

Høring af Chris Patten
Anhörung von Herrn Patten
Ακρόαση του κ. Patten
Hearing of Mr Patten
Comparecencia del Sr. Patten
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VORSITZ: ELMAR BROK

Der Vorsitzende. - Zu dieser mitternächtlichen Stunde können wir mit der Arbeit beginnen. Ich möchte in unserer Mitte gerne den Kandidaten für das Amt des Außenkommissars, Herrn Chris Patten begrüßen. Wie ich gerade höre, ist es sein zweiter Auftritt in diesem Ausschuß, das erste Mal war 1996 als Gouverneur von Hongkong. Ich freue mich, daß wir dieses Hearing hier durchführen können, weil das Thema, das der Kandidat für dieses Amt zu bearbeiten, hat in den nächsten Jahren nach meiner Auffassung eines der wesentlichen Ämter in der Kommission sein wird, denn die Frage der Entwicklung und der gemeinsamen Außen-, Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik hin zu einer verteidigungspolitischen Identität der Europäischen Union wird sicherlich nach den Ereignissen im früheren Jugoslawien eines der Schwerpunktthemen für uns sein. Ich glaube, daß die Europäische Union verstanden hat, daß sie, nachdem sie als wirtschaftlicher Riese dasteht, nicht auf Dauer ein politischer Zwerg sein kann, und daß wir Europäer auch ein hohes Maß an Verantwortung übernehmen müssen und uns nicht immer nur auf unsere amerikanischen Verbündeten verlassen können. Ich glaube, aus diesem Grunde ist es außerordentlich wichtig, daß wir diese Befragung durchführen, um in diesem Austausch Qualifikationen zu testen und gleichzeitig aber auch Meinungen auszutauschen, die uns dann helfen, in den nächsten Jahren in einer sinnvollen Kooperation die Dinge voranzutreiben. Herzlich willkommen noch einmal, Chris Patten. Ich möchte Ihnen gleich das Wort geben zu einem Eingangsstatement, so daß wir dann mit den Befragungen beginnen können. Sie haben das Wort.

Patten, Commission. – Thank you for welcoming me back to this committee. It is actually about a quarter of a century since I first came to the European Parliament as director of my party's research department. I came again as a young Member of Parliament and then regularly as a minister.

As the Minister for Overseas Development and President of the Development Council in 1986, I worked very closely with Parliament on the reform of the food aid regulation, turning food aid into a real instrument of development policy, and I got to know the Environmental Committee here when I was Environment Minister. A number of my colleagues on the Environment Council are, I know, Members of the European Parliament today. Then, as chairman of my political party, I helped to negotiate the agreement between the Conservative Party and the EPP, a relationship which I am pleased to see continues to the uninhibited joy of large sections of the British press.

As Governor of Hong Kong, as you said chairman, I came to the European Parliament. I held talks with several of your delegations on their visits to the Territory and I was profoundly grateful for the European Parliament's consistent support for our efforts to strengthen democracy and to sustain civil society in Hong Kong. That support was an example of this Parliament's strong stand in favour of human rights right across the world. No one has to give this Parliament lectures about the universality of liberal pluralist values. You have consistently given a welcome lead on human rights and I am delighted that today you are ensuring that we have the opportunity of discussion human rights properly in this forum.

It is therefore a considerable privilege, as a former elected politician who did not admittedly depart the political scene entirely voluntarily, to begin a new chapter in my relationships with this institution. At least I hope it is a chapter rather than a couple of short paragraphs. But that of course is entirely in your hands. I am sure that if I am around for long enough, we will have a constructive and candid relationship which means that I will not always say what everyone wants me to say but will always try to say what I think. I will try to take the initiative myself in making our relationship as open as possible rather than wait to be invited to come and talk to you.

You asked me in your written questions, which kept my fax machine white hot throughout August, how the crisis in the Commission should be dealt with. My reply, I notice, was regarded by the Wall Street Journal as being rather undiplomatic. I said I thought there were problems for both of us. The way the last Commission is leaving the field and the subsequent low turnout in most Member States in the European elections. That turnout should disturb us all as convinced democrats. It represents something that we have to put right. On a point which has been made by Professor Prodi, we cannot carry on as though it is business as usual, as though nothing has changed. The European electorate holds the European institutions, the institutions of a Community, of a union that has being spectacularly successful over the last 40 years, perhaps unfairly, perhaps paradoxically, in lower esteem than all of us would like to see. We have to win back people's respect, we have to win back their trust and we have to demonstrate that what we do makes their world more prosperous, more stable and more free. Executives are always, not sometimes but always, stronger when they are clearly accountable and parliaments are always more credible when they exercise their responsibility for holding the executive to account in a balanced, sensible and vigorous way.

We need, in my judgement, more than that insight and more than that democratic practice. In preparing for these hearings, in reading industrial quantities of briefing, I have been all too aware of the gap, the yawning chasm sometimes, that exists between laudable aspirations and prosaic reality. In my field, the European Union has committed itself to try and fashion a more coherent, foreign and security policy. As you said, chairman, to punch its political weight in the world.

But that vision will not amount to much unless we show that we are capable of carrying out rather better the tasks to which we are already committed. I hope I cannot be accused of lacking vision but please do not look to me for a host of new initiatives, for lists of priorities as long as my arm. I feel after the last month of reading punch drunk with initiatives and their acronyms. I think it is crucial to ensure that those initiatives actually achieve what was hoped for them.

I want the Commission to be able to show that it can do well what it has already taken on. I want us to be able to show that the way we conduct our external relations can add comprehensive, efficiently managed and heavyweight value to what Member States do individually and collectively. If we want to be taken more seriously by our own citizens at home, as well as abroad, we have no choice except to take reform seriously and to recognise that prioritisation should mean what it actually says in every Community language. It is not a criticism of those who work in the Commission to say this. Many of them perform heroically, often attempting to do more than they can realistically manage with less help than they should reasonably receive. I want to see their public service recognised and appreciated, not pilloried.

There are three other points I would like to make, if I may, rather briefly. First the Amsterdam Treaty and the Cologne Summit report challenge us to develop a common foreign and security policy that is appropriate for the largest trading block in the world, for a community of more than 350 million men and women, for the largest donor of humanitarian and development assistance in the world and for a community which is an example to many other countries of how free men and women can organise their lives together in harmony, decency and prosperity. Mr Solana as High Representative and I as Commissioner for External Relations have the task of trying to rise to the challenge. I want to place on record that it is for me an honour to be asked to work with Javier Solana whom I have known for almost 15 years. He has done a superb job as Secretary-General of NATO and I am sure he will do an equally good job as High Representative and Secretary-General of the Council. It is imperative that we work successfully together representing the different strengths and institutional contributions of the Union. It is impossible to know precisely at the moment how we will make the most of what the Amsterdam Treaty challenges us to do and reduce to the minimum the potential problems that lie ahead. But having spoken to the High Representative I am sure that we are both wholeheartedly committed, with the support of this Parliament, to making a success of the CFSP.

Secondly, I have been given the job of coordinating all the external relations work of the Commission in order to help ensure the coherence of the Union's policies towards the rest of the world. I will be discussing with my colleagues, Pascal Lamy, Paul Nielson, Günter Verheugen, and Pedro Sobles Mira how we can best make this new system work. We will also want to involve other Commissioners whenever its appropriate. People have said to me – but how can this possibly work? There will be endless turf battles they say. After all it's the European Commission that your talking about. Well let me come clean with you. This is the last political job I guess that I will ever do – at least that is what I have told my wife! So like many of you nowadays I am entirely beyond worldly ambition. I am entirely beyond turf wars. That is what I have told everyone who works for me. There is quite enough for all of us to do and it is imperative that we work together in the interests of the Commission and the Union. Anyway who has ever heard of an Englishman ever disagreeing with a Frenchman!

Like Javier Solana and like George Robertson, the new Secretary-General of NATO who led the Labour Party Delegation to the Assizes which was organised by this Parliament in Rome a few years ago, I am a committed European. I believe that my country's future lies in playing a constructive role in this European Union. I can conceive of no other realistic future for my country. I am also sufficient of a patriot, like others here today, to believe that there are certain qualities that my countrymen and women have on the whole embraced that can make a positive contribution to the building of Europe. Not

least a certain bloodymindedness and a passionate commitment to the notion that in any free society we are all equal under the law – governors and governed.

An Englishman who is partly Irish, a Catholic, a Tory, a supporter of Arsenal football club, I am also, again like Javier Solana and George Robertson, an enthusiastic Atlanticist and I see no contradiction whatsoever in being a European who looks as well to the Western horizon. I do not feel obliged to define my European identity in terms of how rude I can be about the United States. Indeed I look back on the history of this century and see the extent to which the United States helped Europe to recover from the pit of totalitarian horror and to hold on by our fingertips to liberal order and democracy. We are grateful to the United States for that. We are now, as the Bonn statement made clear, equal partners in all respects of the United States and what I have said about the United States certainly does not mean that anyone should expect us in serious negotiations to be a soft touch.

Finally, at the brink of a new century, a century that we must hope is less bloody and evil than this one has been, it must be the task of the European Union, which has done so much to entrench freedom and prosperity in the west of our continent, to help secure it across the whole of our continent. A Europe whole and free, an objective shared on both sides of the Atlantic. And a Europe as well that we must hope will be looked to throughout the world as an example of what men and women are capable of doing if they are able to live together in freedom under the law.

4-004

Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE). –¿Piensa usted, señor Patten, que para que la Unión Europea pese en la escena internacional con arreglo a su peso económico y no se limite a extender el cheque en los grandes dramas contemporáneos, la Unión Europea tiene que hablar en la escena internacional con una sola voz?

¿Sería usted partidario, señor Patten, de extender el principio de decisión por mayoría cualificada al ámbito de la política exterior y de seguridad común, y en concreto a las estrategias comunes?

¿Van a constituir las relaciones con América Latina una prioridad para usted?

Y por último, señor Patten, en la respuesta nº 10, usted se muestra contrario a las audiencias de confirmación de los jefes de delegación de la Comisión Europea en países terceros. ¿Sería usted partidario de una mayor presencia, en cualquier caso, de los jefes de delegación de la Comisión en países terceros en las distintas comisiones y delegaciones interparlamentarias de este Parlamento?

4-005

Patten, Commission. – Perhaps I can answer those questions in reverse order. On confirmation hearings: there may be many things that we can learn from the American Constitution. I would need a lot of convincing that Senator Helms was one of them. I find it difficult to understand why we should be perfectly happy to appoint senior officials here in Brussels without confirmation hearings but insist on confirmations for heads of delegations. It is not something that happens in our own national parliaments on the whole. But, having said that, I totally understand the Parliament's wish to meet heads of delegations when they are back in Brussels. I would be very happy to help facilitate that and beyond that, and I hope we get the chance of talking about it later. It is extremely important that we look at our delegations as parts of the development of a real career structure within the Commission. I do not want to embrace Helms-like hearings, nor do I want to be in a position in which the Commission is being leaned on by Member States about certain heads of delegations which I am told may have happened occasionally in the past.

Latin America: I am going to be very careful in how many priorities I offer this Parliament this morning. But there are already in place initiatives on Latin America that we have to see through to a successful conclusion. There is the negotiation of the arrangements between the European Union and Mexico. There are the arrangements between the European Union and Mercosur and the related negotiations with Chile. I hope that we can make a success of those and make a success of the existing commitments under the Asia-Latin America programme which the honourable gentlemen will know has been perhaps one of the victims of our inability to manage our common services as well in the last few years as perhaps we should have done.

On qualified majority voting, I am frankly, having read the Cologne statement and the Amsterdam Treaty, even more surprised than I was at the time at how far Member States have been prepared to go in areas which for all of them touch on the most central issues of sovereignty, diplomacy and national security. I have not discussed with my colleagues in the Commission what sort of contribution we should make to the discussions about the IGC so I am reluctant to go out on a limb with my own personal views on what further can be achieved but we have already gone pretty far in common strategies and developing a common position on foreign and security policy.

4-006

Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE). - Muchas gracias, señor Patten, por su contestación. Quisiera hacer una pregunta complementaria en lo que se refiere a su disponibilidad para que los jefes de delegación de la Comisión en países terceros acudan a este Parlamento. Entiendo que este Parlamento va a hacer un ejercicio moderado de comparecencia. Pero me

parece razonable, señor Patten, que no comparezcan solamente cuando están en Bruselas porque me parece más lógico que los funcionarios y jefes de delegación adapten su agenda a la agenda de este Parlamento que no a la inversa.

4-007

Patten, Commission. – I understand that. I did not mean that I thought when they were in Brussels they should have a guided tour. What I meant was that they should be in a position to have a proper dialogue with Parliament. It is something that happens in - I think the formulation is: the country I know best with ambassadors who are on home leave. Speaking as somebody who has been as it were at the other end of the world, I recall with considerable respect and enthusiasm the role which the Commission's Head of Office in Hong Kong played, not least in organising visits for delegations to Hong Kong. I remember a couple of occasions when Mr Watson was in Hong Kong with colleagues. And for the presence of Mr Reuter in Hong Kong, an extremely effective representative of the Union, we owe a debt of gratitude to the former President of the Commission, Mr Santer, who helped to ensure that Hong Kong got the recognition which it deserved.

4-008

Sakellariou (PSE). – Herr Patten! Auch ich möchte im Namen meiner Fraktion, der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Europas, Sie hier willkommen heißen. Sie sind uns nicht direkt so bekannt, aber wir wissen von Ihrem Wirken als Gouverneur von Hongkong zumindest, und Ihre tapfere Haltung in Ihren Verhandlungen mit den Chinesen damals wird sicherlich eine sehr hilfreiche berufliche Erfahrung sein im Zusammenhang mit diesem Ausschuß hier im Europäischen Parlament.

Die Amsterdamer Verträge sehen eine Stärkung und Weiterentwicklung der gemeinsamen Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik vor, in dem Sinne, daß Sie sich von der bloßen intergouvernementalen Zusammenarbeit hin zu einer wirklichen gemeinschaftlichen Politik entwickelt, wo Mehrheitsentscheidungen die Regel und das Einstimmigkeitsprinzip die Ausnahme sein sollen. Ich möchte gern wissen, ob Sie, Herr Patten, nicht nur als Kommissionsmitglied, sondern auch persönlich bereit sind, diesen Weg zu gehen, daran zu arbeiten, daß diese Mehrheitsentscheidungen die Grundlage der GASP werden, und ich möchte außerdem wissen, ob Sie neben dem Engagement, das unsere Mitgliedstaaten in der NATO haben, auch bereit sind, eine eigenständige europäische Verteidigungskomponente unabhängig von der NATO zu sehen.

4-009

Patten, Commission. – Thank you very much indeed for your kind opening remarks. I would only say, which is no disrespect to the People's Republic of China, that I hope my relationship with this Committee is even more cordial than my relationship was with Chinese negotiators from time to time. We at least respected one another even though I was called occasionally slightly rude names.

I think that making the existing provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty and making the Cologne statement work is going to be a considerable enterprise in the next few years. I do not want to seem to be a spoilsport in declining to look much beyond the life of this Commission. There was a famous Church leader in Britain in the 19th Century, Cardinal Newman, who wrote a hymn called "Lead kindly light" which included the lines "I do not seek the distant scene, one step enough for me". My objective is making a success of common strategies, making a success of my relationship with Mr Solana, making a success of this first, quite brave effort, to make a reality of a common foreign and security policy.

As for the question of security and security forces, the Cologne statement is absolutely clear. After referring to the Petersberg tasks, the Cologne statement says that we need the autonomous ability to perform those tasks with credible forces and I do not think that there is a general view that we are in that position at the moment. We will know how far from that position we are when the WEU completes its analysis of the different capabilities of Member States but there is still some distance to go between what we have said that we aspire to and what we are capable of actually doing. I hope that I can help bridge that gap. One step enough for me.

4-010

Sakellariou (PSE). – Ich möchte Sie beglückwünschen, mit welcher Eleganz Sie der Beantwortung meiner ersten Frage ausgewichen sind. Meine Frage kann beantwortet werden mit „Ja“ oder „Nein“. Sind Sie für Mehrheitsentscheidungen in der gemeinsamen Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik oder nicht?

4-011

Patten, Commission. – I am entirely in favour of what Member States have been prepared to sign up to so far. If we can make a success of that I will be delighted. What does a success of that mean? It means common strategies, not just in Russia but in the Balkans and elsewhere. It means common strategies that actually add value rather than just collections of what we are already doing. I am less willing than others to sign up to going further down this road before we can actually ensure that this road gets to the destination we want.

4-012

Nicholson of Winterbourne (ELDR). – While fully appreciating your desire to take care of the task in hand, I wonder if we could refer to your answer to Question 5 on the future of the European Union and your vision of European integration. I know it makes you go a little bit further in terms of looking ahead than perhaps you want to take as your first step, but nonetheless it does impact completely upon the way in which you will discharge your tasks. Could I ask therefore that you let us more into your thinking on your view of European integration, of inevitably the ever closer union to which we are committed? What do you feel about that and how do you see it impacting upon your job?

Secondly, you talk about deepening and you also speak in your answer about widening. Do you believe that widening and deepening can happen together and should respect the rules and values that the rest of the European Union Member States have already adopted - that we should not compromise in other words?

4-013

Patten, Commission. – The last point goes right to the heart of your principal question. It has sometimes been suggested in the past, not least in my own country, that somehow widening the Community was an alternative to deepening its institutions. I do not believe that is true for one moment. I do not think that you can widen successfully without deepening.

To go back to the previous question: without confronting a number of other areas issues like qualified majority voting, the institutions of an enlarged Union simply will not work effectively. Enlargement, which I believe has a moral as well as strategic imperative, is not a cop-out. Enlargement raises big and important issues of deepening and it raises important issues of democratic accountability.

I have often been asked in my own country to say at what point I think the European Union should stop its adventure, should stop trying to develop its institutions. I do not know. 25 years ago a lot of people would have been amazed to discover how far we have got today. Five years ago a lot of people would have been amazed to discover how far we have come on common foreign and security policy. I do not want to sign up to some arbitrary destination.

It is not an exaggeration to say that what we are trying to do in Europe has never been tried before in this way. I hope that we can continue to move in the direction on which we have started. To repeat what I stated earlier, our main objectives in the next few years are to make work what we have set our hands to and to make sure that what we do is done without arrogance and with a good deal of recognition of the importance of securing public support for the whole enterprise. Of course we have to give a lead but there is no point in giving a lead if nobody is following.

4-014

Frassoni (Verts/ALE). – In your written and oral answers, you defend the idea that the European Union's role in the international scene should be improved but whilst you continually insist on the need to increase its ability to compete in the markets which you regrettably see as a priority over social welfare, you remain quite vague on what this means politically and in terms of the balance of powers between the European Union institutions and Member States.

Taking into consideration your background and what you have just said to us today and considering the fact that a good number of the members of your cabinet, I also regret, come from national diplomatic services, it is not very clear to me to whom you feel accountable. Do you believe that there is a European space of power and democracy distinct from national governments and parliaments? More specifically, do you think that your role is more of that of a coordinator, of that of a minister in a government? Finally are you in favour of or against reform of the United Nations to create a permanent seat for the European Union?

4-015

Patten, Commission. – First of all the relationship between my job and diplomacy. I do not think that because somebody has been professionally a diplomat disqualifies her or him from feeling a comprehensive relationship with the problems of the real world. In my experience that is far from true. The members of my Cabinet have a very broad range of experience including diplomatic.

The honourable lady is perfectly correct in implying in her question that I bring to my job, as everyone brings to their job, a certain bagful of philosophical prejudices. I happen to believe in liberal markets just as I happen to believe in political pluralism. I have written on the subject. I have talked about the subject and I have tried to take political decisions in that context. The honourable lady might not always agree with my political views but I hope that they will not prevent me working in the best interests of the European Union.

Am I a coordinator? I am partly a coordinator. I am partly an initiator. I am partly the man who has to deliver the beef. I am partly the person who has to ensure that great statements from this Parliament or the Council of Ministers are not just hot air. That they are actually supported on the ground by the sort of development, trade, external relations policies which will actually ensure that we achieve what we want to do around the world. Sometimes my job will be the relatively basic job of, as I said earlier, trying to make things work better than they have worked in the past.

Reform of the United Nations: I do not believe that there is an early likelihood of those Member States which are members of the Security Council giving up their position in the United Nations Security Council. I do hope that the European Union can, as it has been doing, work more together in the UN and in UN institutions.

If this Parliament confirms me, one of my first tasks will be to go to the UN General Assembly and to point out to those who are there just how much the European Union is doing to help UN operations around the world. I will also be able to point out that the European Union Member States are the largest and most reliable contributors to the United Nations.

4-016

Marsset Campos (GUE/NGL). – Señor Presidente, quiero en primer lugar agradecer la claridad, espontaneidad y cordialidad de la presentación que ha hecho el Sr. Patten y también de sus respuestas. A la vista de las respuestas que ha dado a las cuestiones 14 y 15, se pronuncia usted a favor de que la Unión Europea confíe y se comprometa con la ONU y con la legalidad internacional, de lo que nos alegramos como colegisladores. Sin embargo, la pregunta que voy a formularle pretende averiguar su grado de compromiso con esta legalidad internacional.

En la eventual repetición de una situación como la de Kosovo y sabiendo como ha ido la guerra y como está ahora la situación de los serbios y gitano-kosovares, hostigados por la UCK, ¿propondría usted que la Unión Europea llegase hasta el final con la ONU en la solución del conflicto o aconsejaría una intervención al margen de la ONU y de la legalidad internacional que puede suponer la comisión de crímenes de guerra denunciados ante el Tribunal Penal Internacional?

4-017

Patten, Commission. – International law, and I speak with all the advantage of not being a lawyer, is, as the honourable gentleman will know, a nebulous though not an unimportant concept. If we had told European opinion for example, that we were unable to do anything in Kosovo because of the view of one or two members of the Security Council of the United Nations, I do not think European public opinion would have accepted that as the correct moral response to what was happening as a result of Mr Milosevic's aggressive nationalism in Kosovo.

We sometimes have to be realistic about the bounds of what is internationally acceptable and broadly speaking legal. I very much agree with the particular point which the honourable gentleman made. We did not fight in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. We did not drop bombs to prevent ethnic cleansing only to stand by while a different sort of ethnic cleansing takes place. It is plainly imperative for us in Kosovo to give every protection to those Serbs and others who have been the targets of violence in the last few weeks. It is a difficult job but one we manifestly have to do.

4-018

Queiró (UEN). – Sr. Chris Patten, queria dizer-lhe que é com o maior gosto que estamos aqui a ouvi-lo e que acompanhámos, em Portugal, o processo de transição que comandou em Hong Kong, uma vez que temos um processo de transição semelhante em Macau. Na sua resposta à questão nº 5, quando convidado a descrever a sua visão relativamente à integração europeia, diz que a União Europeia embarcou numa viagem sem equivalente na história, cujo destino preciso se afigura ainda desconhecido e impossível de conhecer, acrescentando, mais à frente, que a União Europeia tem a possibilidade de tirar partido da sua posição, enquanto grande parceiro comercial na cena mundial, bem como do seu peso económico crescente, para configurar o desenvolvimento dos mercados mundiais. Interpretei esta sua resposta como querendo significar que a Europa não deve ser uma entidade política menor, comparada ao seu gigantismo económico. Este objectivo, de que também partilho, concretiza-se, sobretudo, através da política externa e de segurança comum, sob a sua responsabilidade. Concretamente, pergunto-lhe o seguinte: que resposta tem para todos aqueles, e não me incluo entre eles, que advogam a criação de um exército comum europeu como passo indispensável para o aprofundamento e a concretização de uma política externa e de segurança comum na Europa?

4-019

Patten, Commission. – First of all can I wish you good luck in Macao. The Governor is a friend of mine except on the tennis court. Both of us had some insight into the unique difficulties that we both faced and I hope that his next few weeks go extremely successfully and I am sure the whole Parliament will be watching what happens in Macao with as much interest as it showed in what happened in Hong Kong.

If we have to wait until there is one European army to make a reality of a common foreign and security policy, I fear we may be waiting a very long time. There is a commitment now to doing better in common the tasks we have in the security field. There is a commitment to improving our decision-making in common. There is a commitment in common to examine whether we can collectively do more in order to provide that autonomous capacity which the Cologne Summit referred to. There is a commitment to try to ensure that we can do in common more in fields like humanitarian work, conflict prevention, trying to assess ahead of events where human rights abuses may lead to a political crisis and international disaster.

There is a commitment to all those things. There is also plainly a commitment to using the Eurocorps as soon as we can where we can. I cannot think off-hand of a single Member State which is committed at present to giving up the notion that defence in Europe is going to be primarily a matter for NATO and for national defence forces even though every country is now committed to working more closely together, to provide a European dimension to security policy. I fear that if we wait until there is a single European army we will miss out on an awful lot of opportunities in the next few years.

4-020

Bonino (TDI). – Solo due domande. Una attiene ai diritti umani e civili e alla promozione delle istituzioni democratiche come bussola portante nelle relazioni esterne dell'Unione europea. Come lei sa, o come è stato sperimentato, normalmente sono ottimi *slogan* per i convegni del sabato e della domenica, molto più difficili da incarnare nel lavoro dal lunedì al venerdì. E in effetti ancora non si è trovato quale sia – ammesso che esista – un modello unico o se invece vi siano altri tipi di modelli. Certamente la politica dei diritti umani è una delle più fragili all'interno del Trattato di Amsterdam e all'interno della Commissione. Lei si è fatto un'idea di come riuscire a compiere i primi passi in questo tipo di politica estera che

rappresenta il nostro interesse? Non è solo una questione morale, ma il nostro interesse è di avere una politica estera che sia sostenibile, dichiarabile e di cui andare fieri. Questo in termini generali.

La seconda questione è più puntuale. Lei forse sa che la Presidenza finlandese vuole iscrivere la moratoria sulla pena di morte all'Assemblea generale delle Nazioni Unite. La Commissione intende promuovere delle azioni di sostegno a questa iniziativa fondamentale?

4-021

Patten, Commission. – On the death penalty I will discuss with the presidency what we can do and say at the UN General Assembly. For the record I have always voted against the death penalty in my own country and almost the first thing I did when I became Governor of Hong Kong was to abolish the death penalty which Amnesty International and others had been arguing for for years.

In relation to the first part of the honourable lady's question and, not only in order to try to curry favour, I commend her on the eloquent leadership that she has given to democratisation and human rights in the last few years. I do not agree with her on one point. The Amsterdam Treaty is extraordinarily clear. It sets out in Article 6 what this Union believes a decent free society to be. It then sets out, in I think Article 11, our commitment to try to spread those values of pluralism around the world. In Article 177 it specifically obliges us to take account of those values in shaping our development policies around the world. I do not believe that a concern for human rights is somehow an optional add-on for weekends. It is a specific treaty obligation for Monday to Friday as well as for weekends.

Part of the argument the honourable lady touched on in one of her last comments. She said a concern for human rights is not just a moral issue. One of the things we have to convince people of, not least Member States and national governments, is there is no distinction between a concern for human rights and the national interest. That there is not a difference for example between a concern for human rights and commercial interest. What is one of the lessons that we have all learned from what has happened in Asia in the last couple of years? Simple – one of the lessons we should have learned is that the best places to do business are the societies which treat their citizens most decently.

(Applause)

We have to begin, if we are to be missionaries on this, with our own national governments and without giving away any trade secrets I have some experience in this field. We have also to design effective programmes of institution building and democratisation. I have been looking at our budget lines on all these matters and we have a budget line on human rights which involves expenditure or commitments – not always the same thing – of about EUR 100 million. It would be a fine thing if we were sure that we were spending that much money well. We have to ensure that we not only spend the human rights budget line well but also that a lot of our other programmes are targeted on developing the institutions that will ensure better governance and the development of civil society which underpins a respect for human rights.

4-022

Belder (EDD). – Mijnheer de kandidaat-commissaris, een vraag over de positie van de Europese Unie in het vredesproces in het Midden-Oosten. Over de bepaald niet rimpelloze relatie tussen de Europese Unie en de staat Israël merkte een westerse analist onlangs op dat de Europese Unie veel sterker rekening dient te houden met de veiligheidsbehoefte van Israël want en ik citeer nu: “Er zijn op z'n minst twijfels in hoeverre de Europese Unie werkelijk onvoorwaardelijk achter de onafhankelijkheid en integriteit van de Israëlische staat staat”. Herkent u deze negatieve beeldvorming en wat denkt u daaraan te doen?

4-023

Patten, Commission. – Sometimes we have not been given in the Middle East the credit which perhaps we deserve for the contribution that we have made, not least through the substantial disbursements, not least through the support we have given to the Palestinian administration. It is worth recalling that we are by far the largest economic partner of the State of Israel. If you add to that what we have been doing with the Palestinian administration, that should give us a basis for our dialogue with both parties to that historic dispute and should also enable us to play a supportive role in ensuring the success of the peace process.

The honourable Member will know that there are important discussions taking place today in, I think, Alexandria to try to relaunch the Wye Plantation Agreement and the peace process. I am sure the whole Parliament wishes those talks well. If they go well Europe will undoubtedly have a role to play, not only as a provider of development assistance, not only as the instigator of the Barcelona process with all that should mean for the countries surrounding the Mediterranean but also as somebody that both sides to the dispute should be able to talk to as a friendly and well informed interlocutor.

4-024

Oostlander (PPE). – Ik heb met groot genoegen geconstateerd dat de kandidaat-commissaris met een zekere vechtlust zijn ambt aanvaardt. Het blijkt ook uit de schriftelijke beantwoording en ik denk dat het zeer in de smaak valt bij onze commissie dat u met een grote ambitie uw taak aanvat.

Voorts is mij gebleken dat u de bestaande mogelijkheden met name op het gebied van veiligheidsbeleid bijvoorbeeld via initiatieven wilt benutten. Ook dat is natuurlijk een zeer praktische benadering van de mogelijkheden van de Commissie en dat ziet het Parlement, denk ik, ook wel zo.

Defensie schijnt u een moeilijker terrein te vinden. Dat is begrijpelijk, maar gezien uw ambitieuze houding vraag ik mij af welke eerste stappen u zou willen zetten bij de uitbreiding van de communautarisering van een stukje defensiebeleid. De geschiedenis heeft ons toch wel geleerd dat de huidige situatie ook op dit gebied niet ideaal is en dat, gezien de noodzakelijke gevolgen van ons beleid, delen van het defensiebeleid geleidelijk ook in communautaire hand zouden moeten komen. Uiteraard niet het hele beleid, zoals dit voor het onderwijsbeleid ook niet het geval is, maar delen mogelijk wel. Ik vraag mij af welke eerste stappen u wenst te zetten.

4-025

Patten, Commission. – What we have to look for initially is those areas not only where we have competence and expertise but where we can make a substantial contribution. Let me give one specific, perhaps small but important example and that is conflict prevention.

At the urging of this Parliament, we have put in place over the last few years a conflict prevention network which began in 1997 and which is due to complete this phase of its work at the beginning of next year. We will obviously have to come to Parliament to discuss with them the next stage of our attempts to develop a network and I am sure to share with Parliament, as well as with the policy planning and early warning unit of the High Representative, the contribution from that conflict prevention network.

We can and should be able to contribute from the knowledge and experience which we have through our delegations around the world. I have to try to develop within my directorate-general, if I am responsible for one after this hearing, a slightly different culture, a culture which recognises the challenges of the CFSP for the Union. We have to look at other directorates and other parts of our competence which have a bearing on CFSP.

Example: it seems pretty likely that in the WEU survey of capacities they will point, as others have pointed, to the fact that in terms of R & D and so on, in terms of the capacity of our military forces we are some way behind the United States. We spend not far short of the United States in global terms but we do not pack as much of a punch technologically. That is an area where we perhaps have to look at procurement policy, R & D policy and industrial policy in general to see what we can do to strengthen and make coherent Europe's armaments industry. There are a number of way in which the Commission itself can make an added value contribution. I would like to take those things to the table when I discuss these matters with Javier Solana and with the presidency of the Council.

4-026

Díez González (PSE). – Señor Patten, el fomento de la democracia, de la paz y de la cooperación internacional son, desde Maastricht hasta Amsterdam, objetivos de la PESC, objetivos que, si impregnan horizontalmente las políticas de defensa y exterior de la Unión, nos ayudarán, sin duda, a dotarnos de una identidad –de la que usted hablaba en su primera intervención- interna y externa como europeos.

En ese sentido, señor Patten, ¿considera usted que la PESC debe reunir las potencialidades y compromisos necesarios para convertirse en una política fuerte, en una política compartida, capaz de añadir un significado más tangible al concepto de ciudadanía europea, en ese plus necesario para que los ciudadanos franceses, británicos, alemanes, italianos, españoles, nos consideremos también ciudadanos europeos, miembros de una sociedad plural cohesionada, mestiza, algo más que la suma de intereses y de identidades puramente nacionales?

4-027

Patten, Commission. – What does it mean to be a European citizen? It means to share a moral community. A moral community which is decent, civilised and stable. It is sometimes difficult to describe exactly what it looks like just as it is sometimes difficult to describe an elephant. But you know a decent and free society when you see one. Not always having exactly the same institutions; not always having exactly the same electoral arrangements but by and large, as I said in my opening statement, treating governors and governed in the same way, allowing the freedoms which enable women and men to prosper and make the most of their time on this globe.

That is what we were fighting for in the Balkans. Our sense of moral community was outraged by what Mr Milosevic was doing. Most Europeans understood that. The challenge in the next few years is to encourage the citizens, the voters in our respective countries and in the whole European Union to recognise that they are going to have to show a certain generosity of spirit and generosity of the wallet if we are to accomplish our historic mission in Europe, if we are to enlarge Europe at the pace which strategy and morality should dictate.

This is a Union in which we spend EUR 8 or 9 billion each year on ice-cream. Is it too much for us to challenge European citizens with the relatively minor sacrifices that we will all have to make if we are to make in the first stage is a real success of enlargement? That is a way of defining what it means to be a European citizen; what it is that we want to share with the geographical continent of which we are the luckiest part.

4-028

Galeote Quecedo (PPE). – Señor Patten, quisiera hacerle dos preguntas, una más formal y otra de fondo. La primera hace referencia a su respuesta escrita a la pregunta nº 15. Quisiera que usted fuera un poco más preciso y nos dijera a qué nivel pone usted el límite de su representación ante esta comisión parlamentaria. Aquí habla de o su director general o uno de sus representantes o un funcionario de sus servicios con la cualificación adecuada. ¿Dónde pone usted el límite en el rango de su representación?

En cuanto al fondo, en un ámbito, señor Patten, que yo sí considero prioritario en la política exterior de la Unión Europea, como es América Latina, más allá de una descripción de hechos, explíquenos, por favor, su voluntad política para impulsar las negociaciones en curso con México, con Mercosur, con Chile. ¿Comparte usted la misma voluntad política que tiene su antecesor en estos momentos?

4-029

Patten, Commission. – I can be brief on the second point and say yes. As the honourable gentleman will know, we should be quite close in our discussions to an agreement with Mexico and I hope that another meeting or so will see us home and dry. We have much further to go with EU-Mercosur and Chile but I hope that success with Mexico will push us forward more rapidly in those negotiations, thus ensuring that we have, as soon as we can manage, the best possible trade relationship and relationship in terms of dialogue and development assistance possible with those countries.

My simple answer to the question is I am very keen to see those things go forward. If I have some disappointment it is that our commitments to Latin America under ALA are perhaps still some way ahead of what we actually spend and I hope we get a chance later on in these discussions of talking about the importance of continuing the reform programme of the common services.

The honourable gentleman asked about where I would draw the line in my relations with Parliament. The question suggests that things existed in the past which I find a little difficult to comprehend. It is my objective to come to this Parliament as often as possible, not to be dragged here, not to have to wait to be invited. I would much prefer to be in a position in which you were complaining that you were seeing too much of me to being in a position in which you claim you were never able to talk to me. Of course the extent to which I will be able to do that will depend to some extent on whether I am able to avoid a regime in which I spend my entire time circumnavigating the world tramping through expensively marbled hotel lobbies and VIP suites at international airports. Obviously I have to do some travelling but particularly in the first months of my job most of the action is going to have to be in Brussels and I do not want to spend my whole time expensively circling the globe.

4-030

Obiols i Germa (PSE). – Señor Patten, realmente sus intervenciones en esta sesión están siendo muy interesantes. Quisiera conocer su opinión con el máximo detalle posible en relación a la política euromediterránea. Cuatro años después del inicio del proceso de Barcelona, creo que hay una conciencia ampliamente compartida de que se ha quedado por debajo de las expectativas creadas. Ello ha sido debido a distintos avatares; algunos son externos a la Unión, otros son propios de nuestro funcionamiento. Quisiera, en este sentido, señalar que se trata de un proceso contrarreloj porque esta conciencia de no cumplir con los objetivos se debe a la percepción de que hay desequilibrios económicos, sociales, demográficos que crecen y, por consiguiente, siguiendo la máxima del Cardenal Neuman, al cual usted hacía referencia, quisiera conocer cuáles son sus percepciones respecto a las dilaciones actuales y cuáles son los remedios que usted quisiera impulsar para acelerar el dinamismo del proceso de asociación euromediterráneo.

4-031

Patten, Commission. – There is plainly going to be a spotlight on this aspect of the Union's policies, not least because I read in the newspapers yesterday that the French presidency wants to see movement in this area - and not surprisingly. A lot of our priorities for the Union, without suggesting that we do not have important contributions to make from Korea to Latin America to Africa, have to be in what I would call near Europe, in the Balkans, in the NIS and in the countries around the Mediterranean. The Barcelona process is admirable and under it we have large commitments. Commitments for example to spend under MEDA this year EUR 1 000 000 94.

If it comes to reallocations of the budget during the course of year, where do all the Members think that is going to come from? It is going to come from money which has not been spent under the MEDA regulation. One of my priorities over the next few years is going to be to get us into a situation where those soft options no longer exist. There is a cynicism about talking about huge global sums to be spent in this or that part of the world when you know perfectly well that the mechanisms have not been put in place for actually spending that money wisely and sensibly. We should stop doing it. I hope that I get an opportunity of talking about the common services during the course of this morning.

I had some questions about antipersonnel mines and somebody said to me what they actually mean is reforming the common services because that is where a lot of the mines are going to go off. No disrespect to those who have been trying very hard to make sure that we can deliver what we are committed to under MEDA and the other regulations. We are in a situation which affects MEDA and other programmes. We have an overhang of EUR 18 billion and 14,500 projects, almost a third of which is more than five years old and 17% of which is now technically dormant.

With the help of this Parliament, if I can get into a situation in which what we promised North African countries is actually delivered then we will have made quite a lot of progress and we will not need so many communiqués and so much hot air because we will be able to point to programmes which are making life better for people on the ground, which are really delivering what this Parliament and what the people who vote for this Parliament want to see.

4-032

Miranda (GUE/NGL). – Antes de mais, gostaria de agradecer a possibilidade de a comissão a que presido poder estar presente nesta audição do Sr. Patten. Passando directamente às questões, há uma que gostaria particularmente de colocar ao Sr. Patten, de natureza funcional ou orgânica mas com incidências políticas, não lhe escondendo, desde logo, algumas inquietações da minha comissão relativamente a esta questão. Trata-se da repartição de competências, na Comissão proposta, por três Comissários com particulares responsabilidades no domínio da política externa: o Sr. Patten, o Sr. Lamy, e o Sr. Nielson - que já tivemos oportunidade de ouvir em audição na comissão a que presido. Estas inquietações surgem, nomeadamente, pelo que pode resultar de negativo para um adequado desenvolvimento de uma política de cooperação com os países de menor desenvolvimento. As questões que lhe coloco, de uma forma directa, são três. Qual a importância real da política de desenvolvimento no âmbito da política externa da União? Como vai ser feita a coordenação entre os três Comissários com responsabilidades neste domínio? Qual a disponibilidade do Sr. Patten para cooperar com a Comissão para o Desenvolvimento e a Cooperação?

4-033

Patten, Commission. - I come to this job as a former development minister. The best job I have ever had in public life until, I hope, this one was as minister for overseas development in my own country. It is the job I found most intellectually challenging and satisfying. I can, therefore, at least at the outset – though I have to put my life where my mouth is in the next few years – assure the honourable Member of my sympathy for everything he said. How will I carry out my coordinating responsibilities? First of all, I think that the structure which has been suggested by Professor Prodi makes a great deal more sense than the previous one, which is no criticism of individuals concerned. Bringing the geographical desks together gives us the chance of producing a greater coherence right across the board. I hope in the next couple of weeks to discuss with my colleagues in the Commission the informal and formal mechanisms to try to ensure that we share our responsibilities in a sensible way, recognising who has the lead where. Poul Nielson has the lead in development policy, and he will have, at any time he wants, access to every geographical desk in my directorate-general.

I think we can make this work satisfactorily. There are problems of policy, and there are problems of management, but all my instincts and opinions are those of a former development minister who thinks that the focus of development should be on helping poor people to become less poor. It should be on helping people with stunted lives to live longer lives. It should be on stopping babies dying, rather than wasting money on excessively large, overblown development projects. The importance of development policy to the CFSP is very clear. The Union, collectively and through the programmes for which the Commission is responsible, is incomparably the largest provider of development and humanitarian assistance in the world. I do not think we always get the credit for that, and if I can contribute to us not only getting the credit for it, but ensuring that it underpins the development of a common foreign and security policy, then so much the better. I will be willing to come to the Development Committee whenever it wishes me to do so, and I hope I will have as good a relationship with the Development Committee as I have with other committees in Parliament. But of course the lead on this is Poul Nielson's.

4-034

Deva (PPE). – I would like to probe this matter a little further with the right honourable gentleman, who said just a few minutes ago that the development commissioner will have the lead in development policy. That is fine, if it is indeed the case, but is it also not true that the commissioner for external relations will in future have the last word on development policy if we have the intellectual honesty to recognise that human rights and democracy are the foundations of our development policy? Indeed, they constitute an essential element of the Lomé Convention under which cooperation with a given country can be suspended. In other words, is it not right to ask the right honourable gentleman whether the development commissioner will play second fiddle to the commissioner for external relations?

4-035

Patten, Commission. – I am reluctant to resume my acquaintance with the honourable gentleman by disagreeing with him. However, the truth of the matter is that I do not have the last word on development policy. The Treaty has the last word on development policy, and what the Treaty says applies to Poul, and it applies to me, and it is absolutely clear what the Treaty says.

Article 177 of the Treaty says that in our development policies we have to take account of the values which the whole Union represents. I do not think you would be able to slip a cigarette paper - if we were allowed to talk about them nowadays – between Poul Nielson and myself on these issues. But I repeat, and it is something I will be saying - if I am confirmed and have the opportunity – to all those who work in my directorate-general, that as far as I am concerned, every desk in my directorate-general is available for Pascal Lamy, for Poul Nielson or for any other commissioner.

For example, the environment commissioner might need to draw on the resources that we have. There is no other way of trying to make this work. In some bureaucracies, people act on the assumption that knowledge is power, and that therefore

you should hold knowledge and information to your breast as much as you can. I think that is a Neanderthal way of looking at running an organisation.

4-036

Sauquillo Pérez del Arco (PSE). – Señor Patten, por las declaraciones que usted ha hecho esta mañana y por las contestaciones, vemos que para usted una de las políticas más importantes es el desarrollo como política exterior y es uno de los primeros temas de la política europea: la política de desarrollo. En esta política de desarrollo -ya ha contestado anteriormente a dos compañeros de la Comisión de Desarrollo-, una de las preocupaciones que tenemos es la prevención de conflictos.

En general, estos conflictos se plantean en países en vías de desarrollo, enfrentamientos en casi todos los casos por situaciones de pobreza. Quisiera saber qué papel piensa usted que habría que desempeñar como Unión Europea, y en concreto usted, para la prevención de estos conflictos. Y en ese sentido, estamos muy preocupados y queremos brindarle nuestro apoyo para evitar conflictos, tanto a veces naturales como evidentemente creados por los hombres en las luchas bélicas.

4-037

Patten, Commission. – I think that a lot of the worst problems that the world faces are a consequence of poverty. I think environmental degradation is very often a consequence of poverty, not because of poor people behaving badly, but because poor people have to eke out a miserable standard of living in inhospitable circumstances. I certainly think that violent conflict is very often the result of extremes of poverty.

Now, I have just said that development policy is Poul Nielson's lead responsibility, and I am reluctant to deliver myself of views on development policy ahead of him, but I do not think that he and I would be in disagreement on this point. It seems to me that the main purpose of development policy should, as I said earlier, be to help poor people. I am sure that, over the next few years, Parliament will be focussing a beady eye on the quantity of our development assistance which goes to the poorest people and to the poorest countries. But these are matters, above all, for Poul.

I would just add one contemporary point: we are all, I am sure, following events in East Timor with concern. I think we should be looking at events in Indonesia with a broader concern. I think that Indonesia is, at present, poised on the high wire between reform and riot, between democratic reform and violent chaos. It cannot be of any great assistance in stabilising the situation that so many social problems have arisen in Indonesia over the last year or so, that there has been such an increase in the number of people living in absolute poverty, for example.

I think that is an example of how properly targeted and effective development assistance should be able to help in political developments where a society is going through an unstable period and moving from, shall we say, authoritarianism to a more democratic structure. We should be out there helping people. I would invite the honourable Member to consider how long it actually takes us, when we make up our minds that we should be helping in a country like that, to make sure that we are delivering the aid.

4-038

Rod (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur Patten, vous affirmez qu'une de vos priorités est de plaider en faveur des marchés libres et d'ouvrir la compétition au cours des prochaines négociations de l'OMC. C'est vrai que cette politique ressemble souvent à la politique du renard lâché dans un poulailler. Le constat, aujourd'hui, est que cette simple ouverture des marchés dans beaucoup de pays se traduit par la destruction des marchés locaux et signifie pauvreté et impossibilité de résoudre les besoins primaires de la population. C'est la raison pour laquelle de nombreux pays ACP, mais pas seulement eux, souhaitent une révision de l'OMC. Je voudrais savoir comment vous comptez préserver les intérêts des plus pauvres dans ces nouvelles négociations.

4-039

Patten, Commission. – I am invited to steal the initiative from Pascal Lamy, which I am reluctant to do, not least since he will be attending a hearing later today. However, I read what he said about the forthcoming WTO in his answers and agreed with every word of it, for example what he said about the important debate on ILO concerns, and the importance of incentivising improvements in labour markets and labour conditions. I think the honourable gentleman will know that the Commission put an interesting paper to Parliament earlier this year on the subject, pointing out, among other things, that very often the worst labour conditions are found in areas of developing economies, which international trade barely touches.

The honourable gentleman and I may differ on the importance of free trade and open markets. I look at what has happened in Asia in the last 20 or 30 years, and regard the benign economic growth in those countries as being largely a consequence of the dismantling of trade barriers and of the access which Asian manufacturers and producers have had to markets in Europe and North America, which I think, since these things are not a zero-sum game, has been to our mutual advantage. If they cannot sell, they cannot buy, as Peter Sutherland memorably put it.

As for the African developing countries and the poorer countries, I thought that the new head of the World Trade Organisation, whom we all wish well during the three years of his mandate, made an extremely important contribution to

this debate yesterday, when he said that his priority in the forthcoming WTO round would be to try to ensure that developing countries got a fair deal with better provisions and terms than they have at the moment. I hope that he is successful in his objective. He will certainly have – representing the European Union – one of the most skillful and wisest of the contributors at the table.

4-040

Schwaiger (PPE). – Herr Patten! Ich möchte einfach zustimmend an das anknüpfen, was Sie eben als Antwort ausgeführt haben, und noch einmal zu Ihrer zentralen Rolle der Koordinierung der Politikbereiche der Außenpolitik, der Außenhandelspolitik und der Entwicklungspolitik kommen. Wie sehen Sie insgesamt die Rolle der Europäischen Union jetzt bei der Ministerkonferenz in Seattle? Welche Möglichkeiten sehen Sie – ich will da zum Beispiel an den Vorschlag der finnischen Präsidentschaft bezüglich der nordischen Dimension der Europäischen Union anknüpfen – politische, außenpolitische und außenwirtschaftliche Elemente näher zusammenzubringen?

4-041

Patten, Commission. – Coordination does not mean trying to do other people's jobs for them. What it does mean is trying to ensure that colleagues develop collectively policies which are coherent and which are mutually reinforcing and do not lead either to intellectual disjunctions or to political embarrassments. That is what I am sure I will be able to do in collaboration with Mr Lamy and with other colleagues. I certainly do not see myself, except as a colleague in the Commission making a contribution to the debate about the negotiating mandate in Seattle., in any sense laying down what that mandate should be.

The northern dimension is exceptionally important, and I am delighted that the Finnish Presidency is holding a meeting to discuss that subject later in the autumn. It is a subject which is of considerable interest well outside some of the countries which are most affected. Perhaps I should declare an interest. I am chancellor of a northern English university, which is extremely interested in some of the academic links which they think should be reflected in any discussion of the northern dimension in Europe. It is a university which has close links with most of the Scandinavian tertiary institutions. So, I hope that the northern dimension will, quite properly, get greater priority.

In general it is perhaps a rather broad aspiration to set out, but what we are all seeking is ways in which the strength of Europe's voice on foreign and security policies around the world reflects Europe's strength as an economic unit and a trading block. That is not the case at the moment. I think that, for instance, we see in our bilateral relations with Japan and the United States how far we still have to go in establishing in their collective minds, in government and in business, the identity and the importance of the European Union, not just the Member States which comprise it.

4-042

Gill (PSE). – Commissioner-Designate, I listened with interest to your comments earlier on your relations with China. I welcome your written response on the subject of improving relations between the EU and China. Encouraging increased trade between China and the EU is important in that one in five people live in that country and it is a developing economy. Earlier, you also stated that one of your qualifications for the job was the governorship of Hong Kong. It is an open secret that relations between yourself and the Chinese Government broke down completely during this period. As a consequence, a major publishing house, owned by Mr Rupert Murdoch, refused to publish your memoirs, in case it had a detrimental effect on his business interests in China. I wish you better luck with your next book. How do you hope to shed this historical baggage? Will this not prove to be an economic liability for the EU?

4-043

Patten, Commission. – I think, perhaps, that we begin with very different perceptions of China. China represents between a fifth and a quarter of humanity, and it is of course preposterous to behave as though you can contain China. It would be preposterous not to have a policy of engagement with China. But I have never understood why it is that we should think that a policy of engagement with China should be totally different from a policy of engagement with anybody else.

You talk of the economic relationship between us and China. Yes, China has a 24.5 billion trade surplus with the European Union. We used to have a trade surplus with China. I am not a mercantilist, but I would ask you, in the great scale of things, who needs whom more? It is very important to draw China into the international community. All of us must hope that China is able to join the World Trade Organisation on reasonable terms. But I do not think that we should continue with the Marco Polo delusion that somehow there is some political key which, if only we can find it and if only we can behave in a sufficiently politically correct way, will shower on our heads a cornucopia of economic and commercial prospects in China. It just is not so, and has not been so for the last 700 years. I am, therefore, very much in favour of developing a strong and effective relationship with China. I am very much in favour of China being a member of the WTO on sensible terms. But I do not think that the price we should pay for that is to take a vow of omertà on human rights in China.

(Applause)

We need not do that by lecturing to other countries. You cannot look at the history of Europe in the last century and think that we can approach these issues in a sermonising, patronising way. But we do take a view about what constitutes a

decent society, and we should express that view, whether it is China or whether it is an aspirant to membership of the European Union, or anyone else.

The fact that a well-known Australian – or now, I think, American – citizen declined to publish a book I wrote denied his publishing company all the profits which McMillan's made out of a bestseller.

(Laughter)

I think myself that there is, perhaps, a parable in that when it comes to discussing relations with China.

4-044

Plooij-van Gorsel (ELDR). – Mijnheer Patten, u hebt vanmorgen meerdere malen benadrukt dat er bij besteding van Europees geld altijd met mensenrechten rekening dient te worden gehouden. Ik verwelkom dat. Welnu, ik wil Pakistan als voorbeeld geven. Wij hebben als Europese Unie de onderhandelingen met Pakistan voor een nieuw verdrag over financiële hulp opgeschort in verband met de nucleaire proeven die daar plaatsvonden. Maar, mijnheer Patten, in Pakistan worden vrouwen als slaaf behandeld, mannen kunnen ongestraft hun vrouw vermoorden of gevangen laten zetten, de BBC – toch een redelijk onverdachte hoek – heeft daar onlangs een documentaire over gemaakt. Pakistan is daarnaast ook de hofleverancier van de Taliban. Toch ook niet een club die bepaald als menslievend te boek staat. Dus ik vraag mij af waarom de onderhandelingen met Pakistan over financiële hulp al niet eerder zijn opgeschort op basis van mensenrechten. Zijn in uw ogen vrouwenrechten ook mensenrechten? Zult u in de toekomst als commissaris die verantwoordelijk is voor de mensenrechten, ook deze rechten erkennen en daarnaar handelen?

4-045

Patten, Commission. – There are two issues in the Honourable Member's question, one of which is more difficult than the other. The first question is this: at what point do you suspend development assistance programmes because of the political behaviour of a recipient country? It is a very difficult dilemma. It is a dilemma I remember facing myself some years ago in Burma. It is a dilemma I remember facing in Ethiopia. You have, insofar as you can, I think, to try to make – though it is not always easy – a differentiation between humanitarian assistance and other forms of assistance. However, if we are to be robust about conditionality, then it is very difficult always to leave in place every development assistance programme regardless of how the beneficiary country has behaved.

You refer, in particular, to gender-related development assistance programmes. I do not disagree with the words you have said. I remember launching a female literacy programme in Pakistan a few years ago, upon discovering that in the part of Pakistan where we wished to work the female literacy rate was 1.8%. It was not surprising in those circumstances that we were not making a success of population programmes and that we were not making a success of primary health care programmes. Programmes related to women who were very often, among other things, the main economic contributors in some development programmes, are an important part of any programme which is directed at alleviating poverty and stimulating economic development. One of the misunderstandings is the assumption that somehow poverty alleviation or gender-related programmes are not also directly related to the strengthening of a country's economy.

4-046

Lucas (Verts/ALE). – I would like to return to the question of the free trade areas being negotiated between the EU and Mexico and the likely forthcoming agreements to be negotiated with the MERCOSUR countries and Chile. In an answer to an earlier question, you said you wanted to see the best possible trade relations arising from these agreements. I would like to know what that means, particularly insofar as it concerns social and environmental considerations. In the case of the Mexico agreement, for example, criticisms have been made by civil society that the agreement is completely lacking in social considerations. After all, even the much-criticised NAFTA agreement has a side agreement on labour rights and has some sort of complaints mechanism, whereas the EU-Mexico agreement has neither. In the light of your commitment to human rights and your former role as a development minister and also your commitment to listen to concerned groups and stakeholders in civil society, will you undertake to support the integration of at least a side agreement on labour rights and the environment together with a proper complaints mechanism into the MERCOSUR and Chile agreements?

4-047

Patten, Commission. – What I can undertake to do is to discuss that issue with the honourable Member, if I am confirmed, and with any representatives of NGOs or civil society that she wants to talk to me and my colleagues on those matters. I do not have a detailed knowledge of the negotiating dossier in both of those areas. I hope that the honourable Member will excuse me for that, but I have not yet got my knees properly under the desk. I can, however, assure the honourable Member that I would be happy to discuss any such concerns with her.

4-048

Maij-Weggen (PPE). – Mijn vraag aan de heer Patten betreft ook het thema "mensenrechten" dat onder zijn verantwoordelijkheid gaat vallen. Het is een thema dat trouwens zeer gevoelig ligt bij ons in het Parlement en ook bij de publieke opinie. Mijn vraag is tweeledig. Bent u, zoals de grote meerderheid van dit Parlement, een voorstander van een gekwalificeerde meerderheid ten aanzien van maatregelen op gebied van mensenrechten, met name om mensenrechten en democratie te bevorderen in derde landen? Op dit moment worden een aantal maatregelen tegengehouden door één of twee lidstaten, terwijl het overgrote deel van de andere landen daar voor is. Bent u bereid om ons te helpen dat dilemma te doorbreken?

Ten tweede, wat is uw mening ten aanzien van Birma dat één van de meest kwalijke militaire regimes ter wereld heeft, waar een gekozen president al acht jaar in gijzeling wordt gehouden en waar China overigens ook een hele dominante rol speelt? Bent u een voorstander van een investeringsstop, zoals de Verenigde Staten die al uitvoert? Het Europees Parlement heeft al vijf keer om een investeringsstop voor China gevraagd. Daar u hebt gepleit voor een goede Atlantische samenwerking, zou dit misschien een mooi begin zijn om de Verenigde Staten op dit punt te steunen.

4-049

Patten, Commission. – On the first point, I am perfectly happy to discuss with my colleagues in the Commission, in the context of the IGC, the point that the honourable Member made, though I suspect that there would be Member States which would take quite a strong view on the other side of the agreement, as the honourable Member knows and as she will have been aware on other matters where we have not always seen eye-to-eye with the United States - for example on China and the annual resolution at Geneva.

On Burma, I share all of the honourable Member's concerns. I think that Aung Sang Suu Kyi has been disgracefully treated. She is one of the bravest champions of democracy in the world. What she represents in Asia is the future of Asia. We are very fortunate that she is as brave as she is in campaigning for democratic liberal values in her country. I have not, unfortunately, ever been able to go to Burma. One reason why I have not been able to do so is because of my disapproval of the regime. Another reason is that when I was a development minister I cancelled my country's small development programme in Burma because of the activities of the SLORC, now, I think, renamed with some other Orwellian set of initials.

I have always some difficulty in calling for complete bans on economic relationships with countries, because I always wonder who actually suffers most in those circumstances. But I certainly would not support official development assistance relationships with Burma at the moment, and I wholly approve of the stance which the Union has taken in its relations with the ASEAN countries and political dialogue with the ASEAN countries. I am not, myself, convinced that members of the Burma Government are going to listen to sweet reason on pluralism and human rights but, sooner or later, we know perfectly well that Aung Sang Suu Kyi will be the leader of that country, and the sooner this happens the better.

4-050

Napoletano (PSE). – Signor Patten, nelle sue risposte scritte lei riconosce un'importanza strategica alla politica mediterranea. In questo ambito, lei stesso, al punto 25, riconosce l'importanza della dimensione regionale di questa politica, come ribadito anche dalla Conferenza di Stoccarda. Considerando le difficoltà che incontrano i negoziati bilaterali di associazione e anche la spesa del programma MEDA, come lei ha ricordato, non ritiene che la dimensione regionale della cooperazione mediterranea vada rafforzata, sia dal punto di vista istituzionale, ad esempio con accordi di partenariato regionale euro-mediterraneo, sia sotto il profilo finanziario, ad esempio superando il limite del 10% previsto dal programma MEDA per questa politica e portandolo a un livello più adeguato?

4-051

Patten, Commission. – I read the documents on the Barcelona process with great enthusiasm. I think the strategy charted is an admirable one, but it seems to me that the relative failure so far is in making what we have already committed ourselves to actually work. So, I would see the first priority as not being to try to renegotiate, as it were, the terms of that regional agreement, but to give more emphasis and more bite to what is actually in the agreement.

It is of such enormous value and importance not only to the countries on the Mediterranean shore, but to the whole of the Union, to help develop their economies, and to help develop civil society in, as it were, "near" Europe, that it forces itself on our attention, not just as something that I think, with respect, that Member States in the south of the Union have to be concerned about. It has to be a priority for all of us. I can assure the honourable Member that it will be a priority for me. I would make that absolutely clear. It is a subject which I have discussed with Professor Prodi. He knows how much I think we need to do better in this area, and I look forward to discussing with the honourable Member, I hope, over the coming months and years, how we can best make a reality of the sort of things that were said in Cannes???? a few years ago.

4-052

Rutelli (ELDR). – Vorrei esprimere apprezzamento per la qualità delle risposte date dal signor Patten. Noi sappiamo che l'Europa dovrà investire molto nei Balcani, non solo nella ricostruzione, nelle infrastrutture, nella presenza militare e di sicurezza, ma anche per i diritti umani e democratici. Nella risposta 42 sui diritti umani, lei ha scritto che la spesa dell'Unione europea dovrà riguardare la promozione della libertà di parola, della tolleranza interetnica e interrazziale, la prevenzione dei conflitti. Cosa pensa, signor Patten, del fatto che sia necessario agire anche sulle basi dell'instabilità, della contrapposizione e dell'odio etnico nell'ex Jugoslavia? Ritiene che sia impossibile costruire una base democratica se non c'è una possibilità di espressione, come visto nel caso della televisione di Milosevic? Quindi, cosa pensa della possibilità di una televisione europea per i Balcani, incluse la collaborazione delle televisioni europee e la dotazione di apparecchiature, di *coders* e antenne satellitari per le comunità, per le famiglie e, dunque, della possibilità di un autentico dialogo che costruisca una cultura di convivenza?

4-053

Patten, Commission. – I agree with the importance which the honourable Member attaches to the media and to freedom of speech. Of course, it is not always the case that the media promote plural values. We can all think of examples where that

has not been true. However, by and large pluralism is more likely where there is a free media, which is a slightly different point. We all know that television and a free media in the rest of the continent helped to wake us up to what was happening in the former Yugoslavia and in Kosovo. In a sense, just as television and a free media triggered what has happened subsequently, so we must hope that television and a free media can bring to an end the horrors in the Balkans.

I think the honourable Member's idea is an extremely interesting one. When I was a student we all had to read a book by Hannah Arendt on the origins of totalitarianism, the argument of which was that technology made it more likely that totalitarianism would survive. We all now know that exactly the opposite is the truth. Information technology, satellites, fax machines, the Internet all make it more difficult for tyrants to stay in power. I profoundly hope that that is true as far as Mr Milosevic is concerned as well, because it is difficult for all of us to imagine circumstances in which we can build successfully for the future in the Balkans so long as Milosevic is in power. Therefore, I would be happy to look at ways in which we could increase the information flow into former Yugoslavia and Serbia, so as to strengthen the hand of that growing number of people who want to get rid of a man who has caused so much damage, who has been the cause of so much wickedness in the Balkans. Obviously, the Balkans are going to take a considerable amount of my time over the next few years, and I do not think any of us should expect the responsibilities that we have rightly taken on in the Balkans to be ones which we can swiftly lay down.

4-054

Gahrton (Verts/ALE). – Jag har en fråga som debatteras ganska mycket både i mitt alliansfria hemland, Sverige, och i den internationella freds rörelsen, nämligen exakt vilken typ av militära EU-insatser som ni menar att Kölnmötet öppnar för. Handlar det enbart om minröjning och liknande fredliga insatser, vilket den svenska regeringen påstår? Eller handlar det också om kraftfullare militära interventioner, kanske av samma typ som Nato genomförde i Kosovo? Jag tror att det skulle vara bra med ett klagörande angående detta. Jag undrar dessutom om ni menar att det krävs beslut i FN:s säkerhetsråd för eventuella EU-insatser. Jag vill också veta hur ni ser på alliansfria och neutrala staters framtid i EU. Har de någon framtid där eller inte?

Slutligen vill jag ställa en fråga som vi har ett gemensamt intresse för. Den handlar om något helt annat, nämligen Kina. Jag har ju fått förtroendet att bli ordförande i Kinadelegationen. Jag delar er uppfattning om det som ni sade här nyss. Betyder det att ni förordar en tuffare policy mot Kina när det gäller mänskliga rättigheter än vad rådet har fört under de senaste åren?

4-055

Patten, Commission. – I should say, at the outset, that I am not obsessed with China. Indeed, for a lot of people, that is my problem. That is why they disagree with me. I think we should speak on human rights in China, as I said earlier, in exactly the same way we would speak about human rights in any other country. I do not think that there should be a sort of political correctness about the way we address human rights issues in China. I will continue to make that point, whatever difficulty it might get me into with the proprietors of publishing houses.

The point that the honourable Member made about peace and security is an important conceptual point. We look back at our history in this continent: three wars, two more terrible than the other, in 70 years. The last half century: peace, partly because of military reasons, partly because of the success of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, a way of territorial defence involving nation states acting together. But another reason for peace and security in our continent, and just as important in a sense, has been the success of the European Union, not only at the outset in bringing together, in probably the most important historic development in our continent in the last century, historic adversaries, but also because of the improvements in the quality and standard of life which the European Union has brought to all those who have been fortunate enough to live within its bounds.

We are now faced with the huge costs of the breakdown of societies in the Balkans. You have to ask yourself whether one lesson to learn from that is not just the importance of us being able to intervene militarily, to intervene with humanitarian assistance, to intervene with conflict limitation ahead of events, but also the importance of us trying to give those Balkan states and other states around our borders the sense that they can join us in the European Union, with our stability and prosperity, as part of our moral community. The stabilisation and association process in Balkans represents a security policy, a two-stage process in which you first of all encourage countries to put in place the right market economic institutions, the right institutions of civil society and governance, and then to give them the prospect of association with the European Union. I think that is a security policy, and that security is not just about –important as it is – soldiers, guns and technology.

4-056

Κόρακας (GUE/NGL). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, κι εγώ ετοιμαζόμουν ακριβώς να σας ζητήσω λίγο την ανοχή σας γιατί έχω ορισμένες ερωτήσεις να θέσω στον υπολήφιο Επίτροπο. Θα ήθελα κατ' αρχάς να ρωτήσω ποια είναι η διαφορά κατά τη γνώμη σας, κύριε υπολήφιε επίτροπε, ανάμεσα στον Επίτροπο εξωτερικών υποθέσεων και στον κ. ΚΕΠΠΑ; Τι γίνεται σε περίπτωση που υπάρχει διαφορά ανάμεσά σας, ίσως και σύγκρουση; Επίσης στο θέμα στρατιωτική επέμβαση με δυνάμεις του NATO ή της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης, δεν νομίζετε ότι είναι καλύτερα να μην υπάρχει σε καμία περίπτωση στρατιωτική επέμβαση; Επίσης, πώς σχολιάζετε τη διακήρυξη της πρόσφατης διάσκεψης του NATO στην Ουάσιγκτον για τα 50άχρονά του, με την οποία και επίσημα πια το NATO μετατρέπεται σε επιθετικό οργανισμό και δίνει το δικαίωμα στον

εαυτό του να επεμβαίνει περιφρονώντας τον ΟΗΕ και το Χάρτη του, και να επεμβαίνει και στρατιωτικά ακόμα στον κόσμο, όπου κρίνει ότι η πολιτική της κυβέρνησης μιας χώρας δε συμβαδίζει με τα συμφέροντα και τις απόψεις του ΝΑΤΟ; Πώς σχολιάζετε το γεγονός ότι αυτή η νέα στρατηγική του ΝΑΤΟ δεν αναγνωρίζει πια βασικές αρχές του ΟΗΕ, όπως η μη επέμβαση στα εσωτερικά των ανεξαρτήτων χωρών, ο σεβασμός της εδαφικής ακεραιότητας και το απαραβίαστο των συνόρων, προκειμένου να εξασφαλίσει στον εαυτό του το δικαίωμα επέμβασης για την εξασφάλιση, όπως λέγεται, του σεβασμού των δικαιωμάτων του ανθρώπου; Ποιός θα κρίνει αν παραβιάζονται ή όχι αυτά τα δικαιώματα; Θεωρείτε ότι είναι ηθικά, πολιτικά επιτρεπτό;

4-057

Patten, Commission. - I do not know of any differences between myself and my colleagues in the Commission on the matters you raise. I suspect from the terms of your question that, even though I hope we will have a courteous and frank relationship, there may be considerable differences between you and me on the sort of matters that you have raised. I certainly do not think that it would have been better if NATO had undertaken never to intervene anywhere. I do not think that would have been better, and I do not think that those people who have returned to Kosovo in the last few weeks and months would regard it as having been better if they had been comprehensively ethnically cleansed. I think that the NATO meeting in Washington dovetailed admirably with what was said at Cologne and Bonn. I do not think that there is any contradiction between them. There is an important continuing role for NATO and there is a very important beginning role for the European Union in developing a common security policy.

4-058

Queiró (UEN). - Sr. Patten, a generalidade da comunidade internacional manifestou o seu agrado pela forma participada, mais de 98% de votantes, e tranquila como decorreu o referendo em Timor Leste, apesar do clima de intimidação criado pelas forças que se têm oposto ao processo de auto determinação daquele território. A dimensão maciça da afluência às urnas por parte dos timorenses faz prever, com certeza quase absoluta, uma escolha amplamente maioritária a favor da independência. Seguir-se-á, provavelmente, se todas as partes cumprirem o acordado em Nova Iorque entre a Indonésia, Portugal e a ONU, a aprovação do corte dos laços com a Indonésia por parte da Assembleia Consultiva daquele país e o início de um processo de transição para a independência de Timor Leste. Dada a tensão que precedeu a consulta popular, a fragilidade do processo e a debilidade económica da população timorense, pergunto-lhe, Sr. Patten, que responsabilidades está a União Europeia disposta a assumir perante aquele martirizado povo, por forma a garantir e assegurar a futura criação pacífica, estável e próspera do novo Estado de Timor Leste, bem como a evitar o horror de uma nova balcanização naquela zona da Ásia? Quero assegurar, Sr. Patten, para terminar, que tenho a certeza de envolver nesta questão todos os ...

4-059

Patten, Commission. - The first thing I would like to say is that I am sure we will want to discuss East Timor in the future and not just East Timor but also Indonesia. What happens in Indonesia and in East Timor is of huge importance. What we have seen in the last few days in East Timor should, we all hope, bring to a more happy and satisfactory end a pretty grisly story which began in 1975. We have, as the honourable Member knows, supported the consultation of public opinion by the United Nations in East Timor. We have been there, as we should be, giving assistance to that process.

The results of the process should be known in the next few days and, thereafter, it will be for the Indonesian parliament to vote, I hope reasonably rapidly, on the outcome. In the meantime, as the honourable Member will know, and as the Security Council has been discussing, there is a problem of growing ethnic violence in East Timor. And I think we should all make clear to the Indonesian authorities that our relationship with them in the future is bound to be affected by how successfully they discharge their obligations in East Timor to protect the population there from ethnic violence. We all want to see the Indonesian authorities protecting people from the sort of violence which has been seen in the last few days and, I repeat, if the Indonesian authorities do not do that it is bound to affect the views of an assembly like this and the views of other democratic bodies around the world on how much assistance we can reasonably be expected to provide to Indonesia in the future.

If the existing police and army units in East Timor cannot provide the security which is required, then I very much hope that the Indonesian army will put in place units which can provide the security which is necessary in the next few months in between the consultation exercise and a vote in the Indonesian parliament. Indonesia is making the transition to democracy. One of the consequences is the end of that unhappy story in East Timor. We must do what we can to help in the transition to a free society in that archipelago, but the Indonesians have responsibilities to discharge in the short term.

4-060

Van Orden (PPE). - First of all Mr Patten, I welcome you on behalf of the British Conservatives in the European Parliament. Earlier you referred to the need to spend money well. Many of us are concerned about the proper and effective control and efficient use of taxpayers' money. Your predecessors did not exactly distinguish themselves in this particular area. You are going to have important responsibilities. In particular, I think you will be in charge of the joint service, the SCR. Many feel that that is a service which has not been brilliantly successful. Do you foresee this service continuing in its present form? What measures do you intend to take to ensure that Community aid programmes are more effectively managed and achieve the purposes for which they are intended?

4-061

Patten, Commission. - I will begin by paying a tribute to those who at present work in the common services. They are trying to cope with a backlog of horrific problems of the past. They have had some success already in, for example, the

harmonisation of procedures, in tendering, from over 40 down to 8. They have started to reduce some of the backlog in payments. It is a horrendous job. I think they are to be commended on what they have achieved so far, not least because - if you compare the number of those trying to manage our own development programmes with the number trying to manage development programmes either in the Member States or for other multilateral institutions - we are very thin on the ground. What we have done over the years, again and again, is to will the end without willing the means, to make grand commitments at summits, at Council meetings and elsewhere without ever taking account of the fact that, if that money is to be spent well and effectively, then it needs not just proper financial control but also the people on the spot to actually deliver the service.

The position is a jungle. There have been 70 budget lines. There have been 80 legal bases. There have been 11 management committees. You cannot run a sensible development programme like that. We are in a situation in which, because of some things going wrong, people are terrified to spend money at the sort of pace which is required, because they are nervous about a problem occurring here or there. So, even though there are all these other very difficult problems crowding in around the world, I intend spending a good deal of my time working with the SCR in trying to ensure that we can deliver programmes with the managerial competence which everybody desires.

This will require some understanding and assistance from Member States. Are we actually to be stopped from harmonising procedures? This is relevant to the new TACIS regulation, because some Member States think that, if we have harmonised procedures, they might not win as many contracts as they have in the past. We cannot go on like that. If we want to have the sort of prudent control of swift and effective development programmes that every taxpayer in Europe and every legislator in Europe is entitled to see, then we have to get rid of some of those practices which represent, I think, the worst of the European Union, and we have to show that we can run the Commission's programmes as effectively as most Member States run their own programmes.

(Applause)

4-062

Van Orden (PPE). – On a supplementary, Mr Patten, what you have described is really a mess, and it shows the need for it to be sorted out. I think in the past the problem has been that commissioners have not taken a personal interest in these management and administrative aspects. I hope, if you are confirmed, that you will take a personal interest in this particular area and devote time to it.

4-063

Patten, Commission. - It would be deeply unfair to Mr Sonbestre and his colleagues not to give this problem the attention it deserves. It is not a very romantic or heroic issue, but it requires a good deal of political attention. Professor Prodi is committed to a review of the project cycle. I think in that review we have to go rather further, without screwing up the efforts which the SCR is already making to try to improve things. It is going to be difficult. It will require the understanding of this Parliament. But, unless we can do this, we will earn a reputation for having large amounts of money which are unspent. At present there are 460 commitments left over from the 1980s which we have done nothing about. We will earn a reputation for not spending the money which is voted. We will earn the worst sort of reputation for running a development programme which other people do not want to be beneficiaries of. That is not a way for us to behave. There has been a mess. There has been a problem. We have to work together, and that includes the Council of Ministers, in sorting it out.

4-064

Hänsch (PSE). – Herr Patten, bei Ihren Antworten zu Ihren Zuständigkeitsbereichen habe ich den Eindruck gewonnen, immer wenn es ernst wird im Bereich der Außenbeziehungen der Europäischen Union, dann sind andere zuständig. Entwicklung - Nielson, Erweiterung – Verheugen, Außenhandel – Lamy. Vor allen Dingen, wenn es um hardcore Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik geht, dann wird das der Hohe Vertreter für die GASP sein, Herr Solana. Vor allen Dingen was den Nahen Osten anlangt, vor allen Dingen auch, was Rußland anlangt - das wurde überhaupt noch nicht ausreichend angesprochen - und USA. Was sind denn nun eigentlich Ihre Aufgaben? Außer Sitzungen der Kommissare leiten, Menschenrechte zu beobachten und die Koordination der Koordinatoren auf dem Balkan vorzunehmen. Reicht Ihnen das? Oder haben Sie mit Herrn Prodi noch Zusätzliches besprochen? Dazu wüßte ich gerne etwas mehr.

4-065

Patten, Commission. – With respect to the honourable and extremely distinguished Member, one sometimes does not recognise what one has said in the paraphrases that are offered by questioners. I do not recognise anything I have said for the last two and a half hours of this *viva voce* examination in the honourable Member's question. The reason I have not spoken about Russia is that nobody has asked me a question about Russia. But, if anybody wishes to ask me a question about Russia and the NIS, I would be delighted to deliver views at length, even exceeding my three minutes.

The point I have been trying to make – and I am sure the honourable Member will come back with his usual Parliamentary adroitness – is that external relations is more than foreign policy. It is my job to try to ensure that across the board there is a coherence about external relations. But I have specific responsibilities, without taking over the jobs of my colleagues. If I had spent this morning telling you what Mr Verheugen should be doing on enlargement, what Mr Nielson should be doing

on development, or what Mr Lamy should be doing on trade, I think that you as well as they would have been less than best pleased with me.

As commissioner for external relations, I have a job under the Treaty to contribute, on the Commission's part, to the development of a common foreign and security policy. I have the job of sharing in or taking a large part in the implementation and representation of that policy. Above all, I have the job, as I said earlier, using a rather vulgar English colloquialism, of delivering the beef. Others have the job, perhaps, of drafting statements which go beyond platitudes, and we hope we will see a bit of that. But I have the job of making sure that everything the Community does and everything the Commission does is mobilised behind those doubtless admirable statements, for example on common strategies on Russia, the Ukraine, the Balkans and other areas of the world as well.

4-066

Sakellariou (PSE). – Herr Patten, damit Sie nicht enttäuscht aus diesem Ausschuß weggehen, stelle ich Ihnen die Frage über Rußland.

4-067

Patten, Commission. – When talking of priorities, the Union's relationship with Russia is right at the top of any such list because, unless we get that relationship right, and unless we play a role in the successful economic and political development of Russia, it will mean a source of considerable instability on our continent in the future, perhaps the greatest source. That is why the relationship matters so much.

God willing, we are going to be shortly in a situation in which Russia shares even longer borders with the European Union. It is terribly important that frontier does not represent a gulf between one sort of civil society, one sort of economy and another. There are strategic reasons why we have to help Russia. There are other reasons – whether you look at drugs, financial mismanagement, fraud or crime. We are sharing this space and we need to draw Russia into the same common European space that all of us enjoy. So it is a profoundly important relationship. The common strategy on Russia is a good document and I hope that, working together, we can make it a success. We will have to look next at our common strategy on the Ukraine, which is also very important.

4-068

Morillon (PPE). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, vous l'avez écrit dans votre réponse à notre questionnaire, l'accroissement de la capacité de défense commune passe par le renforcement de l'assise industrielle et technologique de cette défense. Vous avez repris ce thème dans votre réponse à notre collègue, M. Oostlander. Avec le pragmatisme dont vous avez fait preuve depuis le début de nos relations et de cette audition, comment envisagez-vous de faire progresser la politique européenne d'armement en coopération avec les industries de défense ? J'ajoute que si vous y réussissez, je crois que vous aurez mérité une statue de la part de l'Europe.

4-069

Patten, Commission. – In the parliament of which I was once a member we would have referred to the honourable and gallant gentleman, and the whole committee knows the experience he brings to these discussions, not least after his extremely distinguished role in Bosnia with UNPROFOR. The honourable Member knows, because of his professional experience, a good deal more than me about the relations between national governments and national armaments industries.

What is the challenge for us? There are all sorts of ways in which you can express it. The United States spends about \$290 per head on its defence. The European Union spends about \$140 per head on its defence. In global terms, I suppose, we spend about \$75 billion less than the United States, but we have only got about 10% of the capacity of the United States to deploy military forces elsewhere and to sustain those military efforts. We know the proportion of the air war over the Balkans that was fought by United States rather than European aircraft. Everyone who is an expert in this area points to the growing gap in R&D and the growing gap in procurement between European forces and the US forces. I am not suggesting that this is somehow just a matter of competition. If we talk about the ability to do things autonomously, then we have to be aware of that industrial and technological gap.

A good deal of the debate in the next few years, not least the debate which will be triggered – if that is not too military an analogy – by the WEU report later this year will be about how we ensure a bigger R&D punch, how we ensure more substantial procurement efforts in Member States, and how we ensure that the European armaments industry works more successfully together. In that area there are all sorts of competences and instruments which the European Union can use constructively with Member States, not least those which are represented by some of my colleagues on the Commission in the research area and in the industrial competitiveness area. The honourable and gallant gentleman knows more than I do about the extent to which Member States have guarded jealously their national armaments industries, but I guess that, just as other industries have had to take account of the single market and of the competitive pressures in that, so the armaments industry will also have to take account of what is happening in the European Union.

4-070

Titly (PSE). – Mr Patten, in view of the mergers which have taken place in the last twelve months, do you not think that the idea of a European defence industry has had its day and that we have missed that particular boat altogether?

4-071

Patten, Commission. - I do not think that, and I am not sure that those who already work in the European defence industry think that. I do believe that, if we are serious about the sort of issues I mentioned in the R&D area, then we have to look at ways in which the armaments industry in Member States collaborates more successfully in the future than it does at present.

4-072

Menéndez del Valle (PSE). – En relación con Timor Oriental, al que se acaba usted de referir, señor Patten, sabe usted que una delegación de este Parlamento ha seguido el proceso electoral y que ha sido testigo de la violencia organizada que, afortunadamente, ha sido incapaz de atemorizar al pueblo timorense que lucha desde hace décadas por su libertad. Sin embargo, como sabemos todos, es probable que dicha violencia sistemática continúe con el propósito de impedir el resultado democrático de las urnas.

Acertadamente, ha aludido usted a la conveniencia de dirigirse en el momento oportuno a las autoridades indonesias para que intervengan. Sin embargo, mientras tanto, ¿no cree usted que sería conveniente una especial campaña informativa por parte de las instituciones europeas que, sirviéndose de la moderna tecnología y poniendo de nuevo en dificultad las hipótesis de Hanna Arendt a la que usted ha antes aludido, sirviera para hacer más patente esa tiranía de esos dirigentes de la zona?

4-073

Patten, Commission. – As the honourable Member will know, I spoke at some length on East Timor and Indonesia a little earlier, and I do not want to repeat everything I have said. I did know that there was a delegation which has been looking at the consultation exercise. I salute them and the bravery they have doubtless had to show. I also salute the bravery which many members of the press have had to show in the last few days. A friend of mine from the *Washington Post*, Keith Richberg, was beaten up yesterday, hit with the flat side of a machete, which I suppose is slightly better than being hit with the sharp side of a machete, but is still not a very pleasant experience. The press has been running the gauntlet in East Timor in order to tell the rest of us exactly what has been happening there.

I mentioned earlier the message I thought we should deliver to the Indonesian authorities, and I hope we shall do so without fear or favour in the future, so that they can provide the security which the East Timorese population deserves.

4-074

Γιαννάκου-Κουτσίκου (PPE). – Κύριε Επίτροπε, στις απαντήσεις σας 2, 4 και 15, ορθά θέτετε ως προϋπόθεση τη δημοκρατία και το σεβασμό του διεθνούς δικαίου και της νομιμότητας για τις σχέσεις με τρίτες χώρες. Η πρακτική όμως είναι διαφορετική. Πολύ συχνά οι ηγεσίες μεγάλων χωρών της Ένωσης, την ίδια στιγμή που τυπικώς υπάρχει αυτή η πολιτική, ουσιαστικά αφήνουν σε τρίτες χώρες να εννοούν ότι κι αν δεν τηρήσουν ορισμένες αρχές, η σχέση με τη Ένωση θα παραμείνει. Επειδή υπήρξατε κατηγορηματικός στις δηλώσεις σας, θέλω να σας ρωτήσω: είστε αποφασισμένος με δημόσιες δηλώσεις και σαφήνεια να καταδικάσετε την αδιαφορία για το διεθνές δίκαιο και τη διεθνή νομιμότητα χωρών που θέλουν να έχουν σχέση με την Ένωση; Και, δεύτερον, ποιός νομίζετε ότι είναι ο καλύτερος τρόπος για να μπει σωστή βάση στις σχέσεις αυτές; Είπατε ότι δεν θεωρείτε τη διακοπή των οικονομικών σχέσεων σωστή βάση γιατί είναι πιθανώς εις βάρος των λαών αυτών των χωρών. Ποιό είναι το ισχυρότερο και σημαντικότερο μέσον για να δώσει η Ένωση ένα τέτοιο μήνυμα κατά τη γνώμη σας;

4-075

Patten, Commission. – The European Union has in some respects been more robust than most other donors of development assistance in the conditionality it has attached to assistance programmes. That is doubtless partly because of the democratic pressures of this Parliament. I totally agree with the honourable Member that respect for human rights is an important part of the backdrop for successful social and economic development. I do not doubt that whatsoever. There is always, in practice, a difficulty which aid donors face, in knowing at precisely what moment to suspend or cancel assistance programmes because of human rights abuse. It is never very easy, except in cases where the abuse is so substantial, for example in Burma, that there cannot be much doubt about cancelling programmes. Other times you have conscientiously to weigh the damage that may be caused to some sectors of society in order to try to deliver a broader political lesson.

The most important thing of all is to ensure that you do what you say. Very often what happens is that donors threaten that a given course of action will lead to certain consequences and then are persuaded, in an imperfect world, sometimes by a trade department that it is not a very good idea to actually apply conditionality because there is a big contract which is about to be signed, there is something just about to come round the corner which is in the national interest. I think you have to be absolutely clear that, if you say to people there will be consequences of abusing human rights, that those consequences apply.

4-076

Schori (PSE). – Mr Patten, I appreciate your view that security is a broad concept, building on economic progress, social achievement and regional cooperation. In other words, one could say that we believe that sustainable security should be founded more on the Jean Monnet line than on the Maginot line. I also value your view that all EU Member States - both members and non-members of NATO - make a net contribution to European security. As you have stated in your reply, we have seen this in the Balkans. Experience tells us that, roughly speaking, 50% of countries in post-conflict situations fall back into resumed hostilities. In this light, do you not think that the EU needs to strengthen its capacity of conflict

prevention, going beyond pilot projects and a very valuable CPN network and integrating more into the structures of the EU the capacity to promote, for instance, structural stability i.e. the elimination of underlying structural causes of violent conflicts?

4-077

Patten, Commission. – I agree with everything the honourable Member has said. He obviously speaks with a wealth of knowledge and experience, and I will look forward to hearing further his ideas on how we can do that, which is not to say that it is very easy. A lot of my past year has been spent working in Northern Ireland, so I know a good deal about antagonisms which go back for centuries and the importance of building bridges.

We are faced with holding the ring in the Balkans. We have taken on tremendous responsibilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example. One of your most distinguished Members played a leading role in that enterprise. We ask ourselves how long do we have to hold the ring? How long will it be before we can encourage people who have hated each other for centuries to live in harmony?

It is a sad aspect of our century that a century which began with a fracturing of European nation states, not least because of the problems of ethnic minorities, is now fracturing up in much the same way. So one wonders what we have learned in a century. I just hope it does not take another century to sort these problems out, even with the most elaborate and sophisticated conflict prevention mechanisms.

4-078

Van Hecke (PPE). – Mijnheer Patten, ik had u graag twee zeer concrete vragen willen stellen. Ten eerste met betrekking tot de ontwikkeling van de Europese defensie-identiteit. Het is mij eerlijk gezegd nog altijd niet helemaal duidelijk hoe u die ontwikkeling precies ziet. Opteert u voor de uitbesteding van taken aan de WEU? Of bent u eerder voorstander van het ontwikkelen van autonome capaciteit, los van de WEU? Ik kan dit niet afleiden uit uw schriftelijke antwoorden.

Mijn tweede vraag betreft de benoeming van “de heer PESC”. Het is zonder meer duidelijk denk dat met de benoeming van “de heer PESC” het aandeel van de Raad in het GBVB wordt versterkt. Ik voel het aan en ik ben niet de enige die vindt dat die benoeming een verankering is van de decommunitarisering van het GBVB. In dit Parlement is er altijd sterk gepleit voor een grotere rol van de Commissie. Ik had graag vernomen hoe de Commissie die rol precies zal invullen of nog concreter als u wilt: hoe denkt u een tegenwicht te kunnen vormen voor “de heer PESC”?

4-079

Patten, Commission. – First of all, the Cologne report is absolutely clear that, in order to discharge effectively the Petersberg tasks – and they are laid out very clearly – the Union has to develop an autonomous capacity backed by credible military forces and other credible instruments. I think that is a very clear task, and one which the WEU will help us to perform, first of all in its report later this year and, secondly, in the way it evolves over the next year in relation to the European Union.

Secondly, I do not see myself as working in competition with Mr CFSP, and I do not agree with the honourable Member that what has happened as a result of the Amsterdam Treaty and the Cologne report is that the Commission’s role has been reduced in relation to that of the Council. We are able to share initiatives with Member States, we are there to share with the Presidency in the representation of the positions taken up as part of the CFSP, and we have huge competences in delivering coherence behind the CFSP. That is what is going to be my main job, and the main role of the Commission.

What is surprising is not what has happened to the Commission under the Amsterdam Treaty and the Cologne statement, but rather how far the Council and member governments have been prepared to go. That, for me, is surprising, and I think it has surprised others as well. Look at how far we have come since Maastricht. The joint actions, the common positions after Maastricht which, for example, electors in South Africa and Russia have reason to welcome, now followed by common strategies and by a real determination to give more bite and reality to common decision-making and to the development of positions on behalf of the whole Union, which are not just so much vague platitude, but represent real, sharp-edged commitments to securing a better world. I think there has been tremendous development and I hope that we can make it work. I intend to work with Javier Solana to make a success of it.

4-080

Nair (PSE). – Je voudrais également vous remercier, Monsieur Patten, pour la clarté et l’élégance de vos réponses. La crise du Kosovo a montré, vous l’avez vous-même souligné, la nécessité pour l’Europe d’avoir une défense européenne, et l’on vient à l’instant de vous poser une question sur la dimension industrielle, économique, de cette défense. Mais il y a aussi la nécessaire clarification du rôle de l’OTAN au XXI^e siècle. Or, l’OTAN vient d’élaborer, Monsieur Patten, un nouveau concept stratégique, celui de l’intervention hors zone. L’OTAN est en train de devenir une sorte d’organe génétiquement modifié. Que pensez-vous de ce principe d’intervention hors zone? D’autre part, vous avez défini l’être européen, tout à l’heure, comme appartenant à une communauté morale. C’est une très belle définition dans la grande tradition humaniste européenne. Que pensez-vous alors de l’application de l’embargo économique, qui est un droit d’affamer les populations sans conséquences, vous le savez, malheureusement, pour les nomenclatures des pays concernés?

4-081

Patten, Commission. – First of all, I think that the NATO commitment to operations out of area is, among other things, a recognition of the extent to which our security concerns are affected increasingly by what happens outside our own continent as well as inside it. I also think that it is a recognition of the extent to which the rest of the world looks to the alliance from time to time for intervention with a humanitarian objective.

Secondly, an economic embargo has to have a substantial strategic and moral justification in order to be acceptable to communities like ours. I find it difficult to answer your question in the abstract without coming to specifics but, for example – though it is a personal view – I think that economic and other limitations on our relationship with South Africa helped to promote real change and change for the better there. So, I do think that there are times when economic measures – and comprehensive economic measures – are justified as a step short of military activities.

4-082

Bethell (PPE). – Yesterday Mr Verheugen said that he supported majority voting in the EU decision-making process, with the exception of Treaty amendments. When Mr Patten was asked about this earlier today he did not give a clear reply, as far as I could tell, as to whether or not he agreed with that system of majority voting. I got the impression, from what he said, that he believes in more of a step-by-step approach towards cooperation in foreign policy, but he will know – as all of us do – about the effect of a cautious reaction to that particular question in our country and also in others. Perhaps he could be a little more precise, even if he wishes to say: not yet majority voting, not for the moment majority voting, in other words no? Have I put the right words into his mouth?

4-083

Patten, Commission. – Let me try to put my own circumlocutions into my own mouth. Mr Verheugen yesterday was extremely candid, and I think Parliament welcomed his views. One reason why candour was wholly justified is that they are views which – I believe I am right in saying – he has expressed a number of times in the past. It might, therefore, have come as a surprise to Parliament if he had offered the more cautious reply, which I am going to offer the honourable Member.

These are issues on which I will want to take the views of my colleagues in the Commission, because we will be expected to take a view on matters like this, not least in the IGC, but also in other contexts. Since I am not yet on record as much as the admirably candid and honest Mr Verheugen, I hope that the honourable Member will allow me to reach with my colleagues a Commission view. But I am a simple, plodding fellow and tend to think that step-by-step is usually the way you get to a destination. Sometimes leaps of faith are required. Sometimes you move along a little more cautiously, but heading in exactly the same direction.

4-084

Green (PSE). – Mr Patten, you have answered a whole range of questions this morning on your portfolio. I would like to take you back, if I may, to your position in the college. In recent years you have been engaged in your work with support for the evolution of democratic institutions. In Hong Kong and Northern Ireland, you dealt with representation, transparency, equality, things of this nature. The European Union, for all that it comprises some of the world's oldest democracies, is at a critical point in its democratic evolution. Your written answers to the questions of democratic progress in Europe and your attitude to responsibility and accountability, both of a collective and an individual nature, are very worthy but somewhat terse. I would ask you to expand a little on how you think the new Commission can work, perhaps with this Parliament, in enhancing what you described earlier as the necessary legitimacy and credibility of the institutions of the Union, given the dual crisis you spoke of earlier?

On your response to Question 13 concerning the division of labour between the commissioner and the director-general, I am a little concerned that in a modern, open, democratic bureaucracy if the Commissioners are expected to take and accept political responsibility for the action of their department, then they must also have a well developed sense of, or managerial structure for, the control of their department. Can you say how you will have that political control, as well as managerial control?

4-085

Patten, Commission. – I have run bureaucracies of various sizes in the past and, whatever my faults – for example, sometimes saying in public exactly what I say in private – I do not think that anybody has ever accused me of not giving a clear and firm lead. In my experience, civil servants welcome political leadership which is absolutely clear, even if they do not always agree with it. The thing that most bureaucracies dislike is weak or vacillating leadership. I have always thought it is sensible in any job at the outset, as soon as one has a feel for it, to say very clearly what your main priorities are, what your agenda is going to be, and then to try to stick to it.

The question of responsibility is a very important one. As well as, I hope, giving a clear political lead, I have always believed in delegation, but delegation has a consequence. Since, when you delegate, you still get all the credit when things go right, I do not think it is unreasonable to expect anybody who delegates to take some of the blame when things go wrong. If you shared directly in a decision which goes wrong, you are plainly responsible for it. But if something has gone wrong, if decisions have been taken which you should have known about but do not know about, even if you did not share in the actual decision-making, you are still responsible if you are the person at the top. I do not think that “Yes Minister” is

always the way that bureaucracies work, and I am always challenged when, permanent secretaries - or directors-general in my present occupation if I am confirmed – tell me that I am making a very brave decision.

On the first part of your question, I was terse, not least because of concern about the wellbeing of my fax machine, but I do not think that long answers are necessarily the best answers. I will begin with my own experience and then say something more general. As I said earlier, I first worked with this Parliament when I was in the Presidency of the Development Council. We were faced with a food aid regulation which in those days was actually run by the agriculture directorate-general and was a way of dealing with food surpluses. If there was to be any change at all, Member States wanted to be in charge. By working very closely with Parliament, we secured an outcome in which the food aid regulation became part of development policy, and that would not have happened if I had not been able to work in concert with Members of this Parliament.

I regard it as my primary responsibility to try to develop a good and open relationship with this Parliament, with the Chairman, with rapporteurs and those who are interested in my field of responsibilities, which does not mean, by any means, that you will always agree with me, or that you will always expect me to do exactly what you think. I believe there is a difference between populism and responsible democracy, and I hope that, if you confirm me, I can demonstrate that by the way I behave and by my relationship with you in the coming five years.

4-086

Martin, Hugues (PPE). – Monsieur Patten, deux questions rapides, si vous le permettez. Vous avez fait part de votre opinion personnelle quant à la capacité de l'Union d'engager des actions autonomes de type Petersberg. J'ai beaucoup apprécié vos réponses écrites et orales, mais je suis un peu inquiet que vous vous référiez au parapluie américain. Vous estimez notamment que, je vous cite : « la crise du Kosovo a montré que l'Europe a besoin d'une capacité de défense accrue sous le parapluie de l'OTAN ». C'est vrai aujourd'hui. Ne pensez-vous pas qu'il existe une contradiction à long terme entre la volonté de développer une capacité de défense autonome européenne et le fait de se placer dans un cadre strictement atlantique ? En d'autres termes, ne faudrait-il pas envisager, pour que l'Europe soit crédible, de conduire des opérations sans recours aux moyens et aux capacités de l'OTAN ? Je ne fais ici que me référer aux conclusions du Conseil européen de Cologne. Deuxième question, qui n'a rien à voir avec la première : il y a actuellement des désordres graves en Colombie. Pensez-vous que pour aider au rétablissement de la paix civile, l'Europe puisse intervenir ?

4-087

Patten, Commission. – I hope that in due course the development assistance we provide in Central America, in Columbia, not least for example in crop substitution programmes, can contribute to peace. I hope that the peace process makes progress in Columbia, but - as the honourable Member knows even better than I – it is obviously an extremely serious situation with the drug warlords in such a powerful position within the country.

On the first, and extremely important, question, there is obviously a difference between national and territorial defence and the Petersberg tasks. The Cologne Summit report is very specific in relating the development of an autonomous capacity to those Petersberg tasks. I do not think that in the next year there should be tensions between the first stages of our development of an autonomous European capacity to complete those tasks and our continuing commitment to NATO. We should be grateful that a profound and pronounced European like Javier Solana is being followed in the NATO Secretary-General post by another committed European, George Robertson.

4-088

Sumberg (PPE). – Commissioner-Designate, I would like to focus on one aspect which probably has not been covered today, and that is your relationship with all your fellow commissioners. The last Commission fell, it seems to me, because many good commissioners did absolutely nothing about the fraud and mismanagement and corruption in the Commission. They sat by and did nothing at all. I would like to know - after what I think has been a virtuoso performance from you - how you see your role in that more general position. What can you offer this Parliament as to suggestions, as to how commissioners, and not hapless officials, can be the whistleblowers, that they can stand up for the public rather than letting others do it for them? The credibility of the Commission and of this Union in the future very much depends on this.

4-089

Patten, Commission. – I welcome the opportunity of saying something briefly – though I hope not sanctimoniously – about the point the honourable Member has raised. It is a matter of profound regret that some men and women who have had careers of outstanding and unblemished public service should have had their careers stained in the last few months by what one or two other people have done. It is a matter of considerable sadness, and my sympathy goes out to those individuals who have worked extremely hard, not - despite some of the popular press - manning a gravy train – both in their own national politics and within the European Union over the last few years. It is a tragedy that is how things have finished.

I look around at my colleagues, and I cannot imagine a relationship with them in which any of us would stand idly by while one or two let the whole team down. I do not think Professor Prodi would allow that to happen for one moment. What has happened in the last few months has been very sad for the whole European Union. Regarding the assumption that, because of what one or two people did in the past, everybody trying to become a European commissioner has got some terrible collection of skeletons in his cupboard, I hope that we can get this period behind us.

Since we all cohabit under the same roof, I also hope – perhaps I should not say this – that Parliament will not believe that it would make sense to exchange cohabiting with one lame duck to cohabiting with another. I think it is important to this Parliament, which has necessarily increased its influence and authority in the last few months and to the whole of the project in which we are jointly involved that we have not only an active Parliament, but an active Commission which is able to go out and do the job Parliament wants it to do and which the Council of Ministers should want it to do as well. The sooner we can get all the scandal and tattiness behind us, and the sooner we can recognise the real contribution which a number of departing commissioners have made, in my judgment the better. I hope a free press in all our countries will do that as well.

4-090

Der Vorsitzende. – Herzlichen Dank, Herr Patten, und herzlichen Dank, Kolleginnen und Kollegen. Es ist mir heute morgen leicht gemacht worden, die Sitzung hier zu leiten, und wir werden jetzt eine strenge Untersuchung unter uns durchführen, um das Resultat festzustellen. Ich freue mich, glaube ich schon sagen zu können, daß wir auch weiter gut zusammenarbeiten können, falls das Votum gut ausfallen sollte.