**Manfred Weber,** *on behalf of the PPE Group***.** – Mr President, I would like to welcome Prime Minister Sipilä to the European Parliament. Prime Minister, you are here at a crucial moment in time. The people have the say for the future of your country in April, and Europe in May, so it is a democratic competition in the next weeks ahead of us.

I start with this because your capital, Helsinki, is for my party, for the European People’s Party (EPP), and also for myself, a special place of democracy. We had our Congress there when I was nominated as candidate for my party and practised there what people expect from us – to have competition, to have lively discussions about the future, to present candidates, and then people can choose. People decide about the future, in which direction we should go. The principles of nationalism and European democracy will be at the centre of developments in the upcoming months.

I want to share some points you mentioned in your speech; some considerations on this. First, from the EPP point of view, I fully support what you said on financial discipline. It sounds technical, it sounds market‑orientated, it sounds euro‑business orientated. But it is absolutely in the interests of our children. Sustainability is the key word when we talk about financial discipline, and the EU will always have the EPP on a national level, and on a European level with us as the EPP, and Jyrki is also working on this on your side. Then it is about this sustainability, because that means future.

The second point I want to mention is an answer to your speeches about the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). There, let me be a little bit critical because you started in your paragraph on speaking about the MFF, you started with saying first of all the amount of money must be fixed. That is what we always hear from the national leaders. I think that’s the wrong question. A good question is: what are the tasks ahead of us? What is the demand we have in the European Union? Because we hear from a lot of leaders that say we should fix the money but then additionally we need a strong border control, we have to do something on cybersecurity and we have to build up more innovation in the European Union. So if this is a demand for Europe, then the Member States must also be fair with the contribution to the budget. Then we have to put the money on the table we need for giving an answer on the demands on the table. So the starting point is to speak about the demands.

The third point I want to mention in my short contribution today is about, probably the most challenging for all of us, and is what 35 000 school kids told us when there was demonstrating in the last weeks in Europe – Pope Francis is calling it the illness of the earth – and that is climate change. Thank you for your statement on this specific point. I want to only underline the approach towards the climate change challenge, some of the principles we, as the EPP, believe in. One principle is that the solution on climate change, to give an answer is not to forbid things, is not to prohibit things, is not to ban things. It’s not to say to the citizen that they cannot go any more on their holidays to Majorca because the CO2 footprint is too intense. That’s not our answer. Our answer is that in the future people will fly to Majorca in a clean airplane. Innovation is the key to give an answer on this. That is what we have to do. We cannot say to the developing countries or to the emerging economies in the world that they have to stop to grow. That they cannot develop anymore. That is not the answer. The answer is that we as Europeans can provide the developing countries with the technologies to have growth without climate impact. That is our answer. So innovation is, for us, a key principle.

The second point I want to underline in the CO2 field is that we have to do it together with the people. The people must follow the changes. In the car industry we have a lot of people who are concerned about the changes. You see the demonstrations of the Yellow Vests in France, for example. A lot of people here in this room can finance higher energy prices, but outside there are a lot of people who cannot finance higher energy prices. So we have to do the changes in a way that people accept the changes and follow our approach. We have to create winners and not losers in this regard.

Finally on CO2 and climate change: together, we are strong. We made the Paris Agreement possible. We made the steps already with the CO2 car emission reduction for example. We are ambitious. We are the owner of this fight against CO2 on a global level and we can show to our citizens that together we can achieve a lot.