations of a far-reaching partnership with the EU. Our work with our partners is based on the conviction that changes only last if they come from within a society, and the gradual introduction of political and economic reforms within the framework of neighbourhood policy smoothes the way for a further rapprochement between Europe and Mediterranean countries.

At the heart of our relations with our Arab partners is our desire to promote security, growth and stability in the region. In addition, we firmly believe that these relations have a far broader purpose, namely the joint creation of an area of cooperation and stability, and the advocacy of our common objectives and values.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR COCILOVO

*Vice-President*

**Antonio Tajani**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the relations between Europe and the Arab world are the key to building peace in the Mediterranean area and in the Middle East. We must all become involved in the dialogue between cultures and religions over the next few years, in the firm belief that friendly relations are based on sincerity, loyalty and an attempt to

understand others, without, however, renouncing one's own identity. In confirming the crucial importance of providing the European Union with a strategy for reform in the Arab world, the Rocard report defines some inalienable principles that will have to characterise future relations.

The European Parliament's task will be to encourage any decisions that will enhance democracy, respect for human rights and the role of women, the creation of a free trade area, freedom of information, financial aid and respect for religious freedom.

The Rocard report – and I can announce that the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats will vote for it – defines a fundamental principle, which is that of reciprocity: just as everyone in Europe has the right to practise his or her religion, people should have the same right in every Arab country. On this aspect the Rocard report calls precisely on Arabs living in the European Union to give their accounts. On this, as on other issues, however, we are still a long way from achieving the objectives that the European Union has set itself.

By upholding these principles and helping the Arab countries in their reforms, yet respecting their autonomy, we will help to prevent fundamentalism from gathering further support. The threat of fanaticism does not concern, in fact, only Europe, but the entire Arab world. Terrorism is the child of fundamentalism, which is why it is vital for Europe and the Arab States to work together to beat this scourge of the 20th century. Recent attacks demonstrate that al-Qa'ida's priority right now is to strike out at the moderate Arab States, which are trying to establish a dialogue and are facilitating the reforms. Europe cannot remain silent; it cannot stand by.

**Hannes Swoboda, on behalf of the PSE Group.** – (DE) Mr President, my colleague and friend Mr Rocard will forgive me if I start by addressing a very important topic, one on which Mrs De Keyser has been working very intensively in recent months and years: that of the Palestinian territories. I do not believe that we can make progress without a change in EU policy on the Palestinian issue or with regard to many of Mr Rocard's justified demands.

Today, my group decided unanimously to call on the Commission and the Council to make fundamental changes to their policy on the Palestinian territories. EU policy – championed by the Council and the Commission – is untenable, cynical and unacceptable to the Arab population. Some governments may consider it acceptable, but the population of the Arab countries cannot approve of our current policy towards the Palestinian Government.

We called for free elections; and free, fair elections took place – to which Mrs De Keyser is the chief witness – but then we said we could not accept the result. This is most undemocratic. We then said that the Palestinians should at least form a unity government; and a unity government has been formed. We also told them to make a clear commitment to the peace process and the 1967 borders. The present Palestinian Government has declared its commitment to those borders. Israel has not, but we do not seem to consider this a problem.

Many of our officials still refuse to receive the Palestinian Foreign Minister, for example, as the Council President did recently. It is unacceptable for the Council President, Angela Merkel, to say that she will receive the Israeli Foreign Minister but that it is beneath her to welcome the Palestinian Foreign Minister, who has nothing to do with Hamas.

Therefore, in view of the specific situation in the Palestinian territories, we demand a drastic change in the position of the Council and the Commission. Perhaps individual members of the Council and the Commission disagree with it, but as institutions their policy is wrong and cynical. Do the ladies and gentlemen know the situation in the Palestinian territories? Do they know that our policy is resulting in the territories descending into chaos, that Mafia groups are taking power there? Do they know that a continuation of this policy is the best way of contributing to Israel's insecurity?

We must arrive at a different position, therefore – particularly in connection with this report, but also in connection with Israel's security, which is closely linked to the security of the Arab countries and of Europe. We should do so by attempting genuine cooperation with the Palestinian Government – a government chosen by the elections demanded by us – if that government is at least as prepared as Israel to support the peace process. I wanted to say this at the start of the debate on what is a very good report, but risks being unrealisable unless we change our policy on the Palestinian territories and towards the Palestinian Government.

**Marco Cappato**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to congratulate Mr Rocard, whose report, as he himself has said, is intended to offer support for the purposes of opening a dialogue and a debate. However, I believe that, in making such a statement, we must first make it clear – since this is something that concerns us and our policies within the European Union – that this is a dialogue and a debate that we intend to open not with the States, but with the people, with individuals.

This is all the more true when we talk about a primarily cultural – and therefore also political and institutional – effort, since in this case the talks must take place first with individuals, rather than with the Arab League or with individual States, not least because I believe that two of the major problems in the Arab world – nationalism and fundamentalism – now concern our European cities, too, which, from a demographic point of view, are also increasingly becoming cities of the Arab world. That is why these problems must be addressed by our European Union itself. This state of affairs also affects our institutional systems and the way in which religion is perceived within the European Union.

There is no doubt that Islamic fundamentalism exists. We have taken the liberty, in this regard, of tabling two amendments on the issue of non-discrimination based on sexual orientation and of the clear distinction between political authorities and religious authorities. I do not believe that this is provocation. I only have time to point out, for example, that, when, together with other fellow Members, we went to Jerusalem for Gay Pride, we observed that, during the sometimes violent demonstrations aimed at preventing the demonstration from taking place, Orthodox Jewish fundamentalists, Islamic fundamentalists and Catholic fundamentalists were united. This is therefore an issue that concerns us, too, and that is the meaning behind the amendments, which I hope will be adopted.

**Mario Borghesio**, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the good intentions expressed in this report pave the way for what I fear may be some wrong moves. For example, the concessions and, indeed, the looking ahead to the prospect of pan-Arabism, may lead to what the previous speaker rightly pointed out as a danger: Arab nationalism. I, for my part, would not look on it so approvingly and so calmly.

I am not thrilled with the fact that, behind this offer of dialogue, we can glimpse the plans of what an influential Arab intellectual fearfully described as the ‘Eurabia project’, an expression that was later adopted very effectively by the Italian writer, Oriana Fallaci. Above all, however, what concerns me in the report is the way in which the doubts about the Arab Charter on Human Rights are expressed, where it is stated that some of the provisions contained in the Charter are worded in such a way as to allow different interpretations to be made. Yet, there is little to interpret differently in the text! The Islamic Charter on human rights is very clear: it states that human rights for Muslims are subject to the Sharia. This is stated in the preamble and in all of the subsequent articles, and stated extremely clearly.

For the Arab States that have signed this Charter – the 1948 Charter on Human Rights, to which we are referring – it is valid only insofar as it conforms to the dictates of Allah. Instead, unlike what is stated in the report, it needs to be made clear not only to the people but also to the Arab regimes with which we are holding talks – even though it is not clear how enthusiastic they are about tackling and supporting the Barcelona process, which is spoken about in very optimistic terms, given that they then do not take part in the meetings – that religious precepts are one thing, that laws are another thing and that the principle of freedom of conscience is another thing still. The Charter on Human Rights is based, in fact, on the philosophical principle of the separation of laws from spiritual and religious precepts.

This is a concept that must be reaffirmed very clearly, otherwise Europe will continue to pretend that it cannot see very serious dangers, including, for example, the television programmes broadcast by Hamas, in which Mickey Mouse teaches Arab children about the fight against terrorism, the fight against Israel and the sacrifice made by suicide bombers. That is what the peoples of the Arab world see.

**Caroline Lucas**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, I, too, must beg forgiveness of Mr Rocard by focusing on one issue – Palestine. I also believe that, until the EU changes its current position and recognises the National Unity Government in Palestine, we are precisely undermining the opportunities for good relations with the Arab world, we are exacerbating poverty and suffering in the Occupied Territories, we are in danger of destroying the Palestinian Authority itself and we are certainly already destroying the hopes of the Palestinian people.

We are also being entirely inconsistent and hypocritical, because the Palestinians I have met have rightly challenged me: Does the EU not say that democracy is better than violence? Well, yes, we do. Did the

EU election observers not pronounce the Palestinian elections free and fair? Well, yes, they did. In spite of that, when asked to do so, did the legitimately elected Hamas Government not transform itself into a genuine government of national unity? Yes, it did. Has that government not agreed to the three demands of the quartet to renounce violence, to respect previous agreements and to recognise the State of Israel? Yes, it has. They ask me and I, in turn, ask the Council here tonight, what else is the EU waiting for?

I have just come back from a parliamentary delegation visit to Palestine where we met Prime Minister Haniyeh and many of his ministers, and the message from all of them was the same: they have met the demands of the Quartet, they accept a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders and they are ready and eager for peace negotiations. They cannot understand why the EU does not respond and why we insist, for example, on channelling aid via the Temporary International Mechanism, which, while it helps some of the poorest, is unable to prevent the growing humanitarian and political crisis: it undermines the apparatus and the authority of the Palestinian State and, crucially, it strips the EU of the leverage we could – and should – have with the Israeli authorities to pressure them into releasing the Palestinian tax revenues which they are still illegally withholding. We met Mustafa Barghouti, the Minister of Information, and he left us in doubt when he said, ‘If the EU wants the Palestinian Authority to collapse, then it should say so’. Let us be very clear: that is where our policies are leading. I am sure that neither we nor the Council wants the Palestinian Authority to collapse, and so I ask the Council once again: what else is it waiting for?

**Kyriacos Triantaphyllides, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group. – (EL)** Mr President, if I were a Palestinian citizen looking enthusiastically towards the European Union to get me out of the impasse I was in, I would agree with Mr Swoboda and with Mrs Caroline Lucas and I would be very concerned about certain aspects of the Rocard report.

The first problem with the report is that it upgrades the strategy of the European Council and the European Commission in the Middle East, which calls on all of us to only talk to half the members of the government of Palestine and ignore the fact that this government is the product of democratic elections, that it is a government of national unity and is supported by 96% of the Palestinian people.

We have all seen the outcome of this catastrophic policy. There is a legitimate government on Palestinian soil which the European Council and the European Commission has quarantined, thereby destroying every opportunity which this government is giving us to engage in legitimate talks. If the Union misses this crucial crossroads, the road forward will be very difficult.

In another paragraph, the report notes that any deepening of Euro-Arab relations depends on the energy and talent which Europe brings to bear in reconciling its historic duties and responsibilities towards the State of Israel and the Jewish people; but where are its historic duties and responsibilities towards the Palestinians going? We have to stop burying our heads in the sand. There is a legal, elected government on Palestinian soil which we must not isolate and with which the European Union must engage immediately in direct dialogue.

**Philip Claeys, on behalf of the ITS Group. – (NL)** Mr President, the Rocard report contains many positive points. In these times of political correctness, to talk about an Arab evil openly, for example, shows a certain degree of courage. The report is right to single out a number of painful areas. There is a need for more democracy, more free market economy, respect for human rights, and equal treatment for women, while non-Muslims must be able to practise their religion freely.

The concept of reciprocity is very much applicable here, and it is useful to make a special mention of this in the report. The European Union can, and indeed must, play a part in promoting these principles within the Arab world. Whether this will bear fruit is a different matter, but we should at least try.

The report stipulates – and I quote – that the westernisation of the Arab societies is not the only way of bringing about the necessary reforms. I can go along with that, but I should like to stress that the Arabisation or Islamisation of Europe should not be an option either. One consequence of the riots resulting from the Danish cartoons is that we have had to conclude that a number of essential freedoms, such as the right to the free expression of opinion, have also come under pressure in Europe. The European Union’s reaction to this was rather – not to say very – feeble. I should therefore like to say in all tranquillity and serenity that our freedoms and the right to remain ourselves in Europe and in all European Member States should remain intact.



**Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE-DE).** – *(ES)* Mr President, it is not an easy task to produce a report on reforms in the Arab world, since that covers a fairly heterogeneous group of countries.

There is, however, agreement on the need for reforms in the Arab countries, a notion that is taken up in the very title of the report. The Arab leaders also acknowledged this at the Tunis Summit in 2004. Furthermore, the recent Riyadh Summit insisted on modernisation too, though I notice that its text places less emphasis on the idea of reforms.

The Arab countries are facing a series of challenges which they need to tackle by means of substantial improvements in the political, economic and social fields. That means reforms leading to democratisation and greater respect for human rights, which are not the exclusive property of the West, but are universal.

In many cases, democratisation will involve the challenge of incorporating moderate Islamic options into political life, options that are opposed to the use of violence.

Economic and social reforms are also needed. From an economic point of view, there is excessive State presence, scant participation in international trade and little diversification of economies. Generally speaking, in the majority of these countries there is a low level of economic development and low rates of growth, which are incapable of generating employment for a rapidly growing population. High unemployment and lack of prospects cause social discontent, which feeds radical political forces.

The stability and prosperity of the Arab countries is very important for the European Union. We need to have good relations with them that benefit us mutually; we must consider the importance of their oil and gas to the European Union, which imports much of its energy resources from outside. Furthermore, several Member States have Arab countries as neighbours, and many Arab citizens live in our cities.

In addition, over recent years, an extremely serious Jihadist threat has emerged, which is attacking our countries and also the Muslim States themselves.

In short, there are many fields in which we must cooperate. We must also encourage them and help them to implement political, economic and social reforms. Maintaining the status quo – as the report itself points out – is not a guarantee of stability in the long run, quite the opposite.

**Véronique De Keyser (PSE).** – *(FR)* Mr President, some people have said, on reading this report, that it is strange. It is strange because it does not mention, or scarcely mentions, regional and international policy in this part of the world, the conflicts ravaging the Middle East, terrorism, radical Islamism or illegal immigration. Nor does it mention the colonial past of certain great powers or the persistent influence they wish to continue to exert. What, then, is the point of this well-meaning report, which, by the way, is a real antidote to the cartoons of Mohammed?

First of all, it is not a well-meaning report, but a bold statement and a tremendous message of confidence in the democratic potential of the Arab world, in the diversity of its non-governmental actors, in the strength of its civil society and in its culture. Furthermore, it states clearly the role that Europe must play: to support and promote local endogenous democratic processes and to remind them of the importance of human rights, but without ever imposing itself as a hegemonic power.

This message may seem commonplace. It is, however, vital for a real alliance of civilisations since it finally makes the Arab world a partner in peace, a partner in development and in culture. Many reports emanating from this European Parliament describe the threats coming to us from the East. Mr Rocard has chosen to point out the reasons for hope, and I thank him for it.

It is, however, a subject on which Mr Rocard has been incomplete. The report rightly mentions Europe's responsibility towards Israel and its security. We accept this responsibility and we will continue to accept it, but it is inseparable from our responsibility with regard to Palestine, which is today going through an unprecedented crisis. We shall never be able to sacrifice one to the other. The Balfour Declaration, in 1917, already stated that 'the establishment of a home for Jewish people in Palestine would not prejudice the rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine'. Where have we got to a century after this declaration?

That is why I support and strongly take up the demand not only of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, but also of all those who have spoken this evening and said to us: the sanctions against Palestine must be lifted, we have to negotiate with its national unity government, which accepts the Arab peace initiative, which is also a tremendous guarantee for the security of Israel with regard to the

Arab world. This is a leap forward; this is a rising hope. And it is rising for all those who, on both sides of the 1967 frontier, still believe in international justice and want to encourage hope.

Therefore, in the name of these values, in the name of those just men on both sides of the frontier, what are we, in Europe, going to do? Wait? I say to you, ladies and gentlemen, and I say to the Council and to the Commission: let us wait no longer! Tomorrow it will be too late, and the crushing responsibility for that will be ours.

**Luisa Morgantini (GUE/NGL).** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I will not speak about Palestine because I fully share the opinion of Mr Swoboda, Mr Triantaphyllides, Mrs Lucas and Mrs De Keyser; I will therefore spare you my comments about Palestine on this occasion.

Instead, I should like to thank Mr Rocard for having drafted a report containing many important elements – ‘hope’, as Mrs De Keyser was saying. These elements include the statement that many Arab intellectuals have carried out a lucid analysis of the ills of the Arab world. I believe that what the Rocard report is lacking, however, is a lucid analysis of the ills of European society, with regard not only to the need for reforms in the democratic Arab world but also to our policies.

In the amendments tabled by Mr Rocard himself, there are a few corrections that I fully support, even though I believe that we cannot talk about reforms in the Arab world without taking into consideration the tragedies caused not by European policies but, for example, by the war in Iraq and by the absence of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I therefore believe that we must begin also with a criticism of how devastating and obstructive our policies in Iraq have been, for example in terms of hindering a reform process that is crucial not only in the Arab world but also to us, when it comes to changing our policy.

**Simon Busuttil (PPE-DE).** – *(MT)* Thank you, Mr President. The subject of reform in the Arab world is an extremely complex one. One need only read Mr Rockar’s report in order to understand this complexity. The rapporteur in fact asks whether there is in fact an Arab community as such and points out that there is a reason why we talk of the Arab world but not of the Arab nation or the Arab union. This clearly means that, before we begin discussing the Arab world and offering solutions, we must understand it better. That is why it is essential not to be patronising when we talk of reforms in the Arab world and not to dictate solutions as though we were better informed than everyone else. There is no doubt that reforms are needed so as to enable the Arab countries to benefit more from the process of modernisation and globalisation. Our task is to offer the experience we have had in our Union and to lend our support in a spirit of partnership between two equal parties. We must not create a context in which we tell others what to do.

The Barcelona Process was meant to be one of partnership but, as we all know, we ended up in a situation in which the European Union dictated what should happen, and when and how. We also need to make better use of our interlocutors in the Arab world, such as the Arab League which, despite its own problems, has gained enough credibility to give a voice to the Arab world. Malta took the initiative of proposing a structured dialogue between the European Union and the Arab League; a dialogue aimed at tackling the subject of the reforms that must be carried out on both sides of the Mediterranean. This is a good initiative, and one that has gone down well with the Arab League, and I hope that both the Council of Ministers and the Commissioner can support it. Thank you.

**Libor Rouček (PSE).** – *(CS)* I should like to congratulate Mr Rocard on his outstanding report which, in my view, is much-needed, both for the Arab world and for Europe. I believe the need for this report can be seen from the way that in recent years, not only in the USA but also in Europe, there has been a certain blinkered tendency to view the Arab and Islamic world simply in terms of the fight against terrorism.

Whilst European-Arab relations must take account of the fight against terrorism, they must also take account of issues such as economic and social development, employment, the proper management of public affairs, the strengthening of civil society, the concept of human rights, and intercultural and inter-faith exchange and dialogue. European-Arab relations should be based on genuine dialogue on a level playing field without feelings of superiority or inferiority being generated.

Dialogue and partnership with the EU could in my view be targeted more at cooperation with the Arab world as a whole. In other words, in addition to bilateral relations, we should also focus on specific

organisations, some of which have already been mentioned, such as the League of Arab States, the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab Maghreb Union.

Lastly, because we are here in the European Parliament, I should also like to emphasise the role played by the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) as a democratic body bringing together members of parliament from both sides of the Mediterranean. The EMPA should in my opinion play a much greater role, including attempting to resolve the Arab-Israel conflict.

**Pierre Schapira (PSE).** – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like first of all to thank Mr Rocard for this report, which conveys much objectivity on the European Union's exclusively bilateral relations with the Arab world. It calls, however, in particular for a new dialogue, which must include the problems of development and of good governance. It is to this subject that I should like to return.

In its development policy, the European Union has broken up the Arab world into two parts: the Mediterranean zone and the Caucasus, called the neighbourhood zone, and the Middle East subject to the development policy. This artificial distinction does not allow a more balanced comprehensive approach, which would make fundamental reforms possible.

As far as the matter of governance is concerned, Mr Rocard emphasises the partnership approach and the role of civil society. This is an innovative view that must take into account – and this is why I am speaking of it – the role of the local authorities. In fact, a very dense network of cooperation from town to town has developed in the Arab world, with the organisation of Arab towns which, moreover, belong to a wider organisation, the world organisation of towns, which includes Palestinian towns and Israeli towns that work together. There are cooperation projects for peace, for cultural and religious exchanges, for human rights and the fight against all forms of discrimination.

These transnational actions are the expression of a link between Europe and the Arab world on an infra-state scale, that of emerging civil societies. They also offer a wider framework for analysis than that of the fight against terrorism imposed following 11 September.

**Richard Howitt (PSE).** – Mr President, I should like to congratulate my esteemed colleague, Michel Rocard, on his report. As it underlines, the only valid response in our desire for reform in the Arab world is one which is inclusive and based on common values – something which is too often lost in talk of the war on terror.

As several Socialist colleagues have said, we need to make real progress in finding a peaceful and long-term solution to the problems of conflict, not least between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. But let me highlight the absolute need to limit the impact of any direct or indirect support by the EU or our Member States for authoritarianism in the region. There needs to be a re-evaluation of the relationship between European security services and their counterparts, making sure that these agencies continue to cooperate in addressing common threats, including terrorism, but that any action is unambiguously consistent with international human rights law, including the provisions on torture. There need to be tighter controls governing arms or military transfers to the region to ensure these are not used in internal repression or external aggression. In all of the EU's external assistance programmes there needs to be further re-evaluation of the provision of assistance to countries in the region in order to promote development and economic justice and to support the reformers themselves in the reform process.

**Michel Rocard (PSE), rapporteur.** – (FR) Mr President, Mr Gloser, Mr Verheugen, in only two minutes, I shall not be able to reply to everybody.

I should like first to stress the importance that has led four of our speakers not to deal with the subject directly but to remind us that, before this topic, the unresolved tragedy of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the non-recognition of the new Palestinian Government and the different obstacles that we put in the way, hinder good relations between Europe and the Arab world. They are right. That was not my point. I wish to support this point of view very forcefully. I have often supported it on other occasions. I would draw your attention to the fact that therein lies the key.

I should also like to commend the great understanding of the report's approach, which has been as evident in Mr Gloser's speech as in that of the Commissioner, Mr Verheugen, and I do not think that his successor will say otherwise: there exists a convergence of thinking between a parliamentary approach, which I represent here, and the perception of the Council of Ministers, as well as that of the Commission. For me, that is absolutely essential.

To our colleagues on the different benches, I shall simply say that the contribution made by Mr Busuttill's, who supports the idea of partnership, seems important to me. I would say that Mr Cappato is right to emphasise that we wish, through all these efforts, to engage with civil societies, to engage, ultimately, with individuals, of course, but we cannot engage with individuals alone, we have to do so through institutions, the media, etc., and that is indeed the approach of this report.

Mr Tajani focused on reciprocity. I too am concerned about reciprocity. I should like to point out that the intelligence of our approach will depend on our ability to adjust reciprocity according to the inequality of the levels of economic and cultural development. The point is to support a process that must bring Arab countries closer to the values of our democracies, without pretending and without accusing them of not sharing these values from the beginning of the process. That is what brings me, as Mr Cappato well knows, to defer certain amendments, not because I disagree with some of the criticisms, but rather because I disagree that it is opportune to bring them up now, at a time when we are engaging in a process of holding out a hand to help people who are way behind us when it comes to respect for human rights.

A support process does not presuppose that the problem has been resolved in advance. We will not increase our demands. I would even be tempted, in this spirit, to encourage voting against an amendment tabled by my own group. We have discussed it fully. My group is inflexible on some intangible principles for which I have been fighting for 50 years. In this matter we must progress more moderately. I propose that we use subtlety in our diplomatic relations. In politics, subtlety is rare, but I am suggesting it all the same.

*(Laughter)*

**Günter Gloser**, *President-in-Office of the Council. (DE)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should just like to discuss a few points. What alternative is there but dialogue with our neighbours?

In recent years, the EU has laid down a wide palette of measures – not unilaterally, but in cooperation with many Arab countries. The key ones have already been mentioned: the Barcelona process, for example, and also the further development of neighbourhood policy that is currently taking place. Nevertheless, we note different developments in individual countries.

Who would have thought, for example, that the King of Morocco would have launched a truth commission seeking to reappraise what crimes were committed in the past? Of course, this committee of inquiry does not come close to meeting the criteria the EU Member States lay down for such committees. Who would have thought, also, that certain distant countries would extend the right to vote?

A great deal has happened, but it is apparent that, on certain points, we could have achieved more. The people in Arab countries would also have hoped for a greater share in economic development than has been the case. There is no alternative to dialogue, however.

Mr Rocard spoke of the need for us to develop a strategy: this can only work in cooperation with Arab countries. It is possible that the strategy towards a certain country will differ from that towards a Gulf State. It is also important, however, to note that the Arab League has regained strength. The League often looks to the EU, the association of European states, but it has no such uniting function; instead its members often have a very national outlook and prefer to regulate their own matters. Nevertheless, there has now been a realisation that, when it comes to conflict resolution, in particular, an association is better, and accordingly is a better means of asserting a country's own interests.

I should also like to discuss the various comments that have been made in the debate with regard to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. I am of course aware that the unresolved conflict between Israel and the Palestinian territories often interferes with many of the talks, the forums for dialogue. However, I should also like to say quite deliberately that many problems in Arab countries could also have been solved without a prior resolution of this conflict.

However – including in view of comments by Mr Swoboda and others – we should bear in mind the chronicle of developments in this whole debate. We have never said that the elections in the Palestinian territories were unfair. On the contrary, we noted that they were conducted more fairly than those in many other countries. Another important aspect, however, is that the newly elected government failed to declare its intention to comply with the commitments entered into by the previous government – at least not initially, Mr Swoboda; only gradually – and now only as a result of the initiative of Saudi Arabia.

Many Arab states have succeeded in forming a national unity government.

I would say quite clearly – because this is occasionally obscured, and so that you do not reproach me at the end of the process – that, at the time of the blockade, the EU provided considerable financial support to the Palestinians: a fact that the Commissioner responsible for external relations, Mrs Ferrero-Waldner, has always made clear. The sums paid out were often greater than in the period before the ‘blockade’.

We must now concern ourselves, together with the Arab League and, of course, the two actors Israel and Palestine, with making progress in reviving the peace process – an achievement to which the EU and the Quartet contributed – and with meeting the demands we have heard today.

**Jacques Barrot**, *Vice-President of the Commission*. (FR) Mr President, I simply wish to thank Parliament and, of course, its rapporteur, Mr Rocard, for the work done on a subject that is important for all of us. I will give an account to Mr Verheugen, who has presented the Commission’s position, of the quality of the debates in which I have been able to take part in his stead. I think, in fact, that Parliament prides itself on developing thinking about important issues. I pay tribute, of course, to the German Presidency and hope that this report will make it possible to work out this peace strategy that we all need so much.

**President**. The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow at 11 a.m.

#### **Written statements (Rule 142)**

**Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE-DE)**, *in writing*. – (FI) Mr President, I think that Mr Rocard’s report is fairly commendable: it emphasises the fact that the Union’s role is to encourage and engage with the attempts at reform in the Arab countries. This role requires active inter-cultural dialogue.

We have to give our attention to what the dialogue should be based on. The report says ‘inter-cultural dialogue can only be revived through the affirmation of a common and universal basis of human values which transcends dogmas and Community allegiances’. This should not be understood as a purely secularist basis, which might indeed increase cultural tensions.

A liberalised society exhibits a mix of two ways of thinking: ethical pluralism and cultural relativism, which could be called secularist relativism.

Whereas relativism is based on the assumption that there is no religious truth, the pluralistic approach is just that we can reach consensus on this through reasonable means. Relativism therefore means that value and belief systems have not been left out of political decisions entirely.

Pluralism, on the other hand, aims for dialogue on values and means that different value and belief systems need to be understood when decisions are being taken, for the simple reason that they are an important part of people’s lives. It has to be realised that dialogue along these lines makes not just understanding and interaction, but also criticism, possible.

Relativism in fact leads to an increase in tension because it evades the difficult issues and passes over them. Pluralism can help ease tension as it is fundamentally to do with taking account of human values and their differences.

Religion is not necessarily what causes tension, which is to say a problem. It can also be part of the solution.

**Glyn Ford (PSE)**, *in writing*. I will be supporting this report on EU strategy towards the Arab world. While there is fault on both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict, I welcome the fact that the EU has a much more balanced position with regard to this conflict than the Bush Administration in the US.

What we can potentially do has been recently demonstrated in the not entirely different context of the Aceh conflict in Indonesia – the world’s fourth largest country and largest Muslim state. Here EU efforts brokered a peace settlement and a peace process that ended a 30-year-long civil war at the cost of less than a few hours’ spending in Iraq. This example should serve as a paradigm for the EU’s future actions within our emerging Common Foreign and Security Policy.

## 14. Retrofitting of mirrors to heavy goods vehicles (debate)

**President** The next item is the report (A6-0124/2007) by Paolo Costa, on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the retrofitting of mirrors to heavy goods vehicles registered in the Community (COM(2006)0570 – C6-0332/2006 – 2006/0183(COD)).

**Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the Commission.** (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, on 5 October 2006, the Commission adopted a proposal for a directive on the retrofitting of mirrors to heavy goods vehicles.

Every year 400 people are killed in Europe because lorry drivers have not seen them. The victims are usually vulnerable road users: children on bicycles, pedestrians and motorcyclists. As far back as in 2003, the European Parliament and the Council adopted Directive 2003/97/EC, which stipulates the use of better mirrors to considerably reduce the blind spot for lorries newly put on the road. All new heavy goods vehicles put on the road since January 2007 have been fitted with these mirrors. This is a very good measure, but what do we do about the millions of existing lorries that do not have these mirrors and that will continue to be driven on our roads for many years yet, creating a significant hazard where road safety is concerned?

The Commission considered that we could not wait 15 to 20 years for the lorry fleet to be completely replaced. We have therefore proposed that lorries of more than 3.5 tonnes put on the road since 1998 should be retrofitted with the same mirrors as new lorries. Where that is not possible, for technical or economic reasons, alternative solutions may be considered. Member States that have already taken measures for fitting better mirrors on existing lorries will be exempt, under our proposal, from the obligations laid down in the directive. Finally, the Commission has proposed fairly tight deadlines for the transposition and entry into force of the directive in order to increase the effectiveness of the measure.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it is clear that we have here a means of saving lives that is quite within our reach, and we would be wrong, all of us, if we did not do everything possible to have these measures implemented rapidly. I thank Parliament for all its efforts along these lines.

**Engelbert Lütke Daldrup, President-in-Office of the Council.** (DE) Mr President, Commission Vice-President Barrot, ladies and gentlemen, we are delighted that it has been possible to reach a consensus on an important dossier in the field of road safety – the proposal for a Directive on the retrofitting of trucks with improved wing mirrors – at the preliminary stage. We should like to give Mr Costa, the rapporteur for this dossier, and his colleagues our sincere thanks for their constructive cooperation.

The Community has set itself the objective of halving the number of traffic-accident fatalities by 2010 if possible. To bring us closer to meeting this objective, all the appropriate measures must be taken as soon as possible.

The fitting of trucks with improved mirrors to tackle the problem of the so-called ‘blind spot’ is an important milestone on the road to enhanced road safety.

The deadline of 31 March 2009 for the retrofitting of trucks represents the best-possible compromise between calls for the rapid implementation of the Directive in the interests of road safety, on the one hand, and the concern of some Member States that the deadlines for retrofitting may be too tight on the other.

Building on your support in tomorrow’s vote, we intend to adopt the Directive as quickly as possible at one of the next Council meetings.

**Paolo Costa (ALDE), rapporteur.** – (IT) Mr President, Commissioner, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, what we have before us is one of those measures that, modest though they appear, constitute one of the many positive contributions that are made by the European Union every day and that should perhaps be publicised better among Europeans.

The debate has been conducted very quickly, I think. Commissioner Barrot pointed out that the proposal in question was forwarded to Parliament and the Council in September 2006, and we shall certainly be in a position to complete the procedure at first reading by as early as tomorrow, in other words very

quickly. In fact, we have no time to lose, bearing in mind that rapid implementation would enable us to save at least 400 lives per year. This, moreover, is what Parliament has focused on in an attempt to press for the directive to be implemented and transposed as soon as possible.

I think we have achieved a positive outcome. The idea was, in fact, to identify the number of heavy goods vehicles that, in the end, will have to adopt wide-angle mirrors, enabling drivers to see pedestrians and cyclists and so avoid knocking them down. This procedure will be applied to all heavy goods vehicles registered in Europe as from the year 2000, and the problem will be resolved by 31 March 2009. I would point out that it is existing lorries that are to be modernised since, as from 26 January of this year, the legislation already applies to all newly registered HGVs.

What we have here, then, is a useful outcome: progress towards the kind of road safety that needs to be guaranteed at European level. It is one of those cases in which I think it can be stated that the principle of subsidiarity is being applied in the opposite direction to normal. The point is, it is much better to have shared legislation at European level than to waste time, and consequently lose lives, devising 27 individual sets of regulations in the various Member States.

**Georg Jarzembowski**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Vice-President of the Commission, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats welcomes the agreement reached with the Council at first reading. This is a good example of excellent cooperation. Naturally, we also thank the rapporteur, Mr Costa, for his extremely committed work.

The fact that we are taking a practical step towards reducing the number of traffic-accident fatalities is important, as it is of course insufficient to merely fit new trucks with new lateral blind spot mirrors; in addition, it is of prime importance that the many trucks already in service be retrofitted, as the Vice-President rightly said.

It is regrettable, however, Mr State Secretary, that the Council opposed the rapid solution called for by Parliament. We called for 30 June 2008 – entirely rightly, as a matter of fact. As you know, I represent the same country as you, and we must think about how matters can be speeded up within a federal structure. It is unacceptable that the existence of a bicameral system in Germany should render swift action impossible. I have no intention of speaking about the catalogue of fines for violations of rest periods and driving times now, but we have to think of ways to enable rapid response. The measures are undisputed. Naturally, I should have much preferred agreement on the deadline of 30 June 2008. Nevertheless, for practical reasons, we decided to compromise with you on the deadline of 31 March 2009; for, if agreement had not been reached at first reading and the matter had gone to second reading, more time would have been lost. Thus, the compromise is a very practical solution.

Finally, I should like to appeal to private enterprise not to exploit the deadline. Private enterprises can retrofit their trucks with the new mirrors early, on time and quickly, as they, too, should have a great interest in preventing accidents – not to mention accidents involving fatalities. Consequently, we hope that a consensus can be reached quickly tomorrow, that all of this is soon on the statute book, and that private enterprise is quicker to act than we have been.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău**, *în numele grupului PSE*. – Postechiparea cu oglinzi retrovizoare la vehiculele grele pentru transportul de mărfuri înregistrate pe teritoriul comunității va contribui la creșterea siguranței rutiere. Anual, în Uniunea Europeană, 40 000 de persoane mor în accidente de circulație și această cifră reprezintă populația unui oraș european de mici dimensiuni. Asta înseamnă că un mic oraș european moare anual datorită accidentelor de circulație. Nu ne mai putem permite acest lucru. De asemenea, anual la nivel european, există 400 de victime ale accidentelor rutiere provocate de camioane de dimensiuni mari. Uniunea Europeană și-a propus ca, până în 2010, numărul accidentelor de circulație să fie redus cu 50%, adică cu aproape 25 000 de victime.

Directiva 97/2003 a impus ca, începând cu 1 ianuarie 2007, toate camioanele de peste 3,5 tone să fie înmatriculate doar dacă sunt echipate cu dispozitive de vizualizare indirectă, ce reduc așa-numitul „unghi mort” care este cauza multor accidente. Această directivă însă nu rezolvă și problema celor aproximativ 5 milioane de camioane grele care erau deja înmatriculate în Uniunea Europeană.

Noul proiect de directivă obligă ca, până în 2009, toate camioanele grele înmatriculate după anul 2000, să fie echipate cu astfel de echipamente ce măresc câmpul vizual pe care șoferii îl au datorită oglinzilor retrovizoare. Evident, aceste dotări înseamnă investiții, dar consider că o investiție de aproximativ 150

de euro pentru un camion merită atunci când vorbim de salvarea de vieți omenești. Nu trebuie să uităm însă că multor accidente de camion le-au căzut victimă copiii. De altfel, un studiu arată că dacă așezăm 20 de copii în jurul unui camion care nu este dotat cu oglinzi retrovizoare corespunzătoare, în imediata vecinătate a acestuia, aceștia nu intră în câmpul vizual al șoferului și pot fi victime ale accidentelor. Alte victime sunt bicicliștii sau pietonii aflați la mică înălțime întrucât aceștia intră în unghiul mort al oglinzii retrovizoare.

Consider că acest document la contribui la salvarea de vieți omenești, dar nu trebuie să uităm că siguranța circulației rutiere presupune și o infrastructură mai sigură a drumurilor, un comportament preventiv al șoferilor și mai ales un sistem de semnalizare corespunzător.

Felicit autorul raportului și Comisia Europeană pentru importanța acordată subiectului. Atunci când vorbim de victime omenești, niciun cost nu este prea mare și nu avem timp de pierdut.

**Marian Harkin**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, first of all, I want to congratulate the rapporteur, Paolo Costa, on his excellent and timely work on this compromise package that he has managed to achieve. His work will ensure the most rapid adoption of this proposal and that is important, because the sooner it is put in place, the more lives will be saved.

This is an example of how we can improve legislation already in place. All new HGVs must be fitted with blind-spot mirrors from 1 January of this year, but this proposal goes further and will ensure that all HGVs registered before 1 January 2000 will have to comply with the same regulation no later than 31 March 2009. Obviously, I would have preferred it if this regulation applied to all heavy goods vehicles on European roads but, by the time it comes into force, it will cover all heavy goods vehicles that are nine years old or older. That represents a large percentage of those vehicles on the roads and it will increase as each year goes by.

Equally, I would have preferred it if class 6 mirrors were included, but I believe that Commissioner Barrot has made a commitment to study further the case for the retrofitting of class 6 mirrors – at least that is what the Irish Permanent Representation tells me. Of course it is up to any individual country to enforce higher standards and any individual lorry driver or transport company can voluntarily fit these mirrors to their HGVs right now, as we speak. Indeed, as individual MEPs, I think we can try to influence haulage associations in our own home countries to retrofit their fleets as soon as possible. In the final analysis, no lorry driver wants to be involved in an accident, especially one that is avoidable.

Finally, on a personal level, I am especially pleased with this report as two years ago I put down an amendment to the Vatanen report on road safety to ask for the retrofitting of these mirrors and have continuously lobbied transport ministers, road haulage associations and the Commission to bring forward this proposal. As I said earlier, this is good legislation because it will significantly cut down on injuries to cyclists and pedestrians caused by HGVs and it will save hundreds of lives each year.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

*Vice-President*

**Michael Cramer**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Commission Vice-President Barrot, State Secretary Mr Daldrup, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to start by giving my sincere thanks to Mr Costa for his exemplary commitment and his excellent report. The retrofitting of this mirror on trucks could save 400 lives a year. The blind spot that has existed up to now – which could hide a whole class of schoolchildren – is vital for pedestrians and cyclists, in particular.

Parliament – particularly the major groups – disgraced itself with regard to this regulation by rejecting our amendment last year that sought to introduce this retrofitting. The Council – usually a brake pad in Europe – followed our amendment and made it possible for us to adopt the retrofitting of old trucks tomorrow. I should like to express my deep gratitude to the Council for this. Naturally we Greens would have preferred an earlier date, but we accept the compromise reached.

**Erik Meijer**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (NL) Mr President, in 2001 and again in 2005, I put questions to the Commission to draw its attention to the inadequate protection of pedestrians and cyclists against lorries, particularly lorries that take a right corner in villages and towns.



So far, the safety measures have focused on new lorries; old lorries, though, are allowed to continue to drive without mirrors until 2023, and the latest techniques in the field of mirrors and sound equipment do not have to be applied either.

Only the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark have taken their own measures that are advanced compared to European solutions, while Germany – a much bigger country – decided to adopt a ‘wait-and-see’ approach. Due to the increasing number of lorries on our roads, every delay represents an ever greater risk for traffic safety.

Today, we are finally making headway, even though this is later than my group thought possible. On account of this unnecessary delay, my group has refused to sign the compromise amendments, although we are pleased that this compromise makes unnecessary a second reading, which would have resulted in further delays. If the proposed measures prove to be inadequate still, then they will need to be amended promptly in future.

**Dieter-Lebrecht Koch (PPE-DE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, just a few weeks ago I took part once more in one of Germany’s regular round tables for long-distance truck drivers. As a result, I learned of a great many expectations these drivers have in terms of their ideas with regard to a) a functioning internal market and b) an improvement in road safety.

My impression was that our long-distance truck drivers are more reliant on Europe than the average EU citizen. Bus and truck drivers are constantly at pains to drive without accident – for which I should like to take this opportunity to thank them. To enable them to do so, however, they need – among other things – the opportunity to survey developments affecting their vehicles. What this means is that we must provide them – by law, if need be – with the technical capabilities enabling considerate driving. This is exactly what we mean to achieve with the Directive currently under discussion.

It is good that it has been compulsory since January 2007 for all new heavy goods vehicles to be equipped with lateral blind spot mirrors. It would be an illusion to believe that this blind spot can be completely eliminated with mirrors alone, however; and so I would caution against a new-found exaggerated sense of security, particularly in pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users.

Drivers of new and older vehicles alike should have the right and opportunity to use these mirrors. In this respect, the retrofitting obligation is long overdue. It will hopefully enter into force on 31 March 2009, which means that approximately 800 more people will lose their lives in the meantime, on account of our permitting such a long transitional period. Perhaps, however, hauliers, too, will take the initiative and, rather than waiting until the deadline, will retrofit their vehicles fully in line with the European Road Safety Charter far in advance of the entry into force of the Directive. I should like to pay tribute to all of them already for their act of social responsibility.

**Zita Gurmai (PSE).** – *(HU)* Making it mandatory to equip heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) with blind-spot mirrors is part of the Community transport strategy aimed at increasing the safety of transport for European citizens and first and foremost at protecting our lives.

The protection of human life and the safety of transport are fundamental considerations. As a result of inadequate rear-view mirrors more than 400 lives are lost in the Union each year – as my colleague has stated – not to mention the numbers of injured. As a result of this measure several hundred people’s lives could be saved annually, and for this reason we must take action. There are two basic problems that need to be resolved. The first is to achieve 100% visibility. The other is that old and outdated HGVs should be retrofitted with suitable mirrors, or else replaced by new vehicles. This is of fundamental importance to the 12, where a transitional period is needed, because the immediate introduction of the measures required by the directive would impose a heavy financial burden on our hauliers.

I consider it important that the scope of the measures intended to prevent accidents resulting from the blind spot on the passenger side of HGVs should be extended to the majority of HGVs. In the interest of success and effectiveness, we need to implement the measures with moderate flexibility within realistic time frames, bearing in mind the technical possibilities and circumstances. We also need to ensure that the potential market-distorting effects of the measures are avoided.

Thank you to our committee chair and rapporteur for his work; I am pleased that our amendments have also been accepted.

**Engelbert Lütke Daldrup**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the discussion has shown that all speakers share a concern about road safety. I am obliged to the House for its support, and also for the common decision to set the legislative procedure in motion quickly at first reading. It is in the interests of all of us to make the new road-safety measures on truck mirrors law as quickly as possible.

**Jacques Barrot**, *Vice-President of the Commission*. (FR) Mr President, I should like warmly to thank Mr Costa, who has played a decisive role in achieving this adoption at first reading. As he said, losing time meant losing human lives. I am grateful to Mr Costa, and also to Parliament, which has allowed the timescale for implementing the measure to be reduced. I would echo what Mr Jarzembowski has said and add that there is nothing to prevent some hauliers from taking the initiative and fitting these mirrors. I think that it is worth doing so in order to avoid casualties.

I would like to say to Mrs Harkin that the Commission will, of course, take into account the studies currently under way on Class VI mirrors. We must see exactly whether or not the use of these Class VI mirrors is effective.

I must also thank the German Presidency for having, for its part, sought this conciliation. It is in fact very important, since it will allow us rapidly to implement these new provisions.

**President.** The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow.

## 15. Public passenger transport services by rail and road (debate)

**President.** The next item is the recommendation for second reading on the Council common position for adopting a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on public passenger transport services by rail and by road and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) Nos 1191/69 and 1107/70 [13736/1/2006 C6-0042/2007 2000/0212(COD)] – Committee on Transport and Tourism. Rapporteur: Erik Meijer (A6-0131/2007).

**Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL)**, *rapporteur*. – (NL) Mr President, public transport is indispensable when it comes to limiting the space taken up by transport vehicles, to protect the environment against cars and to enable everyone to reach places of work and amenities that these days, are often located at some distance from their homes.

This scenario could not be more different from the initial days, when inventors and speculators tried to entice those customers with the greatest purchasing power to buy their new means of transport. Since the introduction of the car, this mode of transport has largely become loss-making, which is why many private entrepreneurs have since pulled out. Rather than a commercial activity, public transport has now become a core task of governments. In many cases, transport companies are owned by the state, region or municipality, and in other cases, external enterprises are compensated for their services with taxpayers' money.

Seven years ago, the Commission moved to lay down the allocation of transport zones and contracts in new Regulations. What was new was not that the European Union would be imposing rules, because that had been going on for more than 30 years, but rather that a radical measure, that had been heralded for many years, the opening up of the market, would actually be taken. All public transport for which government money is made available would need to be put out to tender for five-year periods. Interested enterprises would have to compete in order to secure such temporary contracts and the associated payment of government compensation.

Three arguments played an important role in this. The first one was the expected drop in costs, for example as a result of the drop in salary, since staff would no longer have job security. The second was that new, up-and-coming, large international enterprises would offer to take over the organisation of public transport against payment by the government. The third was the prevention of nepotism and legal cases.

As a fledgling rapporteur, I was told in 2000 that the existing situation had been at odds with the European Treaties for a long time, that all effects had been studied at great length and that this reform had to be carried out as a matter of the greatest urgency. My talks with large city councils, national associations

of municipalities, trade unions, user organisations and environmental organisations produced an entirely different picture. Small companies, including all municipal companies, were at risk of going under following a number of award rounds. As a result, small-scale public monopolies would have to make way for large-scale private monopolies, as a result of which in time, the government and user would need to pay more for less, whilst steps towards introducing free public transport and rebuilding urban tram networks could come under fire.

After a year of talks with all parties involved, I suggested to this House on 14 November 2001 that alongside the award of public service contracts to be regulated at European level, governments should remain free to organise their own public transport. This freedom of choice is the best way of getting public transport to win the battle in its competition with the motor car. This House backed me at first reading with 317 against 224 votes.

After more than five years of internal discussions, the Council of Transport Ministers laid down a common position on 11 December 2006 that is in keeping with this first reading. Seeing as the Commission adapted its original proposal, consensus was reached among the three EU institutions, which, alongside public service contracts, also leaves room for government companies and for involving third parties without the need to issue calls for tender.

Needless to say, the text that has now been proposed is meeting with objections among some of this House which in 2001, gave its support to maximum market forces and minimum government service. This has led to amendment proposals relegating the alternatives 'in-house production' and 'direct award' to exceptions that are only permitted in limited cases. I have noticed that these limitations do not form part of the informal compromise at second reading, something which was the subject of negotiation involving the German Presidency of the Council in April.

This compromise is reflected in the 17 amendments largely tabled jointly by six groups to replace the 42 amendments that were previously adopted by the Committee on Transport and Tourism. This broad consensus obviates the need for a third reading. I am indebted to the shadow rapporteurs, the Commission and the Council, not least the German Presidency, for their contribution to bringing about this agreement that is very different from the proposal from 2000.

Finally, I should like to point out that this compromise package does not provide for the obligation that Member States, in the case of contracts being switched to other companies, should protect employees against dismissal or a drop in salary. What is also missing is a ban on destructively low payments made to government companies for services rendered by them, or adequate measures to protect against poor performance on the part of contract companies. I know that at least my group will be backing proposals to this effect.

Although I do not expect the Council to veto in this respect, I doubt whether the same can be said of the fair majority requirement to limit sub-tendering to half of a contract. We will see tomorrow.

**Engelbert Lütke Daldrup**, *President-in-Office of the Council. (DE)* Mr President, Commission Vice-President Barrot, ladies and gentlemen, this part-session is very important as regards public local passenger transport. Following seven years' discussion, we are close to concluding a very important legislative procedure at second reading. The consensus we are about to reach is primarily in the interests of our citizens. We can assure them that they will be able to enjoy attractive, efficient public local passenger transport services in future, too. An integrated range of services with just one ticket and a coordinated timetable is the standard we have set ourselves, and which the public rightly expects.

This consensus is also in the interests of all public and private transport undertakings, who are to be given a new legal framework at long last, giving them greater legal certainty and thus also planning security for the future. Finally, the consensus is in the interests of the authorities responsible for public local passenger transport, as the new Regulation strengthens local self-administration.

There is another beneficiary, and that is our environment. Attractive, efficient public local passenger transport means a sustainable improvement in the transport situation in our towns and cities, and also in the climate impact on our conurbations.

If the House succeeds in adopting the compromise package by the required majority in tomorrow's vote, this will represent a great success for us all.

The fact that we are now close to a consensus is thanks to the rapporteur, Mr Meijer, in particular. The Chairman of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, Mr Costa, and also the shadow rapporteurs Mr Grosch, Mr Piecyk and Mr Cramer, also made important contributions to the struggle to reach an overall compromise.

As a matter of fact, nothing now stands in the way of a consensus; which is undoubtedly related to the fact that, in its common position adopted in December 2006, the Council had already taken account of a number of amendments by Parliament. These cover the following three points, in particular. Firstly, the increase in the scope for action at local level. The passenger-transport authorities now have the choice between a competitive tendering procedure, the use of their own company to provide transport services, and the direct award of a contract. This fundamental principle has not been further called into question. Secondly, the inclusion of quality and social standards. Here, too, there is agreement that the competent authority must meet its responsibilities. Thirdly, the protection of small and medium-sized enterprises. We want to ensure that SMEs will be able to provide their services close to the citizen in future, too, instead of possibly being swallowed up by large international companies.

Particularly helpful as regards the consensus is the fact that we – Parliament, the Commission and the Council – have developed a common basic political understanding of public local passenger transport. This kind of transport cannot be left to the market alone, but rather belongs to the field of services of general interest. For this reason, we need a market organisation that strengthens local decision-making responsibility and guarantees controlled competition. Adequate services of general interest – including in the field of public local passenger transport – are a fundamental precondition for the functioning of the European social model. This also includes social and territorial cohesion in Europe, which cannot be preserved without efficient local passenger transport.

There is also common ground on the issue of the urgent need for legal certainty. Numerous contentious award decisions have shown insufficient clarity in existing law. This will soon change thanks to the new Regulation.

Finally, the new Regulation clarifies the financial relationship between contracting entity and contractor. The party who orders something has to be the one to pay for it. This must not result in either overcompensation or undercompensation.

This has given rise to the question, affecting all of us, as to how – despite the short discussion time – we can reach a consensus during the second reading and thus avoid conciliation? The results of the informal dialogue between Parliament, the Commission and the Council are now before us, and present us with the great opportunity to really arrive at a consensus at second reading.

Right to the end we were still grappling with three political requirements: shortening of transitional periods, further strengthening of SMEs and introduction of a self-provision quota in case of subcontracting to third parties.

Regarding the first of these, our views have come closer together. The transitional period has been reduced from 12 to 10 years, and the deadline for entry into force of the Regulation from three years to 24 months.

We have also reached agreement on the second point. The threshold value for SMEs has been raised slightly. Here, the Council has gone some way towards accommodating Parliament's demands.

The third point – the so-called 'self-provision quota' – remained controversial right to the end. I hope I can say this in the past tense. The views of Parliament and the Council on this important point, the purpose of which is the prevention of social dumping, came into line at the last second. The compromise now reads that, if subcontracting takes place, a substantial part of the services must be performed by the main contractor itself. This affects Amendment 66 to Article 4 and Amendment 67 to Article 5.

I believe that this is a good solution, and am much obliged to all those who contributed to it.

The way has thus been paved for the adoption of the legislation at second reading. If the House votes in favour of the compromise package tomorrow, the Council, too, will give its assent.

**Jacques Barrot**, *Vice-President of the Commission*. (FR) Mr President, Mr Meijer, ladies and gentlemen, if we are ready to reach an agreement at second reading on a proposal as sensitive as this, it is in large

part due to the tenacity and constructive attitude of your rapporteur, Mr Meijer, whom I would especially like to thank.

I shall simply mention two points on the substance of the dossier. This text recognises for the first time the freedom of local authorities to decide how public transport is organised. Thus, we can allow decentralised bodies more room for manoeuvre, which is something worth emphasising on the subject of a Community text. This major development is in response to the demand very clearly expressed by the European Parliament at first reading.

Secondly, the current regulation is more than 35 years old and it had become completely unsuitable. Because of this, it is public transport as a whole that is suffering from major legal uncertainty. This legal uncertainty gives rise to disputes. It compromises development in the sector, since the municipal authorities and operators are denied visibility and certainty when it comes to making what are often very substantial industrial and financial investments.

Today, after seven years of procedure, at the end of three informal trialogues, we have a good agreement within our reach. The compromise between the Council and the rapporteur respects the balance and the objectives of the Commission's revised proposal and meets the European Parliament's main demands. This is the case particularly for the limitation of the periods of entry into force and of the transitional periods. On the other hand, this text makes provision for a special scheme for small businesses and family businesses by defining the possibilities for subcontracting.

With regard to subcontracting, I have just been informed that two oral amendments have been tabled that propose, Mr President, compromise wording. The words 'major part' would be replaced by the words 'substantial part'. It appears that the purpose of these amendments is to make it possible, Minister, to reach an agreement with the Council at second reading. The Commission can only support this objective. As far as the wording of the amendments is concerned, the Commission is obviously flexible. It can accept this last minute compromise if the compromise makes it possible to finalise an agreement.

Once again, I would thank Parliament for this work, as well as the Presidency of the Council, and I very much hope that we shall at last be able to bring this essential report to a conclusion. I am preparing a Green Paper on urban mobility, so it is very satisfying for me to see matters progressing in this way.

**Mathieu Grosch, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.** – (DE) Mr President, public passenger transport is used by millions of citizens, and we hope a few more after tomorrow. The European Parliament, including our group, has not taken this subject lightly. We have been aware of the conflict between tradition and structures of various kinds in many countries on the one hand, and the new challenges of mobility on the other.

There is one point I should like the House to consider. First reading 2001, common position adopted 2006: when discontinuity is discussed in future, the Council will hopefully bear this in mind, otherwise we shall be looking at a generation rather than a parliamentary term for certain dossiers in future.

There is one consolation, however. As I see it, account was taken of many aspects and proposals by Parliament at first reading. Local and regional authorities' freedom to issue warnings was addressed. It was important to include these emphases there, and to take account of control of internal operators and also, at last, of the principle of reciprocity.

Parliament wanted to emphasise additional important points at second reading. There is one thing I should like to say first of all, and that is that what goes for us should also go for the Council. The good compromise now present must not be allowed to fail for both sides for the sake of one word. However tomorrow's vote turns out, I am convinced that good sense will prevail, that this is a good compromise whether or not it is amended. We have shortened the transitional periods, and you know why: this has already taken long enough.

We have improved legal protection, we have tried to improve protection of small and medium-sized enterprises. Why is that? It is because they provide services and contribute to the development of economic structures in certain regions, and because they are unable to simply withstand general competition. On the subject of subcontracting, we want to ensure that this does not lead to social dumping and is not used to circumvent the rules on competition.

Those were our objectives. I believe that, with its proposal, Parliament has created legal certainty and found a very good, sensible path between monopolies on the one hand and uncontrolled liberalism on

the other. I hope that the three partners will give their assent accordingly tomorrow – and it looks as though they will.

**Brian Simpson**, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – Mr President, I should like to thank the rapporteur, not only for his work on this dossier, but also for his perseverance in bringing this report to its second reading. Clearly, this process is required to bring about a fair and level playing field in the area of local public transport contracts. However, the PSE Group still has some concerns, especially in the area of quality of service offered by transport undertakings and especially in the area of bus transport in some of the Member States.

In this regard, we believe that Parliament, in its pursuit of liberalisation in this area, may have forgotten about the importance of providing quality services and I would hope that in subsequent revisions of this legislation, the issue of quality and the enforcement of quality is given serious consideration. I appreciate that what we have today is a first step and that the road to this second reading has been a long one, but we must recognise the progress that has been made and hope that the agreement between the Council and Parliament can be reached quickly. My group will do all that we can to vote only for those amendments that fall within the compromise deal done with the Council, despite our reservations. For us, the alternative will be conciliation.

What people require is an efficient, reliable, affordable and safe public transport system that places on public bodies a responsibility to ensure that those criteria are met. It also places responsibility on transport operators to deliver, and frankly, that is where the challenges will lie. Whilst it is right to put into place the framework for the issuing of public transport contracts, we cannot allow standards to slip and we must ensure that the procedures are fair and transparent. Hopefully, the framework will soon be in place. Now let us work on the quality of service to be provided.

**Paolo Costa**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, Commissioner, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, almost seven years have been devoted to drafting the report in question. Have they been well spent? They have been seven years following which Mr Simpson still has to talk in terms of our hopefully obtaining something better in a subsequent revision, and following which we need a last-minute amendment in order to try to obtain a compromise. It has taken seven years or, rather, seven years and two months to resolve the issue. I do not believe that this is a problem of life or death. Naturally, Parliament will have its say, and I trust that it will be possible for some of the things hopefully said by Parliament tomorrow to be accepted by the Council, so avoiding the need for conciliation.

It has to be said that I do not feel able to say that we have done a thoroughly good job. Are we able to say that we have done a good job when the reserved right to award contracts directly is so extensive as in fact to eliminate or hugely reduce contracting out on a genuinely competitive basis? Do we, indeed, face the possibility of the in-house awarding of contracts even for services administered on a monopoly basis at national level? Is it possible that the in-house contractor or manager will subcontract services out ‘substantially’ or ‘significantly’ – these being adverbs not defined in law? Is it possible that such a subcontractor, even without a tender, might continue more than 50% of the time merely because he is promising investment? In short, are we likely to be paying too little for rail services in third countries, making it difficult to supply said services? Can it really be that there was no possibility of discussing this problem too and that no solutions can be found to it? Do we really still have to avoid finding adequate solutions to these aspects too?

I want, then, to make a final heartfelt appeal not only to all my fellow Members but also to the Council and the Commission: why cannot we try to make this last effort to provide a thoroughly genuine, reliable and useful solution capable of going beyond the vague terms ‘significant’ and ‘substantial’ which, in my opinion, are really not commensurate with the legal basis of the issue? In no way are we complying with the fourth criterion set out in the Altmark judgment. I really do perceive in all this a degree of haste that, after seven wasted years, seems to me to be unjustified by the facts.

We have tabled a number of amendments designed to correct these structures. We do not think that they need all to be agreed to, but if some of them were accepted we should succeed, after seven years and two months, in obtaining an outcome certainly better than that which we should otherwise obtain with the documents we have before us.

**Leopold Józef Rutowicz, on behalf of the UEN Group.** – (PL) The new Regulation of the European Parliament on public passenger transport services by rail and road will be very important, particularly to local communities. I would like to thank Mr Erik Meijer for his contribution to this report.

Harmonising the regulations on service contract procurement should guarantee transparency, competition, the proper sharing of costs and funding. It affects primarily public transport and the services provided by small and medium sized enterprises for local communities, which need subsidies. Extending the contract periods (to 8 years for bus services and 15 years for rail services) is a good idea, as otherwise the investments involved in these services would be too risky and unprofitable for small and medium-sized service providers.

The definition of the term ‘internal operator’ or ‘internal service provider’ also needs to be fine-tuned. The proposed mechanism of compensation is quite complex and will need quite a lot of effort to be correctly implemented. I believe that the regulation adopted will serve us all well.

**Michael Cramer, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.** – (DE) Mr President, in taking tomorrow’s decision, the EU – according to the Mayor of Munich, Christian Ude – is making a deep obeisance to decrepit structures. The heavy rail transport services provided by regional and suburban railways are being taken out of the regulation, as are large-scale municipal transport services in the major cities. The threshold for small and medium-sized enterprises is several times higher than the threshold laid down in European law on the award of public service contracts. The effect in Germany, for example, will be that more than 80% of transport services will not be covered by this regulation. Our amendment, according to which social, environmental and quality standards would be decisive factors in tendering procedures, has been rejected. That is in the interests neither of passengers nor – Mr Daldrup – of the environment.

Why have a European regulation that only applies to a minority of services? This could also have been achieved through subsidiarity. Anyone who agrees to a transitional period of 30 years – which was the original proposal – clearly does not see any need to act. Despite the fact that the European Parliament has halved this period, we Greens voted against this regulation in the Committee on Transport and Tourism. It is not a compromise and does not change a great deal, which is why we opposed it.

**Johannes Blokland, on behalf of the IND/DEM Group.** – (NL) Mr President, the process that we are about to complete is one that has lasted over six years. I am pleased about the agreement with the Council. Although a few aspects of it leave something to be desired, the compromise we now have is an acceptable one.

I am particularly pleased that Member States and regions can, to some extent, decide for themselves how they will organise their public transport. In that way, any competent authority can tailor the compromise to suit its own situation best, which can have a positive effect on the use of public transport.

In order to be able to realise this proposal, we will need to confine ourselves to the elements that have been agreed with the Council. I would therefore like to urge everyone to back only those specific amendments, and leave the other points for another time.

I should like to finish off by thanking Mr Meijer for the commitment and dedication he has recently shown to this. It wraps up neatly our cooperation in the area of transport over the past 25 years.

**Georg Jarzembowski (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, Mr Vice-President of the Commission, Mr Daldrup, allow me first of all, on behalf of myself and my colleague Mrs Jeggle, to thank all of those involved – the Council, the Commission and Parliament – for reaching this good compromise after seven years. I should particularly like to thank Mr Piecyk, who is unable to be here today but who played an instrumental role in the negotiations.

I personally believe that we are creating legal certainty and that we are striking a balanced compromise between the interests of public and private transport services. Cities and regions are at liberty to award contracts to their own companies without issuing calls for tender. On the other hand, however, we make it a condition that as monopolies – possibly with monopoly profits in other fields – they do not compete with private contractors for the contracts in question. For this reason I believe that this is a balanced compromise.

Mr Daldrup, this is not only about high-quality passenger transport services; it is also about high-quality transport services at prices that passengers can afford. In recent years, this aspect has been somewhat

overlooked in some cities and communes. This new legislation will enable us to take greater account of it.

Of the various different points for which we have also won agreement, I should like to refer to just two. You said earlier that in your view 'the substantial part' that has to be carried out by the principal contractor in the case of subcontracts was a social dumping issue. If you really have social dumping in your sights then you need to insist that internal operators perform 100% of the services themselves and do not make use of cheaper subcontractors. Be that as it may, my group stands by the compromise that has been negotiated, including the 'substantial part'. We will see what Parliament decides tomorrow. We will keep our word, however, as otherwise it becomes impossible to enter into compromises with each other. Personally, I also believe that it is particularly important that we have improved the level of legal protection and that companies that believe they have been disadvantaged have quick and effective means of accessing this legal protection.

Finally, I should like to make a personal comment to Mr Daldrup in his capacity as representative of the German Presidency. I hope that you will also take the necessary steps in German legislative procedure to incorporate all of the measures that we adopt tomorrow in full into the Law on the Carriage of Persons (*Personenbeförderungsgesetz*) and that you will not try to deviate from it because of pressure from certain public companies. The measures that we have decided on are good and we should transpose them into national law as they stand.

**Gilles Savary (PSE).** – (*FR*) Mr President, I personally shall not take the responsibility for opposing the compromise, because the first reading has lasted seven years. After a very chaotic procedure, we had better not have a second reading that lasts as long.

I should like to say first that, on the whole, I am satisfied with this text. We needed legal certainty and not to leave the decision to the judges all the time. We have also obtained, for the first time, recognition of the free administration of local authorities.

For the rest, this is a text that is nonetheless very complicated, which proceeds from a compromise on the protection of rail transport for some, and of joint local and regional urban transport for others. I am not sure that this is very easy to interpret, I am not sure that this is simply a win-win game, and I am not sure that we ought not to come back to it pretty quickly in order to clarify, for example, what is called cantonnement, what are called public-private partnerships, and what is called subcontracting without a tender process, which are all so many loopholes that make it possible to avoid playing the game by the common rules.

**Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert (ALDE).** – (*NL*) Mr President, there has been much interference on the line for years where the European requirements with regard to more market forces in local public passenger transport is concerned. Europe was going to make public tendering compulsory, but it never got that far. As many fellow-Members have already said, for no fewer than seven years, people have debated, squabbled and, even worse, occasionally ignored the subject altogether. Few Member States felt like getting their fingers burnt on this issue. The apparently growing legal uncertainty in the sector appeared to make little impression.

In order to break the deadlock, the Commission launched a fresh proposal, and with good reason. In recent years, the European market for public passenger transport has changed a great deal in terms of character, and rulings by the Court of Justice have also demonstrated that a new legal framework is simply imperative.

From a liberal point of view, the agreement under discussion will not bring universal happiness. The efficiency battle, which can be won precisely by means of market forces, remains underexposed, and in the area of legal certainty, there are definitely a few question marks to be placed.

Although I would obviously thank the rapporteur for his commitment, it should be clear that I definitely do not see eye to eye with him where his remarks on market forces are concerned. It is precisely in those cases where market forces have been introduced that more transport, more quality, can be offered at a better price. The figures speak for themselves. Anyway, we cannot turn the clock back now.

What is positive about this proposal is that the provision of public transport services and also the underhand award of contracts are subject to strict conditions and criteria in order to prevent distortion of competition. In short, either you are a market player and you compete, or you are a monopolist and



limit yourself to your own protecting market. This strikes me as a clear basis to work from for the time being.

**Reinhard Rack (PPE-DE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, a happy outcome is worth waiting for, at least so the proverb goes. How far this applies to the case in question remains to be seen. It has taken a long time. As several speakers have mentioned, it has taken between six and seven years, and we should not forget that there are also long transitional periods on top of that. This legislative process is therefore difficult to market in the media. We should be aware of this fact. Perhaps that is also why we are dealing with this issue during a night sitting, but of course this has already become the rule for proposed legislation. Nevertheless, we may achieve a good result, at least on a few important key points.

Our principal purpose has been to simplify the provisions, make them more flexible and take greater account of the principle of subsidiarity and transparency in the procedure. In my view it is also important to consider how this will fit in with the third railway package in terms of both timing and content. A further important point is the decision of general principle that public local passenger transport services should be treated no differently from normal rail services. Key provisions here are in particular the granting of financial compensation for the performance of public service obligations on the one hand, and on the other hand the fact that local authorities on the spot should be free to decide how they organise their public passenger transport services: whether they want to outsource them or whether they actually want to provide them themselves.

It is also positive that we have given a special opportunity – in good European Parliament tradition – to the genuine small and medium-sized enterprises in this sector. I can therefore only hope that we will also agree on a reasonable solution to the issue of the award of subcontracts tomorrow. If we do, there will be no further obstacle to concluding the European legislative process successfully. Then it will be over to the national legislators, and hopefully they will not delay in doing their duty.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE).** – Regulamentul privind serviciile publice de transport va avea implicații asupra tuturor celor 490 de milioane de cetățeni ai Uniunii Europene. Importanța subiectului a generat dezbateri timp de șapte ani și îmbunătățiri succesive ale propunerii din anul 2000. Având în vedere că doar aplicarea principiilor de piață ar putea duce la reducerea numărului de rute și a frecvenței acestora, competiția reglementată introdusă de regulamentul în domeniul serviciilor publice feroviare și rutiere va permite atât sectorului public, cât și celui privat, să îmbunătățească calitatea și securitatea serviciilor în transportul public de călători.

Referitor la regulile de compensare financiară pentru obligațiile privind serviciul public de transport de călători, este important ca autoritățile competente să finanțeze în mod corespunzător obligațiile privind serviciul universal de transport public de călători și costul utilizării infrastructurii de transport aferente. În acest domeniu, este nevoie de investiții și, de aceea, se impune o durată minimă a contractelor. În acest context, este important să se asigure condiții egale de competiție între companiile private și autoritățile publice și operatorii interni ai acestora prin definiții riguroase și condiții clare privind calitatea și frecvența serviciilor publice de transport de călători.

Autoritățile publice responsabile trebuie, însă, să introducă și garanții suplimentare pentru subcontractori, pentru a evita discriminarea în favoarea principalului contractor, în special în cazurile în care contractorul principal a primit un contract direct, fără organizarea unei licitații. Închei prin a sublinia importanța competiției și, mai ales, a calității serviciilor de transport public de călători. Felicit autorul raportului și Comisia Europeană pentru importanța acordată acestui subiect.

**Gabriele Albertini (PPE-DE).** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the regulation on public passenger transport services by road and rail, on which we are preparing to vote, concerns 80% of passenger rail transport and is extremely important for the development of European rail transport, characterised as it is by very diverse national situations.

With the regulation having remained blocked in the Council for almost seven years, I can understand the desire of many of my fellow Members to conclude at second reading, thus avoiding the conciliation procedure and the informal negotiations with the Council that are held to that end.

I should like to congratulate my colleague, Mr Grosch, and our coordinator, Mr Jarzembowski, on the substantial results achieved. However, I regret the fact that the principle of reciprocity, which our group had already firmly supported at the time of the third rail package, should not have been included among the compromises. In fact, in my country, Italy, public transport services by rail are liberalised and are

awarded through the tender procedure. In various European countries, national and regional transport operates instead according to a legal monopoly system, a situation that may continue even after the current regulation has been adopted.

There will therefore be market asymmetries and undue benefits for businesses that operate in markets closed to competition but that will be able to compete in open markets. In this regard, I myself, my colleague, Mr de Grandes Pascual, and other Spanish and Italian colleagues from our group, have tabled two amendments – Amendments 43 and 45 – which include clauses on reciprocity with respect to businesses operating in national monopoly regimes. It will thus be impossible not to support the amendments that amend the proposal along these lines. However, regardless of the outcome of the vote on the individual amendments, I will not fail to guarantee my support for the report in the final vote.

**Christine De Veyrac (PPE-DE).** – (FR) Mr President, Mr Barrot, Mr Lütke Daldrup, ladies and gentlemen, as several of our fellow Members have emphasised, this text has been under discussion in the European institutions for almost seven years now, and that is far too long. We need to reach an agreement today: it is essential for the organisation of local public transport in the European Union.

Allow me warmly to congratulate the rapporteur, Mr Meijer, as well as the shadow rapporteurs, Mr Grosch and Mr Piecyk, even if he is not present this evening. I congratulate them for having negotiated over the last few months with the Member States and for having succeeded in reaching an agreement with the Council on this text. I think that the compromise that has been reached ensures a good balance between controlled and progressive opening up to competition and respect for public service demands. That is why I believe that we must support this agreement and so avoid pointlessly prolonging the discussions, which would be inevitable if we went for conciliation.

Of course, this agreement is not perfect, but it is a good compromise that should make it possible to give real legal certainty to all the transport operators concerned and to establish a modernised framework that is conducive to the development of public transport in Europe. I really hope that we shall be able to adopt it tomorrow by a large majority, thereby giving public transport services for people travelling by road and rail a harmonised and balanced framework.

**Engelbert Lütke Daldrup, President-in-Office of the Council.** (DE) Mr President, Commissioner Barrot, ladies and gentlemen, the debate has been encouraging and gives us reason to hope that after a long period of debates and negotiations an agreement will be reached tomorrow. We have a good compromise on the table. No doubt everyone here has parts of the text where they would have liked to see something different and parts that they are more or less keen on. It is always the case with compromises, that we have to give ground to each other. We must bear in mind that companies, towns and cities and above all the public are waiting for legal certainty and certainty as a basis on which to plan, so that they know how we are going to move forward on public local passenger transport services in our cities and regions.

I should like to express my grateful thanks to the rapporteur, Mr Meijer, the shadow rapporteurs, Mr Grosch and Mr Piecyk, and the many others who have contributed to this endeavour. It has been a long and at times arduous debate. I believe that we have achieved a good result that we can also justify to the outside world, and I hope that tomorrow both decisions are made and that we succeed in agreeing a joint solution in this second reading.

**Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the Commission.** (FR) Mr President, I too would like to thank Parliament for its work and to thank also the Presidency of the Council. We are, I think, approaching a solution that will enable us to have rules that are clearer and more balanced for this public transport sector. Certainly, any compromise is only one step, but it is an important step inasmuch as it allows progressive opening up and, at the same time, it gives a basis to the notion of public service in order to put an end to damaging legal uncertainty. Finally, as I underlined at the beginning, it makes it possible to give local authorities more room for manoeuvre, thereby establishing the notion of subsidiarity.

I should like to add that, in the name of subsidiarity, the Commission did not feel it was necessary, in its initial proposal, to lay down quality criteria. Nothing, however, will prevent the granting authority from laying down criteria that the candidate transport operator will have to meet.

I think that we must now take advantage of this urban mobility policy to ensure the quality of transport in our towns and conurbations. I too, therefore, am hoping for an agreement tomorrow so as to enable

us to get through this next step and, once again, I am grateful to Mr Meijer and to the shadow rapporteurs, Mr Piecyk and Mr Grosch.

**President.** The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow.

**Written statement (Rule 142 of the Rules of Procedure)**

**Gábor Harangozó (PSE), in writing.** – The current Community regulatory framework drawn up back in 1969 was designed for a public transport industry not yet facing the challenges and opportunities of a single European market in the sector. It is therefore obsolete. In spite of the failure to reform in 2000, this new proposal is to be understood as a genuine step forward for the public transport sector. The recent opening of the sector to competition needs to be tackled definitively on an EU-wide basis. It is indeed high time to secure clear Community rules to ensure fair and transparent competition for a modernised rail and road transport sector. With the harmonisation of key aspects and the protection of both operators' and passengers' interests, we should allow the sector to become more competitive. Not only should the sector be more competitive, but by updating the regulatory framework our aim should also be to enhance the quality and the attractiveness of public transport in the Union as a whole by introducing controlled competition. It is in this respect that I strongly support the Commission proposal and the improvements proposed by the amendments tabled by the Committee on Transport and Tourism.

**16. One-minute speeches (Rule 144)**

**President.** The next item is one-minute speeches.

**György Schöpflin (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, the mounting crisis in relations between Estonia and Russia affects us all. What we have is a clear case of undue pressure by a large country against a small one. This is the kind of behaviour from which the European Union protects small states. Russia has persistently accused Estonia of nurturing something that it calls 'fascism', without producing a shred of evidence. The campaign brings the very idea of anti-fascism into disrepute, above all because Russia itself is behaving like a fascist state. The campaign dishonours the memory of those who really did fight fascism and especially those who gave their lives in that struggle, millions of Russians included. Anti-fascism means democracy and equality of respect for all. Russia, by contradicting this, is reviving fascism and thereby turning into a threat to Europe as a whole.

**IN THE CHAIR: MRS WALLIS**

*Vice-President*

**Proinsias De Rossa (PSE).** – Madam President, I would like to raise a serious matter of EU funding being misused, in my view, for the destruction of archaeological heritage in Ireland. I appeal to Commissioner Dimas to intervene directly with Minister Roche in Ireland to ensure that these subsidies, which are being provided to build the N3 motorway in County Meath, are not facilitating the destruction of a recently discovered Neolithic site – a 'woodhenge'. This is an extremely important site, quite close to the historic Tara Hill. The Director of the National Museum in Ireland has called for a complete archaeological excavation, but, given that Minister Roche has been deaf to all expert advice so far, there is a real risk that this unique Neolithic site will be lost. In view of the European investment in this motorway project, it is essential that the Commission step in to ensure that a significant part of not only Irish heritage, but by definition also part of European heritage, is properly excavated, and that if necessary the N3 motorway be reconfigured to achieve that objective.

**Marco Pannella (ALDE).** – *(IT)* Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that we are about to witness a dishonourable – I repeat: dishonourable – episode in the European Union, the responsibility for which rests primarily with the Council and with the inertia of the Commission, which are in breach of compulsory mandates that we have given them. In December 1994 we were defeated by a mere eight votes when the universal moratorium on the death penalty was about to be established. Since then, for 13 years, the overwhelming majority of the UN has been ready to vote for this great principle of civilisation. Since then the European Union has prevented them from voting.

Parliament has said during this part-session that the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) that will take place on Monday 14 May is probably preparing, once again, to betray the mandate entrusted to it and to postpone for yet another year this certain victory.

Madam President, I would ask you to urge the President of Parliament to deal promptly with the issue.

**Zdzisław Zbigniew Podkański (UEN).** – *(PL)* Madam President, Poland's fruit growers have suffered yet another setback. Poor protection of the internal market against excessive imports and dumping has been compounded by frost which has destroyed some 90% of this year's harvest. The losses, estimated at some 1.5 billion EUR, are beyond the means of the Polish Government and insurance companies. Low returns on fruit farming, particularly soft fruits, and especially since Poland's accession to the EU, has meant a reluctance to insure harvests, both by insurance companies and by the farmers themselves, who simply cannot afford it. This situation requires immediate assistance from the European Union, both emergency aid and long-term aid for the coming years. If not, Poland's farmers will be condemned to bankruptcy, and the EU to importing its fruit from third countries.

**Gerard Batten (IND/DEM).** – Madam President, the European Commission has wisely dropped plans to enforce complete metrication in the UK. It realises that nothing would be more likely to ferment rebellion against the European Union amongst the general population than for them to lose the pound, the pint and the mile. This is a victory for Britain, but it is only a skirmish that has been won. The European Union has made a tactical withdrawal in order to fight more strategic battles later. The struggle for British independence is still being waged and the final victory, when Britain leaves the European Union, is still some way off. The next big confrontation will be over the revised European Constitution. At this point I would like to add my voice to those calling for a posthumous royal pardon to be granted to the metric martyr, Steve Thoburn, who was convicted in the year 2000 for the heinous criminal offence of selling bananas in pounds and ounces.

**Hans-Peter Martin (NI).** – *(DE)* Madam President, I should like to inform the public and those responsible of an outrageous case of obstructing the work of an independent Member of the European Parliament. In Austria, the top candidate of the Liberal Forum at the last student elections, Martin Ehrenhauser, received a letter on 20 April 2007 stating: 'We are offering you a job as a contract agent from 15 May 2007 working for the political group of Non-attached Members in the European Parliament.' Mr Ehrenhauser travelled here. Suddenly the letter is no longer valid. The reason: a political instruction from the very top, from the new Secretary General, Harald Rømer.

This is unacceptable. It was a bolt from the blue and in this case it affects me. You will be aware that every Member has the right to work with at least one member of parliamentary staff in his group in his mother tongue. I am the only one who is denied this privilege, because there is a desire to make the work of an unpleasant critic more difficult. At the same time, it is precisely the large groups here that allocate themselves legions of staff who are loyal to their party. Altogether Parliament employs thousands of staff.

I call on the Bureau and those responsible to investigate this case. This kind of thing is detrimental to Parliament and it is also detrimental to our understanding of democracy.

**Jaroslav Zvěřina (PPE-DE).** – *(CS)* Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, in these post-modern times, marriage is becoming less and less popular, especially among young people, yet it remains the foundation of the family. It is thus in the interest of the Member States and of the EU as a whole to support marriage. Following our accession to the EU, I frequently hear complaints about the long-term complications people face when they marry citizens of other Member States.

It is hard for EU citizens to understand that there is no agreement between EU Member States on the mutual recognition of official documents. Men and women wanting to get married have to spend time and effort going around numerous offices to complete bureaucratic formalities in order to make the wedding possible. For me too as an MEP it is hard to understand why the offices of one Member State refuse to recognise marriage certificates or confirmations of citizenship as stated in normal documents. Young people find the process of obtaining current documents and having them super-legalised especially arduous. I am under no illusions about our ability to harmonise codes. Nevertheless our citizens certainly deserve some simple measures aimed at simplifying those laws.

**Eugenijus Gentvilas (ALDE).** – *(LT)* Russia is behaving disgracefully in Estonia and is not even trying to hide its behaviour. The Russians have commenced an economic blockade against a European Union

Member State. In the past, Russia has behaved more subtly in Latvia or Lithuania, or in other countries, which is perhaps why the European Union has been nonchalant about most of Russia's actions. After the events in Estonia I urge you to reconsider the European Union's relations with Russia. Strategic partnership should be replaced by principled, honourable and pragmatic cooperation.

In my opinion, it is essential to postpone the 18 May meeting in Samara. We need to lay out the European Union's opinion to Russia on what conditions are essential for such meetings to be able to take place again in the future. Javier Solana must go to Moscow and clearly state the European Union's position. Europe has enough arguments. My fear is that some European Union leaders will want to have yet another photo opportunity with the antidemocratic Putin, rather than defend the European Union's democratic values.

**Malcolm Harbour (PPE-DE).** – Madam President, I start by saying to you – and I hope you will convey this to the President – how much I enjoyed the initiative he took in inviting Nobel Prize winners here this afternoon and particularly hearing from distinguished scientists speaking to us in this Chamber. We have many issues to deal with, colleagues, involving science and technology and we do not have enough dialogue with the science and technology community. Through this speech tonight, I would like to draw to the attention of all my colleagues the fact that the Parliament's own Science and Technology Assessment Unit, of which I am privileged to be Vice-President, with my colleague Mr Busquin as President, is holding a major event in the June Strasbourg week, called the STOA Experience. There will be exhibitions of recent work and many distinguished scientists will meet and talk to Members about the projects we have under way. I hope many colleagues will take a real opportunity to step up dialogue between ourselves in this Parliament and the leaders in the science and technology community within the European Union.

**President.** Thank you for drawing that to our attention, Mr Harbour.

**John Attard-Montalto (PSE).** – Madam President, I would like to emphasise a point which is not universally known in the European Union. This is the fact that – with the exception of Denmark – cars are most expensive in my country, the smallest country in the EU. This is mainly due to the fact that there is an extraordinary tax called registration tax, which is sometimes higher than the value of the car itself. This means that, in a country where wages are on a par at most with middle-income Europe, the price of vehicles, whether new or second hand, is exorbitant. This creates undue stress for middle- and lower-income families when it comes to changing their cars. It also affects the whole idea of world climate change. Although Malta is small, car owners find it terribly difficult to change their cars to more efficient energy-saving cars and those which produce less exhaust.

**Marian Harkin (ALDE).** – Madam President, as an Irish Member I am delighted to have one minute to add my voice to the many voices who celebrate and applaud what happened yesterday in Belfast. Indeed it is fitting that earlier today we congratulated Betty Williams, Mairead Corrigan, David Trimble and John Hume, all Nobel Prize winners, for their contribution to peace-building and peacemaking in Northern Ireland. Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan worked within their communities and that is where real peace building is achieved, between people, between families, between neighbours and between communities. But we also need political leadership to drive the process forward and today we honoured two of those politicians, David Trimble and John Hume. There were many other politicians at different levels who took risks for peace and they too deserve our applause.

As we celebrate 50 years of the EU, it is most appropriate to recognise that the EU has also played an important role in the peace process in Northern Ireland, giving us moral and economic support. For that support I believe I can say on my own behalf and on behalf of Irish people, thank you to the EU for believing in us and supporting us on the road to peace.

**Antonio De Blasio (PPE-DE).** – *(HU)* Over the past six years, factories on Austrian territory have been continuously polluting the waters of the Rába River. The Rába crosses the Hungarian border already filled with polluted, foamy water. The Hungarian Minister of Environmental Protection, who stepped down yesterday, gave the Austrian factories until 1 May to stop the pollution, but no progress has so far been made. On 1 April, together with my colleague I personally delivered to the Austrian authorities the petition of the Hungarian delegation of the People's Party, calling upon the provincial and federal government to take the necessary steps. To date we have received no answer to our petition.

The Austro-Hungarian Water Commission, which years ago granted the factories an operating licence, is currently holding its annual meeting. This commission is made up of delegates by the governments of the two States, and the revocation of water rights licences likewise falls within their competence. We must do everything possible to stop this harmful, cross-border environmental pollution; therefore I call upon the Austro-Hungarian Water Commission, and thus indirectly on the governments of the two Member States in question – in which I request the assistance of Parliament – to revoke, effective immediately, the water rights licences of those factories which are polluting the river.

**Marios Matsakis (ALDE).** – Madam President, as we celebrate 50 years of European values and fundamental principles, democracy in a candidate Member State is struggling to survive. The elected Government of Turkey is openly threatened by the country's biggest enemy, its army generals. The Turkish army, instead of protecting democracy, is set on a course to destroy it. Irrespective of our personal stance on Turkey's accession to the EU, it is to our benefit and to the benefit of the Turkish people that Turkey continues its reform process. It is our duty to support the political powers of Turkey, represented today by Mr Erdogan's Government, in their fight against the anachronistic armed forces, represented by Chief of Staff General Buyukanit. I call upon the President of this House to make a statement as soon as possible to express our strong support for the Government of Turkey and our dismay at the interference of the army in the politics of the country.

The European Parliament's message to the Turkish army generals should be loud and clear: 'Keep to your barracks and stop your war on democracy'.

**Milan Gaľa (PPE-DE).** – (SK) I have been following the situation concerning political prisoners in Cuba for quite some time. It was with pleasure that I received the news that several opposition groups had recently come up with a joint declaration in which they committed themselves to a united approach in the struggle for a peaceful transition to democracy on the island.

The signatories of the declaration include such well-known dissidents such as Oswaldo Payá from the Christian Democratic Movement for Liberation, Elizardo Sanchez from the Cuban Human Rights and National Reconciliation Commission, and Martha Beatriz Roque and René Gómez Manzano from the Assembly for the Promotion of Civil Society. The document was also signed by the members of the organisation set up by the wives of political prisoners, known as the Ladies in White.

A unified peaceful opposition is essential to pursuing the changes that are needed by the people. One must not overlook the fact that, despite some political and philosophical differences, these groups share the same goals, including respect for human rights, reconciliation, the release of political prisoners, non-violence and cooperation.

**Zita Pleštinská (PPE-DE).** – (SK) The purpose of my presentation is to warn European consumers who wear Chinese textile products. Regrettably, many of those products are coloured using azocolourants that do not meet the standards set in Directive 2002/61/EC on azocolourants.

When people wear such textile products, the azocolourants penetrate the body like silent killers and cause cancer. Just as recently as May 2006 the laboratories of an authorised entity operating in the town of Svit, Slovakia, tested a sample of 90 textile products for children randomly collected on the Slovak market, most of them imported from China, and found that every fifteenth product was hazardous.

One can reasonably assume that large batches of essentially identical textile goods are to be found on the markets of other EU Member States. As these are extremely dangerous products, I urge the Commission to take effective measures to shorten as much as possible the time between sample collection and the publishing of an alert in the RAPEX system. The 3.5 months or more that it now takes is long enough for the hazardous product to be sold out and disappear from the market. I find these facts disconcerting, and I strongly believe that we must not remain inactive.

**Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE).** – (PL) Madam President, there is a saying that you can tell who your real friends are in a crisis. At the moment, Poland's soft fruit farmers are facing such a crisis because of the frosts that have hit Poland in recent weeks. Soon these farms and their families will sink into poverty. Poland's farmers are hoping for some support from the EU, and that someone will reach out with a helping hand. This is what should in fact happen, as that is what solidarity means, that is what being together and helping one another in difficulty means. Lech Wałęsa, who is present in this House today, could tell you much more about this. Help from the European Union will create a good climate and increase our citizens' regard for the EU. Here in this House, in the EU institutions, we need to

develop instruments at EU level to help those countries, regions and industries that have been afflicted by natural disasters.

**President.** That concludes the item.

## 17. Nominal quantities for pre-packed products (debate)

**President.** The next item is the recommendation for second reading from the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection on the Council common position for adopting a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules on nominal quantities for pre-packed products, repealing Council Directives 75/106/EEC and 80/232/EEC, and amending Council Directive 76/211/EEC (13484/1/2006 – C6-0039/2007 – 2004/0248(COD)) (Rapporteur: Jacques Toubon) (A6-0144/2007).

**Jacques Toubon (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – (FR) Madam President, Mr Verheugen, ladies and gentlemen, the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection recommends that you adopt the Council common position, modified by some amendments: an amendment comprising a safeguard clause at the end of the transitional periods, a provision encouraging the extension of unit pricing, a system for guaranteeing that British bread can continue to be marketed in its current sizes and, finally, a declaration by the Commission that can explain and guarantee exactly the phasing out of stocks of bottles that are off-specification. However, the heart of this directive is, on the one hand, freedom in sizing and, on the other, mandatory sizes, for five years, for milk, pasta, butter and coffee and, for six years, for white sugar. That is what is proposed to you.

How have we reached this point? At first reading, on the basis of its own study, the European Parliament retained mandatory sizes for a number of products, in permanent derogation in relation to the general liberalisation of sizes that was proposed by the Commission. The latter, in a position of principle, set out a revised proposal that was totally opposed to Parliament's text. It was then that I was able to resume talks with the Commission and the Finnish Presidency of the Council. The latter succeeded in achieving the adoption of a common position that took up some of the derogations requested by the European Parliament, but only for a limited period, a transitional period.

I proposed accepting the main points of this position, provided that it was accompanied by two additional guarantees. Firstly, that the Commission can propose continuing to keep certain mandatory sizes for certain mass-marketed products if consumers experienced disruption at the end of the transitional period and, secondly, that the Member States should be encouraged to extend unit pricing to local shops. That is what the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection decided on on the basis of my proposal and it is also what we agreed with the Council and the Commission at the end of two dialogues held over recent weeks.

Furthermore, ladies and gentlemen, I shall draw three lessons from this legislative procedure. Firstly, on this occasion, we have, for the first time, carried out an impact assessment. We commissioned this assessment from an independent body, and it was the first time that Parliament had used this procedure, which has, I believe, a great future. Secondly, what we are doing means that better lawmaking does not necessarily consist in doing away with all legislation because - and this is the third lesson I have drawn - through this debate, we have strictly taken into account the needs of consumers, and, in particular, the most vulnerable consumers.

That is why, ladies and gentlemen, I propose that our Parliament vote tomorrow for the three amendments that have been adopted by the Commission on Internal Market and Consumer Protection.

**Günter Verheugen, Vice-President of the Commission.** (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like first of all to thank Mr Toubon for his constructive work on this very difficult legislative proposal and agree with everything that he has just said, particularly when it comes to the lessons to be learnt, that is what we can learn from this dossier. I should like to make one additional point: I hope very much that the Council will see fit to follow Parliament's example and in future, when it is making amendments to legislative proposals, that it will also carry out an impact assessment. This would certainly help us greatly in our ongoing work of creating better regulation.

This is actually just one part of a major project being implemented by the Commission and all of the other institutions: better regulation. We began with the clear political goal of improving and simplifying the European Union's existing body of legislation. Mr Toubon is quite right: improving it does not mean

abolishing it. Improving it means making it simpler, more transparent and more manageable. Obviously, however, the levels of protection that we have in place should remain intact. In principle, all of the institutions and certainly also consumers and business agree with this. Despite this agreement of principle, however, there are always specific reservations once a proposal is actually drafted and tabled. Then it becomes clear that a political compromise is needed and I am pleased that in this case we have produced a good solution together.

What is this really about? We are dealing here with regulations from the 70s and 80s. At that time mandatory sizes were laid down for a large number of prepacked products. These included such varied goods as toothpaste, detergent, fish fingers, tomato puree, solvents and even dry and wet dog and cat food.

At the time of their adoption around 30 years' ago, this was the best way of achieving two aims: firstly, to open up the internal market for goods even more, as provided for in the Treaties of Rome, and secondly to ensure the necessary level of consumer protection in the cross-border trade of these goods.

Since then, however, we have significantly developed the internal market and consumer protection within the European Union.

Now it is a question of following suit by simplifying and harmonising the regulations on packaging sizes. Here, less European regulation means more innovation and greater competitiveness.

I am convinced that this proposal will have a positive impact, in particular for consumers. Consumers will gain greater freedom of choice. Furthermore, thanks to the existing directive on unit pricing (pricing per kilogram or litre), they will also continue to be able to compare the prices of different packaging sizes easily in the future.

I am grateful to the rapporteur for his commitment. I also think that we have agreed on transitional rules. As Parliament has requested, the Commission will review the situation in a few years' time. There is therefore nothing to prevent an agreement at this second reading.

**Malcolm Harbour**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – Madam President, with slightly more time at my disposal I would like to congratulate you on becoming a Vice-President. As a valued colleague of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, it is a pleasure to speak with you chairing the sitting here tonight.

I would also like to thank Jacques Toubon, who I think has led an outstanding review of this process, as the Commissioner has indicated. I also echo what the Commissioner said about the way that we approached this. I think we were one of the first committees in Parliament to commission an impact assessment on our proposed amendments. Some of the issues raised by that have now been reflected in the amendments which we shall support tomorrow, particularly concerning what I might call the safeguard clauses that the Commission will be observing in order to closely observe the behaviour of the market.

Overall we are very much in support of your aims, Commissioner, in wanting to push forward to remove unnecessary legislation, much of which dates back 20 or 30 years, as you indicated. Now that consumers are better informed, we want them to take advantage of that and to have information about pricing.

We want to give manufacturers the flexibility to produce products in different sizes that would suit different family sizes. I am bound to say that in my own country – and I suspect in others – it is such a surprise for them to find the Commission producing a deregulatory measure. As you will see from some colourful newspaper stories in my stories in my own country, this directive has been freely misinterpreted as in many cases preventing British consumers from having access to their preferred sizes for products. I think that you as a Commission need to work on the fact that misrepresentation is so easy, because at the moment this is such an unusual proposal. In that context I am very grateful to you and to the Council for giving consumers of pre-packed bread in the United Kingdom – that is over 80% of regular eaters of bread every day – assurances that their traditional sizes of loaf, which they perceived to be under threat from this proposal, are guaranteed and that they will still be able to enjoy and consume every morning with their marmalade toast made in their traditional sizes of pre-packed bread.

**Evelyne Gebhardt**, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, Mr President-in-Office, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that the piece of legislation that we are debating today is very important, because the reason why this directive was created in the past was of course to open up the market for goods.



Opening up the market and producing nominal quantities have now been replaced by consumer protection. How we deal with this proposal is therefore extremely important and that is why the European Parliament has stated clearly that simply doing away with all of the regulations in this sector could lead to difficulties, particularly for people with disabilities, especially the partially sighted. If we look round large supermarkets, for example, we note that prices are not always displayed as clearly as they might be.

For Parliament, it is of great importance to appeal to the Member States and say that it is not enough to display prices in units of litres or kilograms in the large supermarkets, but that it would also be appropriate to introduce this pricing method in other outlets. They should identify ways of achieving this, as it is particularly important for vulnerable customers. It was very important for us to make this appeal and it is good that it has been heard.

The second point that is particularly close to our hearts as social democrats has just been mentioned by my fellow Member, Mr Harbour. It concerns loaves of bread in the United Kingdom. At no stage have either the Commission, the Council or the European Parliament wanted to call into question these packaging sizes, but the debate in the United Kingdom has taken on a life of its own. To make this clear to the people of the United Kingdom it was important to include a corresponding recital in this legislation, so that we really could ensure – and British Members, in particular from the Labour Party, have asked me to stress this once more – that bread in the United Kingdom will not be affected in any shape or form, but that it will continue to be able to be sold in the forms that the British public is used to.

A third issue in this context concerned the fact that we wanted to ensure that these nominal quantities would not be abolished automatically after a certain time, but that the European Commission would assess the consequences and the possibilities beforehand and would consider by means of an impact assessment whether this was appropriate, what consequences could arise as a result and how we might respond to any disruption of the market. The detergent market has provided us with an example of what happens when there are no nominal quantities, and in that case we could consider what action might be taken.

**Janelly Fourtou, on behalf of the ALDE Group.** – (FR) Madam President, Mr Verheugen, Mr Lütke Daldrup, ladies and gentlemen, I should like first of all to congratulate our rapporteur and also to thank him because Mr Toubon has worked in a spirit of complete cooperation with all his colleagues. Consequently, we have always been informed of his positions and of the progress of the dossier after every discussion with the Commission and the Presidency of the Council. Mr Toubon has sought our opinion, providing us in good time with clear, precise notes, which have enabled us to make up our minds with full knowledge of the facts.

At the time of the vote at first reading, the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe took a stand against maintaining packaging sizes insofar as these mandatory categories did not exist in the 27 Member States and these obligations could hamper innovation and competition by limiting consumer choice. The ALDE Group has, however, come round to the Council common position and supports the idea of transitional periods for certain categories of product.

On the other hand, the ALDE Group did not necessarily want a revision clause to be entered into the actual body of the directive, as it felt that the reference to this review clause in a recital sufficed. Recognising, however, the persuasive powers of the rapporteur, the ALDE Group will support him on this point as, I might add, it will support his amendments as a whole.

Aside from this vote, however, may I express my regret that none of the institutions has taken up the idea of concordance tables, which appeared in Article 8 of the basic proposal. In accordance with the ‘Better lawmaking’ interinstitutional agreement, the Member States are in fact encouraged to establish for themselves and in the Community interest their own concordance tables between the directives and the transitional measures and, above all, to make them public. This point is particularly important for the ALDE Group, which is very committed to improving information for consumers and, beyond that, which is fighting for better information for European citizens.

**Charlotte Cederschiöld (PPE-DE).** – (SV) Madam President, the Swedish Members of the Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats are opposed to a Packaging Directive. Ideally, we would want to do away with the whole directive. I have made efforts to rescue Swedish milk packages, reduce bureaucracy and prevent a debate on milk snatching.

The rapporteur, Mr Toubon, has negotiated, and reached a compromise, with Members of the European Parliament and with the Council. The compromise now looks quite different.

Today's date is 9 May, a day of peace for Europe. The motto is jaw not war, and in that spirit I shall try to do my bit. Negotiations presuppose compromise. Whoever is able to compromise contributes to the development of Europe. It is more difficult to say yes in the right place than to say no. I personally am in favour of Mr Toubon's compromise, irrespective of whether or not my Swedish fellow Members are. This is my way of celebrating 9 May, that is to say by showing some additional willingness to compromise on the issue of a Packaging Directive, for it is in that way that modern Europe is being built – stone by stone, compromise by compromise. I also want to try to help, so I am agreeing to the proposal and would conclude by saying:

*(FR)* My respects, Mr Toubon.

**President.** In fact, Mrs Cederschiöld, Mr Toubon is behind you on the other side. In any event, the debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow.

## 18. Approval of motor vehicles and their trailers (debate)

**President.** The next item is the recommendation for second reading from the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection on the Council common position for adopting a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for the approval of motor vehicles and their trailers, and of systems, components and separate technical units intended for such vehicles (Framework Directive) (09911/3/2006 – C6-0040/2007 – 2003/0153(COD)) (Rapporteur: Malcolm Harbour) (A6-0144/2007).

**Malcolm Harbour (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – Madam President, it is a pleasure to be able to present this report on behalf of the committee tonight. I would like to pay tribute to my colleague, Mr Gargani, who handled the report at first reading – a substantial amount of work was done by Parliament at that stage. I should also like to thank the Commission and the Council, because we have worked very hard together on an extremely complex and technical proposal. In total it is a report of almost 400 pages, which must be one of the biggest reports to come before this Parliament. In particular, Commissioner, I would like to thank your own staff – Mr Schulte-Braucks and Mr Delneufcourt, who I think has been largely responsible for many of those 400 pages. I think he deserves a special mention this evening.

This is a very important report in terms of completing the internal market for motor vehicles. The whole basis of technical regulation for motor vehicles was one of the earliest areas of harmonisation within the European single market, but it has taken until now for us to have a fully comprehensive type-approval framework for all categories of motor vehicles, trailers, major component systems and critical components. Therefore, on Europe Day, I think this is a notable achievement that we have reached at this stage. This of course means that we will get the benefits of improved environmental and safety standards for vehicles, consistent and independent validation of performance and that true level playing field we often hear businesses talking about. We have actually achieved that in this case. In particular, I think the ability of manufacturers of all scales and sizes to be able to get their vehicles approved by a national type-approval authority to a European regulation and to be able to sell those vehicles in every market across the European Union is a major step forward.

At second reading we have an unusually large number of amendments that were tabled and will be voted on tomorrow. These reflect a lot of further improvement and work on our part. I would just like to highlight some of those points this evening. I am particularly grateful to the Council, also, and I am pleased that Mr Deldrup will be speaking as well, which I think is an indication of the importance that the Council attaches to this important file.

First of all, we have had some debate to finalise some of the issues around the type-approval for buses and the timescale for that. The bus sector is important because this type-approval directive brings into play the bus directive that many of us worked on. This brings with it notable safety improvements and important issues like disability access to all types of buses. This will essentially be brought into play as the single homologation approval framework for buses across the European Union.

The second aspect, which was a new element of the directive added between first and second reading, was the provision to apply a new scheme of type approvals for after-market parts, which affected the environmental and safety systems of vehicles. It is important that we have an approval process for those categories of parts so that we have very full consumer protection in that area. But equally this brings the whole of the type-approval process into the focus of many small and medium-sized businesses. Therefore, together with the other institutions, I worked hard to ensure that we had a very effective procedure, first of all for identifying those parts and to ensure that the producers of those parts were involved in that, and to develop the new test standards that would be required for approval. But of course, having done that, it allows the producers of those parts, and particularly tuning and other companies, to have access to the single market with a single approval. I think that is a major benefit that they are very pleased to have.

Another aspect that we looked at was the approval procedure for small series vehicles. Mr Gargani asked for the lower volume vehicle limit to be raised and a compromise has been reached to raise that to a thousand vehicles for simplified type approval, a major benefit for the smaller serious producers. We also identified that there was an important category of vehicle for disabled users – ‘wheelchair accessible vehicles’ – which were series volume vehicles modified to allow access by wheelchair passengers. With the support of the Commission and the Council, I propose that we should devise a new category for that type of vehicle. The producers of those vehicles, which are growing in importance, are very pleased to be recognised in that way and are also confident that this will bring into play a new attention to the needs of disabled users, as well as the strength and fittings of wheelchairs and so on. We will have a vehicle here in Brussels tomorrow to show what we have achieved.

In conclusion, this is a very important step forward for the single market. It has been my privilege to handle it on behalf of Parliament and I commend it to this House for support tomorrow.

**Engelbert Lütke Daldrup**, *President-in-Office of the Council. (DE)* Madam President, Mr Vice-President of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, tomorrow you will be voting on an important new directive on the type approval of cars, lorries, buses and their trailers. We in the German Presidency are delighted that we have been able to reach a prior agreement with the European Parliament on the remaining outstanding issues.

We should like to thank you, Mr Harbour, and your colleagues very much for the good and constructive cooperation. This is an important step towards increasing road safety and vehicle safety in the Community and towards making the internal market in motor vehicles a reality. The new directive extends the European type approval, that has hitherto only been foreseen for passenger cars, to lorries, buses and their trailers. Manufacturers of these vehicles will therefore also be able to benefit from the advantages of the European type approval in the future. At the same time, the directive ensures that in the future all new vehicles in the European Union will have to meet the same high safety standards. The new directive will therefore benefit not only the European automotive industry but also the public throughout the Community.

We are counting on your support in tomorrow's vote and we will then adopt the directive at one of our forthcoming Council meetings so that it can enter into force as quickly as possible.

**Günter Verheugen**, *Vice-President of the Commission. (DE)* Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to offer particularly warm congratulations to the rapporteur, Mr Harbour, on his report and to thank him for his work, which has yielded a really excellent result.

This proposal for a directive consists of a whole package of measures, which are intended to speed up the process of placing vehicles on the market in the Member States. This will indeed, as the representative of the German Presidency has just stressed, bring huge advantages for manufacturers, freight forwarders and users.

Making the internal market a reality is indisputably one of the greatest success stories in European politics. However, when it comes to commercial vehicles, manufacturers have hitherto waited in vain for borders to be fully opened.

Since 1996, the directive on the type approval of motor vehicles has been the European Community's most important legal instrument for creating the internal market in the automotive sector. It was then that all classes of vehicles were given access to the internal market. The only exceptions were commercial vehicles, that is buses, lorries and their trailers, despite the fact that this is a sector of huge economic

importance. In 2006 alone, two million new vans and more than a quarter of a million new lorries of over 16 tonnes were licensed in the Community. The vast majority of these vehicles were built in the European Union. In 2007 these figures will be substantially exceeded, if the data available for the first quarter are anything to go by.

This new framework directive seeks above all to extend the principle of a standard Community-wide type-approval procedure to all vehicles. In addition, automotive manufacturers will no longer need to build vehicles in line with the regulations in each individual Member State to be permitted to sell them there. Instead, harmonised technical specifications will apply, bringing economies of scale into play and avoiding out-dated administrative procedures. Haulage companies will also benefit from this and, in the end, consumers.

A further essential point in this directive is that new vehicles will have to comply with a whole series of directives on technical harmonisation in the field of vehicle safety. Precisely at a time when commercial vehicles do not enjoy a good reputation amongst the public, this will make a decisive contribution to improving road safety across the European Union.

Obviously, small and medium-sized enterprises have not been forgotten. They too will have easier access to the internal market. Manufacturers of special purpose vehicles or small series vehicles and body-builders, who usually work on behalf of haulage companies, will benefit from simplified procedures, which will not involve too much red tape.

I fully agree with Mr Harbour's point about those companies that modify vehicles to meet the needs of disabled users. It was very important to find a way to resolve this problem together. I am delighted that the recommendations made by the CARS 21 high level group, that was set up on my initiative, have been incorporated unchanged into this proposal for a directive. CARS 21 has enabled us to define the legislative framework within which we will move when designing future technical regulations.

There is one further important point to be mentioned here: international regulations are becoming increasingly significant, in this case regulations that are currently being drafted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. An additional factor is that in various respects we are abolishing out-dated Community law and are allowing manufacturers to submit their own test results to obtain a type approval.

On the tension between the Community's rules on languages and the direct reference to international standards and regulations, I should like to say that the Commission accepts Amendment 25 because it believes that in this particular industrial sector a direct and up-to-date reference to such standards may significantly enhance its competitiveness. This applies both at global level and within the EU. The automotive sector is a global business. It therefore has a greater and more urgent need for international standards than some other sectors.

The Commission supports the amendments to enable an agreement at second reading and is convinced that this proposal constitutes a balanced response to the interests of industry, haulage companies and consumers as well as the needs of the Member States.

**Anja Weisgerber**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, I too should like firstly to thank the rapporteur, Mr Harbour, for his excellent and very professional work on this dossier. I can fully support the compromise that has been negotiated with the Presidency.

I should therefore like to comment briefly on just one point, which we have already considered in the debate on Euro 5, and which is particularly important to me, namely access to vehicle repair information for independent garages. This access to information is of crucial importance for European citizens. Anyone who is on holiday, travelling in Europe in his car, can break down abroad. Often, however, the nearest authorised repair garage is hundreds of miles away. That is why we need to ensure that free, independent garages are also able to repair that motor vehicle. Furthermore, all drivers in their home countries should also be able to choose the garage where they would like their vehicle to be repaired. This competition will definitely also benefit consumers. We will guarantee this with our new rules.

To this end we have included an explicit provision in the new type-approval framework directive stating that vehicle manufacturers have to make all of the necessary information readily available to independent garages to ensure that they are able to repair and maintain a motor vehicle. This provision is consistent with the wording of the Euro 5 Regulation, which we adopted last year at its first reading. Our objective is to guarantee access to repair information for independent garages. This should be ensured for a

transitional period by Euro 5, but should ultimately be provided for in the type-approval framework directive.

Finally, I should like to appeal once more to Commissioner Verheugen to ensure that the political will of Parliament and the Council is respected in the negotiations on technical implementation, because the provisions on access to repair information also have to work in practice.

**Evelyne Gebhardt, on behalf of the PSE Group.** – (DE) Madam President, Mr President-in-Office, Commissioner Verheugen, I too am delighted that we have reached an agreement between the three European Union institutions at the second reading, so that we can vote tomorrow and then have these provisions implemented very quickly.

For the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, three points were of particular importance. The first is that we were able to agree in Article 31 to retain a high level of consumer protection in approval procedures for parts or equipment which pose a significant risk to the correct functioning of systems.

Secondly, the text that was adopted in the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection by and large clarifies the technical administrative provisions on type approval and extends them at Community level to all motor vehicles including buses and commercial vehicles. If we also implement these provisions we will be able to contribute to a significant improvement in road safety.

Thirdly, I should like to highlight in particular the fact that the provisions on adapting vehicles to the specific needs of people with disabilities have – thanks in no small measure to the rapporteur – been improved considerably. I am thinking here especially of people in wheelchairs. We have taken a major step forward here and in so doing we are giving the public a positive image of a Europe that puts the concerns of its citizens and the public at the heart of its work.

**President.** The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow.

## 19. EU partnership in the Horn of Africa (debate)

**President.** The next item is the report by Filip Kaczmarek, on behalf of the Committee on Development, on the Horn of Africa: EU Regional political partnership for peace, security and development (2006/2291(INI)) (A6-0146/2007).

**Filip Kaczmarek (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – (PL) Madam President, this report on the strategy of the European Union in Africa, and the EU political partnership in the horn of Africa will be the European Parliament's response to the European Commission's communiqué of last November. The purpose of that communiqué was to create a regional political partnership in the Somalian peninsula as the basis for a comprehensive approach to preventing conflict in the region. It is based on the assumption that without lasting peace there can be no development, and without development there can be no lasting peace.

There were two reasons for selecting this region as a test case for EU regional strategy in Africa. The first was the strategic importance of the region for the EU, and the second was the great political complexity of the three main conflicts in the region, which are interlinked; the conflicts in Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia, where a regional approach is probably the only way of resolving the conflicts. In other words, nothing can be resolved until everything has been resolved.

The strategy proposed by the Commission is based on a comprehensive approach to preventing conflicts in the horn of Africa aiming to tackle the underlying causes of the instability in the short and medium term both at national and at regional level, and to bring about closer regional cooperation. You may, however, justifiably wonder whether this is possible in a region where five out of seven states are in conflict with their neighbours, where each conflict spawns another, where one country has been incapable of functioning normally in the last 15 years, and where an extremely high percentage of the population lives in poverty. Is cooperation through regional partnership the cure to all the ills of such complex and mutually interlinked problems? It is my firm belief that it is worth trying, and that despite certain shortcomings in the Commission's communiqué, some of which were difficult to avoid, and which we address in the report (an example is greater involvement of MEPs and of the Africans themselves in drawing up the common strategy), we should agree on the four main legs of this strategy, which are

that sustainable development is impossible without peace and *vice-versa*, that without the effective participation of African regional institutions there can be no lasting peace, that the regional perspective – that is, regional understanding – is necessary to resolve particular local conflicts, and that regional integration initiatives will be successful if they focus on common challenges rather than on a list of present conflicts. Regional integration must concentrate on issues such as water resources, desertification, food security, and not simply on ethnic divisions and conflicts. Furthermore, the European Union has a key role to play by importing its own tried-and-tested model of integration which has effectively brought lasting peace and which, in the context of the present 50th anniversary of the EU, is, in my view, particularly important.

I am clearly aware that both the communiqué of the Commission and the present report of the European Parliament is only the beginning of the process, and that the ultimate aim is to develop a regional strategy for the region. It should also be borne in mind that specific Member States are conducting their own activities in the horn of Africa, and the report is therefore directed not just at the European Commission, but at Member States as well.

The aim of the report is to flesh out the ideas of the Commission's communiqué, and I would like to stress particularly that it is important to avoid wishful thinking and cobbling together institutions. In my opinion, we should rely on existing initiatives and tested ideas. We need to appoint a special representative of the European Union for the horn of Africa to deal with the major questions that the report raises. This will help avoid duplication, allow deeper analysis and make it possible to pursue minimum political aims in individual countries. We must make full use of dialogue based on Article 8 of the Cotonou Memorandum, cooperation between Parliament and the Commission on creating a common strategy with the involvement of Africa, and searching for African solutions and strengthened African organisations.

I would also like to thank all those who contributed to this report: the MEP from the Committee on Development, the secretariat of the Committee on Development, the shadow rapporteur, the German presidency and the experts and non-governmental organisations with which we were in constant dialogue.

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

*Vice-President*

**Louis Michel**, *Member of the Commission. (FR)* Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, in his report, Mr Kaczmarek shares for the most part the Commission's analysis concerning the need for a comprehensive regional approach. The ideas put forward by Mr Kaczmarek concerning the path to be followed confirms most of the priorities proposed by the Commission, especially with regard to functional cooperation and regional cooperation.

The resolution and prevention of conflicts in the Horn of Africa is not, from our point of view, possible except by means of action at two levels. The first level concerns the standard way of mediation and diplomatic action. The current situation in the Horn quite obviously demands far more vigorous and, I might add, far more unanimous, action, from the entire international community. The second level concerns a structuring action for the prevention of conflicts in the medium term. The aim is to tackle from the root the problems that affect the countries in the region by addressing common development problems that also have an impact in terms of security and stability.

It is this second way that is proposed in the regional strategy for the Horn of Africa, which the Commission presented in its communication of October 2006. I wish to make it clear that the primary aim of the communication is to provide a political framework that recognises the nature of the challenges posed in the region of the Horn and identifies the main routes possible for action by the European Union.

The communication identifies three priorities for intervention. Firstly, to act on the national problems that have regional ramifications; secondly, to tackle regional and transversal problems that are sources of conflicts and instability; and, finally, to foster regional integration. Precisely as the report emphasises, it is important for there to be genuine ownership, a proper political ownership of this strategy not only on the part of the countries of the Horn, but also at European level. That is why we appreciate for its true value the involvement of the European Parliament on this issue and the report by Mr Kaczmarek.

Since the Commission communication was presented last October, I have followed with great interest Parliament's debates on the regional strategy for the Horn and I also personally took part, last February,

in the debate within the Committee on Development. Positive discussions have also taken place at the level of Council working parties since October.

It is, in fact, a progressive process that we want to create, and not to impose. The important thing is that the process has now been started, with the support of the Heads of State or Government in the region. The Commission already organised, on 23 April, a conference with the personal representatives of the Heads of State or Government. This meeting was very positive and promising.

This wide-ranging and intense consultation process enables us to enter confidently and in good order into the realisation phase. We are therefore on the right track. The report that you will adopt tomorrow will be a very important support and, of course, a source of inspiration and direction when it comes to conducting the dialogue that will take place over the next few months.

I should like to point out that the regional programming for the 10th European Development Fund for the Horn will naturally be largely determined by the results of this process of identifying priority actions. I should also like to point out that the strategy for the Horn proposed by the Commission is not intended to supplant the strategies prepared in the context of the 10th European Development Fund. It is there, in a way, to supplement them. Likewise, it will not replace the necessary parallel action for resolving crises and conflicts, which must continue at the political and diplomatic level, as I stressed at the beginning of my speech.

I therefore fully subscribe to the report's recommendations in relation to governance and to the strengthening of the political dialogue. There are two points in the report that also seem to me very important but that go beyond the regional framework of the Horn and of the proposed strategy: the Joint European Union-Africa strategy and the African peace and security architecture.

I could respond on these two points also, as well as tackle other subjects relating to the Horn of Africa and to the actions that we could take there, but the speaking time prevents me from doing so. However, I shall perhaps have the opportunity to return to these subjects later, when I respond to your comments.

**Glenys Kinnock**, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – Madam President, thank you very much to Mr Kaczmarek and to the Commissioner for his response to the report.

In the Horn of Africa, one hardly knows where to begin, because what we see is a lethal cocktail of conflict and poverty, where the rule of law barely exists, where there is no concept of democracy and human rights and where five out of seven of the countries of the region are in conflict with their neighbours. So, as the rapporteur says, there can be no real security and there can be no developments without peace. The key issues are related to building peace, preventing conflict and resolving conflict. Those are the central elements in the report.

It is very important to point out that, as the Commissioner is very well aware, in other regions of Africa, for example West Africa – I was recently in Côte d'Ivoire – and in the Great Lakes area, we are now seeing peace breaking out. But the Horn of Africa stands out as the one region where we have not been able to grapple with conflict management and prevention. Certainly, the idea of an envoy and other suggestions are very welcome indeed.

What we see are the worst examples of conflict. In Darfur, the UN says that some 200 000 people have died and two million have been displaced since that conflict began in 2003. The Government of Sudan continues to ignore efforts at mediation, including from the UN Secretary-General. The border disputes between Eritrea and Ethiopia remain unresolved. The Government of Ethiopia continues to break international law as far as that is concerned. The leaders of Eritrea and Ethiopia refuse to give the people the right to choose their own government and to respect elections, as has been the case in Ethiopia. Now we see intense fighting in Somalia, where about a thousand people have died and where Ethiopian troops have been very active, fighting on behalf of the transitional government in Somalia, but of course – as we all have to acknowledge – with covert assistance from the United States. The Eritreans, meanwhile, back the Islamist militias.

I have written to the Commissioner on this subject and would still like to ask him why it is that we have offered such support to the transitional government in Somalia and why we are not asking serious questions about the bloody process which we are apparently continuing in many ways to tolerate. There is a humanitarian catastrophe looming in Somalia and we are still not holding those responsible in the transitional government accountable for their actions. Why, Commissioner, are we not asking questions? Is it political expediency that prevents us from doing that? Why is it that the Ethiopians do not leave?

Why is it that security cannot be established? Why is there no genuine power sharing, and is the EU insisting that moderates in the Islamic courts must be involved in any possible solution in Somalia?

Finally, I have to ask whether the EU is serious about state-building in the Horn of Africa or whether we are actually focusing on other priorities. May I suggest that the other priorities in the Horn of Africa are the so-called war against terror?

**Danutė Budreikaitė**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (LT) In its communiqué ‘EU strategy for Africa: EU regional policy of partnership for peace, security and development in the Horn of Africa’, which appeared in 2006, the Commission shows its inability to find ways to solve the problems in the Horn of Africa when it states that without long-term peace there will be no development, and without development there will be no long-term peace. This is a vicious circle. Both factors need to occur at once; but as we see, in reality, this is not plausible. In the Horn of Africa, neither the African Strategy nor Articles 8 and 11 of the Kotonu Agreement are working. Regional instability and military conflicts, in which more than one country is taking part, particularly the savage situation in Darfur, show that a special crisis management model is needed for the Horn of Africa, which would include the elimination of military conflict hotspots and the creation of peaceful economic, social and political life.

The EU provides more than 55% of the world's development cooperation humanitarian aid. With military activities taking place in the Horn of Africa, it is not really possible to assess what humanitarian aid is needed, when it should start and when it should end, and when it will be possible to get on with achieving the true goals of development cooperation policy, namely the implementation of the Millennium Goals and the reduction of poverty in the countries of the Horn of Africa. I would like to emphasise that the EU must coordinate its support and actions in the Horn of Africa with other countries such as, for example, China, India and the USA, which have economic interests in the countries of the Horn of Africa. Otherwise, there is little likelihood of any real progress in the creation of peace and security in this region. These countries, likewise the United Nations and other organisations, together with the EU, must create a special model of crisis management for the Horn of Africa.

**Józef Pinior (PSE)**. – (PL) Madam President, first of all I would like to congratulate Mr Kaczmarek for preparing this report. It is quite a difficult and important report, about an area where the European Union has not yet promoted itself much. The area in question is the Somali peninsula, whose countries are in a constant state of conflict, a territory where it is difficult to talk of rule of law, democratic institutions or human rights. It is one of the least developed regions in the whole world.

The most important thing for the European Union at the present time is to build institutions that would guarantee an end to armed conflict in the peninsula, that would protect a minimum of human rights and would lead to governments based on rule of law.

Madam President, I would like to recall the great political traditions, the great traditions of the model of development that followed World War II, which accompanied the fight against colonialism by the countries of Europe and the United States in the establishment of new states and democracies in areas that had previously been colonised. Perhaps issues such as nation-building, establishing national institutions and strong governments capable of guaranteeing rule of law are the underlying response that the European Union should be making.

I wholeheartedly agree with Mr Kaczmarek's proposals such as setting up a special representative of the European Union for the Somali peninsula, and EU assistance to African countries to establish regional institutions of cooperation.

**Louis Michel**, *Member of the Commission*. (FR) Madam President, honourable Members, my reply will be a relatively brief one, although a whole debate would be needed, of course, to deal with the question.

While I do, of course, endorse the analyses and judgments that I have heard on the subject of the democratic credentials of certain countries in the Horn of Africa, I am a little bit more cautious about the involvement of the Commission and of the European Union.

Today, the Horn of Africa is a region of which it can be said that the Commission is wholly committed to it, and it is without doubt the region to which I myself devote most time. Mrs Kinnock was, of course, talking about Ethiopia, and she was quite right to do so, for there is a problem with it in international law, one that, I might add, I am continually raising with its prime minister when I am in contact with



him in the course of my work on bilateral relations, one on which, indeed, I am working on a virtually daily basis. I carry the messages that have to be carried, particularly where political prisoners are concerned. I also know that efforts are being made by people at a very high level to move this issue forward.

Turning to Somalia, let me say that I am astonished that it should be said that we were not saying anything to the transitional government, and I would point out that I was literally obliged to make available EUR 15 million to the Ugandan stabilisation force in Somalia, virtually without conditions attached, even though I had been completely opposed to this if the principle of inclusivity were not adhered to from the outset. After we had made our position clear, and I had imposed that condition, President Youssouf promised us that he would organise a national congress of reconciliation. We are still waiting for it. Since, then, a debate such as this one is suited to this purpose, I have to tell you that if, in Somalia, things are not going well, or moving forward at a good pace, it is for two essential reasons.

The first is that the conflict in Somalia, and the issue of Somalia, are not being considered in the context of the Horn of Africa as a whole, and that Somalia, in a number of cases, has become a battlefield for conflicts between outsiders, and that is indeed the case; the difference between Ethiopia and Eritrea touches upon the Somalia question.

Failure to move forward, failure to find a solution, is also for a second reason, of which Mrs Kinnock has given examples. In the international community, there are two points of view. Try as one might to pretend that there is only one, the fact of the matter is that there are two points of view to be found in the international community, the first of which tends to be held by the European Union, and the second by the United States. Whenever one of the big players in the international community chooses, as a matter of preference, what we shall call a strategy of privileged partnership with another, and when we are invited by our own Member States to match it exactly with the other international partners – as someone has just done – we do find ourselves, in a number of cases, following behind, and so I would say that we are thus not in a position to act in a truly autonomous manner, on the basis of how we ourselves see things and relying on our own judgment. That is the truth of the matter. I no longer want that state of affairs to be tolerated, since it really is too easy to say to someone, ‘you are not doing enough, you have to organise coordination with our partner, that is to say, with the United States.’ I am not criticising the United States – who have the right to their own strategy – but I do think that if the European Union were able, from time to time, to have greater strategic autonomy and more independence in these matters, we would, without a doubt, be much more effective.

This is what I wanted to tell you; perhaps I might also tell you that what I have been doing over the past few months, particularly where political dialogue is concerned, has been, in essence, devoted to the Horn of Africa. The reason why I present this strategy – by means of a report that applies it and is excellent by the way – is precisely because I think that the European Union is not entitled to refrain from taking the initiative in this matter and because I tell myself that the situation is so complex and so difficult that we have to start by trying to get all the stakeholders around one negotiating table in order to sort out the problems that they have in common, and to find common solutions, all with the object of putting them in a position where there is a prospect of dialogue – a dialogue that is something different from discussing without calling a halt to the conflicts between them. In other words, let us open up the prospect of something being done about infrastructure, about food safety, about drought, about pastoralism, about water, about all these issues in which they have a common interest, and then, perhaps, there might be a chance of doing something about political matters.

This is what I wanted to say; it is true that we have to coordinate our actions with the other major decision-makers. I think that very sincerely, but I also think that we need, from time to time, to take up our own position on such matters as Somalia. I do think that, if we had been able to take our ideas to their logical conclusion and say ‘we will not give a cent for this stabilisation force until such time as the National Reconciliation Congress is up and running’, we would have been in a much stronger position.

I will also say – and it is on this point that I will finish – that I have also sent a letter, couched in extremely precise and strong terms, to President Youssouf in order to remind him of his commitment to inclusivity in resolving this conflict.

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

The vote will take place tomorrow, Thursday.

## 20. Assessing Euratom (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the report (A6-0129/2007) by Eugenijus Maldeikis, on behalf of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, on Assessing Euratom – 50 years of European nuclear energy policy [2006/2230(INI)].

There is a symbolic significance in our debating this matter today, which is Europe Day.

**Eugenijus Maldeikis (UEN), rapporteur.** – (LT) We are indeed commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome – Europe Day – very respectfully and solemnly today. I only regret that the fiftieth anniversary of one of the most important European treaties – EURATOM – is passing quite unnoticed, even though this treaty has made a significant contribution to the development of European energy resources.

The European Union became the leading force in the world in the nuclear industry field and one of the primary entities involved in nuclear research in the field of controlled thermonuclear fission and synthesis. According to data from the end of 2006, there were 152 nuclear reactors operating in the European Union, and the nuclear industry sector was producing 32% of our electrical energy. Nuclear energy is one of the most competitive forms of energy.

I would like to say a few words about the main achievements of the EURATOM Treaty. Firstly, I would like to say that the first scientific research programme to be created on the basis of the EURATOM Treaty developed further into a series of scientific research programmes and laid the foundations for the creation of the Joint Research Centre. On the basis of Section 3 of the EURATOM Treaty on 'Health and Safety Issues', legislation was drafted by the European Union to guarantee that basic worker and public safety requirements would be met and that environmental safety standards would begin to be applied. Another section responsible for significant achievement in the implementation of the EURATOM Treaty is Section 7, the 'Safety Control' section. This was one of the major achievements of the Treaty, allowing the Commission and the public to know about nuclear material reserves and their flow, with the European Union controlling this sensitive segment of the market. Much has been achieved in the field of external relations since EURATOM joined many international Conventions including the Nuclear Safety Convention. I would like to say that EURATOM is actively participating in joint projects within international scientific research programmes and with separate countries that are world leaders in the field.

It is also necessary to stress that, in this period, the EURATOM founder countries have sought to very strictly control and regulate atomic energy development in the European Union, and they have complemented the EURATOM Treaty with new legislation. In my view it is very important to mention that during discussions in the committee and during question time, likewise while meeting with various community sector representatives, many Members of Parliament agreed that it was necessary to fundamentally re-examine Parliament's role. The problem of the undemocratic nature of the EURATOM Treaty is becoming increasingly pressing, and I think that many Members of the European Parliament would agree with me. The European Parliament has to be drawn into wider general decision-making in relation to EURATOM legislation. We consider and, after much discussion, we suggest that it would be best to use Article 203 of the EURATOM Treaty to enable a thorough, constructive, step-by-step solution to concrete issues pertaining to the augmentation of Parliament's powers and Parliament's participation in the supervision of EURATOM activity.

I would like to say a few more things that are important. It is often said that the EURATOM Treaty should be done away with, as it is out of date and unable to fulfil its functions in contemporary energy issues. In fact, that would create dangerous judicial insecurity in all the territory of the European Union because this Treaty regulates a multitude of technical matters and its elimination would really create a threat and the danger of nationalisation of nuclear energy resources. Suggestions that some sections be done away with or that the whole structure be demolished have the same dangerous ring to them. In essence, that would weaken the supervision of the use of nuclear energy in the European Union. I would like to thank all the colleagues, who have actively participated in the discussions, and I invite them to support this report.

**Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission.** Madam President, the Commission very much welcomes the report drawn up by Mr Maldeikis.

I believe that, after a very detailed analysis, this report offers a complete and very balanced assessment of the Euratom Treaty that takes into account its positive achievements but, at the same time, does not hide its imperfections. The report reaches conclusions that are in line with the ones expressed in the Commission Communication on 50 years of the Euratom Treaty, which we adopted on 20 March.

I am convinced that the Euratom Treaty has proved a useful instrument both for those Member States which use nuclear power to produce electricity and for those which do not.

The implementation of the provisions of the Euratom Treaty has allowed for a consistent European approach to the development and use of nuclear energy. That approach is most visible in the implementation of the research policy, the nuclear safeguards regime, the supply policy and international relations.

The Commission's priority for the remainder of its mandate definitely remains the establishment of a common framework for nuclear safety. We are now working to establish a high-level group of Member States to tackle nuclear safety issues and waste issues, following the agreement reached by the European Council last March regarding the Commission's proposal. I know we can count on the continued support of Parliament to ensure that we can implement practical measures for enhancing nuclear safety.

The directives on nuclear safety and nuclear waste treatment are still with the Council, and it is high time to move them forward.

Definitely the role of the European Parliament is not satisfactorily reflected in the Euratom Treaty. The Commission fully understands Parliament's concern that it has no responsibility to decide on the use of codecision. That can be done only by an intergovernmental conference.

I should like to recall that the Commission made a proposal on the future of the Euratom Treaty within the context of the draft European Constitution. In this proposal the Commission suggested use of the codecision procedure. As you are aware, the proposal was not retained and Euratom remained a protocol annexed to the draft Constitutional Treaty.

At the same time, let me underline that the Commission will continue to ensure that the views expressed by the European Parliament are taken into account before the Council.

I should like also to address the last point mentioned by the rapporteur. The Euratom Treaty is important. It lays down provisions on the use by certain parties of nuclear energy and, even though it is imperfect, it assigns roles and it is therefore important to retain it in the future.

**Johannes Voggenhuber (Verts/ALE)**, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs.* – (DE) Madam President, the rapporteur has expressed astonishment that the 50th anniversary of the Euratom Treaty is not being celebrated and that it has not been mentioned in the anniversary speeches. The Committee on Constitutional Affairs has considered the reasons for this in great detail.

Perhaps we need to be reminded that today the Euratom Treaty actually reads more like a futuristic ode, with expectations of technological salvation that no one shares any more; that half of the Member States are no longer interested in using nuclear energy or wish to stop doing so; that there are huge popular movements campaigning for nuclear energy to be abandoned; that the European consensus on nuclear energy – as declared in 1957 – no longer exists, because modern energy policy focuses on alternative forms of energy; and that the Euratom Treaty is undemocratic to an unacceptable degree. In the light of all of these considerations, the Convention proposed separating off the Euratom Treaty so that it would no longer form part of a European Union constitution.

This House – and I was astounded that the rapporteur and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy did not include this – has explicitly called for a revision conference to be convened with the aim of revising the whole of the Treaty. This House has expressly supported the idea of incorporating the Euratom Treaty into a chapter devoted to energy, and I simply cannot understand why the Committee on Industry, in opposition to the majority of this House, is clinging on to this futuristic ode and these ideological statements.

**Romana Jordan Cizelj**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.* – (SL) After the fifty years that have passed since the signing of the Euratom Treaty, it is now time, and indeed today is the ideal moment, to ask ourselves about the results of common European cooperation in the nuclear field. Has the Euratom

Treaty fulfilled our expectations? Has it contributed to greater security in energy supply? Has it promoted research? Has the Treaty helped to spread knowledge and information about the use of nuclear energy?

I firmly believe that I can answer in the affirmative. Moreover, the Euratom Treaty has played an exceptionally important role in the area of ensuring adequate protection for people from radiation, protection of the environment in preventing the misuse of nuclear material and in promoting research and innovation.

The results of the Treaty are proof that through close and transparent cooperation, much can be achieved at the European level. An example of this is the Iter fusion reactor, currently the biggest scientific research project in the world, in which Europe is a leading force. This could not have been achieved by any individual Member State.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the Euratom Treaty we must also look to the future and take into account the political and economic circumstances of today. For this reason we are drawing attention to what is termed the deficit of democracy, which derives from the limited powers of the European Parliament in the decision-making process.

I would also highlight the need to establish common European standards in the area of nuclear safety, which also includes guidelines for the dismantling of nuclear facilities and the appropriate handling of radioactive waste. I believe that we should also devote greater attention to coordinated and effective cooperation with the international atomic agency.

Let me sum up. So far the Euratom Treaty has performed its role well. What it needs is to be built upon, and certainly not the introduction of revolutionary changes or even cancellation. Finally, I would also like to thank rapporteur Maldeikis for his exceptionally good cooperation in preparing this report.

**Hannes Swoboda**, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I have been asked by Mrs Thomsen, our shadow rapporteur, to stand in for her, because she is unfortunately not able to be with us this evening. Of course in our group too – as in this House as a whole – opinions diverge on the importance of nuclear energy: for and against, strongly opposed, strongly in favour, more moderate positions. We are not going to change that.

On a few points, however, agreement reigns. Firstly, safety and security are the top priority, safety being the safety of the individual plants and security meaning measures to counter the propagation of nuclear materials. In Europe itself this may perhaps not be such a serious problem, but as a general rule we should set the best example. Since cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency has been mentioned, I should like to stress that we certainly need to adopt more of a multilateral approach here.

My second point is the information obligation. I am not entirely convinced that the requirement to provide information is working as well as it might. We are experiencing a number of problems here, including where several countries are acting in combination, precisely because the information requirement is not working well enough or quickly enough. The third point concerns Parliament's right to codecision.

I should like to thank the Commissioner for his clear words. I would like the rapporteur – whose diligence and work I acknowledge – not to be too hasty to call this a doom scenario. We need a fundamental revision of the Treaty. Surely it goes without saying that the revision will only enter into force once it has been negotiated and until then the existing Treaty will apply. We therefore do not need to worry about possible lacunae or renationalisation.

We must, however, heed the mood of the times and simply do more where safety and security are concerned than is laid down in the existing Treaty. I hope that this House will make a clear statement on Parliament's right to codecision tomorrow, because we believe that it is unacceptable to resolve such an important issue as for or against without Parliament, which represents the people of Europe, having a say in that decision. I hope that there will be a clear majority of Parliament in favour.

**Anne Laperrouze**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the report that is to be put to the vote tomorrow is a balanced one, one that has avoided the pitfalls that traditionally imperil debates on nuclear energy. In reviewing the present state of play, it sets out where nuclear energy fits into the range of options available and takes a neutral line on what future it has in Europe.

The Euratom Treaty is a means of putting the use of nuclear power in Europe into a legal framework without being the means whereby it is promoted. Taken as a virtual whole, its chapters are living and useful, and that is one reason why it must not be broken up; the other is that it constitutes a coherent framework for controlling the use of nuclear energy in the European Union and ensuring that it is to the benefit of all the Member States. It makes it possible for new Member States to take on board a solid *acquis communautaire* covering every aspect of nuclear energy – research, the sharing of knowledge, security, waste management, protection against radiation, joint projects, materials management, the Supply Agency, relations with external bodies – and, while it is for each Member State to decide for or against nuclear power, the Treaty comprises numerous useful provisions for the states that have not opted for it, including the protection of workers and the strict control of nuclear materials in the European Union.

As regards its future direction, the report calls for European legislation on nuclear safety and waste management, while also highlighting the democratic deficit of the Treaty and suggests ways in which this might be remedied. While acknowledging, then, the usefulness of a legal framework applicable to the use of nuclear power in Europe, it is open to certain adaptations, without prejudging the means, but I nevertheless want to say that there are those in my group who would like the report to mention that the intergovernmental conference is the preferred option when it comes to reducing the democratic deficit and, in particular, to giving this House the power of codecision on certain chapters.

I will conclude by saying that I endorse this report and would like to congratulate Mr Maldeikis on being such a good listener and on doing such a good piece of work.

**Rebecca Harms, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.** – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, quite frankly I am outraged at the assertion that this debate on the Euratom Treaty has been balanced. If we bear in mind that just six months after the Euratom Treaty had been signed there was a nuclear accident at Windscale, as a result of which huge quantities of food had to be destroyed because this fire had catastrophic consequences, then I find it incredible that today – 50 years later – anyone can claim that there is nothing wrong.

The Chernobyl accident would never have had to happen if the lessons had been learnt ten years previously from the meltdown at Three Mile Island in the USA.

Let us take a look at Europe: accidents have happened at Brunsbüttel in northern Germany, at Tihange in Belgium, at Civaux in France, at Kosloduj and Paks – two Eastern European nuclear power stations – at Barsebeck and most recently at Forsmark. These are just individual examples of the hundreds or thousands of accidents that happen every year. In each of these individual cases, however, we were close to a major disaster on the scale of Chernobyl.

If anyone is claiming today – 50 years after the Euratom Treaty was signed – that there is nothing wrong, that we do not need to revise the Treaty, that we do not need transparency and that we do not need codecision for Parliament, then that is a scandal.

The call for a revision conference for the Euratom Treaty is supported by both the Convention and Parliament, and has been voiced repeatedly. Before Euratom funds are used for more so-called new reactors of Soviet design in Eastern Europe, we should urgently convene a conference on the Euratom Treaty.

**Vladimír Remek, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.** – (CS) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I should first and foremost like to commend the rapporteur on a document that may have a greater significance for the EU's future than we currently appreciate.

The energy situation in the EU is a key issue for the EU's future. On an issue as sensitive as the use of nuclear energy, which divides the Member States, our Parliament and even my political group, it is difficult but very important to find a sensible path and a common voice in the interests of all the EU Member States.

The Euratom Treaty undoubtedly demonstrated the need for such a framework and our next steps, whatever they may be, must not under any circumstances undermine its current structure. I do not think that the Treaty was so undemocratic; every Member State is able to have a say in how we will proceed with regard to nuclear energy. I should like to express my support for the idea of a European nuclear

forum as a platform for the practical exchange of views, because we should make it clear in the EU how beneficial nuclear energy could be in resolving complex energy and climate change issues.

**Jana Bobošíková (NI).** – *(CS)* Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome the fact that the report emphasises the positive influence of nuclear energy in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> production. What is alarming, however, is the fact that the agreement on nuclear energy enshrined in the Rome Treaty 50 years ago has disappeared.

The discrepancy has gone so far that some Member States do not even uphold the clearly agreed rule that each country has the right to decide whether to use nuclear energy. On Friday Austrian opponents of the Czech nuclear plant at Temelín will block border crossings between the two countries. Once again they will question the safety of Temelín, even though the plant meets all of the standards laid down by the Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency. They will therefore once again be meddling in the Czech Republic's nuclear policy in contravention to the Euratom Treaty, while at the same time causing a nuisance.

I should like to warn that the Austrian activists are breaking a European agreement, without any substantial grounds for doing so. I feel it is dangerous and counterproductive for nuclear energy to be the subject of political battles within the EU.

**Alejo Vidal-Quadras (PPE-DE).** – *(ES)* Madam President, I am delighted that, in the year in which we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, we have not forgotten about the Euratom Treaty.

The European Union we know was originally founded upon the countries' decision to reinforce energy cooperation. Back then, the Heads of State or Government already realised that economic and energy interdependence offered them the opportunity to lay the groundwork for conciliation and prosperity on our continent. Half a century later, nobody can deny that our assessment of the integration process should be a very positive one.

Nuclear energy – with its 145 reactors, 5 200 reactor-years of operation, and an excellent track record of production and safety – employs around 400 000 workers in the Union and produces 31% of our electricity. This energy source emits no greenhouse gases and avoids the emission of an average of 720 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, a quantity that is equivalent to Europe's entire motor vehicle fleet. I note that Mrs Harms is listening to me very carefully.

Without nuclear energy, the Union's emissions from electricity generation would increase by 50%. I am offering these data for one very simple reason: because they illustrate perfectly that nuclear energy is the source within our energy mix that meets the three requirements of our energy policy: security of supply, competitiveness and combating climate change.

Those who advocate entirely dismantling our nuclear facilities for exclusively ideological reasons are simply leading us towards economic and environmental suicide.

Over the last 50 years, the Treaty has continued to provide a crucial framework for stability and prosperity in the Union.

I do not wish to end without congratulating Mr Maldeikis on his excellent report, which will of course have the support of the majority of our group, as Mrs Jordan Cizelj has said.

**Reino Paasilinna (PSE).** – *(FI)* Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear power are universally well-known, but opinions on the subject differ all the same, and so it is among decision-making authorities at national level.

Euratom's perhaps most important achievement is the expansion of cooperation. Back when the Treaty was signed people were working separately. There are different opinions on this issue in my group, as my colleague, Mr Swoboda, said, but we try to avoid highly ideological contentions in this connection. We highlight the importance of safety, research, health and safety at work and waste management, but we obviously need to employ the codecision procedure with regard to the Treaty, as the Commissioner just said, and a Euratom conference of this sort would also be appropriate.

The day before yesterday some of the members of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy here present and I visited a fusion power plant in Germany, and there researchers claimed that in approximately 14 to 15 years' time they will be able to build a power station producing fusion energy,

based on which they could build a viable fusion power plant on an industrial scale. I at least was astonished at the speed at which research is progressing these days, if the plan is realised in the way these researchers said it would be.

The final word on nuclear power has not been spoken yet. There will be further developments on it today and just next door.

**Paul Rübzig (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, just recently the press reported the 100th accident at the Temelin nuclear power station. I wrote to Commissioner Piebalgs on the subject, asking him for information about how the experts assess the accidents at Temelin. In his reply – for which I should like to thank him – he told me that he would request information from the Czech regulatory authority about how it assesses these accidents.

This brings us exactly to the crucial point. In the future we must – and I should like to thank the Commission – think about safety, final storage and decommissioning, but also the safety of nuclear power stations, at European level and consider how we are going to agree uniform technical standards and state-of-the-art technical regulations. If safety standards are not respected then it must be possible, through court decisions, to have dangerous nuclear power plants shut down. To this end we need independent experts who are able to assess accidents objectively at European level. When such an accident occurs a power station must be immediately shut down.

We are living in an age of liberalisation where cutting costs is paramount. I hope that the costs of safety, protection, end storage or decommissioning are not being cut in a few nuclear power stations so that they are better able to withstand the competition.

It is also important for us to make renewed efforts to improve safety through research, education and training, so as to make protecting the health of the population the prime concern.

I should particularly like to thank the Commission and my fellow Members, who are advocating codecision for the European Parliament on this issue.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE).** – De la intrarea sa în vigoare la 1 ianuarie 1958, Tratatul Euratom nu s-a modificat substanțial. Uniunea Europeană a investit continuu în cercetarea privind energia nucleară iar Programele cadru 7 și 6 totalizează 3,7 miliarde de euro pentru perioada 2002-2011. În prezent, energia nucleară asigură 32% din electricitatea europeană, iar cele 152 de reactoare europene reprezintă practic o treime din capacitatea de producție mondială. În România, de exemplu, energia electrică nucleară reprezintă 9,3% din producția de energie electrică națională și de aceea siguranța acestui tip de energie ne interesează.

Se consideră că energia nucleară este cea mai puțin poluantă după energia eoliană și centralele hidraulice de mică capacitate. De aceea, în contextul schimbărilor climatice, se estimează că utilizarea energiei nucleare va permite reducerea, până în 2010, cu 7% a emisiilor europene de gaze cu efect de seră. Cu toate acestea, Tratatul european nu poate da răspunsuri satisfăcătoare unor întrebări actuale cum ar fi gestionarea deșeurilor nucleare sau retragerea din activitate a instalațiilor nucleare. De asemenea, având în vedere importanța energiei nucleare pentru politica energetică a Uniunii Europene, pentru strategia europeană pentru o energie sigură, competitivă și durabilă, pentru siguranța aprovizionării energetice, afirmăm cu tărie că există un deficit de democrație prin faptul că, pentru Euratom, Parlamentul European nu are putere de legislator. Considerăm că un Tratat Euratom adus la zi ar permite fixarea unor standarde armonizate pentru siguranța energiei nucleare, a deșeurilor nucleare și a demontării instalațiilor de energie.

**Ján Hudacký (PPE-DE).** – (SK) To begin with, I would like to thank the rapporteur for a very good report. I do not think that it is necessary to repeat what has been said about the importance and benefits of the EURATOM Treaty for the development and safety of the nuclear energy sector over the 50 years that it has been in existence.

The fact that the nuclear energy sector accounts for nearly 32% of the electricity generated in 15 EU Member States, and does that to high safety standards, thus eliminating 320 million tonnes of CO2 emissions a year, only serves to highlight the viability of this technology, which enables prompt responses to changes and needs in the energy, as well as for health protection and the environment.

The Treaty provides a complete, consistent and still valid legal framework for the safe use of nuclear energy by all Member States; therefore, I do not believe it is necessary to come up with a major revision

of the Treaty. Of course, this should not prevent us from enacting new legislation aimed at enhancing still further the safety of nuclear facilities, nuclear waste management and the decommissioning of nuclear reactors, as well as research and development.

In this context I would like to refer to Article 203 of the Treaty and to mention the initiative proposed by the European Commission and a number of Member States regarding what has become known as the Nuclear Forum. The establishment of such a forum could have many benefits in terms of objectively reviewing nuclear facilities, their safety, their development and the cooperation of affected bodies. The forum could constitute an excellent platform for exchanging information and best practices, involving all relevant groups, including citizens.

It is no secret that several Central European countries are harbouring the ambition to host such a forum in whatever structure or shape it takes. Slovakia has nuclear facilities undergoing different stages of their life cycle, with one decommissioned unit, two units in the process of being decommissioned, another two units being built and several functioning units, and the country therefore has a vast body of experience as well as a large and justified ambition to be in the forefront of this initiative.

**Atanas Paporizov (PSE).** – Madam President, this discussion will inevitably be influenced by attitudes to nuclear power generation. However, I would in this context like to stress my great satisfaction at the document that has emerged from the ITRE Committee, and of course at the work of the rapporteur, which provided the basis for this balanced document.

I would of course like to support the use of codecision, and am sure that this can be achieved through Article 203 of the Agreement. I would particularly like to draw attention to the part of the report which underlines the need to create Community rules on safety in the context of the present requirement for an environmentally friendly scenario for energy development in the European Union, with the aim of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and achieving greater Community independence. I am very satisfied with what Commissioner Piebalgs said in this connection and genuinely hope that the proposals the Commission has made to the Council since 2002 can be reintroduced and seriously discussed, because that is essential in the context of the decisions of 8 and 9 March.

**Teresa Riera Madurell (PSE).** – *(ES)* Madam President, we must not demonise nuclear fission energy, but neither must we extol it as if it were the answer to all our problems. It has its advantages and its problems. The main problem is the treatment of waste, although nobody denies that, by promoting the areas of research under way, a viable technological solution to this issue could be found in the future, just as in the field of fossil fuels progress is being made on obtaining clean forms of combustion and also on CO<sub>2</sub> capture technologies.

Today, however, we are evaluating the Euratom Treaty, 50 years on, and its future viability. In this regard, I would like to point out that I am one of those who, as a whole, take a positive view of the Euratom Treaty's 50 years in force. But I also believe that the time has come to review it, to correct some aspects of it, such as the decision-making procedures, in order to make them more viable and democratic.

Unanimity in the Council is not viable in a Europe of 27 Member States and, furthermore, I agree with those who have said that the Treaty needs to be opened up to the codecision procedure in order to correct its democratic deficit.

**Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission.** Madam President, the issue of nuclear energy is perhaps one of the most divisive issues between the citizens of Europe and the Member States, and today's debate has also broadly touched upon that.

However, if we look at the Euratom Treaty objectively, which the report does, then we will see that it provided for many important things. Firstly, everybody believed 50 years ago that nuclear energy provided such cheap energy that there would be no need even to measure it. The Euratom Treaty provided the framework and support for research that definitely developed safeguards, safety and the treatment of nuclear waste. The Euratom Treaty also gave grounds for non-proliferation. Nowhere in the world is the system of safeguards as strong as in the European Union, and that is because of the Euratom Treaty.

If we look to the future, we know that nuclear power stations will be built, including in the European Union. The issues we have had with Temelín will not be unique, and we really need to work towards



greater consensus on what we would like to achieve with nuclear energy in the European Union. In this connection, the Honourable Member Mr Hudacký mentioned the Nuclear Forum. That is an important element in trying to build consensus in this very important area, particularly in terms of global challenges.

I meet a lot of representatives not only of Member States but also of third countries who are very keen to start using nuclear energy, at the same time not only using their energy for the final stage but also having the whole cycles. I believe if the European Union does not take a strong position on addressing all the issues related to the nuclear cycle, the world will be a much more dangerous place. Therefore, I think the report really provides good grounds for reflecting and answering the challenges that lie ahead of us.

I thank the rapporteur for a very balanced approach and the many suggestions on how we should move forward – but it will not be easy.

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

The vote will take place tomorrow, Thursday.

#### **Written statement (Rule 142)**

**András Gyürk (PPE-DE), in writing. – (HU)** There are few branches of the economy about which popular opinion is as divided as it is about the nuclear energy sector. Nuclear power plants have been regarded as both the flagships of technological development and as prime examples of taking safety risks with human life. One more reason why it is important to commit ourselves to assessment policies that dispassionately weigh the pros and cons of various methods of energy production. Now, at a time when debates on the need to take action against global climate change are intensifying, the extraordinarily low carbon dioxide emissions of nuclear power generation rarely plays a central role in the arguments.

It is my conviction that with the growth of a unified and free European energy market, with the internalisation of the hitherto external costs of energy production and the dismantling of obstacles to the effective operation of the market, it will also be possible to consider rational investment decisions with regard to nuclear energy production. As regards risks concerning the environment and human health, it is inevitable that we will find solutions for a safe method of long-term storage and treatment of waste from large-scale nuclear activity, and for the currently unresolved problems of the safe operation of nuclear power plants. For this reason, we must take steps to make sure that research and development for the safe use of nuclear energy receives as much attention and support as possible.

**Alessandro Battilocchio (NI), in writing. – (IT)** Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the 50th anniversary of the Euratom Treaty has come at the right time. Fundamentally created as it was to deal with energy issues, the EU has since overlooked this important policy over the course of the decades in favour of focusing its attention on other, albeit just as important, subjects.

The period of reflection on the future of the Union therefore coincides with a thorough appreciation of the importance of a common and ambitious energy policy. The two aspects are closely linked: the EU that we want – an economic power, a safe home for our citizens, a queen on the international stage, and an institution free from external pressures – will not in fact be possible without a strategy that guarantees us a secure and sustainable internal energy supply. Europe needs to learn to stand on its own two feet.

The revision of Euratom is an important step in this direction, insofar as it will offer the necessary legal framework to a sector that is already fully proven and productive, in the light of the new technologies and successes obtained in the areas of security and efficiency. It is important, however, not to close the door to other components of the energy mix, such as clean coal and other renewables which, although not yet able to replace all of the sources in use today, may prove to be the winning alternative in the future.

## **21. Environmental protection from radiation following the crash of a military aircraft in Greenland (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the report (A6-0156/2007) by Diana Wallis, on behalf of the Committee on Petitions, on the public health consequences of the 1968 Thule crash (petition 720/2002) [2006/2012(INI)].

**Diana Wallis (ALDE), rapporteur.** – Madam President, Commissioner, this report follows on well from the last debate, which was on the general nature of the Euratom Treaty past, present and future. This is an actual, specific, individual case, which clearly highlights why this Treaty needs looking at in order to ensure the future safety of Europe's citizens in the event of nuclear incidents.

This nuclear incident and its sad after-effects for certain individuals have wider implications for the health and safety of all our citizens. It is, of course, the strength of our petition system that it allows individuals to bring such events to our attention when the European institutions or legal framework have not assisted as they would have wished or expected. Our citizens are telling us that the Euratom Treaty is not working, so we should listen.

Let me take you back to an Arctic night in January 1968, still the era of the Cold War – indeed the facts of this story sound like an international thriller. An American B-52 bomber gets into trouble, the crew scramble to safety and the plane comes down in Greenland with an enormous amount of weapons-grade plutonium on board. Residents of Greenland working at the American base at Thule immediately set out across the ice with husky teams to get to the downed plane, the Americans desperate to get there before anyone else. Over the weeks that follow, many Thule workers were involved in the clear-up. They were not working in laboratory conditions. They were not wearing any protective clothing, except against the cold – indeed the clothing that many of them wore was so contaminated by radiation that it had to be destroyed. Over the months and years that followed, the Thule workers began to suffer all sorts of terrible health consequences. Mr Carswell, the petitioner in this case, was one of them.

This is a long story, which has been all through the Danish courts and has been the subject of many reports, debates and discussions. We are looking here at a very specific issue in the saga, namely the rights of the Thule workers under Council Directive 96/29/Euratom of 13 May 1996, laying down the basic safety standards for the protection of the health of workers and the general public against the dangers arising from ionising radiation. All sorts of legal arguments have been raised against the petitioners and I do not seek to deal with those in detail here, but will merely say that they are set out and dealt with seriously in the report – the question of both the temporal and geographic application of the Treaty to Greenland and the issue of the application to military incidents. This was not a military incident as far as the Member State involved is concerned. The military element is from a third state, so we, following in the steps of the ECJ, argue that the Directive can indeed apply.

But this is not just some legal argument; this is above all a political argument – an argument that could even be pursued under the European Convention on Human Rights, concerning the duty of a state to take appropriate steps to safeguard the lives of those within its jurisdiction. However, what we are absolutely clear about is that there is a right under the Directive for medical monitoring of the survivors, proper surveillance and intervention measures – not merely statistical exercises as have been conducted to date, but proper clinical, medical monitoring that would benefit not only those survivors but also the health and safety of all Europe's citizens in the event of such future incidents. If this is not allowed, then it tells us that the Treaty is not working, and that is why it needs review and attention.

I am afraid that I must also urge colleagues to reject the amendments. They are confused or refer to unspecified events not mentioned in the petition, or they try to undermine the argumentation of the report. Therefore, on behalf of the Thule survivors, and in the hope of future work to review the Treaty, I commend the report to you, unamended.

**Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission.** Madam President, firstly I would like to thank the rapporteur for her work on this very important petition. The Commission has full sympathy with the petitioners who have undergone a very difficult time following their participation in the rescue operations after the air crash in 1968. At the same time, I would say that over the past five years the Commission has followed this case very closely. It has studied it carefully from the legal point of view and has cooperated with the Committee on Petitions and with its rapporteur.

The Commission reached the conclusion that the claims brought by the petitioners in this case cannot be based on Community law but solely on the basis of Danish national legislation before the Danish administration and courts. In view of these elements, this case calls for a political, rather than a legal, solution. I believe that the proposed European Parliament resolution could be one of the elements to help such a political solution.

In order to ensure that Euratom legislation covers future situations such as the one which originated in the petition, the Commission will examine the possibility of making a relevant provision on the application

of the radiation protection requirements in situations arising from military applications. The inclusion of such a provision could be undertaken in the framework of the forthcoming revision and recasting of Directive 96/29/Euratom laying down basic safety standards for the protection of the health of workers and the general public against the dangers arising from ionising radiation. However, the compatibility of such a provision with the case-law needs to be examined in detail.

**Michael Cashman**, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – Madam President, I will not read from my notes. I will say what I feel, not what I ought to say.

The Commissioner offers his sympathy, but we do not need sympathy. What is needed is the enforcement of fundamental rights, which are critical here; the right of access to information in order for you to be completely certain that what has happened to you is not life-threatening.

The easiest thing here would be to attack the government of one of the Member States. I do not want to do that. I want to seek to achieve a solution on behalf of the petitioners.

Commissioner, you talk of a political solution. Well, I wish to inform you that this is a political institution, which is why we are approaching the European Commission to help us achieve that solution.

The solution will not come through sympathy, but through the determination to ask the Danish Government, under the auspices of good and loyal cooperation, which is enshrined in the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam, to acquiesce to the request for information from the petitioners and workers who formed an association and cleaned up after this tragedy. Therefore, do not sympathise with them, but lend them the Commission's political clout and support and enquire of the Member State as to whether it will release information that is essential to these people in terms of ensuring that they are not at risk and that their lives are safe and in good hands. That is all we ask.

I shall detain the House no longer. I am tiring of the Commission's response to the effect that 'it is nothing to do with us'. That is the simplest way to reinforce the Euro-scepticism that is growing across the EU and which, sadly, is prevalent in Denmark.

**Marios Matsakis**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Madam President, this is a unique report on a unique petition and Mrs Wallis has dealt with it excellently. Legal matters aside, the petition on which the report is based raises some important points. I shall briefly mention three of them.

Point one. Even with the greatest of safety precautions, a nuclear weapons accident is always possible. In a way, the US B-52 crash in Greenland was very fortunate. Imagine the effects of it happening in a highly populated area, for example near a US base in central Europe. So anybody who claims nuclear weapons are absolutely safe in peace time is not telling the whole truth.

Point two. After a nuclear accident, well-prepared plans should immediately be put in action which would minimise the short-term and long-term effects to human health and to the environment. It seems that the relevant authorities, in this case the US air force and the Danish Government, were ill-prepared and did not deal with the problem properly, especially as regards protecting the civilian personnel and providing them with long-term health surveillance and monitoring. This shortfall has led to numerous premature deaths from cancer in cases where early detection could have provided a much better chance of survival, so anybody who claims that the relevant authorities can deal most adequately with the after-effects of a nuclear weapons accident is also not telling the whole truth.

Point three. After a nuclear weapons accident, one expects that the government concerned would display a spirit of transparency and cooperation in dealing with the affected population. This was not the case with the Greenland crash, as the Danish Government refused to provide access to the relevant environmental radiation records needed to estimate the radiation doses received by affected workers. Furthermore, the information given by the Danish authorities was dangerously misleading. So even scientific reports issued by governments after a nuclear weapons accident cannot be trusted.

The overall message is therefore clear. Nuclear weapons can cause death and suffering even in peace time, so the best way to deal with them is not to have them at all. After listening to the Commissioner, my final observation would be that petitioners who have endured years of suffering and struggle seem only to receive a lot of sympathy from the EU, but no practical assistance.

**Marcin Libicki**, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. – (PL) Madam President, I would like to start by thanking Diana Wallis for her – as usual – excellent report, and take pleasure and satisfaction in saying that we

have in this House a rapporteur who always delivers highly accurate reports, particularly from the legal point of view, which is extremely important here.

In 1968, a US aircraft crashed with nuclear weapons on board. The writer of a petition which reached our Committee, suffered problems with his health and believes that he was not adequately compensated.

The Committee was again the last resort for a large number of people who had nowhere else to seek justice. This gave rise to an interesting legal aspect which Mrs Wallis dealt with excellently. The accident took place in 1968, while Denmark together with Greenland joined the European Union in 1973, and in 1985 Greenland left the European Union, while the Directive establishing basic safety standards in the event of such accidents (that is, Directive of the Council 96/29/EURATOM), dates from 13 May 1996. Although from the dates themselves it appears that the author of the petition stood no chance of seeking justice here, Diana Wallis proved that according to the precedents of the ECJ, new provisions of community law are fundamentally applicable to the future outcome of events that took place before prior legislative acts came into effect, such as Greenland's withdrawal from the European Union.

If states actually applied the relevant directives, the Committee on Petitions would have fewer problems to deal with. I would like to recall just three cases – the Lloyds case, the Equitable Life case and the matter of local planning abuses in Spain, which were brought simply because the relevant directives were not properly implemented in the countries in question. The injured parties are entitled to remedy for damage suffered, and we are all entitled to security in the future.

**Margrete Auken**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DA) Madam President, this is a grim state of affairs. It is absurd and quite indefensible that nuclear weapons should have been flown around in this negligent way during the Cold War. That is what is really scandalous about the Thule case. Unacceptable though it is to treat nuclear weapons so carelessly, that is no reason for allowing ourselves to state something that has proved to be untrue. We have no documentation to indicate that any of the Thule workers died as a result of radiation. Nor can we maintain that the relevant health checks were not carried out. They were, in fact, carried out, and the results show the opposite of what the petitioner, and now also the report, assert. That is something that we have to respect.

The amendments by the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance are designed to remove errors and unwarranted assertions. That being said, we agree with Mrs Wallis that Denmark cannot avoid the fact that the EU has powers to exercise in this matter. What happened involving the B-52 bomber is not the only nuclear activity that has polluted the Thule area. Every aspect needs to be looked into, and the EU should make sure that the relevant investigations take place. If, however, the report is to have some significance, it must not contain factual errors. If we adopt a report containing errors, all we do is damage our own credibility. I have no interest in defending the Danish Government on this matter. On the contrary. It has treated Mrs Wallis badly, and it has been all too slow in forwarding the results of the many investigations to Parliament. We nonetheless very much hope that we get the report properly adopted so that it is practical and effective enough subsequently to influence events and is not merely set aside for not having respected the real facts.

**Søren Bo Søndergaard**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DA) Madam President, the plane crash on 21 January 1968 in North-Western Greenland triggered not only 850 metre-high flames but also extensive radioactive pollution. The Danish authorities wanted the matter kept under wraps. They knew that their tacit acceptance of American aircraft armed with nuclear weapons in Greenland's airspace was unpopular among the populations of both Denmark and Greenland. That is why 18 years went by before the authorities began to take an interest in the health of the Greenlanders affected and of the civilian workers involved in the clean-up operation. Even today, the people concerned have still not been given a complete picture of what happened to them. This is partly because successive Danish governments have refused to comply with the provisions of the EURATOM Treaty, which they nonetheless signed.

In the view of the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left, that is the crucial point in Mrs Wallis's proposal. We are able to support the first four of the five amendments by the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, but we shall in any case vote in favour of the proposal in the final vote.

**Jens-Peter Bonde**, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group*. – (DA) Madam President, for the first time in 28 years, I shall vote tomorrow in favour of criticising my own government in Denmark. I am ashamed of the way we behaved towards the few hundred survivors of the American nuclear accident in Greenland

in 1968. In order to conceal the fact that this accident was a nuclear one, the authorities failed to supply them with personal protection when getting them to clean up after it. Many have since died of cancer, while animals have been born with defects, which can presumably be traced back to the accident. Mr Carswell has raised this matter in the Committee on Petitions. He has himself been in hospital 50 times due to the effects of the accident. Mrs Wallis has done some detailed work for the committee over the last three years, involving hearings and visits, and now Mrs Auken comes along to the actual sitting at which we are to vote and wants to see all the work begun again from scratch. The matter is very simple and is not about the presence or otherwise of radiation. What it is about is the fact that, under the EURATOM Treaty, the survivors are entitled to annual health checks, however much their health may or may not have been affected, and they are entitled to have access to their own medical reports. Denmark should now comply with those two requirements.

I should like to thank Mrs Wallis and the committee for the very responsible work they have done on this matter. I myself took part in all the meetings, and if Mrs Auken had shown her interest when the matter was discussed, she would not have tabled amendments at the last minute. Imagine if all the other reports from Parliament had to be debated again because Mrs Auken had not taken part in the committee reading. I urge you to vote in favour of the report tomorrow without last-minute amendments.

The Commission now says that there is a need for a political solution. There are some of us who have tried to obtain such a solution. I have sent private letters to the Prime Minister in order to get this matter cleared up politically. His attitude was sympathetic, but no solution was found because officialdom does not want to give way on this matter. What a good thing it is, then, that people have access to a Committee on Petitions to which they can turn when officials are not disposed to listen to them.

**Andris Piebalgs**, *Member of the Commission*. Madam President, honourable Members, enforcement of rights could be done on the basis of legislation. The Commission has analysed this thoroughly. Unfortunately I cannot add anything further, even after this very professional debate.

At the same time, I could also say that the report will be a reference document for future Community action in this field.

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

The vote will take place tomorrow, Thursday.

## **22. Agenda for next sitting: see Minutes**

## **23. Closure of sitting**

*(The sitting was closed at 11.25 p.m.)*