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*Committee on Development*

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26.01.2010

## **NOTICE TO MEMBERS**

Subject: Hearing with Kristalina Georgieva, Commissioner-designate for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response

Please find enclosed the written answers sent by Kristalina Georgieva.

**ANSWERS TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT  
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COMMISSIONER - DESIGNATE  
Kristalina GEORGIEVA  
(International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response)**

**General competence, European commitment and personal independence**

- 1. What aspects of your personal qualifications and experience are particularly relevant for becoming Commissioner and promoting the European general interest, particularly in the area you would be responsible for? What motivates you? What guarantees of independence are you able to give the European Parliament, and how would you make sure that any past, current or future activities you carry out could not cast doubt on the performance of your duties within the Commission?**

I strongly believe the European Union is a beacon of hope for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It has proven countries can heal scars from the past and make the choice of solidarity over divisions. That solidarity is the most important value Europe brings to its citizens and to the rest of the world. It is a tremendous honour and responsibility to be the Commissioner-designate for the new portfolio of International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response – and to marshal the best our Union has to offer to those around the world in most dire need.

I bring to this new portfolio a dedication to development and two decades of professional experience from around the world. A significant part of my work on environment was devoted to understanding the risks of climate change, particularly for the most vulnerable countries and communities. I did extensive work on social safety nets, community development, women's empowerment and assistance to fragile and conflict-affected countries. I always focused on achieving the highest impact from our scarce development resources for the benefit of people in the developing world. In any task I sought collaborative approaches and partners, especially across the UN system, with the EU and its Member States and with NGOs.

Like millions of Eastern Europeans from my generation, I grew up under the shadow of a wall that divided Europe. For much of my life I doubted that I would ever see this wall gone. But Europe came together – and this victory of our unity has given me hope, perseverance, and the motivation to work for a better world for all.

As Commissioner, I will be solely guided by our common European interest. I will abstain from any activity and avoid any situation, which could cast doubt on my independence, impartiality and devotion to the Commission. I come to this position as an international public servant. For the last 18 years I have worked for an institution that has stringent conflict of interest and code of conduct rules and which has held its senior management to the highest standards. I will comply with the rules on independence, ethical standards and transparency which are laid down in the Treaties, as well as in the Code of Conduct for Commissioners.

## **Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament and its committees**

### **2. How would you assess your role as a Member of the College of Commissioners? In what respect would you consider yourself responsible and accountable to the Parliament for your actions and for those of your departments?**

The strength of the European Union is in the collaboration among its members, which rests on respect for our diversity in history, traditions and culture. The College must be a catalyst for this by striving to continuously uphold the general interest of the Union.

I am fully and wholeheartedly committed to strive for this high standard. The College is central for the general direction and outlook of European policymaking. It must be the focus for the accountability of the Commission to the European Parliament, communicating clearly with Parliament on all matters in an open, fair and respectful manner.

My work until now has been shaped by strong partnerships and interpersonal and interagency collaboration – internally with my peers, and externally with partners across the international community, including the UN and the European Commission. I bring this experience and commitment to my work inside the Commission and with the Parliament. I am convinced that cooperation and collaboration are particularly essential for the effectiveness of our efforts in humanitarian assistance. The combination of humanitarian assistance and civil protection tools in one portfolio is already a big step forward in terms of the internal coordination we need. However the multiple and diverse nature of the challenges we face and the established policy of linking relief, rehabilitation and development stresses the need for strong interface with a number of others – in particular with the portfolios of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Development, Home Affairs, and Climate Action.

The Parliament has a long active involvement in humanitarian matters. The main vehicle to deliver the EU's humanitarian aid, the Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO), was founded in 1992 upon the Parliament's prompting. Thus, the European Parliament is – and will continue to be – a critical partner in guiding our work in this new portfolio.

For all these reasons, a priority for me is a continuing constructive and productive dialogue with the Parliament. I look forward to working with you, my colleagues, on promoting EU values in the world.

**3. What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of enhanced transparency, increased cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives, also in the light of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with information and documents on an equal footing with the Council?**

The European Parliament is the place where the voice of the citizens of Europe is best heard. With the Lisbon Treaty we see a strengthened role for Parliament – it brings the legislative process closer to the people, making it even more responsive and transparent. That in itself confirms the European Parliament's central place in the governance of the Union. Dialogue and consultation with the Parliament would be one of my key priorities and one I very much look forward to.

I expect to be judged in part by the openness and transparency of the work we do. Support in Parliament for our legislative proposals will rest on the quality of our work and the timeliness of our communication. I am committed to fully implement and apply the provisions of the Framework Agreement in all its aspects, in particular regarding the flow of information, in order to enhance a common understanding among our institutions and to strengthen our mutual legitimacy, accountability and efficiency. To facilitate this, I will establish regular and systematic contacts with parliamentary committees, individual Members and political groups to assure frank exchange of our issues and intents. I understand that my presence in key committee and plenary meetings, and my availability for informal meetings, will be essential to build this strong atmosphere of exchange and collaboration. I will ensure that we always engage appropriately as we develop initiatives.

The Humanitarian portfolio will particularly draw on the expertise of the members of the Parliament's Development Committee. There are a number of initiatives in the pipeline that I look forward to discussing, including Parliament's views regarding the establishment of the framework for the Union's humanitarian aid operations, and the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps. I also look forward to discussing with the Parliament how to progress on strengthening the EU disaster response capacity, as per the Parliament Resolution of June 2008, and on the implementation of Article 196 TFEU on Civil Protection.

The Parliament is the central voice for expressing the wishes of Europeans in shaping the application of the EU values in the world. I look forward to working closely with you and to hearing your thoughts on how we can best affect the quality of life of millions of people within Europe and around the world.

## Policy-related questions

### **4. What are the main priorities you intend to pursue as part of your proposed portfolio, taking into account, where relevant, the financial, economic and social crisis and concerns related to sustainable development?**

As new Commissioner-designate with a new portfolio, I look forward to interacting with the Parliament, in particular the Committee on Development, as I work with other Commissioners to clearly define priorities for our future work.

At the outset, I see three areas of focus with both immediate and long-term significance.

First, we are in the middle of a major humanitarian crisis in Haiti. We have responded with excellent cooperation between humanitarian aid and civil protection actors. But we also need to use this as an opportunity to learn how we can do better. We need to do an evaluation of the outcomes of this and other crises and then, in a very open and inclusive consultative spirit, draw lessons and feed them back into the organization of our work. In Haiti, the Commission is already now setting in train the long-term planning for this. As the aftermath of the Haitian earthquake has shown, we must further strengthen the governance of European and international humanitarian aid and the overall response capacities of the system. Haiti is also an example of the necessity to be clear about the respective roles of military and humanitarian actors in a humanitarian crisis situation.

Second, there is a set of policy issues that have been at the forefront in the on-going humanitarian work of the Commission. Those include addressing the disregard for International Humanitarian Law, restricting the space for humanitarian actions, and protecting the delicate border line between ensuring security for humanitarian workers and the victims of abuse of human rights and guarding the neutrality of humanitarian assistance.

These are complex issues, with no easy solutions in sight. For example, the disregard for the International Humanitarian Law has tremendous implications for humanitarian actions – not only could it lead to restrictions and even loss of life among humanitarian workers, but it makes delivery of humanitarian aid more difficult, more expensive and at times, impossible, all resulting in unnecessary increase in the suffering of innocent people. Actions have to be taken at both international and local levels – advocating for respect of the law, and protection of humanitarian workers, and addressing specific security risks at individual localities. But success in one place may mean more trouble in another – lowering security risks through military protection could undermine the very principle of neutrality, which lays the foundation for humanitarian aid to work.

Third, we need to quickly bring together the elements of this portfolio and define how to best fit them within the context of the new Commission. This portfolio now combines humanitarian aid and civil protection tools, as well as gives an opportunity for a stronger focus on crisis preparedness and response. It is necessary to quickly make some adjustments to ensure an even more efficient running of DG ECHO, as well as define the objectives and modalities of the work on international cooperation, including ensuring cooperation and coordination with UN Agencies. This is a short term objective, but it needs

to be done properly because of its likely long-lasting consequences.

Other issues relate to our response to the impact of climate change. An important part of this response must be a continuous investment in disaster risk reduction, both inside and outside the EU. We must also improve our ability to ensure a smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and development.

I will engage with colleagues in the College, the staff of DG ECHO, and our partners in humanitarian assistance and crisis response to fully define the priorities for this new portfolio, involving the Parliament and keeping in mind the importance of continuity, the need to use resources effectively, and the need to increase the visibility of Europe in the field of humanitarian assistance.

**5. What are the specific legislative and non-legislative initiatives you intend to put forward, and according to what timetable? What specific commitments can you make regarding in particular the committees' priorities and requests attached hereto which would fall within your portfolio? How would you personally ensure the good quality of legislative proposals?**

The Treaty of Lisbon has brought new provisions, which require the introduction of specific legislative acts. With regard to the portfolio of International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, Article 214 of the Treaty states that a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps needs to be set up. I will make it a priority to work with colleagues to bring forward a proposal to the European Parliament and the Council that will determine the rules and procedures for the operation of the body. The creation of this Corps is particularly timely because 2011 is the “European Year of Volunteering”, so we should start the process as soon as possible to fit this timetable. In that respect I will also build on the Barnier's report relevant proposals. There is also an upcoming Communication on Humanitarian Food Assistance policy that will be among the first policy papers adopted by the new College (it is already at pre-CIS stage).

The Treaty of Lisbon also makes possible initiatives aimed at coordinating Civil Protection and other policy areas within the EU. As Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid are merged into the same portfolio, this is the right time for the Commission to review and report on the implementation of the Decision establishing the Civil Protection Mechanism and its financial instrument. The lessons learned and the experience gained in recent interventions, such as the response to the earthquake in Italy, the tropical storms in the Pacific and the earthquake in Haiti, will provide us with important information for this review. Depending on the outcome of the exercise, it may be necessary to take some legislative initiatives. All proposals will be shaped in discussion with my Commission colleagues.

The Commission will carry out a mid-term review of the Action on the Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. We will assess how far we have come and we will identify what additional measures would need to be taken to further increase the efficiency in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The Humanitarian Aid Policy is governed by a Council Regulation that dates back to 1996 ((EC) No 1257/96). Since this policy is closely linked to

other areas, including crisis management, food security, development, the promotion of human rights and public health, it is important to ensure coherence and complementarity with humanitarian action. Therefore, after we complete the assessment, some of the measures could include a revision of the policy for which we would bring proposals before the European Parliament and the Council.

Aside from these initiatives, I will also consult with other Commissioners and Members, especially from the Committee on Development, to see if there are any other legislative proposals that deserve to be considered or if we need to rethink priorities and/or timing. Every effort will be made to ensure the quality of proposals through an inclusive, transparent consultative and evidence-based process, during both preparation and implementation in line with the principles of better regulation.