

WEDNESDAY, 9 MARCH 2011

IN THE CHAIR: JERZY BUZEK

President

(The sitting was opened at 08:35)

1. Opening of the sitting

President. – Welcome to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are making an early start today because we have an important debate.

2. Request for waiver of parliamentary immunity: see Minutes

3. Composition of political groups: see Minutes

4. Implementing measures (Rule 88): see Minutes

5. Documents received: see Minutes

6. Southern Neighbourhood, and Libya in particular, including humanitarian aspects (debate)

President. – The next item is the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the Southern Neighbourhood, and Libya in particular, including humanitarian aspects [2011/2616(RSP)].

As you know, the situation in North Africa is a crucial test for the European Union. Now that the European External Action Service is operating, we have new tools for working outside the borders of the Union. We are persuaded, of course, that these activities are fully justified, both with respect to Tunisia and Egypt as well as Libya. Today, we are going to talk mainly about Libya, but not only about Libya. We also have a duty to our citizens, who expect us to present an action plan for the Southern Neighbourhood, a programme for cooperation and support for the short, medium and long term. We have to think about this now. Also present in the European Parliament today are representatives of the Transitional National Council of Libya. This means we have a great opportunity to make direct contact and talk with the Libyan opposition. We have to start by overcoming the humanitarian crisis.

Madam Vice-President/High Representative, we are convinced that all the activities of the European Union as a whole would be very supportive of the southern part of our continent and of our neighbours on the opposite side of the Mediterranean Sea.

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, honourable Members, thank you for the opportunity to discuss with this House the circumstances in our Southern Neighbourhood and, of course, with particular reference, as the President has said, to the situation in Libya.

Let me begin by stating the obvious which is that the Southern Neighbourhood is changing fast and across the region, people are standing up for that core human aspiration: to be able to shape their own lives, economically and politically. They call for political participation with dignity, accountability, they call for justice and they call for jobs. I believe we have to respond to those calls. I believe they are just and I believe that we need to make sure that we act quickly.

A crucial aspect of what is going on is that the demand is coming from within. In my visits to Tunisia and Egypt, I heard many, many times: this is our country; this is our revolution. We want to do things our way but we want to engage with you and we need help.

Those principles, I believe, should guide the actions that we take: these democratic transitions must belong to the people; they must be home-grown. They will determine what happens next. But we have to be ready to offer the support, ready with creativity and determination and to do so on a scale that matches the historic nature of the changes we are seeing.

In a fluid situation like this, we have to have our actions rooted in our core values and our core interests. We have every reason to back the changes under way. Tunisians, Egyptians, Libyans and others are demanding respect for those values that actually are at the heart of the European ideal. The emergence of the democratic societies will help to sustain security and provide shared prosperity in our neighbourhood and that is why we have moved between us, the Commission and myself, to produce a joint paper for the European Council that meets on Friday which includes measures that we hope will contribute to that: more European Union financial support available from within the institutions, but also by mobilising the European Investment Bank – and I pay tribute to Parliament for moving so swiftly to recognise the need to assist the Investment Bank with its mandate to be able to put that support at the disposal of people – and that has been extremely successful.

We need your help to do more for the EIB and also for the EBRD, both of whom have been talking with me about the capacity that they have to alter their mandates and be able to put new support at the disposal of this neighbourhood – not, I hasten to add, at the expense of the work that they currently do, but in addition. With the European Investment Bank, we know that we can mobilise a further EUR 1 billion. Just so you can appreciate the amount that that will give, the current work of the Investment Bank in Egypt is EUR 488 million. This would be able to allow them to double the investment at least and that would enable some of the big infrastructure projects which are clearly needed and wanted by the people to be set in place.

We also want to see, through the paper, support with the training and exchange of students. These are young populations. One of the common factors across the Southern Neighbourhood is that it is a young society; those young people, some of them highly educated, some of them wanting further opportunities in education and training – we should respond to them as well, and we will be inviting Member States to consider that and I invite the Parliament to do so as well.

The emergence of a vibrant civil society: meeting with civil society in Tunisia, I met with people who had never been in the same room before because it had not been allowed. Their willingness and desire to establish themselves more fully as NGOs, as organisations able to work on issues of concern in their society and to hold their government to account, that is an extremely important part, as you know so well, of the development of this society.

From that stems more inclusive governance: the ability of people to feel that they have a stake and a say in the governance of their society.

Of course, too, food security, a huge and growing issue in the region; further trade openings; the ability to get greater market access and mobility partnerships – all of these are included in the overall package that will be put to the European Council. I stress again, as I have done before, we want to see this as an incentive-based approach enabling people to move quickly, but also to differentiate. These countries are all different and they are at pains to say, 'Please do not put us all together and see us as the same. We are different countries; we wish our societies to develop as differently as yours have. Yes, there are similarities but our distinctive difference is something we wish to ensure that you respect and you work with'. We want to take an approach which says that we give more for more; that those partners, those countries who want to go further and faster with reforms, should be able to count on greater support from the European Union.

In the coming days and weeks, as we have already been doing, we will be discussing with our international partners how we can coordinate so that we do not overlap and so that we are able to respond more quickly. On 23 February, I held a senior officials' meeting with officials from the institutions, the World Bank, the Investment Bank, the EBRD, the IMF, but also senior officials from China, Russia, from Australia, from Korea, from the 27 Member States, from the United States and from Arab countries. The purpose of that meeting was not to decide what we would do to these countries but to be ready to be able to offer support quickly.

Honourable Members know that one of the criticisms which can be made about us is that sometimes we take a long time to respond. I want us to be ready and my conversations with, particularly, the Arab League and with the countries concerned have been aimed at making it really clear that my purpose is to make sure we are ready to be able to respond and that that response is coordinated and effective and uses the best that we have available, not only in Europe, but across the world.

After the Foreign Ministers meet tomorrow, and the European Council meets on Friday, the NATO meeting I will attend tomorrow and then the informal Foreign Ministers' meeting over the weekend in Hungary, I will then fly to Cairo to meet with Amr Moussa, the Arab League and to debrief all of them on what has happened in our discussions and also to meet a new Egyptian Foreign Minister whom I have already spoken to. But, colleagues, I know there is a specific desire to talk about Libya so, having given that backdrop of the work we are doing, let me move on to the issues that concern us all in Libya.

I see two immediate priorities: first of all, to address the humanitarian crisis and assist with the evacuation, and second to make sure the violence stops and that those who perpetrate that violence are held to account.

On the humanitarian aid side, we have moved quickly. The Commission has increased its assistance to EUR 30 million; my colleague, Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva, went to the Tunisian-Libyan border last week to look at what was happening and to make sure that our engagement was working well. We have also, of course, been in touch with the UN on a constant basis to coordinate our activities and Member States have allocated important resources to tackle what is an immense challenge posed by the continuous flow of people, including through FRONTEX.

On the evacuation of EU citizens, the External Action Service has been instrumental in making sure that we have a rapid exchange of information and most effective use of our resources. Together with the Presidency, I activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism on 23 February to help facilitate the evacuation of EU citizens. Getting information in real time, as honourable Members know, is a challenge, but we needed to make the right choices and so at my request, Agostino Miozzo, the EEAS Managing Director for Crisis Response, travelled to Tripoli on Sunday and Monday to get an assessment of what is happening on the ground.

He met with officials, he met with ambassadors, in a situation which he described to me as calm but extremely tense. Our European ambassadors welcomed the chance to talk in detail and to feed directly into our work their analysis of what is happening on the ground which, combined with contacts that we are making everywhere, helps us to establish a clearer picture of the situation.

Of course, we focused a lot of our efforts initially on the evacuation of European citizens and we have to show solidarity with Tunisia, which is bearing the brunt of the evacuation of so many people, especially Egyptians who are ending up on the Tunisian border and need to be brought to Egypt. Honourable Members know that there are about one million Egyptians in Libya, and about one and a half to two million people from the African countries that surround Libya who are currently there, and we know from what we heard is happening in Tripoli that there are about two to three thousand African people at the airport who are waiting to see how they are going to leave.

We have to be ready though to step up our support for the Libyan people. As I have said, this is a very fluid situation and we have to read it very carefully. I have asked my services, therefore, on a prudent planning basis, to look at a possible CSDP engagement; that engagement would be to support current evacuation and humanitarian efforts. As always with any CSDP options, this needs to be very carefully analysed and we will need proper answers on questions of mandate, resources and objectives. That work, I can tell you, is ongoing this week.

Dealing effectively with the humanitarian crisis is fundamental, ending the violence is a prerequisite to everything else. That is why I am pleased that the international community as a whole, through the UN Security Council, has made its position clear: that the violence is unacceptable; it must stop and people should be held to account.

I am glad that agreement was found in New York on the European demand to include a referral to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. This was a European initiative and they have already started preliminary investigations into alleged war crimes.

Not surprisingly, we are working very closely with our partners: with the UN, with NATO, with the USA, with Turkey, with the Arab League and with many, many other countries with whom we are in daily contact. We talk with them about all of the issues in the Southern Neighbourhood but, especially, to make sure that we are collaborating effectively on the approach that we take in our Southern Neighbourhood and, as I have said, that includes all our partners. We have, as you would expect me to say, our own responsibility.

We immediately suspended the negotiations of the EU-Libya framework agreement, together with all cooperation of a technical nature.

(Applause)

We started preparatory work on restrictive measures ahead of the UN Security Council. In addition to the UN sanctions, we adopted on 28 February further restrictive measures: we have an embargo on equipment which could be used for internal repression and autonomous designations under the travel restrictions and assets freeze. We are now in the process of adding several entities controlled by Gaddafi and his closest associates to that list.

Honourable Members, we will remain at the forefront of the international efforts to restore peace and stability in Libya. Once we get an end to the violence, we have to work to support the emergence of a new Libya with democratically chosen leaders and where people's rights are respected. In line with what I have said from the very beginning, we will not be dictating outcomes but supporting pluralism, accountability, deep democracy and shared prosperity.

By their nature, crises are a test of our policies, our resources and our abilities to respond in real time and the events in the Southern Neighbourhood represent an enormous challenge for the European Union. I believe, as Vice-President of the Commission, that how we respond will define this Commission for years to come.

So I look to the European Parliament and I need your support, because it is only our collective effort that is going to help to bring the European Union together, to confirm a strong position. We cannot afford to think small; we cannot afford to let inflexibility get in our way. We can and we have to respond in a strategic and united way. But I believe that if we do, we can make a real difference, supporting the people in the region who are asking for our support, but supporting them as they shape their own future.

(Applause)

José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (ES) Mr President, the European Union finds itself torn between two frustrations in the Libyan crisis, between what is desirable – the earliest possible disappearance of a criminal regime that is determined to die killing – and what is achievable.

If we are honest, Mr President, we must acknowledge that the European Union, despite all its efforts, has not lived up to public expectations. This is not a criticism, Baroness Ashton, but rather a question of powers.

We have acted promptly and we have acted well, within the scope of our powers, with the European Union fully endorsing Resolution 1970 of the United Nations Security Council. However, we are not a military union. We are aspiring to be a political union, and we are still only an embryonic player on the international stage.

This is why, Mr President, whilst we are holding this debate, whilst the United Nations Human Rights Council is meeting today, and whilst the Council of Ministers for Defence, the Foreign Affairs Council and the European Council are meeting tomorrow, people are still dying in Libya. It is against this backdrop that we must think about what it is that we can do.

Can we stand aside whilst innocent civilians are massacred? Can we remain impassive to the 'Somalisation' of Libya, whilst the United Nations Security Council reaches another slow motion decision?

The European Union must send a message that is loud and clear, and has a single message: 'the Gaddafi regime must end right now'. This message must be accompanied by a set of measures that ratchet up the pressure. First and foremost, Mr President, the no-fly zone,

the neutralising of Mr Gaddafi's communications – and I believe we should congratulate the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe for bringing representatives of the Libyan opposition to the European Parliament – and, of course, international coordination, most particularly with the African Union and also with the Arab League.

This, Mr President, is what the public is expecting of us, and you will have the full support of our political group to achieve it, Baroness Ashton.

Martin Schulz, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you, Baroness Ashton, for your words and the brilliant and self-contained manner in which you set out your position, as well as your analysis of the situation in our Southern Neighbourhood and in Libya.

We are facing an enormous challenge. We are experiencing a truly historic change in the political balance of the world, in particular, in our immediate neighbourhood. We have to deal with widely differing developments. We cannot speak of a uniform process. The uniform process is revolution, but it is very specific to each country and very varied between them. It is different in Morocco from in Tunisia, in Algeria from in Egypt, and Libya is a special case which we are discussing intensively. Gaddafi is a criminal. He is a murderer who belongs before an international criminal court. We probably all agree that this man will not escape his punishment one way or another. The best thing would be for the Libyan people to be able to resolve this problem themselves and for them to then do so.

We are faced with a major challenge that requires a clear head. We have to make a choice, including in what we say here. On the one hand, our emotion tells us that this criminal must be stopped, that the fratricide in his own country must be stopped, and that we should not exclude any necessary measures to achieve that, including any military ones. That is what our consciences say to us. On the other hand, however, we all know how international politics works and that a wrong decision in this area can have wide-ranging and long-term consequences.

Of course, it is easy to say that we will intervene quickly, but even the implementation of a no-fly zone requires us to take the decision to put warplanes in the air and destroy the Libyan air force on the ground. These are acts of war, implemented by NATO, which could perhaps solve a problem in Libya only to give rise to a number of problems throughout the wider region.

I therefore advise, urgently, that everything that we do be done within the framework of international law and, specifically, on the basis of a resolution from the United Nations Security Council and – this is the major common denominator – with the involvement of the Arab League and the African Union. We are including this in the resolution, which is a sensible thing to do. If we want to intervene in Libya, the only sensible option for this to happen is on the basis of a resolution of the Security Council and with the involvement of Arab states. It is therefore worth me repeating that we should not exclude anything but we should also not satisfy short-term feelings rashly and with trite words that feel instinctively right but that – and I want to reiterate this – could be dangerous in the long term. That would be dangerous.

In the European Council – and I turn to you, Mr Buzek, at this point, as you will be representing Parliament at the meeting of the European Council over the coming days – the question of whether we need a Marshall Plan for the whole region has been raised. My response would be yes, we do need a kind of Marshall Plan for the whole region. I would

like to remind everyone, though, what the Marshall Plan meant for Europe. It meant that George Marshall proposed to the United States of America that a percentage of the total economic output of the United States be devoted to Europe. The results of this are well known – today, it calls itself the European Union, and it has levels of prosperity and democratic development and a peace dividend that this continent has never experienced before.

I would also observe, however, that the same governments that are discussing this will believe even 1% of the total economic output to be too high a price for the European Union. You cannot make these trite demands and then do nothing! If we want stability to be brought to our Southern Neighbourhood, we will have to provide a good deal of funding. This is because there is one thing that the people there need, and that is the prospect of being able to live in peace, democracy and prosperity, in other words, the prospect of also obtaining for themselves what we have. That must be the goal of all the efforts that we undertake over the forthcoming days, weeks and months, including here in the European Parliament. After all, all the fine words and nice resolutions that we adopt together deliver precisely nothing for the people of our Southern Neighbourhood – it is tangible acts that they need. For that reason, the common goal for all of us must be the establishment of a free trade zone aimed at economic parity between North Africa and the European Union.

Guy Verhofstadt, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, I think what we need now, Mrs Ashton, is a very clear message and statement from you and from the European Council on Libya. I think three things are necessary in this message. People are still being killed, so what we are saying is not neutral: what we are saying can help on the ground.

Firstly, we have to recognise – or at least to start the process to recognise – the National Interim Council as the representative of the Libyan people. I think someone who is killing his own people in huge numbers has lost all legitimacy. We therefore have to start the process of recognition because that can help the opposition to win this battle against Gaddafi politically.

The second thing we have to do – and the second message you have to give – is that we have to step up all kinds of help. The opposition needs medicine, food, telephone lines, which are all things that we can provide.

Thirdly, we have to paralyse the killing power of Gaddafi as quickly as possible. There is a clear consensus in Libyan society: there should be no direct military intervention in Libya. It is a Libyan revolution and it has to remain a Libyan revolution. What they need is a no-fly zone. The European Union – the Council and you – must ask the UN as soon as possible to adopt a resolution on this, creating a no-fly zone and stopping the bombing of cities which are in the hands of the opposition.

Those are the three clear messages we need, and we need them now. We do not need them in one week or two weeks; we need them today, tomorrow and certainly on Friday when the European Council will make its first political statement on this issue. Those are the three key elements that are necessary today.

(FR) Mr President, I would like to use this speech to make a rather broad point, because what is happening is, of course, historic, and I believe it is essential.

I firmly believe that what is happening today in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt is an unprecedented opportunity to create the conditions necessary for a peaceful resolution of a conflict that has been going on now for decades between Israel and Palestine.

I urge Israel to be bold enough today to take the political steps to launch a peace process quickly with the Palestinian State. The opportunity to show that the democratic process under way in that region is a gift from history that can rid the region and the world of a conflict that has caused so much pain, so many misunderstandings, and so many tragedies, must be seized with both hands. This message must be sent today to that region.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, you said a moment ago, Baroness Ashton, that we must respect peoples and their desire for freedom.

Let us be frank. For years, we have failed to do that. We were party to the dictatorships – we, the European Union and all the Member States. So you have now ceased negotiating with Colonel Gaddafi? Mazel tov! Are you serious? Do you really think you could have carried on? For years, this European Union, these Member States and Mr Berlusconi negotiated the return, for example, of refugees to Libya. Was nobody interested in how those refugees were treated by Colonel Gaddafi?

(Applause)

We should, after all, engage in a little self-criticism where this matter is concerned.

Today, a nation has risen up. It has representatives. When the people of Poland rose up, no one asked if *Solidarność* had been democratically elected; *Solidarność* was recognised straight away, it was helped. I call for you to recognise this interim government, because it is the only force that can bring about democracy. Yes, we need to keep a cool head, Mr Schulz, but we also need to choose which side we are on.

Two things are needed.

Firstly, Colonel Gaddafi must not win, because if he wins, it will destroy any hope of democracy in many regions and it will be a victory for the dictators! Therefore, our policy must be geared towards saying: Colonel Gaddafi must lose, and the Libyans must emerge victorious against Colonel Gaddafi.

Secondly, the Libyans do not want any foreign military intervention, that is true. Yet they are saying: 'We want a no-fly zone'. The African Union is talking about a no-fly zone. The Arab League is talking about a no-fly zone. Therefore, it is not NATO.

The agreement to impose a no-fly zone is primarily intended to create a new balance of power in political terms, to isolate Colonel Gaddafi from the UN, and to say that we will go through either the Security Council or the General Assembly, which voted 100% in favour of excluding Libya from the Human Rights Council. This means that Colonel Gaddafi is completely isolated. It says to him: 'You have no future, you have no chance!'

The military exclusion zone is, first and foremost, a political act. How can it be achieved? There are countless ideas. Clearly, no one is going to bomb Libya, but an aeroplane taking off could, for example, be brought down. Colonel Gaddafi has to be shown that he will not be allowed to bomb Libyan towns. There are options. This is a political act that we must carry out.

(Applause)

I really do believe that if we take the bull by the horns and recognise this interim government, we will get the European Union, the United Nations and the Arab League

moving. Let us speed up the isolation of Colonel Gaddafi, and then I believe that his days as a dictator in Libya will be numbered.

Now, there is also the issue of humanitarian aid. Doctors are needed, and there needs to be a way of transporting the wounded out of Libya. Some ports are open, and all the humanitarian aid should come via the east of Libya. Lastly, food aid and military aid are needed, too. This is the choice before us: if Colonel Gaddafi is to lose, the others need to win.

Let us ensure that what happened in Bosnia is not repeated. An embargo was imposed on the Bosnians and on the Serbs. Everyone was in agreement. No, it is one side against the other here. We want a military embargo, an arms embargo against Colonel Gaddafi. We want to give the people of Libya the opportunity to liberate themselves with weapons, because this is the situation – this is what Colonel Gaddafi wanted.

I would like to end on the subject of refugees and humanitarian aid. Let us use all the instruments at the EU's disposal to temporarily accommodate the refugees and ensure that they are recognised by the United Nations Human Rights Council. There are thousands of refugees who are recognised as such by the UNHCR in the camps. We should let them come to Europe! If we do that, we will be making a very powerful humanitarian and political gesture, and we will be acting in such a way as to ensure that Europe is recognised at last, that Europe's values are recognised, because we are taking action to uphold those values and to ensure freedom in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt.

(Applause)

Charles Tannock, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, this is an extraordinary debate. I agree with almost everything that Daniel Cohn-Bendit has said today, which makes me a bit worried. As I have always said, Gaddafi remains the Fidel Castro of Africa, although not even Castro would have resorted to such savage violence as we have seen recently from the Gaddafi regime and his sociopathic sons against civilian protestors.

Last January, I drew attention to the fact that Gaddafi used to be a huge sponsor of terrorism. Now, of course, he stands accused of terrorising his own people. Gaddafi spent a lot of money and time courting the West, trying to make us think he was a changed man. That has not happened, of course. With vast oil revenues at his disposal, he was able to dispense largesse in return for political acquiescence throughout Europe and Africa, not least in my own country, the United Kingdom, particularly under the previous government.

Our first priority now is to help bring an end to the senseless violence in Libya. I was amongst the first in this House to call for a no-fly zone. I thank France and the United Kingdom for pursuing this vigorously over the entire country to stop Gaddafi bombing his own people and flying in mercenaries, mainly from Algeria and sub-Saharan Africa. I believe that the Security Council – particularly with the Russian and Chinese veto at stake – may not sanction this issue of a no-fly zone.

We should now seriously consider recognising the Transitional National Council in Benghazi as the legitimate Libyan Government, so that it could invite military assistance in without the need for recourse to a UN resolution. This would prevent further civilian massacres and give the pro-democracy rebels a real chance.

Fortunately, most EU citizens in Libya were safely evacuated – and this was done efficiently – but it was clear to me that most EU Member States were only interested in helping their

own nationals. The Maastricht Treaty provisions that allow EU citizens, wherever they are, to seek consular protection from any Member State in times of urgent need appeared to have been totally forgotten during the evacuation process.

Miguel Portas, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (PT) Mr President, we cannot understand the uprising in Libya without understanding the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. Precisely because this uprising in Libya is part of an historic, revolutionary and popular process which will bring democracy to the southern Mediterranean and to the whole of the Arab world, Europe's position, and the changes in its position, regarding the way in which it has been acting in Libya are of paramount importance.

The days of Gaddafi's regime are numbered because it is a dictatorship, and the people have ceased to fear it. It cannot survive when its neighbours are in the process of transition to democracy, and also because it is isolated within the international community.

However, when considering this change in the European position, something needs to be said about the past, as the European Union was one of the pillars of support for the old regime. The resolution does not say so, but the weapons with which the Libyan people are being repressed are largely European weapons and bombs.

I therefore want to make myself very clear. The left is in favour of freezing assets, of the arms embargo, of fostering a relationship with the uprising, and of all humanitarian aid measures, but I would also like to make it clear that we are against any form of military intervention, including the measure that might open the door to such intervention: the no-fly zone.

This has been spoken of clearly here. We have experience: we know how military interventions are started, and we know that once started they never stop.

Bastiaan Belder, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – (NL) Mr President, a true Libyan drama is playing out before European eyes on our southern border, as Gaddafi's regime of terror is not only holding its ground; it is very much on the attack against renegade regions of the country. Meanwhile, murder is the order of the day in the capital, Tripoli, and countless Libyan citizens are disappearing without trace. This is a tragic situation that underscores the opinion of an experienced traveller to Libya that the only effective means is probably armed intervention.

Mr President, I can, however, understand Western reluctance to use this ultimate means. I have considerably less understanding, though, for the delay and procrastination in establishing a no-fly zone over Libya. After all, inactivity in this regard has a high price, namely, prolonging the major suffering of the Libyan people. The European Union can and must help lay the foundation for a post-Gaddafi Libya and for better prospects for the future for this tribal State. First, let us break Gaddafi's air force and leave the 'Brother Leader', as he likes to call himself, paralysed.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI). – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that the leniency and the powerlessness we have demonstrated for a very long time now should not give way to a desire for chaotic intervention, the adverse effects of which would be immediately obvious.

For once, I can say that, broadly speaking, I approved of Mr Schulz's cautious speech. Indeed, I believe that the abundant good intentions of this House, the desire for humanitarian intervention, and the interference in others' affairs, have truly adverse effects.

You want the dictators to leave their countries, and you are right. Yet if you really want them to go, you have to give them a way out. You cannot start by denying them a visa to leave their own country, nor can you promise them a life spent in prison as their only prospect for the future. If and when you do that – and this is a fact, Mr Cohn-Bendit – you will give them no other option but to fight until the last drop of blood has been shed by their people. That is a fact! Traditional international law therefore had a considerable advantage over everything we are hearing today, and it is a real pity that it has been overlooked and, above all, that it has been overlooked by those who heaped praise on these dictators not so long ago. I was not the one who invited Mr Ben Ali to this House and who listened respectfully to his speech. It was all of you, ladies and gentlemen, and we heard very few protests then!

Ioannis Kasoulides (PPE). – Mr President, at its beginning, the uprising in Libya had the same motivations and characteristics as events in Tunisia and Egypt. The Gaddafi regime undertook an unprecedented lethal repression using air force, helicopter gunships and ruthless mercenaries shooting to kill unarmed civilians. The massacre caused defections in the army, the government and the diplomatic service. The people in Benghazi and elsewhere took arms from the defecting army, and the uprising is now an armed conflict, unequal in terms of power.

Gaddafi has lost any legitimacy to lead, having committed crimes against humanity, against his own people. The protracted conflict is causing a great humanitarian disaster inside and along the Libyan borders. It risks creating migratory flows towards the EU, in particular, the southern Member States. It also raises the world price of oil to levels dangerous for the world economy.

It is therefore imperative that the conflict ends immediately, but Gaddafi must not prevail. The no-fly zone must be implemented urgently and we should use all other possible means to assist the pro-democratic Libyans to defeat the forces who, through bribery, intimidation and tribal manipulation, are still supporting Gaddafi.

We can imagine what it will mean if Gaddafi succeeds. We will be witnessing a situation worse than that of Rwanda, to the shame of all humanity. Resolute action is needed now.

Ana Gomes (S&D). – Mr President, the European Parliament seconds the United Nations in their unanimous message to the Libyan dictator: step down, stop the bloodshed, face justice.

In the face of Gaddafi's retaliation against his people, the EU must exercise the responsibility to protect by helping to enforce a no-fly zone, as envisaged by the Arab League, the OIC and the African Union, and the other measures decided on by the Security Council, with all means available, including CSDP assets – please note, Mrs Ashton – namely, to enforce the arms embargo.

The EU must do more to assist all those trying to escape or who are stranded in Libya by supporting UNHCR and humanitarian organisations on the ground and by helping to resettle refugees who cannot be repatriated, such as Somalis, Eritreans and Ethiopians. A burden-sharing action plan to resettle refugees, a common asylum system, temporary protection measures – all should urgently be enacted by the European Union in compliance with the solidarity clause and the principle of non-refoulement, and as part of a coherent and long-term strategy to deal with the impact of political transition in the north of Africa, addressing the root causes of migration.

The EU must revise the ENP South, must prioritise support for capacity and institution-building to sustain the rule of law, human rights, including women's rights, and to prepare genuine elections. The EU must immediately establish relations with emerging political forces in Libya, namely the Interim Transitional Council, to encourage democratic transition and to ensure that democracy delivers the freedoms, the development and the dignity that the Libyan people are showing us they aspire to.

Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, this debate here in the European Parliament makes one thing clear, and that is that we are not neutral when it comes to this conflict. We are on the side of the democratic revolution. Gaddafi must go and Europe must play an active role in bringing that about.

There is a sharing of the workload here at the international level. We are discussing a no-fly zone, something for which – as Mr Schulz correctly identified – the backing of the UN Security Council is required. What do we do if Moscow and Beijing do not grant their assent? Well, then we would have to close this loophole in international law. We would have to take on the responsibility of protecting the unarmed population regardless, with the aid of the Arab League and the African Union, but also with the aid of an active role on the part of the European Union. Military implementation would then be the responsibility of NATO and its partners, but politically and economically, the European Union would continue to also have the key role to play, long after, in such a scenario, NATO and the United Nations had finished playing their major roles.

There is one thing that I would like to say quite clearly, and that is that I was very pleased, Mr Schulz, to hear you say that we need a free trade zone. This is because, if we do not allow these people's products into the EU, they will continue to come across the Mediterranean in coracles and in their masses to overwhelm Lampedusa. We certainly do not want that. Let us, therefore, create the free trade zone, let us allow the products into the EU, so that the people there also have an economic future in their democratised countries.

Mirosław Piotrowski (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, developments in Libya are the latest in a series of events in North Africa and the Middle East. The provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon allow the European Union to make use of the External Action Service, but hitherto, the service has been sluggish in its approach to events in the region. I have twice appealed at least for a mission to be sent there. It is to be welcomed that in the case of Libya, such a mission has been sent. Its objective is to evaluate humanitarian efforts, but specific political action is also needed. According to the UN, 1 000 people have already died in Libya, and according to human rights organisations, the figure may be as high as 6 000. The turbulence in the region is translating into a rise in crude oil prices in world markets, something which is very apparent to everyone who lives in the European Union. It is in our vital interest that at the next summit, the Union adopt a definite position, taking action which is correlated with the efforts of United States diplomacy. Thank you very much.

Gerard Batten (EFD). – Mr President, the momentous events in North Africa may have profound consequences for good or bad for the future prosperity and peace of western civilisation, but we are watching the outcome of a process that began 40 years ago. The West has been held to ransom by oil-producing states, and we have transferred billions upon billions of dollars to corrupt and despotic regimes. Without oil, Colonel Gaddafi would have been nothing more than a local tinpot dictator.

We have to hope that countries like Libya produce democratic and liberal regimes – for their sakes and for our own – but we cannot rely on this. What western countries must do is concentrate funds and scientific research to find an alternative to oil. If there is one lesson in this crisis that we have to learn above all others, it is that western civilisations must not be dependent on others for their vital energy supplies.

IN THE CHAIR: GIANNI PITTELLA

Vice-President

Elmar Brok (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the High Representative for the account she has given us and for her efforts over recent weeks, which could have put Europe on the map just a little bit if we continue to approach this issue with the necessary courage and take the necessary steps.

Despite the differences, the events in North Africa are highly comparable with those of 1989. The people are calling for freedom and better living conditions. Alongside humanitarian aid, which we have to provide now, we must offer the people of North Africa our assistance, if they want it, in developing democracy there. Democracy, however, will only survive if these people are helped to achieve better living conditions at the same time. We have heard talk, in this connection, of a Marshall Plan and of a free trade zone – all of which is necessary, as it could be positive for us in a tremendously dramatic and historic sense for democracy, freedom and better living conditions to establish themselves in these countries. We therefore must not treat this as run-of-the-mill and we must act quickly.

In order to prevent the murderer Gaddafi from reasserting himself, we need to hearten people and show them that we are on their side. It is therefore important that relations be established with the Interim Council. We must act as contacts in order to make it clear, in this way, that we are setting other elements in motion. We must help bring about the total isolation of Gaddafi so that he is separated from his own people and so that no future is possible with Gaddafi, so that the people break away from him. This must also include us preventing Gaddafi from bombing his own people. This means that a no-fly zone – or whatever else – is necessary in order to provide protection and encouragement in order to ensure that those who are fighting for their freedom are not demoralised. Furthermore, since we can do this together with the Arab League, in recognition of the United Nations charter, there would not need to be a UN resolution if Russia were involved. We must, then, help the people there so that they are able to fight their way to freedom in this conflict and so that a sustained civil war with this murderer does not arise.

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

Miguel Portas (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, I just want to check whether I heard Mr Brok correctly: did you say that a military solution, or a decision of a military nature, does not, in his opinion, require a United Nations decision? If that is indeed what you said, I have to say that I disagree with you a thousand times over.

Elmar Brok (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I specifically said that that would have to take place in cooperation with the Arab League and with Arab countries.

Secondly, it is desirable for legitimacy to be gained by means of a United Nations resolution. However, if this should be vetoed by one of the Permanent Members of the Security Council, there are plenty of examples of how the United Nations charter can be used appropriately.

We cannot allow a veto by one of the Permanent Members to block us from preventing Gaddafi from murdering his own people.

Adrian Severin (S&D). – Mr President, the recent events of historical importance in our Southern Neighbourhood call for a resetting of our policies there, but we have to start with the lessons to be learnt.

Firstly, we must learn that relying on authoritarian leaders or imposing our model of life is wrong. We must leave those people to build their democracy in their way and under their conditions.

Secondly, we must understand that the national fragmentation of our aid-for-development policy that sometimes allows the promotion of national geopolitical agendas deprives us and the countries in the area of the benefits of security through development.

Thirdly, our lack of vision and political will in addressing the regional security challenges, mainly the Israeli-Palestinian issue, leads us towards ever worse crises.

On Libya, amongst other countries, we must remember that not all those fighting a dictator are democrats and change *per se* is not always for the better.

We can therefore speak about dialogue, engagement, humanitarian assistance, but recognition might be too early, and recourse to military means should be ruled out or, at any rate, be subject to United Nations approval and Arab League cooperation. Otherwise, we could be led into an adventure, the results of which may be difficult to cope with.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE). – (FR) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, this time, Europe must be present at the meeting. Friday's summit will have to recognise unequivocally and unreservedly the legitimacy of the National Council, the demands of which are simple. Firstly, the humanitarian emergency. A civil war is taking place in Libya. We must increase our efforts to send food, medicines and doctors tenfold, and we must offer our support to the thousands of refugees thronging Tunisia and Egypt. However, Europe cannot just settle for a humanitarian response. The European Council must face up to its responsibilities and carry forward, as part of a decision taken at the UN involving the Arab League and the African Union, the project to impose a no-fly zone so as to prevent Colonel Gaddafi's air force from massacring his people.

Lastly, I would like to say something to the leaders who are playing on all these fears: the migrants fleeing Libya want only one thing, and that is to return to their country. As for those who are today risking their lives for freedom and democracy, what they want is to live and work in a free country of which they can be proud, and so when the time comes for reconstruction, it will be their economic development that the European Union will have to strive for with determination and courage.

Derk Jan Eppink (ECR). – Mr President, we all agree that Mr Gaddafi was a murderer, and I agree with Mr Schulz. I just wonder why, over the past years, our EU leaders have been trying to charm him.

Here I have a picture of Mr Van Rompuy, recently arrived in office and already in the wrong company; and here we have Mr Verhofstadt receiving the dictator with military honour, which he certainly likes. Here, Mr Cohn-Bendit, we have Mr Berlusconi. We know that Mr Berlusconi likes kissing, but he is kissing entirely the wrong person. Also, Mrs Ashton, I have here Tony Blair, your former boss, kissing the dictator.

My point is this: I agree that you have to meet people nastier than yourself, but you do not have to kiss them. You do not have to hug them. You do not have to charm them.

You have been feeding the monster that people are now fighting, and that is why they are getting killed. So I say to all these EU leaders who have kissed and hugged Gaddafi: shame on you!

Mario Mauro (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, he was the right man at the right time. Mr Cohn-Bendit said: Mr Gaddafi is a criminal and he made agreements with Mr Berlusconi.

I say, Mr Gaddafi is a criminal, he made agreements with the European Commission led by Mr Prodi, with the Italian Government of Mr D'Alema, with Mr Blair's Labour Government and with a hundred other governments besides. Mr Gaddafi is a criminal who, for more than 20 years, has led a State that is still of strategic and crucial importance for the interests of half the world. We must have the good sense to admit this, otherwise how do we have a hand in the Marshall Plan alluded to by Mr Schultz?

The Marshall Plan indeed existed, the Americans gave us the money, but as they did so, they demanded that the European governments drove the communists out of politics in their countries; they dictated the conditions to us. What are the conditions we intend to dictate to the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean in order to commit ourselves to a Marshall Plan? Do we intend to replace the dictators of recent years with other dictators in order to help our own interests or does our Marshall Plan aim to nurture the development of strong, healthy institutions that echo the spirit which is alive and well within civil society and which we have seen come to life in recent days in these countries?

This is the real question we must ask ourselves and the proposals we must put to the Council, including the no-fly zone and patrols of the Libyan coastline, which is the duty of European ships in the Gulf of Sidra, not American ones. This must be the appropriate response for Europe at this time.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, I believe that this debate makes it clear that the entire European Parliament is aware that this transformational crisis in North Africa is no longer a test of European foreign policy, but is now a test of the very viability of Europe having an external policy. This is why it is absolutely crucial for the European Union to be able to address the international community with a single and recognisable message.

I would like to take advantage of my minute here to add my voice to those who have stressed the importance of the humanitarian dimension in this transformational crisis. This will enable Europe to act to mitigate the effects on the humanitarian front, above all, in terms of displaced people, and of potential asylum seekers and refugees fleeing from the area of conflict to the nearest border, which is the border with the European Union.

This is why I want to stress the urgent need for the European Union to complete its still-outstanding asylum package; to review Directive 2001/55/EC on measures to protect displaced people in humanitarian emergencies and cope with the unforeseen mass influx of migrants; to be able to prioritise the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union and the European Asylum Support Office, which are the tools at its disposal; and, above all, to fill the human rights clause of its foreign policy with true meaning, making it not just a verbose clause, but a condition for the very existence of the European Union's foreign policy.

Kristiina Ojuland (ALDE). – Mr President, yesterday, many members of our House met the representatives of the Interim Council of Libya, whose message was absolutely clear: they need international support and aid and they need it very quickly.

Therefore, the first thing we must do, as many colleagues have already said, is start to establish relations with the Interim Council in order to legitimise their activities. We have to recognise them.

Secondly, we all know, and many colleagues have said this, that people are still being killed every minute by Gaddafi's air forces in Libya and we must therefore, as a European Union, be ready and act fast, together with the United Nations and the Arab League, to establish the no-fly zone.

My last point concerns humanitarian issues. These people need simple elementary things such as food, water and medical supplies, and they also need technical assistance. Even the military on the side of the opposition need technical assistance so they can connect online with each other.

Paweł Robert Kowal (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, fortunately, it is not true that in recent years, the whole of Europe and all the world's politicians have kissed Gaddafi, as Mr Eppink says is the case. As long as 25 years ago, Ronald Reagan was in no doubt about Gaddafi. We have needed 25 years to reach the same conclusion today. Those kisses, of course, were not entirely without foundation. They were justified with the word 'stability'. Today, in place of the word 'stability' we have to write 'democracy'. This is an opportunity which we have to take, and we have to take it now. In a few days, a summit is to be held. We expect it to produce results. We cannot afford to lose another 25 years. Our problem is not that we do not understand the times. We often say the right things here. Our problem is that we are slow to act. Our problem is that what we do is not effective. This is, perhaps, our most important opportunity concerning all of our neighbours, including Lukashenko. It is important that we manage to react in time, or in 25 years, we will be looking at photos with kisses again. Thank you.

Michael Gahler (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we all want to help the people of North Africa to achieve their legitimate objectives. The people on the ground will choose the way forward, but we must be ready, if they ask us for help, with immediate humanitarian aid. It is therefore a good thing that ECHO, the Humanitarian Aid department of the European Commission, is already on the ground in Tunisia and Egypt.

However, we are currently experiencing a real stress test in relation to the capacities and skills of the EU and its Member States, given that we have to do everything at once: fly our own citizens out, supply the basic needs of refugees from the neighbouring States and transport them home, deal with the refugees arriving in the EU by sea, and counter the illegitimate claim to power of a dictator.

What are the specific steps needed to de-legitimise Gaddafi?

The first is that we must jointly pull our ambassadors out of Tripoli.

The second is that we must recognise the Transitional National Council as the legitimate body with which we deal in Libya and reach agreement with it over the provision of humanitarian aid.

The third step is that our Member States in the Security Council should jointly table a motion to establish a no-fly zone which can be voted on within a short space of time.

The fourth step is that, if the Security Council is blocked by a veto, we should support the development of regional international law. In other words, if the African Union, the Arab League and the EU all agree, we should find a joint way within the region to implement the no-fly zone by suitable means.

Of course, over the medium term, we must discuss how we could generate the opportunities for development in these countries, for example, via a free trade zone, so that people can find a future in their own homelands.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, I wish to lend my support to the resolution on the situation in Libya tabled by our Parliament. Indeed, it provides food for thought for the European institutions. It explains clearly and determinedly the way in which we can help to overcome the difficulties at a time when the situation in Libya is becoming worse each day.

I, for my part, would like to emphasise two issues: firstly, in the short term, our priority is, in fact, to protect the civilians, whether they be displaced persons fleeing the fighting or Libyans caught in the fire of Colonel Gaddafi's attacks on his own people. Any and all resources must be invested in emergency humanitarian aid, not least to help the neighbouring countries that are most affected by the need to provide refuge for people: Tunisia, Egypt and Niger.

Secondly, we have a medium- and long-term responsibility: to seize the historic opportunity being given to us, in favour of these uprisings, to support the democratic transition process and to look further into the future in order to reform the common European asylum and immigration policies on the basis of a truly balanced partnership that deals a final blow to the use of countries in the Mediterranean region as Europe's policemen.

Edward McMillan-Scott (ALDE). – Mr President, ever since I was appointed as Vice-President for Democracy and Human Rights, I have tried to use my voice to speak for those who cannot speak. As it happens, today in the Chamber we have guests from the Interim Transitional National Council of Libya who met the Vice-President/High Representative last night but who cannot take part in the debate. In my view, and I think in the view of many in this Chamber, the European Union must recognise the Interim Transitional National Council of Libya before the weekend, whatever else it may do, and I have seen some of the ideas Mrs Ashton will bring forward.

The defeat of Gaddafi is not only vital for Libya: it is vital for the millions of Arabs elsewhere in the Arab world who are struggling for freedom. If we recognise the interim council officially, it allows humanitarian and other needs, as well as the strategic necessities of the time, to go to that interim council. The EU must be unequivocal in support of democracy wherever it begins to flower.

Tokia Saïfi (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, in these dramatic hours when Libya's future is at stake, humanitarian aid is important but it is not enough. The European Union must adopt a clear position with regard to a no-fly zone so as to put a stop to the fierce repression of the people. We understand the hesitation and the risks, but this issue goes beyond Libya. It affects the political future of that entire region and the political future of Europe.

The European Union must also urgently recognise the National Council as the legitimate authority of Libya. We have an opportunity to send a strong message to all the peoples

fighting for their freedom: 'Europe is behind you, because your struggle is our struggle, too'.

The neighbourhood policy must also be reoriented towards assisting the democratic transition, supporting the economy, and strengthening relations with the other countries and organisations in the region.

Lastly, we must urgently help these countries to manage their migratory flows. The scenes of people fleeing are proof that this is just as much a South-South issue as it is a North-South one.

Ladies and gentlemen, Baroness Ashton, the time has come to make a choice: either Europe sends a clear message of support and mobilisation to help these peoples, or it builds a wall so as to turn itself into an illusory, selfish fortress.

Pier Antonio Panzeri (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the spirit of this debate enables me, Baroness Ashton, to remind you that the Union for the Mediterranean's Parliamentary Assembly concluded its meeting last week in Rome. It set out several paths that the Commission would do well to return to, in particular, in terms of its suggestions on how to support the democratic transition processes in progress.

Hence, I urge you and I urge the Commission to follow the developments in Tunisia intently. This country is objectively a driving force for democracy and is setting a benchmark for the entire region.

Regarding Libya, we need to be fully aware that having decreed it part of the international community, the severance of relations with Mr Gaddafi's regime will have consequences, particularly given that his regime is showing greater resistance than those of Mr Ben Ali and Mr Mubarak.

This means that we must act on four fronts right now – and political timescales are decisive – with credibility, sincerity and consistency. We must come up with a suitable European financial plan. I understand the evocative note struck by many, but we need an Ashton Plan rather than a Marshall Plan. We also need a European immigration and asylum policy, a deterrent policy including the closure of airspace, and full support for the opponents of Mr Gaddafi's regime.

Baroness Ashton, it is up to you and your foreign policy ties with the Council to make these points count in the coming days, but also to avoid Europe's foreign policy being caught unawares again by the events that are changing the Mediterranean.

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, a few days ago, the Gaddafi regime sent a letter to the United Nations Security Council in which it expressed its surprise at the sanctions adopted on 26 February, alleging that only – in Gaddafi's words – 'moderate' force was resorted to against some 'subversive acts'. This is a clear sign of a dictator who knows that he has lost the game and is no longer able to recognise the gravity of the acts he is committing. This plays down in an incredibly cynical manner the brutality which has taken place in Libya during the last three weeks.

On the other hand, the reaction from the Gaddafi regime clearly shows us that it is not at all indifferent to the sanctions which have been adopted so far. This is why I believe that we must apply the toughest possible sanctions, under a UN mandate of course. However, I believe that we need to go beyond the no-fly zones by providing support to those who

need to defeat Gaddafi, while also showing solidarity with our southern Member States which will receive a wave of refugees. This is also obviously going to happen.

Simon Busuttil (PPE). – (MT) Mr President, the events taking place in the Arab world, and in all the countries in the Arab world, are a beautiful dream that is coming true. However, so as to prevent this dream from becoming a nightmare, we have to play our part and ensure that these peoples not only rid themselves of their dictators, but eradicate dictatorships too. This requires that they undergo a transition phase, which calls for massive assistance from our end.

It is true that we have all forged relationships with these countries and their regime. However, once we witnessed the shocking violence being carried out, we spoke out with one voice, against the violence and against the regime that is inflicting it. The next step is to quash this violence, not only using words, but through our actions. Every day that passes and which brings violence with it is another day where we will have allowed murder to take place and blood to be shed.

We must strengthen the European Union's humanitarian presence. This is already being done, and Cathy Ashton is doing a good job, but we must increase our humanitarian aid, both towards the Libyan people, as well as those who are fleeing the regime towards Tunisia and Egypt. Moreover, if this influx makes its way towards Europe, then we must be prepared. It is all very well to claim that we should open our doors to Libyan refugees, yet it still remains to be seen whether we will all shoulder the responsibility if the situation arises.

Ernst Strasser (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, you have repeatedly had to put up with critical comments from this place. I would like to take today's debate as an opportunity to clearly state that the European Union and, in particular, you personally and your staff, has and have acted quickly, well and efficiently throughout this crisis. That has also brought Europe a step closer to the role that we envisage together as co-founders of a global world.

It is right and important to observe that the circumstances are different in each country, particularly in Libya. In Libya's case, the European Union has taken a timely political stand against genocide and in favour of civil society. The pressure on the Gaddafi regime has rightly been escalated in conjunction with NATO, the United Nations and others. Clearly, military action, too, cannot be ruled out where undertaken within the framework of conventions under international law. Moreover, humanitarian aid – meaning food, medical supplies, a roof over people's heads – must be provided for those forced to flee the war zone.

However, we also need to consider what happens on the first day of the post-Gaddafi era. In this regard, I would like to refer, once more, to the Union for the Mediterranean Assembly in Rome, which has proposed some important positive steps – firstly, personal security for the citizens; secondly, political security – which includes close cooperation with the interim government; and, thirdly, economic security.

We must do everything in our power to ensure that economic life in these countries can return to normal and that the people find work.

Krzysztof Lisiek (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Mrs Ashton, I think we also have to look at these events in North Africa and Libya as being part of a kind of historical process. Not that long ago, we were all witnesses of the murders in the Balkans – unfortunately, to a certain extent, we participated in this – and of a situation in which people in Europe were

killing each other. Today, we must make every effort to avoid a repetition of that scenario. Therefore, I hope that at the forthcoming European Union summit, we will show the determination needed to react quickly, and I think that such things as a no-fly zone or a *de facto* severance of diplomatic relations with the Gaddafi regime and with Gaddafi himself as a criminal are essential.

I think we also need to look at what happened in 1989 in Poland and other countries. There is an opportunity here, because today, those young people demonstrating on the streets of Libya and other African countries really do want democracy. We must help them achieve this.

Tunne Kelam (PPE). – Mr President, I was encouraged by your opening statement, Mrs Ashton, especially when you mentioned that our actions must be rooted in the EU core values, because spontaneous protests in North Africa have shown that undemocratic rulers cannot provide genuine stability. We have to realise that attempts to domesticate brutal dictators like Gaddafi have failed, causing much embarrassment. People in Libya are fighting for the same values we share and we need to clearly take their side.

The same value-based approach applies to our future policies towards states like Iran, Belarus, Cuba, China and Russia.

What we have to do in two days' time is to back a no-fly zone, immediately recognise the Interim National Council, and address the social and economic causes of these revolutions.

I think we cannot do without a long-term Marshall-type plan.

Nadezhda Neynsky (PPE). – (BG) Mr President, Lady Ashton, in 1999, in order to avoid unrest in the opposition city of Benghazi, Gaddafi needed scapegoats on whom he could pin the responsibility for the children infected with AIDS as a result of poor Libyan healthcare. He found six Bulgarian medics and a Palestinian doctor to serve this purpose, who spent long, harrowing years in Libyan prisons.

However, Gaddafi's manipulation of this situation failed in his own country, which is proven by the fact that Benghazi was actually now where the revolution started. The nurses, who were victims of Gaddafi's dictatorship, became a clear symbol of European solidarity. This European solidarity is expected today from Libya's citizens themselves and from the young people of Libya. It is expected from those who do not see the Arab world facing a dilemma of 'either dictatorship or Islamism' and who prove every day, including with their blood, that there is also a place for democracy in this world.

This is why today, when we are debating the future of Libya, we Europeans must be impartial in our assessments, definite in our actions and, most importantly of all, united in our decisions. We must give our support to principles, freedom and democracy in this world.

Agustín Díaz de Mera García Consuegra (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, there are thousands of refugees and thousands of displaced people. The solution to this emergency is evacuation. What is needed is transport. As Mr Guterres said, these people do not want to come to the European Union; they want to go back home.

There are 2 million immigrants, 1 million Egyptians and 80 000 Bangladeshis. We must focus on the weakest of the weak: Eritreans, Somalis, the sub-Saharan Africans mistaken for mercenaries and Palestinians. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) says it needs USD 160 million over three months for water, medicines, food and transport.

We expect a resounding response from the Union on Friday. Gaddafi cannot escape international criminal justice: mass attacks on his people constitute crimes against humanity. Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo is already taking action.

Mr President, the European Parliament must be involved. We are also a democratic instrument for applying pressure and informing the free world. We need a mandate from this Chamber for a delegation of Parliament in the UNHCR, Red Cross and Red Crescent refugee camps.

Salvatore Iacolino (PPE). – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the ever-growing and increasingly widespread uprisings that we are currently seeing in the Mediterranean certainly show a strong desire for democratic participation, above all, from young people, who are being pushed on by Facebook and Twitter towards a different world that is more responsive to their aspirations.

Nevertheless, the regions which overlook the Mediterranean represent very different worlds and are now, more than ever, made to suffer under the bloody violence of dictators with whom, it must be said, pretty much all world leaders have carried on relations at some point.

I have a few issues I should like to raise: a humanitarian emergency, protecting the dignity of refugees and, at the same time, remembering that this crisis could quickly turn into a public health emergency; excessive concentrations of displaced persons without adequate healthcare; putting a stop to violence; the hypothesis of a no-fly zone to work out; a new and different kind of solidarity – Mr President and Baroness Ashton – for a Mediterranean policy that genuinely protects the significant group of people who are standing firm in the Mediterranean; changes to Frontex and, why not, let us remind the Council (which is not here today) that there are two directives to protect seasonal workers and intracorporate transfers of third-country nationals, which could also provide a response – including in employment terms – to these exceptional demands that we really have to tackle more effectively.

President. – The catch-the-eye procedure begins now. I should like to warn you straight away that I have 19 requests for the floor but I cannot meet them all; I shall only be able to accept five or six requests. I mean no offence to the other Members, but the debate ran on a lot, we had a very lengthy introductory report from Baroness Ashton and we cannot influence the next debate. Please excuse me therefore. I will give the floor to those who signed up first, obviously giving all the groups a fair representation.

Arnaud Danjean (PPE). – *(FR)* Mr President, Baroness Ashton, you emphasised – and we are all aware of this – the urgent need to take action in response to the Libyan crisis. You rightly pointed out what the European Union has done and has done rather well in humanitarian terms and in terms of the evacuation of European citizens.

Indeed, I think that the European Union would have gained from publicising these actions and making them much more visible, because people too often have the impression that the Member States alone carry out these operations, whereas you have pointed out that European mechanisms have worked here.

On a political and military level now, a reminder of the need for a no-fly zone is certainly necessary, if not just politically, then also militarily. It will take more than that, however, because – let us not forget – no-fly zones did not prevent atrocities on the ground in Bosnia and Kosovo, even when, in the case of overflying, they were applied very rigorously.

While we await the UN Security Council's decisions, we have European common security and defence policy instruments. We can implement them for the purposes of maritime surveillance, monitoring the embargo and delivering humanitarian aid. Europe has to make its voice heard on this point, and you have the instruments with which to act.

Richard Howitt (S&D). – Mr President, I agree with everyone in this debate who calls on the European Union to engage, to act and to exercise the responsibility to protect. I also welcome High Representative Ashton sending a mission into Libya with less incident than, for example, one of our Member States.

But all those who talk tough in this debate, were you also talking tough during 42 years of a brutal military dictatorship? Did you protest when 1 200 prisoners were murdered in cold blood over a decade ago? Or against Gaddafi's historic litany of torture, enforced disappearance and extrajudicial execution?

Did you complain when the European Commission started negotiations for a framework agreement with Libya and which were on course to be happily completed this year? Tough sanctions against departing dictators at a time of crisis look good to European public opinion, but tough standards before a time of crisis look even better for the people we say we are trying to help.

Sonia Alfano (ALDE). – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as some have said, Baroness Ashton, you have shown great courage by taking the bull by the horns in this case, but I think there are a number of basic steps to be taken.

Meanwhile, you have spoken about bringing the guilty parties to justice. Let us call them by their real name: we need to bring Mr Gaddafi to justice. You also spoke about violence. Instead, I think it is right to say that genocide is taking over in these territories, yet again.

We cannot continue to bury our heads in the sand. I think the first thing we need to do is to recognise the Libyan National Council, a transitional council. We must have an interlocutor; we cannot carry on speaking only of sharply reduced humanitarian aid.

There is no doubt that we must all speak up for a no-fly zone. We cannot continue accepting the vetoes of China and Russia, countries that are run by dictators. China censors the Internet while Russia kills journalists such as Anna Politkovskaya. I think that right now, the first thing to do is to begin setting out our stall and recognise the Libyan National Council.

Franziska Katharina Brantner (Verts/ALE). – *(DE)* Mr President, I would just like to deal briefly once again with the issue of the Southern Neighbourhood Policy

and the proposals made by the Commission and Mrs Ashton yesterday. I think what we are lacking is a realisation of what is still going on, for example, concerning our relations with Saudi Arabia and the negotiations with Syria. How will you change them? How will they be changed? Will you continue with the status quo on these negotiations with Syria, and what will you do with Saudi Arabia? How will we interact with these countries?

What I see as lacking in your proposal – which I think on the whole is good – is a process for how we will establish criteria for upgrading relations. How will you do the 'we will pay more': based on what criteria and verified by whom? I think we need a process like an enlargement process, with a Commission to set criteria and a Commission to verify them.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, we are in solidarity with the Arab peoples in their struggle for freedom, democracy and social progress in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, bearing in mind the specific circumstances of each of these countries. However, we cannot forget the support that that EU governments and leaders gave to the dictators, selling them weapons which they are now using to kill their people.

Likewise, we cannot accept any foreign military intervention or interference in the struggles of these countries' peoples. We know how foreign interference begins, but we never know how it is going to end, as the examples of Iraq, Afghanistan and so many other places have demonstrated. The political, economic and social choices of the peoples of these countries in the immediate future need to be respected, and they need to be given all the humanitarian aid that they seek, without preconditions or any interference.

Mario Borghezio (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, of course we must recognise the serious errors of the West. We in Italy have made the mistake of thinking of Mr Gaddafi as 'our son of a bitch', as President Roosevelt would have said, while instead, he was simply one of the many sons of ... that rule over their people and now even fire on them or make other people fire on them.

How on earth has no one in Parliament mentioned the responsibility of the African Heads of State or Government, who, until yesterday morning, thought of him as a brother, pampered him, sent him to the United Nations as a representative leader for the defence of human rights, even leading him to declare himself the king of kings amongst African countries, or have I got the wrong person?

Now, Europe is making another mistake: it pretends to ignore an obvious danger, as a great flood of Somalis, Eritreans and others flee Libya's borders. We need to tackle this with real energy. We should use a Marshall Plan involving the network of small and medium-sized enterprises to help these people, not send weapons.

President. – Before giving the floor to Baroness Ashton for her reply, I should like to let you know that two representatives of the Libyan Transitional National Council are here in the visitors' gallery, Dr El-Welfali and Dr Al-Eisawi, whom we welcome.

The strength of the applause is symptomatic of Parliament's backing and solidarity, and of the strong support shown in the debate for freedom and democracy in Libya. Thank you and good luck. We are right behind you.

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, honourable Members, thank you very much for what has been an important and, I think, very significant debate in this Parliament.

The common theme, of course, is the desire to see change in Libya that puts the wishes of the people at the forefront of the energy of the European Union and the international community.

I think Mr Schulz said it first, but it was repeated very often: we need to be very clear-headed about what we do and very determined on what we should do. We have to make sure, first of all, that the humanitarian aid and support goes in and gets to the right places. We are in touch with *Médecins sans frontières* and the ICRC all the way through the country from

Benghazi to Tripoli. But I know from my discussions that there are areas where it is exceptionally difficult to get aid and medicines into the country because of the fighting that is going on and because people cannot get through.

This is something that Mrs Georgieva, as Commissioner for humanitarian aid, is working on, and Mrs Amos in the UN is also coordinating efforts from there. The good news is that in some places, we are getting messages that they are coping well and support is getting through, but there is, of course, much to do.

I have also listened to what honourable Members have said about the issues of refugees. We have worked hard with Member States to try and support getting people home. For a lot of refugees who arrived at the Tunisian border, their home was Egypt, and some Member States have been working closely with the Tunisians to provide transport by sea or by plane to get people back home, and also to watch over those who will be heading back to Africa.

But there is much more to do. My belief is that, if we can make the country more stable, people can stay at home – which is where they want to be. So one of the challenges for the EU – and I am very open about this – is that by providing stability in our southern neighbourhood, we enable people to stay where they wish to stay, with economic prosperity and democracy, rather than feeling that they have to flee because of violence, lack of opportunity or other issues.

Then there is this whole question of a no-fly zone and the role of military options. I indicated the work on what we described as prudent planning that has been going on with the Political and Security Committee (COPS) and which continued last night. Those discussions are referred to in our discussions with the United Nations, which I have also indicated are ongoing, and NATO, where I will attend a meeting tomorrow. Of course they are done in conjunction with our partners. The Arab League will discuss a no-fly zone on Saturday.

But what I am also very mindful of is something that the Secretary-General of the Arab League said to my delegation visiting him yesterday: we have to define what we need, because a no-fly zone by definition means different things to different people. Ensuring that whatever is done can be done properly is something I think this House would be very keen to see. We have to be sure that whatever options are taken, they are taken with the full knowledge of what we are doing and with the support of the people who are going to be affected by that. In that context, I refer again to the need for our continued discussions and dialogues with the African Union and with the Arab League.

We could have a big debate – and perhaps we should – about a subject that I started to write about in the press, which is isolationism versus engagement. It is a real challenge, and what I would say to the gentleman who held up the photos is, of course, if you are the President of the European Council and you go as President to the African Summit which is held in Libya, you will find that there is a picture of the President with Gaddafi. Of course. There are pictures of many people. There was a picture shown in the same group of our esteemed ALDE Group leader. There are pictures that you can take on many occasions where those of us who are given positions of responsibility have to engage with people who we probably would not wish to.

So I think it is unfair to show a picture of Herman Van Rompuy performing his responsibilities as President of the European Council on behalf of all of us in the host country with the person who was hosting the event. Whether we would prefer the African Union to have held its summit somewhere else is another question; whether, indeed, we

would have made some remarks to them on many occasions that perhaps they should. But in the end, we go to meet the African Union largely where the African Union suggests. We may not like that, and it is a genuine debate. I think we have to engage in that at some point, because my general principle is that engagement is better than isolation. Isolation is effective in some circumstances, but engagement is better.

Having said that, as I have also made clear, we may have brought Gaddafi out of the cold. It is now time to send him back into the cold, fully and properly. This is also very important: to have an assessment of what we engage and how we engage and be prepared to review that and stand up and say: we have done this for a set of reasons we think are right, whichever country it is; that we believe engagement in these circumstances is better, but there are circumstances when that is not appropriate and circumstances where, even if that is what we did, it is not appropriate now.

But let us be honest, let us not throw down challenges with photographs or other things, where people did this and people did that. People mainly do their very best in circumstances that are very difficult, and I think we should take pride in the President of the Council trying to be the representative of the Member States.

I want to just also say something about labels. We hear a lot about a Marshall Plan: somebody even called it an Ashton Plan. No, let us have a Libyan Plan, or an Egyptian Plan, or a Tunisian Plan, owned by the people of those countries in which we engage and offer our support.

I do not want to make a plan that we arrive at and about which we say: guess what, we have come to bring you our plan for your country. No, let us not do that. Let us actually be the people who offer the support to ensure that their plan is able to be everything that we would want it to be to support democracy.

There are people in this House who have years of experience, who have come through revolution and change and who have a huge amount to offer. I firmly hope – and I have said this in these countries – that they will call upon (if they feel it would be valuable) those people who have lived it and who not only know what worked but also can tell them what did not work. Perhaps the things to avoid can be just as important as the things to do.

I agree that we need to review what the EU does, what tools we have available to us, whether we have enough, whether we need to think again about what we are able to do. Because you are right, I operate within a mandate that I am given, and I can only operate in that mandate. That mandate allows me to do some things, but it mainly requires me to gather together the institutions and the 27 countries in a concerted and joint effort.

One final thing about publicity and listening. I have done more press, I think, than anybody else in the world on all of this. I have been wall to wall on the airwaves. We were the first out on the resignation of Mubarak, and I have done a huge amount of press. But I have also done far more without the press in the room. Again, that is what I think is important, because more than anything, we need to listen. We are all visiting these countries, and they have so many visitors from across the world, and that is great – though I think sometimes we need to give them space and time to be able to work together to plan and then have an even more informed conversation with us. But we also need to listen, and if there is anything I urge upon all of us it is to take the time to really listen – I will say this to Member States as well – to what people on the ground are saying, to go to Tahrir Square as I did, to talk to the young people in Egypt, to talk to civil society in Tunisia and to engage with the

people of Libya wherever we can: to discuss what they want for their future and do everything we possibly can to back them.

Edward McMillan-Scott (ALDE). – Mr President, perhaps Baroness Ashton could comment on this. There has been practical unanimity in the House that recognition of the Interim Transitional National Council, currently based in Benghazi, by the European Union would be an extremely important political signal which would allow humanitarian and other strategic aid into the country. She has not replied on that point. Many speakers have raised it. Perhaps she could just tell us what her views are and whether she could convey the message to the Council on Friday.

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, I did not reply to it; I heard it, and I am very well aware of it. There are two reasons that I did not reply. One is that I have assumed the President of the European Parliament, who will be speaking at the European Council, will convey – as he always does – what Parliament has said and what it has agreed in its resolutions. I think that is an appropriate way forward for this Parliament to be properly represented. The second is because it will be for the Member States to determine. So it was not a failure to recognise; I met, indeed, with a gentleman last night. Simply, I was trying to honour Parliament by recognising the role of the President.

Mario Mauro (PPE). – *(IT)* Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, in the light of what Mr McMillan-Scott has said, I cannot work out whether the proposal to recognise the Libyan Transitional National Council will be among the proposals that you and the Commission will be making to the Council.

I have gathered that you are happy for Parliament to talk about it, but will the Commission and Baroness Ashton propose it at the Council meeting on the 11th amongst its proposals or its own-initiative proposals? That is our question.

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, I can only do what, within my mandate, I am allowed to do. My personal opinions do not count in this. Honourable Members have to understand that.

I have met with the Council and I have heard what Parliament has said. The President of Parliament will report. As Mr Cohn-Bendit says, it is very important, but I cannot stand here today and say 'I will therefore recommend'. We have to go forward with what Parliament agrees when it passes its resolution, and I have seen what it is suggesting. We then report to the President of the European Council for the conclusions of the European Council – which rest within his hands – for the Foreign Affairs Council to meet and discuss and for Parliament, through its President, to put this forward. Then, the European Council will take a decision.

I am not trying to avoid the issue. I am simply saying that you have to pull all those things together and then make a decision. I mean no disrespect to the Transitional Council, but again, we have to do this properly and make sure that we do what we are confident and comfortable with.

President. – I am giving the floor to Mr Cohn-Bendit for the last speech, after which we shall finish. I should merely like to remind Baroness Ashton – though I am sure she knows – that she also gets her mandate from Parliament as Vice-President of the European Commission, and not therefore from the Council alone.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, I would like to say to Baroness Ashton – and I can say this in English – that it is also written in her mandate that she has to make proposals to the Member States. It is in her mandate, so we want her to take her mandate seriously. After a debate in the Parliament and after a resolution that you will read, Baroness Ashton, you know that there will be an overwhelming majority to take this seriously and to make this proposal to the Council. If not, there will be a big crisis between you and the European Parliament.

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, I do not accept this big crisis idea. I have been very clear with you, Mr Cohn-Bendit, about exactly what my mandate is. The recognition of a government is the recognition that is given by the European Council. The mandate of the High Representative is to come forward with the ideas that are put to her, to discuss those with the institutions beforehand, and to put forward, on Friday to the European Council, the views that are being expressed. It is for the Member States to take the decision.

I will go from this to discuss with the President of the European Council – whose representative is here – and I will discuss this with the President of the Commission. We will also take the views, through the institutions, ready for Friday and the Foreign Affairs Council which meets tomorrow. I am not avoiding that, but it is absolutely right and proper that Member States take the decision on recognising a government. I hear very loudly what Parliament says.

Let this not be a crisis. I am not avoiding anything. I am simply telling you that the way we should do this is to do it properly, for the benefit of these people and the people of Libya.

President. – I have received six motions for resolutions ⁽¹⁾ tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 10 March 2011.

Louis Grech (S&D), *in writing.* – It is unfortunate that Europe has drawn few lessons from its past. The Union's delayed response to Libya is proof that Europe to date maintains an incoherent and fragmented approach towards the Southern Mediterranean. If Europe holds onto this mindset, there is the possibility that a humanitarian crisis of this magnitude will reoccur. Europe must act on two fronts:

1) Political and humanitarian response: To ensure that the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people are achieved through home-grown democracy, whereby the regime steps aside to allow the people of the region to actively bring about the country's transition to democracy;

2) Migratory flows: Presently, the eventuality of large flows of migration from the region is a secondary concern, yet it must be addressed. The Union has, in the past, acknowledged it, but failed to put any concerted and comprehensive plan into motion. This is why I call for the creation of a Marshall-type Plan, one which will include an integrated immigration policy, based on the principles of solidarity and burden-sharing, whereby all Member States acknowledge that no single country will alone be able to tackle the great and complex

(1) See Minutes

difficulties brought about by large migratory flows, particularly in the case of smaller Member States.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) The uprisings in the Maghreb have already had their impacts in Europe – in the form of boats packed with refugees, falling share prices and price shocks at filling stations, with the EU naively having anticipated only the last of these, at most. Taking the higher prices for crude oil in combination with a strong euro and the rate increase by the European Central Bank, there is little hope of fuel oil prices falling. This shows us, once again, how dependent we are on crude oil supplies and that we must press forward on alternatives.

The rebels' calls for a no-fly zone pose us a dilemma. It requires the United Nations to sanction this direct interference in the sovereignty of a State and, as a consequence, the destruction of its anti-aircraft capabilities – as the experts are warning. The States of the EU must not only consider this but also the consequences of open civil war. Furthermore, what would the EU's position be should Gaddafi change course? It is clear that a dictator cannot be cowed merely by aggressive posturing. Gaddafi has shown how it is possible to ride roughshod over the West and the rest of the dictators are watching on with interest. The EU must now reveal its foreign policy muscles and take clear steps towards de-escalation and the democratisation of Libya.

Mariya Nedelcheva (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Muammar Gaddafi's departure is a matter of urgency today. Yet there is everything else, too, and what matter are the people. We focus on the dictators, but we often overlook the people, who are the first to suffer the consequences. The process of liberating the Libyan people cannot be undertaken without a genuine political transition within the country. However, a democratic transition will never succeed without real opposition leaders. At the moment, that opposition is very weak. Giving it greater visibility is a first necessary step towards creating momentum. On the other hand, a strong regional strategy is also necessary. On the refugee issue alone, the neighbouring countries cannot reach an agreement so as to prevent the influx of refugees from being held up at the borders. The result: health conditions are worsening, which is fuelling intracommunity tensions. If this humanitarian crisis is not tackled, we risk being faced with a situation that quickly spirals out of control.

Edward Scicluna (S&D), *in writing.* – I congratulate my colleague, Ana Gomes, on her resolution. However, I am disappointed by the lack of support from the PPE for an agreement urging the EU to prepare a plan and equip itself to cope with the aftermath of the Libyan crisis, particularly concerning migration policy and relocation. We do not even have a plan A, let alone a plan B.

To date, a small island Member State close to Libya has helped in all the ways it could: Malta. Thirteen thousand people of 89 different nationalities were evacuated by Malta's own boats and its own airlines, putting both at great risk. The Maltese did this not because of any EU legislation and certainly not because of Frontex. Instead, they acted on humanitarian grounds and waived visa requirements. It was a principle of solidarity. Whether or not we are facing an immigration influx of biblical proportions, we cannot tell. For sure it will be large and very significant for Malta. The Maltese people ask not for an application of the Dublin II or Frontex regulations. They demand solidarity and a relocation policy based on the principle of burden-sharing. It is very disappointing and incomprehensible to see the PPE shirking this responsibility.

Traian Ungureanu (PPE), *in writing.* – The events in Libya and in the southern neighbourhood of the EU are a rebuttal of past policies and a test for future policies. The status quo approach was the prevalent choice for almost 40 years. This policy gave Europe the benefits of stability and safe access to energy. But it ignored the societies of North Africa and of the Arab world. We know this because these societies re-emerged dramatically and took everybody by surprise. A major policy shift is required towards active support for the fledgling civil societies in the Arab countries. But this should not be an excuse for rushed decisions that would shatter our neighbourhood policy.

The European Neighbourhood Policy should stay in place as a policy. It should not be replaced by uncoordinated measures. The idea was mooted that financial resources should be taken away from the European programmes of the Eastern Partnership and reallocated to the South. This would send a negative signal towards the societies in our eastern neighbourhood. Moreover, this reallocation has no rational basis. The per capita spending in the South and the East is not unbalanced. It is roughly equal. The problem is not how much we spend but how we spend.

7. Amendment of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union with regard to a stability mechanism for Member States whose currency is the euro (debate)

President. – The next item is the report by Mr Brok and Mr Gualtieri, on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, on the amendment of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union with regard to a stability mechanism for Member States whose currency is the euro (00033/2010 – C7-0014/2011 – 2010/0821/NLE) (A7-0052/2011).

Elmar Brok, *rapporteur.* – (DE) Mr President, Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, the euro is a major success story. It is one of the most stable currencies in the world and has outperformed the dollar on the markets. We can see that the economic figures coming out of the United States are far worse than those for Europe. Yet, given that we do not have uniform conditions, we still see that individual parts of the euro area, individual Member States, are having difficulties and we have to respond to that.

It is the case that a failure of the euro could be extraordinarily costly for all of us in this globalised system, and I want to spell out that my country – which sometimes depicts itself as if it had to make major sacrifices – is the main beneficiary or joint main beneficiary of the euro. We are thus not performing self-sacrifice here. Instead, we are also acting in the common interest of all the States – large and small, rich and poor – and we need to appear to be unified.

We must also make clear that we need to present a unified front in order to be credible. We cannot allow a credit ratings agency such as Moody's to downgrade a country by three levels overnight. When that happens, we get in trouble once again thanks to pressure from the United States. Here, too, we need to have the ability to present ourselves more strongly as unified. I am therefore pleased that we are attempting, in three ways, to create the conditions to make us credible. These are: tightening up the Stability and Growth pact, with greater options for intervention; bolstering the role of the Commission; and an early warning system, the European semester, as part of which it is to be observed at an early stage whether, and to what extent, budgetary discipline can and is to be followed through by the Member States. All of this reinforces our abilities so that we do not find ourselves in a situation like the present one again, and this will enable us to achieve credibility on a durable basis.

Secondly, we cannot overcome this crisis with budgetary discipline alone. We will only emerge from this debt trap through a combination of budgetary discipline and growth. For that reason, efforts to promote growth and competitiveness make sense. I am pleased that the proposals that have been made in this area are slowly being modified so that they are not based on a purely intergovernmental approach but increasingly also integrated into the Community method where the European Union has the relevant competences. The result of this is that many of the concerns that we in this House rightly had about a particular proposal are slowly being resolved. Yet these two factors – competitiveness and budgetary discipline – go hand in hand.

My third point relates to the revision of the Treaty that we have paved the way for and on which the European Council can only decide on 24 March if we have given our opinion by that point. An amendment of Article 136(3) of the Treaty has been proposed. Mr Gualtieri and I, as well as the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, are of the opinion that it would be better to amend Article 136(1), rewording it in order to better meet our demands.

We also know, however, that this approach could possibly be harder to implement as, for reasons of politics and time, the simplified procedure should be our aim and no referendums should be held. If, for the reasons stated, this is not possible, we should at least ensure that the Council undertakes obligations that make clear that the intergovernmental approach in this case does not mean that permanent new structures are created in the European Union but that it will continue, as in the past, to only be used as a method where ground-breaking is required. These conditions must thus be adhered to in order to create the conditions for there to be the possibility of link-up in the event of transfer to the Community method and in order to carry out an improvement of this kind in such a way that we can act in a communal way in the long term.

That means that we also see the weakness of the intergovernmental approach. An intergovernmental approach means no, or hardly any, parliamentary legitimacy and results in a complete inability to act in many areas due to the requirement for unanimity. That means that the Community solution – the ‘Monnet method’ – is also always more legitimate and gives rise to a greater ability to act. We should not forget that in this debate.

The European Parliament wants to create the conditions so that, in the measures taken in the various fields, we revert to the approach of using Community institutions. In this regard, it is not especially the European Parliament that is at issue as, when it comes to an intergovernmental approach, we have, at most, a right to be consulted. What is at issue is a greater involvement on the part of the Commission, which does the groundwork, performs an evaluation and tables proposals. The Commission should also propose a regulation governing such matters in order to incorporate them into Community law.

I hope that the European Council is ready – and I welcome Mr Corbett, as representative of the European Council – to create the necessary conditions in the talks with us by 24 March and to give Parliament the assurance that this approach can be used in such a way that the necessary steps can be designed in a sensible way and so that we can bear our responsibility together.

Roberto Gualtieri, *rapporteur*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it would not be an exaggeration to say that this is an historic time in the process of Europe-building. The economic crisis has made it clear that the single currency needs real European economic

governance and, for the first time, significant and innovative steps are being taken in this direction.

At the same time, we are seeing a dangerous trend of giving this new governance an intergovernmental flavour, which not only risks threatening the institutional structure of the European Union, but also making the new mechanisms ineffective.

Hence, the permanent stability mechanism is an issue of symbolic and central importance. Indeed, on the one hand, the establishment of a permanent stability mechanism represents a decisive and important step forwards. Parliament supports this decision, although it is important to stress that it must not rule out the possibility of using extraordinary solidarity mechanisms, such as those based on Article 122, which are currently in use.

On the other hand, if the establishment of a permanent mechanism is therefore positive, the European Council has chosen to create a purely intergovernmental mechanism, thereby denying in a unique manner the European institutions any role, including in the procedure leading up to its establishment.

Amongst other things, this could stir up disputes during the ratification process about the appropriateness of a simplified procedure, given that it is hardly in doubt that cutting back the competences of the European Union would require an ordinary revision procedure. Furthermore, since the treaty states two clear things; that the monetary policy of the Member States whose currency is the euro is an exclusive competence of the European Union, and that the Member States must coordinate their economic policy within the framework of the Union, as the treaty states, a mechanism that operates completely outside the European Union's institutional structure would scarcely be compatible with these principles and would therefore result in a reduction of the European Union's powers, which would not be compatible with a simplified revision procedure. This problem could also be raised by a number of national parliaments during the ratification procedure which, as we know, will be a complicated and risky process.

Likewise for this reason, Parliament would have preferred a different, more institutionally appropriate and less politically risky procedure, such as Article 352, either alone or in combination with Article 136. The report sets all this out in black and white, but we preferred to concentrate on the substance rather than on procedures so as to reach a realistic yet determined approach.

The central point is that the permanent stability fund will be created by the Member States because that is what they decided, but it may also lay the foundations for a new structure lying outside the EU institutions or it might be an intergovernmental wagon within a European Union train, travelling down the tracks of European law.

Parliament wants to make a contribution because we are following the latter of these two paths. Hence, we asked in our report for two conditions to be respected: the proposal for an amendment must be redrafted so that the establishment of the mechanism's distribution is somehow placed within an EU procedure, or that the EU institutions are heavily involved in the practical implementation of the mechanism and, above all, in defining the conditionality measures.

What principles and rules should be established for providing assistance? Who shall establish them and how? For this, we need a regulation with an ordinary legislative procedure and we are waiting to consult with the European Council and the Member States on these issues.

Maroš Šefčovič, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, honourable Members, in today's interconnected world, no country can remain unaffected by what is happening to its neighbours.

Just look at the events in North Africa and just look at the debate which has just been concluded in this House, and I think that what is true in politics is definitely true in economics as well.

The crisis has shown just how great the risk of contagion is – particularly for the countries in the euro area – when one Member State finds itself in serious economic difficulty and how quickly this spreads to the rest of the countries.

Last year, we showed our determination to do whatever it takes to defend the single currency. Temporary instruments like the European Financial Stability Facility and the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism have proved their worth, but the time has come for a permanent solution.

So as a complement to our reinforced system of economic governance, which was launched this January with the first Annual Growth Survey, we need to set up a robust institutional and financial mechanism to deal with possible future crises.

That is why the Commission supports a limited change to Article 136 of the Treaty. I know that some of you are disappointed with this approach. I have to say, the Commission shares your disappointment. Like both rapporteurs, Mr Brok and Mr Gualtieri, – who I very much thank for their excellent cooperation on these files – and, I am sure, most of Parliament, we would have preferred the Union to be fully in charge of this permanent mechanism.

But we understand why members of the euro area opted for an intergovernmental mechanism at this stage. Rest assured, however, that the Commission will be fully involved in work to set up the future stability mechanism with the finance ministers of the euro area and we stand ready to bring our expertise to the management of the stability fund if required, just as we did for Greece and just as we did for Ireland.

At the same time, the Commission will be vigilant in ensuring that the EU's competences are not affected in any way.

In particular, although European Heads of State or Government agreed that Article 122, the legal basis for the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism, should no longer be used to maintain financial stability in the euro area as a whole, President Barroso did not – as you know – associate himself with this declaration. Therefore, we are not speaking about the European Council conclusions, but the statement of the Heads of State or Government, in this respect. The Commission considers it to be a purely political declaration that does not affect the EU's competences.

The Commission will also take whatever measures are necessary, both legislative and otherwise, to ensure that this new mechanism operates in full harmony with the EU's responsibility for coordination and surveillance of economic and financial policies in all Member States.

Jean-Paul Gauzès, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs*. – (FR) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, as rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, I agree, of course, with what Mr Brok said.

I should just like to draw attention to two points: the important thing today is to have legal certainty. In other words, there should be no ongoing debate regarding the legal bases of action that may be taken at European level, whether it be intergovernmental or Community action; our preference, of course, is for Community action.

Why do we need this legal certainty? Because Europe and the euro area are under constant pressure from the markets. We cannot destroy the markets but we can try to bring them under control. To do so, we must eliminate uncertainty, the decisions that are put off each day, and we must stop constantly wondering whether or not we can take decisions.

It is therefore a matter of urgency, Commissioner, for you to heed Parliament's requests and for us to quickly amend the Treaty so as to guarantee this legal certainty, which is necessary in order to respond effectively to the difficult economic circumstances we are facing.

Edward Scicluna, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs*. – (MT) Mr President, we all agree that there needs to be a permanent financial mechanism for euro area countries. The mechanism's function is to mobilise financing under strict conditions for the benefit of euro area Member States that are experiencing severe financial problems, so as to safeguard the stability of the euro. The issue is that although everybody is in favour of this concept, it is, however, not defined anywhere in the Council's proposal. We have a proposal that explains why and by whom this mechanism is to be financed, but it does not specify who will benefit from it. The Parliament is doing what the Council failed to do: it clearly lays out who the beneficiaries are, and specifies that it must apply to all Member States, and not just the euro area as a whole. What happens if a small country finds itself in a crisis but is not large enough to impact negatively upon the strength of the euro? As it stands, the draft proposal of the Council does not provide any legal guarantees that a country would have access to this mechanism in this case. Small Member States will be contributing to this fund without being able to access it in the event of a financial crisis. This is unacceptable and it would infringe the principle of solidarity that the European Union embodies. It is like paying into an insurance policy which never pays out. That is why I welcome the report, which clearly states that no euro area Member State that contributes to this fund can be left out for reasons related to size. Secondly, there is the question of interest rates, which should not be calculated at punishing rates, as is happening in Ireland and Greece. The Council must therefore examine this issue in light of paragraph 14 and heed the Commission's programmes in this regard, such as the Balance of Payments facility and Macro-Financial Assistance. The fact that only an intergovernmental approach is being adopted on such an important subject is worrying. The Commission needs to become involved in order to draw up regulations which govern, implement and monitor this mechanism. This is why I am very pleased with the work carried out by the Parliament on this proposal and I believe that it is important that the Council accepts them as they are and as they have been agreed upon within the two parliamentary committees.

Paulo Rangel, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (PT) Mr President, the first point that I think needs to be stressed here follows on from what my colleague, Mr Brok, said about the involvement of the EU institutions and what Parliament is requesting from the Council with this report: namely, that the EU institutions and the Community method be involved in resolving this issue of the permanent stability mechanism of the stability fund. The report calls specifically for this involvement, while respecting the role of the Commission. This is essential for Parliament, and I believe that it is essential for this mechanism.

The second point, and it is one that is very important for us, is that the stability fund is only one of the factors. Economic governance and, potentially, EU matters are other factors in resolving the financial and economic crisis that is currently plaguing some of the euro area Member States, and therefore, the Council should be aware that the fund does not solve everything by itself, and that it must be integrated into economic governance mechanisms and into the Europe 2020 growth strategy.

Having said that, I would like to highlight three very important paragraphs of the report: paragraph 6, which involves all Member States regardless of their size; paragraph 12, which states that access to the fund cannot be denied to any state based on its small size; and paragraph 14, which I believe to be the most important, as it establishes, on the one hand, that interest rates must be offered on favourable terms, so that there is not a repeat of what is currently happening with Greece and Ireland, whose problems are not being solved by aid from the EU or International Monetary Fund. It is vital that there be favourable conditions and a back-to-back approach without margins on borrowing costs, so that the financial crises in the most fragile Member States can be resolved.

Enrique Guerrero Salom, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (ES) Mr President, I would like to underline the importance of the consultation that Parliament must issue. This is the first reform of the Treaty of Lisbon since it was adopted and came into force. This is a step towards building the economic governance of the Union, and it is probably the first example of how possible future reforms of the Treaty will incorporate some of the elements of this economic governance.

Parliament, in my opinion, must do what is needed, which is to establish this mechanism, to help to put this financial stability mechanism into action, while, at the same time, ensuring that what is needed is done in the best and most desirable way.

We need a mechanism that is stable, which means it will be able to prevent and discourage speculation and have the capacity to respond as and when needed. It should be a mechanism that is secure, with the legal basis that today's temporary mechanism does not have, and it should have sufficient economic scale.

I am, therefore, in favour of the simplified procedure, although it is preferable that this be an exceptional step; that reforms take a different form; that Union elements be incorporated into intergovernmentability, with a fundamental role for the Commission; and, finally, that Parliament have a say in accountability.

Lastly, following the adoption of our report by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, we hope that the Council will be sensitive to our request, because we believe it will strengthen this permanent stability mechanism and therefore contribute to the economic governance of the Union.

Andrew Duff, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, the Prime Minister has told us that we should do whatever needs to be done to stabilise the euro but, in fact, this is only the minimum that is required to be done.

The Liberal Group here sees it as only the first step in a series of measures which will lead eventually to the construction of a coherent, credible economic government. The key is clearly that the mechanism is crafted so that it can, in future, be fully incorporated into the Union system. It is important that the Commission is to be on the board of mechanism and, above all, that the rules for the operation of the mechanism, including the terms of

the strict conditionality, are prescribed by a regulation proposed by the Commission and codecided by Parliament and the Council.

This is the first substantial change to the Treaty of Maastricht on economic and monetary union. It is critical that we get it right. I trust Mr Brok and Mr Gualtieri to negotiate further on behalf of Parliament before 24 March.

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

William (The Earl of) Dartmouth (EFD). – Mr President, I would like to ask the speaker this: in his view, what mandate does the EU and the Commission have for economic government? Would the speaker not agree that, in the absence of a mandate, the party which he represents is neither liberal nor democratic?

Andrew Duff (ALDE). – Mr President, I would say to the Earl of Dartmouth that the mandate for the construction of an economic and monetary union was clearly established by the Treaty of Maastricht, which was negotiated by a Conservative British Government and confirmed by the Westminster Parliament on several subsequent occasions. I have to say that if British Members think they can play glibly with the future of the single currency, they are committing a profound mistake.

Gerald Häfner, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I believe, in all seriousness, we can say that we in Europe are standing at a crossroads, and it is a crossroads where two major crises require action on our part at the same time.

The first of these is the economic and financial crisis and, in its wake, also the euro crisis – dramatic consequences, in my view, of a one-sided and unsustainable development model based on debt and deregulation that, in our Member States and throughout Europe, increasingly destroyed the sustainability as well as the social cohesion and the achievement potential of the public budgets as the basis for that.

The other major crisis, of which we are much less aware, is what I see as a crisis of democracy and legitimacy, linked to the fact that we are able to take more and more decisions not in the nation state but beyond it, the result of which, as this is associated not with more but with less democracy, is that we lose the consent and the acceptance of the people. We should therefore consider very carefully what we do.

We believe that we do need a stability mechanism, it is just that we think that this one does not go deep enough, as it deals with the symptoms and not the causes. Intervention is one-sided and affects public expenditure, wages, salaries, pensions and social welfare. The enormous profits from speculation that have been and continue to be made and the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth and income in Europe are not being tackled. We are not asking those who have made their profits from such speculation to dip into their pockets, and that means we are not going far enough.

My second point is that what we are doing here is establishing a mechanism outside of the Community method. Yet Europe is exactly the model of how such collaboration between States on their free initiative can be based on social cohesion and more democracy. Through the Treaty of Lisbon, we promised to prepare future Treaty revisions by means of a convention so that they would thus be subject to intensive democratic debate. Now, with the very first revision of the Treaty, we are doing the opposite. We do want this stability mechanism, but we do not want it at the expense of European democracy, citizen participation, at the expense of giving up the Community method. We do not want it in

the form of a retreat to an intergovernmental Europe again but as a step forward to a more communal Europe with more participation and more democracy.

We have therefore tabled amendments to this effect relating both to the content and the methodology. We are in close contact with the rapporteurs. We have decided not to have a final vote today. I am hopeful that the progress that has emerged over recent days will mean that, in the end, we will be able to give our approval. We will only give our approval, however, if this pact takes us forwards and not if it leads to backward steps in our construction of a communal, democratic and social Europe.

Ashley Fox, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, my group is happy to support the Treaty amendment proposed by the Member States. We do so because we want the euro to survive and the countries that use it to prosper. We in the United Kingdom are glad that we are not part of the euro, but we wish you well.

While we support the Treaty amendment, however, we do not support this report because what we have here is a wish list of unnecessary changes dreamt up at the last minute. It really is unfortunate that the Parliament is behaving in this manner.

Such posturing is all the more bewildering given that we will vote on this opinion only hours before the European Council formally agrees the Treaty change. Does anyone here really believe that the Council is listening to us? If the Parliament wants to be taken seriously, we must stop grandstanding and instead start delivering for the citizens of our Member States.

Lothar Bisky, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DE) Mr President, I find it remarkable that unease now reigns in the majority of the groups in this House in respect of approving the use of a fast-track procedure for the amendment of Article 136 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. This report clearly confirms our expectation as MEPs that any future crisis-management mechanism will not create parallel structures outside the Union and that parliamentary democratic supervision should be maintained at every stage. It is just that I find myself somewhat lacking in belief in this regard.

Mr Barroso did make clear yesterday that he supports both the goal of social cohesion within the Union and the Community method. All the speakers agreed with him. Thus far, however, this has not been made into a motion for a resolution and that, it strikes me, is something lacking. What there was – or not – was the Merkel-Sarkozy pact. That awakens my mistrust and a certain degree of scepticism.

For my group, it is clear that we cannot give our approval to any policy that aims to consolidate the budget by means of further cuts in the social sphere. The European Parliament must first be given a vote on the specific proposals for the Union's future economic and monetary policy and the related mechanisms, as these are what this is about at its core. That, in turn, is such a fundamental decision that it must not be taken on the basis of 'Europe by decree' but only in accordance with the convention method laid down by the Treaty.

My group is thus unable to vote in favour of what is, in many respects, a positive report. Ultimately, despite constant assertions to the contrary, this would, of course, set a precedent.

Godfrey Bloom, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – Mr President, I have been here six and a half years, and, my goodness, I have heard some nonsense. But I have not heard so much nonsense spoken as I have today.

Many years ago, I used to lecture on this subject at Cambridge University, and I would suggest that you would do well to read some of my old lecture notes. None of you, it appears, seems to understand the concept of international money. Herr Brok, who has not come off the phone since he came in only to listen to himself, was rather interesting. He started off this debate by suggesting it was a great success – the euro. One wonders what planet Herr Brok lives on. Dear oh dear! It is a complete disaster.

If he thinks it is such a success, I would argue that he speak to the millions of unemployed people, youngsters mainly in the Iberian Peninsula, southern Italy and the rest of Europe, who are suffering from this disgraceful, fraudulent and deceitful currency which was rammed down the throats of the people of Europe against their will.

There is no mandate, Mr Duff. There is no mandate, with your blue card hanging up there, let me tell you. There is no mandate for this. The British people have not been given a vote on this whole shebang of European Union, and neither has anybody else. There is only one way this ridiculous currency spanning many different economies against a whole background of failed ideals can survive – and if you understood international money to any degree, you would understand this – and that is by having a financial, central, statist fiscal policy. If you think you have a mandate for that, you are a disgrace and a scoundrel.

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

Andrew Duff (ALDE). – Mr President, I would like to ask Mr Bloom just how his diatribe was received at Cambridge. I cannot imagine an economics class tolerating such fatuous and intemperate nonsense. I would also like to ask him this: does he not find that there is unemployment in the United Kingdom? Does he not know of the excessive deficit position of the UK? Does he not care that inflation in Britain is greater than it is in the euro area and that sterling is a fragile currency?

Godfrey Bloom (EFD). – Mr President, I have to say to Mr Duff that at the time, in the mid-1990s, some of the class greeted my views with some scepticism. I still now go back to the occasional reunion dinner and most of them come up to me and say, ‘My god, Godders, you were right’.

And I am, by god! I was right in spades, was I not?

(Applause)

Andrew Henry William Brons (NI). – Mr President, there is a temptation for the British to regard the stability mechanism as something that has nothing to do with us, simply because we are outside the euro area. I think that would be a grave mistake.

There is no doubt that there are many UK politicians, here and at home, who would like Britain to join the euro. There was a pledge by all the parties that there would be a referendum before there was any attempt to join the euro, but we all know how valuable referendum promises are in the UK. Both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party pledged to have a vote on the Lisbon Treaty. The former wriggled out of it on the spurious ground that the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty were different; the latter wriggled out of its obligation on the ground that the Lisbon Treaty had been ratified and therefore, it was impossible to have a referendum. Furthermore, the present government has decided there will be no referendum on this Treaty change.

The proposed amendment to the Treaty provides for expensive involvement in the stability mechanism of those countries that are not in the euro area. The whole stability mechanism,

of course, is an admission of the innate flaw in the euro experiment. A currency value should reflect the relative value of a country's imports and exports – the state of its economy. A single currency cannot reflect accurately the state of 17 – or eventually 27 – different economies. Our priority must be to make sure this disastrous experiment is never extended to the UK.

Carlo Casini (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the strange thing about the Council's proposal is that once it has been approved, it will pave the way for the creation of a permanent stability mechanism through an instrument of international law, and hence without a direct link to the institutional structure of the Union.

This fact caused great concern in the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, which I chair, and which has the task of keeping an eye on the coherence of the Union's institutional framework. The simplified revision proposal therefore sparked a lively debate in which arguments based on the solid principles of the process of European integration came up against pragmatism and *realpolitik*.

In short, the Committee on Constitutional Affairs thinks that in order to deliberate on the proposal to amend the treaty, Parliament must assess the economic governance context under which the proposal falls. We need to know more about how the future mechanism will tie in with existing institutional structures. It would be a mistake to create twin structures which, in the long term, would carry the risk of the Union breaking up.

The proposals and suggestions in the report by Mr Brok and Mr Gualtieri aim to build suitable bridges between the Union's institutional structure and the new mechanism. Moreover, I should like to emphasise that the Council must see these issues as fundamental for harmonious cooperation between the European institutions.

I therefore strongly urge the European Council to take heed of this requirement and the consideration that it must give us, ahead of our vote on 24 March. As we await a positive sign, I should like to offer my heartfelt thanks for the brilliant work of the rapporteurs, Mr Brok and Mr Gualtieri.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D). – Mr President, I have no doubts whatsoever that Europe needs a permanent stability mechanism. I have fought many political battles and referendums over democratically legitimate community decision making. I therefore have deep reservations about the Treaty mechanism being proposed by the Heads of State to establish and manage the ESM.

I urge the Heads of State to reflect very deeply on the consequences for Europe if they reject the broad consensus of this directly elected Parliament. Yes, we need a speedy decision, but for such a fundamental issue, we must comply with the Treaties. The elephant in the room is a concern that a change in the wording, or switching to the ordinary procedure, might trigger a referendum in Ireland. My reaction as a democrat is quite simple: so what? I respect the people. I do not fear the people. I believe that Ireland is a mature democracy capable of recognising where our best interest lies and that is at the heart of Europe.

Sharon Bowles (ALDE). – Mr President, response to the sovereign aspects of the economic crisis was slow. Initially, the markets punished inadequate responses. Recently, there has been a respite. Now, some bond interest rates are creeping up again into the unsustainable zone.

Rescue arrangements that were made have been shown to need change and with the best will, I doubt that the next attempt will be one hundred percent correct, let alone future-proof.

Therefore, we need a permanent funding mechanism that is flexible, not least to enable early intervention if that is the most effective remedy. This is not such a wild idea. The IMF does it. But, of course, there have to be boundaries, priorities and governance.

So we need a Treaty change that enables evolution, not a Treaty change that leads to embroilment in what is meant by 'indispensable to the euro area as a whole', which, at the very least, suffers from size discrimination.

Even strong euro area countries need the stability mechanism because of the interconnectedness of the banking system and sovereign debt. It is not a coincidence that the ECB calls for a fund large enough to cope with euro area bank recapitalisation.

And on interest rates, a balance has to be struck between sustainability and moral hazard, but the end-of-the-day position cannot be that Member States extract rent greatly in excess of costs.

Vicky Ford (ECR). – Mr President, Treaty change is a sensitive subject in my Member State where, despite promises, the Lisbon Treaty was passed without a referendum. But I understand why the crisis in the euro area is prompting you to establish a permanent stability mechanism, and although the UK is not a member of the euro area, we do wish to see your economic success. For these reasons, my government has said that it will not block the Treaty change required to establish the mechanism. But this resolution goes further, and we know from history that introducing vague language leads to uncertainties.

The recitals raise the concept of Eurobonds, woolly-worded and with no details. Members from my group are concerned. Does this hand over the sovereign right to manage one's own treasury? What about moral hazard issues?

To summarise, we will not vote against the Treaty language agreed by Member States, which is specifically to enable this mechanism to be created, but we cannot support this resolution with creeping, vague concepts.

Søren Bo Søndergaard (GUE/NGL). – (DA) Mr President, it is only a little over a year since the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force. Nevertheless, we are already in the process of making a second amendment to the Treaty. I actually think it is very interesting that the Treaty of Lisbon was clearly so poor that it constantly has to be amended. Why is it being amended, and how are we going about it? Not via the usual procedure, but by means of a special 'fast track' procedure. Why is this? Is it because the amendment of the Treaty is unimportant? No, quite the contrary in fact. Nevertheless, it is intended to proceed so quickly that there is no real opportunity to involve the people in an in-depth debate.

When the Treaty of Lisbon was sold to the people, one of the arguments presented was that it would give the European Parliament more influence. However, the proposed amendment will mean that major decisions can be taken at EU level without the European Parliament having any say in the matter. So, what will be the result of the amendment of the Treaty? In this regard, we are in complete agreement with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). The amendment of the Treaty will pave the way for top-steered assaults on collective agreements throughout Europe and thus, for a lowering of conditions

for workers. Does anyone really believe that this is the way to win the support of the people for a joint European project? Thank you for giving me the floor.

Morten Messerschmidt (EFD). – (DA) Mr President, the main thing that comes to mind when I read this report and this amendment of the Treaty is that this is an absolute insult – an insult to the electorate, who now, for the second time, find themselves totally disregarded in relation to the Treaty – a Treaty that they were not even asked whether they wanted the first time around. It is an insult to taxpayers, particularly those in northern Europe, who are having to pay for the overspending in a number of southern European countries. It is also an absolute insult to the southern European economies, which may have the impression that it is a question of a lack of money in the countries in question. That is not the case. The problem in these countries is structural shortcomings. These countries should undergo a number of structural reforms if they are to fit into the model that the euro requires and aspires to. Only by changing their financial policy to be more like that of Germany will these countries be able to kick-start their economies. We might just as well say it like it is, and to constantly give them more money and ever cheaper loans will only prolong the pain. Thank you, Mr President.

Francisco Sosa Wagner (NI). – (ES) Mr President, I would like to say that I agree with the opinion of the members who have spoken here this morning and who insist on respect for Parliament and for the Commission.

This is why my modest vote in favour will depend on whether the European Council is prepared to accept the role of these institutions. This is because the new mechanisms we are talking about must be a significant component in economic governance, driven by a European Union that is capable of ensuring coherence between common economic policy, which must set clear, precise and limited objectives, and this stability instrument. In other words, we must ensure at all costs that this effort we are involved in does not end up going down the intergovernmental route, which is a blind alley or one dominated by just a few countries, because that would obstruct the reform.

Fellow Members, Europe is being built one brick at a time, and this is one brick that will reinforce and balance this delicate building.

Werner Langen (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, we must not forget, in this debate, that we are dealing with a simplified Treaty revision pursuant to Article 136 and that we, as Parliament – in connection with whatever mechanisms – are supposed to be more heavily involved. That is the starting point. A wish list has been put forward in this regard. I would like to give my specific backing to Mr Brok when he says that the participation of the Commission and of Parliament must be envisaged. That is why we are having this debate and will not be taking a decision until 24 March, in order to give the Council the chance to actually bring about that participation in reality.

The full inclusion of the Commission throws up questions, as the Commission has failed, in the past, to observe its obligation to act as guardian of the Treaties by failing to instigate proceedings. The Member States themselves have likewise failed to observe their obligations. It is therefore imperative that, in this simplified Treaty revision, we take a new step towards completing economic and monetary union.

I also have an idea of how that can be brought about, which is for the Commission to prepare everything – including proposals and drafts – on behalf of the Council, and the Council to then be obliged, much like in the monetary dialogue that we have with the

independent European Central Bank, to report to us here and discuss matters with us. That would be a sensible approach.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D). – (SK) Mr President, from a legal perspective, the amendment to the agreement is essential for the introduction of a fixed Eurobond. It is also undoubtedly necessary to introduce a euro area stability mechanism.

A mutual assistance mechanism, if properly set up, can bind the Union together and lead to greater integration and solidarity between Member States. However, we should definitely not stop there. If the mechanism is to be significant, coordination must be improved in the economic area, but also in the area of social policies.

At the same time, I consider the intention to establish a stability mechanism outside the system of European institutions to be a bad signal. The intergovernmental or even private-law nature of the proposed mechanism may put the European integration project back several years.

I would therefore like to call not only on the Commission, but especially on Member State representatives, to abandon such ideas. If we are to exploit the crisis at least in some positive way, then we must see it as a chance to mobilise and not to split apart. The establishment and operation of a permanent stability mechanism should happen in the closest possible connection with the framework of the EU, and should involve the institutional procedures of enhanced cooperation.

I would like to end by expressing the hope that only the good signals from the submitted proposal will come to fruition.

Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, we are amending the Treaty of Lisbon, which, in fact, we only recently adopted. Perhaps this should cause us to consider whether the Treaty, which was so greatly trumpeted and said to be a panacea for all of Europe's problems, has nevertheless proved basically to be completely overrated.

Of course, the crisis, which is, at the moment, a problem for the Union, requires very resolute action. Only there is a question as to whether what the Commission and the Council are proposing really is a good solution. This is not only a matter of the euro area, because it is going to affect countries which are outside the area. What is more, those countries – and that includes my own country, Poland – are basically going to have decisions imposed on them which were made without their involvement. This is not a good signal for the citizens, who were once told that the Treaty of Lisbon would be a panacea for every problem.

Gunnar Hökmark (PPE). – Mr President, I have three points. Firstly, deficits are not caused by currencies. They are caused by governments and overspending. I think that is perhaps bad news for Mr Bloom, who spoke here earlier, because if he was right and the responsibility was that of the currencies, that would be extremely bad news for the pound or the dollar, where we have the biggest deficits globally today. The responsibility lies with governments.

That is why it is important that we secure and structure the stability mechanism in a way that helps Member States get out of difficulties, but also helps to ensure that Member States do not get into difficulties. That is why I think it is important that the financing of the stability mechanism is structured in such a way that those who are exposing us to bigger risks by having bigger deficits should be obliged to pay more in order to contribute to the

mechanism. Then you have some kind of 'polluter pays' principle and you also have a preventive action in the stability mechanism, contributing to the stability of the euro as such.

That is why I think we need not only to discuss the formal structure of the stability mechanism, but also how we finance it. We need to secure stability in a long-term perspective as well as in the short-term perspective.

Vital Moreira, (S&D). – (PT) I can summarise my position in three points. Firstly, the idea of a permanent stability mechanism for the euro in itself constitutes a vital contribution to strengthening the single currency, to greater monetary integration in the EU, and to making the public debt markets more stable. We should therefore support it unreservedly.

Secondly, the permanent stability mechanism can only be created with security and legal certainty if it is included in the Treaties in a clear way. We should therefore support the careful amendment of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Thirdly, it would obviously be preferable if the aforementioned mechanism were created and managed by the European institutions themselves, rather than emerging as an intergovernmental initiative for the euro area. Nonetheless, we are well aware that this is impossible in the face of insurmountable objections from certain Member States, and it only takes one such objection for the amendment to the Treaty not to be passed. We should therefore support the Council's proposal for the amendments of the Treaty as it is.

Rafał Trzaskowski (PPE). – Mr President, first, I would like to thank the rapporteurs for the excellent work they have done. It is quite heartening that we are speaking with the same voice as the European Commission. Most importantly, I would like to thank them for defending the prerogatives of this House. To my colleagues from the ECR, I would say that this is not grandstanding but legitimately asserting our role in this process.

In times of crisis, we need effective solutions, stability and predictability, and all these features can be achieved best when we avail ourselves of the Community institutions.

Intergovernmental solutions will not, in the long run, lead us anywhere. Most importantly, if we are serious about fighting economic crisis and being competitive, we have to do it together, regardless of whether a given Member State is a part of the euro area or outside it.

Therefore, I welcome the fact that, in our position – voted on yesterday in the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of this House – we have agreed to open the mechanism to all countries willing to participate in it, thus dispelling the ungrounded fears of a two-speed Europe.

Jo Leinen (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the Treaty of Lisbon, on which work went on for so long, had two clear messages: firstly, the strengthening of the Community method with a central role for the Commission and, secondly, the strengthening of democracy with the participation of the European Parliament.

Little more than a year after the entry into force of the Treaty, the spirit of Lisbon is already being ignored and ridden roughshod over. What the European Council has devised with this revision of the Treaty is unequivocally contrary to both of these messages of the Treaty of Lisbon. The Community method is not being strengthened – instead, what we have is renationalisation, intergovernmentalisation, in an important area of future EU policy and the complete exclusion of the bodies of the EU. That is unacceptable and Parliament actually

has to be opposed to this proposal. It amazes me that the Commission, as guardian of the Treaties, has not spoken up more clearly and that we here in Parliament have to act, to some extent, as representatives of the Commission. We must push the Commission into action that it should already have taken.

A dangerous precedent is being set here. We are observing as a result of the economic crisis that monetary union cannot exist alone. Given the influx of refugees from North Africa and the uncertainty in our neighbourhood, we are seeking additional EU policies and we do not want renationalisation. I hope that the rapporteurs can still make improvements as otherwise, I cannot vote in favour of this revision of the Treaty.

Frank Engel (PPE) . – (FR) Mr President, the stability mechanism before us has been designed from the point of view of previous emergencies. It is a rescue mechanism. However, in the long run, the States cannot be saved, and they should not be saved. The aim should be to perfect Europe's economic union and to create a European budgetary area capable of supporting the Member States and the single currency.

To this end, we must go further than current emergencies dictate. Ultimately, the European institutions must take the lead, and we must stop depending on endless intergovernmental initiatives, be they Franco-German or from elsewhere.

Pierre Werner, whose plan may be regarded as the fundamental basis of the euro, included in his work the notion of a European economic decision-making centre that is answerable to Parliament. Well, today, that economic decision-making centre can only be the Commission and Parliament.

The next step, after we have overcome the hurdle of the small amendment to the Treaty, on which we are about to vote, must therefore ultimately be to go back in time 40 years and finally fulfil Pierre Werner's wish.

Sergio Gaetano Cofferati (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, amending a treaty is always a complex and sensitive subject, even more so the first time because it can set a precedent for future interventions.

Likewise, for this reason, I think that the work of Mr Brok and Mr Gualtieri is very careful, balanced and utterly worthy of support. There are three issues that I should like to emphasise in the report that they have presented to us.

The first point is that the permanent mechanism cannot, and must not, lie outside Europe's institutional framework. For this reason, the presence of the Commission on the board will be the key to providing a common thread to the relationship between the current institutional framework and the mechanism to be amended.

The second issue is proper continuity of the temporary measures with the current situation: there will be trouble if this is not achieved. Lastly, the relationship with the economic institutions is crucial for the future development of economic governance. We must avoid creating dual systems that would do more harm than good.

Íñigo Méndez de Vigo (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, we will not be going ahead with the vote on the Brok-Gualtieri report this morning: we will do it during the Brussels sitting. We will do it then in order to give Mr Brok and Mr Gualtieri time to negotiate the conditions for applying Article 136 with the European Council.

We are doing so because, as Mr Leinen said, the European Parliament is also *der Hüter der Verträge* – the guardian of the Treaties – and because we want the euro to function with everyone involved and with everyone committed; in the end, Mr President, we want it to be effective.

That is what we asked for. It is not about any dispute between the institutions. It is not about gaining power for Parliament. It is about the result – the mechanism resulting from this – being effective for the European public.

Danuta Jazłowiecka (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, only a year ago, in view of how difficult it was to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon, none of us considered the possibility of having to amend its provisions. However, the economic situation in Europe has meant that what was impossible only a year ago has become something which can be done, and that this even has the consent of the majority of Member States.

The economic and financial crisis is not only teaching us solidarity, but is also revealing strong economic relationships between the individual Member States. Being outside the euro area does not protect countries which do not use the common currency from the budget crisis inside the euro area. On the contrary, the financial problems of members of the euro area are having an adverse effect on the situation throughout the Union. Therefore, the permanent financial stability mechanism should be open to all Member States, including those from outside the euro area. Withdrawal from Member States which are not part of the euro area, including by stronger economic and social integration as is proposed by the Franco-German competitiveness pact, will foster a widening of the divide in the two-speed Europe, which will not help us in building a strong, cohesive and competitive Europe and will not create conditions for the Union to work together, which Mr Brok encourages us to do. Thank you.

Zita Gurmai (S&D). – Mr President, we are all aware of the current economic crisis and the danger it presents in general to our lives, in particular, to the euro, which is crucial for the European political and economic project. We need to maintain the stability of the eurozone in the principle of responsibility and solidarity for all Member States in need. That said, I would like to underline three points.

Even when desperate times call for desperate measures and simplified procedures, in the long run, it is not possible to ignore transparency, parliamentary scrutiny and democratic accountability. The stability mechanism should represent the first part of a complex approach and permanent measures aimed at working towards the Union's economic governance. The permanent stability mechanism, once established, should not exist outside the EU institutional framework.

Let me finally thank our rapporteurs for the outstanding job they have done on this extremely important, urgent and complicated matter. Even without much information on the stability mechanism, it deserves a place in the EU institutional framework. I am very pleased that the President of Hungary will be coming here soon.

Pervenche Berès (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, three years ago, we were told: 'This is the treaty to end all treaties; it will not be revised'. Realism has today led us to revise it. For the first time, the Treaty of Lisbon provides real powers for the European Parliament where revising the Treaties is concerned. We have before us a proposal that ignores the rights of this European Parliament and which is proposing an intergovernmental mechanism for a Community matter – monetary policy.

I have drawn two conclusions from this. Firstly, I hope that our colleagues who are going to negotiate on our behalf are able to amend as much as possible the proposal that has been submitted to us, so as to 'recommunitise' the mechanism. Secondly, I also hope that this revision of the Treaty will be the last one carried out without the agreement or the involvement of the European Parliament.

This European Parliament has proposals to make, and we know that we will have to go further in terms of revising the Treaty and in terms of enhanced cooperation if the euro area is to survive.

Sven Giegold (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, there are now three different economic governance packages before us: the Commission's six proposals, the competitiveness pact – currently being negotiated under the leadership of Mr Van Rompuy and Mr Barroso – and the proposals to amend the Treaty and the associated establishment of the European stability mechanism. It is clear, after this debate, that all of this must take place under parliamentary supervision and on the basis of a proposal from the Commission.

The fact is though, that, under the Treaties, Parliament has different rights in relation to the three different packages. At the same time, these packages do overlap. What should we do politically, therefore? In my view, it is crucial that we link our consent for the Commission's six proposals to having our demands met in the other areas, so that everything becomes one well-balanced package in the interests of the citizens.

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) Mr President, a number of EU Member States agreed to create and use one common currency. However, differing economic potential has led to a situation where, for some Member States, the link to the common currency complicates the options for using standard procedures for handling insolvency. All countries using the common currency have therefore agreed to create a mechanism enabling them to resolve existing financial problems and also to prevent these in the future.

The solution agreed on by the countries involved, however, requires an amendment and a supplement to Article 136 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and acceptance of this solution by all EU Member States. However, responsibility for the common currency is currently borne mainly by the 17 countries of the European Monetary Union, and it is therefore logical that the European stability mechanism should have an intergovernmental character, and the position of the European Commission as a simple observer is, in my view, sufficient.

Maroš Šefčovič, *Vice-President of the Commission.* – Mr President, as has been said several times, sometimes, for the Commission to be heard, it must speak up. I will try to do this now.

Firstly, I would like to thank the rapporteurs for their excellent cooperation and the Members for a very important debate. I think that we can definitely agree with many points which have been made in this discussion, especially that we need strong action at European level and that a future mechanism should be as close as possible to the Community spirit and the method.

To react to the comments on our assistance to Greece and Ireland: I think our experience clearly demonstrates that we should be constantly searching for a delicate balance between preserving the sustainability of the debt and avoiding moral hazards. The fact that we are

learning from the experience has, I think, clearly been demonstrated by the statements of my colleague, Commissioner Olli Rehn, in the last few days.

At the same time, I think we have to remind ourselves that the circumstances we are living in are truly exceptional. The crisis is still here, recovery is fragile and markets are in turmoil, as we can see in the constant movements of the spreads. More importantly, European countries are suffering unacceptable pressure and they see their future as mortgaged by high interest rates on their debts.

We therefore need to act, and we need to act fast. We clearly need to demonstrate our resolve. Setting up the permanent mechanism must therefore be done in the shortest possible time and as quickly as possible.

What is very important – and this was the one condition on which the Commission was very insistent – is that it must be done within the framework of the Treaties. I agree with Mr Gauzès that swift action is needed, because we need legal certainty. I also agree with Mr Guerrero Salom, who said that we should not treat this as a precedent. I can assure him that the procedure which is used, and the type of cooperation which is proposed, is definitely not seen as a precedent by the Commission.

I have to inform you that the Commission is closely associated with the preparatory work and that we consider it essential that we are also involved in setting up and operating this mechanism. As stated in Annex 2 of the European Council conclusions, the role of the Commission is expected to be central in the preparation of analyses and programmes for the future countries in it. But we believe that the Commission's central role should be underlined even more strongly.

Regarding the criticism of the method which was chosen, I have to say that we have seen good examples which such a method can result in, for example, Schengen or the third pillar.

To conclude, just one sentence. When the Lisbon Treaty was being drafted, this type of cooperation, this area of cooperation, was considered to be too ambitious for the Member States. Now, however, real life, the real experience we have with interdependence and with economic cooperation, is clearly demonstrating to us that what we need is a European solution to this very important European problem. I believe we will achieve it.

President. – Thank you, Mr Šefčovič. Mr Gualtieri has the floor, though I would strongly urge him to keep to one minute.

Roberto Gualtieri, *rapporteur.* – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, this has been an important debate which I think has clearly shown the existence of broad consensus among the political groups over the assessments and general direction of the report.

With a few exceptions, Parliament is truly speaking with one voice and that is important. We are saying yes to the permanent stability mechanism though we cannot hide some confusion and concern which, as we have learnt, is also shared by the Commission, even though we would have liked to read of these concerns in the opinion of the Commission on the procedure selected.

We are open to showing practicality and a sense of responsibility in noting that the political conditions do not exist to set up a European mechanism today and, nevertheless, we have shown and continue to show determination in our desire to help insert the mechanism into the Union's legal and procedural framework, whilst also respecting the Treaties.

Our proposals are clear, but now I think the crucial issue is another. Is the European Council willing to start up a real discussion with Parliament on its proposals and is the Commission willing to take an active role in this discussion?

I should like to underline that Parliament has taken what I would call a customary decision to postpone the vote to 24 March. I think this is an important sign: this is a responsible Parliament, but I think the Council also needs to show this sense of responsibility by taking Parliament's proposals into consideration.

IN THE CHAIR: STAVROS LAMBRINIDIS

Vice-President

President. – The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 149)

George Sabin Cutaş (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) Against the background of the current economic crisis, the suggestion to introduce a financial stability mechanism meets the urgent need for solidarity between Member States and is a positive step. However, modifying the Treaty in the format envisaged at the moment could create a mechanism devoted exclusively to a limited number of Member States. This does not allow, for example, Member States which do not have the euro to be included under its remit. I believe that for this mechanism to be truly European, it must be created inside the European Union's institutional framework, with the involvement of the Commission and European Parliament. It must also take into account the participation of all 27 Member States. We must not forget that the economic fluctuations which occur in Member States outside the euro area have an impact on the economic and financial stability of the whole Union.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) What is currently happening with the announced amendment to the Treaty of Lisbon shows that everything that EU leaders have said about the importance of the national parliaments and the European Parliament, the deepening of democracy, and the sustainability of the Treaty itself, has been nothing more than propaganda.

A year and several months after the Treaty of Lisbon's entry into force, everyone is being sidelined for an amendment to be drawn up using a mechanism of the Treaty itself which not only allows an amendment to be made without any democratic participation whatsoever – continuing, in fact, with their rejection of the national referenda to approve the Treaty – but also creates a mechanism enabling permanent control of the Member States' economies.

This report is heading in the same direction, by tabling certain proposed amendments to the Commission's proposal regarding the amendment to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union as regards a stability mechanism for Member States whose currency is the euro.

In practice, everything is aimed at consolidating the boost that they are attempting to give to this economic governance with the creation of the 'European semester': the deepening of the penalties relating to compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact, of the economic policy guidelines, and of any indicators that may be adopted. They are trying to impose a veritable straitjacket on the Member States.

Jiří Havel (S&D), *in writing*. – (CS) In May 2010, the long-term fiscal imbalance in Greece resulted in a major rescue package amounting to EUR 720 billion from the resources of the EU and the International Monetary Fund. Despite the fact that the special European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) was created for euro area countries, with resources of up to EUR 440 billion, it cannot be said that all of the EU's problems have been overcome. Moreover, the operation of the EFSF terminates at the end of 2012, and a measure of uncertainty prevails among investors as to what will happen with the debts of problem euro area countries after this date, or after the guarantees provided run out. It is for this reason that a change to Article 136 of the Treaty, creating a stabilisation mechanism after 2013, is desirable for the EU's future financial and fiscal stability. Nevertheless, I would like to point out that this mechanism will not be a panacea for the actual protection of the budgets of problem (or peripheral) states, and that we also need to consider a comprehensive solution to this problem (public debt reduction, renewal of confidence in the banking sector and structural reforms, including fiscal consolidation of the peripheral states in order to boost their competitiveness). On the whole, I think that the report submitted by Elmar Brok and Robert Gualtieri presents an accurate analysis of the issue, referring to the relevant EU legislation as well as the opinion of the Committee on Budgets, and I therefore recommend approving the amendment to Article 136 of the Treaty in its proposed form.

Sandra Kalniete (PPE), *in writing*. – (LV) In the last few years, the euro has experienced several shocks, which would possibly have destroyed another currency. The actions of EU leaders, albeit they have not always been sufficiently swift or convincing, have enabled the euro to be defended. The situation is still fraught with difficulty, but I am convinced that Europe will overcome this crisis and become economically more powerful. This crisis has revealed the EU's weak spots and more clearly shown what amendments are necessary to European Union legislation, including the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, with respect to the stability mechanism for euro area countries. I am convinced that the establishment of the European financial stabilisation mechanism (EFSM) is one of the most important steps that can be taken for the EU to avoid serious economic crises in the future. Of course, the establishment of the EFSM will not solve all problems, which is why it is important that governments recognise their responsibility for compliance with the Maastricht criteria, and implement a sensible, well-considered economic and monetary policy based on long-term objectives. We cannot afford a repetition of the scenarios of recent years, when Member States pursued 'foot hard down on the accelerator' economic policies, disregarding the Maastricht criteria and breaking other fundamental laws of economics. The euro is not only a currency; it is a political covenant, demonstrating the EU's ability to be united in diversity. The euro is the guarantee of European stability, growth and unity. That is why I do not have the slightest doubt that we shall be able to be sufficiently clear-sighted and wise to overcome this crisis and give a new stimulus to development.

8. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

Robert Atkins (ECR). – Mr President, I rise yet again to complain about the time management of this Parliament. Both yesterday and today, we were given a time to vote, and we have abused it yet again. Surely, the sign of a well run and effective Parliament is one that can manage its affairs properly and to time. Can you please urge the authorities to get a grip of this? Otherwise, we will be treated with the contempt we deserve.

Derek Roland Clark (EFD). – Mr President, my point of order regards the first two votes we have today on the calendar for next year and the year after. I have two points to raise, if you please. First of all, these votes simply illustrate how powerless this Parliament really is. Everybody here thinks they are getting more and more power, and more and more influence. But, in point of fact, these amendments are simply to get round the fact that we are obliged to have 12 part-sessions ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

President. – Mr Clark, you have a point of order not a speech. I am sorry, but I have to stop you. We now move on to the vote.

Edward McMillan-Scott (ALDE). – Mr President, I would not normally rise on such a point. As a Vice-President, I respect the Chair.

However, the groups have all been told that the calendar votes, which are very limited – I think there are two amendments – will take place at the beginning of the voting session and not after Mr Schmitt has spoken to the House. I think it is disrespectful to Mr Schmitt to allow people to go and then ask them to come back again for two votes after his speech.

I therefore ask you to put to the House the proposal to modify the agenda that all votes today take place before Mr Schmitt's speech, and we start on the basis of the calendar votes.

(Applause)

President. – Mr McMillan-Scott, I have an answer to what you have just said and it is that on Monday, this Parliament voted the agenda. You will see in the agenda that Parliament voted that the calendar votes would take place from 12:30 to 13:30. This is a decision that Parliament took on Monday.

Edward McMillan-Scott (ALDE). – Mr President, I am sorry to prolong this but as it happens, the voting lists have been circulated to all the groups. If this was an error, it needs to be corrected. It is ridiculous, and disrespectful to the President of one of our Member States and currently in the Presidency, to call the Members back to the House, back to the Chamber, after he has spoken. Let us do it now in the order in which it is on the voting paper. There is no justification for changing this again.

(Applause)

President. – This is how it goes. Every Monday, we vote on the agenda. Listen to me. Do not aargh and ooh. If you want to change the rules, you can do so, but the rules we have say that we vote every Monday on the agenda. We did so this time with those Members who were in the Chamber. Nevertheless, the President has the right to put the agenda to the vote again if a majority of the Members want this, so what I will do is exercise my discretion and ask you: would you like to vote to change the agenda for today? Who is in favour of voting to change the agenda? Who is against? Abstentions?

(Applause)

Having said this, dear colleagues, I remind you that if you want to have a say on the agenda, be here on Mondays.

Mr McMillan-Scott's proposal was to vote on the calendar before the address by the President of Hungary, if indeed time allows – because, as you see, we are actually losing time. Given the time now, I expect that we will have a lot of votes to continue with after the speech by

the President. So, who is in favour of voting on the calendar before the President of Hungary's speech, if, in fact, we have the time to do so? Who is against? Abstentions?

So we shall do that: we shall vote on the calendar if we have time before the President of Hungary's speech.

(Objections)

Colleagues, it makes no difference; we will continue the votes anyway after the President has spoken.

(Murmurs of dissent)

I shall exercise my discretion. In order to stop this ridiculousness, I will take the vote on the calendar as the first vote. Is everyone happy now?

(Applause)

OK, you will still be here to vote after the President's speech, but let us go ahead now with the vote on the 2012 calendar.

8.1. Parliament's calendar of part-sessions – 2012 (vote)

8.2. Parliament's calendar of part-sessions – 2013 (vote)

8.3. Guidelines for the 2012 budget - other sections (A7-0049/2011, José Manuel Fernandes) (vote)

8.4. EU strategy for the Atlantic region (vote)

IN THE CHAIR: JERZY BUZEK

President

9. Formal sitting - Hungary

President. – President Schmitt, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, we welcome you, Mr Schmitt, as someone who, not long ago, was a fellow Member of our Parliament. You are with us, today, in a completely different role than before. You sat many times in this seat, Mr President, and chaired the proceedings of our Parliament. It gives us great pleasure that you are supporting the Hungarian Presidency today, and also that you are working today to create a friendly climate for the European Parliament in Europe, because you know how important this House is – how important it is for the people who live in our country and for the decisions which are made in the European Union.

We are going to vote, today, on the report drafted by Mrs Járóka. This is an important matter for us all, because the Roma minority is the most persecuted minority in Europe, and it is also the largest minority in Europe. We have both the will and the means to be able to solve this problem gradually. The Járóka report will contribute to this greatly. We are sure of this.

It is also important that we are opening up to the Balkan states. We remember very well, Mr President, that during the six years in which you worked with us, you attached very great importance to enlargement of the Union to include the Western Balkans. There are

indeed many problems to be solved there. The countries concerned have to prepare first, but after that, their participation in the European Union will help us, too, to solve many problems. We would also like to thank you for your work on this.

Perhaps my fellow Members remember the days, many years ago, when you won Olympic gold medals. Then you put your whole heart into serving the Olympic movement, and now, as a statesman, you represent your country, and the European Union too, both outside the Union and in Europe. We would like to thank you for this. We are very interested in what you are going to say.

Pál Schmitt, *President of the Republic of Hungary*. – (HU) I shall speak in my mother tongue, Hungarian. Mr President, honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen, I stand here before you with great pleasure and pride. I was glad to return to this important scene of my life and career, to my friends and associates, to the European Parliament, where I was a member for six years. Thank you for inviting me.

Mr President, what would I not have given a year ago for twenty minutes' speaking time! This is an influential place, where every politician, every public actor can learn a lot. I think it is no coincidence that many presidents and ministers have emerged from these benches. This is good news for Europe because it gains leading politicians who have graduated from the not-always-easy school of European dialogue, who see their national affairs in a community dimension, and who are not only able to represent interests, but have also learnt to reconcile them. This is Europe's civilisational legacy and this is its mission today as well.

The European Parliament is a prime example of the important role parliamentarianism and the culture of public debate plays in European thinking. Parliament, endowed with increased powers since the Treaty of Lisbon, is the guarantee of democratic decision making. Clear-mindedness and open attentiveness towards each other befit its traditions. Thus, Hungary, as the current President of the Council of the European Union, readily cooperates with the European Parliament, because this here is not simply a melting pot of legislation but, if I may put it like this, far more than that: the soul of Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen, indeed, Europe not only has a market, a currency, policies and laws, but it also has a soul and a spirit. I know full well that the day-to-day work here is mainly about practical details. However, the crises of the recent past have also illustrated what can happen when the fate of people is approached from a purely financial or technocratic aspect and the major objectives, the principles holding things in place, are forgotten.

Jean Monnet, whom we revere as one of the fathers of post-war cooperation and who, even as an economist, did not dream of merely economic unity for Europe, said this at the time: 'We need true European efforts. We are not forming coalitions of states, we are uniting men'. The following ideas expressed by Jean Monnet are still relevant today, even though they were put into words sixty years ago: 'We are here to undertake a common task – not to negotiate for our own national advantage, but to seek it to the advantage of all. Only if we eliminate from our debates any particularist feelings shall we reach a solution. In so far as we, gathered here, can change our methods, the attitude of all Europeans will likewise gradually change'.

More than six decades have elapsed since then. Do we, however, still take these thoughts which showed us the way seriously? From the very beginning, this alliance was more than a community of coal and steel. Its founding fathers brought it to life as a pledge of peace,

as a mission to create a strong Europe. I admit that it is not easy to find a common denominator for half a billion people in today's expanded Europe, a Europe with 27 Member States. I – if you allow me – see a special grace in the fact that Hungary could take over the mantle of the rotating Presidency precisely now amidst grave dilemmas, hard struggles and momentous issues, because it is at such times that there is the greatest need for the qualities which my country has.

True, the battles of the present can never be fought for us by the spirit of our forebears. Nevertheless, we Hungarians can be rightly proud that, to quote the Hungarian composer, Ferenc Liszt, born 200 years ago, 'we are the sons of an inherently free people'. We live in a country which, thanks to Saint-King Stephen, was created as a tolerant, welcoming, multi-ethnic Christian community, has more than a thousand years of statehood, and has testified to its profound sense of freedom through revolutions. As Hungary's national holiday on 15 March is approaching, we must remember the many, many struggles of the Hungarians, such as the 1848 war of independence and revolution, and, to be sure, the 1956 revolution and fight for freedom, which some of you, many of you who are older, may remember, by dint of which we won ourselves a kind of right and respect here in Europe. Moreover, this never allowed us to forget fraternity and solidarity. We Hungarians have fought too much to be indifferent to the struggles of others and pass other people's problems by without a word.

For this reason, we are watching with particular sensitivity all the events which are now unfolding to the south of us in the Arab world. We show understanding for people's desire for freedom, for a trait that no doubt lives in the heart of every person and every nation. It is no wonder, and actually not unexpected, that this has happened. The desire for freedom of any nation cannot be suppressed forever. Sooner or later, it will break loose. It is the European Union's common duty to protect the interests of its own citizens and to remain true to its humanitarian obligations. Through its own means, it must promote peaceful transition and – there, in the countries concerned – prosperity in one's native land.

Ladies and gentlemen, or if I may so address you, colleagues and friends, as we are talking about solidarity, allow me to list a few of the concepts of the Schuman Plan, such as 'de facto solidarity', 'creative efforts', 'fusion of interest' and 'deeper community'. I sincerely believe that these terms, which we may come across in every EU document and every speech, have not lost their meaning. I am sure that these are profound emotions on which once European unity and post-war reconstruction could be built, and which eventually also brought the countries of Eastern and Central Europe oppressed by dictatorships back here, into this community.

Every point in the Hungarian Presidency's programme sets these basic values as goals. Everything that we are planning and working for can be described by two words, two words that are often used but which have lost nothing of their power: responsibility and solidarity. Please allow me to expand on a few points. What do we mean by solidarity and responsibility? Solidarity is required in financial affairs. We know that protecting the euro is the first of all our common tasks. This is a matter for all Member States, I repeat, all Member States, because the European Union's competitiveness is important for countries both within and outside the euro area, and it depends on us all jointly.

Already now, Hungary is setting a good example by laying down a strong legal restraint on state indebtedness in the constitution which is being drafted. Hungary has decided to take serious measures to reduce expenditure in order to alleviate its current debts and bring its budget deficit below the European average.

However, we respectfully expect the countries using the euro to regain confidence in the common currency. The introduction of the European semester serves the purpose of common competitiveness: it will enable Member States to inform each other of their budget plans prior to national approval and enable us to set country-specific targets. I personally would be delighted if it were introduced during the Hungarian Presidency and could even be called the Budapest semester.

Please allow me to use the words of Jean Monnet again, who thought it was an important virtue and aim of community commitment that nations – to quote him – ‘instead of confrontation, will let themselves be mutually influenced, and eventually pass naturally to dialogue, to common action’. I know that common action still has its moot points, but I sincerely hope that these will be clarified successfully before the economic and financial discussions due to be held soon.

The magic word is prevention. This can help ensure that the financial crises of individual countries do not catch the European Union unawares and enables an appropriate reaction to these because it is easier to avoid a crisis than to recover from one.

We must shoulder responsibility for closing the development gap. Even in a community of this size, solidarity can mean paying attention to the fate of individual people, on the one hand, and to that of smaller and larger communities, entire regions, on the other. The citizens of the European Union deserve equal opportunities. This can be promoted by good cohesion policy, the main cornerstones of which have already been successfully agreed. It is important that Europe should not be torn apart from the point of view of competitiveness either.

Turning to solidarity and unity in the energy market, efforts to develop a single energy market are also closely linked to cohesion. They aim to reduce energy dependency and vulnerability and ensure the unrestricted flow of gas and electricity throughout Europe. The events in North Africa are also a reminder of how important it is to reduce unilateral dependence and to link up unconnected energy networks. Developments are needed for the completion of the single energy market, funds are needed for developments, and broad agreement is needed for finding the funds.

Assuming responsibility is required at a macro-regional level as well. Just as the Barcelona Process in the southern part of Europe and the strategy for the Baltic Sea region in the northern half provide a framework to harmonise regional developments, now the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are seeking opportunities for more efficient cooperation as well. The strategy for the Danube region is taking shape through the participation of 14 countries in some 40 programmes, which is excellent evidence that being neighbours, frequently mentioned as a geographical constraint, can also be viewed as a geopolitical asset. We are very much looking forward to the Danube, as one of our natural bonds and the river of our eternal dependence on each other, helping us progress thanks to the strategy due to be adopted in June; helping us as a green corridor, as an economic potential, as the driving power of joint ventures, as a developing transportation route and, indeed, as a cultural connection. Hungary is acting as an initiator in devising the strategy and, as regards the practical tasks, is organising the work on common water management and environmental protection.

We must accept responsibility on our borders. Europe must be able to react to rapid changes in the world. However, no change that is taking place justifies our acting against our own

interests, running from one side of the ship to the other, thus only strengthening the effect of the none too light waves even more.

I am aware that many people raise the issue of the southern and eastern neighbourhoods as a case of either/or, saying that the current situation dictates that we focus all our attention on the European Union's southern borders. However, we can only give good responses to changed situations – and we must admit that there will always be such changed situations – if we otherwise stand firm at all points of the compass. If the European Union forgets this, it acts against itself and weakens itself. Unexpected situations can always arise more easily wherever we do not keep abreast of affairs, and vice versa: every newly arising problem can be handled more easily wherever there are well-functioning relations.

The Eastern Partnership is neither a Hungarian nor a Polish priority. Although this seems to appear to be our approach to the situation, it is far more common foresight. Nothing proves this more clearly than the fact that we will co-host the Eastern Partnership summit jointly with our Polish friends during their Presidency.

We also need to talk about the solidarity which we need to show with those waiting for expansion. The alliance of states that founded the European Union has always kept its doors open, saying that any democratic country wishing to accede of its own free will which accepts the EU's basic principles may become a member of the community. On the one hand, this means that there are clear conditions to belonging to the alliance. On the other hand, this means that we also have a responsibility for countries outside the European Union, for all those states which consider membership to be their goal and are making serious efforts to achieve this. The ambition to accede deserves clear answers, clear requirements, and an obvious schedule and perspective for the countries of the Western Balkans, but also Turkey and Iceland.

As regards responsibility for minorities, allow me to quote Article 3 of the Treaty of Lisbon: 'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities'. Cultural diversity is indeed the essence of Europe, the source of its vitality. As a national declaration of this, in Hungary in the next national assembly – which, incidentally, will be halved in size from 2014 – all minorities within the country will have their own representation in parliament.

How Hungary represents the fate of Hungarians living abroad is in complete accordance with the same principle. We are in an unusual situation. We have a constitutional obligation to defend the minority rights of indigenous Hungarian communities living in other countries, their right to use their own language and right of self-government. Could we call ourselves good Europeans if we did not do this? It is precisely the European Union that provides us with a legal and intellectual framework where this issue is, in fact, no longer an issue. Now, at last, we have every chance of overcoming historic grievances – without mourning our geographical separation – and celebrating our spiritual and intellectual fellowship without any kind of territorial claim. We have even framed this in law. A state will become stronger and not weaker by granting rights to its minorities. By doing so, it will gain loyal, satisfied, self-respecting citizens, who – not inappreciably – enhance and add colour to diversity through their culture and traditions.

Lastly, allow me to mention the Roma strategy, as Mr Buzek has already done so. The Hungarian Presidency regards tabling an effective and viable Roma strategy to the European Union as one of its most important tasks. Lívia Járóka has already done this. I am convinced

that we need this common action plan. To eradicate poverty, however, in addition to social measures, the firm rejection of prejudices, and developing a supporting cultural and educational environment are indispensable. All this is not, first and foremost, a question of agreement and money, but of our humanity and ingenuity.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we are well aware that the rotating Presidency is primarily always about taking current processes forward. Two apparently opposing characteristics are needed for this: humility and tenacity. Humility in common concerns and tenacity in representing them are the qualities that may lead to success. At the end of our term, the yardstick for us will be this: whether we have strayed from the designated path, or whether we have managed to guide the dialogue back to essential, substantial and constructive affairs.

Therefore, the mission of our Presidency is to be the engine of the processes. Being a player in a team: this is also what the concept of the trio of presidencies represents. It is possible to produce a good individual performance but only if the service of the community, or rather team, interest remains paramount. Many things require reconsideration because it has become apparent that we did not build our new European life on sufficiently solid foundations. An era spent on seeking the way forward appears to be ending in Europe, too. I am inclined to think that I see a fortunate conjunction of the stars in this. Now the European Union has a President-in-Office which is a country making precisely the major structural changes that are also awaiting the EU. Large, poorly functioning systems believed to be unchangeable must be reorganised and reconsidered, and conditions better able to weather crises, which promote development and protect competitiveness, are needed.

The fact that everything in Hungary today is about the need for change and renewal only makes us more receptive to shaping the common European future. Therefore, we have the experience which makes it clear that we must return to the effective representation of community interests. Hungarians expect their leaders and politicians – on whom, incidentally, sovereign power was conferred last year to an unprecedented extent in Europe – to provide a framework for a new life and express the fundamental principles for our future through strong laws and a worthy constitution, and will call them to account on this. Our guiding principle at all times is to enact laws which determine our future in accordance with EU standards, European tradition and civil liberties.

The effective Hungarian constitution, if you will allow me to say a word about this, begins with the date 1949. This was the year when, in the more fortunate half of Europe, the idea of the common market had already come into being and its realisation was close at hand. In the same year, the Communist regime in Hungary expelled itself from Europe through show trials. The country lost its independence by being absorbed into the Soviet sphere of influence for decades. We were cut off from the real Europe, from the community to which we had always belonged through our traditions. Even the sun was blotted out from our vision.

What a state built on lies could lose, the Hungarians preserved as a nation. This is why I feel that it is important and speaks volumes that the Hungarian constitution will bear the current year from now on. It will bear the year 2011, when, as a kind of gift of history, as a form of redress, we can hold the office of the Presidency of the European Union for the first time. This is the first time when we can really demonstrate our democratic commitment through a lot of work and also under peaceful, constructive circumstances and are able to place our Hungarian resolve at the service of the community.

I believe that in the life of a nation, the right time for drafting a constitution always comes when it is strong enough to admit its past mistakes and advocate truths that will remain valid for many decades, and is sufficiently steadfast to see through what it has started. It is at least equally important that we build on European foundations. I guarantee and assure you that we will regard the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union as the standard for the chapter on human rights in the new Hungarian constitution.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am a fencer and it was in this discipline that I took part in the Olympics, so the metallic sound of the clash of swords is not unfamiliar to me. Nevertheless, I do not think that on the European political scene today, we should compete to see who can oust and triumph over the other by force. History has not given us a mandate merely to engage in political chess games and tactical prestige battles, but to serve a cause, to strengthen cohesion and seek consensus.

Europeans need a successful, triumphant and strong Europe, a Europe that is equally founded on the community of interests and values, in which individual nations are also strong. The ambitious programme we call Europe 2020 is about precisely this.

Ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to finish my speech with a thought of the deservedly popular Hungarian writer Sándor Márai, which is related to Europe. I quote: 'We need to build this way of life further. We need to fill it with everything that is modern and preserve in it everything that is timeless. We have everything that we need; all we need is faith and stubborn will, faith in our role and the will to fight against the tyranny of stupidity and temper. Where can a European start work? Where can a Hungarian do so? I think he has already started'. End of quote. All I can add to this is so be it.

Thank you for listening.

President. – President Schmitt, those were important words, and your definition is very important. The European Parliament means not only simple legislation but the very soul of Europe. Quotations from Jean Monnet on the spirit of integration, dialogue and common activity, common actions, are very important for us. It is very important to remind us of the Schuman Plan: grounded on solidarity, first of all, at the beginning of the European Union and then in the 1990s; last century in Central and Eastern Europe, today on the financial markets and, in the very near future, in the Mediterranean region. Thank you for all your remarks on today's activities and today's challenges and threats facing the European Union. Thank you very much for your speech. We will remember your words and your remarks.

(Applause)

IN THE CHAIR: STAVROS LAMBRINIDIS

Vice-President

10. Voting time (continuation)

President. – Voting time now continues.

10.1. 2010 progress report on Turkey (B7-0156/2011) (vote)

Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE). – Mr President, I would like to announce the following. I reached an agreement with the shadows on my oral amendment to paragraph 18. This

means that amendment 26 to paragraph 18 will be withdrawn by Ms Flautre. Therefore, I advise my group to vote in favour of amendment 29 to this paragraph.

– *Before the vote on paragraph 18:*

Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE). – Mr President, I have an oral amendment to add in paragraph 18: ‘is concerned by the lack of progress in these investigations and notes that the recent detention of well-known journalists such as Nedim Şener and Ahmet Şık might lead to a loss of credibility of these trials which should, on the contrary, strengthen democracy’.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

10.2. European integration process of Montenegro (B7-0157/2011) (vote)

10.3. EU strategy on Roma inclusion (A7-0043/2011, Livia Járóka) (vote)

10.4. Industrial policy for the globalised era (A7-0022/2011, Bernd Lange) (vote)

President. - That concludes the vote. Colleagues, we have fifty explanations of vote. You know what this means. I will be going very fast, on the minute I will be stopping you, on the dot. I apologise for this but we have to keep to the time.

11. Explanations of vote

Oral explanations of vote

Parliament’s calendar of part-sessions - 2012

Gerard Batten (EFD). – Mr President, I want to give an explanation of vote on the calendar for 2012. Of course, what we were voting on was utter nonsense, because it does not address the problem of the three different parliaments: Strasbourg, Brussels and, of course, Luxembourg, which everybody forgets about. The total combined costs, I believe, are something in the region of EUR 250 million per month.

What I would like to do is to offer a constructive suggestion. Instead of meeting on twelve different occasions in Strasbourg, why do we not meet on twelve different sessions in Strasbourg in one week: first day – three sessions; second day – three sessions; third day – three sessions; fourth day – three sessions. That way, we only need to spend one week a year here. We can spend the rest of the time in Brussels if we have to, and we can save an enormous amount of cost and an enormous amount of inconvenience.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, there is something extraordinary about the monthly peregrination of this Parliament between the two seats. We preach fiscal rectitude and yet we spend hundreds of millions of pounds a month on shifting our interpreters and our committee clerks and all the Members. We talk about global warming and yet we emit thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gases as fleets of lorries transport the necessary documentation back and forth.

I know there is an argument that Members of this House make for the symbolic significance of Strasbourg and the historic idea, and so on, and I am rather attracted to the idea that the EU, as a club of nations, should share the institutions around rather than concentrating everything in Brussels. But let us have one seat, one way or the other. Why do we not simply

put it to this House that we should meet either permanently here in this handsome Alsatian town or we should meet permanently in Brussels?

Either way, let us cut out the waste and let us, in this time of austerity, try and return some savings to our hard-pressed taxpayers.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI). – (FR) Mr President, the vote that has been cast, although a majority one, is, in fact, a move to undermine the letter of the Treaties, which is very clear and which stipulates that 12 part-sessions must be held in Strasbourg. In order to get rid of one of them, it is being claimed that two different part-sessions could be held in the same week. This is also a way of bypassing the very clear interpreting judgment that was delivered by the Court of Justice precisely when this House wanted to go from having 12 part-sessions to only 11.

For 20 years, we have witnessed surreptitious moves to deprive Strasbourg of the seat of the European Union. It is true – and my fellow Members are right on this point – that the current situation is untenable, but we are not obliged to make Brussels the Washington DC of the European Union. We could have consolidated all of Parliament's activities in Strasbourg, but it would have taken something other than the French authorities' persistent negligence to do so.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, what happened today was not a victory for the Brussels camp over the Strasbourg camp, as we also reduced the number of Brussels sittings by one. The score is therefore Brussels 1 Strasbourg 1. However, ladies and gentlemen, we voted against the law – the decision to hold the August and October plenary sessions in one week each is illegal, as the Treaty states that there must be monthly plenary sessions.

Equally, this cannot be justified as a cost saving, as the costs – which, by the way, amount to EUR 70 million, which is plenty – do not arise as a result of Strasbourg, but rather because activities are continually being rerouted, contrary to the Treaty, into the shadows of Brussels' bureaucracy.

Were we to concentrate our work in Strasbourg, we would both save money and have an independent democratic face in Europe!

Report: José Manuel Fernandes (A7-0049/2011)

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I asked to speak on the budget negotiations because I believe that the European Parliament does not always receive fair treatment in this connection. As MEPs, we, too, need to support economising, but it is also quite simply the case that we must fulfil our responsibilities properly. The proposed increase in the budget for the European Parliament, which is far below the rate of inflation, is thus not a reasonable one. It takes no account, for example, of the increase in the number of members of this House by 18, of the fact that we must fund the accession of Croatia, or of the other investments that we have to make.

I assume that, ultimately, a sound compromise will be found on this issue.

Motion for a resolution B7-0156/2011

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as we all know, Turkey is a strategic partner for the European Union. Its location is crucial for the economic and

political interests of the Union and gives it an important role in promoting European activities in the Black Sea area, as well as promoting peaceful relations in the Middle East.

The 2010 report on the progress made in the negotiations for Turkey's accession to the European Union does, however, show the sluggishness of the process and the resistance of the political forces in Turkey to some of the fundamental provisions of the association agreement. Mr President, I do not believe that the Turkish authorities have made significant progress in terms of justice, fundamental rights, freedom of information, religious freedom and immigration, despite public pressure on these issues.

The economic interests in the region cannot allow us to make concessions on fundamental rights and freedoms. Parliament's resolution looks at this situation with a determined approach, urging the Commission and the Council not to waste the positive results achieved since 2005 and, above all, not to void the existing bilateral agreement with the idea of a privileged partnership.

My worry is that this partnership idea could compromise the acceleration of the accession process, which must remain our overall goal.

Motion for a resolution B7-0165/2011

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, water covers the greater part of our globe. However, we do not very often appreciate the potential and significance of seas and oceans for economic development.

The Atlantic region is particularly important for fishing, transport and energy. It is the source of almost 50% of the world's catches, as well as a variety of mineral deposits such as metals, oil and gas. Powerful climatic phenomena also occur there, and these can have catastrophic effects for coastal regions. Therefore, it is essential to draw up the right strategy for the Atlantic region – one which will enhance good management and contribute to protection of the environment and a better life for the people of the region.

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, discussion of this resolution must be built around Directive 2008/56/EC, the so-called Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

As my fellow Member who spoke earlier said, the context is the protection of the marine environment because the directive I mentioned sets out common principles on the basis of which the Member States must develop their own strategies together with third countries in order to achieve good environmental conditions in the marine waters for which they are responsible.

This is the framework, therefore, on which the strategy for the Atlantic region ought to have been built, as well as on the basis of the indications of the Council of 14 June 2010, as noted by the Commissioner when speaking in this House.

Instead, the resolution submitted for Parliament's vote lies outside this framework and proposes – quite apart from what came out of the consultations carried out by the Commission – a strategy for a macro-region, as well as dealing with territorial issues instead of marine issues.

This direction brings forward a different decision. I hope that the communication from the Commission, in line with the advance statements in this House, bring the initiative

back within the scope of the directive on the integrated maritime strategy which, as it stands, I support. That is why I abstained in the vote.

Motion for a resolution B7-0156/2011

Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, I was pleased to hear the result of the vote on the report on Turkey. I am certain that every effort which aims to transform Turkey into a fully fledged pluralistic democracy with the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms at its heart is deserving of support.

Recent years have shown that Turkey's efforts to become one of the European Union's Member States are having positive effects. The Union's Member States should continue to support Turkey in the reforms it is undertaking. It is necessary to concentrate, in particular, on the most problematic issues, such as constitutional reform, freedom of the press, women's rights and the protection of national minorities. I would also like to draw attention to the problem of implementation of the Additional Protocol to the EC-Turkey Association Agreement.

Debora Serracchiani (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of the resolution on Turkey because the constitutional reform that took place 12 September last was unanimously recognised as an important step forward made by Turkey in relation to Europe.

Naturally, there are still many more steps to be taken and in this vein, I would express my concern over the numerous arrests of journalists. I would like to underline that Turkey is the seventh largest commercial partner of the European Union, that the European Union is Turkey's main commercial partner, and that trade – which has been carried out correctly for centuries – has favoured interpenetration and the peaceful acquaintance of one people with another.

I therefore applaud the notable progress made in terms of getting started on connections between the European Union and Turkey, in particular, through the motorways of the sea that cross the northern Adriatic and the northern Tyrrhenian seas, which now see a flow of more than 250 000 truckloads per year in both directions, together with an important heavy-goods railway freight link from ports to destinations within Europe. In this way, it was possible to get rid of a significant amount of heavy goods vehicles on the road and I hope that this continues.

Andrzej Grzyb (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Turkey is an important neighbour of the European Union, and the report which has been submitted for 2010 highlights significant changes which have taken place there. There is no doubt that the constitutional changes make a great impression, and they make a fundamental contribution to the democratisation of life in Turkey.

There are, however, areas in which we should like to see greater progress. A basic matter here is, of course, the fostering of relations with neighbours. Without a solution to the Cyprus issue, all other issues will be at a permanent impasse. The situation is similar when we look at civil liberties, including religious freedom. I hope the conclusions of the report will allow progress to be achieved in Turkey, and a recognition that the country is changing not only in economic terms but also in matters which are important from the point of view of civil rights and freedom.

Adam Bielan (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, as a member of last year's parliamentary delegation to Turkey, I had the opportunity to see for myself the progress Turkey is making in the process of integration with the European Union. We should certainly take a positive view of the way the Turkish authorities have dealt with issues related to religious freedom, women's rights, trade union rights, judicial reform, revision of radio and TV legislation and improvements in civil-military relations. I agree, too, that it is essential to improve relations between the government and the opposition, to respect freedom of the media, including the Internet, to make improvements in the area of civil rights and the right of freedom of assembly and to carry out a thorough reform of the electoral system. Another disturbing matter is the increasing problem of domestic violence and so-called honour killings. Particular attention should be given to the questions of opening the border between Turkey and Armenia and support for negotiations on stabilising the situation in Cyprus. I support the resolution, because I think that enlargement of the EU to include Turkey is in the interest of particular EU Member States, including Poland.

Markus Pieper (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I abstained from voting on the progress report on Turkey, but not because I do not agree with its analysis – despite some reforms, the criticism of press censorship, violations of human rights, the Turkish electoral system and the freedom of religion do speak for themselves. The reason I abstained from voting was that I believe that the European Parliament must be much clearer in its response.

If Turkey refuses to make crucial reforms, we must bring a halt to negotiations on membership. It is time that this House called for the cessation of accession negotiations.

Hannu Takkula (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, it is absolutely true that Turkey has made progress in recent years, but when we look at the Copenhagen criteria for membership of the European Union, Turkey still has a long way to go. We might predict that Turkey's accession to the European Union will not happen in our lifetime. Specifically, there is still a long way to go regarding the basic assumption that we make about human rights and the rights of women and children. These, however, lie very much at the heart of this European Union and community of values.

It is also very important to consider the situation in Cyprus. If Turkey wants to occupy half of Cyprus, which is a Member State of the European Union, we obviously have to be tough with them on that. We cannot accept a situation of this sort, where Turkey is at present playing two different games and following two agendas. In this matter, we should encourage them to develop democratically but say very clearly that the European Union will not give up its values, and ensure that that is the case.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, the EU's attitude to Turkey will one day be regarded as a generational error, as an ethical mistake. We could have reasonably pursued one of two policies. Either we could have worked with goodwill towards eventual accession, or we could have said at the outset 'look, accession is not going to happen, let us work out an alternative arrangement'. Instead, we have held out the promise of eventual accession with our fingers crossed behind our backs. We have made promises which we have no intention of fulfilling.

Now, look at it from Ankara's point of view. Would they have made a series of difficult and painful concessions on broadcasting, on secularism, on Cyprus, above all, where Turkish Cypriots voted in favour of the EU plan and where isolated Greek Cypriots rejected it and were rewarded?

We have made them grovel about the Armenian massacres, we have imposed tens of thousands of pages of the *acquis communautaire* on them, and then at the end of this process, we are going to turn around and flick two fingers at them!

We risk creating the very thing we purport to fear: namely, an alienated and anti-Western state on our doorstep. Turks defended Europe's flank against Bolshevik expansionism for 50 years. We may one day ask them to do the same against Jihadi extremism. They deserve better than this.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, though I share Mr Pieper's concerns, I voted in favour of this report, as we have stated quite clearly once again – at the beginning of the report – that, for us, the negotiations are a long process with no predetermined result. We rejected the motion by the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, which sought to specify accession, as we did similar motions by the Socialists in previous years. This House therefore found the right line.

We should take the next step soon, however, and tell Turkey quite honestly, as Mr Pieper said, that as far as we are concerned Turkish accession is simply out of the question as it would overburden Turkey and overstretch the European Union. A politically integrated Europe including Turkey as a member is not possible. It is a grand delusion that we must finally step away from.

As for the progress in question, it is in the interests of Turkey itself, a country that is a member of the Council of Europe and NATO and our closest ally.

Motion for a resolution B7-0157/2011

Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D). – (PL) Mr President, I would like to refer to the discussion which took place in this Chamber on the integration of Montenegro into the European Union. During the discussion, I asked the representative of the Commission and the Council for a timetable for this process and to say when Montenegro can become a fully fledged candidate for EU membership. Unfortunately, I did not receive an answer to that specific question. Despite this, I voted for Parliament to adopt the resolution, because I think there are important reasons why we should do so. Firstly, it is a resolution which is important for Croatia. Secondly, it is a signpost for other countries which are today part of the Balkans. However, I think there is a third, very important reason: it is a positive resolution and one which shows that the Union's values are still attractive.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, when it comes to enlargement policy, we need something along the lines of a regulatory framework. We must, therefore, complete the negotiations with Croatia by June, as planned, and then get the accession process for that country under way in the autumn with our vote. We want Croatia to be in the European Union by next year or, at the latest, the year after that.

Things have to go on then, too, but how? We need to integrate the small but difficult remainder of South-Eastern Europe. First of all, there is Macedonia, and then Montenegro. This is a signal to all the other States in the region that, if they fulfil the criteria, they too have a place in our ranks. Unlike Turkey, these are European States to the core, and as such, they naturally have a future within our Community.

Montenegro, in particular, is a small country with a major European tradition. I look forward already to the negotiations with Montenegro!

Report: Livia Járóka (A7-0043/2011)

Clemente Mastella (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, there is still much to be done in the field of combating discrimination in Europe. I agree with the rapporteur, Mrs Járóka, when she states that even if discrimination based on ethnicity could now be considered eliminated, the socio-economic exclusion of most Roma continues and remains one of the greatest challenges that we shall be called to deal with in the coming years.

This is down to a whole series of specific factors, such as geographical disadvantages, deficient education or the collapse of planned economies attracting a large and low-skilled labour force.

A strategy to improve their socio-economic inclusion will not compromise anti-discrimination laws in any way, rather, it would complement them. A significant proportion of European Roma face such precarious and unfavourable conditions that measures aimed at fostering social inclusion must be thought of as bridging one of the largest gaps in the fulfilment of constitutional and human rights in Europe.

Jens Rohde (ALDE). – (DA) Mr President, it is always an emotional debate when we discuss the Roma here in Parliament. There is one group that believes we should not actually do anything – it does not concern the European Union – and then there is another group that believes that we cannot pay out enough money, even if it is not well spent. None of the approaches to this problem are particularly serviceable and, in any case, we are simply not solving the Roma's problems. It is therefore good that we have this report. It is good because we have now taken a decision to look at the results that have been achieved as a result of the considerable funds that we have already allocated to the integration of the Roma. We need to see which projects have been beneficial for integration before we can set a proper strategy, thereby ensuring that the money is well spent. The Danish Liberal Party has therefore voted in favour of this report. It is moving in the right direction for the Roma. Thank you, Mr President.

Salvatore Iacolino (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, with today's adoption of the own-initiative report, Parliament has made real progress towards the proper inclusion of Roma in the communities that host them.

Overcoming the marginalisation of Roma communities by fully recognising their fundamental rights to healthcare, education and the protection of vulnerable groups is absolutely incumbent upon us. We also welcome better coordination with local and regional bodies as well as the improvement of the part of the text providing for concrete checks on the consistency and effectiveness of financing compared to the expected result, together with the part that introduces award criteria for Member States that guarantee appropriate use of the resources granted.

However, more could probably have been done with regard to the recognition of reciprocal rights and duties because it is essential to keep in mind the joint responsibility of Roma communities for their effective inclusion.

Carlo Fidanza (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we all agree on the need for a European strategy for the integration of Roma and, of course, possible discrimination against them should not be underestimated, but rights cannot exist without duties and integration cannot exist without legality.

Shockingly unhygienic illegal slums, a huge school dropout rate, illegal activities such as theft, receiving stolen goods, women and children being led into prostitution, begging, refusal of all offers of integration and job support proposed by local authorities: this is the reality of many Roma communities in my country and in other European countries. It is a bit hypocritical to say that responsibility always and only lies with institutions and never with those who have chosen to inflict this behaviour on society.

Lastly, I regret that this text fails to make reference to the correct implementation of Directive 2004/38/EC, which sets out stringent requirements for European citizens residing in another Member State and their expulsion for public safety reasons. For these reasons, I voted against the rest of my group.

Alfredo Antoniozzi (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the report by Mrs Járóka takes on particular importance at this time and – together with the communication that the Commission is on the brink of adopting – will constitute the basis for further discussions at the European Roma Platform, scheduled to take place in Budapest on 7 and 8 April

I support the call for the introduction of binding minimum standards across the European Union in the education, employment, housing and health sectors. In particular, I think greater attention should be paid to primary education, which is crucial for the full integration of the Roma minority.

The firm appeal made by France, Romania, Bulgaria and Finland to the European Commission is certainly to be welcomed. The Commission does, however, need to take greater responsibility for an active, strategic and leading role in developing the implementation of an effective Roma inclusion strategy. The need to identify specific duties that the nomadic communities must assume is clear.

Pino Arlacchi (S&D). – Mr President, my group supports this report because it is a move in the right direction, calling for an EU strategy and a road map for Roma inclusion.

The report is inspired by a keen perception of the extremely heterogeneous cultural aspects between different Roma communities in Europe. At the same time, it advocates the introduction of binding and minimum standards at EU level for starting a real policy of integration. The EU strategy addresses all forms of violation of the fundamental rights of the Roma people and calls for effective access for the Roma to the labour market by making micro-credit available for self-employment and entrepreneurship. My group particularly appreciates the stress on the education of Roma children, namely, the abolition of classroom segregation through the employment of Roma mediators and an increase in the number of Roma teachers.

Lara Comi (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, this important own-initiative report forcefully affirms the need to set out a European strategy for the social inclusion of Roma. Indeed, we need to fight economic and social discrimination against European Roma, which has increased as a result of the current economic crisis.

The European Union must develop a new legal framework and avoid continuing to deal with this problem through non-binding legislation, as this is insufficient and not suitable for achieving the goal in question. It is equally important to maintain the Roma task force as a permanent organisation and to start thinking about a mechanism for this issue which would be similar to the one used to assess the internal market.

Lastly, Europe must make every effort to guarantee its citizens – and particularly the most vulnerable groups – protection of all human rights related to human dignity. In the end, the overall inclusion of Roma is essentially a question of fundamental rights, even if we have to ask the Roma communities to try and integrate and not to close themselves in their own world where they do not respect European and national laws.

Antonello Antinoro (PPE). – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, with today's vote, we have given a further boost to the – how should I put it – definitive solution to this problem, but we have not adopted the best possible solution.

Indeed, I should like to point out that the more than 300 amendments presented on the reports have been transformed into 38 compromise amendments – all of which were adopted – that aim to better define the priority sectors of the strategy, which is to say, the objectives of this strategy. Through the permanent task force, the Commission will have to ensure the collection and circulation of statistical data and good practices, and the Member States will have to appoint a government official – hopefully a high-level one – who will act as a point of contact for the implementation of the strategy.

However, we could have been even more incisive and less hypocritical if, in the report, we had looked at the obligations and duties that the Roma community ought in any case to respect in their host countries. That is what I am hoping for, namely, that we will soon find the solutions that will enable this community to coexist more easily in all Member States.

Roberta Angelilli (PPE). – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, no more children who do not go to school, no more children forced into begging or being exploited. These are just a couple of the aims of the report by Mrs Járóka, which represents an important political response.

Besides declarations of principle, we are awaiting the Commission's proposal – expected in April – so that there can be clearer and more shared responsibility and cooperation on Roma policies between the Member States and European institutions. The aim must be to use the resources available as efficiently as possible, beginning with European funds and avoiding local administrations having to take on all the problems and dealing with constant emergencies.

Lastly, I hope that a debate is opened up over Directive 2004/38/EC, which sets out specific conditions – i.e. work, sufficient economic resources and health insurance – to retain the right to reside, but which simultaneously leaves a number of gaps in terms of what happens if these requirements are not fulfilled. This inadequacy needs to be rectified as soon as possible.

Raffaele Baldassarre (PPE). – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of this report and I should like to offer my congratulations to Mrs Járóka for the work she has done. She managed to bring together the different positions and establish clear objectives and priorities for the strategy; namely, the provision of specific measures against nomadic lifestyles, guarantees on basic healthcare, equal access to primary, secondary and higher education, and the right to housing.

The strategy actually aims at inclusion and not merely integration. It is obvious that the role of the Commission and local authorities will be crucial, above all, in terms of controlling and managing European Union funds.

The only limitation of this report is the lack of instruments to check the actual desire for integration amongst some Roma communities and the consequences that are likely to stem from any unwillingness to remain on the territory of a Member State or participate in the treatments, and the aid and welfare programmes, which certainly cannot continue *ad infinitum* without producing results.

Mitro Repo (S&D). – (FI) Mr President, I gave my vote to Mrs Járóka's report, but I want to explain my position in a little more detail. The Roma question is a paradoxical one for Europe in many senses. It challenges the fundamental values and ideals of the European Union in practice, but, on the other hand, it is born out of one basic right, freedom of movement, which is a traditional way of living for one nation. There are Roma in Finland too; there, the problem is mainly the low standard of education and consequent unemployment. That is why we need to invest in education in particular.

Soft law is no longer enough, and soft measures are not either. We need consistent legislation and practical measures that are binding on everyone. All the Member States and EU institutions are responsible for this. *Kali sarakosti*: Happy Lent to you all.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE). – (SK) Mr President, we are talking about Roma integration issues. The Roma live in many European countries – both Western and Eastern countries.

It is interesting to note that, although freedom and democracy have been established in Western European countries for longer than in Central and Eastern countries, among which is my own country as well as our neighbours in Hungary, we see similar problems both in the West and in the East. We have not yet overcome these differences.

There is talk of an integration of the Roma population aimed at making them successful on the labour market, and healthier as a population. According to the laws currently in force, access to education and healthcare is guaranteed everywhere, and it is just sad that the Roma population often do not send their children to school to be educated.

Hannu Takkula (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, *esharisto*, thank you. This report by Mrs Járóka is an excellent one. I think that everyone in this House will share the view that it really is time to take action at European Union level to ensure that everybody enjoys equal human rights. For, unfortunately, they have not been implemented as far as the Roma are concerned.

It is not enough to have a good report: we also need action. Now is the time to ask a fundamental question. How do we move forward from here, to prevent this report from merely remaining a naïve dream or a mixture of different opinions, and to allow it to work in practice so that we can see the status of the Roma improve significantly in the European Union?

It is also very important to organise followup for this report. Perhaps we need an ombudsman for Roma affairs at EU level, someone to report on the measures that we have decided on and ensure that they will indeed work in practice. This is the way to tackle this issue properly and successfully.

Report: Bernd Lange (A7-0022/2011)

Clemente Mastella (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the recent and profound economic crisis that has hit European industry has simultaneously highlighted its importance for the European Union's economy.

Indeed, the European economy has often been focused on the idea that the markets ought to regulate themselves and so far, this has mostly been achieved through individual measures with practically no coordination between Member States. However, the Europe 2020 strategy recognises for the first time the need for a new approach with a flagship initiative. It is time for the European Union to fully exploit the shared opportunities for the sustainable renewal and further development of the industrial base, with good quality jobs.

European industry ought to maintain its leadership in key sectors and not find itself bringing up the rear. It is time for the Union to choose its path for the industry of the future. We must make sure that our European market creates its own added value.

For this purpose, clear macro-economic coordination of economic, fiscal and budgetary policies is essential for growth and employment, for example, through the fiscal harmonisation of corporation tax.

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the report by Mr Lange tackles a very topical problem: reacting to the economic and financial crisis that has seriously hit our productive system.

I think the response contained in this resolution is extremely positive, because it manages to bring together the variables required to build a good economic revival plan. The idea of concentrating on research and innovation, bearing in mind the size of our entrepreneurial fabric is very important and I think it gives a useful shot in the arm to the perhaps slightly more conservative stance of the Commission.

I appreciate the work of the rapporteur, Mr Lange, who has managed to integrate more than 500 amendments, bringing in a resolution that overall makes a huge contribution to our work. What emerges is a targeted industrial policy in European terms, which encompasses the various sectors and is participatory, given the use of monitoring models from both above and below.

One controversial point remains: the European patent. I maintain my complete opposition on this issue, but this has not prevented me from voting in favour of what is a very positive report.

Alfredo Antoniozzi (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, this report shines a light on many positive aspects and mirrors the considerations and requirements expressed by the various national associations. Therefore, I cannot but support the overall spirit of Mr Lange's report.

However, some critical issues were not addressed or resolved, such as the request for new legislative measures on resource efficiency and, above all, the issue of enhanced cooperation on patents. It is now imperative to tackle the question of European provisions on origin marking, which, in my opinion, is an indispensable tool to strengthen and improve European industry and its competitiveness.

I voted in favour of the report by Mr Lange because I hope that adopting this report will prompt all the institutions to work to implement the ambitious programme set out, translating it into practical policies.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, industry is developing around the world at an extraordinary speed. In order not to fall behind China or India, we need immediate change. Europe, which is small by comparison, should, however, offer the world more than simply more toxic factories, so I think it is right to invest in new technologies, the

development of medicine and pharmacology and innovative solutions in areas which we already know well, including agriculture. I am not thinking of huge livestock farms, but of the creation of new solutions which make it easier to grow crops, raise animals and produce healthy and ecological food, as well as to obtain energy from alternative sources. It is just such investments which today's economy needs. Innovative solutions are also an answer to the demographic changes taking place in an ageing Europe. Thank you.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE). – (SK) Mr President, industrial policy must, as part of economic policy, aim for sustainable growth, higher employment and a decent quality of life for all Europeans.

European industry is facing powerful competitive pressure from developing countries. The Union must therefore maintain a proactive policy in order to sustain and strengthen European industry as the driving force of economic growth. A functional internal market must be adequately secured by negotiating favourable conditions in trade agreements with third countries, but also by means of protection against unfair competition and infringements of competition and intellectual and industrial property rights by third countries.

The EU has great potential for securing a competitive advantage in the area of highly qualified human resources and the creation of innovative technologies, which is necessarily linked to further investment in research and development.

Adam Bielan (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, industrial products account for nearly three quarters of European exports and give work to 57 million citizens, not including extra jobs in related services. Industry therefore has enormous significance for our economy and affects all of the economy's other sectors. As we learn the lessons of the recent economic crisis and the growing competition in world markets, it is essential to take what action is necessary to maintain the strong position of European industry and also to continue its systematic development.

Here, the Europe 2020 strategy seems to be an attempt at a new approach, one which makes full use of opportunities for sustainable modernisation and development of the industrial base of Member States while also ensuring a high quality of work. This creates an opportunity for Europe to maintain its position as a leader in key sectors of the economy. The integrated industrial policy, which is intended to bring about a gradual and sustainable transition from a mainly productive towards a knowledge-based industry, looks particularly promising. Therefore, I fully support the resolution.

Cristiana Muscardini (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it would be inconceivable for a sector that accounts for 57 million jobs across the European Union, three quarters of European exports of industrial goods, and roughly one third of gross value added in the European Union, to be left without support from appropriate sectoral policies targeted at growth and development.

There can be no competitive commercial policy without innovative, good quality industrial production. I would reiterate the suggestions made by the Committee on International Trade, and particularly those that emphasise the importance of an effective trade protection system, making use of the instruments provided where necessary.

Defending the Union's interests in future negotiations, so as to protect industry and employment, is an unavoidable necessity to help overcome the crisis and ensure that, along

with the manufacturing sector, the real economy takes precedence over the financial economy, avoiding those speculative bubbles that caused so much disaster.

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I consider it to be very important that we should be able to debate this report and also to vote on it today. It would be best, of course, if crises simply did not occur, but it would be worse if no lessons were learnt from crises when they do occur. It is precisely because we learnt from the last crisis that we are getting involved in industrial policy in the European Union again, especially as, before the last crisis, there were quite a large number of people who believed that money could be easily earned with money. Economic and industrial policy, after all, is critical to our prosperity in the European Union. I therefore believe it is extraordinarily important that we have engaged on this issue.

It is a good thing, of course, to be involved in innovation and future-oriented industrial policy, but I think it is just as important that we have emphasised our traditional industry in this report. I am very pleased by this and I hope that we will continue to discuss this issue.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – (GA) Mr President, I voted in favour of this excellent report and indeed it was time for us to focus on industrial policy for the European Union. There is no doubt that we have fallen behind in recent years compared to the major countries of the world, but I hope that we will forge ahead in the future.

Mr President, having indicated my support for the document, I want to express my concern at one item in the explanatory statement, where, on page 32, it calls for the harmonisation of company tax. Now that is something my country would not agree with. Company tax or corporation tax is very important to us and it is up to each country to set its own rate. Indeed, it is well known that some countries allegedly have a high corporation tax but, in reality, they pay far less.

(GA) Be that as it may, this is a fine report and I am very happy to support it.

Andrzej Grzyb (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the resolution which is the product of the debate on the real economy is most deserving of support. The recent period has been characterised, above all, by the challenge which globalisation has presented to European industrial policy and real production in Europe. How the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy can be achieved, in particular, those of job creation and resisting delocalisation of industrial policy, is a fundamental question which was discussed during the debate on the subject of the resolution. In answer to the question as to whether Europe has to lose traditional industries, it can be answered that this does not have to happen, and this was also demonstrated by the debate on small and medium-sized enterprises which was held during the last part-session.

The availability of, among other things, raw materials, including raw materials for power generation, is a serious challenge. We have to devote much attention to innovations and to using the results of scientific research in industry. Another important task is to make use of the synergies which exist between different areas of European Union policy, including between industrial/agricultural policy, for example, and commercial policy. Thank you.

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE). – (ES) Mr President, I voted for this initiative because the European Union has to make a firm commitment to industrial policy and face up to the risks of the crisis, to competition from third countries, and to globalisation with increased public funding that is reflected in the future framework programme.

Why is that? For the purposes of research and development activity. To boost private investment and encourage the public and private sectors to work together. This will enable us to create skilled jobs.

However, we need to make use of the scientific and technological skills of the regions, which have developed innovation networks and competitiveness clusters, and whose innovation and effectiveness exceeds those of their countries. That is the case with Euskadi, the Basque Country.

Make use of the regions' knowledge. Do not live your lives blind to this European reality, because acknowledging it and taking it on board will enable us to consolidate our leading position in industrial policy in the face of the current threats.

Written explanations of vote

Parliament's calendar of part-sessions - 2012

Diane Dodds (NI), *in writing*. – I would ask fellow MEPs to imagine for a moment that they are in business. You currently have two factories, but by having only one factory, you could increase productivity while reducing costs by £150 million and protecting the environment. It is what your shareholders want. What businessman in his right mind would keep two factories? Yet, fellow MEPs, we are actually in business, the business of government and, crucially, of overseeing the spending of our constituents' – our shareholders' – money.

We waste £150 million each year by having 11 sessions here in Strasbourg. In a house that obsesses with green policy, some choose to needlessly pump 20 000 tonnes of carbon monoxide into the environment. I commend Mr Fox on his work to at least bring some modicum of common sense in 2012 and 2013.

Krzysztof Lisek (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) I voted for Amendment 1 to the draft of the European Parliament's calendar of part-sessions for 2012 and 2013. Despite the fact that I understand the symbolic nature of plenary part-sessions held at the Strasbourg seat of Parliament, given the current critical financial situation in Europe, we need to look for savings, and this is what this amendment means. Holding two part-sessions in one week is, above all, a gesture to European citizens, because it is their taxes which are used to pay for the expensive and time-consuming journeys not only of Members, but also of officials and assistants.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted for Amendment 1, which deletes the part-session proposed for week 40 in 2012. I see this as a small step in cutting the waste involved in travelling from Brussels to Strasbourg.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – As one of the co-signatories of the key amendment, I am glad it has been adopted. The calendar of part-sessions for 2012 should now be amended as follows: delete the part-session proposed for week 40 (1 to 4 October); split the October II part-session (22 to 25 October) into two separate part-sessions: part-session 1: 22 and 23 October; part-session 2: 25 and 26 October.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The outcome of this vote sets a fundamental precedent along the road which I hope will one day lead to the concentration of all of Parliament's activities in a single place.

Actually, I think we can no longer tolerate the waste of public resources and atmospheric pollution caused by the dual location of Parliament, which each month forces thousands of people to make long and difficult trips between Brussels and Strasbourg. Putting the two October plenary sessions together in the 2012 official calendar sends a very strong signal and I am optimistic that the path we have taken is more honest and in tune with citizens' wishes.

Thomas Ulmer (PPE), *in writing*. – (DE) I rejected these amendments and will be instituting infringement proceedings at the European Court of Justice along with my colleague, Mr Posselt.

Derek Vaughan (S&D), *in writing*. – According to European law, 12 plenary sessions must take place every year at the Strasbourg seat of the European Parliament. The vote on changing the calendar to allow two of these Strasbourg sessions to take place within the same week reflects our desire as MEPs to cut costs and CO₂ emissions. Travelling to Strasbourg is expensive and the increased travel causes extra CO₂ emissions. I therefore support this report, which will enable us to hold the required 12 plenary sessions in 11 weeks, thus cutting the cost and environmental impact of our work. As an MEP, I wish to represent the best interests, economically and environmentally, of my constituents. I also call on the UK Government to raise the issue with other Member States, as it is the Council's responsibility.

Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) I voted for Amendment 1, which proposed combining the two October part-sessions and holding them in the same week in the European Parliament's session for 2012. I am opposed to organising the work of Parliament by splitting it across three locations. The amendment means that both time and money will be saved, and thousands fewer tonnes of CO₂ will be released into the atmosphere. Savings have to be made – the amendment means that not only MEPs, but also several thousand European Parliament officials who normally work in Brussels, as well as journalists, lobbyists and staff of the European Commission and of the administrations of different Member States, will travel to Strasbourg 11 times instead of 12. This will reduce the costs of transport, expense allowances, hotels, etc.

Parliament's calendar of part-sessions - 2012 - 2013

John Attard-Montalto (S&D), *in writing*. – Today, Parliament voted on its calendar for 2012 and 2013. For the first time in my experience as an MEP, the amendments were approved by the majority. This means that MEPs will not have to move to Strasbourg 12 times a year, but 11 times to incorporate 12 sessions in Strasbourg. The monthly 'travelling circus' from Brussels to Strasbourg has become synonymous with waste, both in terms of the EUR 200 million spent on it, and the 20 000 tonnes of CO₂ emitted.

MEPs cannot decide where they sit but they do have the power to decide how many times Parliament must relocate from one city to the other. Around 350 MEPs supported the amendment that would sandwich two of our sessions into one week, thus saving the costs, time and energy of the return journeys. It will also send a positive signal to our electorate. I also hope that this will serve for an eventual calendar in which 12 sessions will be held in 6 weeks. I disagree, however, that the calendar of 2013 was put to vote together in this plenary. It is clearly a manoeuvre not to further extend this procedure during this legislature.

Alain Cadec (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) During the vote on Parliament's calendar of part-sessions for 2012 and 2013, 58% of MEPs approved an amendment abolishing one

of the two October part-sessions held in Strasbourg. That amendment is quite simply a violation of the Treaties! The Treaties designate Strasbourg as the seat of Parliament and stipulate that 12 part-sessions must be held there annually. Two part-sessions are held in October to catch up on the work that is not carried out in August. Outside these part-sessions in Strasbourg, meetings of the parliamentary committees and additional part-sessions are held in Brussels. In 1997, the Court of Justice clearly established the principle that the European Parliament must meet every month in Strasbourg. The Treaties leave no room for doubt: Strasbourg is not the second seat of the European Parliament; it is the institution's only seat. The anti-Strasbourg group is becoming organised and flexing its muscles more and more, in an attempt to make people believe that Parliament is unanimously against Strasbourg. The supporters of the Alsace seat must speak out more. They have the legitimacy of the law and of 50 years' history of European integration on their side.

Nessa Childers (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted to change the 2012 calendar to save taxpayers' money, to save CO₂ emissions and to lessen the disruption to Parliament business by the monthly trip to Strasbourg.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) The European Treaties explicitly state that Strasbourg shall be the only seat of the European Parliament, and that 12 part-sessions shall be held there annually. However, a vote was held this week with a view to merging two Strasbourg part-sessions in the same week, in October 2012 and October 2013. The democrat MEPs voted against that decision. France, for its part, has already announced that it will shortly refer the matter to the Court of Justice of the European Union. Indeed, the decision taken is in flagrant breach of the spirit and the letter of the Treaties, since it should be remembered that the provisions of the texts may be amended only upon a unanimous decision by the Member States.

Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) We voted this week on the European Parliament's calendar of part-sessions for 2012 and 2013. To my great regret, a majority of MEPs voted in favour of an amendment (to which I was strongly opposed) merging the two October part-sessions into one, in the same week. As far as I am concerned, this vote completely contradicts the spirit of the EU Treaties, which explicitly state that Strasbourg shall be the seat of the European Parliament and that 12 part-sessions shall be held there annually. The debate on the location of the European Parliament's seat resurfaces all the time, and this is a fresh attack today on the European Parliament's seat in Strasbourg. However, the Strasbourg seat has historical references and is referred to in legal texts, and it should not be called into question by these multiple attacks. France recently announced that it was referring the matter to the Court of Justice of the European Union, a move which I would like to applaud and which I will support.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of the changes to Parliament's official calendar for 2012, because I think it is right to try and limit wastage of economic and other resources as we carry out our parliamentary duties. The decision to hold the two October plenary sessions in the same week actually means we can avoid a double journey to Strasbourg, with all that this entails in terms of resource saving. In the end, I think this decision is in line with what already happens, with the concentration of the two plenary sessions in September.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of the proposed changes to Parliament's calendar of plenary sessions for 2012 and 2013 because I think that, even

fully respecting the Treaties, it is, in any case, possible to bring two part-sessions of Parliament together in a single week, avoiding going over to Strasbourg twice in the same month. This will allow us to cut down the costs of the European institutions and avoid wasting time and money. This will require greater effort in terms of organising proceedings, both by myself and my fellow Members, but it will show the public a greater commitment to avoiding the senseless waste of public money.

Catherine Stihler (S&D), *in writing*. – I believe that holding two separate plenary sessions in October is unnecessary. The EU Treaties require Parliament to hold 12 sessions in Strasbourg each year. However, they allow for two sessions to be held in the one week. By stopping the practice of travelling to Strasbourg twice in one month, the Parliament can set an example in reducing its CO₂ emissions and saving public money.

Parliament's calendar of part-sessions - 2013

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted for Amendment 1 which deleted the part-session proposed for week 40 in 2013. As with the decision on the 2012 calendar, this is a contribution to cutting Parliament's costs.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – As one of the co-signatories of the key amendment, I am glad it has been adopted. The calendar of part-sessions for 2013 should now be amended as follows: delete the part-session proposed for week 40 (30 Sep to 3 Oct); split the October II part-session (21 to 24 October) into two separate part-sessions: part-session 1: 21 and 22 October; part-session 2: 24 and 25 October.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The outcome of this vote sets a fundamental precedent along the road which I hope will one day lead to the concentration of all of Parliament's activities in a single place.

Actually, I think we can no longer tolerate the waste of public resources and atmospheric pollution caused by the dual location of Parliament, which each month forces thousands of people to make long and difficult trips between Brussels and Strasbourg. Putting the two October plenary sessions together in the 2013 official calendar sends a very strong signal and I am optimistic that the path we have taken is more just and in tune with citizens' wishes.

Thomas Ulmer (PPE), *in writing*. – (DE) I rejected these amendments and will be instituting infringement proceedings at the European Court of Justice. The Conference of Presidents should not have allowed this motion to go to a vote.

Report: José Manuel Fernandes (A7-0049/2011)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted for this report, which respects the principle that the institutions should have sufficient resources to be managed rigorously and efficiently. At a time of economic and financial crisis in Europe, when the public are obliged to cut back on their personal expenditure, both the EU and national institutions should follow suit. This should not, however, prevent the necessary public investment which translates into medium- and long-term gain. I would stress that the impact of the Treaty of Lisbon's entry into force in heading 5 should become stable in 2012, although the accession of Croatia planned for 2013 will have an impact on the 2012 budget.

Faced with the present situation, some institutions may have some difficulties in maintaining a balanced budget. For this to be successful, I agree with the good management measures

relating to administrative resources and cost reduction plans, whilst adapting efficient and environmentally friendly technologies. Finally, Parliament cannot jeopardise the necessary conditions for giving all the Member States sound working conditions, on an equal footing.

Marta Andreasen (EFD), *in writing*. – I voted against the Fernandes report on budget priorities for 2012 because the European Parliament is still going to look for a 5% increase in its budget even though the rest of the European institutions will confine themselves to 1%. The cost of the EU is, in fact, unsustainable for the nations of Europe and needs to be reduced. I am appalled at the European House of History being approved as part of this report: it is a 70-million-euro-and-counting vanity project which is completely at odds with the supposed claims of austerity.

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour of this resolution which sets out the general framework and priorities for the 2012 budget in the area of funding the EU institutions. Faced with the continuing economic crisis, it is very important to ensure good financial management in order to implement the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. I agree with the rapporteur's opinion that as a result of the implementation of these principles, institutions should submit cost cutting plans. Furthermore, each expense incurred by the institutions should be clearly specified and justified. Parliament and the other institutions should submit biannual reports on the implementation of their own budgets, giving details of the implementation of each budget line. I therefore believe that the European Parliament and the other institutions should show budgetary responsibility and self-restraint. I welcome the establishment of a new Section X in the EU budget for the European External Action Service, with an allocation of EUR 464 million. However, I would like to call on this Service to use the funds earmarked for it to implement its activities and achieve concrete results.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour of this report. Next year's budget must be responsibly balanced, with priority being given to those areas that are inextricably linked with the EU 2020 strategy. In drawing up the budget, it is necessary to ensure the principle of sustainable governance in aspects of effectiveness and efficiency. It is necessary to ensure sufficient resources for the EU institutions so that they can perform their functions properly. At the same time, the institutions must also respond to the current financial, economic and social situation of the EU, apply stringent management procedures and manage resources with rigour and efficiency I agree that the EU institutions can make a significant contribution to reducing costs and generating economies of scale, such as centralised procurement, shared services between institutions, e-governance systems, etc.

Elena Băsescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for this document because I think that the Fernandes report on the budget priorities for 2012 appropriately identifies the directions to follow next year. I approve of and support the idea presented in the report about giving priority to the internal recruitment of staff. This will help increase efficiency through using the experience previously acquired, while also reducing training costs and the costs involved in adapting to a brand new organisational culture. At the same time, it is important to compare in detail the actual expenditure with that budgeted during 2011 and to pinpoint exactly the causes of significant variations. EU institutions should prepare and send the Commission plans for cutting their expenditure, with specific deadlines and measurable targets. We cannot ask only ordinary citizens and the private sector to make sacrifices. EU institutions need to as well. Indeed, Parliament must serve as a model, demonstrate solidarity and keep a very close watch on how resources are spent.

Regina Bastos (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The report on the priorities for the 2012 budget of Parliament and the other European institutions, for which I voted, goes some way toward taking account of the economic, financial and social situation that we are experiencing. In other words, it is a budget marked by restraint and austerity. This report advocates legislative excellence, cutting costs, reducing the impact on the environment, and a zero-based increase; that is, an increase in line with inflation. The proposal that coming budgets should be multiannual budgets is equally important, so that they can be in line with the multiannual financial framework. It also takes into account the possible accession of Croatia in 2013.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I agree with the report on the guidelines for the 2012 budgetary process, which stresses the need to consolidate the resources required to address the new institutional framework resulting from the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. A responsible attitude towards budgetary matters is of paramount importance for both Parliament and the other institutions. The current crisis and the heavy burden of public debt lead to an urgent need for self-restraint, taking into account the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. It is worth highlighting the fact that certain investments, particularly in technology, could result in future savings in the long term, and therefore, these should not be prevented. I would also stress that proposals for reducing paper, energy and water consumption, along with emissions, should be tabled as part of the organisational culture of Parliament and the other institutions. It would also be desirable to reduce the amount of material for disseminating physical media, which should be replaced by digital media.

Nessa Childers (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted to restrict the EP budget for 2012, given the economic, financial and social constraints on EU Member States. We undertook to seek to cut some spending and to justify the rest in detail. However, projects already under way, such as the House of European History, should not be jeopardised. This is an austerity budget which stays in line with inflation. At the same time, cuts must not have a negative impact on the quality of Parliament's legislative work.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I support the excellent report by Mr Fernandes, because at a time when we are experiencing a severe financial, economic and social crisis in which so many sacrifices are required of the public, we must be the first to set an example by adopting guidelines for a budget marked by restraint and austerity. The resources needed for the EU institutions to be able to fulfil what is expected of them should, however, be made available, especially in view of the new institutional framework resulting from the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.

I would also stress the importance of subjecting the management of these resources to higher standards of rigour and efficiency, under stricter and more transparent control. It is equally important to encourage the creation of synergies and avoid unnecessary duplications in terms of personnel and functions.

Diane Dodds (NI), *in writing.* – When this House considers budget priorities, it does so in the context of massive public sector cuts in EU Member States, rising unemployment, increasing household bills and overall economic uncertainty, both nationally and in many families. In this extremely serious and challenging context, what does the EU consider to be a priority? Remarkably, one priority is a European House of History.

I would hazard a guess that if my constituents were to be asked if this represents 100 million well spent at this time, few – if any – would say yes. It is time for this place – MEPs, the Commission and officials – to get real. Priorities must be in the best interests of our

constituents and aimed at making their lives easier. EU money must not be wasted solely for the fulfilment of those obsessed with pushing their idealistic notions of a shared EU history or identity. Such self-indulgence must end.

Lena Ek, Marit Paulsen, Olle Schmidt and Cecilia Wikström (ALDE), *in writing*. – (SV) We have chosen to support this budget report. This is partly because it so clearly emphasises the importance of economy and restraint in these difficult economic times and partly because it welcomes the allocation of EUR 464 million to the European External Action Service, the important activities of which are in the area that the EU ought to be focusing on.

At the same time, however, we are extremely critical of the investment of a total of EUR 549.6 million to extend the KAD building in Luxembourg, and we do not at all share the rapporteur's expectation that this will result in savings in the long term. Instead, the only reasonable option would be to establish the European Parliament and its work in a single location.

Göran Färm, Olle Ludvigsson, Marita Ulvskog and Åsa Westlund (S&D), *in writing*. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats voted in favour of the report on the priorities for the 2012 budget for the European Parliament and other institutions.

The report adopts a critical and questioning stance towards a number of budgetary proposals involving high costs and recommends that Parliament's budget for next year increase by no more than the rate of inflation; in other words, it should not change at all in real terms compared with 2011. We would also like to emphasise that we agree with the report's extremely hesitant and critical position with regard to the project to establish a House of European History. At a time when there is severe pressure on national budgets, we consider it inappropriate to initiate such a project, which will probably be very expensive.

However, we would like to point out that we would have preferred an even more restrictive approach to be taken to Parliament's budget for 2012 that also included proposals for savings and redistributions to finance new requirements. The Commission advocates a rate of increase of a maximum of 1% for the EU institutions' administrative budgets for next year – an initiative that we believe should be supported. Compared with inflation, an increase of a maximum of 1% would, in practice, entail a reduction in the overall size of Parliament's budget.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Taking the current financial, economic and social situation in the EU into due consideration, it is increasingly important that the institutions respond with the quality and efficiency that is required, and that they employ strict management procedures so that savings may be achieved. It is now necessary to make efforts to fully achieve the objectives enshrined in the Europe 2020 strategy, focusing on growth and job creation. It is also necessary to strike a sustained balance and make an effort towards consolidation in all the categories of the budget. It is therefore important to maintain a prudent approach with regard to administrative expenditure. In conclusion, Parliament should maintain the principle of legislative excellence, respect the principle of good management and transparency, and ensure a spirit of budgetary responsibility in the general framework and priorities for the 2012 budget.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The report 'sets the principle of legislative excellence as a priority'. Given that, despite the ambiguity of the concept, this will depend essentially on the political guidelines attached to the legislative process, we advocate that

a fair allocation of resources – material and human – be made available to Parliament, to serve the requirements and scope of parliamentary work. The rapporteur does not hold back from longwinded rhetoric throughout his report, which is punctuated by concepts like ‘good management’, ‘economies of scale’, ‘efficiency’, ‘effectiveness’, ‘cost-benefit analysis’, ‘redeployment of staff’, ‘mobility’, and so on. Nevertheless, the European External Action Service appears to be excluded from this list when it comes to supporting ‘the EU’s ambitions in foreign policy’. We agree completely about the ‘importance of equal treatment of Members of all nationalities and languages in terms of the possibility for them to carry out the duties and political activity incumbent upon them in their own language’. However, this involves much more than ensuring interpretation services in committee meetings, as the rapporteur suggests. It also involves the provision of interpretation services at meetings of coordinators, trialogues, delegations, parliamentary assemblies and others. It also involves all official and work-related documents being translated in a timely manner. At present, there are unacceptable omissions in both areas.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) This is another report on the continuity of EU budget policy, which is subordinate, above all, to the political guidelines introduced into the legislative process. However, we advocate the fair matching of work resources – both material and human – available to Parliament to the needs and scope of Parliament’s work, without exaggerating the costs or possible savings, and without undermining Parliament’s work.

We cannot, however, refrain from pointing out that, rather than concepts like ‘good management’, ‘economies of scale’, ‘efficiency’, ‘effectiveness’, ‘cost-benefit analysis’, ‘redeployment of staff’, ‘mobility’, and so on, what the European Union needs is other policies, including substantially reducing spending on the military and on the European External Action Service.

We support the protection of equal treatment of Members of all nationalities and languages in terms of the possibility for them to carry out the duties and political activity incumbent upon them in their own language, bearing in mind, however, that this means much more than ensuring interpretation in committee meetings, as the rapporteur states. It also involves the provision of interpretation services at meetings of coordinators, trialogues, delegations, parliamentary assemblies and others. It also involves all official and work-related documents being translated in a timely manner.

Lorenzo Fontana (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) The report by Mr Fernandes concerns the guidelines for the 2012 budget procedure for the European institutions. Amongst other things, the report provides for greater rigour – given this tough time of economic crisis – in terms of the bureaucratic management of the European organisational system. That is why I supported Mr Fernandes by voting in favour.

Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of adopting this report, which lays down guidelines for the 2012 budget procedure: a general framework and budgetary priorities for the functioning of the European institutions (except the European Commission). Our report supports, in particular, the reduction in the European Parliament’s budget in view of the Member States’ economic, financial and social situation, and I welcome that. My final point is that I resolutely opposed the amendments attacking the European Parliament’s seat in Strasbourg, and I am glad that they were rejected by the majority of the European Parliament.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), *in writing.* – (LT) I agreed with this report, because it is very important to give priority to the principles of good management, namely, economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In the implementation of the various policies, the results achieved must be taken into account and variable expenses should, whenever possible and when their scale so demands, be made subject to regular cost-benefit evaluations. As a result of implementation of these principles, institutions should submit cost cutting plans; thought should be given to the advantages of centralisation, so as to generate economies of scale (e.g. centralised procurement, shared services between institutions). Interinstitutional cooperation is essential in order to exchange best practices that favour effectiveness and allow for savings. I believe that interinstitutional cooperation should be improved as regards translation, interpretation, recruitment (EPSO) and EMAS and should be extended to other areas. In a context of economic crisis, the heavy burden of public debt and restraint in times of ongoing national budgetary consolidation efforts, the European Parliament and the other institutions should show budgetary responsibility and self-restraint. Parliament's goal should be to develop legislative excellence and all the necessary resources should be available for this purpose, while respecting budgetary constraints.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) In the current economic, financial and social climate, the budgetary procedure guidelines for 2012 present a real challenge, especially because the European Union's institutions are being forced to make considerable savings but, at the same time, they need to have sufficient resources to enable them to carry out their activities with the highest level of professionalism and efficiency. In this respect, I express my support for better interinstitutional support with a view to exchanging practices which will result in a strategy for strengthening ties between Europe and its citizens, while maintaining budget austerity and making savings so that the Europe 2020 agenda objectives can be implemented successfully.

Although the 2012 budget for Parliament and the other institutions should be about consolidation, this should not create obstacles preventing investments, since investment projects ensure the smooth operation of Europe's economies.

Last but not least, I support the rapporteur's point that it is unacceptable to have no interpretation services available during the meetings of the European Parliament's committees, as MEPs must be allowed to use their mother tongue. I, too, was in the situation where I could not use the interpretation services, even when I was presenting a report.

Barbara Matera (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The 2012 and 2013 budgets will be consolidation budgets aimed at reflecting the Member States' spending cutbacks and setting a benchmark for the levels that will be established in the next financial framework.

The aim of this budget must be excellence, which means pursuing the objectives of economy, efficiency and effectiveness using as little as possible of the available resources. During this consolidation phase, Parliament has to aim to increase the budget but not above the rate of inflation. This threshold means exercising great responsibility. The increased expenses deriving from enlargement to include Croatia and the 18 new Members of this House provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon will be integrated through an amending budget.

In order to respect the approach of containing expenses, I hope that all the institutions will send the necessary information in advance in order to set out a general framework of administrative expenses so that the Budget Authority can take decisions on the use of

resources following a multiannual, sustainable approach that aims for the comparability of the information provided over time and across the institutions.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I welcome this report which makes clear that Parliament expects the Bureau to submit realistic requests when presenting the estimates, is ready to examine its proposals on a fully needs-based and prudent basis in order to ensure appropriate and efficient functioning of the institution, stresses that the purpose of the amending letter presented by the Bureau to the Committee on Budgets in September is to take into account needs unforeseen at the time the estimates were drawn up and stresses that it should not be seen as an opportunity to renew estimates previously agreed. Following the interinstitutional line, the enlargement-related needs shall be integrated either in an amending letter or amending budget, and the needs for the 18 new MEPs following the Lisbon Treaty will also be integrated by an amending letter or amending budget.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) This report has the great merit of stressing the need for MEPs to carry out their duties in their own language. The lack of translations in a number of meetings, in communications that are addressed to us, and in joint resolutions that are under negotiation, is an unjustifiable obstacle to our work as MEPs and hence to democracy. I support this request. However, I refuse to support the waste of money and the democratic aberration that the establishment of Baroness Ashton's European External Action Service represents. Likewise, I refuse to endorse the use of private enterprises in preference to civil servants.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Treaty of Lisbon has given Parliament new responsibilities. This situation means additional administrative work, with the result that Members need qualified staff to carry out advisory roles. This new situation leads to two problems: increased costs arising from the need for more assistants, and additional space required in order for them to carry out their duties in good working conditions. This situation leads to increased costs. That is difficult to explain during this time of crisis, but if Parliament's work is to be excellent, it needs to have the necessary financial and human resources. That is why I voted as I did.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – Although the report contains the main guidelines and priorities for the 2012 budget, including the standards of legislative work in the European Parliament, I do not think that the budget increase in terms of the rate of inflation is correct or justified. There are other mechanisms and ways of solving common problems and priorities. I voted in favour.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The expenditure ceiling for the multiannual financial framework of the European Union budget for 2012 was increased once again. Particularly in times when citizens have to tighten their belts, the European Union, too, must make savings. There are plenty of opportunities to make savings, from abandoning one of the seats of Parliament, to reducing the morass of EU agencies, to improving the fight against fraud within the aid programmes.

Labelling it as due to the economic and financial crisis, the European Union has simply put a few plans on hold but not made any real savings, despite selling these acts as major savings. This is more than unfair towards European citizens and it is just as unfair to justify all the additional costs on the basis of the greater demands under the Treaty of Lisbon. For these reasons, I voted against the budget report.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) This report includes an increase in the expenditure ceiling for the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the European Union's budget in 2012. As a result of the economic and financial crisis, the citizens in the Member States were urged to accept austerity measures and thus to bear the major part of the impact of the crisis. The EU, too, should reduce its expenditure. This begins with the uncontrolled growth of agencies, goes on to the pre-accession aid for Turkey and continues through to the expensive duplicate structures and administration costs as a result of the European External Action Service. I therefore voted against this report.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) Mr Fernandes's proposal for a resolution on the guidelines for the 2012 budget procedure offers an overview of the administration of Parliament's budget in view of a future optimisation of the management of the resources available to the European institutions, which is why I voted in favour. Parliament will have to adopt a budget to consolidate the future financial framework and the additional human resources needed to meet the requirements of the Treaty of Lisbon, and to improve and complete the buildings available, information technology and interpreting services. The main objective is still to find a good way of managing resources so as to contain expenses while nevertheless improving services.

Miguel Portas (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) I chose to abstain because, although this text mentions identifying possible savings for next year's budget, these are not made specific within the text. If we want to be consistent, savings-related policies should begin with the very Members of this House.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted in favour of this report as I believe that the current financial, economic and social situation in the EU cannot prevent the institutions from employing strict management procedures so that the necessary savings may be achieved. A real effort needs to be made towards consolidation. As regards sound management principles, the institutions should submit cost-reduction plans, and when presenting expenditure, it should be clearly specified and justified. In this vein, I would like to publicly express my appreciation for the excellent work that has been carried out by my colleague, Mr Fernandes.

Crescenzo Rivellini (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I voted in favour of the report on the guidelines for the 2012 budget procedure because I think that the current economic crisis – which right now has repercussions on employment above anything else – requires a joint effort on cutting back from the Member States and the European institutions. I therefore agree with the statement that in the current circumstances, the general principle for European financing is to follow an ethos of budgetary austerity.

In any case, I feel that I must emphasise how, even in view of the economic situation, the Union's budget and, in particular, Parliament's budget – as the only European institution directly elected by citizens – should primarily take care to promote and bring citizens closer to the European Union, particularly at times like these when the future is so uncertain. In particular, I think it would be a particularly good idea to consider a better distribution of Parliament's information offices in the Member States and their more strategic location, partly in the light of the latest upheavals in neighbouring States.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – I voted in favour even if I would have preferred that some amendments concerning the need for the EP to reduce its number of places of work to one did not pass.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The guidelines for the 2012 budget are based on a balance between the need to give the European institutions sufficient and appropriate resources to carry out their activities, and the need to find a quality and efficient response in the face of the current financial, economic and social crisis. The submitted proposal points out that the institutions may have difficulties in maintaining the financial discipline and restraint needed to comply with the multiannual financial programme, particularly with regard to heading 5. The rapporteur therefore calls for sound management principles, such as economy, efficiency and effectiveness, so that it is possible to achieve greater rigour, simplicity, clarity and transparency.

As regards the Parliament, this document, for which I voted, includes the needs arising from Croatia's accession in 2013, the increase in the number of MEPs by 18 and the need for extra staff following the Treaty of Lisbon's entry into force. For the other institutions, it is worth pointing out the new Section X on the External Action Service which, with the new Treaty, will respond to the financial needs arising from the creation of an ambitious institutional framework to support EU foreign policy.

Peter van Dalen (ECR), *in writing.* – (NL) According to the Fernandes report, the European Parliament must shine in the legislative field and all resources must serve that end. For me, there has to be a second priority here, too, namely, that Parliament must shine when it comes to budgetary discipline. Governments, businesses and citizens are currently having to evaluate their expenditure once again. The European Parliament must do the same – we must focus not on more money but on new priorities. We need a change of course because the European Union's administrative spending has risen faster than its total spending, and Parliament tops the list! Recital F of the report makes reference to the European External Action Service, which is likely to cost more money. That, too, must change. Why does the said service have many dozens of employees and luxury premises in exotic locations like Barbados and Madagascar? Take a close look at the service and you find that it does not need more money. This must be the number one budgetary priority for the European Union: not spending more money, but spending better.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) The guidelines for the 2012 budget procedure consist of assorted individual sections drawn together under the headings 'economy' and 'consolidation'. Many citizens in Europe, like their national governments, have been forced into economy and restricted spending by the consequences of the financial and economic crisis. In this situation, it is more than justified that the European Parliament should lead by example with its proposed budget for 2012. In 2012, the EU will be faced with new – and inevitable – expenditure. This is dependent on the potential accession of Croatia, the newly created European External Action Service and the three financial agencies. In order to stop the automatic process of increased budgetary demands equating to an increase in the budget, now is the time that potential savings in the EU budget must be identified. This should include, for example, a business analysis of the Union's agencies and an evaluation of EU bodies' human resources and buildings policies.

Motion for a resolution B7-0165/2011

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I am voting for this resolution because a strategy for the Atlantic region is essential for EU territorial cohesion, especially in the context of the eastward enlargement of EU borders. It is worth noting that our approach to the Atlantic can only be less one toward a peripheral region and more one that affirms its geo-centrality in the world as part of a strategic orientation that puts the region at its

centre. For the EU, it is the border area with North America, South America and all of western Africa. A strategy for the Atlantic region in which the Member States and their regions participate should also prioritise new areas of innovation in the economy and science, in particular, new products and services linked to the environment, to renewable and marine energy, to food-related marine biotechnology, to health and smart technology-intensive products and services.

The Atlantic strategy should not be isolated, but rather enshrined within the set of the EU's overall objectives, given the lessons of the Baltic strategy, adapted after the start of the period of budgetary planning for 2007-2013, which has undoubtedly limited the scope of the initiative.

Laima Liucija Andrikienė (PPE), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour of this resolution on the European strategy for the Atlantic region. Five EU Member States are situated along the Atlantic coast – France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. Therefore, there is a need for a strategy to coordinate the actions of these countries in the region. I agree with the rapporteur that the major added value of EU regional strategies is seen in multi-level cooperation, coordination and better strategic investment of available funding, not in additional allocation of resources. I believe that this strategy would address the following issues of common interest: environment and climate change, including preventing and combating marine pollution by ships, transport and accessibility, research, innovation, culture, leisure and tourism, marine services and training, as well as fisheries and the seafood sector. I would like to recall that one of the first strategies of this kind is the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region approved by the European Council, covering 8 EU Member States, including my own country, Lithuania. This strategy is aimed at making the Baltic Sea region environmentally sustainable, prosperous, easily accessible, safe and secure. This strategy has already been successfully initiated, and I therefore feel that the European strategy for the Atlantic region would be beneficial not just for this region, but for the whole of the EU.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Cooperation on problems extending beyond national borders is one of the great added values of the work carried out by the European Union. My colleague, Mr Cadec, has been working for months to strengthen cooperation between the regions of the Atlantic Arc, so that it enables them to make the most of any possible synergies. I therefore voted in favour of this resolution, which 'asks the Commission to shape as soon as possible the EU strategy for the Atlantic region as an integrated strategy dealing with maritime and territorial issues'.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I supported this resolution. Territorial cohesion is one of the EU's most important objectives and a precondition for an effective, economically strong and competitive internal market. The Atlantic region has its own specific characteristics, namely, a dynamic maritime area whose fragile environment must be preserved and which is subject to the consequences of climate change. It is an outlying area within the European Union, with major accessibility and connectivity problems. I feel that there is an urgent need to adopt this strategy, which will help address this region's fundamental problems as regards opening up, the interconnection of transport and energy networks and the development of marine energy, the development of urban and rural areas, and the intensification of land-sea ties and of sea-interior waters ties.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I agree with Parliament's resolution on the European strategy for the Atlantic region, which I believe is of great importance, as

five Member States have an Atlantic coast: France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the UK. This strategy is being proposed to address significant issues, such as maritime energy, the environment and climate change, transport and access, security and surveillance, research, innovation, the creative industries, culture, leisure and tourism, marine services and training, fisheries and the seafood sector. European territorial cooperation, which is consolidated in this strategy through the aforementioned aspects, can contribute widely to the intensification of the integration process within the Atlantic region through greater participation by civil society in the decision-making process and the implementation of concrete measures. I would also like to stress that this initiative can, and should, lead to the better use of EU funds, not an increase in expenditure.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) As a Member elected by a country in the Atlantic region, I must highlight the importance and the need to create a European strategy which takes the geographic, demographic and economic characteristics of this region into account. An integrated and joined-up strategy needs to be created to ensure a synergy and consistency between sectoral policies in this area, creating the added value necessary to address the challenges of sustainable development and competitiveness of this region in particular, and of Europe in general. I have no doubts as to the need for an approach at European level, based on strengthening cooperation between the Member States with an Atlantic coast, coastal communities, the private sector and civil society, and in which this common strategy will benefit all the stakeholders.

This should enable the identification of common problems and challenges, and of shared priorities, and the creation of the synergies needed to promote more efficient resource use. It is important not only to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the traditional sectors, but also to exploit the full potential of the Atlantic area, with new markets, products and services, guided by two main priorities: protection of the environment and ecosystems, and job creation.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this resolution as I support the need for the Commission to establish, as rapidly as possible, a European strategy for the Atlantic region which addresses maritime and territorial issues. This strategy should address issues of common interest, such as the environment and climate change, marine energy, maritime transport, maritime security and surveillance, fisheries, tourism, research and innovation. The Azores, Madeira and Cape Verde should also be included and have a prominent role in this strategy.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Today, the Atlantic is one of Europe's borders and has been one of the European continent's most important means of contact with the world. It was across this ocean that European peoples, particularly the Portuguese, came into contact with peoples, economies and cultures previously unknown to one another, and forged what is today a truly globalised world. Today, the Atlantic region suffers marginalisation compared with Europe's centre, and this can and must be remedied through the understanding that the Atlantic and relationships with the more important partners bordering it, such as Brazil and the United States, can bring about the reaffirmation of a geostrategic centrality that has, however, been displaced by the emergence of the Asian countries. The importance of the region fully justifies the establishment of a European strategy which, true to the role historically reserved for the ocean that gives it its name, does not confine itself to the Member States, but rather is able to provide a link to those other coasts. In this regard, I would stress the extremely important and irreplaceable role

of the outermost regions in the strategy's success. These continue to merit special support from the Union, which can overcome the costs of insularity and boost foreign contacts.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) On 14 June 2010, the Council asked the Commission to draw up a European strategy for the Atlantic region within one year, as it is a peripheral territory with special characteristics in terms of both its potential and its environmental fragility. Therefore, given its importance at global level, a strategy is required that is ambitious and takes into account its maritime and territorial aspects. This resolution represents a fundamental contribution to drawing up the strategy as it draws attention to crucial aspects such as the need to seek out synergies with other policies on the environment, energy, transport, tourism, marine resources, and others, to adopt a macro-regional policy and move towards the international approach that is needed for good relations with countries that have Atlantic coasts. I welcome Parliament's adoption of this resolution, as I am convinced that this EU strategy for the Atlantic region will speed up sustainable growth in this area and put maritime issues at the top of the European agenda.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) We are in favour of developing strategies aimed at the economic, social and territorial cohesion of certain macro-regions, which should obviously be given the appropriate means to allow this to be achieved fully and effectively. Every phase of these strategies – preparation, formulation and implementation – should actively involve the countries and regions that are within their geographic scope, and should be based on cooperation between those countries and regions. These strategies can and should address issues of common interest, such as, in the case of this specific proposal of the European strategy for the Atlantic region: marine energy, environmental preservation, including the prevention and fight against marine pollution, transport and access, research and innovation, among others. However, we have major doubts about, and other strong disagreements with, some of the points in the resolution. We therefore did not vote in favour. The resolution does not safeguard the principle that new resources, especially financial resources, should match the new objectives in the area of cohesion policy, in order to make them effective. The resolution also proposes the subordination of the strategy to EU foreign policy, to international trade policy objectives, to the Europe 2020 strategy and to the achievement of 'the aims of the internal market'.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) It is important to continue developing strategies aimed at the economic, social and territorial cohesion of certain macro-regions, which should obviously be given the appropriate means to allow this to be achieved fully and effectively. Every phase of these strategies – preparation, formulation and implementation – should actively involve the countries and regions that are within their geographic scope, and should be based on cooperation between those countries and regions. These strategies can and should address issues of common interest. This case concerns the European strategy for the Atlantic region: marine energy, environmental preservation, including the prevention and fight against marine pollution, transport and access, research and innovation, among others. However, we have major doubts about, and other strong disagreements with, some of the points in the resolution. We therefore did not vote in favour.

The resolution does not safeguard the principle that new resources, especially financial resources, should match the new objectives in the area of cohesion policy, in order to make them effective, which means that we will have a lot of promises but few actions, in addition

to being subordinated to international trade policy objectives, to the Europe 2020 strategy and to the achievement of 'the aims of the internal market'.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE), *in writing.* – (GA) I strongly support what is being done at EU level to establish an integrated strategy for the Atlantic region. The Atlantic strategy must focus on stimulating economic development of the Atlantic islands and the Atlantic coastal region.

The Atlantic region is one of the richest areas for wind, wave and tidal energy, but not enough benefit is being reaped from that energy potential. Atlantic coastal region leisure and tourism activities also constitute valuable economic resources. There is true growth potential there; for example, developing strategic marinas in each country.

The maritime transport, ports and seafood sectors – including aquaculture – in particular would benefit from the establishment of closer collaboration among the Member States bordering the Atlantic. Any strategy for the Atlantic must comply with the provisions of the common fisheries policy. Over the years, there has been an improvement in cooperation between Member States on issues of safety, security and maritime surveillance.

Since the Atlantic Arc area is so extensive, however, an integrated strategy must be put in place to ensure better and more effective activities coordinated by Member States.

Estelle Grelier (S&D), *in writing.* – (FR) The adoption of a parliamentary resolution on the draft strategy for the Atlantic region is an opportunity for me to point out the urgent need to work at European level on a common approach regarding the use of our maritime areas and to find a joint solution to the problems that exist. The Channel is a particularly illuminating example in this respect: a strategic maritime gateway to the European Union, it is both an essential link between the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea (it contains 20% of the world's fleet and more than 500 vessels over 300 tonnes sail through it every day) and an area dedicated to fishing, leisure activities, aggregate extraction and soon – much to my satisfaction – energy production from offshore wind farms. This concentration of activities calls for serious thought to be given to the issue of managing maritime safety in that area at European level, as part of a joint strategy. That is why, during the debate on the strategy for the Atlantic region, I once again called on Mrs Damanaki, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, to include the Channel in the proposal that she is due to submit in June.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this document, because as we know, the Atlantic region has its own specific characteristics; namely, it is a dynamic maritime area (thanks to maritime transport, fishing, marine energy, etc.), an area whose fragile environment must be preserved and which is subject to the consequences of climate change, and it is also an outlying area within the European Union, with accessibility and connectivity problems and with a low number of major city centres. We need to shape as soon as possible the EU strategy for the Atlantic region as an integrated strategy dealing with maritime and territorial issues. This strategy should implement a better coordination of goals and means, with strong links to the EU 2020 strategy and EU policies post-2013. This strategy aims at better spending of EU money, not increasing expenditure. This strategy needs to be well-connected to EU regional policy and integrated maritime policy. I feel that it should also facilitate synergies with other EU policies such as trans-European transport networks, the common fisheries policy, climate and environment actions, the research and development framework programme, energy policy, etc. It is important to improve accessibility in Atlantic maritime regions and increase movement of persons, goods and

services in these regions in order to achieve the aims of the internal market and the objective of cohesion policy, especially by the development of short sea shipping and the highways of the sea.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted for this report on the EU strategy for the Atlantic region which is of the opinion that this strategy should be set within the cohesion policy objective of territorial cooperation (Objective 3), and be based on an integrated, cross-domain and territorial approach, aiming at better coordinating policies between the various levels of governance on a given territory, with a focus on relevant issues, and is convinced that European territorial cooperation can contribute widely to the intensification of the integration process within the Atlantic region through a greater participation by civil society in the decision-making process and the implementation of concrete actions.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Atlantic region has specific characteristics of its very own as it is a dynamic maritime area, in which I would stress its maritime transport, fisheries and marine energy. It is an area with a fragile environment that has to be preserved, but which is subject to coastal erosion and extreme weather events, and it is a peripheral area. Therefore, an integrated EU strategy is required which covers maritime and territorial issues. That is why I voted as I did.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (ES) I voted for this resolution which calls for the EU to create a European strategy for the Atlantic region. European territorial cooperation can contribute widely to the intensification of the integration process within the Atlantic region through a greater participation by civil society in the decision-making process and the implementation of concrete actions. The text includes a call on the EU for the strategy to deal with maritime and territorial issues. It also insists that cooperation within the framework of this strategy should, first and foremost, be based on the needs of the stakeholders concerned and is thus of the opinion that the political priorities addressed have to be decided through a consensus.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – Taking into account the specificities of the Atlantic region, Parliament asks the Commission to act as soon as possible to establish the EU strategy for the Atlantic region as an integrated strategy dealing with maritime and territorial issues. Though Parliament believes that this strategy must develop synergies between relevant EU, national, regional and local policies, it calls on the Commission and the Member States to set up simplified rules to facilitate the implementation of this strategy and reduce the inherent administrative burden. In my view, this is not possible, because efficient measures of influence on the Commission have not been found so far. I am getting the impression that the Commission has still not started to change its priorities under the Lisbon Treaty and is conducting unjustified and long-lasting rhetoric with Parliament to further its own opportunities. This is not being done in the general interest and is actually detrimental to the whole situation. I supported the report, but nevertheless remain of the same mind.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) Five Member States of the European Union border the Atlantic. France, Portugal and Spain, in particular, certainly do not see only benefits from this geographical fact, as the Atlantic plays a not insignificant role when it comes to the streams of refugees that now threaten to increase as a result of the crises in the countries of North Africa. People-smugglers are all too keen to use the Atlantic route, since Spain's border fence was erected in 2005. In order to prevent a flood of predominantly economic migrants, the EU would be well advised to quickly develop an effective Atlantic

strategy that also covers this aspect, even though the remaining two Atlantic States – the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland – bear little to no impact in this regard. As the resolution hardly, if at all, covers this area, I abstained from the vote.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), *in writing.* – (PL) At today's vote, the European Parliament adopted the resolution on the European strategy for the Atlantic region. The strategy is a further European initiative which will not concentrate on solving the problems of a single country but of the entire Atlantic region, which includes as many as five Member States.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that the strategy should be characterised by a bottom-up approach. The geostrategic position of the region allows development of cooperation in the fields of maritime safety, international trade and fishing, as well as protection of the marine environment and preservation of biodiversity.

I think it is necessary to ask the European Commission what resources will be given in pursuit of the strategy, because this is particularly important in relation to establishing the new financial framework. In my opinion, another important matter is the process of putting the strategy into effect and the possibility that it may be necessary to create additional financial instruments.

Rolandas Paksas (EFD), *in writing.* – (LT) I agree with the resolution on the European strategy for the Atlantic region, which will contribute to the region's sustainable development. Moreover, a further step will be taken towards the implementation of one of the European Union's objectives – territorial cohesion. Given the geostrategic position of the Atlantic region, the Commission must take immediate action and develop an integrated strategy for this region, strengthening international cooperation and triangular cooperation initiatives, and addressing maritime and territorial issues. Attention is drawn to the fact that effective territorial cooperation will promote the development of marine energy and will create a favourable environment to use transport and energy networks and interconnections. For this strategy to achieve the objectives set, it must be well-connected to EU regional policy and integrated maritime policy. Only this can guarantee synergies with other EU policies and create the conditions for more targeted and more effective absorption and use of funds allocated by the EU, without increasing expenditure. Furthermore, the adoption of this strategy will improve accessibility to Atlantic maritime regions, and increase the movement of persons, goods and services.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The motion for a resolution on the European Union strategy for the Atlantic region follows the request made by the European Council to the Commission to develop an integrated strategy dealing with maritime and territorial issues in the Atlantic. I voted in favour of the resolution to ask the European Commission to prepare and report on the negotiations on the planned strategy no later than June. The aim is to implement better coordination in the region on issues such as the integrated maritime policy, the trans-European transport networks, fisheries, climate and environment actions, research and development, increasing movement of persons, goods and services in the regions in order to achieve the cohesion policy objective, ensuring that everything ties in with the EU 2020 strategy and with the European Union's policies post-2013.

Miguel Portas (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted in favour of this resolution because given that Portugal is an Atlantic country, with a dynamic maritime area and great potential, although it has a fragile environment that needs to be preserved, I consider it positive that the EU is recognising the potential of its Atlantic region. I also believe that many of the

problems of this vast area should meet with a response at European level through an integrated EU strategy for the region, and through the prospect of a territorial cohesion policy that should be a fundamental framework for Union choices. However, Union decisions have been totally absent and completely sacrificed because of unacceptable budgetary constraints resulting from political choices of austerity that do not encourage development.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Given Portugal's particular geostrategic position, this matter is of great importance, especially as regards the areas of maritime security and surveillance. I therefore believe that the establishment of the European Union strategy for the Atlantic is very pertinent.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – As was the case in the resolution on an EU strategy for the Danube region adopted by the EP last month, the present draft resolution stresses that the major added value of EU macro-regional strategies is seen in multi-level cooperation, coordination and better strategic investment of available funding, and not in the additional allocation of resources. The draft resolution underlines the conclusions of the Swedish Presidency regarding no new institutions, no new legislation and no new budgets.

Furthermore, REGI wanted this strategy to work according to a bottom-up approach and to involve all stakeholders (regional and local public authorities, Member States, the EU, private stakeholders and civil society organisations, including the interregional networks and organisations concerned) in its design and implementation. From the Greens/EFA point of view, we proposed amendments on the development of marine energy, the prevention and fighting of marine pollution by ships, and the development of short sea shipping and highways of the sea, that were all adopted.

Antolín Sánchez Presedo (S&D), *in writing.* – (ES) As a Galician and co-signatory to this initiative, I support an ambitious strategy for the Atlantic region. I call on the Commission to table a proposal prior to June 2011 with the priority of growing and creating sustainable jobs in line with the Europe 2020 strategy. The macro-region's area is maritime, fragile and peripheral, so the strategy requires an integrated, cross-cutting and territorial focus, all of whose dimensions should protect the environment, encourage accessibility, mobility and connectivity, and promote cohesion.

The strategy should also facilitate synergies between the EU's various policies – for example, as regards: tourism; highways of the sea and trans-European transport networks; common fisheries policy; energy policy, and marine energy in particular; climate change measures; the Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development; multilingualism; and, in general, any policies that will be implemented from 2014 onwards – and between any relevant policies developed in the field by the various responsible authorities. The plan must be drawn up, adopted and implemented in a transparent and trustworthy way, through cooperation between all the public institutions, and the involvement of the private sector and civil society organisations.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Owing to its vast area, the European Atlantic coast has great potential and several specific characteristics. The Atlantic region offers significant and dynamic maritime activity and has at its core regions that are very different from one another, but which have the common characteristic of depending on activities in the maritime basins of this ocean. There are remote regions of the Atlantic that are difficult to access, being at a great physical distance from continental Europe. I am talking,

specifically, about the outermost regions of the EU, where problems of connectivity and accessibility are reflected in their economic and social development. However, it is also important to mention that these regions have unique advantages compared with other European regions. Apart from their permanent constraints, their own characteristics offer potential that should be taken into account as part of an integrated view of the Atlantic region.

The objective of territorial cohesion allows, or rather obligates, harmonious development for all EU regions, bearing in mind the specific characteristics of each one. I therefore hope that the outermost regions of Macaronesia, including my home region of Madeira, are properly taken into account in any future strategy for the Atlantic, and that an integrated approach can overcome the main difficulties and challenges that these regions experience.

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Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I am voting for this resolution, as I believe that the accession of Turkey to the EU is in the strategic interests of both the country and the EU, but this will require Turkey to make a firmer commitment to the processes of reform in order to meet the accession criteria. This is the case particularly in the areas of freedom of the press, association and assembly, of commitment to creating a faster, more independent and fairer judicial system which cooperates effectively in the fight against terrorism, and in the struggle for women's rights and human rights in general. Moreover, the withdrawal of Turkish forces from Cyprus is an essential condition for building a climate of good neighbourliness.

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour of this resolution on Turkey's 2010 progress report. When it began negotiations on EU accession, Turkey committed itself to reforms, good neighbourly relations and progressive alignment with the EU. However, it is clear that Turkey's progress is too slow, demonstrating the unwillingness of this country's government representatives to implement reforms and democratise the country. The European Parliament has serious concerns about the deterioration in freedom of the press, about certain acts of censorship and about growing self-censorship within the Turkish media, including on the Internet. We condemn the restrictions on freedom of assembly and, in particular, the violent police crackdown on student demonstrations at Ankara University in December 2010. The European Parliament is also concerned that human rights defenders are being persecuted in Turkey. This represents just a portion of the human rights violations in a country that aims to become an EU Member State. It is clear that the current human rights situation in Turkey is complicated, one might even say contrary to the EU's values and policies. Against such a backdrop, negotiations on EU accession are leading to a dead end. I therefore believe that the Turkish authorities must adopt immediate rigorous reforms in all branches of government or consider the possibility of becoming not an EU Member, but a strategic partner.

Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The European Parliament report and the corresponding motion for a resolution adopted by plenary illustrate the imperialistic infighting within the EU and the conflict surrounding economic and political relations and the objectives processed in cooperation with the bourgeoisie in Turkey. These issues relate to the exploitation of the people in this country, the servicing of broader imperialistic interests in controlling wealth-producing resources and the exploitation of the people in the Middle East, in North Africa and in the area as a whole. As the capitalist

crisis and imperialistic aggression escalate, the European Parliament has concealed the anti-grassroots policy of the Turkish Government and the attack on the social rights and grassroots freedoms of the workers in that country. The Turkish Government continues to view grassroots forces protesting against violations of the rights of the Kurds as terrorists. The European Parliament tolerates Turkey's intransigence and aggression against the Republic of Cyprus. It has voted against the proposals and amendments concerning the Republic of Cyprus and its legal rights in the area. The Greek Communist Party is radically against the accession of Turkey to the EU, because it is fighting against this imperialistic organisation. The MEPs of the Greek Communist Party voted against the report on Turkey because its accession to the EU can only bring hardship for the workers.

Pino Arlacchi (S&D), *in writing*. – My statement aims to justify my abstention on the resolution on Turkey. I abstained because I did not agree with its lack of positive inspiration and its lack of a clear appreciation of some key features of the Turkish Government's recent action. In this resolution, there is too much of a paternalistic attitude towards a great country that does not deserve this treatment.

There are too many demands on Turkey, with too many details and too many unrealistic standards to be met. If these standards were applied to the EU Member States, several of them would not qualify for EU accession. I hope this attitude towards Turkey will change over time, and I hope this Parliament will show a stronger commitment to the goal of having Turkey in the EU soon.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour of this resolution. Turkey committed itself to reforms, good neighbourly relations and progressive alignment with the EU. These commitments and efforts by Turkey should be viewed as an opportunity for Turkey itself to modernise, given the support from Turkish citizens and civil society for Turkey's further democratisation and their commitment to an open and pluralistic society. Despite the progress made in some areas, the situation in Turkey remains rather complicated. Hitherto, Turkey has made rather slow progress with regard to reforms. Ongoing confrontation between the political parties and the lack of readiness on the part of the government and the opposition to work towards consensus on key reforms mean there is no visible impact, and in some areas, the situation is worsening, particularly as regards freedom of the press. The Turkish Government has committed itself to undertaking comprehensive reforms in order to modernise its country, and it must therefore increase its efforts to establish a democratic state, based on the principle of separation of powers with a balance between the executive, legislative and judicial functions and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) For the fifth consecutive year, Turkey has failed to comply with Europe's requests. There has been a growth in fundamentalist movements, which the government does not combat due to its nationalist and Islamist political views.

The status of religious Christian minorities and of women has been deteriorating for years. Turkey does not therefore wish to come into line with Western democratic standards; it has chosen a pathway of re-Islamification, which will lead it ever further away from accession. A country that aims to take a leading role in the Arab-Muslim world with an aggressive foreign policy towards the West and Israel is a country that demonstrates for itself the reasons why my group has long opposed those who would like to see Turkey become a Member State.

Whilst, on the one hand, the report sheds light on many problematic aspects that have emerged in recent years, it also applauds the 'progress' that the Turkish Government has made in some areas. Essentially, the report holds the doors to Europe wide open for Ankara, which is why I voted against it. Turkey is not Europe and never will be, either in cultural or political terms. The backward steps made by Turkey ought to convince even its most enthusiastic supporters to give up on the idea that this country should join the European project.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) The European Parliament must continue to give encouragement to states wishing to become members of the European Union because it is only by encouraging democratic change and punishing swiftly abuses or ineptitude that will enable these countries to become aligned with Member States' common democratic and economic standards. This is why it is natural to welcome the first steps which have been taken towards constitutional reform in Turkey, which highlights, however, the need for global system reforms. Turkey's political problems, its relations with Greece, which are still tense and even in stalemate, the precarious dialogue between the political parties and the undermining of press freedom are all reasons for slowing down the pace of the accession negotiations. Turkey's immediate aim is likely to be the waiver of the visa scheme imposed by Member States on Turkish citizens. Indeed, concluding the negotiations on the readmission agreement will result in better management of migration.

The Commission must launch the dialogue with Turkey about visas as soon as the agreement comes into force. Europe cannot afford to have a state the size of Turkey feeling frustrated about the way in which its citizens are treated. Turkey is likely to expect Parliament's resolution to benefit it more. However, the fact that Parliament is saying that the negotiation process with the EU is lengthy and open-ended does not reflect the reality on the ground.

Philippe de Villiers (EFD), *in writing.* – (FR) The Member States clearly have everything to gain from maintaining good relations with Turkey, but once again, the European Union has discredited itself with this report on Turkey's progress towards accession.

Firstly, it is still not listening to the people of Europe, who are worried about this prospect, the upshot of which is that hundreds of millions of euro are being spent indiscriminately each year (in pre-accession assistance), and nothing is being given in return.

Secondly, the Union recognises, although it has not learnt from it, that Turkey flouts international law in Cyprus and fundamental rights in its own country, scorns its Armenian and Greek neighbours, oppresses the minorities living on its territory and does not even deign to honour the commitments it makes to the Union.

When will we have the courage to get out of this trap? Will our leaders get back to reality and propose a partnership to Turkey instead of accession?

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted in favour of this report because I believe that the reforms in Turkey, although important, have been taking place slowly. It is worth stressing the recent amendment to the legal framework reinforcing women's rights and contributing to greater gender equality, but there is still much to be done to reverse the low rates of female employment.

Göran Färm, Olle Ludvigsson, Marita Ulvskog and Åsa Westlund (S&D), *in writing.* – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats support the demand for Turkey to recognise the genocide. However, we believe that it is important that the criticism of Turkey for not recognising the genocide is not used as a weapon by the – regrettably – xenophobic forces

which want to keep Turkey out of the EU at any price. We think it is important to continue the membership negotiations with Turkey and to put pressure on this country to comply with the Copenhagen criteria, because that will force it to comply with the human rights requirements and adopt a more progressive attitude to minorities like the Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians and Syrians, who we believe would perhaps be the ones to benefit most from Turkey joining the EU – an EU that is genuinely democratic and prepared to accept diversity. We therefore abstained from voting on Amendment 38.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Given the maelstrom of instability afflicting the southern Mediterranean and the whole Muslim world, it is clear that, for all its flaws, the Turkish regime has been able to evolve in a more peaceful and orderly way, and that it has sought to converge and integrate with the European Union by adopting its standards and best practices. Today, Turkey is a regional power to which the EU must pay particular attention, as the link between the two is crucial. Having said that, it has to be acknowledged that Turkey still does not fulfil all the objective criteria that would enable it to aspire to be a full member of the Union, and that the reforms that it has recently been making will take time to have the expected results. I hope that Turkey will be successful in its efforts at democratisation and that, whatever form its future relationship with the Union takes, it will become closer and deepen, for their mutual benefit.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Negotiations concerning Turkey's accession to the EU began in October 2005, and that process is still ongoing and a long way from reaching an outcome in the near future. The European Union, which is interested in pursuing a policy of good neighbourliness, welcomes this integration, as it regards Turkey as a strategic partner. Nonetheless, there are certain problems hampering the advancement of this process. The first of these is the disrespect for fundamental rights as regards freedom of speech, respect for minorities and the rule of law. The EU sees this as an unacceptable situation, which is only exacerbated by the occupation of a large part of the territory of Cyprus. Turkey must therefore provide evidence that it is in the process of changing, particularly by implementing the legislation amended in 2007 and complying in full with the undertakings that it has made to the EU. I am voting in favour of this report in the hope that the Turkish Government will adopt the approved recommendations as soon as possible, as the people of Turkey will reap the benefits.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) Turkey is militarily occupying part of an EU Member State: the Republic of Cyprus. Despite efforts by the Cypriot Government to resolve the problem and repeated demonstrations of goodwill to come to a fair solution, the Turkish authorities show no signs of wanting to match these efforts. Instead, they are pursuing a policy of non-compliance with United Nations resolutions, and of the occupation and colonisation of the northern part of the island. That should be a central point in this resolution. However, the resolution is complacent as regards the continuation of this situation. In addition, it is silent about the repression of workers, trade unionists and leftist forces in Turkey, as well as of the Kurdish minority. Those who have voted for this resolution are concerned rather to urge Turkey to 'support and actively contribute to the implementation of EU policies and measures in the region', particularly in the area of energy, highlighting its 'constructive engagement' in NATO operations in Afghanistan and the Balkans, along with the renewal of 'close ties with Israel'. These considerations are illustrative of the deeper meaning and significance of EU enlargement processes which, in the specific case of Turkey, is the imposition of the wishes of the EU powers and the interest that they serve.

Carlo Fidanza (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I welcome the report by my Dutch colleague in the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), Mrs Oomen-Ruijten. The text is very balanced. It highlights some of the critical issues still to be resolved in the process of bringing Turkey closer to the European Union and also notes how, as well as the unresolved issue of the Armenian genocide, it is also up to the Turkish authorities to take responsibility for the occupation of part of the island of Cyprus and the dispute with the Republic of Cyprus, a Member State since 2004.

Another fundamental point is inter-religious dialogue with the various communities, including the Christian community, and, in particular, the possibility for these communities to obtain legal personality in order to open and operate houses of worship. I think the time has come to leave hypocrisy behind and stop constantly boxing in the Turkish people, since we knew from the start that the obstacles would be difficult to overcome. Turkey is not Europe, either in cultural or geographic terms, though it has extremely strong commercial ties to Europe. For these reasons, I think it would be more useful and worthwhile to set up a privileged commercial partnership, instead of insisting on the long and winding road to accession.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) As we have been stressing, many questions are raised by the negotiations on Turkey's accession to the EU. This is a process promoted by the major powers in the EU, and it is not lacking in contradictions, as its objectives include the integration of this large country into the EU single market, control of its economy and the use of its geostrategic location in relation to the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia, particularly for access to and control of the energy sources and markets of these regions.

Moreover, the resolution is instructive on this point, urging Turkey to 'support and actively contribute to the implementation of EU policies and measures in the region', particularly in the area of energy, highlighting its 'constructive engagement' in NATO operations in Afghanistan and the Balkans, along with the renewal of 'close ties with Israel'.

The resolution ignores the repression of workers, trade unionists and leftist forces in Turkey, and of the Turkish people. As for Cyprus, the majority of Parliament maintains the usual ambiguity, although it is not clear why, given that Turkey has not taken any step towards recognising Cyprus, an EU Member State, but is continuing its military occupation of the north of that island, installing Turkish citizens to change its demographic balance, and in breach of UN resolutions.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) The large groups have not had the courage, in committee, to defend their own political choices regarding Turkey's accession to the European Union. In order to avoid talking about full membership of the Union, in the case of the left, or of a privileged partnership, in the case of the so-called right, they have struck a deal. They have decided on the usual meaningless option of the 'open-ended' process – in other words, a process with an uncertain end. Who, though, wants to pursue negotiations that have no clearly defined aims? The people of Europe, who are overwhelmingly opposed to this accession, and whose governments, like this Parliament, refuse to listen to them, are being made fools of. Parliament, which, every year, deplores the fact that Turkey does not honour its commitments, that reforms there are slow, that the conditions of women and Christian minorities there are deteriorating, that it is in conflict with a Member State

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And which completely fails to learn from this! Turkey and its people are also being made fools of – with disastrous diplomatic consequences, as we saw recently with Mr Erdoğan's visit to Germany and Mr Sarkozy's visit to Turkey. Neither does Nicolas Sarkozy have the courage of his alleged convictions: is he in favour of a partnership and not of accession? Then he should say so clearly and act accordingly.

Catherine Grèze (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – (FR) I am in favour of the negotiations and Turkey's accession to the European Union, but only on condition that human rights and democracy are respected. That is why I voted for the amendment, which proposed the recognition of the Armenian genocide, a crucial historical act and prerequisite for Turkey's accession to the Union.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour of this document because accession negotiations with Turkey were opened on 3 October 2005 after the Council had approved the Negotiating Framework, and because the opening of those negotiations was the starting point for a long-lasting and open-ended process. Turkey has committed itself to reforms, good neighbourly relations and progressive alignment with the EU, and these efforts should be viewed as an opportunity for Turkey itself to modernise. Full compliance with all the Copenhagen criteria, in accordance with the conclusions of the December 2006 European Council meeting, remains the basis for accession to the EU, which is a community based on shared values. I would single out the main aspects and priorities of this integration as building good neighbourly relations, advancing EU-Turkey cooperation, enhancing social cohesion and prosperity and fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria.

Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FI) Turkey has aspired to membership of the EU since the 1960s, but now the membership talks have, in practice, come to a halt. Turkey needs to look in the mirror: it has not implemented the Ankara Protocol or recognised Cyprus. Furthermore, the country must introduce civil and human rights reforms before it can join the Union. These include freedom of religion and acknowledging the rights of women. These are the facts. The Union, however, should also take a look in the mirror. There is strong opposition to Turkey in the EU, based on prejudices and fear of difference. The big Member States, such as Germany and France, are afraid of Turkey, which is a large, influential country. The situation in North Africa has once again shown that Turkey is a skilful foreign policy actor. In fact, Turkey is more skilful than the EU or its individual Member States.

Since the 1990s, Turkey has built good neighbourly relations and stability in its region – on its borders with Europe, the South Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. The young people in North Africa who are so keen to see reform are looking to Turkey. Turkey is a strong economic actor. Unlike the European economy, Turkey's economy is dynamic and is growing, in spite of the economic crisis and recession that has hit Europe and the rest of the world. This cannot be ignored.

Sandra Kalniete (PPE), *in writing*. – (LV) Today, when with bated breath and hope, we observe the revolutions that have overwhelmed some of the Arab countries, my conviction that Turkey's membership of the European Union is a geopolitically strategic necessity simply becomes stronger. Turkey is a democratic Islamic state, which can serve as an inspiring example to other Arab countries that wish to establish a democratic system of government founded on the rule of law and respect for human rights, while preserving their religious values. It worries me that we are sending the wrong signal to the citizens of Turkey and reinforcing the influence of anti-European and Islamic fundamentalist forces.

We must recognise that by so doing, we are also doing a service to those who do not wish to see the European Union as the most important player on the world stage. We must face up to the truth and admit that Europe cannot currently compete in terms of economic development with such countries as China, India and Brazil. Admitting Turkey to our Union would make us larger and economically more powerful.

We must also recognise Turkey's stabilising geopolitical significance. From the experience of Latvia, I know that accession negotiations are an important instrument for encouraging reform, which is why it is important for the EU to open negotiations on new chapters with Turkey. Turkey's wish to commence negotiations with the EU on the introduction of a visa-free regime is justified. Turkey's government has made significant strides, which is why I should like to emphasise that criticism in EU reports on Turkey's progress should be commensurate with an objective assessment of the country's achievements.

Ramona Nicole Mănescu (ALDE), *in writing.* – (RO) Turkey has achieved remarkable economic growth, enabling it to progress in 10 years from the 27th to the 16th biggest economy in the world. It is the European Union's 7th biggest trade partner and the EU is Turkey's main trade partner. Roughly 88% of direct foreign investments in Turkey come from EU states, which indicates how solid our ties are. On the political front, it is a model of stability and democracy for Muslim states. Negotiations with Turkey should be given a boost. For example, I think that opening Negotiation Chapter 15, which is on energy, is important, including for EU Member States. Turkey's strategic importance to the Union's energy security must not be ignored at a time when we want to diversify supply sources, with the Nabucco gas pipeline project being a significant example of this. Therefore, I think that Turkey must be considerably involved, even prior to accession, in EU energy projects or in regional cooperation in the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea region.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted for this report, which commends Turkish citizens and civil society for supporting Turkey's further democratisation and for their commitment to an open and pluralistic society, but notes Turkey's slow progress with regard to reforms and recalls that the Turkish Government has committed itself to undertaking comprehensive reforms, both with a view to fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria and for the sake of Turkey's own modernisation, and calls on the government to increase its efforts in that respect.

Kyriakos Mavronikolas (S&D), *in writing.* – (EL) There has been no change over the past year in Turkey's attitude towards either the European Union or Cyprus. Turkish colonisers and occupying troops are still on the island. It is important to note that the Turkish Cypriots in occupied Cyprus are demonstrating against Turkey, protesting about their financial hardship due to the presence of the Turkish occupying army. Referring in a statement to the Turkish Cypriot demonstrations, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan accepted that Turkey invaded Cyprus in order to serve its strategic interests.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (FR) This resolution lectures Turkey on democracy. Such lectures are inappropriate. Barely two months ago, Parliament was welcoming the negotiations between the Commission and the dictator Colonel Gaddafi. And what about integration between the Union and Turkey?

As for its claim to draw a partner country's attention to the need for a separation of powers when this House demands no such thing within the Union, it is, in fact, unbearable. There is worse, however: this text threatens Turkey with the cessation of its EU accession negotiations if it fails to comply immediately with the Union's neoliberal dogma, and

reminds it of the Copenhagen criteria. Anyone who has the general interest of the people at heart knows that this Europe needs to be changed before it is enlarged. I am opposed to any further accessions taking place until social dumping has been stopped, but I shall vote against this arrogant text.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The possible accession of Turkey to the EU continues to be cause for major reservations. Its continuing occupation of part of Cyprus, its refusal to open ports and airports in the region, the violation of rights of political, religious and ethnic minorities, discrimination against women, the exclusion of political parties and the revocation of laws limiting the jurisdiction of military courts are some examples that demonstrate this. There are other fundamental issues. Most of Turkey is not geographically part of Europe. Turkey has an Islamic identity that is very different from the Judaeo-Christian identity of most EU countries; the secularity of the country is only held in place by military force. The movement of people from what would become the country with the largest population in the EU would create great imbalances in the labour market. None of this precludes acknowledgement of the efforts made by Turkey over recent years to meet certain criteria required by the EU, and it recognises the invaluable role that this country plays within NATO. A relevant consideration would be whether it would be better to guarantee Turkey privileged and preferential partnership status with the EU, rather than creating false expectations and hopes for membership, something that it would be difficult for the facts and circumstances to accommodate.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (ES) I am in favour of Turkey's accession to the EU and welcome the progress the country has made to its citizens' benefit. However, at the same time, it should be mentioned that in order for Turkey to be able to accede as a Member State of the EU, it has to comply with the Copenhagen criteria and the obligations to the EU itself and to its Member States, like any other candidate country. It is necessary for Turkey to respect international law, and it must do much more in relation to the Kurdish problem, to acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide and to normalisation with its neighbouring countries. As such, Turkey must withdraw its occupying troops from the Republic of Cyprus.

Louis Michel (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) I believe that Turkey's eventual accession is of vital importance if the Union wishes to increase its political, strategic and economic influence at international level. Integrating that country into Europe will benefit Europeans at least as much as it benefits the Turks.

We should not forget that Turkey is a traditionally secular country; it is powerful and has a wealth of human resources. It is a gateway to the markets and the energy routes of Asia and the Middle East. It is also totally reliable within NATO. Certain efforts made by the Turkish authorities with regard to respect for human rights deserve to be mentioned. Thus, the adoption of amendments to the constitution is a step in the direction of the democratic standards necessary for accession.

Nevertheless, although the new radio and television laws are welcome advances, freedom of expression and, more specifically, freedom of the press, remain a cause for concern. Similarly, the resolution of the Cyprus issue is a prerequisite for any progress in the accession process.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing.* – Turkey's accession to EU is not within the strategic interest of EU until Turkey admits to the genocide of Armenians and withdraws its troops

from Cyprus. I voted against the resolutions as a whole and against many separate odious points.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) The progress report on the accession negotiations with Turkey was, once again, more than sobering. Given the circumstances, however, what else could be expected? Turkey is not a European country – geographically, culturally or historically – and it has a different approach to many issues for these reasons. All of this being the case, it always astounds me how this House manages to produce such politically correct and positive resolutions on this subject. The truth is never allowed to be stated and clear words are to be avoided if at all possible. It is really time to come clean with Turkey. It must be made clear to the Turks that they are our friends and partners in many areas but that accession to the EU is just not possible.

Rational forces in Turkey have long since recognised that accession to the European Union is not the most worthwhile goal for them. In light of its location and the manifold connections with the Turkic peoples of the Caucasus and with the Arabs, Turkey is assuming an important strategic position in the Middle East. The EU should take account of this and recognise Turkey as an important strategic partner beyond its borders.

Claudio Morganti (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) I wonder how it is possible that this report does not mention a number of fundamental issues regarding Turkey, above all, the disastrous situation in Cyprus. In the northern, Turkish-controlled part of the island, systematic violations of basic rights are a common occurrence and Turkey is trying to bring in more settlements, which definitely will not help the peace process that we are hoping for.

Another fundamental issue that astonishes me and that has not been adequately stressed is Turkey's obstinate refusal to acknowledge the Armenian genocide that took place last century. For these and other reasons, I voted against the report, just as I remain strongly and staunchly against Turkey's possible future accession to the European Union.

Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) The European Union needs Turkey and Turkey needs the EU. It is important not simply in terms of trade and economic ties and investments. Almost 100 years ago, Turkey turned to face Europe and it can and must become a bridge linking our continent with the Muslim world. Unfortunately, it has to be acknowledged that negotiations on Turkey's accession to the EU have slowed. The EU is waiting for progress, particularly as regards protecting human rights, gender equality and safeguarding freedom of expression, freedom of the press and religious freedoms. Normalisation of relations with Cyprus is another important issue. This conflict must be resolved in a manner that is favourable for both Turkey and Cyprus. It is important to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Events in North Africa demonstrate the important contribution Turkey has to make, spreading stability and democratic values. The people of Libya, Egypt and other Arab nations view Turkey and the EU as an example that they need to follow. I voted in favour of the report, because it is well balanced. It reflects well the state of Turkey's EU integration in 2010. I have always agreed with Turkish membership. However, this country would have to implement the Ankara Protocol and do more, particularly as regards minorities, women, press freedoms and the rule of law.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I voted in favour of Parliament's resolution on Turkey's 2010 progress report. The Commission's annual report shows that the modernisation of Turkey towards a democratic and pluralist system is a slow and painful

process but that the Turkish Government, citizens and civil society are working towards it. The domestic political squabbling over reforms does not ease the way to reaching European standards, but does, however, show a commitment to change and modernisation. Recent events in the Mediterranean show how important it is to assess the reforms and the situation step-by-step, avoiding taking simplistic stances on the issue.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), *in writing*. – (EL) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on the 2010 progress report on Turkey. Apart from anything else, it contains an important call on the Turkish Government to apply the bilateral readmission agreements entered into, pending the application of the readmission agreement between the EU and Turkey. This call is even more valuable in light of recent events in North Africa, which put Greece at the centre of the wave of immigration. This is a time when, wherever we are and wherever we stand, we need to highlight the immigration dangers that we may have to face; we cannot simply stand by and watch something that is already happening. As a candidate country, Turkey should cooperate with the EU so that, together with Greece and the other Member States, we can stem the flood of immigrants trying to enter the EU illegally.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) The motion for a resolution on Turkey draws attention to the situation on human rights. The constant stalemate between Turkey and Cyprus, the precarious dialogue between the political parties, the undermining of press freedom, women's rights and other fundamental rights are some of the factors which have resulted in slowing down the pace of the accession negotiations, according to the draft report. The negotiations are regarded as 'a long-lasting and open-ended process'. I think that Turkey's accession to the European Union must be seen as a strategic benefit for both parties: the EU and Turkey. This is why I call on the Turkish Government to step up the reform process in order to fulfil the accession criteria completely.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The process of bringing Turkey closer to the objectives of the European Union has been, and will be, a long one. I have therefore always advocated the deepening of relations between the EU and Turkey through the gradual implementation of partnerships in various areas. I think that creating a long-term expectation of integration is not positive either for the EU or for Turkey.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – Notwithstanding the progress mentioned during the debate, and the 'opening', problems remain in relation to women, minorities, freedom of opinion and the press, social imbalances, poverty, rights of the child, education, an independent judiciary and army intervention in politics.

The EU Commission notes that despite legislative advances, 'however, senior members of the armed forces have made a number of statements going beyond their remit, in particular, on judicial issues'. It reached the following conclusion regarding the judiciary: 'Investigations in some high-profile cases continued to raise concerns. This points to the need to improve the work of the police and the gendarmerie but, also, the working relationship between the police and the gendarmerie, on the one hand, and the judiciary, on the other'.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) There are still many unresolved questions over Turkey's progress in the EU accession negotiations.

First of all, the ongoing issue with Cyprus needs to be concluded between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities, during which the withdrawal of Turkish troops will also be negotiated. These negotiations are currently going through a particularly delicate

phase. In addition, major doubts must once again be raised over the cultural background of the country itself, which is closely tied to Islamic traditions – a long way from Europe's Catholic Christian roots.

Oreste Rossi (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) Although the report offers strong criticisms of the positions held by Turkey, the clear intention to have it join the European Union remains. We cannot support this for many reasons that show that this country has nothing in common with the rest of Europe: geographic position, religious belief, the militaristic decision to continue to occupy part of the European Union in northern Cyprus, the decline of the freedom of the press, limits on the freedom of expression, religious discrimination and the violation of women's rights take Turkey ever further away from Europe.

To this day, religions other than Islam cannot open and operate places of worship, proselytise, form a clergy or have a legal personality. The Turkish Government does not wish to comply with the important European Union Treaties and protocols and it does not cooperate sufficiently in terms of controls on illegal immigration. For these reasons, I voted against the report.

Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – (NL) I have always supported Turkey's accession to the European Union, subject to adherence to the Copenhagen criteria and Turkey adopting the *acquis communautaire* in the proper manner. Today, I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on the progress report on Turkey. The resolution gives expression to a clear and balanced political message on the eve of the parliamentary elections. Turkey has delivered major efforts on the road to its membership, including the partial revision of its constitution, civilian control of the military and the partial reform of the judiciary. Further steps are necessary, however. The pace certainly needs to be stepped up, too. The European Parliament points out that better guaranteeing of human rights, including those of women and minorities, is crucial, as is an independent judiciary. In addition, emphasis must also be placed on guaranteeing the freedom of expression and, in particular, the freedom of the press, as this was recently put under pressure again as a result of the arrest of journalists. It is necessary, however, that Turkey be encouraged to fulfil the exemplary role that it can play in the democratisation process for the Arab world. I therefore find it regrettable that there are still crucial chapters in the accession negotiations that are being blocked by various Member States.

Catherine Stihler (S&D), *in writing.* – I supported this report which recognises the constitutional changes which have taken place in Turkey but also addresses areas which remain problematic, such as their failure to implement the Ankara Protocol. By encouraging Turkey to continue carrying out reforms, the European Parliament hopes to see improvements in human rights and equality laws which will benefit Turkish citizens.

Thomas Ulmer (PPE), *in writing.* – (DE) The progress report on Turkey very clearly shows up the weaknesses in the process in place hitherto. Turkey clearly lags behind expectations. There must also be no accession discounts, as the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament and the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance have been calling for. In this context, also, Mr Erdoğan's appearances in Germany, where he called on the Turks in Germany to un-integrate, must be viewed in a critical light. Such speeches are not helpful for good cooperation and represent a snub to the efforts of both Germany and the Union. Furthermore, there is still much to be desired in relation to the freedom of the press and the resolution of the Cyprus issue.

Geoffrey Van Orden (ECR), *in writing*. – I have been consistently supportive of Turkey's accession process while fully aware of serious concerns that have to be addressed. The Progress Report 2010 is a reasonably balanced document and I have voted in favour of it in spite of a number of reservations – not least over the Cyprus issue, where I much regret that the amendments calling for fulfilment of the EU Council's promise to end the isolation of Northern Cyprus were voted down. Turkey has a pivotal role to play as a gateway between West and East and we should be sending positive and welcoming signals.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) I voted in favour of the 2010 progress report on Turkey, which turned out to be clearly negative. According to the report, over the past 5 years, Turkey has made hardly any progress worth mentioning in its process of reform or in meeting the EU's accession criteria. There are still considerable failings in the fields of human rights, freedom of the press and of opinion, and women's rights. As a member of the High-Level Contact Group for Relations with the Turkish Cypriot Community in the Northern Part of the Island of Cyprus, I am well aware that the same applies to the unresolved problem of Cyprus.

Joachim Zeller (PPE), *in writing*. – (DE) I voted in favour of this report, but I did so only because it very specifically makes clear that there is no progress in the accession negotiations with Turkey. On the contrary, indeed, essentially what we have is a standstill or even steps backwards in relation to the observance of civil and human rights, freedom of religion, of assembly and of the press, and on the Cyprus issue. In fact, Turkey's new foreign policy direction, for example, as relates to Iran and Syria, gives rise to doubts about whether Turkey's Prime Minister Erdoğan is really serious when he talks about moving closer to Europe. Furthermore, it remains unclear how the billions of euro of pre-accession aid paid to Turkey are being spent. There is only one conclusion from all of this, and that is that the accession negotiations must be halted. Turkey remains one of the EU's most important partners. The idea of its full membership, however, is becoming increasingly illusory.

Motion for a resolution B7-0157/2011

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I am in favour of this resolution as I am convinced that Montenegro should become an example of success for the EU in the Balkans, as it meets all the conditions established by the Commission to begin the accession process. However, I am concerned about the prevailing corruption, particularly in construction, privatisation and public procurement sectors, and, more seriously, discrimination against minorities and the most vulnerable groups. The independence of the media should also be a concern.

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour of this resolution on the European integration process of Montenegro. The European Parliament approves of the reforms being made by Montenegro and welcomes the progress made in the European integration process. On 17 December 2010, the European Council took the decision to grant Montenegro the status of candidate country for accession to the European Union. I share the regret expressed in the resolution over the decoupling of candidate status from the right to open negotiations. It is important that the decision to start these negotiations should not be unduly or unreasonably postponed. I expect the negotiations to start at the latest after the publication of the 2011 Commission Progress Report, provided Montenegro makes good progress in fulfilling the benchmarks set by the Commission.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) The European Union strongly supports the progress made in the enlargement process but notes that major challenges remain in most of the countries concerned. This resolution concerns the case of Montenegro. I supported it as I believe it is balanced: it emphasises the fact that Montenegro has made real progress, not only in economic terms, but also in terms of the fight against corruption. While Montenegro must, of course, continue its efforts, I feel it is only right for it to be granted the official status of candidate country for accession to the European Union.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this resolution. The European Council reaffirmed that the future of the Western Balkans lies with the European Union and that the growth and stability of this region is particularly important. Judging by the progress made by Montenegro in various areas, it is clear that the country is taking preparations for European integration seriously. The government and opposition parties in Montenegro have reached a general consensus as regards European integration and have made it a high priority. The report also shows that Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) assistance works well in Montenegro and that there has been significant judicial and administrative reform. Montenegro is successfully engaging in regional cooperation, is a constructive regional partner, and is playing a stabilising role in the Western Balkans region.

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) The report sets out the reasons why Europe should not want Montenegro to join the European Union. Rampant corruption, ongoing serious social discrimination against women and several ethnic minorities, media pluralism standards that fall far short of European levels and the entrenched presence of organised crime in the economic and political life of the country.

Furthermore, I cannot even support the Council's basic position regarding the accession of Balkan countries to the EU. It is a political and strategic absurdity to think of Europe as the inevitable destiny of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. It seems that recent experience does not count at the top levels of our institutions. Trying at all costs to speed up enlargement, including economically weak and politically unstable countries, certainly has not helped the consolidation of the European project. Indeed, it has weakened its structure, slowed down decision-making processes and complicated the development of shared policies in crucial areas for the life of our continent.

I therefore voted against this report which, although it emphasises the multiple problems underlying the process of Montenegro's accession, retains the basic idea of giving this country the opportunity of joining the EU.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I welcome the concern and commitment shown by the government and opposition parties of Montenegro in relation to European integration. The results of this process are the institution of the country's legal and constitutional framework, which has almost been finalised, along with the economic reforms that have been undertaken. However, there are a number of aspects to improve, including corruption, organised crime, discrimination and the freedom of the press. I would like to call upon this state to continue along this route, which I hope will soon end in processes of negotiation being opened.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Montenegro has shown that it wants to continue with its European choice. I welcome the determination of its leaders and the changes which have been taking place in the country to bring it up to European standards, particularly with regard to democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law.

Despite the progress which has been seen, it is still clear that the country still has some way to go before being fit to join the European Union. I hope that the determination of Montenegro will continue to be felt and that, rather than nominally or formally converging with the EU, Montenegro will improve living conditions for its people and improve the functioning of its institutions so that it can become a prosperous state.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The European institutions have recognised the strategic interest of EU enlargement to the Balkans on a number of occasions. The accession of new states depends on various factors. The first of these is the interest expressed by the state, followed by a pledge to comply with a set of fundamental rights for citizens. As the Republic of Montenegro has expressed its interest in acceding to the EU, the Council decided to confer candidate country status on this state on 17 December 2010. In fact, as stated in this report, Montenegro has been making a number of reforms, particularly the creation of a new legal and constitutional framework, and in the fight against corruption. Nevertheless, there are areas in which more progress is needed, such as the freedom of the press and respect for the work of non-governmental organisations. I am voting for this Parliament resolution on the process of integration for the Republic of Montenegro, which recommends that the process of integration be speeded up. I would like to call upon the Montenegrin authorities to continue to make an effort to fulfil the established objectives, as this country is an important neighbour for the EU, and one with which we would like to collaborate.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) In the case of Montenegro, it is becoming clear that the direction and meaning of the processes of EU enlargement are intended to satisfy the designs of the major EU powers and their interests, which serve their large corporations: namely, the extension of markets, access to and control of geostrategic locations, and manual labour that can be exploited and used to further devalue the workforce in the EU countries as a whole. As the peripheral regions created as a result of successive processes of enlargement are exhausted, it is necessary to create others. Many promises are being made today to the people of Montenegro, as they have been to others in the past and present. However, the price is high, and it has only partially been divulged. In this particular case, it is important not to forget that the process of breaking up Yugoslavia was carried out by NATO and the EU powers, which are today seeking to attract Montenegro into an accession to the EU that is the successor to that process.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) We are facing yet another episode in the process of the total disintegration of Yugoslavia, and what remains of it. This time, it is Montenegro's turn. The major powers of NATO and the EU, having imposed strangulatory economic and financial measures on Yugoslavia, with the support of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, supported ethnic divisions which ended in war and the hasty creation of new 'sovereign states'.

The future integration of Montenegro into the EU is the successor of that process and the attack on the achievements of socialism, with a view to satisfying the interests of economic and financial interest groups by exploiting the workforce, through the market, and through the geostrategic locations and natural resources of these countries.

Now the promises are huge. The EU beckons with millions of euro in so-called 'aid' and development. However, how much will this cost and when will it arrive, if indeed it does?

Our experience is that 25 years of Portugal's capitalist integration in the EU demonstrate that the promised progress is never achieved. What is achieved is the destruction of

manufacturing and employment, the exploitation of workers, the destruction of public services, debt and foreign dependence. This is why we have our doubts about this process.

Lorenzo Fontana (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) The enlargement process of the European Union continues on exclusively geographical premises and, as I have already stated in this House, the Council is being hasty in granting the status of candidate country for accession before the countries in question reach democratic quality standards that at least approach a basically adequate level. Corruption, smuggling, organised crime and violations of the freedom of the press are just some of the factors that lead me to think that Montenegro is still a long way from Europe. These reasons really seem sufficient to not support this resolution, which traces the guidelines for the European future of the Balkans irrespective of the area's tangible problems.

Jiří Havel (S&D), *in writing.* – (CS) The decision to grant candidate status to Montenegro was primarily political. Montenegro would probably have had to wait longer for it, if not for the fact that this issue was being considered at the same time in relation to Albania. However, the comparison works to the advantage of Montenegro, of course. Nevertheless, many of the reservations applying to Montenegro 'carry over' from one annual report to the next, and we see from the Commission statement that politicisation of the state bureaucracy, independence of the judiciary, organised crime and the environment are now 'regular features'. There is no fundamental progress in sight regarding the fight against all-pervasive corruption. We must not underestimate this. In the given circumstances, it is therefore a good solution to grant Montenegro candidate status without setting a deadline for the start of accession talks. The EU has already adopted a similar approach towards the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2005. The difference is that overcoming the barrier which confronts the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia requires the agreement of two states. Montenegro's fate, meanwhile, is entirely in its own hands. I presume that all of this was made very clear in the recent talks between Herman van Rompuy, José Manuel Barroso and Jerzy Buzek and the new leader of Montenegro, Igor Lukšić, the world's youngest premier. Nobody likes to be led by the nose for too long. This also applies to a country which, despite the fact that it is not in the EU, has been using the euro as its national currency for many years now.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this document because a general consensus and high priority has been given to European integration by the government and opposition parties in Montenegro, which has resulted in good progress in the reform process since the independence of the country. I welcome the fact that Montenegro was granted the status of candidate country for accession to the European Union and Montenegrin citizens have been granted the possibility to travel without visas (full visa liberalisation) to the EU Schengen area. I welcome the fact that the process of establishing the legal and constitutional framework of the country has almost been finalised and there has been good progress in adopting important legislation in the field of fighting corruption, as well as progress in reform of the judiciary. However, there is still a need to continue to reform public administration, strengthen human resources at the local level of administration and combat organised crime, particularly money laundering and smuggling. The media sector must be able to operate without political interference and it is necessary to guarantee the independence of regulatory bodies.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I voted in favour of the resolution, which promotes the integration of Montenegro into the European system, because we have all

witnessed that this country has made notable progress towards adopting proper processes and instruments.

These are necessary steps not only for joining the EU but also to give a judicial, civil and social structure to a country that must develop in compliance with the regulations and in view of shared growth at the various levels of administration.

Montenegro has already launched important reforms that are therefore heading in the right direction, which also involves creating an administrative structure capable of making effective future use of Structural Funds, which will benefit this country greatly.

Ahead of the start of the much anticipated negotiations, many fellow Members and I hope to create a suitable environment for the citizens of Montenegro, free from corruption and bursting with initiatives for democratic growth.

Monica Luisa Macovei (PPE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the resolution in order to acknowledge Montenegro's progress towards European integration and highlight the remaining goals to be achieved for the benefit of its people. When the resolution was in the Committee on Foreign Affairs, I contributed amendments concerning the efficiency and predictability of the justice system. The publication of all judgments and the unification of jurisprudence should be priorities in order to ensure public trust and a predictable judicial system. Increased funding for courts to work fast and efficiently and consistent measures for training judges are also necessary. The efficiency of the EU funds spent in the area of justice reform and the combating of corruption must be assessed. The consistency of the rule of law throughout a nation is vital to its ability to progress politically and democratically.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted for this report, which welcomes the general consensus and high priority given to European integration by the government and opposition parties in Montenegro, which has resulted in good progress in the reform process since the independence of the country, and which welcomes the new political leadership in Podgorica and encourages the new government to continue Montenegro's European integration process and speed up the reforms leading to fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria. It also welcomes the European Council decision of 17 December 2010 to grant Montenegro the status of candidate country for accession to the European Union, but regrets, however, the decoupling of candidate status from the right to open negotiations, stressing that the decision to start them should not be unduly or unreasonably postponed, and expects the negotiations to start at the latest after the publication of the 2011 Commission Progress Report, provided Montenegro makes good progress in fulfilling the benchmarks set by the Commission.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) This resolution supports the obligation for the people of Montenegro to submit to the Copenhagen criteria and accelerated privatisations. The Union has been reduced to an aggressive and pretentious liberal doctrine. I want no part of it. I shall vote against.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) As a candidate for future accession to the EU, Montenegro has demonstrated its willingness to pursue its choice of Europe through the determination of its leaders and the changes which have been taking place in the country in order to bring it closer to European requirements, particularly with regard to democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law. However, despite the progress that has been made, this is not yet enough, and Montenegro has to continue to make efforts before it is

fit to join the European Union. I hope that this determination will continue to bear fruit and that joining the EU will become a reality, so that Montenegro can give its people better living conditions and improve the functioning of its authorities in order to become an increasingly better state.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (ES) I am in favour of starting discussions on the accession of Montenegro to the EU, inasmuch as I am in favour of expansion on principle. Nevertheless, I have been unable to vote for this resolution as the Commission is demanding a series of reforms from Montenegro that are in line with the EU's neoliberal policies, such as the privatisation of the public sector and the adaptation of the education system to the Bologna Process. For all the above reasons, I did not vote for the report, but rather abstained.

Louis Michel (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) Ever since it gained independence in 2006, Montenegro has clearly demonstrated its desire to join the European Union: the euro was officially adopted in 2006, and a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) has been in force since 1 May 2010. Montenegro's accession to the Union will bring greater political, economic and social stability to the country and will increase the stability of the Balkan region. Indeed, I welcome Montenegro's efforts to become a constructive partner in the field of regional cooperation, notably as a result of the various regional agreements it has concluded with its neighbours in the areas of readmission and extradition and in judicial and police matters. The consolidation of peace and stability benefits not only the region but also Europe as a whole.

I therefore call for accession negotiations to begin as soon as possible, particularly since the European Council granted Montenegro the status of candidate country at the end of December 2010. Montenegro's efforts to meet the accession criteria are going well, even though substantial progress still needs to be made, in particular, regarding corruption and organised crime, freedom of information and gender equality.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing.* – Although the Committee on Foreign Affairs welcomes the European Council's decision to grant Montenegro candidate status, serious problems remain as regards corruption, especially where the building industry, privatisation and the state procurement sector are concerned. There are still problems as regards minorities and unprotected groups as well. It would be correct to supervise the implementation of Parliament's recommendations to Montenegro, and if these recommendations are implemented, I believe that the accession of a country like Montenegro can only be a benefit to the EU.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) There is constantly a tension that is not always easily reconcilable between respect for human rights and other national interests (perhaps of a military or economic nature). Even the United States and the European Union step over this fine line from time to time, as can be seen from the infringement of civil liberties and data protection in the context of the fight against terrorism. The EU must therefore stand up more strongly and consistently for human rights within and outside the Union. Outside the Union, I have in mind especially the protection of Christian minorities in Islamic countries and in Asia. I therefore voted for this motion for a resolution.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), *in writing.* – (PL) Today, the European Parliament adopted the resolution on the European integration process of Montenegro. Enlargement of the EU to include the Western Balkans was confirmed as long ago as 2003 in Athens, which is why Parliament has expressed the hope that accession negotiations will begin before the end of this year. In the resolution, attention is drawn to the significant

improvement in the political and social situation in Montenegro, and also to Montenegro's positive approach to European integration.

Unfortunately, Montenegro has still not overcome the problem of corruption and organised crime. In my opinion, a very important and so far also unresolved problem is the question of discrimination against ethnic groups and also against women, who are under-represented in decision-making processes and in public administration. Another positive feature is the country's fight against censorship and its attempts to guarantee freedom of expression. However, attacks on journalists and activists are still being reported.

Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) EU integration is the main driving force behind Montenegro's progress. This country has achieved a lot in the last 12 months, successfully implementing structural and economic reforms, and effectively combating corruption and organised crime. Ethnic minorities live together peacefully in Montenegro and the country successfully promotes good neighbourhood relations. The EU and Montenegro therefore signed a Stabilisation and Association Agreement. I voted in favour of this resolution, because it rightly indicates further steps to reform Montenegro. It is necessary to make progress in the establishment of the rule of law, to continue to implement administrative reforms, improve the capacities of civil servants, amend electoral law, and strengthen civil society and the independent media. It is important for the country to maintain the momentum and to continue the work it has begun.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) Montenegro became one of the official candidate countries for accession to the European Union last December 2010, but no date has yet been established for the start of proper negotiations. I support the spirit of the resolution where it compliments the government of Montenegro in light of the priority being given to reforms linked to the integration process and, despite the problems still to be resolved, it expresses hope for official negotiations to begin within the year. In terms of bringing the Balkans closer to the European Union, Montenegro is the country that offers the best socio-political situation. This is why I voted in favour of the resolution, since I think that the accession to the EU of Montenegro and the other Balkan countries is of fundamental strategic importance for Europe in terms of the stability of the region itself, for its own development, and for the resources that it offers.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I acknowledge the effort that has been made by Montenegro, particularly with regard to legal reforms, the struggle against corruption and the fight against different types of discrimination, but I would like to stress that this work needs to be continued and intensified. However, there is still a wide range of matters that require particular attention. I am referring to economic issues in particular, and the need to apply new structural changes, despite the success of the economic reforms, which has been exposed by the financial crisis. I would like to add one final remark on an issue that I hold dear: the need for improvement in the quality of legislation drafted in Parliament.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – In general, this report is good and well balanced. The report addresses all relevant policy fields. Montenegro, which became a candidate country in December 2010, is still waiting for negotiations to start. The report criticises this fact in paragraph 2: 'regrets the decoupling of candidate status from the right to open negotiations and stresses that the decision to start them should not be unduly or unreasonably postponed'. The rapporteur expects negotiations to start after the 2011 progress report. Some interesting points are on IPA (paragraph 5), corruption (paragraph 8), freedom of information (paragraph 10), organised crime (paragraph 14) and

anti-discrimination (paragraphs 17-22). Many paragraphs are devoted to the issue of anti-discrimination and touch on all relevant aspects such as Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians (paragraphs 17 and 22), LGBT (paragraph 17), women and domestic violence (paragraphs 17-19), ethnic issues (paragraph 21) and civil society (paragraphs 5, 10, 23, 24 and 32). In general, the report is very positive on the role of CSO and devotes many paragraphs to the issue. The most important are paragraphs 23, 24 and 32.

In these paragraphs, the report 'reiterates the importance of active and independent civil society organisations for democracy' and 'encourages the Montenegrin Government to have close collaboration and regular dialogue with NGOs'.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) Ever since Montenegro officially became a candidate country for accession to the European Union on 17 December 2010, the country's government has immediately given priority to reforms that can accelerate the European integration process.

There are still some problems to resolve, such as electoral reform, and reform of the public administration and the legal system, but the report makes it clear that Montenegro is making progress. Italy fully supports the European aspirations of this country, since it believes that the accession of Montenegro and the Western Balkans meets a basic interest of the EU in that it promotes stability, regional cooperation and development in a crucial geographical area for our continent.

Catherine Stihler (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted in favour of this resolution which would see Montenegro achieve candidate status for the European Union. It also highlights the issues of equality and corruption which need to be tackled within Montenegro and calls for measures to be taken to tackle these problems.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) I voted for the motion for a resolution, because the report states quite clearly that since gaining its independence in 2006, Montenegro has made significant progress in internal reforms. However, we must not be blind to the fact that there are, as always, serious problems with corruption and organised crime, freedom of expression and discrimination. Nevertheless, at the same time, the report explains that the government of Montenegro is prepared to tackle these problem areas effectively, and has introduced a package of suitable and appropriate measures.

Iva Zanicchi (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I voted in favour because I think the process of European integration in Montenegro can meet a fundamental strategic interest of the European Union, namely, promoting and seeking to guarantee stability and development in a crucial geographic area for our continent. At the same time, this accession may strengthen the fight against organised crime originating from the Balkan area. It also needs to be highlighted that during the process of bringing the Balkan countries closer to the Union, Montenegro has long expressed strong domestic consensus on the European outlook and shown a mature and conciliatory attitude to neighbouring States.

Report: Lívia Járóka (A7-0043/2011)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted for this report because the values of European integration require that the EU be free of prejudice and discrimination in order for human rights to be respected. This discrimination is exacerbated by the current economic crisis, and the integration of the Roma population should be seen as the joint responsibility

of the European institutions, the Member States and the regions, making use of all the resources available to the EU to address this situation.

The Commission should play a leading role in this process, paying particular attention to requests for technical assistance and, above all, presenting a strategy that includes the defence of human rights, the right to education and training, culture, employment, sports, adequate housing, healthcare and better sanitation for the Roma population as priority areas. Moreover, efforts should be made to increase political and civic participation by the Roma, starting with the youngest.

Laima Liucija Andrikiene (PPE), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this resolution on the EU strategy on Roma inclusion. Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority, but they are also very isolated and, therefore, almost completely disconnected from national economies. I agree with the rapporteur's opinion that the inclusion of Roma is a necessary investment, because it is cheaper to integrate Roma than to sustain their substandard socio-economic conditions. Another important dimension that I would like to underline is the fact that the overall inclusion of Roma is essentially an issue of human rights. A significant proportion of European Roma face such substandard conditions – almost totally disconnected from the economy, resulting in their exclusion from basic human rights – that fostering social inclusion cannot be viewed within the framework of general policy rectifications, but must be handled as bridging one of the largest gaps in the fulfilment of constitutional and human rights in Europe. By approving this strategy, the European Parliament has taken the first step towards promoting the social and economic inclusion of Roma, and now the Council and the Commission must take the necessary action to ensure that this strategy is successfully implemented.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Approximately 10-12 million Roma reside in the European Union. Many suffer discrimination and social exclusion. They are, for the most part, European citizens, and the EU must establish a strategy for integrating them. That is why I voted in favour of this text. It provides for an action plan based on the fundamental values of equality, access to rights, non-discrimination and gender equality, drawing on the Structural Funds already available.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) The Roma situation in the EU is rather complicated. A large proportion of Europe's 10-12 million Roma have suffered systematic discrimination and are therefore struggling against an intolerable degree of social, cultural and economic exclusion as well as human rights violations. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the Roma community live in regions which are among the least economically and socially advanced in the Union, and therefore Roma children often do not have access to education and training systems, which later leads to them being discriminated against in the labour market and prevented from integrating into society. The EU has developed a range of useful tools, mechanisms and funds to foster the inclusion of Roma, but these are scattered across policy areas and, therefore, their effect and benefit remain limited. I agree that the Member States must improve the implementation of the EU strategy on Roma inclusion and ensure the full transposition and application of all related directives and EU law, thereby preventing Roma segregation and discrimination.

Regina Bastos (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The European Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex, race, colour or ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, language, religion or beliefs, political or other opinions, membership of a national minority, wealth, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation, as well as on grounds

of nationality. There are approximately 10-12 million Roma in Europe, most of them European citizens, who suffer from systematic discrimination and who are victims of intolerance. The integration of the Roma population is the responsibility of all the Member States and European institutions.

This report urges the Member States to cooperate with the European Union and the representatives of the Roma community to develop integrated policies, using the resources available within the European Union, under existing Structural Funds, to support the integration of the Roma community, as it is less costly to integrate the Roma than to sustain their insecure socio-economic conditions. The harmonious integration of Roma communities involves the participation of everyone: the Roma themselves, and their host community. For this reason, I supported this report.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) The adoption by a very large majority of Mrs Járóka's report is an additional political signal confirming that the European Union is aware of its responsibility towards this ethnic minority, which is the largest one in Europe, as well as the most persecuted one. The report highlights priority areas that must feature in the strategy, such as the fight to have the Roma people's fundamental rights respected. The strategy must focus on education, but it must also prevent extreme marginalisation and avoid the reproduction of inequalities. Finally, the strategy must establish innovative ways of providing genuine access to the labour market and to affordable, healthy housing.

The current challenge, as mentioned in the report, is to ensure that EU funds are fully absorbed and are used in a way that will benefit the Roma people. Indeed, the instruments are there but they are utilised particularly badly.

Roma inclusion is a matter for Europe. It is now up to the European Commission to draft final proposals on the basis of our vote today. While respecting the principle of subsidiarity, the Union must fully perform its role as a driving force and unite the actors involved at all levels so as to increase the beneficial effect of EU funds and make the Roma fully fledged European citizens at last.

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) Basically, the report on Roma inclusion does not bear in mind the difficulties faced in the social integration of Roma if one considers the fact that often, it is the Roma community itself that does not want to integrate in the social fabric of our countries.

This is a cultural factor that cannot be denied or ignored: Roma have their own traditions and customary ways of life which makes it difficult to integrate them in social environments characterised by processes, lifestyles and habits very different from their own. It therefore remains a fact that any Roma integration policy will have to deal with this obstacle: their actual desire or willingness to integrate.

Quite aside from sociological considerations, I must recall that given these and other difficulties, the policies proposed in the reports on Roma communities will require an enormous disbursement of funds by the EU and the Member States, without achieving the desired result in the end. Without mincing words, that is what has happened so far and there are no reasons to believe that the situation will change from here on in. I have therefore voted against the report.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this report, because Roma living in Europe need the support of the European Union (EU). The EU strategy on Roma inclusion proposes setting compulsory minimum standards of education,

employment, housing and healthcare. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of European Roma face such substandard conditions, being almost totally disconnected from the economy, resulting in their exclusion from basic human rights. Therefore, the strategy proposed by the European Parliament gives priority to Roma employment and improving education, housing and social security. It is important to ensure the abolition of the segregation of Roma children in schools and classrooms. It is also very important to encourage Roma to become involved in all areas of public and political life and to participate in the work of non-governmental organisations. In order to implement the strategy on Roma inclusion, it is indispensable that the strategy must, above all, be an internal EU strategy, and the general oversight of priority areas and objectives must be within the Community structures, with an annual report on the progress of the strategy and the evaluation of results.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) The 10-12 million Roma should enjoy minimum standards at EU level so that they can have access to jobs and education. The European Parliament resolution, which endeavours to influence the future strategy on the inclusion of the Roma, offers better protection for fundamental rights, as well as increased EU funding. Romania understands perfectly well the difficulties, but also the indolence of this minority. The European Union ought to be aware that there is a very high level of resistance to change within this ethnic group, including social inclusion. The Roma have been victims of discrimination down the centuries but, at the same time, of self-exclusion as well. This assessment is very fair, but it needs to be realised that, very often, the solutions which we come up with are inadequate or not understood by the Roma.

The future EU strategy on the Roma minority must obviously emphasise compliance with, and the promotion of, the fundamental rights to work, housing, health and, in particular, to education, even in spite of resistance from parents. However, no one must expect change to occur quickly. Several generation changes will probably be required for this minority to assume certain rules of social coexistence.

Jan Březina (PPE), *in writing.* – (CS) A basic precondition for drawing up any kind of sensible strategy on Roma inclusion is to collect and provide data on the socio-economic situation of the Roma (chiefly education, health, housing and employment). Both Member States and international organisations (the International Organisation for Migration and the OECD) should therefore focus on these issues in greater detail, and help to set concrete objectives relating to, for example, the percentage of the Roma community completing secondary and tertiary education or employed in the civil service or represented in various areas of social and political life. It is then up to the Commission to set out a clear and manageable EU strategy for Roma inclusion on the basis of this data. We might consider establishing performance bonuses for the EU strategy on the Roma minority, within the framework of the cohesion policy. In any case, there is a need to draw up more effective methods for monitoring the spending of EU resources specifically designated for marginal groups of citizens.

In the interests of Roma inclusion, it is also perhaps necessary to make use of the funding options provided by the PROGRESS programme, the lifelong learning programme, the cultural programme (2007-2013) and the public health programme (2008-2013). In this context, the Commission should provide the European Parliament with a list of projects benefiting the Roma which it has funded since 2000, and set out the results achieved by these projects.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I am pleased with the commitment that the EU has demonstrated in establishing binding standards that guarantee the Roma community access to education, employment, housing and healthcare. This initiative addresses not only the human values inherent in the social inclusion of ethnic minorities, but also the economic progress stimulated by the fall in unemployment. I agree with the measures proposed under this integration strategy, in particular, the fight against undeclared work and the increase in Roma teachers. It is important that the community itself be included in the integration process, so as to ensure sustainable development from the inside out, encouraging a desire for a positive role in society, instead of imposing it. This process should also focus on all forms of the violation of fundamental rights, with particular attention to social exclusion and discrimination in public life.

Françoise Castex (S&D), *in writing.* – (FR) The issue of Roma inclusion is a major challenge that the European Union must take up. This report is along the right lines, as it shows the European Parliament's will to fully contribute to this end.

Nessa Childers (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted for this report as Europe's 10-12 million Roma should benefit from binding minimum standards at EU level to improve their access to employment, education, housing and healthcare. The resolution, which seeks to influence the Commission's upcoming strategy for Roma inclusion, also calls for better protection of fundamental rights and use of EU funding. I hope EU governments now respond to this strong message from Parliament.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I support the rapporteur, Mrs Járóka, when she advocates a coordinated EU policy, complementing existing legislation, to promote the integration of European citizens belonging to the Roma ethnic group – estimated by the Council as numbering between 10 and 16 million – that provides for the adoption of anti-racist and anti-discriminatory measures. The implementation and correct application of this policy should also be ensured. Measures should also be adopted, however, to respond to the specific needs of the Roma and to promote their socio-economic inclusion, such as the right to work, housing, education, healthcare and others.

In addition to the humanitarian aspect of Roma integration, this should also enable an increase in the workforce to support the social security system, and reduce the social and healthcare benefits guaranteed by the state to those living in poverty, not to mention the possibility that crime rates may be reduced. Integration should take into account the protection of children and should respect the law. A common European solution is needed to a common European problem, taking an integrated and cross-sectoral approach that enables aid for and specific intervention in the most underdeveloped areas, and in those with severe structural disadvantages.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) We have just adopted by a large majority the EU strategy on Roma inclusion. This is a strong political signal confirming that the European Union is aware of its responsibility towards this minority, which is the largest one in Europe, as well as the most persecuted one. The European Union and the Member States must tackle the disgraceful segregation suffered by the Roma head-on. This report stresses the importance of respecting the fundamental rights of the Roma and, in particular, access to education. To avoid any risk of marginalisation, it is also important to implement innovative policies on genuine access to employment, and to enable these people, the vast majority of whom are permanently settled, to access decent and affordable housing. The EU funds are there. They must be used in a way that will benefit the Roma. It is now up to

the European Commission to draft final provisions based on the proposals in this report in a coherent manner with the principle of subsidiarity and with one aim: to ensure that the Roma become fully fledged European citizens.

Karima Delli (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – (FR) Parliament has adopted a good text. It emphasises Europe's important role in ensuring the social inclusion of the Roma within the European Union, with the application of this strategy at local level. The report points out that a strategy for the Roma is possible only with the cooperation of members of the community – in short, we must work 'with' before we work 'for'. The Roma should therefore be involved in any decision making.

The text points out the difficult living conditions, discrimination and difficulties in accessing essential services that the Roma suffer. It points out the need to ensure respect for the freedom of movement of European citizens. It also mentions the importance, in social inclusion terms, of social protection, vocational training, education and public service provision. It denounces the insufficient allocation of funds, when the money could be put to good use. However, the real drawback of this report is the insistence by the conservatives in the European Parliament on mentioning the need to combat the Roma people's so-called 'prolonged dependence' on the social welfare system. This is a scandalous prejudice aimed once again at marginalising the Roma community.

Anne Delvaux (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I am delighted that the European Parliament has adopted the Járóka report by an overwhelming majority. The report states the need to combat the exclusion of, and discrimination against, the Roma, to promote their social, cultural and economic integration, to better protect their fundamental rights and to make better use of European funds. Parliament has defined its priorities, on which there is a consensus. Parliament calls for an EU action plan in this area, wants EU funds to be harnessed, and proposes the adoption of a crisis map, to show where Roma populations are concentrated. As far as specific measures are concerned, one can mention access to education, which is as much a priority for the Roma people as it is for anyone else. Furthermore, we must monitor the use of EU funds to ensure that the money actually reaches the intended recipients.

Parliament has also made strong calls for EU bodies to be set up under the supervision of the current Roma Task Force, with the aim of providing EU financial assistance to relevant local initiatives and of identifying and reporting in good time any misuse of funds. Furthermore, the scope of the funding should be extended to projects aimed at improving public services as well.

Ioan Enciu (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for this report because I think that an EU-level strategy for integrating the Roma minority is a positive and welcome step. This community needs special attention at European level, given the persistent problems with social and economic integration, along with the particular level of mobility among its members. However, I think that the biggest effort is still to be made. Strategies and actions plans for Roma integration have been and are available at every level, but it is their proper implementation that is lacking. To ensure its success, this new strategy must be implemented in the most appropriate manner. With this in mind, I think that a structured dialogue between the Roma communities, non-governmental sector and local authorities must provide the basis for the future strategy's implementation.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this report because I believe that the inclusion of the Roma does not just have to do with moral imperatives or the

European Union's human rights obligations. A number of studies prove that the exclusion of these European citizens has socio-economic costs for the Member States. The social inclusion of the Roma is a necessary investment, and will be of financial benefit in the long term.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Historically, the Roma have been the target of discrimination and hostility from the majority populations of the Member States. Much discrimination also still persists within Roma communities themselves, and the strategy urgently needs to seek to remedy this, rather than simply not hiding it. I believe that an EU strategy in favour of the integration of the Roma, as for any other disadvantaged ethnic minority group, is to be welcomed.

I also believe that it is likely to succeed if it is supported by the active involvement of the very people whom it aims to integrate. Without the participation, interaction and commitment of all players in this common effort, the strategy will run the risk of being nothing more than a statement of good intentions. Much remains to be done to reverse the trend of discrimination towards the Roma. I hope that the strategy's success will eventually justify the slowness of its elimination.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) This report covers the development of an EU strategy on Roma inclusion. It is a very useful and encouraging document which was compiled jointly by the Commission and Parliament, and its recommendations address the objectives set out in the Europe 2020 strategy as regards reducing poverty and combating social exclusion, so as to foster inclusive growth throughout the EU. The Roma population has highly dynamic demographics, unlike other ethnic groups, and it is thought that in some countries, such as Hungary, they will make up more than 50% of the economically active population by 2050. Their integration is therefore imperative, not only in ethical terms, as it is a human rights issue, but also for the sustainability of social security systems. It has been shown that this does not represent a cost, but rather a 'necessary and financially profitable investment in the long run'. Sometimes, the costs of exclusion are greater than those of inclusion, when we take account of the benefits that this brings. I welcome the adoption of this report, and I welcome the recommendation that the Commission take on the role of overseeing and monitoring Member States' compliance with this strategy.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) The resolution adopted advocates the adoption of an EU strategy for Roma integration, along with the development of an inclusive action plan based on the fundamental values of equality, the exercising of rights, non-discrimination and equality. The aim is to ensure that the Roma community has real access to education, jobs, housing, healthcare and culture. The mention of European programmes and funding that can be used for the social and economic integration of the Roma is opportune, given that these are underused. This resolution is all the more important given that it is common knowledge that the Roma have been the target of unfortunate and unacceptable discrimination in a number of EU countries, such as France and other Member States.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) The discrimination that takes place against the Roma in various EU countries is common knowledge. Just recently, there have been problems in France and other EU states, which could worsen under the pretext of the economic and social crisis. The rapporteur, who is a Member of Roma origin, has therefore tried to make Parliament aware of this situation.

Within this context, the resolution that has been adopted today advocates that the Commission propose and the Council adopt an EU strategy encouraging Roma integration as an action plan at European level, and which will be significant and inclusive at various different levels, based on the fundamental values of equality, the exercising of rights, non-discrimination, and equality between men and women.

In the same way, it is worth remembering that there are European programmes and funding which can be used for the social and economic integration of the Roma, but that communication needs to be improved at all levels if these are to be properly employed. The objective is to ensure that the Roma community has real access to education, jobs, housing, healthcare and culture.

Lorenzo Fontana (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) Managing the problems of the largest ethnic minority in Europe requires pragmatism, rather than some kind of fake bleeding-heart liberalism. We are talking about giving the Roma minority a whole series of rights, which a very great many citizens can only enjoy thanks to daily sacrifices. I do not think it is a European strategy or a decision that deserves support given that this phenomenon also implies vast differences between one Member State and another. Some countries are in an objectively difficult situation, whilst others are barely affected by the phenomenon. That is why I think it would be more effective to apply the principle of subsidiarity. Hence, I do not intend to lend my support to the text that has been tabled.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing.* – (FR) Rarely has a European Parliament report come so close to madness. For the strategy on Roma inclusion read the systematic promotion of a small population in everything and everywhere, mandatory quotas in all areas, including in decision-making bodies and businesses, and the systematic public funding of its alleged needs, including housing. This minority is, of course, supposed to be the frequent victim of malicious discrimination, and never does one question one's own responsibilities. It should be said that the rapporteur is herself part of this minority, which proves that it is not as oppressed as all that. Frankly, it is a bit like entrusting a Chinese person with the task of defining Europe's trade protection policy.

To return to the subject at hand, though, which other European citizens, albeit victims of poverty and insecurity, and excluded, in their own country, from the social benefits already allocated as a priority to others, are the object of such deep concern on your part? It is in this systematic discrimination against European citizens and at their expense that the reasons for their growing rejection of the Brussels set-up are to be found.

Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) This week, the European Parliament, by a large majority, adopted a report on the EU strategy on Roma inclusion: this is an additional political signal confirming that the European Union is aware of its responsibility towards this ethnic minority, which is the largest one in Europe, as well as the most persecuted one. The report emphasises the priority areas of this strategy: fundamental rights, inequalities, the fight against discrimination, education, access to employment, the labour market, access to housing, and so on. These are all areas in which action is needed. For my part, I stressed the need, within the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, to pay special attention to children and minors when drafting such a strategy. The report also highlights the misuse of the European funds available for Roma inclusion: administrative delays and burdens, insufficient awareness, a lack of involvement on the part of local authorities, and so on, are all difficulties to which the Member States, local authorities, interested parties and others must respond in order to ensure the full absorption of these

European funds. This strategy will have to be shaped later on by each Member State and will thus be assessed at local level.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing.* – (FR) The issue of Roma inclusion is a genuinely European problem, which is why the European Union must go to the very root of the discrimination suffered by the Roma community by combating stereotypes, in order to ensure equal access to employment, housing, healthcare and education. I am therefore delighted that the European Parliament has taken up the issue and adopted this report, which aims to provide food for thought for the Commission. This report denounces the misuse by the Member States of the European funds that should be devoted to Roma inclusion projects, but it is my hope that the Commission will go further by forcing the Member States to account publicly for their use of these funds.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this document, although I believe that this report should have been rejected. At the moment, it is not necessary to strengthen a strategy that is devoted to just one group. Rather, we need an effective emergency strategy aimed at solving the issue of legal and illegal migration in order to ensure, above all, economic stability, employment, security, public order and justice for all European citizens who make up part of a Member State from demographic, cultural, traditional, historical and economic viewpoints.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) The European approach to the Roma problem has been, and still is, inadequate. The report drafted by Lívia Járóka in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, along with the contributions from the other associated committees, should provide new impetus for a proper Roma integration strategy, which we expect from the Commission next month.

I strongly believe that we are all eager to bring about real change for the Roma community and offer them all the prerequisites for social inclusion. This is why we need to focus on the political and financial instruments we have available and take direct action in key areas such as education and health.

Cooperation at every level, from European to local, is also essential because, without concerted action, all the resources are wasted. The Roma need to be involved in making policies. This is why solutions must be found to bring us into contact with those who form the link between the decision-making and implementation levels.

Lastly, we must acknowledge the importance of the message we are sending out with this report. However, we should not forget that numerous messages have been given and the time has now come for concrete actions.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) The Roma are culturally one of the richest nations in the world. Their presence lends variety to the landscape of many different countries. However, stereotypes and discrimination are injurious to the Roma, and unfortunately do not help in establishing dialogue – and dialogue is needed. We live alongside one another, and we must at least accept each other in order to put an end to the phenomenon of exclusion. To this end, it is necessary to support education so that there will not be obstacles to Roma children learning alongside other children in European schools. It is also necessary to support initiatives which will allow Roma to undertake legal employment and more easily acclimatise in the country in which they are currently living. We are afraid of what we do not know. If we know more about the riches of Roma culture and customs, integration will certainly take place more quickly.

Timothy Kirkhope (ECR), *in writing*. – The ECR Group is wholeheartedly supportive of the inclusion and integration of the Roma people within Member States and the European Union. Equal access to the public service sector and the labour market and freedom from discrimination are essential for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, or heritage. We also strongly support the report's aims regarding EU funds being better spent and better allocated in order to fully support the Roma people. However, some sections of the report which discuss health, education and employment are areas which we believe should be legislated by Member States.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Voting in favour today on the resolution on the European Union strategy for Roma inclusion could represent a useful boost to the promotion of non-discrimination in the Member States, as well as an incentive to bring in instruments to protect the Roma. What I have said is valid, in particular, for the most vulnerable groups, in line with the provisions of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights. I think that defining effective economic instruments is a further aim to be reached in order to implement a serious and substantial Roma inclusion policy. The resolution in question tackles a particularly significant issue – including for my own country – and aims at proper integration of the Roma so as to enable their real participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the countries in which they are located, on condition (I would add) of the total respect of the principles and laws of the host State. Lastly, I support the request made to the Commission regarding the adoption of a leading role in the establishment of unitary strategic coordination, in partnership with the Member States, by setting up a task force to act as a permanent organism responsible for supervising and coordinating the issue.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for this report as I welcome its extremely close look at the complexity of the issue of the Roma community in the EU. I would even dare say that when most of these problems are resolved, it will mean that a large number of the problems we are faced with now as a European society will be resolved. I would just like to mention the way in which the Structural Funds could be used to support the priorities of the EU Roma inclusion strategy. I believe that substantial funds need to be allocated to the economic and social development of these communities. In cases where inadequate support is given to interventions in terms of finances or an appropriate period of time for the envisaged impact to be made, the effects achieved will not be those we currently expect. What is required is prioritisation, smart spending of funds and political commitment. Otherwise, the financial resources will be wasted. Following this report, I await with interest the next steps which the Commission is going to take. I hope that this strategy will generate the value added required from implementing a European measure supporting Roma inclusion.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I welcome this report on the plight of the Roma – the most marginalised group in the European Union. The resolution sets out practical steps for improving the health, education and welfare of the Roma. It includes measures to improve their access to the labour market and to decent housing. This resolution offers an opportunity for the Roma to be better integrated into society.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) This resolution is pure talk, yet again. I am pleased that this text denounces racial hate speech, ethnic profiling, unlawful fingerprinting and unlawful eviction and expulsion. However, I object to the bitter pills we are made to swallow along the way: full powers for the Commission in this matter, stigmatisation of the Roma in a text that claims to defend them, competition on the job market and competitive clusters. This confused approach is unacceptable.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The EU is an area of solidarity and inclusion, so it must do what is necessary to prevent discrimination against the Roma and to gain them the same rights as regards education, employment, healthcare and housing in all Member States, as well as states intending to join the Union. The Roma should be attending to children who are generally prevented from attending school; with children and women who are used in begging; with begging adopted as a life choice; and with the rejection of work and recourse in its stead to the social security systems of third countries. Decisive steps must be taken to bring discrimination to an end. However, if this is to be achieved, the Roma cannot exclude themselves and must help with their own integration into a European area in which inclusion is desirable.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (ES) I voted for the report on the EU strategy on Roma inclusion. The text points out the need to prepare an EU-level strategy for the protection and integration of this population. It also calls on the Member States to adopt and strengthen effective legislation against discrimination – including multiple discrimination – in all areas of life that guarantees, protects and promotes fundamental rights, equality and non-discrimination, and the right to freedom of movement, including actions to raise public awareness directed both at Roma people and at others, so as to eradicate discriminatory obstacles.

Louis Michel (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) Today, some 10-12 million Roma are in need of European measures to promote their social, cultural and economic integration. The Roma have suffered and continue to suffer systematic discrimination, exclusion, human rights violations and stigmatisation. The report we have just adopted is an important step towards measures aimed at reducing marginalisation, poverty and social exclusion.

However, much remains to be done to prevent discrimination. Even if discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin can be eliminated, the socio-economic exclusion of the majority of the Roma population remains a harsh reality. Many Roma in Europe are completely cut off from the economy and live in conditions so poor that they cannot enjoy their fundamental rights.

I believe, furthermore, that Roma inclusion should begin in early childhood, with the inclusion of children in the population register, access to quality education, and job assistance for parents. The Commission must set binding minimum standards at EU level that require the involvement of local, national and European authorities alike.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – Areas in which more effort from the EU is required in the Roma inclusion process are priorities for the EU. Unfortunately, there are problems involving education, medical care and the extreme isolation of these people. The report calls for the Commission to present a strategic plan for introducing binding minimum standards at EU level for these priorities, including penalties for Member States that do not comply with the objectives. Although I am not confident that this will be successful, as a whole, I voted in favour.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The Roma and Sinti – that is the politically correct term, although some members of these ethnic groups take this to be pejorative, and ask to be designated ‘Gypsies’ – do, of course, live to some extent in miserable circumstances. We must, at the same time, not overlook the fact that the lack of progress towards a better way of life is also connected to the traditions of these groups, to which they continue to cling. In a typical do-gooding way, over many years now, attempts at socialising these groups have been begun but they have all failed, because they have not been accepted by

the great majority of this nomadic people. The European Union has set aside EUR 12 billion up to 2013 for integration of minorities, and it is already quite clear that the money will be wasted where most Roma and Sinti are concerned.

Both the clan structure and lack of the right to intervene on the part of the authorities prevent this vicious circle from ever being broken. The strategy that has been planned is not only incapable of changing anything significant; it could, in some areas, such as 'non-discrimination', even turn into an own goal. Moreover, there is a lack of the concept that there is no such thing as a right to be included in the social security system. That is why I strongly reject the report.

Claudio Morganti (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) I decided to vote against this report because I cannot see any need for the European Union to commit huge resources to the inclusion of the Roma. At a time of economic crisis and general difficulty, it aims to press ahead even more quickly to ensure specific funding and favourable conditions in a number of areas for the Roma population.

This ethnic group has historically remained isolated in Europe, often not as a result of the will of others but by their own nature; they have willingly remained at the margins in order to carry on living according to their own customs, which are a long way from the common values and sentiments of Europe. Rather than a specific European strategy for the inclusion of the Roma, I would like it if we worked at a European level for a real and effective common immigration strategy, which seems increasingly essential and can no longer be postponed.

Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) A European Roma strategy is undoubtedly an absolute necessity, as this is a European minority which is typified, at the same time, by a very large degree of cross-border mobility, given their way of life. I voted for this resolution, especially because it emphasises the role played by good quality education and training as a factor influencing people's personal and professional life and because, as a result, education is the most reliable solution for ensuring Roma integration into society.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) While the majority society in the EU is rapidly ageing, the Roma are recording a rapid increase in population. In Hungary, where the Roma currently make up between 6% and 8% of the population, they will exceed 50% of the working population by 2050. All the worse, therefore, that Roma life in the EU is characterised, as it always has been, by unemployment, a level of education that is greatly below average, organised crime and prostitution, as well as retreat into a parallel society. The situation of women in often archaic Roma society is particularly dramatic, and their lack of education and, hence, their exclusion from the labour market is so much the greater. The report before us admittedly addresses some of the problems, however one-sidedly. Integration is not a one-way street. The Roma must make their contribution, send their children to school, integrate themselves better into the labour market and put an end to criminal tendencies. I therefore voted against the report.

Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this report, because we urgently need to change a situation where, even in the 21st century, a significant portion of the 10-12 million Roma living in Europe suffer discrimination, and economic and social isolation. The road to integration is a long and complicated process which is adapted to the conditions of individual countries and local regions. The European Union strategy should ensure clear objectives and means of funding programmes. However, the greatest responsibility lies with national governments and local authorities, which know best the

situation in the region. Education, healthcare, housing policy and the more rapid inclusion of Roma in the labour market – this is the key to solving a long-standing problem. If Roma EU citizens are unable to integrate properly into the societies of European Union Member States, then this would send out a poor signal on EU integration policy in general.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The European Union has now been working for years on problems relating to the social integration and protection of minorities. The report by Mrs Járóka on the Roma inclusion strategy sets out an action plan for their socio-economic integration in view of a European project that defines national strategies to deal with the problem, partly on the basis of the costs that each Member State will have to bear. I voted in favour of the report precisely because we need a new European legal framework that includes measures to combat discrimination and protect human rights, to integrate Roma in the various Member States with a plan that guarantees their education and health coverage.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), *in writing.* – (EL) I voted today in favour of the European Parliament report on the EU strategy on Roma inclusion. Their inclusion in society is a very important issue which concerns all the Member States in general and Greece in particular where, according to studies (by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency), 35% of Roma are illiterate and just 4% have attended school for at least ten years. The key point in inclusion is education and the abolition of segregation in schools. Alongside adequate healthcare and equal opportunities in employment, the Member States need to keep a closer eye on the extent to which EU funds for the Roma are actually used for the benefit of the recipients.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing.* – We know that 10-12 million European Roma continue to suffer serious systematic discrimination in education (where they are victims particularly of segregation), housing (particularly with forced evictions and sub-standard living conditions, often in ghettos), employment (their particularly low employment rate) and equal access to healthcare systems and other public services, as well as an astoundingly low level of political participation. The EU strategy on Roma inclusion should embrace measures to ensure the monitoring of the situation of the Roma in relation to the respect and promotion of their fundamental social rights, equality, non-discrimination and free movement in the EU, and also to provide education, training opportunities and job assistance for adults, which are crucial in order to support the recruitment and continued employment of the Roma with the aim of avoiding the perpetuation of social exclusion.

The Commission and Member States should address the particular needs of Roma women by applying a gender perspective in all policies for Roma inclusion and providing protection for especially vulnerable subgroups. Therefore, I ask the Commission to present annually to the European Parliament a follow up of the EU strategy on Roma inclusion in order to monitor the progress made at national level.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted in favour of this report, which focuses on the need to effectively address the problems and challenges related to this sensitive issue of integrating Roma communities.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – Parliament's Járóka report on the EU strategy for Roma inclusion was voted on in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on 14 February, with the majority of the Greens/EFA amendments accepted by the rapporteur or included in the compromise amendments, and many of the Group's red lines to the issue included: namely, the Roma inclusion strategy should be guided by

an insider's approach: designed by Roma for Roma, which means empowerment of Roma, inclusion in the decision-making process, hiring of Roma staff/mediators in key positions at local, national, EU level; stop unlawful practices that continue with EU Member State impunity: violence against Roma, violations of the right to free movement, increasing activity of extremist political parties, politicians, and policies, systemic segregation of Romany children in education, widespread residential segregation of Roma, trafficking in human beings, denial of access to healthcare and social services, coercive sterilisation of Romany women.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) On 6 April, the European Commission will present its Communication on Roma inclusion. This issue is also listed among the priorities of the Hungarian Government, which currently holds the European rotating Presidency. Parliament's resolution points out the need for the greater integration of Roma populations in modern society.

Personally, I think that it is up to these populations to adapt to our society and not to force us to adopt favourable policies that often produce results that are quite opposite to expectations. Ignorance, a lack of education and illiteracy often mean a lack of future prospects. Without education, it is impossible to take an active role in society. The difficulties that the Roma face in finding a job are often the result of their low level of education and this shows that the educational sector is the foundation on which to build a future of their own.

Oreste Rossi (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) This report is absolutely unacceptable since it reiterates on a number of occasions that the inclusion of the Roma is an economic necessity and that it would bring financial advantages for the Member States. It also proposes a task force for the Roma as a permanent organ of the Commission and denounces systematic discrimination and an intolerable level of exclusion and human rights violations.

The report also emphasises the need for a common European strategy to combat all forms of violation of the rights of the Roma, including fingerprinting and expulsion. It sets out fines for national governments that do not respect obligatory European standards towards the Roma population, promoting the hiring of Roma in the public administration, and hiring Roma teachers in schools so as to protect their culture by using their language. As a final insult to the freedom of speech, it also sets out to condemn the rejection of and discrimination against Roma in political meetings. It is clear that I cannot but vote against a report that is absolutely offensive and harmful to the rights of people to be the lords of their own manor.

Olga Sehnalová (S&D), *in writing*. – (CS) Any European strategy for Roma inclusion must be based, first and foremost, on a knowledge of local conditions. The strategy is therefore inconceivable without close cooperation with the local authorities and the communities where the declaration must be translated into everyday coexistence between the majority of society and the Roma community. The report does not overlook this aspect and I have therefore voted in favour of it.

Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – (NL) The Roma struggle with discrimination in Europe on a systematic basis and have to fight exclusion, violations of their human rights and stigmatisation. By voting for binding EU minimum standards today, I hope that the 10-12 million Roma will have better access to jobs, education, housing and healthcare. It is a positive that the report calls for the best measures to be sought in collaboration with the stakeholders. The report further highlights the primordial role of regional policy. The

Member States, after all, do have access to funds to assist the Roma with integration, but barely use that money. It is thus up to the Member States to face up to their responsibility.

Another positive in this report is the idea that the Commission will have to introduce award criteria in favour of compliant Member States and penalties for non-compliance. The only minus point is the reference to the Roma's 'prolonged dependence' on the social welfare system. This is a very conservative, preconceived opinion that marginalises the Roma community once again. I hope that the Commission integrates this report into its own proposal, which is likely to be presented on 5 April. It is scheduled to be adopted by the Council before the summer. The integration of the Roma is one of the priorities of the Hungarian Presidency.

Catherine Stihler (S&D), *in writing*. – I supported this report which aims to combat discrimination against the Roma people and calls on Member States to produce policies for their integration into the labour market. The Roma people is one of the most marginalised groups in the EU, which is why we need to ensure that action is taken to tackle the social exclusion that they face.

Report: Bernd Lange (A7-0022/2011)

Alexander Alvaro (ALDE), *in writing*. – (DE) In the vote on the Lange report, I am abstaining on paragraph 31 because of the ambiguous wording, which refers to Eurobonds as well as project bonds. However, taking it as a whole, I am voting for the report, as I have nothing against project bonds in themselves. Project bonds serve as finance for extensive innovation, infrastructure and reindustrialisation projects. This is not a question of instruments for the communitarisation of debts, as would be the case with Eurobonds.

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted for this report, as industrial policy is a priority for the Europe 2020 strategy and the main driving force behind the European economy. The focus on this sector is due to the fact that it is responsible for three quarters of European exports, providing jobs for 57 million people and representing 80% of investment in research and development. I believe that if Europe is to be competitive in this area, there must be a focus on advocating green and innovative knowledge-based projects.

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour of this important resolution on an Industrial Policy for the Globalised Era. The global economic crisis has affected European industry and therefore, to be able to overcome the effect of the crisis and face those challenges, the EU needs an industrial policy approach that combines competitiveness, sustainability and decent work that can, at the same time, stimulate the economy, boost employment, reduce environmental degradation and improve quality of life. I agree with the resolution's call for the Commission and the Member States to develop an ambitious, eco-efficient and green EU industrial strategy in order to recreate manufacturing capacity across the EU territory and to generate highly qualified and well paid jobs within the EU. The European Parliament stresses the great importance of SMEs in the industrial landscape, in particular, when it comes to providing long-term jobs at regional level, and in preserving economic and creative vitality and a high level of growth. There is, therefore, a need to continue working on better access to financing opportunities for SMEs and, in particular, to develop viable venture capital possibilities; to strengthen, in the context of the new architecture of the financial market, short- and long-term financing possibilities for SMEs and their preferred sources of finance; to open up markets and create

fair conditions for competition, enabling more entrepreneurs and small companies to grow and develop into companies operating all over Europe.

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) The global economic crisis has affected European industry, making it more difficult for it to adapt to the challenges posed by the transition to an industry based on knowledge and efficiency, which has a strong impact on industrial development and the labour market. To be able to face these challenges, I think an industrial policy approach is required which combines competitiveness, sustainability and decent work which can, at the same time, stimulate the economy, boost employment, reduce environmental degradation and improve the quality of life in the European Union. This report supports industrial progress through smart and forward-looking regulation and market stimulation, based on accurate expectations for market developments, and supporting the global trends towards clean, sustainable and innovative forms of production, distribution and consumption. I voted for this report because I believe that the success of the European Union's industrial policy depends on it being firmly rooted both in a new financial sector architecture that promotes investment and prevents speculation, and also in a macro-economic policy that steers fiscal, economic and budgetary policies in the EU towards sustainable growth and job creation.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Deindustrialisation is an established fact in Europe. Europe's technological and economic position is being put at risk by increased globalisation and intense competition from rapidly developing countries. The European Union must therefore adopt an industrial policy that combines competitiveness, sustainability and decent work. The aims are as follows: to stimulate the economy, boost employment, reduce environmental degradation and improve quality of life. This is the thrust of this resolution, which I endorsed. In particular, I am in favour of issuing EU bonds with a view to enabling the European Union to fund innovation, infrastructure and reindustrialisation.

Liam Aylward (ALDE), *in writing.* – (GA) There are 57 million people employed in the industrial sector in the EU, and 75% of European exports involve the same sector. That sector will be central to the future competitiveness of the EU. I welcome what the EU's 2020 strategy contains about encouraging high quality jobs and training to help and support the development of the industrial base, and therefore I voted in favour of the report.

Since it is SMEs which create two thirds of the jobs in the sector, I welcome what the report contains on small business access to public procurement opportunities and the role of small businesses in improving industrial policy.

SMEs must have better access to the Framework Programme, and assistance and support must be given for technology transfer and innovation. I agree with the rapporteur that the EU should develop and encourage innovative clusters in regional areas. The major advantages of these clusters are their ability to transfer knowledge, to develop research activities, qualifications and infrastructure, and to stimulate employment opportunities in regional areas.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this report. The European Union is the world's largest market, but we are not exploiting our huge potential. We are a very open market, but face enormous obstacles to accessing foreign markets. The incomplete single market in areas such as energy forces us to bow to the conditions dictated by external parties, which has a direct impact on our competitiveness. The viability of industry depends on the viability of our small and medium-sized business sector, which,

despite the measures approved, is going through a difficult period. I agree that innovation is at the core of industry today, but in this area we cannot exactly boast of our ability to react in a timely manner to changing global market conditions. I believe that today, we have a well balanced and comprehensive vision of industry, and now the Member States and the European Commission will have to do their bit to ensure that our ambitious goals enable the creation of a modern and competitive industry.

Jan Březina (PPE), *in writing*. – (CS) European industry is still facing the consequences of the economic crisis, and requires a coordinated approach at EU level in order to handle them successfully. An industrial strategy must be drawn up for the EU setting out strategic areas for investment, and then taking account of these priorities in the future financial perspective, annual budgets and policies of the EU. The development of European industry will not happen without ambitious funding, especially in the areas of research and energy, telecommunications and transport networks (TEN), and therefore in the public services which sustain the business environment. In my opinion, however, it is neither necessary nor appropriate to start issuing EU bonds for this purpose (Eurobonds or project bonds). The EU is not a sovereign political entity, and therefore its revenues should basically be made up of the contributions of Member States. Not to mention the fact that the idea of Eurobonds involves debt and might clash with the principle of a balanced European budget. Financial support for innovation, infrastructure and reindustrialisation should be based primarily on boosting the resources for the Eighth Framework Programme for Research and Development and for the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme, with the aim of ensuring that European industry remains competitive at the global level, and thereby also making effective use of private investments.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Europe is currently finding that it has become less competitive in global markets. As such, Europe needs to find ways of strengthening its industrial base to face up to new challenges. This report, 'An integrated industrial policy for the globalisation era', aims to table proposals to relaunch European industry. An integrated and sustainable industrial policy must be based on scientific research, on innovation, on increased resource efficiency, on a commodities strategy, on reinforcing small and medium-sized enterprises, and on developing regional networks. In particular, it is essential for energy efficiency and the introduction of information and communication technologies to constitute the basis of the industrial revolution, so as to increase competitiveness, economic growth and employment. I particularly welcome the emphasis given to traditional European industry, which is essential to our economy. Measures such as the introduction of new technologies and increased efforts in scientific research and innovation in sectors such as the manufacturing industry are of crucial importance. This is the only way that we will be able to return European industry to a leading position in the world.

Françoise Castex (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) Industrial policy is essential for the European Union, and this report is an opportunity for the European Commission: the initial communication was disappointing. Parliament's work provides the Commission with concrete proposals that it must take up. This report should be linked to our proposals, which the European Parliament as a whole adopted this week, including, in particular, the principle of a 'tax on financial transactions' at European level and of issuing EU bonds (Eurobonds). Our policies must show that social innovation and technological innovation are compatible.

Jorgo Chatzimarkakis (ALDE), *in writing*. – (DE) In the vote on the Lange report, I am abstaining on paragraph 31 because of the ambiguous wording, which refers to Eurobonds as well as project bonds. However, taking it as a whole, I am voting for the report, as I have nothing against project bonds in themselves. Project bonds serve as finance for extensive innovation, infrastructure and reindustrialisation projects. This is not a question of instruments for the communitarisation of debts, as would be the case with Eurobonds.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) Clearly, Europe must develop a long-term European industrial strategy. We cannot be the only economic area in the world to unilaterally apply free trade principles while having no idea of what our main competitors are doing. The European Commission has to realise that, with the crisis, the rules put in place are no longer suitable for today's economy, and that it is time to seriously strengthen the European Union's anti-dumping arsenal and the application of the general principle of reciprocity in trade. The European Union needs a European strategy that serves as a vehicle for major industrial projects such as Galileo and ITER. It must also support its production sectors and its SME base. It must promote and increase its research and development investments so as to try to maintain its lead in the area of high technology. Similarly, it must step up the fight against counterfeiting, and put forward an offensive European patent policy.

Karima Delli (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – (FR) This text does not stand out for its quality, since it is the result of a very broad compromise between the MEPs. It contains both elements that are very positive in the eyes of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance and certain ideas that we have sought in vain to denounce. However, the main thing is that it enables MEPs to express a rather progressive opinion on the EU 2020 strategy's flagship programme dedicated to industry.

Hence, the text calls for transport systems to be made more sustainable through the use of more efficient technologies, interoperability and innovative mobility solutions. It points out the need to place energy and resource savings at the heart of European industrial policy. In this respect, it recalls the huge job potential and cost reduction benefits that energy efficiency improvements are expected to yield.

The adoption of measures that ensure energy efficiency improvement must therefore underpin initiatives in all industrial sectors. MEPs also sought to encourage all the efforts made to redress skills shortages in order to promote the qualifications of the workforce and interest young graduates more in industry.

Robert Dušek (S&D), *in writing*. – (CS) Industry creates almost one third of EU GDP, industrial products account for three quarters of exports, and industry employs 57 million European citizens. European industry was already going through a restructuring process before the crisis started. At present it is influenced especially by the rapid and changing development of the global economy, as well as growing competition. A new form of globalisation is developing, leading towards a global society based on knowledge, research and innovation. The need to mitigate climate change and maintain maximum biodiversity levels is leading industry towards production that involves 'zero' CO₂ emissions and an efficient use of resources. European industry should continue to maintain a strategic position in key sectors, and to exploit the opportunities for sustainable recovery aimed at securing the greatest possible number of jobs for qualified workers. The rapporteur proposes a whole raft of measures to make this possible. I agree with and support the creation of an innovation supply chain, greater efficiency in the use of resources, the more effective use

of public contracts, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), greater production of so-called clean energy and the generally broader inclusion of SMEs in the concept of European industry. The report is of benefit to European industry, the rapporteur genuinely understands the issue, and I am therefore voting for the adoption of the report.

Ioan Enciu (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of this report because I believe that it represents the way forward for a robust, cohesive and employment-based industrial policy for the European workforce. R&D is a key driver for innovation and trade and will remain one of the cornerstones for industrial policy in the EU. I believe that industry plays a key role in keeping jobs in Europe and this is why we must enhance efforts to maintain a strong industrial base, become the most competitive economy in the world and ensure close-knit networks between companies in different Member States in order to achieve shared industrial priorities. Some of my amendments included in the report concern shortening the time to market for new products, ensuring that European manufacturing strengthens the foundations of the European economy and the simplification of funding programmes for industry.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this report as I support the idea that only an industrial strategy that is ambitious and efficient from an environmental standpoint can renew and stimulate Europe's productive capacity, and gain a central role in the creation of highly skilled and well paid jobs in the EU.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) At a time when Europe is experiencing an unprecedented crisis, which is due, albeit not solely, to the budget, we cannot forget the leading role of industry, which represents 37% of Europe's gross domestic product, and the challenges that it is facing in a globalised world in which emerging economies – and also the US – are committing to aggressive industrial policies based on massive investment in research and development in key sectors, competing with Europe, with the advantage that they do not have the same environmental, social and labour constraints. There is no miracle solution to this. Despite its many virtues, the Europe 2020 strategy is not a magic wand for European industry in a world where competition is global and fierce.

I therefore believe that the only route for European industry is to specialise and definitively commit to quality and the latest technology, along with rationalising costs and ensuring greater efficiency in management. European products must be preferred, not because they are cheaper – that will never happen – but because they are better and more innovative. Only the excellence of European industry can make this happen. We hope that we are capable of rising to the challenge.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The importance of European industry is indisputable. It represents three quarters of exports, a third of the EU's gross value added and a third of employment. Although dynamic, it has not escaped the economic crisis and needs to be at the forefront of the European policy agenda advocated by this report. Indeed, industrial policy should be central to our concerns, as it relates to the future, by creating employment and promoting investment in production. However, it also presents us with challenges: how can we guarantee the sustainability of resources when faced with climate change? The EU needs a coherent industrial policy that conveys confidence to companies and helps them to overcome the crisis. It needs to promote modern industry that is effective, reduces energy costs and CO₂ production, and is ecologically responsible, and which is competitive, engaging in research, innovation and the recycling of raw materials. This is because we cannot forget that an industrial policy is also a social policy, and I am therefore

voting in favour of this report. However, I would like to draw attention to the need to strengthen support for small and medium-sized enterprises, which employ the majority of workers in the EU's business sector, and to implement origin marking.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) This is another report that is full of contradictions. On the one hand, it has some positive aspects, which we appreciate, defending industry and small and medium-sized enterprises. The presence of modern and efficient industry which creates jobs and is environmentally sustainable is an important tool for development in every country and region. However, the current framework of EU policies, in which the most negative aspects have been worsening over the years, is markedly unfavourable to this endeavour. Rather, it has been promoting the dismantling of important productive centres, deindustrialisation, the elimination of jobs, and growing dependence in innumerable countries and regions. Liberalisation and international trade deregulation policies are a central tenet of this policy framework, and are contributing decisively to the current situation. However, the report insists on advocating these policies. It endorses them, while ignoring their effects. It also insists on the sacrosanct principle of 'free competition' and the deepening of the internal market, both offshoots of the aforementioned framework, on public-private partnerships, and even on synergies between civilian and military investment. The Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left sought to eliminate these most negative aspects from the report, while keeping the aspects that are good. Unfortunately, all the proposals were rejected by the majority in Parliament. That is why we voted against.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) Unfortunately, none of our amendments, which were aimed at removing the most negative aspects from the report, were passed. We therefore voted against in the final vote on the resolution by Parliament.

Although, as I mentioned in the debate in plenary, there are positive aspects in the report, there are many contradictory positions. While, on the one hand, it claims to defend industry and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), on the other hand, it contains proposals that insist on the liberalisation of free trade and free competition, on the deepening of the internal market, on public-private partnerships, and even on synergies between civilian and military investment.

We would like industries that are efficient in terms of resource use, that are less dependent on carbon, that value jobs with rights, and that guarantee equal rights for women in terms of access to jobs, to promotion, to wages, and to participation in management and administrative bodies.

We advocate other policies, particularly in terms of industrial policy, foreign trade, financial, research, science and innovation policies, which support SMEs, as well as a commitment to training and skilling workers, and to the dignity of those who work.

Lorenzo Fontana (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) Mr Lange's report on the Industrial Policy for the Globalised Era looks at extremely important issues, such as access to credit for enterprises, and, above all, for small and medium-sized enterprises. I particularly appreciate the idea of linking the industrial world with universities in order to boost European universities, thereby harking back to the EU 2020 objectives. I therefore voted in favour.

Elisabetta Gardini (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The Europe 2020 strategy has acknowledged the need to set out a new industrial policy in order to maintain a solid and sustainable industrial base in Europe.

Strong and prosperous industry is indeed a key factor for growth in the European Union and therefore, in the current context of globalisation and intense international competition, it is essential to create a framework that is even more favourable for its development. This report should certainly be applauded for having provided a detailed survey of industrial policy in the light of the economic crisis, which seriously damaged the sector, and also for providing various cues for properly reviving European industry.

For this reason, I think it is important that the political aims set out in the flagship initiative tabled last 28 October by Mr Tajani are translated into tangible actions such as, by way of example, strengthening and internationalising small and medium-sized enterprises, providing easier access to credit, and the definition of a new industrial innovation model. Other than that, Europe must take the risk of increasing productivity with new ideas by investing increasingly in research, which must represent the new engine to restore European excellence.

Adam Gierek (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) The global market is reacting to the need to meet the demands of the model of consumption which has already been formed in highly developed and developing societies. However, competitiveness ‘at any price’ is appearing, by which I mean competitiveness which is influenced by more than just the innovativeness of industry and changes in the model of consumption.

We can include the following in the catalogue of unfavourable phenomena which accompany competitiveness: a model of consumption, imposed by industry, which squanders energy and raw materials; competition which is based not on the superiority of the methods used but on the financial supremacy of wealthy monopolistic corporations; a fragmentary competitiveness which is concerned only with the final phase of processing and not gross competitiveness, by which I mean competitiveness which takes account of the preparation of raw materials and materials for production; the taking over of raw materials and energy markets by supranational, often non-European, corporations; increases in energy prices and, as a result, of raw materials too, by regulations which impose a system of emissions trading on the EU Member States; unfair competition imposed mainly by large, supranational corporations, including financial corporations.

I treat this report as a good beginning to a very important discussion about the future of competitive industry in Europe, and so of Europe itself, so I voted in favour of its adoption.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) I regret that this report was not tabled earlier, for example, when Brussels was denouncing the creation of industrial champions, or when Mittal was carrying out its hostile takeover of Arcelor, depriving Europe of the only bit of its iron and steel industry it had left. For decades, the European Union has worked hard at destroying our industrial fabric and our industrial jobs, through European sectoral policies, European competition policy and European free trade policy, which all of you here have systematically praised, supported and promoted. In the face of disaster, you are now tentatively coming round to what the *Front national* has been proposing for a very long time: recognising the crucial nature of an industrial base, developing strategic sectors, protecting against unfair competition and helping to penetrate external markets, guaranteeing and safeguarding raw material supplies, regulating takeover bids, making competition policy subject to strategic, socio-economic and public service requirements, providing public support to emerging or innovative sectors, and so on.

However, it is rather late in the day, and Europe, which has hung on to its ultraliberal ideological foundations, is definitely not the best level at which to make decisions and implement such policies.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), *in writing*. – (LT) I agreed with this report, because EU industry accounts for roughly a third of gross value added in the EU, with almost three quarters of European exports being made up of industrial goods, and a third of employment, providing subsistence to some 57 million people. The recent profound economic crisis has hit European industry. However, the crisis has also highlighted the importance of industry to the EU economy and made it evident that not enough has been done to comprehensively address its needs in the current challenging climate. Manufacturing growth has fallen to its lowest level in the last two decades, and certain European industries are in permanent crisis as a result of unfair competition from third countries, particularly in the areas of labour relations, the environment and intellectual and industrial property protection. As the USA, Japan and China are pursuing a strong and active industrial policy supported by leading edge products and services, there is a danger that European industry may be left behind. An integrated and sustainable industrial policy in the EU should be based on the following key aspects: the need to establish an innovation chain linking scientific research and practical adaptation, to use resources more effectively, and to enhance clean energy production.

We must call on the EU to launch strategies providing for long-term changes and to pursue an education policy that satisfies the needs of the labour market. It is necessary to combat the spread of the shadow economy and undeclared casual work during the crisis which distorts competition, and there are also proposals to facilitate SME participation in public procurement.

Silvana Koch-Mehrin (ALDE), *in writing*. – (DE) In the vote on the Lange report, I am abstaining on paragraph 31 because of the ambiguous wording of the vote, which refers to Eurobonds as well as project bonds. However, taking it as a whole, I am voting for the report, as I have nothing against project bonds in themselves. Project bonds serve as finance for extensive innovation, infrastructure and reindustrialisation projects. This is not a question of instruments for the communitarisation of debts, as would be the case with Eurobonds.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) In my opinion, today's vote is an important step forward towards emerging on the other side of the economic and financial crisis that has struck Europe and its industries. Indeed, the resolution looks at a key sector that needs support in order to allow the European Union to implement an industrial policy that needs to marry the achievement of high levels of production with a commitment to competitive and sustainable renewal. For this reason, I applaud the reference to the EU 2020 strategy, which must function as the guiding light for the complete implementation of Europe's priority actions through huge investment in innovation and research, which is necessary for growth and development in Europe. Overall, I think the rapporteur, Mr Lange, has done a good job, managing to bring together the ideas and suggestions garnered from more than 500 amendments and putting together a report that I agree with and support, with the exception of the European patent. Indeed, I think that the decision to start enhanced cooperation in a sector of strategic importance – namely, intellectual property – is not a correct decision or one that will bring positive consequences for European industry.

Bogusław Liberadzki (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) Industrial policy for the globalised era is becoming a great problem for the Union and for individual Member States. The quest to minimise production costs and prices is becoming the reason for closing down industrial production in the Union, moving factories to locations outside the EU and then importing production. This is having adverse effects: a loss of the capacity for industrial development, technical education and innovativeness, and, as a consequence, a dependence on other countries. Entire sectors of industry are going under, such as the shipbuilding industry in Poland. Stricter environmental requirements introduced only in the EU and toleration of dumping by Asian producers are accelerating the deindustrialisation of Europe. What is needed is a judicious policy which will allow Europe to retain its industrial character.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The recent economic crisis has confirmed that small and medium-sized enterprises are still the driving force of economic and social development, playing a key role in promoting economic competitiveness and creating jobs. I welcome this report and I think that the EU instruments supporting competitiveness need to be reviewed and strengthened with the aim of streamlining administrative procedures and facilitating access to funding for SMEs. It is also absolutely essential to introduce innovative incentive mechanisms, based on achieving the targets linked to smart, sustainable growth with an integration aspect, and to promote closer cooperation with the financial institutions. One important method for funding innovation for SMEs which is available via the European Investment Bank is the Risk Sharing Financial Facility. However, to ensure its success, the European Commission needs to make significantly more funds available, including through innovation funds from ERDF sources, and to promote direct private investments and innovative financing mechanisms for high-risk innovative projects and those in which SMEs participate.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I agree with this report that an EU strategy to promote strong and skilled human resources with a strong creative potential and active involvement in innovation and development, new and innovative technologies/processes/solutions which generate added value, R&D geared to the needs of sustainable development, an efficient supply chain for the production of high quality goods and services, more efficiently organised production and management systems, overall greater resources efficiency that leads to a reduced carbon footprint, cost-efficient and sustainable modes of transport, smart and efficient logistics and high quality infrastructure, a consolidated and fully operational single internal market, and a level playing field in trade relations with third countries, is the only means of increasing the sustainability and competitiveness of European industry and thus maintaining its global leadership.

Jiří Maštálka (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (CS) The report on an industrial policy for the era of globalisation is an important document in the crisis that has affected the European economy and industrial production in particular. However, it does not include the main issue – the real cause of the enormous economic problems. This is the global capitalism of free competition and unbridled neoliberalism, on which the EU is unfortunately based. The EU does not need more strategic documents literally churned out by the Commission, but there is a pressing need for a change to its underpinnings, and particularly a move towards a social and peaceful union with a regulated financial sector. Since we are debating a ‘strategic’ document as such, experience shows that it is not as difficult to produce such documents as it is to develop them subsequently in the individual areas, and to monitor and evaluate the effects of the proposed measures flexibly. The area of intellectual property rights, for example, including industrial rights, is proof of this.

Gesine Meissner (ALDE), *in writing.* – (DE) In the vote on the Lange report, I am abstaining on paragraph 31 because of the ambiguous wording of the vote, which refers to Eurobonds as well as project bonds. However, taking it as a whole, I am voting for the report, as I have nothing against project bonds in themselves. Project bonds serve as finance for extensive innovation, infrastructure and reindustrialisation projects. This is not a question of instruments for the communitarisation of debts, as would be the case with Eurobonds.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) European industry represents approximately a third of the EU's gross value added, as almost three quarters of European exports relate to industrial goods, and a third of employment. Moreover, it has a multiplying effect, which means that approximately two additional jobs are created in associated services for every job in industry. In view of this, no one is disputing the importance of the industrial sector to the economies of the Member States, but the economic crisis has cast doubt on the importance of this sector, to the detriment of the financial and service sectors, and it is time for us to review this situation and go back to investing heavily in this sector. European industry is heading in the direction of specialisation and commitment to the quality of its products and to the latest technology. What is produced by our industry needs to distinguish itself by innovation and quality, never by price.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) In order to remain competitive amidst worldwide economic change, the significant economic sector that is industry must not be neglected. Sustainability as well as humane working conditions should be both encouraged and demanded, for it is the case that competition from the emerging nations such as China, India and Brazil grows ever stronger and consequently, the pressure on the European internal market grows ever greater. Sustainability and growth are two buzzwords often heard, above all, in industrial policy, but their implementation is seriously in doubt, due, primarily, to the lack of available resources. I am abstaining because I am of the view that the measures proposed will not be in any way sufficient to secure Europe first place in the world in the industrial sector.

Rolandas Paksas (EFD), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this resolution because EU industry has been badly hit by the current economic crisis. In today's world, there is huge competition in industry and, therefore, the industrial sector must remain competitive and innovative, supporting innovative ideas, and quality and technological leadership. We must enhance facilities, transfer high technologies and facilitate their transposition among companies. We must make every effort to ensure that existing resources (minerals) are used appropriately within the European Union, avoiding their export outside the EU's borders, and that we stop oligopolies from forming in trade. European aid should go not towards a quick fix, but towards investments in the future that are focused on the creation of new jobs, so that every citizen has work in their own country. Particular attention must be paid to so-called problem regions with a low level of industrial development or a high level of unemployment. Consequently, there is a need to promote the establishment of technology, industrial and science parks and company centres. These organisations are particularly important for actively creating and developing modern technologies and ensuring economic development and modernisation, while, at the same time, creating new jobs. Small and medium-sized enterprises must be encouraged to invest in clusters. A favourable business environment should be created for them and the administrative burden should be reduced. Deep-rooted bureaucracy is preventing industrial development and is damaging the competitiveness of products created.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I voted in favour of the report by Mr Lange because alongside the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Union must work for vigorous development and better use of resources in order to ensure innovation. The report on an Industrial Policy for the Globalised Era lists precisely these objectives: industrial innovation and simplification of existing legislation with the interests of citizens at its heart, and the role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – the beating heart of the European economy. SMEs need to be guaranteed favourable conditions and easier access to financing. It is important to emphasise that the means through which a dynamic and cutting-edge industrial policy will be realised is Structural Funds, which, if used correctly, will lay the foundations for growth in Europe.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) EU industry accounts for roughly a third of gross value added in the EU, with almost three quarters of European exports being made up of industrial goods, and a third of employment, providing subsistence to some 57 million citizens (plus its multiplying effect whereby each job in industry creates approximately two extra jobs in related services). There are 15 key elements: building an innovation chain; increasing resource efficiency; clear targets for sustainable products; using public tenders; enhancing clean energy production; a convincing raw materials strategy; reshaping trade for fair coexistence and sustainable production; outlining an obligatory sectoral industrial policy; involving SMEs; developing regional areas for action; ensuring anticipation of industrial change; restructuring; enhancing qualifications; enlarging workers' participation in decision making; and long-term policies.

EU industrial policy must be orientated towards both a sustainable, eco-efficient and globally competitive renewal of the industrial base and a sustainable transition from a mainly production-based towards a knowledge-based industry, while being definitely committed to investing in the EU and establishing strategic partnerships between companies in the Union.

Fiorello Provera (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) Through this report, Parliament has highlighted important issues that deserve to be emphasised in terms of the growth of European industry. I am referring to the recognition of the strategic role of small and medium-sized enterprises and to the need to make it easier to access credit with simplified funding procedures, as well as the importance of internationalisation as a key factor for competitiveness.

The link between innovation and the industrial world through continuous relations between enterprises and universities is also crucial and includes the sale of results and encouraging their use. For this reason, I support the contents and the proposals of the report by Mr Lange.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The recent economic and financial crisis has highlighted the importance of industry to the EU economy, which means that it is important to recognise the need for an integrated approach to industrial policy, combining competitiveness, innovation and sustainability, whilst, at the same time, showing itself capable of stimulating growth, creating jobs and ensuring environmental preservation. Indeed, European industry is facing numerous challenges, so it is vital that there be commitment to investing in new technologies and solutions, in training of staff, in the efficiency of production systems and management models, and in strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises.

Evelyn Regner (S&D), *in writing.* – (DE) I voted for the report because I am convinced that an integrated industrial policy for Europe is indispensable, especially in the face of the new challenges brought about by globalisation, and a further development of industrial

policy is therefore necessary. Industrial policy serves as a driver for sustainable employment and the prosperity of society. A single job in industry creates at least two more jobs. Europe's position in industrial policy is increasingly being put in doubt as a result of increasing industrialisation in the emerging countries and the growing strength of our largest competitors, like the US and China. We must therefore develop more ourselves; for that to be the case, we need to make sure to renew our industrial base by taking steps in specific sectors, but also by guaranteeing, in broad terms, the competitiveness of Europe on a global level and the sustainable growth of European industry. The report also calls for an integrated industrial policy to serve as the foundation for environmental, competition and trade policy, in order to improve resource efficiency. In addition, the report highlights the importance of a constructive partnership with workers and trade union organisations. The need to improve coordination between the EU and the Member States is also emphasised in the report. I consider these measures to be absolutely necessary. This report makes provision for the further development of industrial policy to be approached with the necessary ambition and prudence.

Britta Reimers (ALDE), *in writing.* – (DE) In the vote on the Lange report, I am abstaining on paragraph 31 because of the ambiguous wording, which refers to Eurobonds as well as project bonds. However, taking it as a whole, I am voting for the report, as I have nothing against project bonds in themselves. Project bonds serve as finance for extensive innovation, infrastructure and reindustrialisation projects. This is not a question of instruments for the communitarisation of debts, as would be the case with Eurobonds.

Crescenzo Rivellini (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) In today's plenary session, we voted on Mr Lange's report, entitled Industrial Policy for the Globalised Era. European industry accounts for roughly a third of gross value added in the EU, with almost three quarters of European exports being made up of industrial goods, and a third of employment, providing subsistence to some 57 million people. If its multiplying effect is accounted for, whereby each job in industry creates approximately two extra jobs in related services, its impact on employment is even more substantial.

Furthermore, EU industrial policy should be oriented both towards a sustainable, eco-efficient and globally competitive renewal of the industrial base and towards a sustainable transition from a mainly productive towards a knowledge-based industry. The integration of all EU policies so as to combine all aspects that have an impact on industry is crucial. The own-initiative report on industrial policy by Mr Lange restates the position expressed in the Communication by the Commissioner for Industry, Mr Tajani, with some new ideas aimed at the important renewal of the industrial sector following the economic crisis.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – Parliament has today supported a set of actions to promote the competitiveness of European industry. I welcome the recognition that, to face the crisis and globalisation challenges, energy and resource efficiency must be the basis for European industrial renewal. Sustainability has to be recognised as a central aspect of the so-called 'competitiveness proofing' and 'fitness checks' to be implemented by the Commission as part of its better regulation initiatives. The report rightfully calls for closed-loop industrial systems, greater resource productivity, durability and re-use, recycling and remanufacturing.

The report also calls for instruments to foster the development and growth of eco-innovative SMEs, as well as the development of eco-industrial parks. It is important to bring the EU's

industrial policy in line with its climate and energy policy objectives. The Greens expect the Commission to deliver on that challenge in its upcoming strategic initiatives, such as the resource efficiency strategy, the raw materials strategy and the Small Business Act.

Oreste Rossi (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) At last, the European Union has recognised the fundamental role of industry, calling for simplification of access to credit and a reduction in red tape. In recent years, we have witnessed the adoption of measures which cause heavy burdens for European industry and which favour the unfair competition of products imported from third countries. I would note the costs resulting from combating climate change and the measures aimed at reducing or eliminating duties.

The report highlights the importance of research as an instrument to fend off competition and notes the professional training of workers and the information that must be given to consumers. Let us not forget, however, that aside from all the fine words, the EU is at risk of a rupture between Member States, which results in a minimal desire to create an industrial future together. I am referring to what has happened with the European patent, which has seen the Union exclude Italy and Spain, and the use of enhanced cooperation amongst other Member States. I voted in favour of this report since the principles it brings up are worthy of support.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) Industry in Europe is facing not only the effects of the economic crisis, but also the new challenges of the globalised era. Businesses must react appropriately to ever faster changes in economic trends. The economies of rising countries are altering the balance of forces in international markets. With the development of a knowledge-based society, the role of scientific research and innovation is also being enhanced, these leading to economic growth and competitiveness. The problems which the EU economy is having to face up to include demographic change and the downturn in productivity. The main objectives for EU industry are a growth in competitiveness and innovativeness. To achieve them, it is necessary to take a number of measures at the same time. It is essential to continue work on the single market and harmonisation of customs and tax legislation. The bureaucratic burden on businesses should be reduced and the legal framework simplified. Cooperation between businesses should be strengthened through business clusters, networks and centres of excellence, and efforts should be made to promote synergies between universities and business.

It may also prove helpful to use alternative mechanisms such as public-private partnerships that share the risks between private and public investors, and to use leverage and the knock-on effect. It will be crucial to support small and medium-sized enterprises, which form the basis of European industry, by financial assistance in the area of innovation and technology transfer and by involving innovative and sustainable criteria in tenders for public procurement. It should not be forgotten to ensure a rise in spending on research based on cooperation between the public and private sector.

Catherine Stihler (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of this report which highlights ways in which the EU's industrial base may be strengthened. Industry provides roughly a third of employment in the EU, which is why it is so vital that we ensure its ongoing viability.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) European industry and its multiplier effect account for approximately a third of the EU's gross value added, and it provides a livelihood for 57 million people. It is necessary to create an industrial policy which fosters coordination between the Member States and their competitive potential, as expressed in the Europe 2020 strategy. The relevance of this report at a time of economic recession shows

that, despite its importance, this sector is relegated to the background. This evidence requires a closer look at the challenges which European industry will have to face, particularly the restructuring and reorientation of its makeup, based on a global knowledge society through innovation and research, in order to address the competitiveness of emerging economies. Aside from this, new dynamics, climate change, demographic shifts and the process of urbanisation/depopulation are developing. Of the 15 points tabled by the rapporteur, I would like to highlight the measures that have an effect on small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), which are the real driving force of the EU growth. The simplification of European procedures for obtaining funding, more and better information given to the SMEs about operational programmes, the creation of innovation clusters and networks, as well as greater support on the part of the European Central Bank, are key initiatives for the success of European industrial policy.

Alexandra Thein (ALDE), *in writing*. – (DE) In the vote on the Lange report, I am abstaining on paragraph 31 because of the ambiguous wording of the vote, which refers to Eurobonds as well as project bonds. However, taking it as a whole, I am voting for the report, as I have nothing against project bonds in themselves. Project bonds serve as finance for extensive innovation, infrastructure and reindustrialisation projects. This is not a question of instruments for the communitarisation of debts, as would be the case with Eurobonds.

Derek Vaughan (S&D), *in writing*. – I supported this report as it sets out the need for a coherent policy on the future of industry across the EU. With over 60 million jobs in the EU generated by industrial manufacturing, a robust policy will help the EU overcome some of the challenges faced by manufacturers. Making up part of the EU's 2020 strategy, this report outlines 15 'cornerstones' of a strong policy which will ensure that the EU can keep up with competitors from the US, China and Japan, who invest heavily in research and development into cutting-edge technology, and countries that are able to cut costs through cheap labour and have less stringent intellectual property rules. Some of the most useful recommendations in the report include the need for an innovation chain which links industry-related research to innovation and application of the technology, and an increased emphasis on resource efficiency and sustainability which ties in with the aims of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Iva Zanicchi (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I decided to vote in favour of the own-initiative report by Mr Lange since it represents Parliament's contribution to the debate on an issue of utmost importance for the business world: European industrial policy.

The report has a number of positive aspects, such as the broad appeal to European enterprises to meet environmental standards, but only on a voluntary basis and without rigid impositions. The central role of industry – and not just industrial policy – for the growth of the European Union is also correctly reiterated. Now, taking our lead from the report that has been voted on today, I think it is important that all the institutions and interested parties strive to realise the objectives defined therein, translating them into real action. Particularly important are: the adoption of measures for the protection of intellectual property; the affirmation of an industrial innovation model that aims for excellence; the modernisation of industries, particularly with regard to environmental protection and the careful use of energy resources; and support for the creation of circumstances that assist in the internationalisation of small and medium-sized enterprises.

12. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

President. – The sitting is suspended at 13:45 and shall resume at 15:00.

IN THE CHAIR: RAINER WIELAND

Vice-President

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

14. EU approach towards Iran (debate)

President. – The next item is the report by Mr Belder, on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, on the EU's approach towards Iran (2010/2050(INI)) (A7-0441/2011).

Bastiaan Belder, *rapporteur.* – (NL) Mr President, I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to the shadow rapporteurs, with whom I enjoyed sound collaboration in the course of producing this report. The result is something that we can be proud of. A report was adopted in a vote of the Committee on Foreign Affairs by an overwhelming majority of 62 in favour and just 3 against. It is also very important, in this key portfolio, that we speak with one voice, not only in Parliament, but also in the European Institutions as a whole.

I am delighted that, through this resolution, we are expressing our support and solidarity with the millions of demonstrators who have taken to the streets since the disputed presidential elections of 2009. The opposition forces in Iran are in dire need of that support and solidarity now that they are seeing how regimes are falling and presidents resigning elsewhere in the Middle East. The Green movement must feel our support, as the opposition is once again looking for options for how to organise legitimate protests against the Iranian authorities at the risk of their own lives. The fact that that risk is real is proven not only by the arrest of the opposition leaders, Mr Mousavi and Mr Karoubi, but also by the wild and uncontrolled calls from a significant proportion of the Majlis, the Iranian Parliament, to have them put to death. In our resolution, the European Parliament calls on the Iranian authorities to fully and unconditionally cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), based in Vienna. It is precisely Tehran's uncooperative stance that lends Iran's nuclear programme its suspicious air. The concerns of the whole international community are more than justified. That being the case, in my view, it is incomprehensible to send a country like this the message that it has a right to enrich uranium. However true it may be, it is not the signal that the European Parliament should be giving at this crucial point in time. I therefore ask my fellow Members to support my proposals to remove these passages from our resolution. The resolution also goes into Iran's role in the region. Certainly, in the wake of the documents leaked via WikiLeaks on the region's perception of Iran, Parliament will serve Tehran well by sending it a clear message that it must bring an immediate end to exercising its destabilising influence. I therefore ask you all to support the amendments I have tabled on the role of Iran in its neighbour Iraq and on the removal of paragraph 53 from the resolution. In my opinion, the European Parliament already gives sufficient support to the idea that the Union and Iran should have a stable Afghanistan as a common goal in paragraph 55.

As I reach the end of my speech, Mr President, I would like to make one final remark. I am not thin-skinned, and it is precisely for that reason that I want to comment on Iran and its official representatives in Brussels and the national capitals. I have had the opportunity to

take a look at correspondence from Iran to my fellow Members from various sources. The tone and the content of the correspondence must be called remarkable, to say the least. This report – I referred to this earlier – was adopted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on which I serve by an overwhelming majority. For that reason, this resolution must not be seen as a private project of mine, but as a common stance of the European Parliament as a whole. It is therefore not the case that my background as chair of this Parliament's first delegation determined the critical tone of this resolution. On the contrary, in that respect, Iran must be called to account for its own behaviour. The entire European Parliament – and I am thankful for this – accepts neither President Ahmadinejad's anti-Semitic rhetoric nor the denial of the holocaust, although I have to say, unfortunately, that that anti-Semitism is not restricted to the inner circle of the regime.

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*. – Mr President, this is an opportunity to debate the European Union's approach to Iran, which has been the subject of an own-initiative report with Mr Belder as rapporteur.

Mr Belder's report touches on a broad range of issues and reflects the views of many different interests, but I will concentrate on two issues, the nuclear programme and the human rights situation in Iran, both of which the report deals with extensively.

As honourable Members know, Iran's nuclear programme remains a serious concern for the European Union and for the international community as a whole. Both the UN Security Council and the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna have adopted a series of resolutions requiring Iran to take the steps necessary to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its programme. Regrettably, the last IAEA report, issued on 25 February, confirmed Iran's failure to comply with its international obligations.

For the European Union, we remain determined to work towards a diplomatic solution on the basis of our double-track approach, combining pressure with dialogue. The objective remains to engage Iran in a phased approach of confidence building, leading to meaningful negotiations on the nuclear programme.

At the second meeting I led on behalf of the E3+3 – China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – in Istanbul, I presented to Iran our proposals for concrete confidence-building measures, including an updated fuel supply arrangement for the Tehran Research Reactor, as well as other transparency measures.

Honourable Members will know that these proposals would bring immediate benefit for both sides and could pave the way for a process to address concerns and gradually build mutual confidence. And building confidence is what our efforts are all about.

Iran's response was disappointing. It was not ready to discuss our proposals unless we first recognised Iran's 'right to enrich uranium'. It spoke of the removal of all sanctions.

I understand Iran's wish to see sanctions removed. We all want to see our talks come to a successful conclusion which – in accordance with the Security Council resolutions – would mean the sanctions would go. The removal of sanctions is something which would accompany the gradual re-establishment of confidence. That was the path we were trying to go down.

As for the 'right to enrich', the Non-Proliferation Treaty is careful to balance rights and obligations. I see no value in re-writing or re-interpreting it in any selective way. The first step is for Iran to put itself into full compliance with its obligations.

We will continue our efforts engaging Iran but, at the same time, our efforts to increase the pressure, first of all, through a strengthening of the implementation of existing sanctions.

I have since met with the new Foreign Minister of Iran, Dr Salehi, in Geneva, a meeting which gave me the chance to explain to him the efforts we have put into the Iran talks and our strong desire for a response, for the security of all of us. I have also written to Dr Jalili, who led the talks on behalf of Iran, to restate our offer and to invite him to respond. Dr Salehi told me they were considering their response and I urged them to be positive.

Like this Parliament, I share the views of so many on the issue of human rights in Iran. The continued and systematic oppression, arrests and harassment of lawyers, journalists and others who are exercising their rights is totally unacceptable.

We have seen very long prison sentences and restrictions on the right to work and travel for up to 20 years for some of the people convicted. When Iranian people wished to demonstrate peacefully on 14 February in support of the situation in Egypt and Tunisia, the demonstrations were forbidden. Moreover, as Mr Belder has said, Mr Mousavi and Mr Karoubi, the two opposition leaders who had expressed their support for these demonstrations, were held under house arrest and later apparently detained.

I have seen the statement by Socialists and Democrats of the Parliament made on 1 March, and I fully support that. I remain very concerned about the treatment of Mr Karoubi and Mr Mousavi and I issued a statement on 4 March to that effect. Despite our efforts to secure verifiable information, it remains unclear whether they are under house arrest or otherwise imprisoned. I urge the authorities of Iran simply to grant them the freedom of movement to which they are entitled.

The report also underlines the seriousness of the increase in executions in Iran. The information we have suggests there may have been around 100 executions since the beginning of this year. In line with our longstanding and firm position on the abolition of the death penalty, I have called for a halt to all pending death penalty cases. I want the death penalty abolished, whatever the method. Stoning and public hangings are barbaric.

It is important to note that international efforts can and do make a difference. I saw that in the case of Ms Ashtiani. Her execution has – at least temporarily – been stayed, but as the report points out, Zahra Bahrami, a Dutch-Iranian national, was executed in Iran on 29 January with no prior notice. Both the execution and the process leading up to it were shocking. I have made this clear publicly, expressing my dismay over the lack of transparency in the case and that the Dutch authorities were refused consular access.

Let me finish my intervention by mentioning that my services, together with Member States, are discussing how we can be more effective on human rights issues in Iran, using public and private messages, working bilaterally and through multilateral organisations, working with Member States and with international parties, all with a single purpose: to ensure that the Iranian people, like others, have their basic rights respected.

I look forward to this debate.

Michael Gahler, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, I should first like to thank our rapporteur, Mr Belder, for his comprehensive report. As soon as it

is now put to a vote, it will be passed by a large majority here in this plenary. It is really important that the regime in Tehran must not succeed in breaking a broad common front even in this Chamber. As regards the nuclear ambitions of the leadership, the international community stands together at the United Nations. No one in the world wants the Iranian bomb. We all want complete and transparent collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Agency. We have made wide-ranging offers. Unfortunately, they have not met with a positive response.

In this House, we are not quite all of one mind as to how far we should enforce international demands with sanctions. I hope, however, that in our overall view of the situation, we are coming to a common way to proceed.

The second aspect that worries us is Iran's role in the region. Iran's attitude to Israel remains intolerable and unacceptable. Its support for organisations that destabilise the region cannot be tolerated. Large parts of the region are in fear of Iran's policy. The internal political situation is dramatic where human rights and democracy are concerned. It is for that reason that I harbour the wish that this great people of culture will rid itself of this leadership sooner rather than later.

I am very confident that we shall not see a second Iran in Egypt, but rather a second Egypt in Iran. Then we should see an end to the exploitation of religion for very secular aims. Then one hopes that there would be an end to the death penalty in general and, in particular, for minors and members of minorities. Then there would be an end to the persecution of dissidents, not only of Mr Karoubi and Mr Mousavi, and then one hopes there would be press freedom and a path to free elections for a better Iran.

On the way there, we must put our European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights to use among other things, so as to allow support to be given to active players in civil society. Targeted sanctions against representatives of the regime must also be extended. In the light of the events in North Africa, let us also give Iranians the courage for a better future.

María Muñiz De Urquiza, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (ES) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, I am very pleased that the approach of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is the dual approach of discussing human rights and the nuclear issue on a practically equal footing, because Iran is a contradictory example to the world and to the countries surrounding it which, immersed in democratic reform processes and guided by the legitimate democratic aspirations of their peoples, see in Iran exactly what they do not want for themselves, and that is what we are denouncing in the report that will possibly be adopted tomorrow.

First of all, it is a technocratic regime that subjugates its people and violates human rights, by applying the death penalty – and I should like to mention the case of Zahra Bahrami in particular – by disempowering women, by persecuting homosexuals and by suppressing dissidence.

It is also a contradictory example as regards political freedoms. The repression of demonstrators, which is going on right now and has been going on since 2009, is absolutely unacceptable, just as the detention of the leaders of the democratic opposition movement is unacceptable. On behalf of my group, I am demanding the immediate freeing of the opposition leaders, Mr Mousavi and Mr Karoubi, and their wives, as well as of all the people

under arrest for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of assembly.

Iran is also a contradictory example in terms of negotiations with the international community on the nuclear issue.

A responsible attitude by Iran in this area, as well as in that of human rights, a different focus in the region as regards Hamas and Hezbollah, and different rhetoric in relation to Israel, would make Iran an important partner and player in the region's stabilisation, which is another of the things we are calling for in this report.

Baroness Ashton, it is important to open a European Union delegation in Tehran, not only so that we can have a political dialogue with the Iranian regime, but also with a view to civil society.

Finally, I should like to thank Mr Belder for the work he has done with the shadow rapporteurs so that we were able to balance this report and make it acceptable to the entire European Parliament.

Marietje Schaake, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, is Ahmadinejad better than Gaddafi? While the international community is rightly focused on Libya and seeks ways to end the violence Gaddafi and his collaborators inflict on citizens, let us not allow Iran to be snowed under in our political agendas. A massacre is also happening in Iran, but it happens in slow motion. One execution every eight hours since the start of this year, and systematic repression, torture, rape and censorship have been rampant during the Islamic Republic, and, in particular, since the elections in 2009.

Ahmadinejad is no better than Gaddafi and we need to invoke similarly harsh measures to protect human rights in Iran. Some might argue that sanctions are in place, but these only focus on the nuclear issue without yielding the desired results. In fact, this risks becoming a zero sum game vis-à-vis human rights as impunity meanwhile continues.

Madam Vice-President/High Representative, in this report, the European Parliament gives you the mandate to impose sanctions on individuals responsible for the grave human rights abuses that we see, and we have made this recommendation before. A list of 80 names has been leaked and attributed to your office. I want to ask whether this is a sign of your inclination to move ahead with this important measure.

We also need to provide technologies for citizens to communicate freely and to access information, and the EU needs to be a safe haven for free thinkers. Vice-President/High Representative, let the EU lead on efforts to hold accountable individuals who rape women before execution so that there is absolutely no chance they may end up in heaven as virgins, men who shoot dead unarmed youths from rooftops while they walk in the streets, and the judges who convict human rights lawyers for defending juveniles and women. Let us hold accountable a system that allows *de facto* imprisonment of opposition leaders.

When Libya is discussed on Friday, please use the momentum to introduce similar measures against those in power in Iran so that justice can be done to the Iranian citizens who, in 2009, started the massive youth uprisings that now inspire a generation in the Middle East and in North Africa.

Barbara Lochbihler, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, the report before us, on which all groups have worked intensively together, represents a very good basis on which the EU can construct its Iran policy. The various issues on which we disagree

with the Iranian Government are dealt with as a single overall challenge: the nuclear programme and Iran's relations with its neighbours, the catastrophic human rights situation in the country and the difficult economic situation. Unemployment has risen to enormous proportions; one in four Iranians is living below the poverty line.

Baroness Ashton, you must now draw some conclusions from the report. We Europeans must not stand by while critics of the regime, trade unionists, women's rights workers and those of different faiths are detained, tortured and murdered. We must try, plainly harder than before, to put pressure on those responsible for human rights violations, through targeted sanctions, such as restricting entry or freezing their accounts.

The European External Action Service must equally examine which economic sanctions actually hit the target and which of them merely impact upon the Iranian people. A policy of complete isolation will just lead us up a dead end and also fails to find favour with many Iranians.

Parliament has, with this report, made it unmistakeably clear that democratic change cannot be brought about by external military means. We must stick to a double-track strategy going forward, under which we try to engage in dialogue while unambiguously insisting on respect for universal rights and compliance with international treaties. It is in this context that we must understand the demand to open an EU delegation in Tehran now that the European External Action Service has taken over responsibility from the rotating Presidency of the EU for representing the EU in third countries.

Charles Tannock, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, High Representative, Iran to me represents the most serious threat to global security. President Ahmadinejad is determined to arm his country with nuclear weapons and the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran is too terrifying to contemplate, posing an existential threat to Israel. This is why we must consider all options, including military ones, to prevent it.

Iran has deceived and obstructed the international community time and time again. Sadly, the European Union has, at times, allowed itself to be manipulated by Ahmadinejad.

While the Council regularly denounces the barbaric theocratic regime in Tehran, individual Member States have sometimes taken a less robust approach. Indeed, it is only a few months ago that EU leaders agreed to proscribe export credit guarantees to Iran. Until then, these guarantees represented a vital lifeline of an economic nature to the regime which craves any vestige of legitimacy, not least because of Ahmadinejad's contempt for human rights, as evidenced by the regular execution of homosexuals, political dissenters and minors.

(The President asked the speaker to speak more slowly so as to permit interpretation)

Mr President, everybody understands English, as far as I am concerned.

I am sorry. I will speak at the speed I wish to.

Indeed, Iran seems to feature in this Parliament's human rights debates more frequently than any other country. EU Member States need to understand the importance of a united and impervious approach to Iran's machinations.

In particular, we also need to understand that unless we thwart Iran's nuclear ambitions and also its support for terrorism, the region will undoubtedly be thrown into an arms race.

Given the inherent instability in the Middle East and Gulf region, which is only too apparent now to all of us, that will be a disaster with unknowable consequences for the future.

Sabine Lösing, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (DE) Mr President, the Belder report has been considerably improved by the amendments, and my group can agree with a great number of statements. Unfortunately, for all that they are correct, it primarily contains descriptions of the situation, but the underlying philosophy of a realistic future perspective has not been developed.

The human rights situation in Iran is intolerable. However, sanctions will not bring about a lasting improvement in this situation. In order to promote democratisation in Iran, we must do everything we can to make the international situation less tense. Worsening international relations brings with it the danger that further anti-democratic measures will be taken inside Iran, which will result in weakening the opposition. A policy of detente would also have to put an end to every form of threatening behaviour. Negotiations and international relations can only be successful if diplomatic recognition of all partners is a given. Only in this way can meaningful compromises in the dispute on the nuclear programme be achieved.

I have set out our ideas for a carefully targeted Iran strategy in an alternative motion for a resolution, and on the grounds that I have described, I shall call for the Belder report to be rejected.

Fiorello Provera, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to begin by congratulating Mr Belder on his excellent work.

Whilst the world is watching the revolt in the Arab world, Iran continues to repress dissidents. The arrest of the two leaders of the opposition, Mr Mousavi and Mr Karoubi, is the most obvious proof of this. The West took action against Mr Gaddafi, but it continues to dither over Iran, perhaps because Mr Gaddafi has already fallen whilst Mr Ahmadinejad so far has not.

The largest rebellion since the post-electoral revolts of 2009 is currently under way in Iran. What are we waiting for before we freeze all the assets held by Mr Ahmadinejad, the companies controlled by the revolutionary guard and all supporters of the regime who are involved in this repression? What are we waiting for in order to impose travel restrictions on these figures of the regime?

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) Mr President, as is well known, it remains open to doubt whether the Iranian nuclear programme is really intended for peaceful purposes. For this reason, Iran's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency is particularly important. It is crucial in order to confirm to the international community that Iran is applying nuclear energy for civil purposes.

With regard to Middle East policy, it is up to Mr Ahmadinejad finally to make it clear that Iran poses no threat to Israel and also that it recognises Israel's right to exist within the borders recognised by international law. Disarmament and the creation of a nuclear-free zone should, in my opinion, be an important goal of the EU's Middle East policy, in order to guarantee peace and security in this region.

Iran is naturally an important player in the Middle East. With this in mind, I am pleased to gather from Mr Belder's most comprehensive report that there is constructive cooperation with the EU on the question of Afghanistan in order to increase security and stability in

this region. It is only in this way that we can remove the breeding ground from radical Islam or Islamism, which is rearing its ugly head increasingly often in Europe too.

Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE). – (NL) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, ladies and gentlemen, two years ago, in other words, before the demonstrations in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, the people of Tehran took to the streets. They did so at the risk of their own lives. They took to the streets because they wanted greater democracy. They also wanted to protest against the intolerance and repression of a flawed regime. I am therefore pleased that the emphasis in this report is on human rights and I congratulate Mr Belder for that. The lesson that we need to learn is that we have to do everything in our power to assist the opposition and all those who have demonstrated. We need to extend a helping hand to them against the regime.

Why do we have to do so? We have to do so because the regime has the money and the oil and those who are being oppressed will only be able to achieve anything if we also make an effort. I think it is a very good thing that we are very clear about this point in paragraph 32 of your report, Mr Belder. Mr President, when I see the repression, I would also like to hear from you what we are doing when it comes to the opposition leader, Mr Mousavi. Are we still paying attention to the fate of Mr Karoubi? What specific options do we, as the European Union, have in order to provide more support?

Proof of the dynamism of Iranian society can also be seen in the one million signatures campaign, a campaign led by women who have been collecting one million signatures for the cause of opposing discriminatory legislation. I want to pay sincere tribute to these brave women. I would like Baroness Ashton to tell me where she can offer consular assistance, as this is not always offered.

Marita Ulvskog (S&D). – (SV) Mr President, violations of human rights in Iran are extensive and are also thought to be on the increase. There has been a definite deterioration in the situation in most areas, particularly when it comes to freedom of expression. There are threats to carry out a number of death penalties to which attention has been called; intellectuals, students and dissidents are persecuted; people are tortured; and women and ethnic and religious minorities continue to be discriminated against. The list can go on.

This is something that was already disturbingly evident at the time of the election in 2009 and that continues to be so. All of us who, on various occasions, meet official representatives of Iran, are also met with more severity and implacability. In the light of this, I would like to say that I think the priorities that Baroness Ashton has outlined – which is to say human rights, strong existing sanctions and the nuclear programme – are the right ones and should clearly be our main concern.

However, the sternness of the EU's reactions towards Iran must be made stronger and clearer. We need to be more implacable, too, when it comes to crimes against humanity. There comes a time when polite conversation is actually a form of deceit, and I believe that we are at that point now in relation to Iran.

Marit Paulsen (ALDE). – (SV) Mr President, I would like to thank Mr Belder for a very good report. I am a member of the delegation to Iran and I receive letters from the Iranian regime in which they address me in God's name, which I find extremely unpleasant. On this pretext, they are succeeding in creating what, on the basis of Mr Belder's report, can be clearly described as hell on earth. It is incredible and hard to believe.

I have a little idea and a dream that I would like to present to Baroness Ashton in this context. When you build a big new building for the External Action Service, would you possibly have room for a little office for a small group of people who could gather information on who the torturers, executioners and judges are in these grotesque societies that surround us, so that they know that we are monitoring their behaviour closely?

Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, Mrs Ashton, I would like to congratulate Mr Belder for an excellent report. I have the impression that the European Union has a double standard, and that we very severely criticise regimes just as they begin to crumble and fall. The example of Libya is a case in point. Meanwhile, we remain silent, guided too often by a variety of reasons – which include the economic interests of certain countries – when it comes to those regimes which are doing well. The Iranian regime is doing well, and the report's criticism of it is completely justified. What has been going on for years in Iran is something which is absolutely unacceptable. The European Parliament must speak about this. We must say what we think about the death penalty, about torture and about the fact that the hopes which – let us remember – were associated with the fall of Shah Reza Shah Pahlavi have completely failed. On the contrary – things are even worse.

Barry Madlener (NI). – (NL) Mr President, I would like to start by offering my compliments to Mr Belder on his outstanding report. Mr Belder has written a very pointed report that takes a stone-hard line on Iran. It is the right line to take. The dictator, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, just carries on killing his own citizens, while political opponents are tortured. Rumour has it that the Dutch citizen, Zahra Bahrami, was also tortured and I have asked for this to be looked into.

I would like to ask the left-wing socialists and the appalling Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance in this House not to water down this report with all sorts of different amendments. The criminal Ahmadinejad regime continues to threaten Israel and is attempting to exert its influence in Egypt. Ideally, Iran would like to see the advent of an Islamic republic including political ayatollahs, Sharia law, the stoning of women and the hanging of homosexuals. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, for many Muslims, that is what pure Islam stands for. Iranian warships have even sailed through the Suez canal, a downright provocative gesture to the West and to Israel. I will make that my last point.

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE). – (LT) Mr President, the European Union's relations with Iran are more than a little ambivalent. We are allowing ourselves to be manipulated. We are talking about democracy, the democracy clause, but we detect a distinct smell of oil and gas. If we do not have the goal of democracy in our hearts, let it be trampled on along with human rights. A few years ago, I was astonished by public information on the powerful construction machinery that European Union companies are providing Tehran with. This included deep mining equipment to build underground plants, where a nuclear weapon is most probably being produced. Tehran already has rockets able to reach almost the whole of Europe, so why not help them produce just what we always wanted for Christmas. European deep excavation machinery is digging a hole both for the Iranian nation, if Israel fails to hold its nerve faced with the spectre of a second exodus, and also for Europe and the whole world. It does not seem as if Europe is ready for this scale of challenge, above all, nuclear Iran's hegemony in the Near East and Northern Africa. Is anyone analysing current events in this respect?

Other notable equipment includes powerful German and Dutch construction cranes, which Tehran is using for the public execution of so-called criminals and opponents of the regime.

It is said that hanging using these European cranes is particularly cruel and the agony lasts for a long period. Today, the executions of sinners continue, as does the supply of equipment from Europe.

Hopefully, the Iranian authorities will not order Mistral aircraft carriers in Saint-Nazaire, but will be able to acquire them a little later in Russia, built under a French licence. There will definitely be a need for the Mistrals, so that the countries of the Persian Gulf feel the gun at their heads. The feelings of small countries around the Baltic and Black Seas are of little concern to anyone, but the Persian Gulf is close to Europe's belly. I suggest we consider this.

Zoran Thaler (S&D). – (SL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the tragedy of Iran is great. Thirty years after the revolution against the Shah's dictatorship, a simple question arises: can Iran be considered a civilised country at all? The barbarity of the Iranian regime is reflected in its many diverse forms of oppression and in its anachronisms. Women, dissidents, anyone who thinks differently, young people, people of same-sex orientation and so on and so on are being oppressed.

What can we do about this? On the one hand, the European Union needs a policy towards Iran and it needs to impose sanctions that will hurt the main representatives of the regime. Let us prevent them from travelling and doing business, and that includes the Revolutionary Guard. On the other hand, let us help young people and those fighting for human rights and democratic change.

Ensuring free access to information, freedom of the press, television, radio and especially the Internet is key. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are the strongest weapons for those who are humiliated and outraged, the numbers of whom in Iran are very large. We have a responsibility to protect them.

Norica Nicolai (ALDE). – (RO) Mr President, in 2005, this regime came to power with a message promoting nationalism and justice. Even now, we have failed to turn Iran into a democratic regime. All that we have managed is to witness the development of the only country which promotes a despotic regime on a large scale, worthy of the dark Middle Ages. Fellow Members, I believe that Iran is becoming one of the burning issues in our foreign policy because we risk ignoring the huge influence it has in North Africa through funding terrorist-type movements, by which I mean Hamas and Hezbollah.

Unless the European Union carries out a clear assessment of Iran's influence in this region, we are at risk of this lack of democracy in Iran becoming established. More than that, we face within Europe a serious weakness and the risk of a threat to our security. I believe that it is time for solutions to stop following the traditional principle encouraged by Talleyrand, which is to dance and then come to a clear, firm decision.

Peter van Dalen (ECR). – (NL) Mr President, Mr Belder's report is a very good one, as it is both realistic and pragmatic. As far as I am concerned, the report could still have been much stronger in its criticism of the reprehensible Ahmadinejad regime. This villain denies the holocaust and would like nothing better than to drive the state of Israel into the sea with no time to lose. Christians literally have no life under Ahmadinejad. What is more, he oppresses his own people in an appalling way. Never have so many people been executed as over the last year. The EU must therefore continue to support the forces of opposition, which focus on democracy and human rights. The Ahmadinejad regime cannot be tackled hard enough. I am talking about sanctions and targeted actions against the Iranian nuclear

programme, as happened with the Stuxnet virus. I look forward to the day that this regime falls. Today would not be soon enough!

Nicole Sinclaire (NI). – Mr President, human rights defenders in Iran are subject to death threats, acts of harassment, arbitrary arrest, judicial harassment, stigmatisation, violent attacks, ill treatment, torture and killings. Women human rights defenders are particularly at risk in Iran. Freedoms of expression, association and assembly are severely restricted in Iran and often come with severe penalties.

The death penalty is also arbitrarily used, especially on minors. However, what I find considerably disturbing is how the European Union actually deals with Iran. Once again, our High Representative seems to talk a lot but do very little. I have often, and I repeat it again today, invited her to the Subcommittee on Human Rights to actually be questioned on her activities in the area of human rights.

She has told us today how important human rights are to her, but when has she ever come to the Human Rights Subcommittee? She is willing to send her underlings, but she is not willing to have a democratic cross-examination by this House. She will listen to our speeches, come up with some rambling, pre-prepared statement and then go home. That is not democracy, Ms Ashton.

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

Richard Howitt (S&D). – Mr President, I do not want to take up too much time. I just want to ask Ms Sinclaire this: when the High Representative comes to a special plenary sitting of the whole Parliament to discuss the annual human rights report and is cross-questioned by MEPs from across the whole Parliament, does she not think that this is a more satisfactory way for us to hold the High Representative to account on the human rights record than asking her to attend the subcommittee of the Parliament, even one that I dearly cherish?

Nicole Sinclaire (NI). – Mr President, with respect to my colleague, it is actually not satisfactory because as he knows – and if he spent as much time in the Human Rights Subcommittee as I do, he would – it is in committees that we actually get a chance to have more than one say and more than one minute, and then we actually get a direct response.

I have made many comments on the issues of human rights and I have yet to have one reply from Baroness Ashton – one reply – so how is that? I repeat that this is about democracy. I represent five million people. I have been elected here. Baroness Ashton has not received a vote in her life.

Paweł Zalewski (PPE). – *(PL)* Mr President, Mrs Ashton, I would like to congratulate Mr Belder for an excellent report. It is to be welcomed, too, that the report was amended during the negotiations. I think that with these amendments it has now been given the appropriate wording. The entire international community, which attaches great importance to democracy and human rights, is alarmed by what has been going on over many years in Iran, and we are trying to decide what measures should be taken. They must, of course, come from within Iran. Hence, it is obvious that the European Union supports the Iranian opposition.

I think there are three issues which we should now raise and which may influence policy in Iran. The first matter concerns our policy of cooperation with Turkey in relation to Iran. Turkey is an important partner for the European Union. It is a country ruled by a party for

which the Islamic tradition is important, but it is also ruled in a way which is much closer to European standards. The second matter is cooperation with Russia. We should put pressure on Russia to work still more closely with the European Union and the United States, so that cooperation with Iran does not look as it does today. Thirdly, the last matter, and one which is very important, is that of the anti-missile shield. The European Union should work with NATO and the United States to ensure that the shield is built in Europe.

Pino Arlacchi (S&D). – Mr President, the initial text of this report was criticised for its aggressive language, focusing mostly on Iran's nuclear programme, neglecting the human rights concern and lacking a positive perspective for future cooperation. The numerous amendments presented by my group and by others correct these flaws, and the current text is a balanced one. It distinguishes the two main dossiers: human rights abuses by the current government and the Iranian nuclear programme.

The two dossiers are not the same thing, and it is irresponsible to make threats to Iran of war or international intervention, as I have heard suggested in this Parliament today. If you want to strengthen Ahmadinejad, just continue to do so, because all Iranians, regardless of their political positions, will take a stand against any foreign intervention. The current policy that the European Council and also the High Representative are taking is the right one, because it is based on a careful appreciation of the situation on the ground.

Geoffrey Van Orden (ECR). – Mr President, first of all, I congratulate Mr Belder on his excellent report. Iran has the potential influence and wealth to be either a force for good or a force for evil in the greater Middle East. Regrettably, its regime has become a force for evil masquerading in religious garb. Iran's nuclear weapon programme is cause for enormous regional and international concern. Iran has become a source of extremist doctrine, it carries out and sponsors acts of international terrorism, has a dangerous influence on populations of young Shias in the Gulf States, in Iraq and in Lebanon and does not hesitate to ally with Sunni terrorist groups in Gaza and beyond. It has helped train and arm terrorists that have attacked NATO forces in Afghanistan and it is a human rights abuser. It would be tragically ironic if a tyranny such as Iran became the main beneficiary of the desire for greater freedom that we have seen so dramatically expressed across the Arab world in recent weeks and in a most sickening example of hypocrisy – I am just finishing Mr President – President Ahmadinejad has told the Egyptian people that they have the right to express their own views about their country.

(The President cut off the speaker)

George Sabin Cutaş (S&D). – (RO) Mr President, the international community is looking almost helplessly on as the human rights situation deteriorates in Iran. However, we should not overlook the instruments we have available to make our voice heard. The Treaty of Lisbon provides us, through the position of High Representative, with a means of persuading the Iranian Government that human rights must not be restricted through repression. They are an inalienable privilege of the individual and must not be brought into question by any political regime. Mass executions, particularly those involving juveniles, stoning, discrimination against women and minorities and torture are, unfortunately, part of a much longer list.

Democratic change cannot be imposed from outside. However, the European Union must constantly support the people inside this country, and not only through making statements, who are risking their lives every day to protest against these injustices.

Jan Zahradil (ECR). – (CS) Mr President, in light of what is happening in the Arab world, in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere, the rigidity and immobility of the Iranian regime is even more apparent. It is an intolerant regime, a fundamentalist regime, a regime which murders political opponents, and a regime which must be kept under international pressure. We must support the Iranian opposition in exile, which is legitimate, and we have European Parliament resolutions on this. It is necessary, among other things, to monitor the situation in the Ashraf refugee camp in Iraq, where there are more than 3 000 Iranian refugees from exiled opposition organisations, and where there is a risk of a humanitarian catastrophe, and it is necessary to provide protection to these people. I would therefore like to hear a clear opinion from Baroness Ashton on this matter, and I would like to hear a clear statement as to how, under her leadership, the EU will be helping these refugees in the Ashraf camp.

Tunne Kelam (PPE). – Mr President, now that the EU is calling for an immediate end to the brutal Gaddafi dictatorship and insists on completely isolating him, the same applies to the brutal and bloody Iranian regime. Cherishing hopes for confidence building is not a realistic option any more, especially since Tehran has completely eroded its credibility regarding its nuclear programme.

Instead, we should address the great potential of people-led democratic change in Iran. True, this change cannot be imposed from outside. However, the EU's priority should be to extend our clear moral and political support to these forces. I have especially in mind blacklisting top Iranian officials (Ms Schaake mentioned eighty names), supporting the start of Farsi-language Euronews broadcasts and insisting that parliamentary relations – if any – should be conducted under strict conditionality.

Ioan Mircea Paşcu (S&D). – Mr President, the current dogma is that Iran will be the big winner of the revolutions in North Africa and beyond. This is possible but less probable.

Firstly, the Iranian model is not exactly what the young people who are revolting in these countries are aspiring to. Secondly, the regime does not enjoy internal peace in order to concentrate exclusively on promoting a more assertive foreign policy. Finally, because other countries like Turkey – or even Egypt after, but also during, transition – are powerful competitors to Iran's ambitions.

Of course, Iran can always derive a degree of influence through proxies, but that would probably not prove decisive in gaining control in those countries. Paradoxically, the only way to derive an advantage would be to look at the current developments as an opportunity to start reinserting Iran into the international community. It would be a long road but the only sensible one for Iran.

I congratulate Mr Belder on an excellent report.

Antonia Parvanova (ALDE). – Mr President, I would like to thank Mr Belder for his excellent report. Just one day after celebrating the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day, I would like to make a special point about the situation of women in Iran, and please allow me to dedicate this speech not only to Sakineh Ashtiani and Zahra Bahrami, but to all women put in jail and those who are missing because of the current Iranian repression.

The EU has to take into account the aspirations for democratic change of the people of Iran and the unacceptable situation that Iranian women have to face. We know that there is discrimination, and even political and social repression, affecting women in this country,

and we should echo these unacceptable facts when considering our approach towards Iran.

While the situation is currently deteriorating, women's rights activists in the country have continued taking the lead in opposing the current repression and denial of civil liberties and human rights. Women's rights should not be an optional negotiation point and I hope, Madam Vice-President/High Representative, that the EU will uphold this violence without compromising them.

Nikolaos Salavrakos (EFD). – (EL) Mr President, the report by Mr Belder, as presented to us, is an accurate, balanced and objective report. I personally sympathise with the people of Iran, who are an ancient nation with an ancient culture and important traditions. Iran is a rich oil-producing nation and has an important geopolitical position in the Middle East. The systematic violation of human rights noted in the report and by all the speakers does not sit well with such a nation with such a tradition. First of all, however, the Ahmadinejad government needs to realise this and take the necessary measures. This country's insistence on pursuing a nuclear programme which is unacceptable to the international community has caused massive tension in the area and raised huge questions. Whatever else, it does nothing whatsoever for geopolitical stability in the area.

We must not forget or overlook the massive uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East and the fact that the Muslim communities are turning towards a political Islam.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Mr President, the green revolution and the latest protests demonstrate quite clearly that there is great potential for civil society in Iran. This must be supported, for it is the only way that a democratic opening can develop.

Unfortunately, sanctions often hit precisely this young and active civil society. The holding of Tests of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL tests) has been abandoned, for example. This test is, however, a prerequisite for study at most Anglo-American universities. The victims of this abandonment are thus internationally minded students.

The report uncritically proposes further sanctions, such as restrictions on the export of technology for mobile phone and communications networks, yet it is precisely these rapid communications and information technologies that are needed to spread pluralistic ideas. Ultimately, it will be the third countries China, Russia and India, who will carry on doing business, exporting and securing raw materials for themselves, and who will unfortunately not comply with these sanctions, who will be left laughing.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, at the moment, Iran is joining the Arab states which are seeking their path to democracy, and the situation in the country is described in detail in the report drafted by Mr Belder. The Tehran regime is firmly opposed to change, with its suppression of demonstrations and arrest of the movement's leaders. I strongly condemn this stance which has been predominant in Iranian society for a good number of years. The people are asking for their right to free expression and the government ought to listen to their requests.

Furthermore, the Iranian authorities have turned violating human rights into a habit. At this point, I would like to mention Neda, the 'Angel of Iran'. They support the use of the death penalty, stoning, the execution of juvenile criminals, all by ignoring their international obligations. Iran's nuclear ambitions are also endangering the population. Operations in the newest nuclear energy plant had to be halted recently due to contamination risks.

Mitro Repo (S&D). – (FI) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, this report is especially welcome because the European Union must have a clear and consistent strategy for countries like Iran. Over what was just an 18month period, in 2008 and 2009, Parliament adopted a position on access to justice for 36 Iranian people in connection with single human rights violations. This is more than with any one other country. Moreover, each of them would deserve being mentioned and remembered individually here even now.

Where Iran is concerned, human rights should not be accorded secondary status with trade and tariff preferences. That is morally wrong and to the EU's shame. That is why the European Union and Parliament must, in future, closely monitor developments in Iran's human rights situation.

Peter Šťastný (PPE). – Mr President, I also want to join my colleagues in the call to support the Iranian opposition and provide for better protection of refugees in Camp Ashraf. These poor people and their families are constant targets of a brutal and vicious Iranian regime. Adding to their plight is the daily harassment and hostile attitude of Iraqi forces who are supposed to protect them.

Madam High Representative, let us not forget these sorely tried people. Together, we need to ensure that the EU plays a key role in their transition from persecuted opposition to a democratic government. After all, it is in everybody's interest to see – and hopefully soon – a stable and democratic Iran whose citizens enjoy the same freedom and rights as we do here in the EU.

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, I think that this has been an interesting debate and I wanted to just deal with the two specific issues that were raised in a sense outside of the debate before winding up on that matter.

Ms Paulsen asked me whether we could find space in the – I think the word was 'glittering' – new building, to be able to have people working on the issues of concern in human rights. Can I just say that I was delighted that Madam Hautala, the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, wrote to me to say that she was pleased with the design of how we plan to deal with human rights within the new organisation. However, I am only moving people into one building to remove them from eight buildings where they are currently scattered around Brussels, believing as I do that enabling people to work together will make us more effective. We will have to squeeze them in, because I am also trying to save money on the way. Therefore I hope, when you see what we do, that the word 'glittering' will be a nice word and not a word, I fear, that suggests I am trying to do something that I genuinely am not.

In response to Ms Sinclair: the way that I was told to respond on human rights issues by Parliament, by decision of this House, was to attend regularly the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) to which the subcommittees – of which the Subcommittee on Human Rights is one – would be invited and where they would be able to put questions to me. I have done that and I am more than happy to meet with Ms Hautala, as I do, and to respond to queries from her, as well as to attend the plenary debates in this House. I am more than happy to try and do more; I simply ask you to recognise that there is a limit to the amount of hours I have got in the day and the number of things I can do. But it is not out of any disrespect to the Committee or indeed to you personally at all; far from it. I do hope that you will feel able to contact my office with issues of concern and indeed to attend the meetings where I am able to come and speak.

I am very well aware of my own background in terms of being a leader of a House of Parliament and not being elected, but I was very privileged to be elected by this House and, of course, to be invited into this role by 27 Heads of State and the President of the Commission. As far as that goes, I am very mindful of my responsibilities.

In relation to the debate itself and the human rights issues that have, in a sense, dominated our debate: I am trying to look at what more we can do. I will not comment on what currently is being dealt with specifically because I want to present this when we finish the work, but we are talking to human rights activists and to organisations, as well as considering across the 27 Member States what might be a more effective way of being able to address this issue and to put as much pressure as we possibly can.

As regards Mr Karoubi and Mr Mousavi, as I have said, it is even difficult to establish precisely whether they are in prison or under house arrest. I am trying to continue to get that clarification. Of course, we are supporting the resolution in Geneva for a special rapporteur on Iran. We do raise these issues directly as well; it is really important that we all stand together in pushing forward on human rights in Iran. Many honourable Members have raised specific cases and the terrible record that this country has, and we need to do as much as we possibly can and I think we can do better if we do that together.

Finally, on the nuclear issue: I spent four and a half days in direct discussions with the Iranian negotiators and I am very clear in what I am trying to do, which is to provide an opportunity for this country, for Iran, to show what it keeps saying, to demonstrate that it is moving in a civil nuclear power direction and not in a nuclear weapons direction. As I have said to them, it is not difficult: what they have to do is be open and transparent, to allow the inspectors to do the job they are supposed to do and to do the confidence building that we have oftentimes explained to them in great detail. It is for them to choose. I am absolutely clear as well that the Security Council and my role with the E3+3 will continue to put pressure on to try and make sure this happens. What is really encouraging is that although I lead the negotiations, I do so with the E3+3 sitting with me; and that shows very clearly to Iran that we are totally united in our approach, and I pay tribute to all those who work with me. They have to show the political will to do what is necessary; and if they do not, I say to the honourable Members, we will have to do more to keep the pressure on.

IN THE CHAIR: ALEJO VIDAL-QUADRAS

Vice-President

Bastiaan Belder, *rappporteur*. – (NL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, let me start by offering you all my sincere thanks for your valuable contributions to this debate. I listened very attentively to what you had to say. Your contribution makes it clear what my intention is with this report, namely, to point out that our fundamental rights – our human rights, which are so fundamental and form the basis of our existence – are also the rights of the Iranians. For me, it is identical. In other words, the attention that we pay to fundamental rights and to their observance is essential. I am convinced that such observance also creates future prospects for Iran, and specifically for the youth of the country. It struck me during the debate that Mrs Lösing – who is no longer present, unfortunately – hit the nail on the head with regard to future prospects. That is certainly something that is close to my heart.

If we just take a look at the facts, we see that for years on end now, over 150 000 young, highly-educated Iranians have left the Islamic Republic precisely because of the lack of any

prospects for the future. They did so not only because of the repression, but also because of the oppressive socio-economic situation and the climate of a lack of freedom. The bottom line – and I was told this by an insider who is also an economist – is that this alone generates a loss of 40 billion a year, and that is not including the brain drain. Through my report, what I wanted to highlight was precisely that the attention we pay and the promotion we give to more leeway and the observance of human rights truly provide some future prospects in Iran. This also benefits the region in terms of overall security.

Finally, Baroness Ashton, I was really curious when I found out – I had not been aware of this, but my fellow Members brought it up – that a couple of weeks ago in the American press, a report circulated that there is, in actual fact, to be a list of serious violations of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and of those responsible, from top to bottom, right down to the jailors in the prisons. I would be extremely appreciative if you were to follow the American example in respect of a list of this kind, as we would not then all merely focus on those bringing about nuclear proliferation and thus threatening world security, but also on the terrible prevailing climate in Iran. At the same time, this sends a signal to the Iranians that we are looking at the whole picture in Iran, not just at the nuclear threat, and that we nonetheless believe that Iran should be a normal civil society, in line with the high level of civilisation that the country has traditionally enjoyed throughout its history.

Finally, you must not think ill of me in relation to the fact that for me, as a Protestant, the freedom of religion is extraordinarily important. Let me be clear on this point: for the Sunnis – the minority – for the Baha'i, for Christians and Jews – this is such a terribly embarrassing point – my report unfortunately is already out-of-date, I admit straight away. I say this as there has been a tidal wave of repression that has hit the Sunnis, the Baha'i and Christians, in particular, over recent months, and I apologise to my fellow Members that my report is not up-to-date in that regard. For me, this is a spur to do more with Iran – I am working on the basis of an open-door policy – and I hope to be in touch with you on a regular basis in order to help bring about an Iran with a future for its entire population.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place at midday on Thursday, 10 March.

15. 16th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (Geneva, 28 February - 25 March 2011) (debate)

President. – The next item is the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the 16th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (Geneva, 28 February – 25 March 2011).

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, I am pleased we also have the chance this afternoon to debate the work of the UN Human Rights Council and, in a sense, to look at how we can strengthen its overall impact.

As honourable Members may know, I addressed the Council last week together with many Foreign Ministers from across the world. For obvious reasons on that occasion, the situation in Libya was at the heart of our discussions.

I am pleased that the international community sent a strong and united political signal regarding the ongoing human rights violations in Libya. Already before the High-Level Segment, the Council had called for an inquiry and recommended the suspension of Libya's membership of the Council – which, as you know, has since been confirmed by the General Assembly in a unanimous decision.

All that is proof that multilateral institutions can live up to their mandate and can act in what we call real time. As I stressed in my remarks there, the UN Human Rights Council has a responsibility to ensure that stated intentions are translated into real action and real progress. I think that Ms Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, whom I met in Geneva, is giving exactly the right direction politically in order to make a difference on the ground. What matters in the end is not the number of resolutions that are passed, but results in the real world that make a difference to people who are in need.

I also emphasised that human rights are universal. I pointed out that we in Europe reject the accusation that somehow, the EU is trying to 'export' so-called European values to other countries. The rights to free speech, freedom of assembly, justice and equality are not European rights: they are universal rights. We must never fall into the trap of believing that people in other parts of the world – whether it is Africa, Asia or Latin America – should be any less passionate about their rights. That is why we speak out and we act against human rights violations wherever they occur.

We also recognise that Europe's own path on human rights protection has not been a straight line and that constant efforts are also needed inside Europe. At the Human Rights Council, we are ready to discuss our own challenges, share experiences and offer support to those working to improve respect for human rights around the world.

We have several priorities for the 16th session of the Human Rights Council and we have discussed these actively with our partners.

The EU will present an initiative on freedom of religion or belief. Faced in recent months with an increasing number of acts of religious discrimination and violence in different parts of the world, we need to send a strong, collective message against religious intolerance and in favour of the freedom of religion or belief for all people everywhere.

We will also table resolutions on Burma/Myanmar and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We believe that in both cases, the severity and number of human rights violations justify the extension of the mandates of the respective UN Special Rapporteurs.

The EU also supports the initiative to create a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, as proposed by several countries and regions. We are seriously concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran. This was highlighted by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navi Pillay. A particular concern is the dramatically increasing number of death penalty cases – more than 100 so far this year, as we discussed in our previous debate – and the repression of those exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

We feel the Council should address the situation in Egypt in an appropriate manner, taking into account the rapidly evolving situation in that country. The EU welcomes Egypt's invitation to Ms Pillay to send members of her Office to the country. We hope this mission will be dispatched without delay.

The EU also is engaging with the Tunisian authorities to jointly present a draft resolution on the subject of boosting UN technical assistance on human rights in the context of ongoing transition.

Other key situations that need to be addressed by this session of the Human Rights Council are Belarus, where we are deeply concerned at the number of political prisoners, the Democratic Republic of Congo – where there are distressing reports of continuing human rights violations, in particular, widespread sexual violence – as well as Côte d'Ivoire.

Let me conclude by stressing once again the importance of the Human Rights Council for the EU: the debates, the resolutions and the rapporteurs. But in the end, these are only inputs. What truly matter are the outputs. The real test is whether we make a difference on the ground. For that reason, the EU will work hard to strengthen the Human Rights Council and especially its ability to address urgent situations. This is a key objective of the ongoing review process. We will continue to push for an ambitious result.

Laima Liucija Andrikiėnė, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, I would like to take this opportunity to express my full support for the decision taken by the UN General Assembly on 1 March to suspend Libya's membership of the United Nations Human Rights Council. I think this sends a strong signal, not only to Colonel Gaddafi and his regime, but also to those countries in the world where human rights violations are frequent and widespread.

In my report on the UN Human Rights Council and the EU's role in it – adopted by this House in February 2009 – I strongly advocated the introduction of membership criteria for this important UN body.

In the case of Libya, the United Nations General Assembly acted in line with the European Parliament resolution and took a correct and timely decision.

Speaking of the 16th session, I would like to draw special attention to the Council's review process. It is important that the EU Member States and the European External Action Service actively engage in the 2011 review of the Council to strengthen compliance with its mandate.

The UNHRC should become more an early-warning and preventive mechanism. There is also a need for a transparent and all-inclusive review process, including NGOs, civil society and all relevant stakeholders.

Last but not least, I would like to welcome the establishment of the Directorate for Human Rights and Democracy in the EEAS system. The establishment of the External Action Service also provides us with a unique opportunity to streamline our action on the protection of human rights in the United Nations Human Rights Council.

I therefore want to encourage the High Representative to make sure that European efforts in the Human Rights Council are well coordinated and that EU Member States belonging to this body are united and effective as never before.

Richard Howitt, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, I shall start by welcoming yesterday's appointment of Mariangela Zappia as Head of Delegation in Geneva. Her appointment contributes to advancing gender equality in the External Action Service. We look forward to working with her.

Our Parliament will be present at a crucial time for the review of the Human Rights Council, as the global fulcrum for respect of human rights, the universal periodic review of all UN members, the independence of its experts or so-called special procedures, and the enhanced role for civil society participation. They are key characteristics of the Council that we should work to protect at all costs.

I am disappointed that the outcome document for the working group on the review omits any independent trigger for special sessions, that there is no requirement for member countries to justify failure to respond to recommendations, and that there is no provision at all for addressing specific country situations. It is ironic that this session will address seven individual country situations. As it is doing in the cases of Libya and Côte d'Ivoire, the EU must continue to find creative ways within existing rules to make sure that human rights violators can never escape accountability.

To show in this debate that the High Representative does answer questions, can I ask her three in particular? Firstly, given what she said about the Democratic Republic of the Congo, will Europeans support the appointment of a special mandate holder for that country? Secondly, does she accept that, at some stage, a judgment has to be made as to whether the Palestinian and Israeli investigations in relation to the Goldstone report meet international standards, with a deliberation on the possible referral to the International Criminal Court if they do not? Thirdly, will the EU lodge an objection to Pakistan's reservation on Article 40 – the obligation to report – of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights?

In conclusion, I believe that Libya's suspension from the Human Rights Council creates a historic precedent for respect for human rights in the UN system, which, in these dark days, shines a light on the silver thread.

Marietje Schaake, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, the UN Human Rights Council has the potential to address the ever more urgent and elaborate human rights violations across the world in different countries – Iran, Belarus, Burma, Tunisia, Libya, etc., there are too many to mention – but also horizontal themes such as LGBT rights, free expression, rape as a war crime and the role of human rights defenders.

In a sense, the UN Human Rights Council is in a similar position to the EU and it has to act as a global player. But both bodies suffer from the same problem – a lack of credibility, double standards at times, and they are not able to act quickly enough. The EU thus far has been unwilling to scrutinise its own human rights record sufficiently, for example, its participation in renditions and the lack of press freedom in some of our Member States.

Until last week, Libya was a member of the UN Human Rights Council. It has, rightfully, been removed. This is a very important precedent.

Heidi Hautala, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, with decisive and timely action towards Libya, the EU and the Human Rights Council have indeed shown that they can take action when needed. They can indeed. They can show that different regional groups can come together and they can show that the Council does not need to be divided.

Today, there is no longer a reason why action on Iran, North Korea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma and Sudan could not be next in line.

This time is significant for another reason. A first comprehensive review of the working methods of the Council has come to a conclusion and, like my colleagues, I feel disappointed by the fact that the Council failed to appreciate the importance of the review.

The EU prepared itself well but failed to win the support of others. But at least the independence of the Human Rights Commissioner and of the special procedure was not damaged, so this is already an achievement under the present conditions.

In any future discussions of the Council's work, the European Union must be able to build alliances and to reach across to other partners. It must also be willing to listen and able to compromise. I think we had a very welcome participation by the High Representative in the meeting some weeks ago. High Representative, I salute you for taking this step and giving a very impressive presentation there.

So to my last point: the EU's performance. After the creation of the Human Rights and Democracy Directorate at the European External Action Service, the EU delegation in Geneva will have a central role to play in EU human rights policy in the world. It needs increased resources and its work must be integrated into all fields of EU foreign policy.

I am very honoured to be leading Parliament's delegation to the Human Rights Council's 16th session at this critical time next week.

Willy Meyer, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (ES) Mr President, Lady Ashton, you began work with the world in disarray; a world in the midst of financial, food and energy crises triggered by attempts to regulate the markets. The truth is that your difficulties are the result of the underlying approach, whereby an unregulated free market structures our lives: this has caused serious human rights issues, both in developed and developing countries. This is our problem, one we have been unable to resolve, yet there are no signs of moves to rethink the economic policy that is leading the whole of humanity down a blind alley.

I believe that is one problem that needs to be resolved, first and foremost, followed by the European Union's cynical exploitation of human rights, and our foreign and neighbourhood policies, which require a comprehensive overhaul in light of the upheavals in north Africa.

We have given the impression – in the foreign policy that you inherited – that we are more concerned with free trade than with human rights. We have never applied Article 2 of the association agreements: not with Tunisia, not with Egypt, nor in the association agreements that we are seeking to conclude with Colonel Gaddafi, Prime Minister Netanyahu or King Mohammed VI. The article has never been enforced, giving the impression that we are not interested in strict compliance with the human rights obligations set out in the association agreements. This issue has yet to be resolved and I hope that at some point, the House and the European Union will take action.

Nikolaos Salavrakos, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – (EL) Mr President, Commissioner Ashton, I will not say that man is hypocritical, but I will say that he is contradictory. The whole of world philosophy, all of literature, everyone with an education, and all of us here in this House, recognise human rights and yet, as you said, half the UN members are in breach of human rights. We are talking the talk, but not walking the walk. We know that, for the sake of grand ideas, we have become the biggest criminals in mankind.

This being so, I welcome the 16th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council and I trust that, with current developments and with the lessons we have learned from

experience, it will adopt fundamental resolutions. As you know, I have been a lawyer for forty years and I have understood and I have as my creed the fact that respect for human rights is a way of life and is not easily imposed. Please adopt a more fundamental policy on this issue.

Inese Vaidere (PPE). – (LV) Mr President, the United Nations Human Rights Council is a unique international platform, created to promote human rights and democracy in the world. Its work programme is hard and extraordinarily important. Much good has been achieved, including sending a special mission to Egypt and the decision on Libya. However, the Council can often be accused of a lack of political rigour, proactive measures and rapid response. It is precisely for this reason, first of all, that it is very important to carry out an objective and transparent evaluation of the Council's work. The Council must improve its way of working, in order to work effectively on long-term problems such as we can observe in Iran, Belarus, Russia and elsewhere, as well as to respond rapidly to exceptional situations, such as ...

(The President interrupted the speaker)

... active dialogue between the Council members should also be pursued between sessions. The politics of country blocs, which is beginning to dominate the Council's work, must be eliminated, since it leads to a selective examination of issues, threatening its authority and political reliability. Second, it must hold a more active dialogue with civil society and non-governmental organisations. Third, I should like to emphasise the necessity of a more active role for the European Union on the Human Rights Council, where we should take a common position. That is precisely why I call upon the High Representative to ensure that we have clear and powerful representation and coordinate our work in the Council. For its part, the European External Action Service must present regular reports on, and an evaluation of, the Council's work to Parliament, including to the Subcommittee on Human Rights. A significant challenge currently faced by the Human Rights Council is to encourage a peaceful process of democratic change in the Middle East. It must strive to prevent the spread of radicalism, which would make the human rights situation in the region worse, threaten international security, and also Israel's right to exist. That is why the Egypt mission must be followed by new missions to other Middle Eastern countries, where the protests have been even more aggressive and the political situation is even more complex.

Thank you.

Jörg Leichtfried (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, ladies and gentlemen, human rights, liberty and equality are far too important for all of us to allow games to be played with them, for them to be put in the balance against powerful interests, and for commercial interests perhaps to take precedence over these values that are so important. They deserve our full commitment and it is incredibly important for the international community to help in matters relating to human rights quickly, efficiently and in a targeted way.

The Human Rights Council is on the right track here. We have seen that the mission to Tunisia made sense and the mission to Egypt made sense. Libya's loss of its seat on the Human Rights Council was a proper and important signal that things could not go on in this way. However, it is also the case that missions, resolutions and perhaps other things that happen in this way, have been knocked flat. You are quite right, Baroness Ashton: it is not enough to decide to do something, we must also take care that it is implemented. The European Union could still make a greater contribution here than it does at the moment.

However, it is also essential that the United Nations accept that after the Treaty of Lisbon, the position of the European Union has altered. Baroness Ashton, I should like to ask you to ensure that especially those who have always called themselves our friends and whom we also call our friends, and for whom we show great consideration (particularly when it comes to trade policy), to remember in future that they are our friends and not to leave the European Union in the lurch, as they did in the vote in September.

Charles Goerens (ALDE). – (FR) Mr President, in this debate, we are going to emphasise once again the importance of putting ...

(The President interrupted the speaker)

social, cultural, civil and political rights on an equal footing. Very well. Unfortunately, to fully meet that requirement – a legitimate one, certainly – is not quite so easy in practice. Why are we unable to make second-generation human rights as binding as first-generation ones? Because traditional human rights – those stemming from the French Revolution – are codified properly today, which is unfortunately not the case for social rights, for example. We should not be fatalists, however. The European Union, with its battery of instruments, can bring all its weight to bear, particularly at the United Nations, in order to enhance texts relating to rights that are not yet codified properly and, in particular, social rights. I would add that, with development cooperation and humanitarian aid, this requirement becomes a little less unrealistic.

Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, Mrs Ashton, I confess that I was not a great supporter of your taking up the eminent position which you hold today, Mrs Ashton, but I must say that I am, today, pleasantly surprised by at least three things which you mentioned in your speech. I would like to stress this and to commend you for this. Well, firstly you stressed the universality of human rights. I fully agree that irrespective of where we are – in Strasbourg, Libya, Russia or Iran – this universality must be fully respected. I am very pleased that we are on the same wavelength. The second thing is that you stressed religious intolerance, or rather the fight against it. Indeed, the European Parliament's resolution calls on the representatives of Member States to take up this matter. I am very pleased that you stressed this. The third matter which I am pleased about as a member of the delegation for relations with Belarus is that you stressed the possibility of intervention in matters relating to Belarus, where fundamental human rights are being violated. There is a chance that a Regional Council will be established. I am very pleased that you support this, because this is something we should be doing. Thank you very much.

Gay Mitchell (PPE). – Mr President, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate and can I say at the outset that I appreciate the briefing arranged by the High Representative yesterday on the issues surrounding Libya.

Six million Jews were murdered in the Second World War here in Europe. Between the two World Wars – the First World War and the Second World War – 60 million Europeans were killed, leaving aside the people from all other parts of the world who died.

According to a recent edition of *The Economist* magazine, there is a deficit of 100 million women because of gender-based abortion. This is not to do with abortion because a woman's life is in danger, or because she is in danger of having a back-street abortion. It is because she is a woman.

Yesterday was Women's Day. This was not raised here. When is political correctness going to be overcome, so that we can have respectful debates here, so that we do not turn our

heads the other way, as happened in the first half of the last century, so that we raise these issues, so that we ask why this is?

This House disgraced itself. It voted down an amendment not to fund infanticide. Not to fund coercive abortion. How in the name of God could we vote down something like that? I am sick of this political correctness that does not allow debate on issues in this House in a respectful manner that allows different views to be expressed.

I want to know from the High Representative if you are you going to raise this issue with the UN?

May I say in conclusion that I find the attitude and some of the decisions of the Court of Human Rights here in Strasbourg, which is not an institution of the European Union, absolutely extraordinary.

When are we going to be able to discuss this issue? Why were there no women yesterday who asked about the missing 100 million women who have been terminated because they were women? It is wrong and there should be no disagreement in this House on that issue in particular.

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

Véronique De Keyser (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, on Women's Day, you perhaps failed to notice that in the report by your group member, Mrs Nedelcheva, abortion was not a taboo subject, it was addressed, and it was debated and voted on democratically. It is not a taboo subject; this is a democracy.

Gay Mitchell (PPE). – Mr President, I know Ms De Keyser's position on this and I respect it. It is more than I received from her in relation to my view.

We have to have respectful debate in this House, where people hear each other's views and then we come to conclusions. I have not heard anybody from the Socialist or Liberal side raise in this House the issue of gender-based abortion. Not only did they not raise it, they voted down a resolution put to this House not to fund infanticide or coercive abortion. It is a shameful occurrence, on the record of this House, for those people who did it.

Please let us have respectful debate in this House. That is what this European Union is supposed to be about – unity in diversity.

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

Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck (ALDE). – Mr President, of course I respect Mr Mitchell's views. Like most, if not all, of the Members of this Parliament, I deplore the fact that in a number of societies in the world, female foetuses are aborted, whether with the consent of the mother or under coercion.

However, I fear that, by mixing up this issue with the issue of reproductive freedom, Mr Mitchell is obscuring the issue. If the issue were limited to the fact that female foetuses are aborted, it might be easier for us to reach an agreement on it.

Gay Mitchell (PPE). – Mr President, I would like to thank the honourable Member for that point. If we were a bit more respectful of each other's positions and tried to reach common ground, we would find that there is a lot we can do to roll back on this agenda, but please can we all open our minds?

I really do find it hard that Parliament would vote down an amendment not to fund coercive abortion, not to fund infanticide. Let us have this sort of discussion and see what we can do to stop this gender-based abortion. We can have disagreements in other areas.

I personally have no difficulty with reproductive health support; it is when it comes to the abortion area I have difficulty for very good reasons and I would be happy to debate them. I am not an ogre; I am not something from the past. I have a well thought out view on this and I would be happy to discuss it with anybody. I thank the Members for what they have said.

Maria Eleni Koppa (S&D). – (EL) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, the session of the Human Rights Council is being held this year in the shadow of events in North Africa and the Arab world in general, which have a great deal to teach us. We, as Europe, must make sure that we are up to the job. This is therefore an opportunity for us to make a fundamental evaluation of the Council, so as to further improve its working methods and emphasise our support for its independence and its role in defending human rights in the world.

In these times of historic change in our part of the world, the message of the universality of human rights is more topical than ever. At the same time, however, all the international players need to work to eliminate the practice of double standards when it comes to citing human rights. We need to be fair and consistent. Just as we welcome the recent adoption of the resolution condemning human rights violations in Libya, we must take the same hard stand on the continuing illegal colonisation of the occupied areas in Palestine.

Sari Essayah (PPE). – (FI) Mr President, I would like to pay tribute to Mr Mitchell's speech, as of course, the primary human right for each girl and boy is the right to be born into this world.

The Human Rights Council is the UN's main body responsible for human rights, and now at last we must venture critically to assess its status and policies. The Council at its best could have a decisive role as a promoter of human rights and democracy. Unfortunately, its work is characterised by double standards, selectivity, politicisation and the creation of blocs in human rights issues.

It is typical that the Council was very close to adopting the resolution on progress (progress mind!) in the human rights situation in Libya. Among the countries giving Libya recognition were Iran, North Korea, Egypt, Sudan and Pakistan. Do declarations by these countries carry any weight? Should these countries not be the next to be expelled from the Human Rights Council? Just the fact that such a resolution was even considered shows just how ignorant the international community has been or has wanted to be concerning the situation in Libya.

Over the last few decades, however, around two thirds of the condemnatory resolutions that the Human Rights Council has adopted have concerned Israel, which is nevertheless the sole democracy in that area of the Middle East. At the same time, it has ignored the poor state of the rights of women and minorities in all the surrounding Arab countries. The work of the Human Rights Council will lack credibility unless it changes that work and its ways of working.

Raimon Obiols (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, I do not wish to repeat the important points already made by my fellow Members, so I will simply add that it is good to hear of Lady Ashton's involvement in the Human Rights Council session held at this very important time.

We hope that the session will constitute a step forward, allowing the European Union to make its actions more consistent and raise their profile, to reach common positions on all relevant human rights issues, and to use the Human Rights Council to build coalitions with countries, civil society and relevant international organisations, in order to make real progress in the field of human rights, as Lady Ashton said in her speech. We also hope that the European Union will be able to uphold the universal nature of human rights in the face of relativistic arguments and that it will finally achieve something that is within the compass of our generation; to achieve something comparable with the universal abolition of slavery in the past: namely, the universal abolition of the death penalty.

Salvatore Iacolino (PPE). – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, there is no doubt that the inviolability of human rights is the real essence of all societies, which indeed gives rise to democratic values. For this reason, the Human Rights Council meeting that will take place in Geneva must have precise and appropriate priorities: of course, this includes combating discrimination in its various forms – race, sex, religion, political orientation – whilst, on the other hand, there is also the issue of protecting minorities and vulnerable groups.

The climate in which the Council meeting is taking place is particularly delicate. We are all aware of what is happening in North Africa and, above all, in Libya. Today, in a lengthy debate, we have listened to and largely welcomed the speeches made by Baroness Ashton. However, there is also the problem of the Middle East and, at the same time, the Treaty of Lisbon urges us to adopt an even stronger and more decisive stance in favour of the European Union.

We need strength of resolve and solidarity, which must be the guidelines for tangible and decisive action, because, after all, the Libyans, the Tunisians and the Moroccans wish to stay where they are currently living. To make this possible, we will need to act quickly.

I should like to make one final consideration, which is also a question for Baroness Ashton: we have listened to your speeches, as I just said, and largely welcomed them. One form of serious discrimination relates to religion: how on earth, bearing in mind that the bloodiest violence of recent times has been perpetrated against Christians, did you fail to mention ‘Christianophobia’ in her speech?

Norica Nicolai (ALDE). – *(RO)* Mr President, I do not know whether this session, which is currently going on, will end in success or failure. However, what I do know is that it would have been worthwhile holding this debate much earlier because the European Union will have a voice at this session, which is coherent, articulate and, above all, effective. This review, which is getting under way now, partly in New York and partly in Geneva, sends out a very complex signal to a world which is changing and has a major problem with the failure of a certain type of human rights policy.

Fellow Members, I believe that we will have to discuss very seriously this institutional mechanism created by the UN, certainly without giving any priority to particular rights. However, we must discuss its effectiveness and, in particular, think about whether it would not be worth having one of the global agencies involved in immediate prevention. In this context, I do not think that we need to restrict ourselves simply to watching what has happened so far, but should also try to prevent it. I believe that a different way of handling the human rights issue is on the cards.

Charles Tannock (ECR). – Mr President, the fact that Libya was a member of the UN Human Rights Council tells us everything we need to know about this discredited and politicised organisation. Gaddafi's 42-year rule has systematically crushed any vestige of human rights in his country and we have now seen the consequences of the culture of violence on which his reign-of-terror regime was based.

However, it would be unfair to single out just Libya. Other human rights abusers also enjoy membership of the Council, including China, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Uganda, where homosexuals are persecuted. Bizarrely, it was even mooted that Iran should head up the Women's Equality Commission at one stage. The UNHRC also spends much of its time vilifying our democratic ally, Israel.

However, I suppose, on reflection, that this Council is all that there is on human rights at UN level, so we will have to engage, albeit fully cognisant of the inherent contradictions of having brutal non-democratic regimes as members of the UN Human Rights Council.

Struan Stevenson (ECR). – Mr President, I would like to say to Baroness Ashton that she did not answer my colleague, Jan Zahradil, in the last debate on Iran on the question of Camp Ashraf. The 3 400 people there are suffering psychological torture. This is a breach of their human rights. We give EUR 1.2 billion to the rebuilding of Iraq and yet, every time we pass a resolution in this House, every time we pass a written declaration with a big majority, we are simply ignored by the Iraqi Government and by their Iranian cohorts.

They are psychologically torturing the people in Camp Ashraf with 210 loudspeakers blaring propaganda and threats at a high decibel level day and night for the last year. They are prohibiting access to medicines and the hospital for injured people and people dying of cancer.

Why are we not saying, 'Stop, or you get no more help, no more money, from this House'?

Diane Dodds (NI). – Mr President, I would like to ask the High Representative, in the light of all of the events that are going on in Libya at the moment and the much vaunted anguish that we rightly display about the violation of human rights in Libya, whether she will support the cause of those people in the United Kingdom who had relatives, friends and loved ones blown up by Semtex or killed by guns that were supplied by Colonel Gaddafi and his murderous regime in Libya. Will she support their case in any new regime that would emerge from the conflict in Libya?

José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, in the context of our debate on the current human rights situation, and in view of the last report discussed, I would like to address the following question to Lady Ashton.

In view of the current situation in some North African countries and within the region, do you feel that this is the right time to be opening a European Union delegation in Iran?

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, again, this was a very interesting and full debate, which has raised a large number of issues that honourable Members feel very strongly about.

Firstly, I would like to thank all honourable Members for the energy and passion with which they have conducted this debate. I reflect on the fact that it is two years since the publication of Ms Andrikiene's report on the development of the UN Human Rights Council,

including the role of the EU, and on the resolutions that have been passed since that report was produced. I would like to thank her for her comments about the work we are doing in the External Action Service and the beginnings of our work to build the new pieces of work on human rights.

I am also very pleased to see that Ms Hautala will be going to the session of the Council. I think it is extremely important, with her knowledge and expertise, that she is able to participate there. I also hope that she will back up the efforts that we have been making to try to ensure that the work of the Council improves and increases. I hear the criticisms that are made of it. I think we have all been pushing hard with the review to try to make that review as strong as possible. It is certainly not quite where we would have wished it to be, but now that we have seen the transfer to New York of some of the discussions, we can continue to work there as well. This really is an area of work where parliamentarians working with us can make a significant difference. I have full confidence in Ms Hautala's strength in pushing forward on that.

I want to deal with some of the particular questions that have been asked of me. I will start with Mr Howitt's, because he said that there were three in particular. Regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are in favour of a strong resolution and indeed, we have said there ought to be a specific mandate now on this particular situation. On Goldstone, we are trying to engage to find a consensual resolution. That is what we are doing at the present time. In Pakistan, we made a *démarche* on 5 March specifically on Article 40, which is the point concerned.

To those honourable Members who specifically talked about freedom of religion and belief, let me first of all say that I do indeed talk about the terrible tragedies for Christian communities anywhere in the world where these terrible tragedies occur. My general point is that we believe in the right of freedom of religion and belief, whatever that religion or belief might be in that context. It is important that we continue to make those statements as clearly as possible, when you see terrorism or attacks on any religions, including Christianity.

My team has just been meeting with a group of MEPs to talk further about what more we should do on this. I have already said that we plan to do something at this session of the Human Rights Council specifically on this because it is so important.

I apologise that I did not answer on Camp Ashraf. I intended to, but I turned the paper over too quickly. I think we have a total of 3 000 people – or perhaps 3 400, the numbers vary – and we are in weekly touch with the UN who, as you know, are visiting the camp. They assure me that the basic needs are being met. There are really difficult issues, as the honourable Member knows very well, in looking at what might be done around Camp Ashraf. I am very conscious of the very different opinions that we hear on this. However, the honourable gentleman is completely right that the significant part of this is to make sure that people's rights are not violated and that we ensure humanitarian support is given. We do indeed – hence I know about the weekly reports. That is not by accident. It is because we are engaging on this issue and engaging with the government there to try to deal with that in the best possible way that we can.

I also agree that it is now important to get a strong delegation in Geneva. Again, Mrs Hautala raises specifically the fact that we have just appointed a new Head of Delegation. I talked with the team while I was in Geneva. We have split the delegation in two so that one can

concentrate on the issues, particularly of the World Trade Organisation, and the other can focus much more on the UN agencies.

In my conversations on this, I am also clear on the need to think better and more creatively about how we operate in Geneva. We need to build alliances on human rights and to have the opportunity to talk with partners across the world where we can make common cause on some of the most important issues that concern us. I hope that we will be able to move forward on that over the coming weeks and months.

If I might just finish with this, I was very taken by what Mr Salavrakos said when he said that human rights is a way of life. I think that is probably right. I describe it as being this simple: for human rights to apply to you, you simply have to be here and human. There are no other criteria that should apply. I think that in all that we do, it is really important that we do not forget that very simple basic principle.

Honourable Members, there will be many issues upon which we disagree, many issues which create – as I witnessed – real passion and concern, but the ability to be able to debate those issues and the ability to put our strength of feeling on human rights at the core of what we think is absolutely essential.

Very finally, I have not made any decision about opening a delegation in Iran. That is partly a resources question but, of course, I will keep honourable Members informed about that.

Meanwhile, I would like to thank everyone for this debate and to assure honourable Members that I will do all I can to make the Human Rights Council as effective as possible and – more important even than that – to represent the European Parliament and the European Union on issues of human rights as effectively as I possibly can.

José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, I did not really understand Lady Ashton's answer. I am not sure whether she gave me an answer, whether she said that she would respond at a later date to my question on whether it is the right time to be opening a European Union delegation in Iran given the current human rights concerns, or indeed whether there was no answer. As I did not understand the answer, I would like to repeat my question.

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, in response to Mr Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, I was trying to say that there are two issues. One is resources, inevitably. The second is that this will require a decision to be made and for proposals to be put by me, obviously not least to the Commission, on the opening of a delegation. There will be a discussion in the Foreign Affairs Council and Parliament will also take a view on this. I have had no discussions with anybody about doing this at the moment. As you well know, at the present time, my engagement with Iran is very much on the nuclear talks and the human rights issues.

President. – I have received six motions for resolutions ⁽²⁾ tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place at midday on Thursday, 10 March.

(2) See Minutes

Written statements (Rule 149)

Tunne Kelam (PPE), *in writing*. – In light of the current situation in North Africa, and taking into account the fact that human rights are being violated more than ever across the world, the work of the UNHRC needs to be reformed. The UNHRC has to act in time and to react efficiently to the new challenges. Regrettably, this is not the reality. The problem could be partly solved if additional meetings beyond the current sessions would take place. Further, the UNHRC needs to seriously review its membership to make sure that its members fulfil the minimum criteria. It is shameful that dictatorships, such as Libya, could so easily take a seat in the body intended to safeguard human rights. More than ever, the credibility of the UNHRC is being challenged by politically motivated behaviour. Using the EEA, the EU now has an opportunity to speak with one voice and to function as a global actor. The Vice-President/High Representative has to make sure that the actions are coherent and that an efficient coordination takes place between the EU Representations in Geneva and New York. There is no practical alternative to EU value-based foreign policy.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – No convincing and efficient resolution can be adopted while human rights are being strongly violated within the European Union. All loud statements and words turn into cynicism and undermine the basis of the fight against global injustice and lies. The European Union should not give advice to third countries while in its own territory, namely in Latvia, the government treats Parliament's resolution of 11 March 2004 with scorn and derision. It is not acceptable to demand that other countries do what the European Union is not able to demand that the Latvian Republic should do. How can the EU be called 'united' when rules are not for every Member State? Until the resolution on 335 000 Latvian non-citizens is implemented, there is no sense in asking for changes in the area of human rights in third countries. It is a rough derision of democracy and human rights.

Joanna Senyszyn (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) It is to be welcomed that in the programme of the 16th Session of the UNHRC, alongside the general problem of respect for human rights, reports and panels have been included concerning the rights of the child, violence against women, the rights of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and the fight against terrorism. Also to be presented at the session is a cross-regional statement on LGBT rights. The UNHRC needs new legal tools for the continuous monitoring of constant violations of human rights and for reacting rapidly to urgent situations which arise due to the political situation around the world (Tunisia, Egypt, Iran, Belarus). Therefore, I endorse the idea proposed in the resolution for independent 'triggers' which will allow a prompt response to human rights crises. I welcome the establishment of the new Directorate for Human Rights and Democracy and the creation of a Brussels-based EU Council Working Group on Human Rights, because this will allow better coordination and monitoring of EU policy on human rights. A major role should be played by the high-level EU Special Representative for Human Rights. UNHRC panels should also be held in-between sessions, and the sessions themselves should be moved to other regions, including to places where conflicts are currently in progress. Finally, I also appeal to the EU's Member States to respect human rights in their own domestic policy, because failure to do so weakens the Union's position in the UNHRC.

IN THE CHAIR: LIBOR ROUČEK*Vice-President***16. State of play of the peace process for the Middle East (debate)**

President. - The next item is the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission, the Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, on the state of play of the peace process for the Middle East.

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, I am grateful for the opportunity to have today's debate on the Middle East peace process and I am extremely interested to hear from honourable Members on this. I believe that achieving progress on the peace process is very urgent and very important.

As we have discussed in this House earlier today, our Southern Neighbourhood and the wider Middle East are changing fast. We have seen historic events in Tunisia and Egypt and ongoing violence in Libya, and we also know of protests which continue in Yemen, Bahrain and elsewhere. With the region in upheaval, some have said that it is not the time to focus on the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace process, but I believe the opposite to be true. At this moment, it is even more important to try to put an end to this conflict, as a key contribution towards a peaceful and stable region.

This is the message which I have delivered in my visits to the region in January and in February and in my discussions with President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu: for the greater security of both peoples, an agreement should be found. I also believe the European Union has an important role in this process. The Foreign Affairs Council set out its position very clearly, most recently in our Council conclusions in December.

The only viable choice is a negotiated outcome on all final status issues. If there is to be genuine peace, there has to be a solution to the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states, with the state of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable state of Palestine living side by side in peace and security. The EU position on settlements is clear: settlements are illegal, they constitute an obstacle to peace, and they threaten to make a two-state solution impossible.

I chaired the Quartet meeting in Munich on 5 February. The EU went into this meeting seeking an invigorated Quartet and I think we managed to achieve that. Together with our partners from the UN, from the US and Russia, we agreed on an ambitious schedule. Last week, Quartet envoys met in Brussels, under the chairmanship of Helga Schmid, the Political Director and Deputy Secretary-General of the EAS, with, for the first time, the Palestinian negotiators. Tomorrow, the Quartet envoys will meet the Israeli negotiators for the first time.

The envoys are now moving to prepare the next principal meetings when Ban Ki-moon, the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, Secretary Clinton and I will meet again. But, if there is to be a two-state solution, both states must be viable. For that reason, it is important that the EU is the largest contributor to the Palestinians. We remain committed to continuing to support their state-building plan and its implementation, both politically and financially.

In this regard, we have already approved a first package of EUR 100 million out of the EUR 300 million earmarked for 2011. Funds for institution-building have been further increased

to reinforce Palestinian capacities on their way to statehood. This work is crucial for the establishment of a future state of Palestine and crucial to finding a way to a two-state solution.

As honourable Members know, I have twice visited Gaza and, after meeting with business, with civil society and especially with many children, we have proposed a comprehensive package of support, focusing on infrastructure, equipment and training for the Kerem Shalom crossing. This is specifically to support greater movement of goods, allowing exports to promote economic recovery. In both my visits to Gaza, I called for a greater opportunity for the people there to develop the economy and provide jobs and a future for their children. I also called, and continue to call, for the release of Gilad Shalit.

On 13 April, I will host the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee led by Norway; we are in discussion on the possibilities of a donor conference in June. Honourable Members will know that on 22 February, there was a useful and productive exchange of views with Israel at the Association Council, where the Middle East peace process was discussed, along with other regional issues, particularly, of course, the changes occurring in the region. The discussions included our bilateral relations and how better cooperation can go forward on the current action plan and in the context of the desire for a solution.

I also welcome the willingness of the Israelis to meet with the Quartet envoys tomorrow, but I urge Israel to make positive moves now to find a solution and to promote and support moves towards direct talks. As I said, I believe that this is in the interest of both peoples in that region and I believe Prime Minister Netanyahu has a vital role in helping to get the talks moving.

Honourable Members, I very much look forward to hearing from you so I will pause at this point. I believe all of us in this House share the desire to see this conflict finally end and both parties find a solution for the stability of the people of Israel and for the people of Palestine, which will also help enhance the stability and security of the region. I urge and hope that this will happen soon.

José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (ES) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, ladies and gentlemen, you quite rightly said, Baroness Ashton, that the situation in the southern Mediterranean is diverting attention from the conflict in the Middle East and the peace process, which has already been drawn out over almost 30 years and appears to have come to a standstill.

As your visit has demonstrated, current events and the general situation in the region have had an impact on the process. In the light of that visit, I would like to ask your views on a number of issues.

This morning, we discussed the difficulties that the United Nations Security Council is having in obtaining a further resolution to impose a no-fly zone in Libya. To what extent do you feel that the peace process and the credibility of a key player have been affected by its recent veto of the proposed resolution condemning the settlements in the Palestinian territories? In your opinion, how does the lack of a Security Council decision affect perceptions of the Obama administration's commitment to pursuing this process?

Secondly, how do you view the decision taken by the Palestinian National Authority to hold presidential and legislative elections before September and Hamas's decision not to take part in these elections?

Lastly, Baroness Ashton, I would like to hear what you think of the resignation of the Palestinian chief negotiator following the publication of documents by WikiLeaks, the reshuffle within the Palestinian National Authority and the repercussions that the leaked documents have had on the Palestine side, on the Israeli Government, or on both parties as a whole.

Véronique De Keyser, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, we have spoken about it all day long: the tremendous hope that has emerged following the revolutions in the Arab world shows us that democracy is something that we all aspire to, and that there is nothing exclusive about it. The right to live freely is something that must be universally recognised.

This also applies to the Palestinians, when, at this very moment in time, in Gaza in particular, young Palestinians – and there are an awful lot of them – have no prospects, no future, no opportunity to educate themselves, to move around and sometimes even to access healthcare or to eat. This is clearly unacceptable. We share these sentiments; I think they are shared by pretty much everyone.

However, I then ask myself, and I fail to understand – let me make that clear – what the European Union is trying to achieve in its association agreement. You spoke about this. I have read and reread the minutes of the association agreement. Even though the European Union has denounced the violation of international law in many respects, as you pointed out earlier, we have provided a series of positive incentives – you call them positive incentives – in the areas of agriculture, fisheries, the environment, policing, judicial cooperation, transport, space cooperation, enhanced scientific cooperation, and in an ACCA agreement, with no guarantees and nothing in exchange.

You had invited the Israelis to your Quartet meeting, but they did not come. Thus, I do not want to criticise you, Baroness Ashton. I am aware of your efforts; you are putting a lot into this issue. I do not even want to tell you that these positive incentives do not work. What I want is to ask you whether we still have the right today to dispense with any forms of pressure other than sanctions. Do we have the right to provide economic and trade incentives when so many human rights and so many aspects of international law are constantly being violated? I do not think so, and what is more, I believe that this is a political mistake in the light of the revolutions taking place today in the Arab world.

Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, Madam High Representative, on behalf of my group, I would like to start by saying that we could not agree more with your introduction, with the aims you have put forward, and with the efforts you are making to re-instil life into what you yourself called the ‘stalled’ peace process.

I believe that it has stalled and it should be restarted so that we can see some progress. Last week, Parliament had the honour of being addressed by the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister who came to make his case to us. He urged us, on the one hand, not to constantly focus on what is happening in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and, on the other, rather to re-orient our focus on what we could do together, Israel and the European Union.

It would be easier for us to do that if we had some serious indications that Israel is really willing to breathe new life into the peace process.

I cannot help but feel that Israel believes that upheaval in a number of Arab countries gives it more breathing space. Like Ms De Keyser, I am afraid that this could turn out to be a

major political mistake. On the contrary, Israel should make use of what is happening today to speed up the process and try to conclude a peace agreement as soon as possible.

Margrete Auken, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DA) Mr President, I would like to thank Baroness Ashton for her speech, in which I am a little disappointed. I quite agree with Baroness Ashton that now is the time – with this historic situation – for the Palestine-Israel issue to come to the fore. Yet, why was not a single word said about the recognition of Palestine this coming September?

We all know very well that time is now running out. We all know very well that this issue, in particular, urgently needs to be resolved and that we desperately need to hear from the EU's principal representative in particular that this is what we are working for. Many of us were proud and stood tall when we were recently granted a joint EU seat on the Security Council. That was excellent and I would like to express my thanks for that. It also had a beneficial effect. A great number of fine statements are made at a high level – a great deal goes on up in the ethereal regions. The terrible thing is that when we come down to earth from these lofty heights – to reality – we experience considerable problems.

As Mrs De Keyser also mentioned, we saw the EU accept the further upgrading of relations with Israel. It was referred to as a mere technicality to avoid conflicts with Parliament, but what is much worse is the fact that the Israeli settlements are expanding as never before. The siege of Gaza is certainly not over, and unfortunately, Baroness Ashton only mentioned Kerem Shalom instead of talking about openness towards all parties. This is, in fact, a very serious matter. Why is it that all we hear about is money? We have paid and paid, and that is important. We have given money to Salam Fayyad, but if we do not give him the chance to build his state, it will all have been in vain.

Allow me to finish by saying that the EU's credibility in this historic situation is now truly on the line. If we do not actually understand that we need to back-up all of our fine words with action, where will our credibility go in relation to the rest of the North African and Arab countries? Every single time it seems, when it comes to the crunch, at best we give money, but otherwise we do not go on to take any political action.

Struan Stevenson, *on behalf of the ECR Group.* – Mr President, Baroness Ashton, I am deeply concerned about the progress of the situation in Iraq. The recent uprising there – when the people took to the streets, particularly young people who cannot get jobs, who see the broken economy, the continuing lack of security and sectarian killings – was brutally repressed. Twenty nine people were killed, many hundreds were injured. There is now an indication that Ayad Allawi, whose al-Iraqiya Party won the election last March, is going to withdraw from the coalition because Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has defaulted on the many promises that he made to al-Iraqiya in the coalition deal.

If that happens, we are going to be back to square one, with a sectarian government, backed by both al-Hakim and Muqtada al-Sadr at the behest of Tehran, and we will have a destabilised situation where the party who won the election is no longer in government. That cannot be acceptable surely, in terms of the future of the Middle East.

Kyriacos Triantaphyllides, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (EL) Mr President, I should like to take this opportunity, following what has been said today, to comment on the EU's stand on the events taking place around us in the Arab world. This stand confuses stagnation with stability; it is a reprehensible stand, because it has failed to heed the demands of the people in the area for freedom and social justice. However, the European Union can behave

differently; it can behave correctly. It proved as much in the case of Palestine, at least as regards so-called 'state building'. Even if, in the Arab conflict, the European Union has again failed to send out a strong political message, it has, nonetheless, supported the government of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad over the last two or three years and, as such, they have been able to construct the necessary institutions so that, by next September, Prime Minister Fayyad will be in a position to ask the UN to recognise the independent state of Palestine and I hope that, when it does, the European Union will support that request.

The European Union could play a similar role in the countries in the area. I hope and pray that it does and I call on the European Union to negotiate and to enter into agreement with each of the countries whose people are calling for change and, together with the representatives of those people, to define the sectors in which the European Union could help financially and otherwise, by exchanging expertise and setting out joint programmes for the social and economic development of the area. In this way, the European Union will also address the objectives which it has laid down in its neighbourhood policy.

Bastiaan Belder, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (NL) Mr President, High Representative, I would like to back you up on two points in your introduction. You spoke about direct negotiations. Last week, I had the privilege of holding extensive discussions with the representatives of the Israeli Government and of the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset. You have to trust and believe your discussion partners, and they say that they want direct negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. I would thus like to ask you to use all your diplomatic inventiveness to bring these direct negotiations about as, ultimately, you do need both parties to the conflict around the table if you are to conclude a peace. Given the background of the events in which Arab masses are calling for responsible governments, we can conclude that the momentum to bring about a breakthrough is now present.

My second point is that I was very pleased that you made reference to the sad fate of Gilad Shalit, who has now been incarcerated for nearly five years. Exactly one week ago, I spoke with his father in the heart of Jerusalem, and he was wondering whether Europe still cared for his son. You gave me the answer. I hope that you persistently continue to strive to re-unite father and son as soon as possible.

Hans-Gert Pöttering (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, ladies and gentlemen, the Arab world is in the grip of profound change. People are fighting for their dignity; they wish to live in liberty, in a democracy and under the rule of law, as we do. It is our political and moral duty to give our full and committed support to people in the Arab world involved in this cause.

I was in Cairo last weekend and met many young people there in Tahrir Square. The openness, confidence, courage and optimism of the young people in Cairo left a deep impression on me. Egypt and other Arab countries now have the opportunity of democratic development.

This is also an opportunity for Israel, for it not to remain the only democracy in the Middle East besides Lebanon. The change taking place in Arabia must be seized as an opportunity for peace between Israel and Palestine. We must refrain from everything that is a hindrance to this peace. This means that settlement building by Israel is a provocation to the Palestinians and the Hamas rockets are a provocation to the Israelis. There must be an end to both. Peace between Israel and Palestine is possible – two states living together peacefully within secure borders as good neighbours.

Now is not the time for pusillanimity and tentative dealings. Now is the time for courage, decisiveness and statesmanlike behaviour; now is the time for peace in the Middle East; now is the time for democracy in the Arab countries.

Hannes Swoboda (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, let us be honest, the state of no war, because we cannot talk of peace in the Middle East, has at least allowed the dictators and authoritarian regimes to keep their own people under control and conclude a non-aggression pact with Israel, and has allowed Israel to do so as well. As we have seen, such props and such pillars are very fragile and can suddenly collapse. Now they have collapsed.

I am pleased that Israel has not intervened in internal Arab developments. However, non-intervention is not enough. As Mr Pöttering said, we must seize the opportunity; that is, Israel must seize the opportunity to conclude a lasting peace with democratic states; a peace that does not rest on the shoulders of a few dictators, but is genuinely based on the will of the people to make peace. Here, the development of settlements is not only a thorn in the flesh, as it always has been, but also an obstacle. What is more, when the deputy Foreign Minister, who has already been quoted here, says, in the talks we had in Brussels, that we are not taking any new areas away from the Palestinians in any case, that is hair-splitting and cynical to boot. Settlement development must be stopped. I am very sad that the Americans have used their veto here, since they have thereby proved that they have no genuine interest in the peace process.

Now, briefly about the elections, about which questions have already been asked. I hope that we recognise the elections. We must recognise the elections and the outcome of the elections as a democratic step. That does not mean that we must recognise any policy that is implemented as a result of the elections. We must not, however, repeat the mistake of deciding who is the good winner and who is the bad winner of the elections. We must instead recognise the democratic development.

Finally again, since we are all of one mind on this: I hope that you will strengthen your efforts to free Mr Shalit, so that this problem can finally be resolved. For just as settlement development is an obstacle to really meaningful dialogue, so is the imprisonment of Mr Shalit an obstacle, as much as ever. I hope that we can approach both problems in such a way that we can finally arrive at sensible, constructive peace talks in the Middle East.

Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, the contrast is striking! The revolution, the change taking place in the Arab world is fascinating for all of us. We are trying to help. We have discussed Libya today. In recent days and weeks, we have discussed Egypt and Tunisia. Yet, at the same time, we have a standstill in the peace process. Against this backdrop, we must say quite clearly here, Baroness Ashton, that you did us a service when you managed to convene a meeting of the Quartet. To produce movement now, at this period of profound insecurity in the region, and profound insecurity in Israel, was an extremely positive service. I should like to make this very clear. You occasionally have to endure criticism from this House, too. For this reason, some praise is perhaps also in order.

As far as the contents are concerned, I should like to make it clear that I do not believe that Israel is sceptically disposed towards democracy in Arab countries. It is merely that these changes have not yet come to an end. When and if there are democracies there, I agree completely with Mr Pöttering and with you too, Mr Swoboda, then there will clearly be a great opportunity finally to get the Middle East peace process going too. Settlement building

must stop, that is clear in any case, as must the sophistry with which it is defended. There is a consensus among all groups in this House on that point.

Connected to the uprising in the Arab world, we also have experienced protests against the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip. The situation in the Palestinian Territories is in no way simple. Democratisation must succeed here too. For the time being, we fortunately have a moderate and conservative partner in the West Bank, but that is absolutely not the case in the Gaza Strip.

Nicole Kiil-Nielsen (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, I have observed a strange tendency within the European Union: despite statements criticising Israel's human rights violations, the Member States and the Commission are working tirelessly to strengthen political and economic relations with Israel, with no conditions attached.

On 22 February, the Union actually upgraded its association agreement with Israel, promising to step up cooperation in several apparently technical agreements in various areas: competition, access to public contracts, Israel's integration into the European Research Area and into European agencies such as Europol, the European Space Agency and so on.

On 31 January, the Commission authorised the transfer of EU citizens' personal data to Israel, a country suspected of having used EU citizens' passports to carry out an extrajudicial killing in Dubai last year.

Israel, which already participates in more than 800 projects with European universities and businesses, will receive more than EUR 500 million in subsidies in 2013. Among the beneficiaries will be the arms manufacturers Elbit and Israel Aerospace Industries, which manufacture the drones and aircraft used against the people of Gaza.

At the Association Council, the European Union welcomed the new measures announced by Mr Netanyahu for Gaza and the West Bank.

Baroness Ashton, please could you indicate what this facilitation measure consists of when hundreds of lorry drivers are protesting in Gaza as we speak to denounce the closure of the Karni crossing? Also, how does Mr Netanyahu propose to stop the rapid colonisation of Jerusalem and the West Bank?

I would be grateful, Baroness Ashton, if you could send a message of encouragement and a true message of hope to all those women who took to the streets in Palestine yesterday and who are expecting a great deal of the European Union.

Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL) . – (FR) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, the revolutions in the Arab world are consistent with the aspirations of the Palestinian people. There is one difference, however: the Palestinians are fighting not against their leader but against an external power that is dominating them, humiliating them, plundering them, colonising them, imprisoning them, stealing their land and their homes, building walls and imposing a blockade on Gaza, while leaving one million of their people in refugee camps, in defiance of international law.

Baroness Ashton, I have heard your explanations, but the European Union has to be firmer and more active. The Arab peoples are watching us. Wholesale changes are taking place in the Middle East. Wholesale changes are also required within the Israeli leadership, which must respect the universal values laid down by law. Use all the resources at your disposal, which include calling the association agreements into question. I agree with what you said

about Gilad Shalit, but I have already asked you how you plan to secure the release of a young Franco-Palestinian, Salah Hamouri, who is rotting in an Israeli prison for no reason.

Lastly, Baroness Ashton, carry out a strong political act, a political act of the utmost importance: ensure that the European Union officially recognises, without delay, the Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital.

Fiorello Provera (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the European Union is the principal financial backer of the Palestinian Authority, providing it with around EUR 1 billion per year, and yet Europe's political role in the peace process remains marginal.

This large-scale financial assistance gives us the right to ask the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to return to the negotiating table. On the issue of the recognition of Palestine, we must be clear. The problem of peaceful coexistence with Israel will not be resolved through unilateral recognition of the Palestinian State, which, moreover, still has not been self-proclaimed.

The PNA must instead go back to taking an active role, sit down at the negotiating table and resolve the ongoing disputes, particularly over safe borders, on the status of Jerusalem and on the issue of refugees. Even a partial agreement would strengthen the moderate sections of both sides and reduce the influence of extremism.

Diane Dodds (NI). – Mr President, the wind of change blowing through the Middle East promised democratisation, and no true democrat can deny that the people of Egypt, Tunisia and now Libya deserve both freedom and democracy.

I can also fully agree with the High Representative that these events, rather than being a distraction, demand a refocusing of our attention on the peace process. In recent visits to the area, I found an understandably nervous Israeli people. Past experiences have seen political vacuums filled by Hamas and Hezbollah.

In this situation, we must consider how best we can help, both in the peace process and in the stability of the region.

Recognition of Israel's need for security and the validity of agreements with neighbouring countries are important cornerstones. We must also admit that the neighbourhood policy has failed. We currently spend EUR 1.5 billion per year on this policy. We must assess the tangible benefits of this. If we consider Egypt, where tens of thousands of people are added to the labour market each year with no economic future and no hope, perhaps we should realistically acknowledge that the seeds of further revolution are already there.

Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, as indicated in the Middle East Quartet Statement made in Munich, we would all like to see the end of negotiations between Israel and Palestine in September 2011 in the form of an agreed solution for the two states that will bring peace and security. Unfortunately, the prospects are not rosy. With only six months left, negotiations have come to a standstill, stalled over the question of the settlements.

Ladies and gentlemen, I do not think that the loss of valuable time will benefit Israel, nor will it contribute to finding a successful solution. On the one hand, I am concerned that it will become ever harder to find moderate leaders in Palestine with enough political support to be able to conclude agreements with Israel, which is no easy task. On the other hand, if the settlements remain, it will become ever harder to create a truly viable Palestine state.

Lady Ashton, I agree that the peace process should not be put on hold because of political upheaval in the region. If the current events result in democratic regimes, as we all hope, regimes that will listen to the wishes of the people, the climate in the region will become even less propitious for Israel. It may be that Israel will become even more isolated and come under greater pressure from some of its Arab neighbours.

In conclusion, everyone, including Israel, would benefit from reaching a solution as soon as possible. I would therefore urge the European Union to contribute actively to restarting the peace process in close cooperation with the United States and the other Quartet members.

Lady Ashton, I hope that there will be a high-level Quartet meeting this month, as set out in the Munich Statement. Can you confirm whether that will be the case?

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D). – Mr President, the current situation in the region is both full of risk and full of hope. For me, the emergence of democratic movements among Israel's neighbours is a cause of celebration. We must reject the racist stereotype that regards them as a threat.

I led a parliamentary delegation to Gaza and the West Bank in December 2010. The most heart-rending story was that of a little boy who brought his toys to school every day because he was not sure when he came home whether his home and his family would still be there.

That child's parents want peace. Every member of the PLC that we met, both in the West Bank and in Gaza, wants secure Israeli and Palestinian borders based on the 1967 green line. They also want the settlements to stop. It is incomprehensible that Prime Minister Netanyahu has refused appeals from all of Israel's allies to stop the settlements. Simply to stop them. Not to dismantle them. To stop them.

It is necessary, in order for serious negotiations to get under way, for those settlements to stop. I would appeal to Ms Ashton to ensure that that appeal goes again to the Israeli authorities: to please stop the settlements and get the talks going.

We must support the efforts of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad to peacefully lead the Palestinian people to a Palestinian state. We do not know what the consequences will be if we do not do that soon.

Chris Davies (ALDE). – Mr President, there cannot be a greater friend of Israel in the European Union than Germany, so it is quite something to read that Chancellor Merkel has been shouting at Prime Minister Netanyahu, saying 'you have done nothing to promote peace, give me something'. Quite something!

She is right, of course. Israel has played for time. It likes talks about talks because all that time gives it the opportunity to keep changing the facts on the ground and making a two-state solution that much harder to achieve.

High Representative, you have the power to make a difference. Here is the statement of the European Union from last month on the association agreement: six pages of condemnation of human rights abuses and illegality and infringements by Israel – and yet a summary which says we seek closer cooperation with Israel.

What is this about? Is it surprising that Palestinians regard the European Union as having double standards? You are putting your trust in pleasant dialogue. But Israel just thinks we

are weak, weak, weak. And until you use your power, until you stand up and use a word to Israel which they are not used to hearing, nothing will change. That word is 'no'.

David Campbell Bannerman (EFD). – Mr President, whilst good Libyan people are being bombed and terrorised by Mr Gaddafi, the EU has been shelling out on projects for Libya like 'enhancing respect for international humanitarian law'. It is pretty obvious that has not worked. Meanwhile, Baroness Ashton here is demanding yet more resources, on top of the almost EUR 3 billion the External Action Service is due to receive. Instead of being immersed further in this bloated, duplicating and insatiable EU foreign service and European Defence Agency, Britain should spend the GBP 48 million a day we pay for EU membership on our own national defence interests.

The Libyan crisis has shown the value of having aircraft carriers with fast jets stationed off crisis zones. I appeal to David Cameron to see sense and reprieve both the carrier HMS Ark Royal, and at least a minimum number of Harriers. During the Falklands crisis, Mrs Thatcher successfully reprieved the Ark's sister ship, HMS Invincible. We must do the same for the Ark Royal.

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, I would like to begin by mentioning the very sceptical, pessimistic voices which have recently expressed the view, since the uprisings in the Mediterranean region, that the Middle East peace process is in danger of becoming a kind of collateral victim. Based on this interpretation, the process would become even more deadlocked than it currently is, which would cause further disruption. I believe that we do not need to take such a pessimistic view of things.

I actually believe that it is these recent events which show us the need for significant progress in the peace process. In this respect, we need European leadership, mainly so that the September 2011 deadline for reaching an agreement can be met. From this perspective, I would like to congratulate the High Representative for the commitment that she has shown and the efforts that she has made in recent months.

In order to implement the two-state solution and promote the cause of a global Arab-Israeli peace, I believe that we need, once again, to bring both sides to the negotiating table and, in this regard, the Quartet's initiative of consulting with the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators separately marks a first step. We certainly need to take a further step. I believe that the climate of revolution in the Mediterranean may give new impetus to the peace process. However, we must take care that the changes taking place do not lead to a review of the commitments made previously by some of the countries in the region in relation to Israel.

David-Maria Sassoli (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Mediterranean has made a dramatic return to the global political agenda and Europe has found out that it is very weak indeed.

We failed to invest in a neighbourhood policy with the Middle East and the Maghreb, we did not give our backing to an area of free trade or a common immigration policy and what is happening in North Africa is having an effect on the Middle East, where the peace process has stalled. Baroness Ashton, Europe must help Israel and the Palestinians to restart negotiations on the basis of proposals that are now supported by both the Council and Parliament.

The changes under way also affect Israel and, by investing in change, we can bring together security and peace. Europe must exert pressure on Israel to weaken its grip on the occupied

territories and to halt the settlement policy, which is a necessary condition to restart negotiations. As we are currently seeing, these days, nobody is impervious when the desire for freedom explodes like this.

Any further delay in resolving the conflict risks compromising Israeli and Palestinian hopes of reaching a fair solution and compromises the future of such a fragile area of the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE). – (FR) Mr President, everyone can see that the situation is changing in the Middle East with this democratic wave that is sweeping through the Maghreb and the Mashreq via Egypt.

This historic uprising taking place in the Arab nations must be seen by Israel and by the Palestinian leaders as an opportunity, not as a risk. Indeed, I believe that the sudden emergence of democratic movements at the borders of Israel and the Palestinian territories is an opportunity to be seized by both parties.

Today, Israelis and Palestinians are having to face facts: the world around them is changing, and it is time for them to change too. Therefore, the time has come for Europe to force a dialogue, to open real negotiations and to launch a genuine peace process with a view to finding a lasting solution that sees the two nations living side by side in peace.

However, at this very crucial time, it would be incomprehensible and inappropriate for the Union to dispense with its special envoy for the Middle East. I should therefore like it if you could shed some light on this matter for us, Baroness Ashton.

Krzysztof Lisiek (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, as a Member of the European Parliament, I have had the opportunity to visit several countries in the Middle East in the last few months, including Syria, the Palestinian Authority and Israel. One of the region's leaders told me: 'Please tell Europe's leaders to be more strongly involved, because if this involvement achieves success, it will be a political success of the kind for which the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded'. I dedicate those words to Mrs Ashton. However, speaking in all seriousness, all leaders said the same to me: the European Union must be more strongly involved in the Middle East process. For example, the United States is affected by certain political restrictions, while, on the other hand, our involvement must include cooperation with a partner such as the United States, if only because of the strategic relations of the United States with Israel. Secondly, all of us, including Mrs Ashton, should make use of every opportunity available to the European Union. Last week, for example, there was an unprecedented joint sitting of the governments of Poland and Israel in the form of an intergovernmental consultation. The Prime Minister, Mr Tusk, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Sikorski, were in Israel. We should make the most of this type of opportunity.

Ioan Mircea Pașcu (S&D). – Mr President, the Middle East question, complicated as it was, has become even more complicated lately. Naturally, the safe bet for everyone would be to wait and see.

On the Palestinian side, the question is who will tip the balance in their favour: Hamas, supported by Iran, gaining ground in the West Bank – more probable – or Fatah reasserting its presence in Gaza – less probable. Then Jordan, a key country which is engulfed in turmoil, might blow up the entire peace process. As for Israel, apparently there are two schools of thought: one favouring a restart of the current negotiations through breakthrough proposals, the other favouring the same 'wait and see' policy.

However, with the vision and determination to take the right turn at each of these crossroads, there is a chance that the current impasse can be overcome, however far off that might appear now.

Marietta Giannakou (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, I agree with the High Representative's observation that now is the time for serious intervention and proper negotiation in the Middle East. Firstly, because no one knows what will happen next in North Africa and, secondly, because it is clear that the situation between Israel and Palestine is being used as a pretext for global terrorism and tension and, in particular, to ignite tension in the Muslim world.

Therefore, the peace process needs immediate intervention, intervention by you, Lady Ashton, and by a special envoy. This will also be a chance for Europe to find out if it really can intervene and play the role played once upon a time by the United States, but with different results.

Of course, financial aid is necessary, but it requires special regulation and special monitoring, because we all know what became of financial aid in the old days. Of course, there is also the huge issue of democratisation because, without social democracy, the peace process will certainly become a very difficult process. Thus, a special negotiator, with a special team to help towards proper democratisation and constitutional order, would be very valuable and I have the impression from what you said, Lady Ashton, that you will be making efforts in this direction.

Lena Kolarska-Bobińska (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Mrs Ashton, when I talked with politicians in the Middle East, I often heard them say that the European Union is a payer, not a player. It was also said that the Union must be a player and not just a payer, because the European Union is the one institution in the Quartet which everyone trusts. Some trust Russia, while the other side in the conflict is more open to the United States. The European Union is predestined for this role. It was said that the Union does not have a common policy because the Member States have very different attitudes to the parties in the conflict and the ways of resolving these problems. We have, now, an exceptional opportunity, because there is Mrs Ashton, we have the External Action Service, and we can create a common policy on the conflict.

This week, the Commission published a new document concerning assistance for the countries of the Mediterranean region entitled 'A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean'. I appeal for us to examine our policy on the Middle East and on Eastern Europe and to learn lessons from these experiences which can then be used when building the new policy towards the countries of the Mediterranean. The European Union has given help to institutions in Poland and 10 other Member States. It has helped civil society in the Middle East. Let us, then, make use of this experience when building the new policy.

Cristiana Muscardini (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, ladies and gentlemen, in order to achieve peace, all parties first need to take on some commitments, beginning with the recognition of Israel to all effects – which is still not the case in some countries – and therefore, all countries in the area need to offer basic, essential guarantees in order to establish relations built on mutual respect.

If the commercial policy has today become a new form of foreign policy, then we must try to propose and reach solutions not only democratically, but also through commercial

agreements. It is no longer conceivable for the Union to continue financing projects, as it has done so far, that bring neither the result for which the funds were allocated, nor even a slight improvement in the democratic process and the peace process.

Israel cannot be left alone and the Palestinian people have the right to a State. However, we also need to take action in economic terms, with observatories that are capable of monitoring the use of the aid that we are giving out.

The new situation that has taken hold in recent months, which involves a wider geographic area, finally forces Europe to take stronger and more determined political action and to work more closely with young people, who can help build the safer and more democratic society that we still have not been able to provide for the new generations.

Pino Arlacchi (S&D). – Mr President, having heard Baroness Ashton's statement, I would like to put two questions relating to her evaluation of the impact on the Middle East peace process of what is occurring now in North Africa.

Baroness Ashton, do you not believe that we have a new opportunity, since the global platform for human rights is now much higher and the threshold of tolerance in the Middle East for clear violations of international law and human rights, such as Gaza and the settlements, is much lower?

My second question is this: do you not believe that the psychology of a besieged fortress in Israel, which, in the past, was a driving force behind its foreign policy, now has much less justification, because the threat posed by what are becoming democratic regimes is very much less and also because democracies do not go to war against each other? Do not all these factors contribute powerfully to a potential reduction in tension in the Middle East?

Charles Tannock (ECR). – Mr President, the EU is part of the Quartet but sadly, there is currently not much progress in the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. Stalemate is likely to continue as long as there is so much unrest and uncertainty in the Arab world. Certainly from Israel's point of view – and I declare I am Vice-President of the European Friends of Israel – the unpredictable situation in Egypt is diverting attention away from the peace process.

I welcome the commitment by the military government in Egypt to honour the 1979 peace treaty with Israel. Let us hope that the Muslim Brotherhood do not prevail in Cairo. Whatever happens, we should make sure that future EU aid to Egypt is conditional on retention of the peace treaty with Israel. Indeed, the fact that part of the putative future Palestinian state is ruled by Hamas, which is committed still to Israel's annihilation, is surely the biggest obstacle to peace.

Iran also constitutes a threat to the very existence of Israel. Peace in the region will never be possible as long as Tehran continues to fund and arm the fanatics of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Therefore, I understand the recent concern in Israel at the passage of two Iranian warships through the Suez Canal on their way to Syria, which is the first time this was allowed to happen since 1979. Egypt getting closer to Iran is a very alarming trend. Therefore, I wish the High Representative every success in this diplomatic minefield which lies ahead.

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) Mr President, the Middle East peace process is, in my opinion, going through an endurance test at the moment. The Arab world is changing and few can foresee what sort of governments or regimes will take power in the Arab countries.

The situation is all the more complex for the fact that the Israeli administration has again provoked the Arab world recently by building new settlements on Palestinian territories. In my opinion, there is only one option open to us at such a time – intensive engagement on all fronts.

We must convince our Israeli friends to refrain from all actions that might provoke unnecessary anger among the Arab population. However, we must, at the same time, carefully attempt, through close engagement with the Arab world, and particularly with countries that are now deciding on their future orientation, to support decent, democratic political forces that will be capable of resolving any disputes peacefully, in a businesslike manner, and without prejudice and hatred.

We know that the path to greater peace in the Middle East will not be easy, but I hope that the Israeli Government understands by now that today it has one of its last chances for a peaceful and pragmatic ordering of relations with Palestine.

Hannes Swoboda (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, Mr Tannock referred to the Iranian ships that passed through the Suez Canal. My question to Baroness Ashton, the High Representative, is: is it certain that Egypt has no possibility at all under international law to deny passage to the ships, whether it wished to or not? I only wanted to ask whether it was based on international law or whether some political connection is involved here.

Catherine Ashton, *Vice-President of the Council/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, I will try to deal with as many of the issues that were raised as possible but, as always, when we debate the Middle East peace process, there is a real sense of urgency and a strong desire in this House to see us make progress. Let me just tell you that this is reflected a thousandfold in the work that I try to do to see what we are able to achieve as the European Union.

I absolutely want us to move away from ever hearing the phrase ‘payer, not a player’ again. I am sick of it. I have heard it enough. I do not criticise Members here for saying it. It is simply just a travesty of the role of the European Union, but I think it does reflect historically some of the ways in which we perhaps were perceived. I have worked really hard in the course of this year to change that, not least on the ground, and I will say more about that in a moment.

I want to begin with you, Mr Salafranca, because you asked me about some very specific points. We began with the issue of the veto of the Security Council by the United States – the 14 to 1 vote on the settlements proposal, the resolution that was put forward by Lebanon on the day, because they are part of the Security Council – which, as you know, created a huge amount of what we might call noise in the system and beyond. I was in the Middle East with the Palestinians during the course of those final days leading up to that vote. All the EU countries on the Security Council voted against the American position and voted for the resolution.

Our position is absolutely clear. We are all united in recognising that the settlements are illegal under international law. Those of you who, like me, have seen the settlements, will know that actually, they are not in anyone’s long-term interest and would have to be resolved ultimately by determination of the borders. Our proposals have been the 1967

borders with appropriate swapping of territory, which is for the parties to agree and not for us to say, but I am sure that would take into account the reality of people's lives and where they live.

I do not think it has had a dramatic long-term effect on the relationship with the US, not least because the United States has worked very hard to explain its position – and I am not going to try to explain it for them – and to continue to work with the Palestinians. I think that the Palestinians have understood the position that the United States found itself in. So there is still a huge amount of work going on, but I do not want in any way to suggest that it was not a difficult time. I was very well aware of that.

You asked me about the Palestinian elections called for September, which Hamas has refused to participate in. You will also know – and you will have seen it – that Prime Minister Fayyad is busy looking at the possibilities for some sort of reconciliation. I will be speaking to him soon about that among many other things. I am not sure whether the elections will now go ahead. That will be for them to decide. I know that they are thinking about the best way forward.

You also asked me about the leaks that occurred from the Palestinian side. You know that Mr Erkat, who was the chief negotiator, is moving to a new position as a senior advisor for President Abbas on the grounds that it was from his office and he must take responsibility for it. I think it had two effects. One is, of course, great concern about what was going on. When you are trying to pull together a negotiating position, lots of things are said. Many of them do not end up in the final documents but people – and this is right and proper – spend time thinking about the different positions. So without doubt, there was concern in Ramallah and beyond, and on the West Bank and beyond, about what was being said. Interestingly, there was an equal and opposite reaction whereby, I think in parts of the Israeli press, when they saw what they thought was a Palestinian position, they asked, why are we not engaging with this? So it had an interesting effect on raising the debate. Perhaps in the longer term – although I am never a fan of leaking anything, because it prevents people from developing good policy – this might not have the effect that originally we might have seen.

Let me just kill off this association agreement discussion, which is why I kept shaking my head. What has not happened is a change in the existing framework and the position. Progress in the association agreement remains dependent upon progress in the Middle East peace process. What was being described was the aspiration to want to have those stronger relations, because we do believe in a two-state settlement and we do believe in the future of Israel. We want to see a strong Israel – economically, politically, all of those things – as we wish to see a strong Palestinian state, but we cannot make progress until we see progress in the Middle East peace process. I agree with Ms Neyts-Uyttebroeck that it is really important that we start to speed up. This has been a point that I have made consistently in Israel and to the Palestinian Authority. We have to get moving.

There are two reasons for this. One is that the region is changing and those changes demand it and, as Mr Arlacchi said, there is a change in the region that demands that we recognise that an Egypt – not that I believe that Egypt wishes to create a problem militarily with Israel, I do not at all – a democratic Egypt moving forward will want to look again at the issue that is on its doorstep. I think it is the interests of both. I genuinely believe it is in the interests of the people of Israel as much as of the Palestinian people to find a solution now. This could be a really important part of a secure, stable region. I have said that and will continue to say it, and will continue to say it to all our partners, including everybody in the Quartet.

Mr Belder, we have to get, as you say, to direct negotiations, but we have to do it by making sure the positions of the parties are credible and credible with each other as well. It is really important that the Palestinians are able to go to the negotiating table with the support of the Arab League. I speak with Amr Moussa on this subject. I will see him again in Cairo. He will be leaving the Arab League in May, I think on 14 May. He is becoming a presidential candidate in Egypt, as I understand it. It is very important that the Palestinians can carry the people with them. That is important for them and it is also important for Israel and for the security of both. So all of this is tied up with trying to make sure that progress is linked to a certainty about being able to carry the people and the other partners who need to be engaged with that.

Mr Lambsdorff, thank you for your comments. I think the Quartet is a really important vehicle, but it is not everything. I am trying to make sure that we make progress on that. I feel very strongly that we have played an important part. I think we have played an extremely important part over the past weeks and months in how we have been able to keep momentum going. We need to get further and faster. With the Quartet envoys meetings that are taking place, we need to use that opportunity. When the envoys arrived last week in Brussels, I sat with them for an hour to discuss how I saw the possibilities and to impress upon them the importance of using these meetings with the Israelis and the Palestinians. I do not mind where we meet the envoys. I understand with the Palestinians and with the Israelis that sometimes, they are very nervous about what is happening. So if we go to Jerusalem to meet the Israeli negotiator, I do not care where we go. Let us just have the meetings and actually, for the very first time, get the envoys meeting with the negotiators and having the chance to explore the positions in a way that we have not done before. For me, that really matters.

When I talked about Gaza and Kerem Shalom, I really was not trying to suggest that there is only one crossing. We did a complete piece of work on looking at the whole of the infrastructure on the crossings because, when I went into Gaza and met with businesses, particularly, but also in talking to the young people – and I went to the summer schools last year which we fund – it did seem to me that one of the most important issues for Gaza was to get the economy moving as quickly as possible. I respect the fact – and I meet with the Israeli general who is in charge of opening the crossing each time I go and get an update – that there is some movement. I appreciate that. However, we wanted to make sure that we enabled exports in particular, which is vital for the crossings and vital for the economy, because getting more goods in if you do not have an economy does not help you as much as if you can do both. So, getting that to happen mattered.

Kerem Shalom was the one where we saw that we could do three things. First of all, we could put in the infrastructure – the road that would enable it to be used more frequently – and, secondly, we could put in the equipment that would enable the scanning to be done much more quickly to get the flow of goods moving. Thirdly, we could also train the Palestinian people as part of our mission. EUR 5.3 million is what it will cost. We can do it and we are ready to roll. The reason that matters is because, although of course I want to see a much bigger solution for Gaza, it is important that we offer our support to enable things to happen quickly that can help to alleviate that situation. So that is my particular reference for Kerem Shalom. We looked at Karni. There are other crossings we have looked at, but that is the one where we can make a specific contribution right now. We will try to do so but it does not alter the basic premise of what we have said – that the crossings need to be open, that people need to move freely and be able to do that as quickly as possible.

I just want to say to Mr Campbell Bannerman that I do not mind you attacking me, but please, let us get the facts right. Most of the money that you are describing – and, in fact, there is more of it – is used for spending outside. It is not actually for my service. It is in order that we can build democracies, support human rights, the instrument for stability, development and so on, which I know you and other members of your group – and I think everyone in this House – absolutely supports one hundred percent. You want us to support the people of Egypt, the people of Tunisia and the people of Libya. Well, that is some money that we use to do it across the world over time. The budget for the European External Action Service is EUR 460 million. That funds 135 delegations, the central staff, everything that we do all over the world. It is less than 50% of the British Foreign Office's budget. So if you want to attack me for that, that is fine, but please do not accuse me of having billions and billions of euro that somehow I am using for a sparkling building or anything else. That is the amount that I have for the moment to be able to spend under the budget that exists. I will try to spend it as well as I possibly can in the interests of the things that I believe in and which this House believes in. The rest of it is for us to give to other people who need it to achieve what we think is right.

I have been talking too long but, Mr Arlacchi, it is true that things in the Middle East are changing and the terms are changing. What is really interesting, as we build the platform on which we operate, is to be able to look at the potential in the region – whether it is in Lebanon and the possibilities of what could happen there, whether it is in terms of the Middle East peace process and certainly what is happening in Egypt and also in my conversations with Jordan, where I speak to the Foreign Minister frequently. We talk about the opportunities that we have there. So I think it is the moment where we can really make changes.

I want to just say something about the relationships that we have. I work very hard at the relationships with Israel and the Palestinians and I talk to a lot of people. I talk to the leaders of both, privately for many hours, and with other people in the meetings. I respect those conversations very much, but I tell you the European Union is respected in both countries and I intend to keep it that way because that is about a two-state solution. They will tell me about things they do not like. I am glad they do, but I think they have respect for the position that we are trying to take. We do not have a marginal role. We have a realistic role. The role that we are able to play is one that I understand and I use to the best effect I can. I cannot do what other countries can do. I do not have the power to do some things, but what we can do is use our economic and political muscle – in the best sense of that word – to be able to try and support this process going forward. I devote more energy to this probably than to anything else that we do.

Ms Dodds asked whether the neighbourhood policy had failed. It has not, but it definitely fits into the 'could do better' category. I said a long time ago that we need to review the policy. Stefan Füle and I have started that work. The events of the last few weeks have proved we need to do it, to make it more effective, more able to achieve what we want and to be flexible and recognise that in the different countries, we need a differentiated approach that will really deliver for the people on the ground the things that they want against the values and aspirations that we hold for them and for ourselves.

I have upgraded the post of special envoy to Deputy Secretary-General for the moment because I think it is so important that the Quartet envoy is somebody who is absolutely at the heart and who is our political director. I thank Marc Otte for his contribution. Once Helga Schmid has finished this piece of work and we see where we are going, I will then look

to see what we should do for the future to make sure that we are properly represented in the region.

Finally, Mr Swoboda, you asked me about the Iranian ship. As I understand it, the position is that the Iranians said they were doing a training mission in support of their work to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia. Permission was given for it to go through on that basis. As far as I am aware – and that is the last information I had because, obviously, as soon as we heard, we asked for the information – as a training mission with that in mind, I do not think there was any reason for the Egyptians to deny them access. Whether that was what was happening or not is another thing altogether.

Honourable Members, thank you very much for this debate. I hope in my response I have covered as many of the issues as possible.

President. – Baroness Ashton, we thank you very much because you have had a very demanding day. You have worked very hard in this Chamber today, so thank you for being with us and for giving us such excellent and detailed answers.

The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Elena Băsescu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) The situation in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region is at a particularly delicate juncture, as the High Representative has also mentioned in her speech. I believe that this is an appropriate opportunity for the EU to focus on the peace process in the region. Israel is one of the European Union's biggest trade partners, while students from the whole of Europe have access to study centres in Israel, thanks to the university international exchange programmes.

I should also mention that the Middle East is where the challenges of the future are already taking shape. The management of drinking water is one example of this. The Arab revolutions have generated a climate of instability in the Mediterranean region, which has a particular effect on Israel. Recently, due to such security risks, the step was taken to close a border point, leaving Kerem Shalom as the only commercial crossing which is completely secure. The Israeli authorities are focusing their efforts at this location on ensuring a normal flow of civilian and commercial traffic. In this context, I feel that it is vital to resume as quickly as possible the negotiations on reaching a peaceful solution. Indeed, the EU's involvement in this process may provide the support needed for this dialogue to be carried out in ideal conditions.

Dominique Baudis (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) The revolutions in the Arab world must not divert our attention from the Middle East peace process. On the contrary, they are an opportunity to be seized. Palestine is due to hold presidential and legislative elections before the summer, and the Palestinian Authority wants to establish legitimate institutions and manage its security. The ongoing construction of Israeli settlements is an injustice and a provocation to the Palestinians. Today, we have the opportunity, with this wind of freedom that is blowing over the whole of the Arab world, to relaunch the negotiations. The EU must take the initiative to relaunch them. Why not do so within the context of the Union for the Mediterranean?

17. Agenda of the next sitting: see Minutes

18. Closure of the sitting

(The sitting closed at 18:20)