



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Development

22.12.2009

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Hearing with Andris Piebalgs, Commissioner-designate for Development

Please find enclosed the written answers sent by Andris Piebalgs.

**ANSWERS TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COMMISSIONER -DESIGNATE
Andris PIEBALGS
(Development)**

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?**

For the last 5 years I have had the privilege of being the Commissioner for Energy. During this period we have achieved a great deal, including the successful adoption of the "20-20-20" initiative, the third electricity and gas Internal Energy Market package, and real moves towards an effective Community approach to energy security. Energy policy was one of the key achievements of the last Commission, and one of my priorities was to ensure that it plays an integral role in all Community policies: from external relations, to environment, development and the Lisbon Agenda, to name but a few. This enabled me to gain experience and knowledge over a wide range of issues and different Community policy areas, as well as the functioning of the Institutions.

Prior to this I have been committed to ensuring that Latvia plays its role as a leading Baltic Member State in the EU. From 1995-1997, I served as Latvia's Ambassador to Estonia; from 1998 to 2003, I was Permanent Representative of Latvia to the European Union, where I was deeply involved in the accession negotiations. From 2003 until April 2004, I was Deputy Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, responsible for coordinating Latvia's position in the European Council and all Council formations.

I also have political experience, as Member of Parliament of Latvia (1993-1994) for the Latvijas ceļš party, where I was Chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee. I was appointed as Minister of Finance (1994-1995) and Minister of Education (1990-1993). Both ministerial mandates were fulfilled during the period of the large-scale internal reform process in my country.

I believe this experience, covering international negotiations, a wide range of Community policies, and a detailed knowledge of the EU's workings, provides me with the necessary experience to contribute as a member of the College to the Commission's policy during its next mandate, and more particularly to tackle the challenges facing the EU's development policy over the next 5 years. The EU provides around 60% of the world's total development aid. This is something that we should be deeply proud of, and a huge investment that every citizen has the right to know that we are spending with care and determination to get value for money, for us and for the world's poor. I consider it an honour and privilege to be given the opportunity to make a difference in this enormously important challenge.

With respect to independence and previous activities, I fully subscribe to the principle of independence in the performance of my duties in the general interest of the European Union. I will fully comply with all the requirements relating to ethics and Commissioner's obligations laid down in the Treaties and the Code of Conduct for Commissioners. I shall neither seek nor take instructions from any government or from any other body, and I shall refrain from any action incompatible with my duties. I will also take all necessary precautions to avoid any possible conflict of interests in the performance of my duties. This will be confirmed through my declaration on my outside activities, financial interests and assets when taking up office. I do not have any business or financial interests, nor do I have other commitments or positions that might be inconsistent with the duties and responsibilities of a Commissioner. There are no professional activities of any of my family members that could be incompatible with my future work. According to the Code of Conduct for Commissioners I already made public a declaration on my financial (and other) interests in order to ensure full transparency.

Independence in the exercise of my duties will be strengthened by considering all stakeholders' interests whatever the origin of these interests may be prior to taking any decision.

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?

Firstly, as a member of the College I shall continue to play an active role in shaping EU policy initiatives taking into account the EU interest. Active participation of all members of the College on all decisions is the best way to serve this EU interest.

Secondly, as Commissioner for Development, my role will be three-fold. Firstly to ensure that the EU's development policy continues to make real progress in terms of the amount of aid that the EU devotes to the world's poorest countries in compliance with our goal to meet the objective of 0.7% of the EU's GDP for development assistance by 2015. Secondly, and equally important, it is to ensure that the quality of aid continues to improve, focussed on real needs and concrete results, and better coordinated between the Commission and the Member States. Finally, it is equally vital to ensure that the development agenda is fully integrated into a wide range of other EU policy fields, including Environment and Climate Change, Agriculture, Energy, Education and Culture, Migration, Trade and of course the EU's wider

international policy objectives.

The coordination between development policy and the EU's wider international policy objectives is particularly important to ensure that development policy remains at the core of the EU's external policy. I therefore view good coordination between the Commission's development policy and the new European External Action Service as a priority.

Furthermore, as the Commission's institutional representative on the Foreign Affairs Council, I will have the role of defending the Commission's proposals, as well as of ensuring that its positions, particularly following the work of Commissioners on issues which are relevant to policies other than the common foreign and security policy such as trade, agriculture and environment, migration or energy, are fully taken into account in the Council's deliberations. I view this as an important task.

I consider that I am responsible and accountable to the Parliament for my actions and for those of DG's Development and EuropeAid (AIDCO) and will strive to ensure that the two services meet the highest possible standards of professionalism and integrity. I would also work closely with the Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response.

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?

I believe that as Energy Commissioner I have always made particular efforts to ensure that Parliament is fully informed of all aspects of the Commission's work, and is involved in all aspects of its legislative and non-legislative work, with collaboration, discussion and consultation going far beyond legal requirements. I consider that enhanced transparency, increased cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives is a precondition for the Commission and myself as a Commissioner and my Services, to carry out our functions and objectives effectively and efficiently.

I intend to continue this approach and to ensure that EU Development Policy is undertaken in partnership with the Parliament and the Council.

In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, I am ready to provide Parliament with information and documents and also undertake to fully respect all the other commitments under the Framework Agreement governing the relations between our two institutions.

I am also supportive of the Commission's efforts towards greater openness vis-à-vis the general public and stakeholders. The field of development is characterised by active and committed NGOs who can be a real asset to EU development policy objectives.

Policy-related questions

4. What are the three 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?

Eradicating poverty and progressing towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be the main objective of the development policy I will pursue. It is the best contribution development policy can make to the external action of the EU. Creating the conditions for economic growth and integration of developing countries into the world economy is, in my view, intimately linked to achieving the MDGs.

In this sense, the current economic and financial crisis represents a major challenge for developing countries and for EU Development Policy. To harness the impact of the economic and financial crisis, we need to implement with a sense of urgency a broad range of policy decisions the EU has adopted in 2009 and before. Harnessing the impact of the crisis on the Millennium Development Goals and assisting developing countries to seize opportunities when growth picks up again will be at the centre of my priorities. It will frame the next Commission's mandate, covering the UN MDG Review conference in September 2010 until the MDG target year of 2015.

More specifically, I will give a sense of urgency to a number of policies and instruments the EU has adopted over the last few years. In line with the new provisions of the Treaty, I will push for more EU aid effectiveness, combating costly fragmentation, allowing the EU and Member States to programme and implement aid in a quicker and more coordinated way, acting more and more as one. While being aware of the impact of the crisis on national budgets, I will push for full respect of our commitments in terms of aid volumes. As the EU budget in support of its development agenda is fixed until 2013, most of the EU financial efforts to deliver on our promises will have to come from the Member States and from a more efficient way of working together.

I will pursue tangible progress in « Policy Coherence for Development », so that other policies of the EU, such as trade, research, migration, CFSP, agriculture and fisheries, release their potential to contribute positively to development. And I will boost the way in which other financial means, be it public or private, can be better leveraged to enhance resources for development.

I will pay specific attention to food security, climate change and green growth. More specifically, working closely with my fellow Commissioners, I will bring forward a new proposal for a renewed EU Food Security policy, drawing on the success of the Food Facility, and I will give priority to climate-related action in developing countries. The EU already has a strong record in pioneering climate-related support to developing countries, but it is clear that the Copenhagen process will imply a new scale of action. Special attention must be paid to the agricultural sector to avoid a backlash on food security, as well as to disaster risk reduction on which forceful initiatives already taken must be swiftly implemented. In order to sustain a more balanced integration into the world economy, regional integration shall continue to be a priority both with a view to strengthen the regions' capacity to deal with conflict and crisis, and to create more conducive conditions for trade and sustainable economic growth, which, in

the case of ACP countries, should be supported by full Economic Partnership Agreements. The political conditions for development must also be given particular attention. Democracy, governance, human rights, the rule of law and the fundamental values on which the EU is built will remain the cornerstone of our development policy, and will be specifically promoted through the governance initiative in ACP countries.

Finally, development policy and its objectives will remain the central part of our political relations with developing partners. Whilst working in full cooperation with High Representative/Vice-President Ashton, I will ensure that the stronger coordination of the external action of the EU enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon will work in favour of development policy. I will continue to pay specific attention to Africa, building on the EU-Africa Summits and the Joint Strategy.

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?

My most important legislative proposals will be the revision of the Cotonou agreement and the new set of external action instruments within the framework of the next Financial Perspectives. As set out by President Barroso, I am committed to ensure a direct link between EU policy priorities and the EU budget, and within my portfolio, to ensure that European development cooperation improves its contribution to the EU global agenda, enhances its impact on poverty reduction, provides a greater ability to pool and leverage other resources, and last but not least, allows for a better division of labour with EU Member States. Improving monitoring and evaluation of development assistance is also a priority. Following the introduction of simplified procedures and of innovative ways of funding, aid flows are being delivered expeditiously through the EU Delegations. I intend to pursue the timely delivery of aid while putting equal weight on quality of operations.

Considering that the services under my responsibility implement important amounts of financial resources all over the world, I take financial oversight very seriously. Sound financial management depends on a continuous effort to streamline our regulatory framework, optimise our resources and focus our financial management systems on effective and efficient controls. This is the way to provide assurance that money is spent where it is supposed to be. I believe that our dialogue with the European Parliament and the Court of Auditors on the Tolerable Risk of Error is important in this respect.

Enhancing the European Parliament's scrutiny over development policy is equally key. It is why the case remains strong for the integration of the European Development Fund into the EU Budget and within the remits of the EU legislative authority, while maintaining the specificity of our action towards ACP countries.

Our future development policy should tap the full scale of financial means for development ranging from Official Development Assistance (ODA), through innovative sources of financing, and remittances, to better leveraging non-ODA means and private capital flows through ODA. In this perspective, I will look at deepening cooperation with the European

Investment Bank and at blending of grants and loans based on the experience of the EU Trustfund for Infrastructure in Africa. More needs to be done also on mobilizing domestic resources, especially through good governance in the taxation area, tackling inter alia better mobilisation of domestic resources and illicit capital flows, on which I intend to submit a specific Communication in 2010. In this context, I am committed to conduct large consultations of the shape of our future development instruments, in particular with the European Parliament.

Going beyond EU instruments, I would propose a renewal of the European Consensus on Development in view of the next multiannual financial framework for the Union. I will continue to present annually a Spring package on development policy, through which the EU has progressively forged a shared development vision. I will take these achievements further, in line with the new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, so as to strengthen EU efforts on MDGs. The 2010 package will be crucial, since it will shape the common EU position and contribution to the UN MDG Review High Level Event scheduled for September 2010. In doing so, I want to launch the debate on a renewed global contract beyond 2015, which should sustain a strong multilateral agenda for development beyond 2015. We will need to collectively reflect on achievements and weaknesses of the current multilateral agenda and take up the challenge to improve the nexus financial assistance, growth and domestic policies in support of development. In view of these challenging debates, I intend to strengthen the Commission-European Parliament partnership to support an ambitious development agenda for the whole EU.

Therefore, I will also strengthen EU efforts on Policy Coherence for Development to make sure other European policies contribute positively to EU Development Policy. Here, I will count on the Parliament's support to screen a number of policies and legislative initiatives through the lenses of policy coherence. Key areas are: climate change and environment, agriculture, food security, migration, trade & finance, and security.

More specifically, many developing countries will be disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change without having the means to respond. As part of supporting their adaptation and helping them to make a contribution to mitigation, I believe that additional financial means will be essential. Building on the outcome of the Copenhagen Conference, I will take pertinent initiatives to pursue these priorities and launch a dialogue with developing countries on how to efficiently deliver climate-related assistance. With food security and energy being equally critical concerns for sustainable development, we will have to consider, in the context of the above series of initiatives, how these global challenges should be mainstreamed into our development policy and instruments.

Finally, I will push for the EU to lead on the reform of global governance, which should reflect the changing equilibria in the world economy while enhancing the voice and representation of developing and transition countries striking the correct balance between the legitimacy (through representativeness) and effectiveness of global institutions. Concretely, in its role of representing the EU in the G20 and as an observer at the World Bank/International Monetary Fund annual meetings, the Commission should continue to advocate the rebalancing of voting power to strengthen developing and transition countries and thus preserve the World Bank's legitimacy and effectiveness.