

THURSDAY, 15 MARCH 2012

IN THE CHAIR: JACEK PROTASIEWICZ

Vice-President

(The sitting opened at 09.00)

1. Opening of the sitting

2. Science capacity-building in Africa: promoting European-African radio astronomy partnerships (written declaration): see Minutes

President. – Before moving on to the order of business, I would like to make a brief announcement. Written declaration No 45/2011 submitted by MEPs Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez, Fiona Hall, Filip Kaczmarek, Teresa Riera Madurell and Judith Sargentini on building scientific potential in Africa and support for Euro-African radioastronomy partnerships was signed by a majority of the Members of the European Parliament. In this regard and pursuant to Rule 123 of the Rules of Procedure, the declaration will be passed to the addressees and published in the minutes of the sitting in the texts approved at this sitting together with the names of the signatories.

Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, on behalf of my colleagues who co-sponsored this written declaration, Ms Fiona Hall, Ms Teresa Riera Madurell, Ms Judith Sargentini and Mr Filip Kaczmarek, I would firstly like to say how pleased we are that this written declaration has attracted such a large number of signatures. It should also be remembered that the issue of science capacity building in Africa and the promotion of European-African radio astronomy partnerships is an exceptionally important issue, which is followed with great interest throughout the continent, and particularly in South Africa.

Mr President, I want to thank all the signatories, and the team of young people who devoted themselves very enthusiastically to collecting signatures and seeking support from our fellow Members. I also want to thank the South African Government and authorities, whose Minister for Science and Technology, Ms Pandor, will visit Brussels next week to tell the media how important this written declaration is for the development of the African continent and of the southern cone of the African continent in particular.

I would also like to call on the European Commission to respond in a constructive manner, as it should, bearing in mind the importance of this written declaration, which is very important for Africa, very important for science and certainly very important for relations between the European Union and Africa itself.

President. – Mr Martínez Martínez, congratulations on obtaining the signatures. We shall now move on to the order of business as established earlier.

3. Documents received: see Minutes

4. Transfers of appropriations: see Minutes

5. Discriminatory Internet sites and government reactions (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

6. Competitive low-carbon economy in 2050 (debate)

President. – The next item is the report (A7-0033/2012) by Chris Davies, on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, on a Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050 (2011/2095(INI)).

Chris Davies, *rapporteur.* – Mr President, last week I was in my constituency in the City of Carlisle, standing on a muddy patch of ground where a new supermarket is being built, watching a drilling machine digging holes in the ground to about a 60-metre depth down which cold water will be pumped and from which warmer water will emerge, providing the heating system for the new supermarket. This ground source heat pump system will save the developers about GBP 100 000 a year and have a payback of eight years at most, possibly less.

If these are the steps we have to take to develop a low-carbon economy – drilling a few holes in the ground – it does not seem that difficult to me. But there are two lessons to be learned from this. The first is that the financial mechanism alone should have encouraged supermarket developers and the like to invest in simple technology of this kind, but often it takes regulation to make it: financial mechanisms alone have not stimulated the market sufficiently. Secondly, it takes time. One building here, one building there will not make much difference. But every large building constructed over the next 40 years will make a difference.

Endorsement of the Commission's Roadmap for a competitive low-carbon economy by 2050 provides the framework for measures to enable us to reduce our emissions of carbon dioxide by more than 80% over the next few decades. Because I, together with this House, believe that global warming presents a threat to billions on this planet in the coming decades, that is something important to us all. But I accept what the Polish Environment Minister said in his letter to colleagues at the Environment Council last week. He had some good arguments, saying, for example, that Europe, with only 12% of the world's emissions, cannot solve the problems of the world. Of course that is correct. It does not mean to say that we cannot take a lead. He also said that we must be careful not to lose industry, and that is also correct: we do not want to lose jobs overseas as a result of the measures we take to deal with climate change.

But let us not exaggerate this; let us not pretend that we have lost most of these jobs because of climate change measures – they have gone because of many, many other reasons, not because of the emissions trading system or anything like it. What was really missing from the argument put forward by the Polish Minister was that the dynamics of the process of actually setting targets and introducing the appropriate regulations can drive forward innovation.

Look at the car industry: look at how, when we passed legislation just three years ago, it was bitterly resisted by industry – and yet they far exceeded the CO₂ reduction targets we set. They have done a brilliant job and not simply reduced their emissions but made their vehicles more fuel-efficient so that they are cheaper to drive, with consumers thereby getting a better deal. That really is a win-win situation for Europe and for our industry. Frankly, if the arguments of the Polish Environment Minister had been applied, we would not have got to that situation now.

I believe that the Roadmap can stimulate technology and give greater certainty for investors. Do people in Poland really think that if they are building a coal-fired power station now,

with a lifetime of 30 or 40 years, we will not be insisting that our measures be enforced over that period to reduce its CO₂ emissions? I cannot see it. It is important that we plan for the future. We must not condemn Europe to relative decline. We have got to look not to the past but to the future.

Commissioner, I hope Parliament today will endorse the Roadmap; I hope you will embrace many of the ideas put forward in it by my colleagues here, and I hope you will then bring forward measures to promote innovation, create jobs and take Europe forward.

Connie Hedegaard, *Member of the Commission.* – Mr President, the 2050 Roadmap communication provides a solid basis for discussing the further development of EU climate policies. It represents an incredibly strong signal for the whole process in this Parliament on this issue. I would like to thank in particular the rapporteurs: Chris Davies from the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and Mario Pirillo from the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy. It sends a very strong message about what this is all about, namely the environment and industry going hand in hand and seeing that this is not harming the potential in Europe and is actually something that can enhance our growth.

We just heard Chris Davies, a Liberal, say that financial mechanisms alone are not enough, and often it also takes regulation: that is also a very clear statement and is exactly what the low-carbon Roadmap is about.

After the second failure of the Environment Council to adopt Council conclusions on the 2050 Roadmap, it is even more important that the European Parliament gives its support to an ambitious EU climate policy in line with the global requirements, integrating the discussion on the short-term policy needs with the longer-term perspective.

Although one country blocked the final compromise in the Council, 26 Member States explicitly asked the Commission to move forward. We should not allow the most reluctant among us to dictate the pace of the rest. This is a very clear signal coming out of the European Parliament today: that you really want us to move forward and take the measures needed.

We welcome the report, as it endorses the central findings of the Commission's 2050 Roadmap – in particular the interim milestones for domestic greenhouse gas emissions reductions, as set out in the Roadmap. In the context of the difficult economic circumstances we are facing, the European Parliament's report strikes the right balance and creates the right vision.

It is of paramount importance that Parliament recognises that a gradual, cost-effective transition to a low-carbon economy passes through the milestones for domestic greenhouse gas reductions of 40% by 2030 and 60% by 2040 in order to achieve at least 80% by 2050 as compared to 1990.

This is strong guidance for our policy for decades to come. It is the starting point for further work related to the preparation of the 2030 policy framework, which is reasonably foreseeable and the focus of most current investors. Business needs clarity in the long term in order to be able to keep costs down. If there is one thing business always asks from us as politicians and regulators, it is long-term predictability. If you are a company, a sector or an investor, you are already looking beyond 2020 and planning investments which have a much more distant horizon.

The report confirms that, if the EU delivers on its current policies – including its commitment to achieve a 20% energy efficiency improvement by 2020 – this would add a further 5% greenhouse gas reduction through domestic action. While this does not require any change to our current targets for 2020, it shows a very practical and economical way to achieve higher reductions in line with the cost-effective pathway to 2050. The Energy Efficiency Directive will play a vital role here in providing the legal framework for reaching the 20% efficiency target. As you know, we are by no means on track to meet that.

The report also recognises that the ETS remains the principal instrument of the EU climate policy, though not the only one. The Commission is monitoring the situation closely. For the longer term, we take note of the various proposals put forward by the European Parliament for future changes to the ETS. We will assess how to take these into account in our further work.

With regard to the risk of carbon leakage, I understand that this is present throughout the report, but the EU has included specific measures in the climate and energy package, as the report also states. These are adequate. Border measures are not necessary and are counter-productive, at least at the moment. As I have said before, they are a tool in the toolbox, but they should stay there for as long as we can move forward through other means. As outlined in the Roadmap, we will continue to observe the international situation in order to ensure that these measures remain adequate.

In the Commission we fully share the strong focus set on energy efficiency and renewables. This is key to combining emission reductions, improved energy security and sustainable growth and jobs. In this respect, the Commission urges the Council and Parliament to reach an agreement on the Energy Efficiency Directive rapidly. In addition, the Commission will soon come forward with a communication considering the EU's strategy on renewable energy post 2020.

We strongly support Parliament's call for enhanced action to reduce emissions in the power, industry, transport and agriculture sectors. Let me highlight just one example from the transport sector. The report affirms that the Commission should be proposing ways of ensuring that average CO₂ emissions from new cars meet the target of not more than 95g/km by 2020. As requested in the existing legislation, the Commission will this year produce a proposal to establish the modalities for reaching this target.

Furthermore, the Commission intends to submit a proposal addressing emissions of HFCs and other fluorinated greenhouse gases in the second half of this year, which is also mentioned in the report. Finally, we also welcome the balanced considerations on competitiveness, research, innovation, growth and jobs in the context of moving to a low-carbon economy, confirming the main conclusions of the Commission assessments.

Last but not least, we thank you very much for supporting the Commission's proposal for the next multiannual financial framework and the intention to a very substantial degree to mainstream climate action in it. The Commission has proposed to increase the proportion of climate-related expenditure to at least 20% of the whole budget, either directly on climate action or through other policies where climate action is also addressed and where the different initiatives will help us move in a greener direction and the direction of a low-carbon economy. We count on your support on this matter in the upcoming budgetary discussions.

In conclusion, I would encourage the European Parliament to adopt the resolution as a further step for developing the appropriate policy framework for the transition to a

competitive, energy-secure and resource-efficient low-carbon economy. What you are about to adopt today will send a very strong and timely signal that Europe is ready to move on. Thank you very much for that.

Mario Pirillo, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy*. – (IT) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the goal of reducing CO₂ emissions by 80-95% by 2050 enables us to lay the foundations for a post-carbon European economy. It also requires us to launch a new industrial revolution based on new thinking about the system of production, involving the whole socio-economic sphere, to create better awareness of energy consumption and the efficient use of land. Research will play a key role in fully exploiting renewable energy. With firm and binding objectives, we shall be able to prepare industry for the transition while preserving its competitiveness at the global level.

Europe must take pride in having set out at every level on the road to protecting the environment and combating climate change. There is no way that we can negotiate with the environment, and that is why we must insist on solutions that lead to zero emissions, and why I am convinced that nuclear energy must not form part of the energy mix. As the rapporteur for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), I am grateful to Mr Leinen and Mr Davies for their excellent cooperation. Thank you.

Romana Jordan, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (SL) Mr President, for several years we have been tackling a financial and economic crisis, forcing media coverage of sustainable growth to take a back seat. But despite this, Europe has continued work in this area and we are on track to achieve our set objectives.

It might seem ambitious to debate the reduction of emissions in these difficult times, but this is the moment to do so. Objectives have been set for 2020, and we will only achieve these through the Energy Efficiency Directive. However, since the path to a low-carbon society is connected to investment in technology which should last several decades, we should already be giving potential investors guidelines for the development of European society to the year 2050 and showing them the path to a low-carbon society. For us, this is the path of development of technology, investment in knowledge and innovation and sustainable rural development.

Since we are on the threshold of a new Multiannual Financial Framework, the European budget must also reflect these priorities, both in agricultural and cohesion policy and support for the Horizon 2020 research programme, as well as in numerous sectoral policies.

In this report, we largely succeeded in remaining as technologically neutral as possible. We also emphasised the international dimension and the responsibility of third countries for achieving global objectives.

It is good that we have recognised the Emissions Trading System (ETS) as an important market-based mechanism for the European Union. Any recalibration of the system will therefore impact climate objectives. A desire to set higher objectives is covered in the Energy Efficiency Directive, potentially due to be adopted in the middle of this year. Any other changes to objectives are unrealistic in the short term. In this respect, we might also be concerned about the credibility of the European Parliament.

With this in mind, several amendments have been drafted in cooperation with the rapporteur and I invite you to support a realistic but nevertheless ambitious approach to the development of a low-carbon society.

I believe it is very important that the European Parliament reaches a common position on the issues of long-term development, which have already been raised by the European Commission in its timeline. This is especially important given the problems occurring around the world, where I personally think we should listen more sensitively to all the arguments for exercising a little more caution sometimes with our ambitions.

In finishing, I would also like to thank the rapporteur, who has been an excellent leader and coordinator on this occasion and ensured that we produced, in my opinion, an appropriate document for this parliamentary vote.

Jo Leinen, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, climate protection requires immediate measures, as well as a long-term strategy if we are to achieve the objective of stabilising the Earth's atmosphere at 2 °C. The Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament supports your Roadmap for 2050. It is an extremely important element in guaranteeing planning certainty and clarity in relation to where the path is to take us. All those involved, particularly the economic sector, eagerly await this planning certainty and clarity. This makes it all the more regrettable that Friday's Environment Council meeting was blocked by one country, showing itself to be incapable of making political decisions. I would like to ask the Commission: what is your strategy for rescuing Poland from this psychological and political isolation? We need Poland. Poland is an important country. We need to make it clear that Poland also has enormous opportunities to modernise its economy and deploy new technology in pursuing its climate strategy. Perhaps it is necessary to clarify the assistance the EU can offer and the way in which the effort is distributed among all 27 countries, all of which share a common goal, but which may have different ways of reaching that goal. Commissioner, you must be able to provide an answer here.

If we want to reduce CO₂ emissions by 80 to 95%, we need to embrace all sectors, not just industry, but also transport and agriculture. I hope that the amendments tabled here will not dilute our report. We need to speak out clearly in relation to climate neutrality in the transport sector and in favour of major efforts in the agricultural sector. We would encourage you to include not just aviation, but also marine transport in the emissions trading system. You need to show leadership here, and you should not give in.

The Emissions Trading System is not working. You need to take corrective action. This report indicates how this can work. I believe, in the final analysis, that we are witnessing a new industrial revolution. The issue at stake is a competitive European economy and climate protection is a key element in the competitiveness of Europe in the 21st century.

Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – (NL) Mr President, the nice thing about road maps is that they can provide us with a vision, and this case is no different.

The starting point was the question of where we have to be in 2050, and that is clear: our greenhouse gas emissions must come down by 80 to 95%. You can then work back from that to tell what you need to live up to. That is good for the environment, for public health and for our economy, as the Commissioner has also just clearly highlighted once again. This will also give business the certainty that it is pressing so hard for. It provides the certainty to be able to actually invest responsibility in the low-carbon economy.

False promises, on the other hand, must be the worst thing that we can do for business. By false promises I mean sending out the message that actually we can take our foot off the accelerator when it comes to the CO₂ targets. Yet how can we embrace the two degree

target *en masse* without accepting the attendant consequences? That way lies the creation of false promises.

Mr President, quite honestly, I find myself once again feeling badly let down by the right-wing side of this House. Mr Davies produced a very balanced response to the Roadmap, but everything that could involve even a little bit of pain was then stripped out of it. Let us be honest: a low-carbon economy cannot be achieved in a painless way. We do have to have achieve a low-carbon economy, however.

Louis XV of France famously said '*Après moi le déluge*' ['After me, the flood'], and sometimes I feel that those words still echo here in Strasbourg, 350 years later. There is hope, however. At the end of his life, he distanced himself from those irresponsible words. Let that part of history, too, repeat itself.

Bas Eickhout, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, I would like to thank the rapporteur for this report, which is certainly a balanced report on the future of our climate agenda, and above all on the future of the European economy. That is important, and that is why we are discussing it here.

The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) in this House argues that we should perhaps be going somewhat slower, but I would like to point out that, at the end of the day, we are doing this because of the climate, and you cannot negotiate with the climate. If we do not begin to act now, we will feel the consequences in terms of climate change, and that will make things really difficult for our economy. We need to act now to prepare ourselves and to establish an economy, as Europe, that is prepared for the future and that can even play a leading role on the international stage. That is what this is about.

This report enables us to provide industry – which everyone is always prompting us to remember – with the certainty to invest. We are providing that certainty for precisely the industry that does want to progress. Who are we going to listen to, industry that just wants to remain stuck in the past or industry that wants to make progress? We need, for once, to choose the industry of the future, and that is what we are talking about here.

Commissioner Hedegaard, I agree that we have laid out a tremendous vision for 2050 here, but now we need to take action for right now. We need to tackle the emissions trading system now. We need to set the targets for 2030 now. We need to get moving on saving energy now. We need to take this action now as, because while the long term may seem far away, the necessary investments need to be made now.

You have a majority in the Council – 26 Member States are participating – and you will hopefully achieve a large majority here in Parliament shortly. The time for action is now.

Miroslav Ouzký, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (CS) Mr President, I would like to pick up on the words of the rapporteur, Chris Davies. Yes, he stated here that the EU emits about 12% of emissions, and I have long been saying that without global cooperation our efforts will achieve almost nothing. We are always going on about how we will save the world and set an example. I have heard such phrases throughout my time in this Parliament. So far we have achieved nothing, only more and more regulations and more and more burdens on our economy. To respond further to the words of Mr Davies; you know that it is not a matter of digging a few holes in the ground, but rather enormous structural changes for some countries, and the example of the car industry is not really appropriate. The European car industry has been wallowing in the red since the last set of regulations. I believe that

any Roadmap for the future is a very good thing, but I would like to point out that if the map is glued to the front windscreen of the car, it may end in tragedy.

Sabine Wils, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (DE) Mr President, the current vote on the Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050 is of central importance. The lack of ambition in relation to European climate protection policy threatens the sustainable development of Europe's economy. Dirty technologies, such as nuclear power and carbon capture and storage, are impeding a change in energy policy. The EU emissions trading system has so far failed as an instrument for climate protection and is undermining European climate protection policy. It shows that market-based instruments are not the way to combat climate change. Long-term climate protection means identifying binding targets for renewable energies and for the reduction of greenhouse gases.

Binding interim steps for 2030 and 2040 as part of the move away from the use of carbon in economic activity by 2050 will give industry some certainty in relation to planning. Ambitious climate protection with a long-term goal of 95% greenhouse gas reduction by 2050 in comparison with 1990 levels will promote innovation and create new jobs in the area of renewable technologies.

Oreste Rossi, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the report presented by Mr Davies is restricted to providing unilateral and restrictive rules that have an impact on future climate legislation; they take no account, however, of the problems that would arise for European businesses and citizens from the application of such limits.

In recent years, Parliament has constantly been called upon to vote for measures that turn out, or will later turn out, to be inapplicable or require derogations. To give an example: let us take the measure on particulates, which all European production is in breach of; or the measure on energy efficiency, which if ever applied, will have a devastating economic impact on the economies of Member States and their citizens.

To contemplate making European businesses pay astronomic sums for securing CO₂ allowances in the Emissions Trading System (ETS) market so that they can continue production is to seek the destruction of our economy. Our businesses are already struggling to resist unfair competition from third countries that not only do not have to comply with particular emissions limits but also have labour costs and hence costs of production far lower than ours.

What some green fanatics do not want to understand is that pollution is a global phenomenon and that when an industry closes in Europe and relocates its operations to a country that does not take part in combating climate change, this causes greater pollution and loses us many jobs. Logic suggests that if we are to make certain drastic choices, they must be made in conjunction with all industrialised and developing countries, and that import duties should be imposed on the goods coming into Europe from those countries that do not take part.

Nick Griffin (NI). - Mr President, be careful what you wish for because you may get it. This old saying is very true about reducing our use of hydrocarbons. By 2050 we will have a low-carbon economy for the simple reason that we will largely have run out of carbon.

All the increases in non-conventional hydrocarbons, including from environmentally catastrophic shale oil and gas fracking, are only just about keeping up with the worldwide decline of conventional oil production. The long emergency of peak oil has begun. Those

who think we can deal with it by building wind farms and eating nut cutlets may mean well, but the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

The biggest threat is to food production. In agriculture, before the age of oil, for every calorie of energy invested by man, horse or ox, the average return was one-and-a-half calories. On that small surplus our ancestors built their cathedrals, painted their Rembrandts and wrote their Rights of Man.

Oil-based agriculture uses far fewer people to produce far more food. Its ratio is twenty-to-one. That is an input of 20 calories of oil energy for machinery, fertilisers and pesticides for every calorie of food produced. Today's globalised world is a house of cards, built on the suicidally-unsustainable use of finite fossilised sunlight. This is the real carbon crisis which we need to address. If we continue to fail to do so, today's children will look back in despair at all the time and energy that our generation wasted trying to kill the wrong pig.

Markus Pieper (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as we move further towards renewable energies, we shall have to make a decision. Do we take the path of more stringent environmental regulation with even stricter directives and regulations, for example in relation to buildings, industrial machinery or power stations, or do we take political measures and use emissions entitlements and quotas to provide market economy incentives for less environmental consumption?

At present we are doing both of these. The Davies report seems to further strengthen environmental law and at the same time restrict emissions rights. I am critical of this twin strategy. Is it not apparent that it is this increasingly stringent European legislation that is undermining emissions trading?

It surprises me that Mr Davies, as a Liberal, has ignored these issues. If it were up to him and the Liberals, businesses would have to pay twice: once for additional environmental regulations, then if CO₂ emissions decline, the certificates will simply be withdrawn from the market, making them even more expensive, so that businesses will be asked to cough up yet again.

This policy is placing too much strain on the European Union. This means that we are helping to protect the environment by driving away business and industry. This cannot be allowed to happen, which is why the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) refuses to support the unilateral tightening of emissions trading provisions.

What we need is greater flexibility and greater room to manoeuvre at national level with the European environmental laws, for example the Energy Efficiency Directive. This would also enable us to optimise the European incentives framework by also transferring the Emissions Trading System to buildings and other economic areas. What is important is that we should achieve our savings targets in the end. I believe that the best way to achieve this is with a reliable framework. We should be working with business, not against it!

Marita Ulvskog (S&D). – (SV) Mr President, Commissioner, global emissions increased by 6% during 2010. In my own country of Sweden, the increase in emissions was into double figures.

This is a double burden. Firstly, the climate issue has been overshadowed by the economic crisis when it comes to setting priorities on the political agenda. It has been difficult for us to debate the issue of climate change. Other things have vied for attention.

Secondly, the lower levels of economic activity during the crisis ought to have led to generally lower rates of climate-relevant emissions, but that has not been the case. Sweden is one example of this, and there are very many more. Moreover, we ought to have taken the opportunity during this period of crisis to make long-term climate investments, which would help us to get out of the economic black hole. It should be an opportunity for us to make an economic recovery and to increase our competitiveness. We have not achieved that, either.

This means that we must continue to hold on to our ambitions. That absolutely goes without saying. We must lead the way. That is the EU's and Europe's task. We must seize every opportunity. There are some things that we have succeeded in achieving in this political assembly: resource efficiency programmes and the Energy Efficiency Directive, which entails binding energy efficiency targets. That is how simple and detailed climate policy can be.

I would just like to say to Ms Hedegaard that she has the most important mandate in the Commission. There are many people both inside and outside this building who will support her all the way, because she is safeguarding this agenda.

Theodoros Skylakakis (ALDE). – (EL) Mr President, we have a very good and balanced report on the current policy, but we do not have a good and balanced policy. Our international policy – to put it politely – has not succeeded; it has not brought about results and, based on what we can see around us, it is not expected to bring about results in the near future.

On the other hand, on the other side of the Atlantic, the political will cannot be taken for granted, which is why it is necessary, alongside the policy we are applying, to seek alternative international strategies.

Also, our policy on renewables has succeeded as climate policy, but has been a resounding failure as an industrial policy. Seventy per cent of panels, for example, are produced in Asia and seventy per cent are being used in Europe, subsidised by European consumers.

Thirdly, the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and conditions in terms of carbon leakage have been completely overturned since 2008. The deep recession in Southern Europe, in conjunction with rapid industrial development in Turkey, for example, has turned the situation upside down. Turkey will have higher average emissions than the 27 this decade; and yet, it has not made any commitment and does not appear to have any desire to make a commitment on its emissions.

We need to rethink.

Satu Hassi (Verts/ALE). – (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we must all recognise that the EU's present policy on climate change lags behind what science is urging us to do. I would have liked Parliament to be able to state more clearly that our emissions reduction target, including the immediate one for 2020, should be tightened up.

In any case, this report supports the Commission's Roadmap and the idea that we should also set milestones for 2030 and 2040, and, in this way, we will be paving the way for where we have to be by the middle of the century. This means that Parliament will be sending a strong message that the Commission should now take action and make legislative proposals. We cannot allow just one country, Poland, to prevent us from going forward.

Innumerable reports show that the technology exists and that the cost is very reasonable. Mr Davies gave an excellent example of this, and my own home uses the same sort of heating system that he described. Anyone who is concerned about costs should remember that the postponement of action also means the postponement of costs.

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

Lena Kolarska-Bobińska (PPE), *blue-card question.* – (PL) Mr President, we are always saying how important it is for industry to have a stable framework, that it is important to have a plan, a long view so that everyone knows how to proceed. However, on the other hand, you are supporting the idea of changing this plan, especially during the next 10 years. This will result in disorientation for industry and for investors, because this changes the plan immediately, right now. So the question is: do you not think that there is an inconsistency between the establishment of clear and stable rules and constantly changing them?

Satu Hassi (Verts/ALE), *blue-card answer.* – Mr President, I shall answer in English. Last November, the International Energy Agency published a grave warning. If we continue 'business as usual' it will mean that in five years we will have lost the possibility to keep global warming below a 2°C increase because the 'business as usual' investments made by then will have used up the room for manoeuvre which we have for global emissions. This means that, in practice, the International Energy Agency too has asked us to be more ambitious in our climate policies. We should listen to that very strong message.

Marina Yannakoudakis (ECR). – Mr President, when we talk about climate change all too often we concentrate on the challenges rather than the opportunities. Cutting greenhouse emissions must go hand in hand with creating green jobs. I welcome this report's call to increase the EU competitiveness in the low-carbon economy. We must support ventures such as the green enterprise in my constituency of London. Sustainable industry can drive the recovery, deliver energy security and help us meet our climate change targets.

London is also the world centre for carbon finance. Managing emissions is one of the fastest growing sections in the financial service industry. The EU should not interfere with the carbon markets. A readjustment which removes carbon allowances from the EU emissions trading system could be dangerous. It could lead to certain businesses locating outside the EU, which is unacceptable. While promoting green jobs we must also ensure that our existing industry remains competitive.

Tadeusz Cymański (EFD). – (PL) Mr President, whatever the political options, we all agree that it is our human responsibility to protect the environment. This also applies to reducing combustion of fossil fuels, which means reducing carbon dioxide emissions. However, the implementation of this programme cannot take place in isolation from economic facts and the circumstances in which individual Union countries find themselves. My country, Poland, has put in enormous efforts during the modernisation of the coal-based post-Communist economy and this also resulted in massive reductions in CO₂ emissions. These measures involve real sacrifices and costs for our citizens. Investment in the energy sector reduces growth in other sectors. Even the current 20% reduction will be very difficult in our economic situation and will have a negative social impact.

The Polish veto is not a symptom of a lack of understanding, an unwillingness to conform or a desire for isolation, but results from a rational assessment of the situation and from

an analysis of the restricted possibilities that are open to us. Furthermore, there is only one atmosphere on the earth and public opinion is shocked by the fact that the greatest polluters, the global economic powerhouses of the United States, China and India, have not taken any significant steps, which undermines our competitiveness and the entire point of the proposal.

Francisco Sosa Wagner (NI). – (ES) Mr President, of the many issues being discussed in this debate, I would like to emphasise that of the emissions trading market, a market that has certainly been flawed from the outset. However, the current restriction of allowances and the economic crisis have led to a drastic fall in the price of carbon; that is to say, the price has fallen so much that it is now cheap to pollute.

The design of the policy for this market therefore requires an urgent revamp, as its deterioration threatens all our green efforts and all of the European Union's green policies. If emission allowances are not valued, it provides an incentive to increase emissions, polluting industries will not invest in new technologies and, worse still, the funding of important projects will be in jeopardy, such as, for example, energy efficiency projects or carbon storage plants. That is the risk. It is down to us, the Commission and Parliament, to address it.

Richard Seeber (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to thank the Commissioner and, of course, Chris Davies and our shadow rapporteurs for the report. I believe we have made a number of improvements here. It is important for us to have planning certainty. However, planning certainty naturally also means that we need to differentiate between legal instruments and proposals for the distant future. That is why it was so important for the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) that we should not interfere with the existing rules of the Emissions Trading System (ETS) up to 2020, despite the admittedly low CO₂ price. However, we need to show our companies how they should be investing. We have also received incorrect market signals as a result of the current economic crisis.

The balance that needs to be achieved here not only relates to the internal fabric of the Community, but also to our competitiveness beyond our borders. I do believe that Europe has a very ambitious climate protection policy. May I remind you that Commissioner Hedegaard returned from Durban having scored a number of successes. Nonetheless, Europe must be maintained as an industrial location. It needs to be strengthened, not weakened. Otherwise I fear that the major polluters will simply move elsewhere, so that jobs will be lost and the climate will sustain further damage overall. As I have said, it is always difficult to make predictions about the period up to 2050. For this reason, I would like to read out a couple of predictions made in the past.

For example, Gottlieb Daimler once said: 'The worldwide demand for motor cars will not exceed 1 million, not least because of the lack of available chauffeurs.' This should perhaps give us pause for thought, showing as it does the reliability of predictions for the distant future.

Rovana Plumb (S&D). – (RO) Mr President, I would like to express my thanks for the proposals that have been tabled, and indeed to my rapporteur colleagues as well. The European Union certainly needs to maintain its leading position in the battle against climate change. Europe needs now more than ever to make investments and create jobs. Its citizens need jobs to be created. This is why investments in environmental protection can be

regarded as a driving force for development, and the Roadmap which you, Commissioner, have proposed and which we support is a response to this.

However, we must bear in mind that the efforts made by Member States supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy are not the same, as their starting points are different and, by extension, their efforts for implementing this measure also differ. I welcome budgetary planning for European funds as it ensures funding for the projects which will result in greenhouse gas emissions being reduced, but which will also allow the disparities to be narrowed in terms of infrastructure between Member States.

The Commission must also review the emissions certificates trading system as the development of the carbon market is faltering and influenced by a host of factors. A balance needs to be devised between 'set aside' and the number of certificates relating to the post-2012 ETS.

Holger Krahmer (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, Mr Davies is aware that I am a fundamental opponent of the plan we are about to decide on. Political plans – particularly ones with very long-term goals – have always existed. These plans always had one thing in common: they were superseded by reality. The fact is that it makes absolutely no sense to plan how the world will be in 2050. This presumes too much knowledge. A great many things are bound to happen to us before then that we have not planned and that we cannot know or predict. The targets we set ourselves are, in the final analysis, arbitrary. We find ourselves comparing years and percentages that actually only have one constant feature, namely that they end in zero. Their relevance in terms of climate cannot really be explained in objective terms. We could just as easily deduct five years from the dates or add 5% to the percentage points. This would be just as arbitrary, but a little more ambitious. Why do we not do this?

I would suggest that any of us still alive in 2050 should meet once again as venerable ladies and gentlemen to discuss the reality of these plans as part of a night's entertainment. I have the feeling that would make a very entertaining evening indeed.

It is also high time that we realised that European climate policy is a failure in global terms. Our pioneering role is not accepted and no one pays much attention to our standards. I would simply remind you of the inclusion of the aviation industry in emissions trading. We must take a much more reasonable approach. We will only achieve success in climate policy if the rest of the world comes on board.

(Applause)

Yannick Jadot (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, you mentioned the European legislation on CO₂ emissions from cars. This was already one of the Commission's initiatives in 1995. Yet, faced with the lobby by large car manufacturers, what should have been achieved in 2005 will not be achieved until 2015.

I would like it if, at some point, democracy were allowed to function and citizens were able to see the transparency of what is being debated in Parliament, because those on the conservative benches who claim to protect the citizens are today abandoning them in the face of rocketing fuel bills. They are abandoning the workers in the face of the relocation of an industry that has failed to innovate and that has left our territories. They are abandoning the citizens of the whole world in the face of climate change.

Yes, we find ourselves in a complicated situation. We are facing a twofold problem. Firstly, we have governments that seem incapable of changing their software, incapable of imagining an economic model that is anything other than household debt, State debt or climate debt. Then, we are seeing lobbies in this situation that are stepping into the breach of this conservatism. Nuclear energy, carbon sequestration, oil sands and shale gas lobbyists are trying to take advantage of this political indecision.

Ms Hedegaard, your Roadmap is not perfect, Mr Davies' report is not perfect, but it would be irresponsible of Parliament to validate the complete irresponsibility of Poland. We will vote for this report.

Konrad Szymański (ECR). - (PL) Mr President, the report proposes a significant tightening up of the European Union's climate policy by, on the one hand, increasing reduction targets by up to 80% by 2050 and, on the other, by reducing the number of permits available on the market by letting them expire before the third phase of the ETS. We cannot agree to this for both economic and political reasons. In Durban we all agreed that international negotiations would continue until 2015. There is no reason why the European Union should be making its climate policy more restrictive at this time without international agreement. This road leads directly to loss of competitiveness.

In Poland, the stricter climate policy would incur an annual cost of EUR 5.4 billion, which is more than half of all business profits, or all of industry pre-tax profits and, for this reason, the legislative proposal in this regard, even without the Council's decision, would be a mark of extreme disloyalty not just to Central Europe, but also to European industry.

Roger Helmer (EFD). - Mr President, all over Europe we are sacrificing perfectly good coal-fired and nuclear power stations on the altar of environmentalism. We are trying to replace them with renewables. Wind turbines are blighting homes, communities and lives yet they deliver only an intermittent trickle of very expensive electricity.

This policy threatens our energy security while forcing up costs and undermining competitiveness. High energy prices are driving industry, jobs and investment out of the EU altogether and blocking economic recovery. Ironically these industries go to other jurisdictions with lower environmental standards so in one policy we damage our economies and increase global emissions.

We are promised green jobs yet repeated studies show that every green job destroys several real jobs in the real economy by forcing up costs and restricting growth. Across the Atlantic the US has discovered shale gas. America is looking forward to a new industrial revolution based on plentiful, cheap, indigenous fossil fuels. In the meantime in Europe, we shackle our industries with green dogma. Yet again the European Union appears to have a death wish.

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

IN THE CHAIR: GEORGIOS PAPASTAMKOS

Vice-President

Yannick Jadot (Verts/ALE), *blue-card question.* - (FR) Mr Helmer, could you confirm that in Great Britain, EDF, E.ON and RWE are in the process of negotiating a feed-in tariff for nuclear energy of nine to 12 cents per kWh, a price that is currently higher than that of onshore wind energy, which is seven cents per kWh?

Roger Helmer (EFD), *blue-card answer*. – No, I am unable to confirm that.

Gerard Batten (EFD), *blue-card question*. – Mr President, I know that Mr Helmer is something of an expert on this subject, and wonder whether he can confirm or deny something that I have read in the press, which is that if Britain closed down all of its industry, took every British aeroplane out of the sky and every British car off the road, this would not actually make any discernible difference to the world output of CO₂ emission gases. In fact, if we completely closed everything down, it would have no effect at all. Can he state whether that is true or not?

Roger Helmer (EFD), *blue-card answer*. – Mr President, yes, I believe the answer to that question is that it is pretty well true. If the whole of the British economy were completely turned off and we did not even burn a candle, China would make good the CO₂ savings that we had achieved in a period of about 12 months.

Pilar del Castillo Vera (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, I am just going to go over two points very quickly. The first is possibly the most discussed issue in this report and that which has led to the most disagreement: whether or not to deal with the emissions trading mechanism.

It is clear that it is suffering like any other ‘market’, and it is suffering due to the downturn, but I think it would be wrong to intervene in this market. To intervene to try to improve prices, as is done in other sectors, would be a serious error. More growth is needed. What we have to do is give it a boost, so that we can emerge from the crisis and then the emissions market will return to how it was.

Secondly, when it comes to the Roadmap, as has been said here, there are a lot of uncertainties. If I had to draw up a map with different roads to take us to the final objective, which would be a low-carbon economy, there is one road, one route that is the main route: that of energy efficiency. In this area, we can indeed say and plan many things.

We have reached agreement on the Energy Efficiency Directive, with a huge effort made by all the parliamentary groups. This is the same agreement that my group and I would like to see reflected in today’s vote on the report we are debating. I honestly believe it is worth it. We managed it for energy efficiency, why can we not do the same with this report?

Matthias Groote (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, we are discussing the changeover to a low-emissions economy. We have heard a number of people today tell us that we should continue as before. Mr Davies’ report contains an important point: if we continue as before, this will cost 5% of gross domestic product in the future. A full 5% of gross domestic product if we continue as before! Accordingly, the contents of the report represent a start.

Naturally we are only responsible for 12% of emissions. However, if someone does not make a start, no one will. There will be a battle for resources and the lower our emissions in the future, the fewer raw materials we will consume. There will also be a radical economic impact if we fail to take evasive action, investing in renewable energies and reducing emissions from traffic.

We have made a start here. This is a difficult path, both within the EU and internationally, which is why we need more diplomatic activity around climate issues. The European External Action Service needs to play its part in ensuring more is done with regard to climate-related diplomacy. We resolved here to include aviation in the Emissions Trading System. At present this is encountering international resistance – to put things

diplomatically. Nonetheless, we are on the right track. If the US, Russia and India develop a similar system, then we will of course be willing to cooperate with them and to show them the hand of friendship. Nonetheless, someone has to make a start. That is what we have done. It will also be evident in economic terms that we made a start in good time.

This is a good report and everyone in the Chamber today bears some responsibility in making this report a success. We cannot afford for the report to fail, like its predecessor, the Eickhout report. That would be a completely destructive signal to the citizens of Europe and the world's public at large. Hence my call to all my fellow Members: each of us must move a little from our positions if this report is to be a success.

Evžen Tošenovský (ECR). – (CS) Mr President, the debate on this report is highly complex and, in my opinion, risky for the development of some sectors in Europe. We must remain constantly vigilant to the danger of over-regulation, in order to avoid a dramatic deterioration in the competitiveness of European firms. The report itself draws attention to this threat at several points.

I agree with the need to increase the efficiency of energy systems. Improving efficiency can develop new fields. A reduction of the burden on the environment and a decline in CO₂ emission will then be a secondary effect. The best thing we can do is to concentrate on supporting research and speeding up innovation cycles. Account must also be taken of the development of individual Member States, and the right to a national energy mix, including a role for nuclear energy. It would be wrong for the 'green economy' to emerge only from political and administrative efforts supported by regulatory instruments across the EU. I see a serious danger of an artificially-created and subsidy-fed economy which could become totally non-functional in the longer term. The first negative signals might be a transfer of production capacity outside the territory of the EU, as the report also states.

Elisabetta Gardini (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I have to say that I am rather concerned. I hear words such as 'success', 'failure', 'leadership', but we ought to agree on what these words mean, because I think that today we shall be voting on a very complex text, that many of us shall be voting on matters with great unease, choosing the lesser evil, and that we are not going to vote out of conviction. There is no unanimity, as is plainly shown by the vote in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, where this resolution was passed with just 32 votes in favour, with 24 against and five abstentions. Therefore, we should not fool ourselves that we are all in agreement and that we are all marching happily towards the abyss that Europe alone is opening up for itself.

Have you seen what is happening with the Emissions Trading System (ETS)? Aviation is a case in point: European companies are writing desperate letters, arguing that these things should be regulated at a global level. Where can Europe, with its 12% of emissions, go by itself? It is going over a cliff-edge, and we are going there singing, satisfied and happy!

What is leadership? It is not quitting, as our quite excellent fellow Member, Mr Leinen, said. However, neither is it not quitting. Leadership consists in persuading, but we have persuaded no one. Let us look in the mirror, let us tell ourselves the truth, then let us read the Eurobarometer – our citizens are sceptical about this crisis. Let us instead examine our conscience; let us begin to see things as they really are, not as they appear in our dreams. Leadership is difficult, it wins hearts, but it must persuade, if we are not to be quite, quite alone. A leader is a step ahead, but not miles ahead; to be miles ahead is to be alone. Please let us take a reality check. Thank you.

Kathleen Van Brempt (S&D). – (NL) Mr President, we believe that this is a tremendously important report and it seems to me extremely important that we should send out a clear signal but, if I am not mishearing the right-wing side of this House, it appears that is still a little difficult.

No clear decisions were taken today in the Council and the truth is that that is entirely down to the arguments there. Let me reiterate – and perhaps the Commissioner will have to bring this up in the discussions in the Council – that this is not only an important dossier from the point of view of the climate and global warming, but also from an economic perspective.

The economy will have to be low carbon by 2050; there is no alternative. The question is whether we can take the decisions today, whether we can provide the legal framework, whether we can put the right regulations in place for our industry to have the certainty it needs to invest and for our governments to have the resources to do what has to be done. This simply takes courage. It does not make sense to simply exploit the argument at this point that now is just not the right time and that we need to save the economy. The economy needs to be saved over the long term, and that has everything to do with the low-carbon economy.

I therefore hope – and when I say this I am looking at those on the right-wing side of this House with common sense – that we will soon make an unambiguous decision and send out a clear signal to the Council and the rest of the world, as that is what we need to do if our children, too, are to have a future.

Françoise Grossetête (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, I wanted to return briefly to what my colleague Ms Gardini said, because I am obliged to mention that Mr Davies' report was approved in our Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety by a very narrow majority. This is a good reflection of the fears that have been expressed by some of our colleagues regarding the current direction of the text.

Yes, we have a Roadmap for 2050, but do we not still need to deal with what was adopted in the energy and climate package for 2013-2020? Modifying the Directive on greenhouse gas emissions allowance trading before it is even fully applied and implemented in 2013 could be perceived by market operators as a serious legal instability risk. This would damage the credibility of the carbon market and, in my view, it is a poor solution to a real problem. Some are complaining that the carbon price is too low. This is, unfortunately, due to the economic slowdown. Is it not in the interest of the market mechanism to reach the lowest price? In the past, when this system was being put in place, people rightly feared that the price of carbon would not rise.

Let us not be more royalist than the king. We must be very careful not to harm the competitiveness of our industries – I am referring to airlines, as has already been said. I would also like to mention China, which has put its Airbus purchases on hold in protest against the new European tax on carbon emissions in the aviation sector. Is that what we want?

I am therefore particularly concerned because what seemed to be a solution for the environment must not become a potential source of trade disputes.

Jolanta Emilia Hibner (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, first of all I would like to thank my colleagues for their work in preparing amendments for the final text of the report, in particular MEPs Romana Cizelj and Markus Pieper. Many of the clauses are good, but many

are problematical and even bad. The summits in Cancun and Durban showed that the European Union does not have any support for CO₂ emission reduction obligations of 25% by 2020. Despite this there are amendments in the report introducing such clauses, contrary to the global view. It was with great difficulty that the European Union managed to introduce the European Emissions Trading System in 2007. This system was to have been the medicine that cured European industry by a flow of additional funds for new technologies. Changes to the ETS in its first years of functioning are dangerous, as they dismantle the entire system.

The report excludes all coal-based energy and does not allow for the possibility of developing research and innovation in this sector, although in fact coal is the only natural resource available in Europe for power generation. Today, we must ask ourselves the question: what sources of energy is Europe to have now and in the future: coal – excommunicated; atomic energy – forbidden; gas and oil – from sources outside of Europe; biomass – small quantities and/or at the cost of changes to agricultural land management, stopping cultivation for food; wind and solar power – which cannot be stored in batteries, because this technology does not yet exist; shale gas is already social enemy number one. Where should Europe go next? Perhaps we shall transfer all of our industry to Asia and America and only leave tourism here. Yet how will we earn our livelihood?

Christa Kläß (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, a competitive, low-carbon economy by 2050 is the declared aim that we all whole-heartedly espouse. We have already defined the staging posts on the way to achieving this goal. There is absolutely no reason at present to change this Roadmap. This applies in particular to the Emissions Trading System, which is still more or less in its infancy. Each of us knows how dangerous it is to push the speed too far or to change course when an aeroplane is taking off. Likewise in this report, we also need to recognise and incorporate the existing measures.

We are addressing the whole economy. This is the right and necessary thing to do. There is absolutely no reason to point a finger at agriculture in this report, as is the case in paragraph 2. Everyone must play their part in reducing CO₂ emissions. Agriculture is always the focus of European environmental policy at present. We are presently in the middle of discussions in relation to a new European agricultural policy. This involves serious debate about realistic targets and we should avoid getting prematurely bogged down with numbers in this report. The current common agricultural policy imposes stringent requirements in Europe for healthy, sustainable production. This applies to foodstuffs and to the production of biomass and energy in equal measure. Europe is already distinguishing itself from third countries in terms of energy production. I would ask you to accept this. This is also the focus of the amendments tabled by my group. I would ask the House to vote in favour. It is only by meeting each other half way that we can reach an acceptable compromise and achieve a good result.

Peter Liese (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, Ms Hedegaard, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to discuss the agreement with regard to the Energy Efficiency Directive. All groups support a wording that will enable us to achieve a 20% energy saving by 2020. This will also create the right conditions for meeting ambitious environmental targets.

This wording also deals with the Emissions Trading System (ETS) on a cross-party basis. We support cautious intervention in the ETS, avoiding hasty, uncontrolled actions. Parliament's message is very clear, however: there is a need to act here. The Commission needs to present a plan. This is also set out in the compromise that the Group of the

European People's Party (Christian Democrats) has negotiated with Mr Davies. I would like to discuss paragraph 94 of the report. Unlike the topic as a whole, the formulation in relation to aviation in the Davies report is uncontroversial. There are no amendments and I expect it to be adopted. We support the Commission here. We call on the Commission to implement the legislation in relation to aviation. We should not cave in to threats from third countries. This would have serious consequences for other political areas, such as the financial market and trade. The Court of Justice of the European Union has confirmed that we are right. There is not a court in the world that finds us wrong. If we give in now, there will be serious consequences.

Nonetheless, Commissioner, we want to see the legislation implemented in its entirety. This also requires that we do everything in our power to negotiate with third countries, and that European aviation should not suffer discrimination. We want an international solution. Take this as your cue: negotiate by all means, but do not give in!

'Catch the eye' procedure

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). - Mr President, I wish to thank the rapporteur, and also to thank Christa Kläß for mentioning agriculture more substantively than has been done thus far in the debate. There are many pressures on agriculture. We have this debate this morning, we have the CAP reform, which has a 30% greening component about which there is much concern, and we have the Commission's proposals on LULUCF, which have not yet reached Parliament but which have serious implications for agriculture.

I would draw the Commissioner's attention to the reaction from farming organisations – remember that they are the practitioners and it is worth listening to what they have to say – who consider that the Commission's proposals are neither feasible nor coherent given the current level of understanding, and that scientific knowledge concerning carbon capture and storage and emissions from soils, and the effects of different management methods on these, is still far from complete.

We need to be very careful about imposing more accounting rules on farmers, and to be mindful of the content of paragraph 95 of this report, which encourages the Commission to come up with measures but also to take particular account of the role of agriculture as a producer of food.

Gilles Pargneaux (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, allow me just a moment to express my approval of the Roadmap such as it has been presented to us by Mr Davies and which we have supported within the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.

At the same time, when we are faced with a resolution like this one which sets a limit – and we must always bear that in mind – we realise, as we have heard in some of the speeches from the other benches this morning, that this limit may be somewhat lacking in visibility, in transparency, because there are many measures, particularly economic measures, which suggest that things will not be done as they should.

When we look at the position of a number of our leaders, we get the impression that you are, at times, somewhat isolated. I would therefore like it if you could reassure me, Commissioner, that your conviction, such as you have always displayed, will continue to forge ahead in this way, in spite of the difficulties we may face in this area.

Alajos Mészáros (PPE). – (HU) Mr President, Commissioner, the Member States of the European Union used to be at the forefront of industrialisation and fossil fuel consumption. It is therefore natural that we, too, must do our share in combating carbon emissions. Member States must supplement their emissions trading schemes with technological and innovation-based solutions in order to achieve the necessary reductions. Today there is a surplus of emission allowances, which has driven down their prices to such an extent that they are only able to influence our industrial investments to a slight degree. In order for us to be able to secure the future of our industry we must considerably expand our investments.

To predict now what the European economy will be like in 2050 is not an easy task. If we are to succeed in this field we must act in keeping with our energy efficiency efforts and must also refrain from excluding our nuclear reactors. We must not sacrifice the dynamic development of our industry and competitiveness on the altar of decarbonisation. The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) endeavoured to ensure this balance in its report.

Riikka Manner (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, firstly I wish to thank Mr Davies for this excellent and balanced report. It investigates some very important moves towards a low-carbon economy, and, in my opinion, it also proposes some very coherent and realistic policy measures as well as the need, in particular, to invest in the green economy.

We now need to work together and we require some very immediate action, for us to be able to progress towards a low-carbon economy, and we need cooperation between the various areas of policy on agriculture, cohesion and, of course, the environment. Energy policy is indeed crucial in all this, as we are talking about how we will replace carbon. I actually disagree with what my fellow Member said earlier on, that we would not be able to find a way to replace carbon in the use of renewable forms of energy. In my view, there are good prospects for doing so, in the shape of both biomass and wind and hydro-electric power.

Bogdan Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Commissioner, I am not against a low-emission economy based on modern technologies, but I am against a lack of common sense and a desire to ignore that the emperor has no clothes. According to the report published in World Energy Outlook, during the period up to 2050 over 50% of global energy will continue to be produced from coal. In this light, an independent European Union emission reduction policy, without energy alliances with the largest global users of coal, is doomed to failure.

We cannot afford the closure of steel mills and factories that is taking place at an alarming rate in front of our eyes – what is known as ‘carbon leakage’ – and the transfer of production to the Far East. This is quite simply hypocrisy. As, for the period until 2050, the European Union is the greatest advocate of low-carbon technology, why does it not allocate additional funds to research relating to the use of the most effective energy source, which is the sun, and to methods for transporting solar energy from outside the earth's atmosphere and why does it not cease focusing on the least effective but very costly programme, which is the so-called renewable sources of energy? I am calling for balanced development, particularly in the area of emission reduction, so that the poor do not have to pay penalties for the emissions of the rich.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, both Member States and regions must definitely help achieve the low-carbon emission targets by 2050. However, we need

to be aware of how difficult it is to meet these targets. The report has drawn our attention in the transport sector to the need for a cultural shift towards using new, more sustainable modes of transport. The encouragement of new forms of investment, so as to facilitate the modal shift to greener modes of transport and reduce the need for transport, as proposed by the report, will involve dealing with specific regional situations. The lack of a suitable infrastructure, especially in poor regions where there is a low level of IT use, will create a number of problems relating to accessibility.

A cultural shift needs to be supported by measures which will not affect citizens' daily lives, especially their jobs. In my view, to meet this challenge, we need to have total harmonisation of sectoral policies at European Union level and involvement from every institutional level.

Karin Kadenbach (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to make a few remarks using the catch-the-eye procedure. We have heard several speeches today that could lead to the impression that things will not become more expensive if we just keep the status quo. I would like to thank Mathias Groote for pointing out that it is not just a question of quality of life, a healthy environment, clean water and clean soil for the future, but that it is also necessary to think in a business-like way.

After all, what we are risking today with a CO₂-polluted environment is soaring future costs, not just in the health sector, but also for the entire economy. When I hear people say that tar sand and fracking are the alternative technologies of the future, then I find myself wondering where some of my colleagues have been in recent years. We are talking about a low-carbon future and instead we are hearing proposals that would have exactly the opposite effect.

I would like to thank Mr Davies for this well-balanced report. I think there are just a couple of points to add: we need a policy that deals with people's present situation, while also looking a little way into the future.

(End of the 'catch the eye' procedure)

Connie Hedegaard, *Member of the Commission.* – Mr President, I would first like to thank Mr Peter Liese for the very clear way he condensed what must be the European response to the discussion over ETS and aviation. Of course Europe cannot give in to threats: that I think and hope will be clear to everyone here. We are very much engaged in trying to get the global agreement that we have been working for since 1997 through ICAO. As we speak there is an ICAO meeting in Montreal, where EU Member States are very well represented and are fighting hard to try to set ICAO on track to an international global way of regulating aviation as the global sector that it is.

The Commission is also there, and we are now posting two people there permanently for a period to work with ICAO in order to push things forward as best we can. So we are following exactly the two strands that Peter Liese was clearly saying that European policies should be based on.

Mr Leinen asked me about the Commission's strategy vis-à-vis Poland. I noted with great interest yesterday that the Vice-Premier of Poland, Mr Waldemar Pawlak, very clearly stated in the Polish press that, for instance, when it comes to energy efficiency, he saw the very large potential in Poland, also in economic terms.

There will be ways forward. Some of the more unfortunate part of the discussions up to and in the Council last Friday was probably that it was as if the milestones that we are discussing should apply today, as if we were talking binding targets and specific effort-sharing at this stage. That is all for later. Of course we also have an EU budget which could help some Member States to make a transition and achieve energy efficiency and more efficient grid systems and so on. I am sure that there are good ways forward when it comes to what we have seen from Poland.

There was another question on shipping. We are now analysing options for shipping, as we were asked to do by the European Parliament. Last year we had a number of meetings with stakeholders where we were discussing options forward. So that work is being done in the Commission.

Mr Ouzký asked what the point of all this is without global cooperation. To make it very clear: there is global cooperation. It is not bringing the world fast enough to where it should be, but I think that Durban was proof that it is possible to push international climate negotiations forward a little. One of the outcomes of Durban was that all countries of the world now admit that we have to be equally legally bound by 2020. That has been a key ask for Europe for many years as well as from this Parliament, so it is just one example that things are moving forward – but too slowly. To focus on energy efficiency and renewables will also be in our own industrial, economic and job-wise interests. It is not either-or; it is both the international track and also what we do in our own region.

To mention just one fact: even Poland is importing energy from outside. So this is also about our economy and our energy security. Last year in Europe we paid EUR 315 billion for our oil (imported oil – just the oil part). That is a lot of money. Our trade deficit was USD 115 billion if you take us all together. EUR 315 billion is a very, very large burden macroeconomically speaking. It would be good if, through intelligent climate and energy policies, we could reduce that kind of bill and at the same time increase our energy independence. I agree with Ms Yannakoudakis, who said that we should also look at some of the possibilities here and not just at the challenges.

The final two points. Ms Gardini said: look at the Eurobarometer. Yes, please do: look at the Eurobarometer. A new one on climate was produced last autumn, the first since 2009. Never have the Europeans been as concerned about climate change, and they asked for intelligent climate policies which also address energy efficiency, energy security and can also lead to growth and jobs in Europe. So please look at the Eurobarometer.

The last point. Mr Cramer said that it was crazy to plan for the future. I think Mr Cramer is expressing a view that many would take when discussing 2050, as if we did not have enough challenges here and now. I think that it is totally irresponsible not to plan for the future – especially here, because the kind of investments you are talking about when it comes to energy systems, for instance, lock in your energy choices for the next 40, 50 or 60 years. That is why short-termism will not work there. It is clear, however, that when you are talking about 2050 there is – and should be – a limit as to how detailed the policies you can come up with are.

What we are doing here is setting a direction. We are, as mankind, at a crossroads. Where do we go? Which road do we choose? Do we follow business as usual – that is, do nothing and continue to build on fossil fuels, which we know will be more expensive, restricted and limited in the future, knowing that that will only make things worse? Or do we use our knowledge, our technologies, man's ingenuity to pursue a cleaner and greener kind of

growth? That is the kind of choice we have to make, and we have to make it now. That is the whole point of the Roadmap: the sooner you make that choice, the more cost-efficient the transition will be.

Neither I nor the Commission is in doubt as to which way we should choose, but I am glad to note that a very large majority in this European Parliament is also not in doubt. I thank you very much for that.

Chris Davies, *rapporteur*. – Mr President, I do not know who timetabled this debate but I do not think it was one of their best days!

I would ask the House to remember that I am not asking you today to support the report that was carried in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety by a small majority. Rather, I am asking you to vote for the joint EPP/ALDE amendments and the report, and to take into account the fact that we have made compromises here in order to try to secure a large majority for reform in this House.

I will just touch on a couple of issues. Firstly, the emissions trading scheme (ETS). This is a market mechanism, but it is not a perfect market mechanism. A huge surplus of allowances has built up and that needs correcting. When the ETS was launched the Commissioner at the time said that we were going to learn by doing. We are still learning. Roger Helmer of the UK Independence Party said that wind turbines were useless and were driving industry across to China. Well, he should then answer the question why, if that is the case, China is building more wind farms than the whole of Europe put together?

When we look at the green economy or the low-carbon economy, I do not like to talk about wind turbines, as that is too easy. I like to think of the Rolls Royce factory in Derby in the United Kingdom, where they are building engines for the A380 Airbus. This is very advanced technology. These engines can allow us to meet the aspirations of travel but do so by using less fuel and producing fewer emissions. Ms Grossetête, that is not undermining Europe's competitiveness; it is ensuring that we can maintain it and strengthen it.

Some see the Roadmap and the proposals that will come forward from the Commission as a result as a threat. I see it as a challenge, and also as an opportunity. I have heard UKIP – and indeed Ms Gardini – saying that we should just carry on as we are and should not make changes unless the rest of the world does. It all sounds quite easy, with some degree of common sense. But that is not building a better future for Europe. It is just condemning us to the slow lane. It is allowing us to fall backwards, overtaken by the technological developments of the Far East.

We can accept that not all of us in this House want a green future, but we should not opt for a black future. We should be going forward to a bright future.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place at 12.00 today, Thursday, 15 March.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Ivo Belet (PPE), *in writing*. – (NL) I am convinced that we, as the EU, are choosing the right path by resolutely striving for a low-carbon and carbon-neutral society. Of course, this needs to be done in a balanced way, in other words without naively shooting ourselves in the foot. We have a population of 500 million people in the European Union, but unfortunately that is not enough to bring a halt to global warming on our own. We need

to bring China, India, the United States and other emerging economies on board. That is why it is so important that five American Nobel prizewinners yesterday made a very clear call to President Obama to support the EU measures to combat CO₂ emissions from aircraft. The cost of this measure hovers around EUR 2 per ticket. We must not give up on this ambition because it also obliges the other major players to take a position before their own public opinion and make clear where they stand when it comes to combating global warming. Parliament therefore also supports Commissioner Hedegaard's policy with a large majority and asks for the implementation of the emissions trading scheme (ETS) policy in aviation to go ahead.

Adam Gierek (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) The Union under its current management reminds me of an old man who 'ambitiously' flexes his muscles even though he is about to kick the bucket. The report and communication bring to mind the mutterings of a person with a high temperature, higher than the proverbial two degrees of global warming. There is no point in putting forward any amendments, but any stupidity can be harmful and this demands a strong reaction.

My questions are therefore: 1. Why does the Commission want to 'save the climate' at the cost of Poland's economy, harming the social conditions of its citizens? 2. Who will be the principal beneficiary of speculation on the CO₂ emissions market? 3. Which of the Union's states will become more competitive and which will become less competitive? I am not expecting any answers. You would have to delve into the reasons why the climate doctrine has become politicised, a doctrine in which the Commission appears to have blind faith. It is difficult to argue with faith. Or perhaps it is not a question of conviction, just a cynical climate game? The Polish veto is a signal for the Commission to return to normal functioning.

Filip Kaczmarek (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) The very title of Chris Davies's report: 'a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050' contains a contradiction, which, in my opinion, has affected the whole proposal. This title is misleading, but it would be simple to change it. We should add a question mark at the end. I am sure that no one today is able to prove that by 2050 it will be possible to reconcile these two values which are so important to us: competitiveness and reduced emissions. It certainly does not work at present. On the contrary, the unilateral reduction of emissions in Europe is reducing the competitiveness of the European economy. Perhaps at some point it will be possible to reduce or reverse this dependency. The problem lies in the fact that at present we do not know how to do it and whether it will even be possible. Wishful thinking could put our economy into serious difficulties and already there is no lack of problems. An important and integral part of the issue of emissions is its global nature. European efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases will not have much impact if we do not introduce solutions that are able to regulate emissions effectively at global level.

Béla Glattfelder (PPE), *in writing*. – (HU) I welcome the fact that the report took significant account of the opinion I had prepared on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development. European agriculture could make a substantial contribution to the reduction of EU carbon emissions while creating new jobs, especially in rural regions. The primary way for farmers to facilitate the achievement of climate protection goals is through the production of renewable energy sources, in particular biogas, which can also serve as a means for them to supplement their income. When utilising agricultural products for energy purposes, care must be taken not to jeopardise food security or cause a rise in food prices. In order to increase energy efficiency and reduce pollutant emissions the coordination

of relevant EU policies is required. Therefore, rural development funds and other Community financial funds should in future only support investments that are energy efficient, and in particular those that focus on the use of renewables. One of the main issues afflicting farmers is rising energy prices. By increasing their energy efficiency and utilising agricultural and forestry residues as energy sources they could reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. This way European farmers could not only contribute to the fulfilment of climate protection goals but could also considerably improve their competitiveness.

Jaromír Kohlíček (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (CS) The report by Chris Davies is full of interesting information and very bold objectives. After the collapse of talks with the largest air carriers in the EU, it will be interesting to see how the report's ambitious objectives develop. The statement that China and India have overtaken the EU in the production of photovoltaic cells requires further explanation. If it is due to the fact that the EU is too bound by various regulations and directives, then we must first and foremost resolve this administrative anomaly. The emphasis on central heating in cities is interesting and realistic, and reducing the number of permits to emit CO₂ by 1.74% annually is certainly a very bold plan. The reduction of CO₂ emissions by up to 20% of 1990 levels by 2050, and the progressive targets obtained through linear interpolation may be taken as political declarations and good will. On the other hand, it is right to emphasise the priority of securing food and animal fodder production when exploiting the energy potential of biomass. The support for research and developed mentioned in the final passage is of fundamental importance. The proposal to earmark 20% of the European Regional Development Fund for investments in energy saving, the development and introduction of low-carbon technologies and innovation support raises question marks. In my opinion, there is a lack of emphasis on the forthcoming 8th Framework Programme for Science and Research. The greater part of the report is unfortunately just wishful thinking, although the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left does support the stated objectives.

Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE), in writing. – (FI) The Commission is right to make long-term plans for the EU to have a genuinely competitive low-carbon policy by 2050. It seems odd, however, that the many targets which the Commission has proposed, and which some of my fellow Members support, will do just the opposite for the EU, especially when we consider the global realities. In all the steps we take, we need first of all to examine what is happening in the area of international climate policy. If we now decide on unilateral action to make emissions cuts by up to 95%, through action not bound by any international climate agreement or linked to any equivalent emissions cuts in third countries, we will arrive at a situation where competitiveness is just a distant dream.

The symptoms of our climate policy are already visible, both in the economy and in our employment situation, and there are no real environmental benefits either. In the long term, we should not get locked into what are already expensive solutions or work out our plans based on them. We should instead endeavour to create for our industry an operational environment that encourages investment and innovation in more efficient technology. Additional, unilateral commitments are not an incentive, when we realise that our emissions represent around 11% of the total globally. They will stifle our economy. That is why, in the report before us, I am concerned about the desire to intervene artificially in emissions trading and to manipulate allowance trading prices politically. This would be a very dangerous move, which would render our industry completely incapable of planning any

measures in the climate policy environment that we would be creating, and it certainly would not encourage technological development.

Emissions trading is working in accordance with its aims – to reduce emissions. With a tighter emissions ceiling, emissions would fall as planned, and the arm's length price would be determined with reference to each economic situation. The incentives for moving to new, more efficient technology are created by offering the opportunity for innovation, and not by taking it away by tightening the screws.

Śławomir Witold Nitras (PPE), in writing. – (PL) Mr Davies's report is potentially harmful even though it is packed with noble ideas such as overcoming European dependency on imports of fossil fuels and popularising electric road transport. We all understand how important such ideas are. However, the rapporteur has not taken into account the costs associated with implementing the requirement to reduce CO₂ emissions by 80-95% by the year 2050, which is the principal assumption in this report. In countries such as Poland, which produce 90% of their energy from coal, this policy will not only bring about enormous price hikes, but also bring about losses in the industrial sector, its relocation as well as high unemployment.

In addition, another clause in this document assumes the introduction of changes to the recently created emissions trading system. This could undermine the credibility of the European Union among investors and business, whose support is vital in times of crisis. Another shortcoming of this report is the fact that we are setting goals for ourselves without knowing whether the 2020 strategy is going to be successful and while we are ignorant of the outcome of international climate negotiations, which are expected only in 2015. To summarise, this report goes too far into the future, contains provisions that are potentially harmful and is too ambitious for a region that produces barely 12% of global emissions.

Valdemar Tomaševski (ECR), in writing. – (PL) Mr President, Mr Davies's report on a Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy by 2050 requires thorough analysis and an assessment of the provisions it contains as regards their impact and the effects that they will have in the future. I cannot agree to the introduction of new restrictions on Member States for a failure to comply with the already very high CO₂ emission standards for European Union Member States. The unilateral fight – involving only Europe – against global warming is becoming a threat to the competitiveness of economies in individual countries. This is also a threat for the economic security of our citizens.

The measures proposed in the report would result in a significant increase in energy prices and manufacturing costs in the Union's new Member States, which is unacceptable. The enlargement of the Union was supposed to assist economic growth in Central and Eastern Europe. However CO₂ emissions trading and the proposal for a rapid transition to a low-emission economy will put the brakes on this growth. The ideological battle against global warming cannot slow down growth in the new Union members. Rapid implementation, as proposed by the report, will increase the already large gap in standards of living between old and new Member States. The promotion of a low-emission economy will result in a cooling down and not a strengthening of the European economy. Nature should be protected, but not at the cost of thrusting half of Europe's inhabitants – and only those of Europe – into poverty.

Rafał Trzaskowski (PPE), in writing. – (PL) The proposal by the rapporteur to stop using fossil fuels by 2050 is as ambitious as it is unrealistic. Such proposals for top-down

central planning of the emissions trading system are unacceptable. The present proposals fail to take into account the specific characteristics of individual Union Member States. We can move forward together towards the goal of emission reduction, but not by means of a single solution for all Union members. For Poland, a drastic reduction in carbon dioxide emissions also means increased dependence on imported sources of energy.

Vladimir Urutchev (PPE), in writing. – (BG) There is no doubt about the need for us to have a clearer vision of our economy in a few decades time, following the scenario imposed for decarbonising industrial activity and energy. However, this must be done in the most cost-effective way, while preserving and increasing our economy's competitiveness, which is not clearly visible from the Roadmap for 2050 and the European Parliament report.

We have actually focused only on carbon dioxide as the other greenhouse gases are not affected to the necessary extent, although restricting them does not cost the economy and people as much. I share the serious concerns that imposing new, even higher targets both for 2020 and beyond in order to reduce carbon emissions, or modifying their trade system will introduce legislative uncertainty and send the wrong signal for planning business investments. There is no need for mandatory targets for emissions after 15, 20 and 30 years, which will undergo significant changes during this period, as we learn in life.

What are needed are benchmarks or indicators showing the direction and acting as a means of monitoring the effectiveness of the measures taken. Achieving complete energy decarbonisation will not be possible with renewable energy alone. All low-carbon energy technologies, including nuclear and clean coal technologies, will make their contribution, especially outside the EU.

Zbigniew Ziobro (EFD), in writing. – (PL) I read the provisions in this report with some concern. It is like a description of the worst nightmare facing European business, full of internal contradictions. It completely ignores differences in economic development between the countries of the so-called 'old Union' and its new members. A good example of this is the section concerning the emissions trading system. It takes no account of the specific characteristics of fuels used by different economies, which is enormously unfavourable to countries using coal and could result in reduced investment in some industry sectors and the relocation of production facilities. In the report, the author completely ignores this fact, and focuses on increasing emission thresholds.

According to experts, it will also not be possible to comply with the provisions concerning diversification of energy sources or to find a zero-emissions source by 2050. The report presents the financial aspects of the Climate and Energy Package in too general a manner, while the investment costs in Poland alone for modernising the energy sector have been calculated as EUR 86 billion by 2030. The report is also dangerous in that, contrary to global trends and diplomatic realities, it postulates a unilateral reduction in emissions. However, the EU is already producing the lowest level of greenhouse gases. For this reason I am again calling for prudence and for the contents of the report to be rejected.

7. 6th World Water Forum (debate)

President. – The next item is the oral question to the Commission (B7-0101/2012) by Richard Seeber, Sophie Auconie, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, Satu Hassi, Miroslav Ouzký, Sabine Wils, on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, on the 6th World Water Forum (O-000013/2012)

Richard Seeber, *author.* – (DE) Mr President, we, the European Parliament, have drawn up a resolution for the 6th World Water Forum, to be held in Marseille this week. Unfortunately, a large number of colleagues will be unable to attend, as this is a plenary week. Nonetheless, I would remind you that this is the 6th World Water Forum and that we already have a resolution from the United Nations from 2010 drawing attention to water and sanitation as a human right. I believe that we should take this as the starting point for our deliberations in our resolution.

Let me begin, however, by reminding you of a few statistics. The Earth is a blue planet, with the greater part of its water resources made up of saltwater. Our water reserves amount to 1.4 billion cubic kilometres, only 2.5% of which is usable freshwater. Most of this freshwater is in the form of groundwater and only 1% of this is available for actual human use. This represents a figure of 200 000 cubic kilometres. Sixty per cent of this is already used.

If we also consider that water consumption worldwide is increasing at twice the rate of the world's population, then, I believe, we have food for thought. We need to consider how to secure worldwide consumption in the long term. According to United Nations statistics, the fact is that about 70% of water is used for irrigation in agriculture, with industry accounting for a further approximately 22% and domestic consumption the remaining 8%. At the same time, we find a stark rise in urbanisation, particularly in the developing world. Forecasts indicate that the developing world will witness a 50% increase in water consumption by 2050.

If we consider that the Earth's population will probably have reached 9.3 billion people by 2050 and that we will need 70% more food to feed this population, then it is possible to imagine how great the strain on water resources will be. Nonetheless, there are also positive signs. We have achieved the first of our Millennium Development Goals, access to clean drinking water. That was evident in the last UN report. We have actually exceeded this target with 89% and may even reach 92% by 2015. Unfortunately we are not quite so far advanced with regard to sanitation. Nonetheless, it is quite clear that if we want to make progress and succeed in solving our water challenges, we must choose a path of economic development, as these successes were only possible by facilitating access to clean drinking water for the Chinese and Indian populations. Unfortunately, there is little positive to report from sub-Saharan Africa.

I believe it is a very positive thing, and I am sure that many of my colleagues will agree with me, that the slogan for this 6th World Water Forum is 'Time for solutions'. We have already passed numerous resolutions. We now need to put these resolutions into practice. The World Water Forum is working to draw up 12 key priorities with three strategic objectives.

The first is to secure the well-being of people. The second is to keep the planet 'blue'. The third is to contribute to economic development. What do we need to do to achieve these objectives? We drew up a few ideas in our resolution. Firstly, it is important to improve the situation regarding data. There is still a significant deficit in relation to effective data in the water sector: what are the incoming and outgoing volumes, who are the consumers, what is the level of pollution, and so on. The availability of data must be improved in order to be able to frame and implement policy correctly.

Secondly, planning and action are required in relation to river basins. This is also the central concept behind the Water Framework Directive. However, this concept must be spread throughout the world. A UN resolution also exists. The central point here is that countries

need to cooperate across national divides. We are also aware that water leads to conflict in many areas. I also believe, however, that cooperation provides an enormous opportunity to practise policies that will secure and maintain peace.

It is also of central importance that decisions in relation to choosing locations will need to include water-related points in future. This applies in particular to industry. It applies to agriculture and, of course, to industrial production too. We should not forget that water has a very regional character, being extremely scarce in some places and plentiful in others. For this reason, I believe that the 'one-size-fits-all' principle is inappropriate, particularly in the water sector.

Connie Hedegaard, *Member of the Commission.* – Mr President, my colleague Mr Janez Potočnik unfortunately cannot be here today so he has asked me to replace him and I am happy to do so as I had the chance myself also to participate in part of the Water Forum in Marseille as have my colleagues Piebalgs and Georgieva.

In reply to your questions, first I would like to recall that a Ministerial Declaration was developed by the host, France, together with states' representatives and the Commission. Second, the EU has developed over several decades a comprehensive water policy.

Since the year 2000, with the adoption of the Water Framework Directive, water policy aims at achieving good status of all EU waters by 2015 on the basis of integrated river basin management. This brings together all users and stakeholders to address all pressures on the water environment in the whole river basin, beyond administrative boundaries. The EU will continue to promote this approach worldwide. But, in spite of our efforts, the achievement of EU water policy goals is still challenging due to a number of old and emerging water management issues related to both water quality and quantity. We also have to look ahead at the vulnerability of the water environment to climate change and ensure that adaptation to climate change is taken into account in our water policies. The Commission presented at the World Water Forum a unique EU web-based platform: the European Climate Adaptation Platform, which is a concrete solution, focusing also on water issues like drought and flooding.

At global level, the EU will do its utmost through its development cooperation policy to promote integrated river basin management as a key tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and multi-level governance.

Third, I would like to refer to the 2012 Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources that will present the EU policy response to current water challenges. The Blueprint should, subject to an impact assessment, suggest actions in seven specific areas: on land use; on economic incentives to propose recommendations on how water pricing can reflect the true cost of water use and pollution; on water efficiency targets, to provide tools to develop indicative water efficiency targets – at EU, Member State, river basin and sectoral levels; on innovation, the Blueprint will be complemented by a Water Innovation Partnership with stakeholders and the private sector. The Blueprint will also look at ways to improve governance, including analysing the administrative setup and the potential to reduce administrative burden. Consideration will also be given to the knowledge base for water policy-making, where the Blueprint will seek improvements in statistics on pressure exerted by all activities on water resources; the enhancement of the Water Information System for Europe and the development of a Roadmap for water research. Finally, the Blueprint will reinforce the EU's commitment to achieve the MDGs on access to drinking water and sanitation, while taking into account relevant outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference.

The implementation of the new Commission policy framework on water management in developing countries will translate integrated water management into concrete action, that is by expanding the EU Water Initiative.

The Ministerial Declaration of the World Water Forum complements the Commission communication on a development Agenda for change, by highlighting the key water-related issues for the implementation of EU development policy.

Sophie Auconie, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the issue of access to water and sanitation is an essential issue in my view, essential in our view. That is why I was especially pleased to be involved in preparing a resolution on the issues from the World Water Forum with my colleague Mr Seeber.

Indeed, when we talk about water we are actually talking about the health and living conditions of billions of human beings. I have just returned from a remote region of Burkina Faso where there is no running water or electricity. I lived with the population, with standing water. There, I experienced the difficulties they encounter, the worry and the sickness among children. I am therefore pleased to learn that the first of the UN Millennium Development Goals has been achieved before the deadline set for 2015. In 2010, the proportion of the population without access to water had fallen by half since 1990. I want to say to you: 'What good news!' However, this is also a real call to action. This success is a sign that we must never give up and that action does bear fruit.

I am therefore pleased with this resolution and I have taken three main ideas from it in particular. Firstly, as I have just said, we must put everything in place in order to achieve all of the UN Millennium Development Goals, particularly with regard to the problem of sanitation. Secondly, we must ensure water management through drainage basins and deal with the problems of source pollution upstream rather than downstream. Finally, I would like to mention the idea of 1% solidarity for water, a principle that has been applied in France allowing for fundraising to improve access to water. I spoke about this just a moment ago, with regard to Burkina Faso for example.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (RO) Mr President, the European Parliament's motion for a resolution conveys a clear message within the World Water Forum: water is a common resource that is used and must not be treated as a commodity intended to generate profit for a minority. Having access to drinking water and sanitation is a human right. This is the main political message which I would like the European Union to convey in Marseille. The motion for a resolution also deals with other key aspects, with one of the most important being, in my view, the use of water in agriculture. Seventy per cent of the water we use from nature is used for agricultural activities, while this figure rises to 80% or even 90% in some countries.

The provision of access to water can only be achieved if technology and methods allowing more food to be produced with less water are used on a wider scale, such as efficient irrigation systems. We need to encourage the use of these technologies in order to achieve this objective. We must support the farmers in the European Union who deploy them and we must endeavour to remove the barriers obstructing farmers from third countries. Let us not forget that, although 70% of the water taken from nature goes into agriculture, we waste 30% of food at the same time. In other words, we waste a huge amount of water at each point in the food chain, from extraction to consumption. The provision of access to water is also closely linked to other global problems, such as food security.

Just like we need international forums on the themes of biodiversity and climate change, which relate to this topic, we also need one dealing with this global problem. I hope that the European Union's negotiators will convey these messages in Marseille, as well as at the Rio Conference.

Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, when we discuss water and the major international significance of it, people often fall back on a famous quotation from a director of the World Bank in the 1990s, who said, *'If the wars of this century were fought over oil, the wars of the next century will be fought over water.'*

That is a very scary prediction indeed. We are going to batter each other's brains out due to water shortages. The quotation does not stop there, however, a fact which is often forgotten. The official went on to say, *'unless we change our approach to managing this precious and vital resource.'* The thinking here is that, in contrast to oil, water is a renewable resource that we can use over and over as many times as we want. It is just that we have to handle it very wisely. That is what the World Water Forum in Marseille is all about, as well as the Rio+20 conference in June.

This week, the UN's World water development report came out. That report, too, is alarming, but it, too, is not defeatist. It contains some absolutely critical elements, and the exhaustion of groundwater, in particular, is a problem that is completely underestimated. This is the case in China, the Middle East, in California and in many other parts of the world. We need to give an awful lot of consideration to this, and in particular to the role played by agriculture.

The paramount thing, however, is collaboration. Yesterday, the Danish Presidency reached an agreement with China to export more European technology to China. China will be investing EUR 500 billion in water management over the next decade.

That is perhaps also a handy comparison between water and oil. The water shortage is not just a threat. It will also, of course, represent a major economic opportunity before long. Let us reach agreements about that at Rio+20, and let us ensure there that we really do provide for much better water management at the international level.

Michèle Rivasi, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, it is good that we have this resolution on water because it is proof of Parliament's good intentions.

I would like to highlight some problems. Firstly, in terms of water management. As we speak, the World Water Forum is being held in Marseille. Yet, as you know, there is strong criticism with regard to the conflict of interest arising from the fact that the president of this World Water Forum, Loïc Fauchon, is also the chief executive of the Marseille water service (*Société des eaux de Marseille*), an affiliate of Veolia. This has therefore become a commercial forum rather than a general interest to see water become a shared global resource. In terms of water management, it is very important that water management is reallocated to local authorities under direct state supervision. This forum ended with a declaration claiming that private investment can guarantee the right to water, which logically leads the debate towards the privatisation of water systems. This is a problem for both European and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

The second problem concerns water and health. When we see that 88% of the diseases in the world come from drinking dirty water, poor hygiene practices or inadequate sanitation services, we must seriously invest in the treatment of industrial waste water and waste

water in particular, which are poured untreated into nature. This, nevertheless, represents 70% of waste water.

My final point relates to water and energy. We cannot replace water. Yet, as you know, the problem of shale gas management may lead to problems with groundwater pollution, hence the importance of the framework directive on groundwater, where they realised in Canada and the United States that it could cause pollution. Therefore, if we are fighting for water quality, we must do so at all levels.

Miroslav Ouzký, *on behalf of the ECR Group.* - (CS) Mr President, you know I am often regarded in this assembly as a critic of current policies on the environment, but when it comes to water I am decidedly and very strongly at one with all of the previous speakers. Water as a resource, water as a global problem, water losses, defective water management and the inadequate protection of water in some parts of the world are very serious problems. I therefore very much support the ongoing conference and the motion for a resolution, although with one minor exception. We have – perhaps in error – included a sentence in the resolution declaring that water is a shared resource of humankind - which is true - and that it should not therefore be a source of profit. You know, if we support this sentence, then I firmly believe it might very seriously threaten water management in most of the Member States, and I therefore very strongly support the proposed amendment tabled by Richard Seeber and others to change this to 'illegitimate' profit. If this word is added, the proposed amendment will go through. It will be a great honour for me to support the report.

IN THE CHAIR: RAINER WIELAND

Vice-President

Marisa Matias, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (PT) Mr President, I would like to cite an example here. In Portugal, with our public funds and EU money, we have managed to ensure that we have 98% coverage of water supply and 90% coverage of sanitation today. This investment was made by Portuguese and EU taxpayers, yet now water is being privatised in Portugal.

Why am I mentioning this example in this House? I am doing so because it is a clear example of what we are doing wrong in the area of water, in Portugal, in Europe and worldwide. We are treating water as a commodity. However, water is a public resource, not a business. Water is a scarce resource, not an asset subject to competition. Water should be for everybody, not merely for those who can pay. Water and water resources should be preserved, not disrupted or contaminated. Water is a right, a basic human right. Moreover, trying to make water into a profitable business is about as reasonable as starting to sell air in plastic bags; it is not reasonable at all. There are millions of people in the world without access to water.

Jaroslav Paška, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – (SK) Mr President, water is enormously important for our planet and its inhabitants. It is an essential precondition for the functioning of living organisms. We need it in the household, in factories and in agriculture. A sufficient supply of water determines where we can live, produce and sow food crops. It constitutes about two thirds of the human body, which cannot survive more than 12 days without taking in water. According to Leonardo Da Vinci, a genius who was several generations ahead of his time, 'Water was given the magical power to be the sap of life on Earth'.

There is not, however, an unlimited amount of water on the Earth. Our consumption requirements are growing with increasing social development. As no new water is created on the Earth, with the same water going round in an endless cycle, we must learn to manage it more rationally, protecting its purity and quality. The legislative pressure for stricter protection of water sources, ensuring the necessary access to drinking water for all and strictly regulating the efficient management of water in production sectors, is therefore a justified and important measure for limiting the waste of this precious and life-giving liquid.

Ewald Stadler (NI). – (DE) Mr President, previous meetings of the World Water Forum were driven by the wish to regulate the sparing and prudent use of water as a valuable resource. This is something that should be supported. I am grateful to my colleague, Mr Seeber, for mentioning the directive of 23 October 2000, the Water Framework Directive, in this context, as this is intended to regulate the management of water in river basins. Among other things, charging schemes in these countries are to be altered so that the charges for drinking water and waste water are designed to encourage and reward a thrifty attitude to water.

My question to the Commissioner is as follows: there are several countries who have dragged their feet for the last 12 years in implementing this Water Framework Directive. The countries were given until 2009 to implement the directive, however this has not happened. Several countries, including my own country, Austria, have been tardy in this regard.

Therefore, if we also wish to have any credibility in future World Water Forums, I would ask the Commissioner that the Commission pay more attention and attach greater importance to the implementation of this Water Framework Directive. In the final analysis, however, I believe, despite the defects that can be found in any resolution, that this resolution is correct and that this is the right message from the European Parliament to the 6th World Water Forum, which is why I intend voting in favour of this directive.

Bogusław Sonik (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, few people are aware of the fact that as much as 40% of the world's population does not have access to drinking water and that over 80 million people worldwide still use unhealthy and contaminated sources of water. Water management has an immediate impact on human health, on energy generation, agriculture and food safety. Thus efficient water management is a fundamental premise for combating global poverty. It is also worth remembering that the UN recognised the human right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a right that is related to the right to an adequate standard of living.

We have to realise that the times of so-called easy water are over. For this reason it is our responsibility to update and revise existing regulations in this area in order to respond to and face the challenges posed by urbanisation, increases in human population and pollution. On the day before the World Water Forum we should pay particular attention to this problem, in order to give this issue as much publicity as possible and draw the public's attention to its potential consequences. It is only in this way, that is with the support of the international community and the most influential politicians, that the outcomes and conclusions of this world forum can be positive, setting a good direction for future changes.

Gilles Pargneaux (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, on the occasion of this resolution, allow me to address two subjects; firstly, the issue of water management both worldwide and in Europe, and secondly a question to the European Commission for action

to be taken in order to respond to some of our concerns regarding the common agricultural policy.

We know what the situation is: water is the major issue of the 21st century. By finding answers to this problem, we will achieve peace in the world and in Europe. We know the issues in terms of management and food security. In addition, as our colleague Ms Rivasi mentioned, on the occasion of this forum, there are too many purely commercial concerns at the heart of the discussion which has been taking place over these last few days in Marseille.

One question: why is there no consistency between water management and water resources on the one hand and the common agricultural policy on the other? For there is nothing mentioned in the CAP reform with regard to this management, as our colleague Ms Sârbu has just said. Can you therefore provide us with some answers ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Charles Goerens (ALDE). – (FR) Mr President, the importance of this issue and its aspect relating to development would have justified the involvement of the European Parliament's Committee on Development in preparing this debate.

A shared resource and the target of the seventh Millennium Development Goal, water is either too scarce, too polluted or often both. Securing water should be considered a strategic priority in all political moves within all of the European Union's partnerships with developing countries.

Indeed, since water is an essential shared resource for the survival of humankind, treating it as a simple commodity is out of the question. That is why it seems wise to provide safeguards to prevent any breach of this principle.

I do not believe that the activity of an entrepreneur who contributes towards building water supply and sanitation infrastructures or a plumber having to repair a leak – all from the private sector – represents a breach of this principle. What we must do is ensure that individual interests do not take precedence over the general interest.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, in July 2010, as the culmination of a long struggle, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution recognising the right to drinking water and sanitation as a basic human right for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights. The resolution calls on countries and international organisations to step up their efforts at providing everyone with safe, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation.

It was not easy to secure the adoption of this text. It is no coincidence that certain countries, including some Member States, vetoed it initially, before eventually abstaining from the final vote. The fact is that the United Nations text is strong and clear, while others prefer the partial and ambiguous approach that opens the door to big business dealing with water and sanitation. Effectively guaranteeing the right to water and sanitation inevitably clashes with the greed of the cartel of multinational water companies. In order for this right to be enforced effectively, this precious public resource needs to be under public ownership and management.

Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, there is an issue that concerns me: the fact that water is not a renewable product for many. Water is sometimes renewable, but not always. Many aquifers are not renewable, but water returns to the ground. The

problem is that it does not always return to the same place it comes out; for example, the water that evaporates from the Mediterranean forms the rain that falls over Austria or Prague, and that aspect needs to be taken into account.

I think transboundary water agreements are very good, and I think that the Commission should place much greater emphasis on them. As the directive lays down, a river has to be managed in a uniform and unique way, but this approach needs to be strengthened a great deal, and international relationships with respect to transboundary waters need to be promoted. That is essential in my view, and we will see it with Turkey, which will never agree, but we must insist.

However, I think the monitoring of aquifers is very poor. The technology exists to monitor aquifers. Most damage is done through illegal extraction of water from aquifers. I therefore think it is vital that this aspect is taken on board, and technology exists for that.

I also believe that the relationship between agriculture and water should be reviewed, because it should not be the case that crops that consume a lot of water are treated in the same way as those that do not. If we put a price on water, which I support in agriculture, and which occurs in my country and region, it should be taken into account that corn and lettuce, for example, consume much more water. We are then exporting water to all the countries to which corn or lettuce are exported. That needs to be reflected in agricultural prices. It is an issue for consideration.

Edite Estrela (S&D). – (PT) Mr President, it is vital to discuss the quality and quantity of water, and the impact of climate change, which is already making itself felt in precipitation levels. In my country, Portugal, 68% of the land was suffering severe drought and 32% was suffering extreme drought at the end of February. This is a catastrophe. Droughts and floods kill more people than any other natural disaster.

In relation to both quantity and quality, the so-called water crisis does not stem only from natural causes: it is also the result of misuse. This problem is also one of management. The UN itself acknowledges the need to develop ethically correct water management systems. Europe continues to waste approximately 50% of its water owing to inefficiency. Water is a public good, albeit one that is scarce, and it should be accessible to all and fairly priced. It is not a commodity subject to speculation. It is necessary to reduce consumption and combat waste ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL). – (FR) Mr President, the 6th World Water Forum, where the main water markets come together, is currently taking place. It is therefore not a unique platform for dialogue as our resolution says. Alongside this, an alternative forum is taking place where the fundamental issue is the right to water. For water is a resource unlike any other; it is a natural resource like the air or the sun. It is essential to life, and not just human life. Water does not belong to anyone. It cannot be owned, even publicly. It cannot be a source of profit.

What is being called into question is the management of this water, of water that is useful to human beings. There is dramatic abuse in this regard on the part of public-private partnerships within our countries. Water is becoming more and more expensive while its quality is not improving. We must ask ourselves about the European Union's responsibilities, particularly with regard to abuse as a result of public service concessions. It is time to react,

to take a comprehensive approach and I, for my part, am pleased that in France a number of local authorities have decided to regain control of their water management at local level.

(Applause)

Catch-the-eye procedure

Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, the world's population has already passed the seven-billion mark and the amount of food required is likely to increase by 70% by 2050. This rise in the demand for food is likely to mean a 19% increase in the amount of water used in the agricultural sector, which already accounts for 70% of the water consumed globally.

The motion for a resolution currently being debated quite rightly notes that the latest technological advances would help increase efficiency in the water sector, and encourages the use in agriculture of new technologies, equipment and tools associated with the use of water. I would like to highlight in this regard the benefits which would be derived from using transgenic plants more widely, which are also more cost-effective and can help farmers care for the environment, including through saving water.

Monika Smolková (S&D). – (SK) Mr President, access to drinking water is a major problem in many countries worldwide. On the other hand, we, who currently have enough water, often use it irrationally, undervaluing it and wasting it. The poor management of water in all respects certainly contributes significantly to climate change. As we can now regulate emissions, industrial output and gigantic rivers, we must next find a way to protect water and soil, and to capture raindrops where they fall. Compacted soil and the uncontrolled spread of forest paths are the main cause of natural disasters every year in valleys, where rainfall exacts a heavy toll on human life and on property.

I would therefore like to express the conviction that the future Commission plan will also include technical measures for the recultivation of compacted soil, so that it retains rain water where it falls, allowing it to gradually penetrate the soil, reaching the roots of plants, and naturally replenishing the sources of streams, rivers and wells.

Ana Miranda (Verts/ALE). – (PT) Mr President, I come from the land of a thousand rivers, as our national poet, Rosalía de Castro, described Galicia's rivers and springs in her most famous poem. As elsewhere in Europe, water has been commodified and privatised over recent years. Major pieces of water-catchment infrastructure have been constructed, despite being unnecessary, when the public are paying a high price to consume water and even water from dams is not good for consumption.

In this crisis situation, there is a need to adopt a new model of water culture, to change the paradigm and to invest in sustainability. Water is not merely an input in production: it is a right, an eco-social input and a public resource. It is essential for life. The two key aspects of a new water culture involve, firstly, conserving and protecting water quality, preserving the functionality of rivers, streams and wetlands, and ensuring quality water resources, and, secondly, efficiency, moving towards a management model ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Nicole Sinclair (NI). – Mr President, I welcome the international dialogue at the conference this week in Marseille. It is imperative that all decision-makers, from local

governments through to Member States and the UN, promote initiatives for water quality, availability and affordability.

Water is a common good and a human essential, and it is also a human right which should not be used for excessive commercial profit. With this in mind, the fact the Forum's President, Louis Fauchon, has a foot in both camps is deeply troubling. Member States must give farmers incentives to increase investment in on-farm water storage capacity, which takes up as much as 70% of natural water supply, although the UK National Farmers Union has warned that there is no quick fix.

I am also dismayed that in this year of CAP reform – as has been mentioned here by one of my colleagues – there is no mention of this matter. Is this a question of the EU talking with one head and then not talking with the other?

Romana Jordan (PPE). - (SL) Mr President, human life is vitally connected to water and without it we can only survive a few days. Despite this, we have not thus far devoted enough attention to the supply of drinking water.

Perhaps this is because most of the European population do not have these problems, but the problem of access to safe water is not just a problem for third countries, undeveloped areas and poor sections of the population. It is a real problem, which developed societies will also increasingly face, due to population growth, urbanisation, deforestation and unsustainable development.

Even countries that currently still have an abundant supply of water cannot ignore global change and should seriously consider how to retain their good position.

For example, based on the amount of water for the population, my country Slovenia is among the top 20 countries in the world, but long droughts have also proved a problem for us.

This is not only problematic for human health, but also for many economic activities, therefore I echo the words of our rapporteur Richard Seeber — more attention must be given to this problem.

Christa Klauß (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, increasing violent conflict concerning water demonstrates the serious nature of the situation. There can be no life without water. Nonetheless, 900 million people do not have access to clean drinking water and 2.6 billion people do not have adequate sanitation. Access to clean water is a fundamental right. We must all play a responsible role here.

The key ideas behind our water policy are prevention and the principle that the polluter pays. It often takes just a few simple steps to avoid wasting and polluting water. We must encourage the transfer of technology for innovations in the area of water provision and treatment. Over 90% of industrial and domestic waste water is allowed to reach water bodies without prior treatment.

However, domestic waste water should also be seen as a resource. For example, phosphates can be extracted and reused, leading to greater resource efficiency. Clean water and sanitation are a key to development. The World Water Forum in Marseille must take us another step forward.

End of the catch-the-eye procedure

Connie Hedegaard, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, there are three points here. First, Ms Rivasi was referring to a request to privatise water services. I would like to clarify that the Commission has not made any such request. EU water law is neutral, as it concerns the legal regime of the providers of such services, and this choice is left to Member States.

Mr Stadler was referring to problems with implementation of the Water Framework Directive. I think this is a very relevant issue. I also know that very recently the Heads of State had a very systematic discussion on the need for us in Europe to be much better at implementing and, when the Blueprint that I referred to at the beginning comes out, there will also be some ideas on how to improve implementation of environmental legislation in Europe.

Finally, Mr Pargneaux said it was strange that we all know that water is going to be an increasing problem but is really not addressed in the CAP. One could argue that it will be indirectly addressed in Pillar 2, but I think that Mr Pargneaux had a good point, which I am sure Parliament will discuss with the relevant Commissioners. I can assure you that the point has been taken and will be taken back to Mr Potočník, as will the other points that we have heard today.

President. – To wind up the debate, a motion for a resolution has been tabled under Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place today at 12.00.

Written statements (Rule 149)

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – The 6th World Water Forum is a unique platform where the water community and policy and decision makers from all regions of the world can come together, debate and attempt to find solutions for water. It is taking place in Marseille now. I am interested to know what the Commission's role has been in the political process leading to the 6th World Water Forum. What is the EU's approach with a view to further progress at the global, national, regional and local levels in promoting solutions for water, including with a view to fighting poverty and climate change? Will the Commission support a 'multi-level governance' approach to water issues, stressing the role of the regional and local dimensions?

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) Almost half of the developing world's population lacks sanitation facilities, more than 800 million people still use unsafe drinking water sources, and inadequate access to sanitation services and poor hygiene practices cause the death of more than 2.5 million children every year. Deforestation, urbanisation, population growth and climate change put new, ever-increasing pressure on the availability and quality of safe and healthy water resources, and cause increased risks of extreme water-related events occurring, with poor populations being the most vulnerable and least capable of adapting to these trends. I think that public health and environmental protection are priorities for any water management policy, and the protection of drinking water resources plays a key role in human health.

I support the development of integrated river basin management plans at global level, and I should stress the need to achieve a thematic concentration of funding available for water-related activities and to mainstream the issue of water in every policy area, including

all EU financial and legal instruments, as addressing water-related challenges is integral to a functioning 'green economy'.

Pavel Poc (S&D), in writing. - (CS) The consumption of water in agriculture, industry and households creates so much pressure on water sources that demand already exceeds local supply in some areas of the EU. Climate change and human activities in the region are aggravating the situation. This can be seen from the greater incidence of floods or extreme drought in areas where these were previously not common. New problems are also emerging, such as the penetration of pharmaceuticals and endocrine disruptors into surface and subsurface water, and threats from new techniques for extracting raw materials. Growing demand for packaged drinks also creates waste plastics that threaten the environment and our own food chain. Privatisation of distribution networks makes people hostage to private companies, and their activities often result in devastated public water supply systems which have to be reconstructed from the public funds. Today, however, we really do not need the cycle of privatisation of profits and compensation for losses from public funds. Instead, we need investment in greater efficiency, as losses in distribution networks are as high as 40% in some Member States. When reviewing the EU legislation currently in force in the area of water policy, it is above all necessary to respond to the new risks and to ensure the organic interlinking of sectoral legislation in order to protect key elements of the environment such as water. The 6th World Water Forum in Marseille is an opportunity to initiate an extensive public debate on the genuinely sustainable use of water resources.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D), in writing. - (HU) In parallel with the part-session of the European Parliament, Marseille is hosting the 6th World Water Forum. The 21st century is seeing the emergence of an increasingly intense competition for the Earth's diminishing freshwater reserves between the various geographic regions and economic sectors. It is particularly important for us to reduce the water consumption of the agricultural sector, which is responsible for almost 80% of the world's water use. To this end, we must apply irrigation technologies that use water sparingly, cultivate drought-tolerant plant varieties and introduce a pricing scheme that is equitable yet promotes savings. I will therefore submit a proposal in connection with the reform of the common agricultural policy to allow the eligibility of irrigation systems promoting water savings for support. Desertification represents a particularly serious problem in Hungary, too. Over the past two decades alone, groundwater levels on the already arid sand plateau of Kiskunság have dropped by five metres. This is partly due to human activity but also partly due to climate change. The recycling of water for agricultural purposes must be increased within the borders of the EU. For this purpose close cooperation with Israel would be advisable, as there the rate of recycling reaches 75%. This by far exceeds Spain's mere 25%, which is the highest in the EU, whereas other EU Member States, for example in the Mediterranean region, are far behind even this level. Hungary, too, has much headway to make in respect of water recycling. Another reason for EU rules to promote efficient water management and water recycling is that only in this way can we ensure the international competitiveness of European enterprises in this strategically important field.

8. Schmollenberg outbreak (debate)

President. - The next item is the debate on the oral question to the Commission on the Schmollenberg outbreak by Patrick Le Hyaric, Takis Hadjigeorgiou, João Ferreira and

Nikolaos Chountis on behalf of the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left (O-000045/2012 - B7-0103/2012),

- the oral question to the Commission on the Schmallerberg outbreak by James Nicholson and Ashley Fox on behalf of the ECR Group, Albert Deß and Esther de Lange on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (O-000047/2012 - B7-0104/2012) and

- the oral question to the Commission on the Schmallerberg outbreak by George Lyon and Nathalie Griesbeck on behalf of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (O-000057/2012 - B7-0105/2012).

Patrick Le Hyaric, *author.* – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, after mad cow disease, bovine tuberculosis, foot-and-mouth disease and bluetongue virus we now have a new virus, the so-called Schmallerberg virus, which is starting to affect our livestock. The full scale of this disease will not be known for several weeks, until the lambing and calving seasons begin.

Several questions need to be asked. That is the reasoning behind our oral question.

What have you discussed, Commissioner, to prevent an embargo on our beef? Are there any plans to make resources available to speed up screening for this disease in order to try to slow it down or contain it?

It would also be appropriate, in my view, to create a European compensation fund for livestock farmers affected by this disease, in cooperation with each of the Member States.

Finally, do these health crises not pose new and serious questions about our agricultural systems, which are both increasingly concentrated and increasingly open to free trade, but, ultimately, are becoming increasingly fragile, and where, moreover, food and health security is increasingly being called into question?

This should be reflected within the discussion on the new reform of the common agricultural policy.

James Nicholson, *author.* – Mr President, the recent outbreak of the Schmallerberg virus is extremely unfortunate, especially for farmers who will have to deal with the consequences of the lost livestock as we enter into the calving and lambing seasons. We now know the animals were probably infected last autumn, but it is only now that we are seeing the devastating effects, with many lambs and calves being stillborn or deformed.

Although I do not wish to downplay the severity of the situation, I think we do need to urge a proportionate response. Thankfully it is believed that the virus does not pose any risk to human health. This is why recent moves in countries such as Russia and Egypt to ban imports of EU animal products, such as meat and dairy products, is, I believe, an overreaction and simply an excuse to pursue protectionist trade policies.

As we are aware, the transmission of the virus can be attributed to midges, demonstrating that, despite our best efforts to contain the outbreaks of this kind and prevent them from crossing borders, this is sometimes impossible. Despite this difficulty, a coordinated response between Member States is necessary, especially when it comes to sharing the data so that we can get a clear picture of the extent of the spread of the virus.

Measures should be taken to reassure the general public and our trade partners in third countries of the high standards and safety of the food produced in the European Union.

Most importantly, efforts to research the virus and ultimately develop a vaccine for it should be supported so that, in the future, farmers across the European Union do not have to experience an outbreak like this again.

Albert Deß, *author.* – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, thank you for the current debate in relation to the disease in animals caused by what is being referred to as the Schmallerberg virus. According to scientists, the virus has much in common with the Akabane virus, which has been familiar for some time now in animals from Africa to Japan and Australia. The Akabane virus is harmless to humans, so that it can be assumed that the Schmallerberg virus likewise poses no threat to humans. The virus is a major danger to animals, however, and can cause enormous economic damage.

Commissioner, we need to do all we can to halt the spread of this disease and perhaps even to eradicate it. In order to be able to take effective steps, there is an urgent need for mandatory reporting throughout the European Union, something that has already been agreed in Germany at federal level.

As we have already heard, the virus is transmitted by biting insects and it is very difficult to protect animals from such sources of infection. Effective protection is actually only possible through the use of an appropriate vaccine. On behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), I would call on the Commission to do all in its power to speed up the development of a corresponding vaccine, so that it becomes available as soon as possible.

It is also important that the Commission should organise for this data to be recorded quickly, so that the relevant data is available and the necessary measures are implemented.

It is also a matter for the Commission to achieve the lifting of the trade restrictions imposed by Russia on 20 March, as already called for. I have heard reports that, as well as Russia, Ukraine, Egypt, Algeria, Mexico and the US have already imposed initial trade restrictions.

The faster we act, the sooner we can prevent the further spread of this disease and perhaps even eradicate it.

Britta Reimers, *author.* – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, within the last year, a new viral disease has been discovered in sheep and cattle that leads to deformity or even still-birth among lambs and calves. The disease is apparently communicated by midges, which also seem to have been responsible for carrying it into the EU. The affected farms have suffered serious damage, in some cases even fighting for survival, and have been left to fend for themselves until now. We are all agreed that technically correct monitoring is essential for new diseases so that it is possible to determine, on a scientific basis, whether or not it is a new epizootic. This requires time, however, and time is precisely what the affected parties at local level do not have. They need help. Funds based on mutuality, such as an animal disease fund, require mandatory notification in order to be able to distribute financial assistance.

When will the Commission finally develop a standard strategy for new diseases that clearly defines when remedial measures and assistance can be provided to those affected by new diseases, in addition to the monitoring services? We are running out of time. The disease is continuing to spread. Trading partners outside Europe are responding with export embargos, so that the damage is also spreading to non-infected farms. The insemination and breeding livestock trade is restricted, despite the fact that the disease is spread by midges and direct infection seems unlikely. How does the Commission intend to proceed in relation

to export embargos? Climate change and increased trade and mobility in society will lead to a rise in diseases entering our territory. We need a rational concept to reduce the consequences. We need answers for those affected that will help them and us all.

Connie Hedegaard, *Member of the Commission.* – Mr President, as Mr Dalli cannot be here today, I will answer your questions on behalf of the Commission.

The Commission has of course followed the development of the Schmallenberg issue very closely from the start, and we continue to coordinate the EU response. I would like to say to Ms Reimers, who asked how we get a standard procedure for new diseases in place, that we think that we already have good mechanisms to ensure an appropriate response to emerging diseases. These mechanisms allowed us to detect the virus and prepare coordinated actions. Recent experience, like the response to the H5N1 and the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus, demonstrates that the EU level of preparedness is satisfactory and the application of the one health concept leads to successful reaction. The current event is thus an opportunity to fine-tune those existing mechanisms. Under the new animal health strategy, the Commission is, however, taking further actions to ensure that the EU level of preparedness further improves.

In this case also a guidance document addressing the main priority actions to be undertaken in the EU has already been prepared by the Commission and endorsed by Member States' experts and stakeholders.

As regards prevention of further spread of the virus, while this virus has already circulated in the animal population of eight Member States now, it is unlikely that there is any virus circulation during the winter season. In view of this, the most appropriate control measure to be applied, for now, is surveillance, which is already in place.

I should make clear that the movement and export of diseased animals is not permitted in the EU. Any veterinary measure we might take would need to be proportionate and sustainable. It would need to take into account that the available information suggests that the impact of this virus on animal health and production is limited, and that there is no evidence that it can cause illness in humans.

However, the Commission has asked the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to collect epidemiological data from Member States to further assess the impact of the Schmallenberg virus (SBV) infection on animal health, animal production and animal welfare. The Commission and the EFSA are liaising with Member States to facilitate and standardise data gathering and transmission of data.

There is a knowledge gap as regards this virus due to its novelty. To address this gap, the Commission is co-ordinating – and plans to financially support – scientific studies to gather further information aimed at developing a sound veterinary policy for this infection, which is essential for possible future control measures to be adopted either at Member State level or EU level.

As with any other viral disease, there is no specific treatment to cure animals infected with the Schmallenberg virus. At this stage, we cannot predict when an effective vaccine might become available. With respect to any possible public health risk related to this virus, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) stated in December of last year that it is unlikely that this new virus could cause disease in humans. Current data supports this assessment.

However, it cannot be excluded at this stage. If new evidence arises on the public health impact of SBV, the Commission would, of course, ask the ECDC to provide an update of its risk assessment to take such developments into consideration. The coordination of any public health response would be ensured through the EU Early Warning and Response System.

Regrettably, despite this rigorous approach, more than ten third countries have applied, or are preparing to apply, trade restrictive measures related to the Schmallenberg virus. The Commission agrees very much with what Mr Nicholson was saying when he urged a proportionate response. We consider restrictive measures against EU exports of ruminants and their products to be disproportionate and unjustified on the basis of the currently available scientific evidence. Thus the Commission is working in close contact with third countries to prevent and reduce their trade restrictions.

To conclude, a measured response at EU level is necessary to avoid provoking unjustified market disturbances within the internal market and in trade with our international partners. It is imperative that we continue to keep matters in proper perspective.

Esther de Lange, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, sadly I am hearing once again from the Commission the words ‘track’, ‘monitor’ and ‘studies’, while what we actually need now is action, and indeed action on two levels: action in respect of Europe’s farmers, who are currently suffering from great uncertainty over their markets, but also action in respect of the citizens, who are worriedly asking themselves whether this animal disease will not, in fact, have public health consequences.

If I look at the ten countries that have closed their borders to European products, I see that some countries only close their borders to live animals, while others do so for live animals, animal products and meat. Some countries refuse access to products from three Member States of the Union. Others do so from five Member States; still others do so from eight. What is more, all of these third countries lay down different conditions for the removal of the restrictions.

What specific action is the Commission taking right now to get these restrictions lifted? The Commission always points out its sole competence in this area. It does not like countries going out and negotiating on their own, yet as long as national ministers believe that they will achieve things more quickly on their own than communally through the Commission, they will continue to try to do so. In other words, Commission, you need to prove that you deserve to have this sole competence by streamlining what happens, for example by means of encouraging standardised certificates for those countries.

My final point concerns public health. I was pleased to hear the Commissioner say we are not dealing with a case of zoonosis here. This disease probably cannot be transmitted from animals to humans, but we need to be clear here and all communicate in the same way rather than every country for itself.

Matthias Groote, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, I am grateful to the Commissioner for the opportunity to debate this important topic today. In my country, Germany, 900 holdings are affected by the Schmallenberg virus and the numbers are growing. Naturally there are also signs of fear in the public debate in relation to the agricultural sector, ranging from loss of income to complete loss of livelihood, as well as public health concerns. After all, it is not possible to offer a 100% guarantee that this virus will not affect humans.

The European Food Safety Authority has already announced that it wishes to work closely with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in order to keep a close eye on the impact on public health. I believe that this is very important. A monitoring procedure does exist and has been simulated once by EFSA. We have just heard that eight Member States have been affected by this disease so far, and our fears are that the outbreak will spread as the flying insect population increases in spring and summer. A number of different scenarios have been identified.

Can the Commission indicate precisely what steps it will take to combat the situations revealed in the simulation? Perhaps you are still at the analysis stage? This is a very important point. It is also important that the general public should see that steps are being taken to control this disease. I am aware that this is something new, and that we do not have specific means for combating this disease. Nonetheless, I would ask what steps is the Commission planning, or has it already taken to ensure that this disease does not spread to all 27 Member States? Eight countries are affected so far and we do not want to see the disease spread to all 27 Member States.

Liam Aylward, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, my country, Ireland, has no reported case of the Schmallenberg virus. I just hope that it will remain virus free. However, I am quite concerned by the intention of one of the EU's trading partners, Russia, to ban shipments of Europe's cattle and hogs from 20 March because of the infection in some Member States.

The news that Russia may expand the ban, applying it not only to the import of all live cattle, pigs and sheep, but more importantly to beef, pork and sheepmeat from the whole EU, is worrying for producers across all Member States. That the ban includes pigs – though the virus is not associated with pigs – demonstrates a knee-jerk attitude to this situation.

Given that Russia was the leading destination for EU beef and pork in 2011, we need immediate action to protect the reputation of European produce and address public health concerns. I welcome the European Commission's determination to resist attempts by third countries to impose trade restrictions on the back of concerns over this virus, but we must step up our efforts to ensure that agricultural trade does not fall victim to a knee-jerk decision.

The EU has a strong record for health and safety standards in agriculture and animal welfare, and we must work to ensure this message continues to be communicated clearly and consistently to our trade partners and consumers.

Martin Häusling, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, the fact is that yesterday's numbers speak for themselves. Nine hundred and forty-four holdings in Germany are affected and a total of eight EU Member States. Yet the Commission has still done practically nothing, stating that the outbreak was a matter for the individual Member States.

If we do not soon have mandatory reporting for this outbreak in Europe, farmers will be hung out to dry because they will receive no compensation. If the Commission fails to take consistent action, more states will impose an import ban. That is why I find it hard to understand why, as I see it, the Commission continues to make light of the problem.

We need mandatory reporting in Europe, however we also require the pooling of scientific resources within the European Union in order to act against this outbreak and to develop vaccines; we also need to provide assistance to sheep farmers. In the wake of the bluetongue

epidemic, this is the second time they have been badly hit. Their survival is threatened, and if we fail to compensate them, we will see sheep farming die out in many regions in a few years.

There is one more thing I would like to say: we need to learn to deal with these new diseases. They will increase as the climate changes, which is why we also need to take a consistent approach to climate change.

Julie Girling, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, as I understand it, this is the first wholly new virus to be seen for two decades. In my own constituency, it has now been detected in an almost linear way across 200 miles from north to south and very quickly spreading.

What would I like to see the Commission do? Please, please look at the following. Firstly, recognise the importance of rapid and decisive action. Secondly, deal with the trade restriction implications urgently; farmers need that reassurance. Thirdly, fast-track research efforts on treatment and possible vaccination; compile reliable data. Finally, and possibly most importantly to my mind, treat this as a warning. Climate patterns are definitely changing; airborne vectors are becoming more prevalent. If there is more and maybe – God forbid – a whole clutch of new viruses coming onto the system in one go, can we cope? Is it robust enough?

Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, in my view, there are two aspects to this whole debate. Firstly, there is the major gravity of this crisis. This epidemic started five months ago, and the virus is already present on more than 1 200 farms. There is no known treatment for it, and the information from the Commission has been conflicting so far. Indeed, the approaching hot season will cause new problems. The second aspect relates to the consequences for European producers, apart from the reduction in their animal numbers, especially in view of the export restrictions imposed by our partners.

In reply to a question asked in January, the Commission indicated that adopting trade restrictions against EU exports was not justified and did not comply with the international standards of the World Organisation for Animal Health. Nevertheless, the Russian Federation announced that it was going to ban live animal imports from all Member States from 20 March. The Russian authorities have given as their reason for this the failure of the EU's veterinary agencies to offer Russia information about the epidemic and the measures to combat it.

The Commission should clarify whether it feels that the criticism levelled at the European veterinary agencies by Russia is justified and, given the earlier statement about the non-compliance of such a measure with international standards, it should indicate what steps it intends to take in its dialogue with the Russian Federation.

Ulrike Rodust (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I welcome the fact that we are drawing attention to the animal disease caused by the Schmallenberg virus today through this oral question, as it shows that we take this issue seriously. Many farmers have been waiting desperately for this moment. As you have already heard, 944 holdings have already been hit by the Schmallenberg virus in Germany alone. This has caused huge problems for these farms.

Because of its proximity to the coast and the protection of its dykes, my own region of Schleswig-Holstein has a large number of sheep farmers. Many sheep have been infected with this virus. The virus threatens the survival of many farming businesses, particularly

at present in the lambing season. The number of cases continues to rise. Both sheep and beef farmers are suffering from the effects of this virus in Schleswig-Holstein. In the last week alone, the number of cases in my region has risen from 106 farms with infected animals last week to 116 farms this week. Even though the virus does not pose a threat to humans, farming businesses are suffering serious financial losses due to deformities and still-births.

I would also like to draw your attention to the suffering of the animals. I believe that this is also something unacceptable. We urgently need a vaccine. I would be interested to know what progress has been made by researchers in this regard and whether the Commission is supporting Member States in the search for a vaccine. Perhaps we should also consider whether it is possible to help the farms that have been financially hit by the virus in some other way. What options are open to the Commission here and what steps have already been taken? Please act quickly and keep us informed of developments. Our farmers are counting on you, and on us.

Horst Schnellhardt (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, there can be little doubt that it is right for us to discuss the Schmollenberg virus in Parliament today. I would, however, ask that we should distance ourselves from any tendency towards panic or overreaction. After all, what has happened? As so often happens, we have a virus, in this case the Schmollenberg virus, that has only occurred in some animals, although admittedly in larger numbers. However, the Friedrich Loeffler Institute has also found that the animals automatically develop immunity when they come into contact with the pathogen. I would remind you that a few years ago we talked about swine flu and avian flu, putting significant measures in place to combat the problem, only to be forced to defend ourselves from attacks from the Greens within the committee suggesting we were overreacting. In other words, a slightly more considered approach is necessary.

I believe we should check the facts and that there is a need to gather data regarding the disease throughout Europe. I believe we also need to examine the extent to which these measures are necessary. I think that calling for compensation at this early stage is taking things too far. There are a number of options available at national level. For example, compensation can be paid from the regional animal disease funds in Germany and the Netherlands. I would suggest that the Commission should provide support with the establishment of such funds in other countries, enabling us to deal with the problem much faster on a regional basis, rather than through unwieldy programmes for the whole of Europe.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I believe it is important for us to discuss this problem and all its aspects, which number at least three, in the European Parliament today. The first point is assistance for the affected farmers, who are undoubtedly in need, as my colleagues have pointed out: sheep farming, which has a very low profitability and which is extremely important for maintaining the environment in some regions, is naturally hardest hit. However, I would once again request that the principle of subsidiarity should be observed and that the matters that can be clarified at local level should be effectively clarified there. I am naturally much more concerned by the indirect negative impact.

This brings me to my second point, namely the safety of consumers. Naturally, we also need an intensive awareness campaign for consumers. After all decisions are made at the

meat counter on the basis of what we want to eat, not scientific findings. So, then, is this virus harmful to humans or not?

The third point is the avoidance of disproportionate international trade sanctions and, with this in mind, I would again ask the researchers to coordinate analysis and information programmes on a Europe-wide basis.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Mr President, over one thousand sheep farming businesses throughout Europe have now been hit by the Schmallenberg virus and, as the disease is carried by biting insects, this number is likely to increase further as temperatures start to rise in springtime. New outbreaks are occurring at regular intervals, particularly in countries with intensive livestock farming, such as Germany, France, England and the Netherlands. For this reason, we need to take a new approach and move away from intensive livestock farming and the associated diseases caused by humans. We need to move towards businesses with smaller structures, run along ecological lines, familiar from the Alpine regions, including my own country, Austria. I believe we would be much wiser to follow preventive, sustainable, ecologically-oriented agricultural practices, rather than the emergency measures, compensation programmes and vaccination campaigns that we currently favour.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, this animal health alert is yet another reason for the EU to develop animal health standards. Unfortunately, the vaccine for combating this virus is still being worked on, and it is estimated that the impact of the epidemic will reach its peak in April. This is why the EU must make every effort to provide information in real time to farmers in Member States. Permanent surveillance needs to be carried out on the areas not yet affected by the virus in order to establish the contamination routes. It is also vital to reach the correct diagnosis and report cases to national authorities so that the outbreaks can be isolated.

Commissioner, the virus has already been included in the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed. How do you envisage distributing the necessary information directly to farmers in the affected areas?

End of the catch-the-eye procedure

Connie Hedegaard, *Member of the Commission* . – Mr President, first, in reply to Mr Häusling, the Commission is not disregarding the importance of this. Ms Girling mentioned a number of things that the Commission could do such as deal with the trade aspect, compile data and a lot of other things. I think I mentioned all of them as part of what we are actually doing in my first response.

I would like to say one thing to Ms de Lange and others who have been concerned about the 10 countries that have threatened trade implications because of this. As I said, the Commission is in dialogue with those 10 countries. To give one example, Commissioner Dalli has been communicating with the Russian authorities, and the Commission currently has a delegation in Moscow dealing with exactly this. So everyone is taking this seriously.

To finish: when new diseases and risks like this come up, what can we do? We can coordinate, exchange data and use our scientific entities and bodies to provide as much knowledge as we can get. One of the places where you can find an update of some of these things is in this guidance document on the web. It can be updated easily when new information is available. It has been agreed with the farmers' organisations and with the Member States that this guidance document will be available on the web, so there you will have the updated information on where we are on this.

President. – The debate is closed.

(The sitting was suspended for a short time)

IN THE CHAIR: MARTIN SCHULZ

President

9. Establishment of a maximum eight-hour journey limit for animals transported in the European Union for the purpose of being slaughtered (written declaration)

President. – Written declaration No 49 of 2011 on the establishment of a maximum eight-hour journey for animals transported in the European Union for the purpose of being slaughtered, submitted by Dan Jørgensen, Esther de Lange, Pavel Poc, Carl Schlyter and Andrea Zanoni, was signed by the majority of Members of Parliament.

According to Rule 123 of the Rules of Procedure, it will therefore be submitted to the addressees indicated and will be published in the minutes as a text adopted in this session, also bearing the names of the signatories.

Carl Schlyter (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, this declaration is the result of a combined effort with Dan Jørgensen, Pavel Poc, Esther de Lange and Andrea Zanoni. We worked hard, and I wish to thank everybody who signed the declaration. The Commission said eight years ago to Parliament that it could reduce transport time but that we had to create the political pressure for this. Well, Parliament has done that, and one million signatures have been obtained for this initiative started by Dan Jørgensen and others. That means one million citizens, plus more than half of Parliament and several Ministers. Now, Commission, the political pressure is on you. Please give us this legislation. I wish to thank all Members.

(Applause)

Dan Jørgensen (S&D). – (DA) Mr President, two Commissioners have stood in this Chamber and said that there will be a proposal for new legislation in this area. Twice we have been promised this and it has not materialised. Now a million citizens have said that they demand new legislation and the majority in this House has said that we demand new legislation. The Commission cannot put this off any longer. That is all there is to it.

10. Introducing the 'Chess in schools' programme in the education systems of the European Union (written declaration)

President. – Written declaration No 50 of 2011 on introducing the 'Chess in schools' programme in the education systems of the European Union, submitted by Slavi Binev, John Attard-Montalto, Nirj Deva, Mario Mauro and Hannu Takkula, was signed by the majority of Members of Parliament.

According to Rule 123 of the Rules of Procedure, it will therefore be submitted to the addressees indicated and will be published in the minutes as a text adopted in this session, also bearing the names of the signatories.

Slavi Binev (NI). – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank my colleagues Mr Mauro, from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), Mr Attard-Montalto from the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, Mr Takkula from the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and

Democrats, and of course Mr Deva from the European Conservatives and Reformists Group who, together, initiated and presented the 'Chess in Schools' declaration with me. This has shown that when we have good ideas, we will not let political boundaries or prejudices stand in our way.

I would also like to thank President Buzek who supported and sponsored this initiative. Allow me to thank Parliament's administration and, of course, our teams for their impeccable work, as well as all those who signed the declaration. Among those I have left to thank are Jacek Włosowicz, Piotr Borys and Milan Zver. This is a good thing; no, it is even better than that, this is something good for our children, for our future.

Here in the Chamber today we have the President of the European Chess Union, Silvio Danailov. Finally, I would like to wish you a very pleasant weekend after the vote.

(Applause)

President. – Mr Lothar Bisky has stepped down from his position as chair of the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left and yesterday the group chose his successor. Firstly, I would like to thank Mr Bisky on behalf of the entire House for his work as chair of the GUE/NGL Group and for his truly excellent service at both personal and collegial levels. I believe that you have been a very valuable colleague to all of us in every respect as chair of the group. We are pleased to know that you intend to remain in Parliament, however, on behalf of the whole House, I would like to express our thanks for your cooperation.

(Applause)

Naturally, I also wish to congratulate Ms Zimmer. Ms Zimmer has been elected as the new chair of the GUE/NGL Group. We extend warm congratulations to Ms Zimmer.

(Applause)

11. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

Georgios Papastamkos (PPE). – *(EL)* Mr President, I should like to ask you and, through you, the House, to put the vote on Chris Davies' report first for obvious reasons.

Jo Leinen (S&D). – *(DE)* Mr President, I am opposed to the motion. This is a complete surprise from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats). We have discussed the motion in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety. We have the advantage of excellent groundwork by the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and have discussed this in detail this morning. The Commission and industry at large must know how matters are to proceed with regard to climate protection. I am in favour of voting on this matter today.

Georgios Papastamkos (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, I did not ask for Chris Davies' report not to be put to the vote today; I asked that it should be brought forward in the voting procedure and be put to the vote first.

I think there was a misunderstanding.

(Parliament agreed to accept the request to change the order of the vote)

11.1. Competitive low-carbon economy in 2050 (A7-0033/2012 - Chris Davies) (vote)

11.2. Discriminatory Internet sites and government reactions (B7-0152/2012) (vote)

11.3. Outcome of the presidential elections in Russia (B7-0177/2012) (vote)

– Before the vote on Amendment 5

José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, in the interests of achieving the broadest consensus possible, we believe that this resolution should receive wide support from this House, and so we propose an oral amendment to Amendment 5, in agreement with Mr Swoboda, Mr Verhofstadt and the other political groups. In the English version, this oral amendment consists of adding the words 'strengthening and implementation' after the word 'introduction', and the replacement of the word 'condemns' by the word 'deplores'.

(The oral amendment was accepted)

11.4. Kazakhstan (B7-0135/2012) (vote)

– Before the vote:

Liisa Jaakonsaari (S&D). – Mr President, I have very good news. During this process on the Kazakhstan resolution, the Kazakhstan authorities have released political prisoners including Mrs Sokolova and today the editor-in-chief Igor Vinyavski.

(Applause)

11.5. Situation in Nigeria (B7-0138/2012) (vote)

11.6. Situation in Belarus (B7-0178/2012) (vote)

– Before the vote:

Kristian Vigenin, on behalf of the S&D Group. – Mr President, yesterday we had an extensive debate in the European Parliament with a very clear message on our side. There is a joint draft motion for a resolution which is also very clear, and Parliament is united behind the message we want to send to the Belarusian authorities, to Belarusian society and also to European citizens.

However, I would like to ask that we postpone the vote on this resolution to the mini-plenary in Brussels next time, for two main reasons. Firstly, to give the authorities time to reflect on and react to the current situation in which they find themselves, and

secondly to be able to amend this resolution with the developments that we expect in the coming days.

Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR). - (PL) Mr President, I understand Mr Vigenin's argument. It is true that we had a wide-ranging discussion yesterday, but it was also yesterday that the Belarus dictator Alexander Lukashenko refused to show mercy to two people accused of alleged attacks in the Belarus metro. This means that they will probably be executed. A decision today not to approve this resolution will be seen in Minsk by Lukashenko as saying, in the language of diplomacy, where tit-for-tat actions are an important consideration, as a retreat and a sign of weakness. For this reason I would ask you, ladies and gentlemen, to vote today on this resolution, which has already been agreed. This will be a clear signal to Lukashenko that we are united and agreed on this matter.

(Parliament agreed to postpone the vote)

11.7. 6th World Water Forum (B7-0130/2012) (vote)

President. – That concludes voting time.

IN THE CHAIR: JACEK PROTASIEWICZ

Vice-President

12. Explanations of vote

President. – The next item is the explanations of votes that have just been cast.

Oral explanations of vote

Report: Chris Davies (A7-0033/2012)

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR). - (PL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, clearly the objectives described in this report are lofty, and not just in appearance, as protection of the environment is without doubt an issue that should unite us. Nevertheless it is worth noting that in recent times the European Union has displayed a tendency to impose highly restrictive ecological solutions on itself even though the world's greatest polluters, such economies as India and China, do not share EU objectives. One can also not ignore the fact that within the European Union itself, the highest price imposed by these – I emphasise – lofty ideals, which are being adopted by our organisation, the highest price is to be paid by the relatively poorly developed economies. For this reason, while agreeing with everything that underlies our document, I was unable to vote for it.

Francesco De Angelis (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, passing this measure will necessarily help to increase the level of investment and thus secure the European Union's industrial future. We need to give industry the stimuli it needs to encourage investment capable of favouring economic growth and reducing CO₂ emissions at the same time. A low-carbon economy must not therefore in any way reduce the competitiveness of the European Union; quite the reverse, it must increase it.

Finally, it is important to maintain the investment needed to encourage the development of renewable energy sources in order to guarantee savings and clean energy. On this issue Europe must speed up if it does not want to remain behind. Deeds and not words are what

is needed for the ambition of having a genuine green economy capable of driving growth and sustainable development. Thank you.

Bogusław Sonik (PPE). - (PL) Mr President, with reference to the Commission communication and the report by Mr Davies on the transition to a low-emission economy by 2050, I would like to emphasise two things. First of all it is essential to have a clear idea of the costs of raising reduction targets. Secondly, the proposal to reduce the number of permits introduces uncertainty into the business sector.

The document states that industry needs clear signals in order to make investments, but the same document proposes a change to agreements made just two to three years ago concerning the number of CO₂ emission permits. It was on the basis of those agreements that companies planned their investments for the period to 2020. Can such a measure be called regulatory certainty and does it provide a clear picture of the European low-emissions strategy? Not all Union agreements from 2008 have come into force and we do not yet know the effects of the package agreed, so I think that it is premature to be setting new targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions. For this reason I voted against this document.

Adam Bielan (ECR). - (PL) Mr President, I voted in favour of rejecting this report. The strategy for moving to a low-emissions economy over the next 40 years is highly damaging. The Polish Government vetoed the Commission's proposal, arguing that new agreements should be made after the completion of global climate negotiations, which will take place at the earliest in three years' time. At the present moment it is not possible to determine what will be the condition of the European economy in the next decade.

Setting regulations aimed at the total elimination of coal and gas from power generation would seriously harm the economy of my country, which is based on these raw materials. Taking into account the present economic situation of Polish society, a drastic rise in prices associated with introducing these regulations would result in a significant decrease in the standard of living of the average Polish citizen. I do, however, agree with the proposal to authorise the Commission to establish legally binding objectives for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as well as the proposed cancellation of the right to sell surplus CO₂.

Peter Jahr (PPE). - (DE) Mr President, reducing greenhouse gas emissions is an important climate protection goal, however I believe that concentrating on one single key figure, namely the reduction of CO₂ emissions, is misguided. This establishes incorrect incentives. Instead, we should be concentrating in particular on the protection and sparing use of our natural resources. In addition, CO₂ reduction must not be at the expense of individual sectors. The targets are not only too high for the agricultural sector, they also have no scientific basis, particularly in view of the continuously increasing need for food and, from my point of view, agriculture is not part of the problem, but rather part of the solution because closed materials cycles are perfectly possible in agriculture. It is for that reason that I could only abstain from voting on this motion.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). - (RO) Mr President, I voted for this report as I support the contribution made by the European Union to the continuity of the international climate treaties. I think that Europe needed this long-term plan as part of the Europe 2020 strategy, thereby ensuring sustainable economic growth and a green energy strategy. My country supports the principles advocated in this document. However, I should point out that it is important to retain the 1989 milestone for the future framework in the case of both

Romania and the other Eastern European states. This will make it possible to highlight the progress achieved by this group of countries in terms of reducing their carbon dioxide emissions. I also think that the issue of transferring the credit surplus from the Kyoto system needs to be clarified. All the options in this area which Member States would consent to must be considered.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – (GA) Mr President, there were many good proposals in this report, but there were also some controversial ones. At the end of the day, most of them were rejected and I think we reached a satisfactory result.

In relation to this, the key word is the first word ‘competitive’ because we are in an economic crisis and, if we are to get out of it and for the European economy to grow, we need jobs, we need new industries and we need to be competitive in the world. We have to try and balance that with our concerns about the environment. Some of the proposals would actually harm our economy – and some were rejected, maybe others were not.

But the real key for Europe is to try and get other countries, particularly the likes of China and India and indeed all countries on a worldwide basis, to act globally to deal with a global problem. This is our challenge.

Charles Tannock (ECR). – Mr President, along with the rest of the ECR Group I abstained on the report on the competitive low-carbon economy for 2050.

As an idea in itself this is a good one for many reasons, such as combating climate change and sparing our finite hydrocarbon resources.

Unfortunately the report asks for the Commission to bring forward the measures necessary to achieve the 2030 objectives rather too quickly and also calls upon the Commission to use somewhat radical interventionist measures in order to address the market failings of the emissions trading system. Some of these measures included putting aside a significant amount of carbon allowances and including air transport in emissions trading.

The controversial content was subsequently watered down, and, while as a group we felt that what was finally proposed in the compromise package rendered it more acceptable than before, we still do not feel that we could accept the report’s climate mainstreaming provisions, particularly in the agricultural sphere and in the area of regional funding, which is why overall we abstained.

Motion for a resolution: RC-B7-0152/2012

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, what has recently been happening in the Netherlands, where a political party, unfortunately one that supports the Dutch Government, has, for cynical political ends, been inciting hatred and opposition against migrants from Central and Eastern Europe who are supporting the Dutch economy with their work, is something that we must strongly oppose. I am very pleased that what is happening in the Netherlands has met with such sharp and decisive condemnation from the European Parliament.

Unfortunately – and I am very sad to be saying this – the type of incidents that we have been discussing do not only happen in the Netherlands. There are also voices speaking against Polish migrants in the United Kingdom and such comments are said by Members of Parliament from parties represented in this House. I appeal to the Poles in the Europe

of Freedom and Democracy Group to call on their British colleagues to abandon their anti-Polish rhetoric.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). - Mr President, this Chamber is obsessed with declamatory votes, with legislation and resolutions designed to show what very civilised and humane people we are, rather than to effect any outcome in the real world.

The worse the crisis becomes outside, the more we engage in this displacement activity. Greece is in default, the crisis is spreading across the Mediterranean and we are obsessing about a website in the Netherlands.

And we are not even condemning the authors of the website, although we have given those boneheads far more publicity than they could have dreamed of. We are not even condemning the party associated with it. We are condemning an unrelated party of the Dutch Prime Minister.

Well, I think he might very reasonably protest but, if he were to spend every moment responding to things in other parties with which he disagrees, he would be up dawn till dusk doing that and he has actually got a country to run.

But of course the real reason this is happening is a sort of tit for tat because one group is condemned, therefore another one has to move a resolution. You know what? Instead of escalating, we would gain far more credibility and respect if we dropped this kind of self-indulgent and self-righteous resolution and we concentrated on the issues that actually have effects on the real world.

Csaba Sógor (PPE). - (HU) Mr President, a curious situation has developed in an EU Member State which is among the founders of European integration. In the Netherlands, a country with extremely strong democratic traditions but traditionally liberal social views, an openly xenophobic and discriminative website is inciting citizens' hostility against other nations under the tacit approval of the government and the authorities. Even if it was about the incitement of tension between non-EU citizens this practice would be condemnable, but in this form it is detrimental not only to Dutch society but also to the whole of the European Community. I request the Dutch and European political decision-makers to not permit certain people to attempt to divide citizens into old and new or good and bad Europeans. In these difficult times we need even more solidarity and even more Europe instead of tension-mongering between nations.

Norica Nicolai (ALDE). - (RO) Mr President, this motion for a resolution marks the first of a kind. It is the first resolution to sanction an Internet-based communication, a website which promotes a xenophobic attitude against European citizens. It is also the first resolution to sanction a government. What I too deplore is that this action is being tolerated. I also want to stress that we are talking about a coalition government formed by Christian Democrats and Liberals. However, I would not like us to use this political matter to stir up a hostile debate between groups. If there is a certain degree of responsibility, I would point out that it is shared between Christian Democrats and Liberals. I believe that we are going to have to use civic education and profile campaigns to attempt to avoid such tactics which are wrong, especially during a crisis, and which can exacerbate deviations from democratic behaviour in relation to European Union standards.

Zuzana Roithová (PPE). - (CS) Mr President, it is a slap in the face of democracy when the government of a democratic country fails to issue a clear condemnation of a portal inciting xenophobia and hatred between nations within the EU. The second step might be

to label the shops and the third to visibly label the clothing of all citizens from Central and Eastern Europe. We should not be satisfied just with today's motion for a resolution. We must keep up our pressure until Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte has condemned these shameful sites and taken legal steps to close them down. In my opinion, they are discriminatory and contrary to the freedoms of the Union. They also incite hatred and divide European society. It is wrong of the Dutch Government and media not to confront xenophobic tendencies with clear arguments. For 20 years, the Dutch have profited from post-communist Eastern Europe, investing EUR 23 billion in Poland alone. Hundreds of Dutch people have built second homes in the Czech Republic. Now, thanks to the EU, hundreds of thousands of labourers and other workers are helping the further development of the Dutch economy directly in the Netherlands. We expect that the majority of Dutch society is unequivocally opposed to the xenophobic tendencies.

Ewald Stadler (NI). – (DE) Mr President, I voted against this motion for a resolution today simply because I believe that it must be the right of all citizens of the European Union and beyond to choose for themselves the way they lodge their complaints and how their complaints are channelled. They can do this via the Internet or using the mass media; in the old days they could also do it using the newspapers without being nannied by the need for political correctness.

However – and on this point I agree with Mr Kamiński – I believe it is absolutely wrong to name countries, irrespective of whether or not these countries are Members of the European Union. In particular, I believe it is quite wrong to name the Poles on this website. My experiences with the Polish community in Austria are quite different and do not justify such characterisation. Criminality is not the preserve of particular nations; in fact it is the one thing that would seem to be undisputedly international.

Salvatore Iacolino (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, a joint motion for a resolution on a subject of particular importance – that of discrimination, of aversion to those who must in fact be integrated and welcomed where there is clearly a chance of work or reuniting a family – is undoubtedly helpful.

European citizenship is a subject of extraordinary value. We certainly need to be conscious of it; we need to give new life to the theme of reception and integration; we need to bear in mind that there are directives – Directive 2004/38/EC, which is essential in this respect – and while we are working on celebrations for 2013, the designated European Year of Citizens, all this is why we need to remove every obstacle that hitherto has specifically caused these difficulties. In the meantime, the Internet, while it is a key means of knowledge, must definitely be linked to a series of essential requirements to which its users should adhere. Thank you.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, I had to take the floor during this procedure because the Conference of Presidents has decided that only Chairs of the political groups are entitled to express their views during the debate, thereby restricting the freedom of expression of those MEPs among us without any post. We cannot stand for any xenophobic insults because we were born in Eastern Europe. During the last century, negative stereotypes resulted in the Holocaust and the massacre at Srebrenica, as well as the massacre in Norway during this century.

It is embarrassing and shows cowardice that the Netherlands Government, which my colleagues in the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) are also part of, has not distanced itself from the PVV's position. Electoral reasons are no excuse because

no one can justify extremism, discrimination, xenophobia and the participation of such a group in government. This attitude is a continuation of other abuses carried out by the Netherlands against my country: blocking access to the Schengen area and restricting access to the labour market.

Adam Bielan (ECR). - (PL) Mr President, I agree with the standpoint of Commissioner Reding. The portal launched by the Dutch Freedom Party, on which citizens make accusations against workers from other European countries, and principally Poland, is, in my view, a violation of all of the EU's achievements. As a Polish citizen and a Member of the European Parliament I am appalled by this type of development, which is a symptom of racially based intolerance.

I am, however, particularly astonished and concerned by the lack of reaction to this, shall we say, embarrassing development by the authorities in the Netherlands, a country that for many years has been viewed with great positivity and trust by Polish society. At the same time it is enormously heartening to see the reaction of Dutch citizens, a decisive majority of whom are opposed to the activities of Geert Wilders' party. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all these people and to assure them of Polish citizens' best intentions, both of those in Poland and abroad. I hope that such a sorry political development finds no echoes in other Member States.

Mitro Repo (S&D). - (FI) Mr President, I voted in favour of the motion for resolution, because it is important that Parliament clearly expresses its disapproval of all forms of intolerance.

The prohibition of discrimination based on ethnicity is one of the most fundamental of all principles in the EU. The website of the Dutch Freedom Party is an open invitation for discrimination, which cannot be in any way acceptable. It is especially important to express disapproval, because there is a risk that similar activities will also spread to other Member States. Stirring up prejudice can easily lead to ethnic divisions and the notions that what is western is good and what is eastern is bad, and that people are lazy in the south and hard-working in the north. Parliament needs consistently to prevent such ethnic divisions from arising.

Frank Vanhecke (EFD). - (NL) Mr President, this is much ado about nothing. It seems to me that this Shakespearean reference is still the most fitting commentary on the predictable theatrics in this House in relation to *ochgottekes*, a Dutch website.

To be absolutely clear, I personally find this website a rather unfortunate initiative, and I endorse what Mr Stadler just had to say in that connection. I do believe, however, that if there is a party in the Netherlands that has constantly opposed unrestrained legal or illegal immigration, including from Eastern Europe, if there is such a party, that that party is also fully within its rights to sound out the opinions and the experiences of the voters and the citizens.

Ultimately, this is not something that the European Parliament should be concerning itself with. We need to watch out any time that we put freedom of expression at risk. This is a sinister sign of political correctness with which we are once again living up to our reputation as a progressive and ultimately useless talking shop.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). - (DE) Mr President, Mr Wilders, his party and his website – all of them expressions of distasteful right-wing extremism – are tolerated by the Dutch Government. It angers me to see how double standards are applied here. The Hungarian

Government takes action against right-wing extremists and finds itself constantly painted in a false light, despite the energy with which it is acting. The Dutch Government is content to garner support from such forces, which is why I believe it was high time to send out a clear message here. I would like to contradict Ms Nicolai on one point, however. The Christian Democrats in our group have spoken out clearly against this website, for which I am grateful, however I believe that the Dutch Government as a whole should do likewise, contrary to its increasingly euro-sceptical stance, which is also a consequence of this tolerance. I hope that conditions will soon be restored in the Netherlands that will enable us to feel pride once again in this founding Member State of the EU.

Philip Claeys (NI). – (NL) Mr President, I in no way approve of Poles or any other fellow Europeans being singled out because of who they are. A great many of them are upright, hard-working people, but the question is whether the specific aim of the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV)'s website was to sow hatred, as has been all-too-easily asserted here.

We are talking about a website used to record problems. It seems to me that the chamber of this Parliament is probably the only place where you can find people who think there are no problems with Schengen. Schengen, and the opening-up of internal borders, was a godsend for organised crime. Instead of behaving like some kind of court of political correctness and of pseudo-moral added value, we would do better to acknowledge the problems and then tackle them. That is precisely the kind of attitude that could improve the collaboration and mutual respect between all the peoples of Europe.

Motion for a resolution: B7-0177/2012

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, it is difficult to describe what we have seen in Russia as elections. Of course, technically speaking, there were different candidates on the ballots and voters could go to polling stations to vote.

Today we are receiving ever more reports of many irregularities during vote counting, but it is not just for this reason that it is difficult to speak of free elections. Firstly, all of the candidates that constituted a real threat for the authorities – and it must be stated clearly that those whose names were on the ballot did not constitute any such threat – were quite simply excluded from participation in the elections. For this reason I believe – and unfortunately I could not vote in favour of the European Parliament resolution, which has many true and critical statements about what took place in Russia – that this motion for a resolution did not, in my opinion, go far enough. We should speak out much more strongly in defence of democracy in Russia.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, every contiguous country has felt the pressure of Putinite revanchism and energy diplomacy: the Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia – most spectacularly in 2008 – and Azerbaijan.

In fact you do not need to be a neighbour of Russia to be on the receiving end of it. We have had problems with our ambassador being harassed, expulsion of diplomatic personnel from the United Kingdom and, of course, the Litvinenko affair.

Why? What does the Kremlin have to gain from this kind of behaviour? I think the answer lies in what German historians used to call 'Primat der Innenpolitik', what colleagues on the left of this House might think of as, in Leninist terms, exporting your internal contradictions.

It suits a basically insecure regime to keep fomenting troubles on its border, and that is why the development of a pluralist, liberal, multi-party regime in Russia is not simply a good objective in itself but ought for us to be an imperative of Western foreign policy.

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE) . – (LT) Mr President, I abstained from voting on this motion for a resolution for two reasons. Firstly, I myself was an observer in the Duma and Presidential elections. I spoke with representatives of all the candidates and none of them made any claims. It is not true to say that the elections were illegal and it is greatly misleading for those MEPs who were not there. Secondly, I am convinced that the European Parliament does not have the moral right to teach others when it has even worse human rights violations and even crimes in its own Union, when people are handcuffed, thrown into a cell, held under house arrest during elections, prevented from meeting voters, and when illegal searches are carried out, funds seized, parties' activities blocked and people are slandered on state television. The worst thing is that the European Parliament is failing to draw attention to and is even concealing crimes perpetrated by European Union Member States against opponents. Cases are falsified and the opposition is being drawn into legal trials; year after year people are being hauled before the courts. A mechanism has been created that only allows you to prove your case after 10-15 years, once your political career is already over.

Ewald Stadler (NI) . – (DE) Mr President, I am very pleased that Mr Uspaskich spoke before me, because, as an election observer in Russia myself, I can confirm what he witnessed. Ms Gardini also reported the same thing. The course taken by the debate was significant. Anyone who failed to join in the chorus criticising Russia was immediately branded as stupid, as my Czech colleague has characterised me, or accused of talking nonsense, as Mr Brok has described Ms Gardini's contribution.

The same people who want to give Russia a lesson in freedom of opinion and pluralism are not prepared to tolerate freedom of opinion in this House; the fact that they are not even aware of this contradiction is particularly dramatic. The Russians are not children. They know how they wish to organise their own democracy and they wanted stability from these elections. They never want a return to those thieving times under Mr Yeltsin, when many of those who now live in the West shamelessly profiteered on Russia's assets. That is the background to this electoral result.

Adam Bielan (ECR) . – (PL) Mr President, I think that the two previous speeches have shown how effective today's Russia is in creating a network of influence. The basic problem of Russia today is an ever more obvious lack of political pluralism together with restrictions on media freedom. The results of the current presidential elections cannot be considered to be representative, if one takes just the example of the exclusion of candidates that wished to stand for election. The irregularities in the election process, particularly the reports of breaches of electoral law, also require thorough investigation.

The increased involvement of Russian society was however a considerable achievement of the last election campaign; its involvement and clear ambition to decide on the nation's future must translate into a change in the way Vladimir Putin's regime governs the country. I would therefore support the appeal by the Russian authorities to start a substantive dialogue with pro-democracy demonstrators and the opposition and to reduce restrictions and tone down rhetoric. A simplification in the rules for registering political parties, freedom for them to act as well as guarantees of civil liberties, these are all measures that Brussels

should make a pre-condition for continued cooperation with Russia. For this reason I support this motion for a resolution.

Mitro Repo (S&D). - (FI) Mr President, although the situation in Russia continues to give cause for concern, we need to recognise the huge progress that Russia has made since communism. There would not have been any need for double-dealing in the presidential elections, because Putin did not have any rival candidate worth considering. The political opposition in Russia should unite and work together more. A candidate representing all factions would be bound to do a lot better in elections.

The social media has achieved change. Since the Duma elections last December, Russian civil society has been active in a whole new way, and Putin has, furthermore, allowed it to happen. President Putin should realise that Russia in this decade is no longer the same country in which he came to power 12 years ago. I do not suppose that we will see a revolution in Russia like the Arab Spring. Russia must introduce democratic reforms itself, but the European Parliament has an important role to play in this as an institution that supports this process.

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE). - (LT) Mr President, I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution; although, I do not believe that it fully assesses the results of the Presidential elections in Russia. What is important is that with this resolution the European Parliament assessed the Presidential elections in Russia, and that assessment is unambiguous. The Presidential elections were not free and they were not fair. This means that the results of both the State Duma elections held last December and the Presidential elections held this month are questionable, and the legitimacy of those who declared victory is also questionable. Logically some colleagues have suggested that this resolution should also include a proposal that Russia should not only amend certain laws, but also hold early elections to the State Duma soon. Russia is already different after these elections, and both the European Union and the Russian authorities will have to treat that different Russia with care and respect. It cannot be what we call business as usual.

Kristiina Ojuland (ALDE). - (ET) Mr President, I also voted in favour of this motion for a resolution, primarily because a great many important amendments were included in the resolution that was passed today. The leader of our group, Guy Verhofstadt, and I together tabled a very important amendment, in which we emphasised that the presidential elections were neither free nor fair. As a result, the European Union as a whole must draw conclusions regarding the legitimacy of these elections and also the legitimacy of the elected president. This raises serious questions about relations between the European Union and Russia. As in the discussion that took place here a few days ago, which was attended by both Mr Kasyanov and Mr Kasparov, a great number of our colleagues raised the question of whether the European Union can continue to pursue relations with Russia on the assumption of 'business as usual', as the English expression goes. That is also in doubt.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). - (DE) Mr President, Mr Putin is a dyed-in-the-wool opponent of democracy, which is why this motion for a resolution could have been much more strongly worded. I would, however, call for the following points for the future, which are of some importance. Firstly, the immediate and absolute right to demonstrate for the opposition. Secondly, the release of all members of the opposition still imprisoned. Thirdly, the establishment of free, independent media, which is vital for truly free elections. Fourthly, the establishment of a new registration process for genuinely democratic parties and

corresponding party plurality and a re-run of last year's Duma elections on this basis. Only then will we have a democratic system in Russia as an alternative to Mr Putin's tyranny.

Hannu Takkula (ALDE). - (FI) Mr President, I voted in favour of this motion for resolution. As members of the European Parliament and of the European Union, we must act in accordance with our values, and we must promote political reform in Russia and make efforts to ensure that a free electoral system in Russia is a possibility. That is not the case at present, of course, and if we examine the situation closely, with reference to European values and our concepts of justice, neither the Russian Parliament nor the President have been legally elected, and this, of course, poses a problem. We should engage in cooperation with the Russians and encourage them to proceed along the path of democracy, but, to my mind, the European Union should call for new elections.

Furthermore, as we are here in Strasbourg, it is worth remembering that the Council of Europe, which is located right next door, has certain obligations concerning Russia, and now Russia should also fulfil them for its part. In fact, they relate to questions of human rights, and Putin could do a lot about that.

To conclude, we should now take steps to ensure that Russia has new elections very quickly. This is also in Putin's interests, as the current mood in Russia suggests that Putin will not last the full six years in power if there are no new elections. Unfortunately, that is the situation, and the European Union should press for new elections.

Anna Záborská (PPE). - (SK) Mr President, I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution, but I do not think it goes far enough. It mentions shortcomings and discrepancies in the preparation and implementation of the elections. I firmly believe, however, that these elections were manipulated. I grew up under communism, and I know what it means when voter turnout comes close to 100%. Such a turnout was recorded in many regions of Russia.

The EU can be a strong global player only if it refuses to be blackmailed. We may be dependent on Russian gas and oil, but Russia is also dependent on the billions that we pay for these raw materials. I would therefore like to say to Mr Putin that this Parliament will be keeping a close eye on his next steps, and if he proceeds to repress peacefully demonstrating citizens, we are prepared to take concrete measures, as in the case of Belarus.

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE). - Mr President, I voted in favour of the whole resolution despite the fact that the text could have made a clearer evaluation of 4 March's fraudulent events in Russia for election to the office of President.

Therefore, I wish to announce here at least one amendment, which was tabled as Aa among the recitals and should have been seen as essential to the event but it did not pass the procedure.

So it reads, 'whereas, if it were taken seriously, the procedure of selecting a candidate to be President of Russia could not be considered to be a competitive and true election'.

Motion for a resolution: RC-B7-0135/2012

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR). - (PL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, geopolitically Kazakhstan plays an enormously important role, not only in its own region of the world but also in the whole area that we call Eurasia. So far, Kazakhstan has been a country that has been able to escape the national and regional conflicts that are common in that part of the world. We should certainly give appreciation for the religious and racial tolerance

that exists in Kazakhstan. It is with all the more concern therefore that we observed the events that took place in that country in December of last year – demonstrators being killed, events that aroused concern in Kazakhstan and throughout the world. It is therefore all the more satisfying to hear that the Kazakh authorities, according to reports that have reached us, have taken a hard line as regards dealing with those responsible for these events. From our side, that of the European Parliament, an organisation that is supportive of Kazakh nationalities, there should come a clear message: democracy should apply everywhere, no one is above the law and therefore those responsible for these events should be brought to justice.

Paul Murphy (GUE/NGL). - Mr President, my group, the European United Left, proposed a number of amendments to strengthen this important resolution.

I condemn the brutal massacre by the Kazakh state forces of oil workers and their supporters last December, and I condemn the arrest of the political opposition and the continuous clampdown against and harassment of opposition media, independent trade unions and journalists.

I supported the oil workers' strike right from the start, as I believe that all their demands are fully justified, and I salute the courage of all the Kazakh workers, journalists and opposition activities that I have met and who have dared to speak out, despite the huge repression that they face.

In the end I had to abstain on the final vote on this resolution because, despite all the correct concerns that it raises about the alarming, serious deterioration in terms of human rights, the resolution ultimately gives in to the window-dressing attempts of the Kazakh state to suggest that they have learned lessons and that the situation on the ground is improving, when in fact the situation on the ground continues to worsen.

Kristiina Ojula (ALDE). - *(ET)* Mr President, I also voted in favour of the Kazakhstan resolution today. Yesterday there was a very thorough and serious debate in this chamber over what we have seen taking place in Kazakhstan. The events of last December are naturally the type of events that cannot in any circumstances be approved of, and all those who were responsible for those events and those who are guilty of the killings must be brought to justice. If Kazakhstan has taken steps to that end, then that it is truly commendable. On the other hand, Kazakhstan is definitely a very important state, large and powerful due to its resources. It is certainly also in the interest of the European Union to cooperate with Kazakhstan, but the precondition for that cooperation is that Kazakhstan should move towards democracy and democratic values.

President Nazarbayev truly has a great opportunity to lead his country and people towards a better future and also towards democratic principles.

Charles Tannock (ECR). - Mr President, the ECR abstained on this motion. The part that Kazakhstan plays in the development of the political stability of Central Asia cannot be underestimated.

Kazakhstan and the EU already have a good relationship but cooperation should be strengthened, particularly in the areas of dialogue on democracy, human rights and trade as well as fighting terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking.

We welcome the release of Evgeniy Zhovtis and fully support the calls for the Kazakh authorities to make every effort to improve the human rights situation in their country

and investigate fully the December police shootings against oil workers and improve their respect for the freedom of assembly and expression of religion in line with OSC recommendations.

We await the FBI-led investigation on the police shootings in December so as a group we felt that the motion was actually too biased against the government and, until all the facts are known, we have abstained. It is rather bizarre that actually we have the same position as the GUE/NGL Group but for completely different reasons.

Motion for a resolution: RC-B7-0131/2012

Ewald Stadler (NI). – (DE) Mr President, I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution, but I wish to state that this is just one of the problem areas confronting us. We need to recognise that there have been widespread attacks against Christians and Christian communities in Muslim countries, for example against the Copts in Egypt. The problem has been exacerbated since the so-called Arab Spring. The same is true in Syria, where the rebels also lead attacks on Christians, and in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Since Iraq's so-called liberation, Iraqi Christians have shrunk to a very small minority. I myself know a number of Iraqi refugees in Austria. When the Danish Minister spoke yesterday on behalf of the Presidency of the Council, saying that this should not be allowed to become a religious conflict, he displayed a great deal of naivety. This is already a religious conflict and, as a religious conflict, it threatens our Christian brothers in these countries, which is why we need to do much more for these Christian communities.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, in today's world Christians are the religious group that is subject to the greatest persecution. This is happening on many continents and it also unfortunately happening in Nigeria. We as Christians, as well as many people in this Chamber, feel solidarity, as believers in Christ, with our persecuted brothers in Nigeria. It is good that the European Parliament has spoken on this matter. A situation cannot be permitted to continue where, in the 21st century, those who are bringing Good News, the Christian message, a message of love for one's neighbour, a message bringing all the goodness of our Christian faith, should be persecuted, killed and deprived of their rights. I would like to say today that it is not just our prayers but also our actions that are with our Christian brothers in Nigeria.

Paul Murphy (GUE/NGL). – Mr President, together with my sister party in Nigeria, the Democratic Socialist Movement, I condemn the violence of Boko Haram. This organisation has absolutely nothing to offer the workers and poor of Nigeria other than deeper religious and ethnic violence. Violence and extortion by state forces and between rival corrupt politicians is also common.

For Socialists, the answer to communal, ethnic, religious division and violence lies in mass movements which can unify the working class and poor in a struggle against their common enemies, in this case the corrupt elite and the big business which literally steal the vast wealth that exists in Nigeria: just 1% of the population taking 95% of the oil wealth, while over 80% of the population lives in poverty.

January's general strike, the biggest ever in Nigeria, was not just against the fuel price hike but increasingly called for regime change. That is exactly what is needed in Nigeria, a struggle for a government of working people and poor that can use the tremendous resources that exist in the interests of the majority and point the way forward beyond division.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, in the eighth largest oil-producing country in the world with a population of 1 50 million, Christians are being persecuted by an extremist group in the most brutal possible manner, as the attack on the Catholic church and the people there has proven. If we, the European Union, do not state clearly that we are the protectors of the Christians in the world, then this type of problem will continue to arise. We are generally in favour of religious freedom and inter-faith dialogue on a fair basis. However, we also need to state quite clearly: if we do not look after Christians, then who will? I am grateful that the European Parliament has clearly chosen this course and would like to witness some clearer words and actions from Baroness Ashton in this direction.

Motion for a resolution: B7-0130/2012

Ewald Stadler (NI). – (DE) Mr President, we have had a very interesting and positive debate today in relation to the motion for a resolution to be presented to the 6th World Water Forum. I believe it was important that the Commissioner should have announced the Commission's intention to impose sanctions on countries that dragged their heels in implementing the Water Framework Directive. This should also send a signal to countries outside the area of validity of the Water Framework Directive that the European Union itself is serious about the sparing and correct use of water. However, we should consider seriously whether it would be worthwhile establishing separate water cycles in future. We must draw a general distinction between drinking water and process water. This needs to become standard practice worldwide because we cannot stand by and watch as people in developing countries are forced to live with poor quality drinking water that was previously used as service water and process water in industry. We need to make sure that there are separate water cycles for the public.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, in the time that we have gathered here in Strasbourg, from 12-17 March, in other words precisely during this week, the 6th World Water Forum has met in Marseille. This is a very honourable group that has gathered in Marseille to debate issues that have an enormous significance for a large part of the citizens of our planet. There are areas in the world, particularly in Africa, where access to water is very difficult, and where there is no access to water whatsoever. For this reason I am completely in favour of the statement that access to water is a fundamental human right. Water is quite simply essential for life. It is a very good thing, therefore, that our Parliament is speaking constructively on this matter and that the European Commission is also speaking constructively on this matter and I would like, speaking from this place, to wish the participants of the 6th World Water Forum in Marseille the greatest success with their deliberations.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) Mr President, I voted for this resolution because improving access to water helps enhance people's quality of life. It is important that it is managed efficiently, especially in the context of reducing poverty. I think that more consideration should be given to environmental and climate aspects during the debate on eradicating poverty. I support the need to protect water resources and the inclusion of this issue on the Rio+20 Conference agenda.

The efficient use of water is not only important for the environment, but also from an economic perspective. I support the idea of devising water management plans at a global level. At the same time, the finances available need to be reassessed in order to increase the

population's access to these services. In Romania water quality features among the priority measures for implementing the EU's environmental *acquis*.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I was in Rome last week and had the opportunity to study how intensively the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the *Iuistitia et Pax* Pontifical Council and others prepared for this World Water Forum. The issue at stake here is a truly decisive matter for the future of the human race, which is why I welcome this motion for a resolution, even though I believe that we need to consider this issue far more intensively. Water is not just a source of life, but also a source of death, triggering wars or murderous conflicts if supplies run short. That is why it is urgently necessary for us to ensure, as Ms Băsescu has said, that appropriate water management is introduced. Above all, however much I favour a social market economy, I believe that limits must be imposed on the fantasies associated with the privatisation of water. This is truly a public asset that belongs to all of the human race. That is why I voted in favour of a corresponding amendment. We need to take care to ensure that water does not become an asset to be used for speculation or blackmail.

Charles Tannock (ECR). – Mr President, I voted alongside my group, the ECR, in favour of the motion for a resolution on the sixth World Water Forum.

Given that almost half the developing world's population does not have access to basic sanitation facilities and that 800 million people still use unsafe drinking water, the work of the Forum is extremely valuable internationally.

While public health and environmental protection are put forward by the report as the main priorities for water management policy, and rightly so, we welcome the fact that the report also recognises the role that access to clean water plays in securing peace and cooperation in conflict zones, and we support strongly the call for the implementation of international agreements for the shared management of surface waters and ground water that cross international boundaries.

This is particularly relevant in the Middle East Peace Process, where adequate water access is a vital political consideration for all the parties concerned.

Written explanations of vote

Report: Chris Davies (A7-0033/2012)

Damien Abad (PPE) , *in writing.* – (FR) Last year, the European Commission adopted a Road map for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050, aimed at reducing CO₂ emissions by 80% by 2050. In order to achieve this, several action plans have been developed in various fields (transport, energy, climate change, and so on). Parliament, in an own-initiative report, has proposed a range of measures to complement these action plans. This report emphasises the shortcomings of the Emissions Trading System (ETS) and energy efficiency. With regard to the ETS, I am in favour of a step-by-step approach rather than restrictive objectives.

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I am voting for this report. The objective of achieving a low-carbon economy in 2050 will help to tackle the main problems posed by climate change. Moreover, it represents an opportunity for the economy, as it benefits the EU to focus on a knowledge economy that is efficient and innovative at global level, thereby meeting the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of this resolution on the competitive low-carbon economy in 2050. I believe that our future lies in the development of clean technologies and sustainable rural development. Our common European climate change policy strategies and the global race for the efficient use of resources need to be seen as opportunities. In the context of the current economic crisis, the existing targets for 2020 are sufficiently ambitious. Therefore, it is important to indicate clear guidelines for the period after 2020 and to encourage investments in sustainable technologies. It will be important to give incentives for the development of low-carbon technologies, particularly in the context of the European funding programme for research and innovation, Horizon 2020.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I am particularly invested in the Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050. There is no doubt in my mind about the need to work towards a Europe with lower CO₂ emissions. In this regard, the Roadmap suggests strategies for the transport, electricity and agricultural sectors, aimed at progressively reducing CO₂ emissions while maintaining a competitive economy within the global market. However, I will make no secret of the fact that this text has also been at the heart of a deep political disagreement. As is often the case, the left wanted to do more for the climate without taking into consideration the economic reality. They were calling for a revision of the Emissions Trading System so as to make it even more restrictive. This idea would leave our companies in a vulnerable position and I am firmly opposed to it. I am in favour of a more realistic long-term vision than the one our socialist and green comrades are advocating. In the short term, such a revision would make it even more difficult to restart our economy. I believe we need to do more to encourage our companies rather than constantly stigmatising and sanctioning them.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour of this report. The European Parliament and the European Council are aiming to reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% by 2050. However, it is now clear that this target will be difficult to achieve because there has been no agreement on specific measures and measures for emission reductions. I welcome the European Parliament's proposal to set interim greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for 2030 and 2040, including objectives for specific sectors, set timetables and measures taking into account the specific characteristics of Member States, national capacities and potential. It is also necessary to ensure maximum energy efficiency, to promote the development of renewable energy and adopt decisions on energy storage, increasing energy efficiency and the development of infrastructure for efficient energy transmission. The EU must also play a more active role in international fora and negotiations mobilising other countries in order to establish an ambitious, comprehensive and legally binding agreement on climate change as soon as possible.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) Moving to a low-carbon economy is an absolute and unavoidable necessity in Europe today. It is a great undertaking that calls for ambitious objectives in all areas. The report by our colleague, Chris Davies, has the merit of covering a wide range of issues: from energy efficiency to reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP), from the Emissions Trading System to intelligent energy networks and even rail corridors, the areas for action leave no stone unturned so that, by 2050, we should be well and truly committed to a low-carbon economy. We can discuss the objectives and percentages but I believe that this report lays the foundation for what needs to be done. However, I abstained, not because I disagree with the content, but because I think that we should not lead people to believe that nuclear energy is a green energy solution. By including

it in the list of low-carbon energy sources in the same category as renewable energy, we are turning a blind eye to the danger and the many risks posed by nuclear energy. Nuclear energy is nothing more than a transitional energy source; it is by no means the energy of the future.

Phil Bennion (ALDE), *in writing.* – I should like to commend my British Lib Dem colleague Chris Davies on his extensive work on this report.

Tackling climate change and promoting technological innovation are key priorities for Liberal Democrats in the UK, and this report serves to emphasise the potential for economic growth that can be unlocked by making the transition to a low-carbon economy.

It is crucial that we face the challenges of climate change, rising oil prices, and political instability in oil-producing countries head on; making the investments in energy efficiency and renewables in Europe will help stimulate our economy, reduce energy prices for ordinary citizens, and develop the economic and environmentally sustainable economy which we desperately need.

Sergio Berlato (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) In 2011, the Commission tabled a strategy document outlining an ambitious European pathway for reducing greenhouse gas emissions after 2020: reducing emissions by 40% by 2030, and by 60% by 2040, with the aim of achieving a 80-95% reduction by 2050. This document, in defining a European strategy for the environment, has a major impact on Member States' industrial policies. The report under discussion proposes yet more stringent requirements than those set out by the Commission, with more ambitious climate targets for 2020 and binding European targets beyond 2030, quite apart from reaching a global climate agreement. I am opposed to any amendment of the commitments that have already been made to reduce emissions by 2020, principally because the commitments to reduce emissions made as part of the 'Climate and Energy Package' adopted in 2008 are the outcome of long and difficult political negotiations, which led to a compromise between the Member States on balanced effort-sharing and preserving the competitiveness of the respective sectors involved. Moreover, it is essential for the European Union, in pursuing its climate targets, not to alter the regulatory framework already in place, thereby incurring the risk of further penalising European businesses vis-à-vis their global partners.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this European Parliament report because it is necessary to assess and act against the risk that, in the absence of sufficient global efforts, domestic action will lead to a shift in market share towards less efficient installations elsewhere, thereby resulting in increased emissions globally, i.e. in carbon leakage. The European Parliament therefore invites the Commission to bring forward within the next two years the measures necessary to achieve the 2030 objectives taking into account particular national capacities and potential, as well as international progress on climate action. Such measures should be implemented in a coordinated, cost-efficient and effective way. The European Commission should also present a cost-benefit analysis of meeting the proposed pathway at Member State level, taking into account national circumstances stemming from different technological development, as well as the necessary investments (and the attendant social acceptability) and the existence of a wider range of possible global conditions. It is important to note that moving to a low-carbon economy would have significant potential for creating additional jobs, while securing economic growth and providing a competitive advantage for European industry.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) The EU published the Low-carbon Roadmap in March, which applies to all economic sectors. At the moment, detailed plans are being drawn up separately for each sector, with the most recent being the document called 'Energy Roadmap 2050'. Given that it is difficult to estimate the trend in supply and demand, the plan presents several scenarios, along with an analysis of the possible effects, challenges and opportunities produced by modernising the energy system. Other factors taken into account include the possible changes in terms of infrastructure, technology and the price of fossil fuels.

It is estimated that the price of electricity will rise by 2030. This is why we must invest in 'smart' electricity grids and in enhanced technologies for energy production, transport and storage. These measures, combined with the completion of the single energy market, should ensure that prices fall in the long term. The costs will be offset by the long-term nature of the investments, the jobs created and the reduction in the level of dependence on imports.

Philippe Boulland (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) We must promote a low-carbon economy and take all possible measures to follow the Roadmap aimed at reducing CO₂ emissions by at least 40% by 2030, 60% by 2040 and 80% by 2050. The Emissions Trading System must be improved and the transport and agriculture sectors must also play their part in this effort to reduce emissions. Member States must be encouraged to take legislative measures to include air transport emissions in the Emissions Trading System without giving in to commercial pressures from non-EU states which are opposed to this system. The EU must continue to promote investments and encourage technological innovation so as to remain competitive and exemplary at international level.

Jan Březina (PPE), *in writing.* – (CS) The report on the Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050 is guided by good intentions, but contains some undesirable or unrealistic targets and appeals. I do not agree, for example, with the stated notion that 30% of the environmental element of direct payments from the common agricultural policy should be used for an EU-wide regime of incentives aimed at the development of carbon sequestration in the soil. If European agriculture is to be successful on a global scale and as self-sufficient as possible, agricultural land must be used for production, and we must place high demands on it in terms of safety and quality, of course. In relation to the idea of a low-carbon economy, I do not consider the call for an EU commitment to total elimination of CO₂ from the energy sector by 2050 to be realistic. Along with reducing emissions of CO₂, it is necessary to bear in mind other targets, such as preserving and increasing EU industrial competitiveness and energy security by being as independent as possible in terms of third country energy supplies. I would like to point out in this context that the existing 20% target for renewables is based on the contribution of nuclear power to the energy mix in many Member States, while the world energy outlook from 2011 drawn up by the International Energy Agency includes a scenario based on a smaller contribution from nuclear energy. The EU should therefore take a critical attitude to this.

Cristian Silviu Buşoi (ALDE), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted for this report because the debate on greenhouse gas emissions is increasingly important, not only from the global warming aspect, but also as a result of our dependence on non-renewable resources. There is an urgent need for alternative energy resources which are greener and just as reliable. Through utilising the EU 2020 strategy, Europe is obliged to find innovative methods which can foster economic growth, but without impacting on the environment.

According to the data from 2010, there was a 6% rise in carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere. However, we must not ignore that Europe is responsible for just 11% of global CO₂ emissions. This is no excuse, but the actions we have taken are not enough to halt the rise in CO₂ emissions. However, I do not believe that we can afford to have a very stringent deadline at a time when we are facing a financial crisis, which increases the need to develop industries, while maintaining a competitive economy.

Antonio Cancian (PPE), in writing. – (IT) I voted for the report drafted by Mr Davies on the Roadmap for a low-carbon economy by 2050 because I believe that the issues linked to protecting the environment must not be underestimated and instead must be among the issues of principal concern for the European Union. Indeed, without reducing our dependence on fossil fuels we cannot hope to safeguard the climate and contain pollution, thereby protecting our global environmental heritage and human health itself.

The benefits of these choices will also be felt in the economic and commercial sphere, by reducing our sizeable imports of oil from third countries. We must nevertheless take care not to be alone in imposing such strict regulations and limits: these rules must result from an international agreement among all leading countries. Only uniform regulations can be effective in the battle against pollution and global warming. If this is not the case, not only will our returns be meagre but we also risk laying ourselves open to ruthless competition from economies basing their success precisely on the absence of strict environmental and social regulations like ours.

Andrea Cozzolino (S&D), in writing. – (IT) The necessity for the international economy to orient itself increasingly towards a system of production based on the reduction of carbon emissions is one that is being imposed on us by the ever more imminent risk of irreparable climate change, as well as by the need to move our system of production gradually away from the consumption of finite resources. Given all that, the obstinacy with which the forces of the right have wanted to put forward the nuclear option again seems simply incomprehensible, and in many ways also outside time and history. It is outside time and history, as are all recommendations on the safety of nuclear power stations, which have several times been served up to us and promptly been refuted by the facts. It is still more unthinkable in a country such as Italy, where almost 30 years after power stations were decommissioned, we still have waste heaps that have not been disposed of and where, not long ago, a new referendum firmly rejected the reintroduction of nuclear power. We therefore demand that a correct objective, the reduction of emissions and the transition to an economy based on renewable sources, should not become the pretext for allowing a means that has proved to be unsafe and dangerous, and one which Europeans have for this reason chosen to replace, creep in again by the back door.

George Sabin Cutaş (S&D), in writing. – (RO) I voted against Amendments 4, 23 and 24 of the report on a Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050, on the basis that they were calling for the use of nuclear energy to be abandoned. I think that European Union Member States cannot afford at the moment to give up this form of energy. Nuclear energy must continue to be part of a diverse energy mix so that the EU's energy requirements can be met.

Robert Dušek (S&D), in writing. – (CS) The Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050 should help create a framework for new legislation that will shape the nature of investment. The system of allowances has proven to be insufficient for reducing CO₂, as a surplus of allowances has reduced their price and they can no longer

fulfil their role in terms of investment in a low-carbon and sustainable economy. There was, moreover, further emission growth of 6% in 2010. Global producers such as China and India are now preparing for a massive transition to sustainable green technologies. Europe, if it wants to remain competitive, should push for the quickest and most effective possible reduction in CO₂, and support technologies and processes that make much more effective use of energy and resources. Progress has been achieved, for example, in the car industry, but the aerospace industry is still lagging behind and remains one of the main problem areas. In this context, it is absolutely essential to emphasise the role of trees and forests in capturing CO₂. Trees and forests tie up CO₂ in the most natural way possible, without the need for large investments. It is vital to limit the massive looting of forests for profit, which is happening on a greater scale day after day in most EU Member States. I welcome the report on the whole, and I will be voting in favour of it.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted for the report on a ‘competitive low-carbon economy in 2050’, as the development of an economy with a low level of greenhouse gas emissions is vital in order to respond to the challenges posed by climate change, as well as in order to enhance the very competitiveness of the European economy and create more jobs.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) At a time when debate on pollutant gas emissions has become unavoidable and maintaining the current energy dependency on oil and its derivatives is unsustainable, it is important to find alternative energy sources that are more environmentally friendly and equally reliable. It is also crucial that Europe find innovative ways of promoting growth that is sustainable and ‘greener’, in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy. However, the 2010 data are not encouraging, with a 6% increase in CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere. As the rapporteur points out, we cannot forget that, despite this increase, the EU is responsible for only 11% of global CO₂ emissions, and that our actions alone will not be enough to halt the process of global warming caused by an excess of CO₂ in the atmosphere. It is therefore crucial to ensure the development of a low-carbon economy that is still competitive and does not harm the European economy, which is already fragile. We cannot set ourselves such high emissions targets that they create conditions of unfair competition with the rest of the world, thus damaging European competitiveness.

Elisa Ferreira (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) This legislative initiative should correct three fundamental problems.

Firstly, it should adapt the climate objectives to the economic crisis that we are currently experiencing.

Secondly, it should correct the errors in how the emissions trading system works, particularly as a result of its misappropriation and distortion by the financial system.

Thirdly, it should draw the proper conclusions from the terrible experience of Fukushima about the uncontrollable risks of the nuclear option; namely, that this should not be the easy way out of combating CO₂ emissions.

In my view, the final result of the vote cannot fulfil any of these objectives, so I am voting against.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) This report is indicative of the market-facing approach that has dominated the so-called transition to a low-carbon economy. The

shortcomings and weaknesses evident in this report include the reaffirmation of belief in emissions trading, despite its widely demonstrated perversity and ineffectiveness, and the excessive focus on the issue of energy sources, without paying due attention to patterns of consumption and the economic model that underlies them. Given energy consumption and the flows and patterns thereof, issues such as the production and trading models currently in force, as well as free trade and its impact on the relocation of production, are insufficiently addressed. In the area of transport, for example, the advocating a modern and efficient public transport system with wide coverage and low prices for the public – all of which contrasts with what is currently being done at present in Portugal, for example, under the IMF/EU programme – equates to paving the way for the market, liberalisation and charging on various forms of transport. Focusing on private transport, which no doubt meets with the approval of the automotive industry, advocating a Single European Sky, and including this sector in the emissions trading system are telling examples of the approach that is behind the whole report.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), in writing. – (SK) Investment levels must be increased very significantly if Europe is to secure its industrial future. The energy sector in particular demands the greatest possible level of clarity and certainty. Endorsement of the European Commission's Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050 as the basis for policy-making will help to provide this. It will create the framework for new legislative acts and other measures that will shape the form of investment. To combat global warming, CO₂ emissions must be reduced on a worldwide basis. The latest signs are not encouraging: emissions increased by 6% during 2010. CO₂ is accumulating in the atmosphere at an accelerating rate. The EU is currently responsible for just 11% of global CO₂ emissions, and our actions alone will not curb the warming process. It can be expected that investing in the development of a low-carbon economy will not weaken Europe's competitive position, but strengthen it.

In my opinion, Europe must develop a sense of urgency, or risk losing the race to maintain a competitive economy. Decisive action is essential if the EU is not to get left behind. Adoption of the Roadmap, and the setting of ambitious goals for the development of a low-carbon economy, provide an opportunity to stimulate progress.

Lorenzo Fontana (EFD), in writing. – (IT) The emissions game is no longer played under the same rules for everyone. The EU's Climate and Energy Package was adopted on the assurance that the other large-emitter countries would also be making similar commitments, but this has not happened, and some large economies have already announced that it will not happen in the near future. Moreover, bearing in mind that from the time the package entered into force the Union's GDP growth has been practically static, in contrast to the situation in other countries that do not apply such measures, I consider that our current climate strategy is putting a brake on economic recovery and that, consequently, adopting new and more stringent limits far into the future, such as those proposed in this report, would put Europe at risk of losing the competitiveness contest in the global market. That is why I voted against the report.

Adam Gierek (S&D), in writing. – (PL) Measures leading to a low-emission economy should be based on realistic assumptions and not on the ambitions of European bureaucrats or declarations forced on us by lobby groups. This resolution is a typical example of such a negative approach.

It is one thing to force people to use sustainable energy, which I support, or to force through clean and safe nuclear energy, which I also support. However, to speak of a low or nil-emission economy without any economic vision for the EU countries between now and 2050, without any ideas for the use of readily-available and cheap alternative energy sources and also without any idea of future consumption models is naïve and simplistic.

I would suggest that the Commission employ science fiction writers for this purpose and not the European Parliament. This ridiculous proposal has no practical future, unless one includes throughout it some climatic equity, meaning a breakdown of the climate burden on the level of the world and the Union based on a per capita CO₂ emission limit. Since this is not the case, I voted 'no'. Thank you.

Robert Goebbels (S&D), *in writing.* – (FR) I did not vote for the Davies report. It is unrealistic to want to define technological development and its impact on the economy and employment until 2050. This is actually irresponsible, painting in glowing colours a near-perfect world in some 40 years' time.

Europe will have trouble achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy by 2020. Only by unilaterally setting more ambitious objectives in terms of reducing emissions will we see results more quickly. In any case, the proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions coming from the EU is decreasing. Europe will not be able to carry the burden alone. In this context, the pious hopes of the Davies report will remain nothing more than a pipe dream.

Catherine Grèze (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – (FR) The message that the European Parliament is trying to send by adopting this report is that we are all prepared to endorse the Commission's major long-term commitments in the area of climate policy. I clearly support the EU's strong ambition and hope that Parliament sends a positive signal about the climate. I cannot, however, support instruments which are bad for climate, social and economic policy. While I am well aware that we have a different way of making policy at European level compared with national level, as there is often the need to seek compromises, I cannot bring myself to vote in favour of a text that peddles the myth of nuclear energy and clean coal. The lesson we learned from the Copenhagen Resolution, which we all remember, is still at the forefront of our minds. That is why I did not vote in favour of this Roadmap which mentions nuclear energy as an instrument for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050.

Mathieu Grosch (PPE), *in writing.* – (DE) I expressly favour the ambitious targets that Europe has set itself in relation to environmental and energy issues. However, Europe should not allow itself to become isolated as a result of its pioneering role.

It is absolutely vital that greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced and appropriate rules must also be established beyond European borders; after all air does not respect Europe's boundaries. However, the targets should be negotiated in consultation and agreement with the third countries, particularly if these targets impact upon them directly. The European Union's Emissions Trading System (ETS) is a good example of how an arrangement agreed at European level can encounter international resistance just before coming into force.

Europe should hold fast to its agreed policies, while at the same time seeking international dialogue. In relation to the ETS, a compromise should be found at the level of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) that will enable third countries also to accept the ETS.

Brice Hortefeux (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) On Thursday 15 March 2012, the European Parliament approved the Roadmap for moving to a low-carbon economy in 2050. With this text, the European Union is defining its long-term vision and continuing to reflect on what will be the outline for a green economy. I am pleased with the adoption of this report which will give greater visibility to the economic and institutional actors over the coming decades with a step-by-step approach for 2030, 2040 and 2050. It is true that deep divides have emerged on the subject of the functioning of the Emissions Trading System (ETS) as the price of carbon is currently very low. The proposal from the parliamentary left to artificially inflate the price of carbon per tonne was unacceptable as it did not take into account the particularly difficult economic and social context of these last few years. In truth, the left has completely failed to take into account the reality of the situation and the difficulties facing our entrepreneurs. Rather than imposing restrictions and ending up out of our depth because we are ignoring the consequences of our actions, we have instead chosen an approach based on prudence and discernment by calling on the European Commission to evaluate the situation and make proposals where appropriate.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), *in writing.* – (LT) I abstained from voting on this document because I believe that the adoption of the Roadmap, together with the emissions reduction trajectory and milestones it proposes, will handicap European competitiveness and be of little value. The EU is currently only responsible for 11% of global CO₂ emissions and our actions alone will not curb the warming process. I agree with the provision that we urgently need to back the technologies that will win and invest in the processes that use energy and resources much more efficiently. However, we must not forget that China is still 70% dependent upon coal as a source of electricity and there are no guarantees that the objectives of its current five-year plan, which gives priority to low-carbon 'green' investments, will be achieved, even though these investments are on a scale that dwarfs those of Europe. I am convinced that there are genuine grounds to believe that there is a threat of 'carbon leakage', of business moving out of Europe to avoid higher costs resulting from the measures being taken to reduce CO₂ emissions. Such developments would not be good for Europe's economy and would do nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally. If such instances could be proven measures should be taken to protect or compensate the industries concerned. I therefore believe that measures must be adequate and logical.

Karin Kadenbach (S&D), *in writing.* – (DE) It is with a heavy heart that I decided to vote against this report, which contains several positive and necessary proposals for combating climate change at European level, without threatening the competitiveness of European businesses, by bundling together a package of measures. However, despite several commitments from the EU to a withdrawal from nuclear energy generation, this report contains a number of indirect and explicit statements that portray nuclear power as a solution for carbon-free or low-carbon energy production. I find this an anathema, both personally and politically.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The environmental challenges that our planet is posing us are urgent and demand immediate action. As the European Union, we can do much to reduce carbon emissions, with the international target of arriving at an 80% reduction in emission levels compared to 1990. In the context of such a difficult challenge, all sectors of production and industrial processing contribute to the 2050 target and the intermediate targets of 2030 and 2040, as required by the report. We are all being called on to play our part, at the European level, so that our contribution to reducing the amount of carbon emissions in the atmosphere can be a positive and achievable target.

Jörg Leichtfried (S&D), *in writing.* – (DE) I decided to vote against this report, which contains several positive and necessary proposals for combating climate change at European level, without threatening the competitiveness of European businesses, by bundling together a package of measures. However, despite several commitments from the EU to a withdrawal from nuclear energy generation, this report contains a number of indirect and explicit statements that portray nuclear power as a solution for carbon-free or low-carbon energy production. I find this an anathema, both personally and politically.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) Today's vote on the Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050 has confirmed that the future will involve the development of high energy-efficiency technologies, sustainable rural development and efficient energy use. However, we must not forget that the target for the 20% increase in energy efficiency will be difficult to meet by 2020. We must remain realistic and bear in mind the current financial and economic climate. Moreover, a reduction in nuclear energy will mean an increase in the level of use of fossil fuels and, therefore, of carbon dioxide emissions. Europe must take specific measures: incentives encouraging public and private investments aimed at designing and developing sustainable technologies, creating a smart electricity grid and improving pan-European energy interconnections.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing.* – I supported this Report. To combat global warming, CO₂ emissions must be reduced on a worldwide basis. The latest indicators are not encouraging: emissions increased by 6 per cent during 2010. CO₂ is accumulating in the atmosphere at an accelerating rate. A recent assessment by scientists who had voiced doubts about the evidence of global warming concluded that temperatures were indeed rising at a rate very close to that estimated by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. EU Member States were amongst the first in the world to industrialise and greatly increase their use of fossil fuels; we have a responsibility now to exercise leadership by reducing our CO₂ emissions.

Iosif Matula (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) The European Union's targets for reducing CO₂ emissions by 80-95% by 2050 can only be achieved through efficiently coordinated EU actions and local practical implementation. The conclusions from the climate change meeting in Durban and the stance of third countries on the air carbon tax indicate little interest in rapid actions and political commitment for reducing carbon emissions. The development of low-carbon economies at local and regional level, along with investments in these areas, makes a considerable contribution to creating new jobs and boosting the regions' competitiveness. Waste management, energy efficiency in buildings and the creation of standardised infrastructures for electric and low-emission vehicles are priorities which can produce immediate results locally. The future of sustainable investments will take into account the reduction in dependence on external energy suppliers outside the EU. Developing an integrated system of cross-border energy markets helps establish the energy balance between Member States and increases internal generation capacity.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE), *in writing.* – This report endorses the European Commission's roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050. The EU is responsible now only for 11% of global CO₂ emissions. I had concerns about the possible negative impact of paragraphs 2, 98, 104 and 110 on agriculture; these have been addressed by way of adopted amendments. I abstained on part 2 of the vote on paragraph 72 since Member States are free to choose their own energy mix. Ireland, though not a

nuclear nation, likely derives some of its energy from nuclear sources through the UK/Ireland interconnector.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The debate about pollutant gas emissions is increasingly important, and we cannot continue to be held hostage to energy dependence on oil and its derivatives. We must therefore find alternative energy sources that are more environmentally friendly yet equally reliable. Through the Europe 2020 strategy, Europe must find innovative ways of promoting economic growth without continuing to affect the environment. However, the 2010 data show that there was a 6% increase in CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere. Nevertheless, as mentioned in this report, Europe is responsible for only 11% of global CO₂ emissions, and our actions alone will not be enough to halt the process of increasing CO₂ emissions. This must be a joint effort by all powers, particularly Brazil, Russia, India and China, which are becoming increasingly responsible for CO₂ emissions. What is required of everyone is to ensure the development of a low-carbon economy that is still competitive and does not harm the European economy, which is already very fragile as a result of the global crisis. Moreover, we cannot make demands of ourselves that are not also met by others, leading to a loss of our competitiveness in global markets.

Louis Michel (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) Europe must consolidate the future of the industrial sector by investing more in this area. In fact, large energy-intensive companies are worried about the possibility of companies leaving Europe in order to avoid the increased costs represented by the measures taken to reduce CO₂ in the air.

Such measures will have a negative impact on the European economy and will do nothing to reduce the dangers of greenhouse gas emissions. That is why the adoption of this Roadmap moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050 must serve as the basis for taking political decisions. Europe must take appropriate measures in order to preserve the competitiveness of its economy.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing.* – According to the rapporteur, moving towards a low-carbon economy by 2050 will not only help address the major threats and challenges posed by climate change but will also significantly contribute into turning the European economy into an competitive, efficient and innovative economy able to stay at the forefront of global developments. I disagree with that statement since financial investments do not correspond to the objectives set.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) Trade in emissions certificates is a dubious environmental policy instrument that aims to reduce pollutant emissions. EU trading in carbon dioxide emissions was introduced in the European Union through legislation in 2005. Emissions trading links the emission of greenhouse gases to the possession of licences: anyone producing greenhouse gases is only permitted to release the volume of pollutants for which they have emission rights. If a lower level of pollutants is released than permitted, then the surplus rights can be sold on to others. On the other hand, those who produce too many greenhouse gases can purchase additional emissions rights. In addition, there are also generous free limits allowed by the state. All of this opens up opportunities for speculation and bypasses the actual purpose of the scheme, namely the reduction of CO₂ emissions. Busy trading in emissions certificates thus does nothing to encourage investment in the establishment of a low-carbon economy. Because, according to several well-known scientists, it has not been proven that human CO₂ emissions are the main cause of the greenhouse effect, I have voted against this report.

Claudio Morganti (EFD), in writing. – (IT) Europe cannot bear the burden of the entire world's climatic and environmental problems alone. In fact, I find it absurd that the European Union wishes to go it alone, proposing more stringent limitations on carbon emissions. I am aware that we must move in that direction, but this must certainly not happen at the expense of the competitiveness of the entire economic system. Indeed, our businesses must already comply with far stricter regulations in a whole multitude of sectors than their direct competitors in other countries. Adding further to the burden would be difficult to tolerate. The new emerging countries, which have staggering growth levels compared to the stagnant European economy, pay absolutely no regard to these problems, just like the United States itself among the rest, which has also never agreed to meet the obligations that all other developed countries have already undertaken for some time. The European Union can set an example by overcoming the challenge of climate change, but definitely not in this self-mutilating manner. Instead, it should use its weight, assuming that it counts for something, to convince all the large economies to proceed together to take reasonable steps in common in this direction, to protect our planet and our own future.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE), in writing. – (LT) I want to draw attention to several aspects of this report. Firstly, I am convinced that we should not set specific CO₂ reduction targets. Setting such binding targets would lead both to a reduction in the EU's competitiveness and would be a burden on smaller EU Member States. Secondly, I want to stress the need to promote increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy (together with the development of 'smart networks'). Efficient use of energy (like other resources) would not only contribute to reducing CO₂ emissions but would also have positive economic results – it would save raw materials that are becoming increasingly expensive.

Sławomir Witold Nitras (PPE), in writing. – (PL) Considering the ambitious provisions in this document, which unfortunately are damaging to Poland and the European Union, I had to vote against the report. If the transition to a low-carbon economy were to take place in accordance with this plan, this would result in enormous costs for European industry, high energy costs for households and significant levels of unemployment. I do not need to mention that it is the poorest EU countries that would bear the highest cost for this type of policy.

We are all aware of the value of a low-carbon economy but, especially in times of economic uncertainty, we should focus on areas that do not involve such high costs for industry and ordinary citizens. Furthermore, placing such an ambitious burden on our economy in a context of ever increasing global competition does not seem to be the most sensible solution, even if it were to bring about certain benefits.

Franz Obermayr (NI), in writing. – (DE) In principle, trading in emissions certificates means first of all setting upper limits for greenhouse gases. Certificates are then issued in line with these upper limits that entitle the bearer to produce a particular amount of gas. Countries whose emissions are below the upper limit can sell on their surplus rights. On the other hand, countries that produce greenhouse gases in excess of the upper limit can purchase these emissions rights. Because the certificates can be traded in the open market, the price is determined by supply and demand. Trade in emissions certificates presents a number of problems: the market is not transparent and speculators manipulate prices on the trading platforms. In addition, supposed environmental projects in emerging countries are supported, although the effect of these projects on climate change is systematically over-estimated and many of them are actually counterproductive. Finally, I do not believe

that busy trade in emissions encourages investment in low-carbon technologies. However this would be urgently necessary in order to reduce the greenhouse effect. For that reason, I voted against this report.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), *in writing.* – (EL) Low-carbon emissions require new, alternative forms of energy. Clearly, Europe's energy dependency and the damage that the exploitation of hydrocarbons has caused to the global ecosystem are such that we need a common 40-year European strategy for the energy future of Europe. That is the subject of this particular report, which I voted in favour of. For Greece, this debate is vitally important. In the new technological revolution taking place, especially in the western world, my country, with its rich sun and wind resources, can take the vanguard. The economic crisis gripping Greece at present should not disorientate us; on the contrary, it should encourage us to make haste and make use – and not a moment too soon – of our comparative advantages in the alternative energy sector, for the benefit of Greece, for the benefit of society and for the benefit of the environment. In addition to its huge environmental benefits, this is a sector that, according to all the signs, will be the new driving force for growth.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted for this report on a Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050, as it is aimed at achieving a Europe with a cutting edge, high-tech industry, and with highly skilled professionals creating the products that we need, using fewer resources and emitting less CO₂ in the process. The measures set out in this report contribute towards a genuine 'green economy'.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) Around 90 parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including emerging economies, which are collectively responsible for more than 80% (EU 11%) of global emissions, have made unilateral declarations concerning quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets, albeit not legally binding. If these targets were to become binding, it is vital for national circumstances to be taken into account, along with the pressure which may come to be exerted on the budget. I call on the European Commission to carry out an in-depth assessment at the level of each Member State of the impact of the new carbon reduction targets on the economy, competitiveness and the European labour market, as well as an assessment of the equivalence of the measures adopted by other developed countries, in the context of international negotiations.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I would congratulate the Commission on the 'Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050' that it has presented. Despite requiring major investment in sectors such as technology and green transport, infrastructure such as smart electricity grids and environmental protection, this programme is set to be an asset in the long term. It is our responsibility to show leadership by reducing CO₂ emissions, even if our actions alone are not enough to halt the process of global warming. We should therefore aspire for Europe to have cutting-edge, high-tech industry, with highly skilled professionals creating the products that we need, using fewer resources and emitting less CO₂ in the process. Finally, it should be noted that there is a need to revise the emissions trading system, so that prices recover to the levels set out when the legislation was adopted, and in order to avoid so-called 'carbon leakage' or the possibility that some companies may leave Europe in order to avoid higher costs resulting from the measures taken to reduce CO₂ emissions.

Evelyn Regner (S&D), *in writing.* – (DE) I decided to vote against this report, which contains several positive and necessary proposals for combating climate change at European level, without threatening the competitiveness of European businesses, by bundling together a package of measures. However, despite several commitments from the EU to a withdrawal from nuclear energy generation, this report contains a number of indirect and explicit statements that portray nuclear power as a solution for carbon-free or low-carbon energy production. I find this an anathema, both personally and politically.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – Abstention. Although some good things were saved in the text, that is; endorses the Commission's Roadmap together with its trajectory, the specific milestones for domestic emission reductions of 40 %, 60 % and 80 % for 2030, 2040 and 2050 respectively, and the ranges for sector-specific milestones, as the basis for proposing legislative and other initiatives on economic and climate policy; [trajectory implies 25% domestic reductions for 2020; acknowledges that 20 % energy efficiency would mean internal reduction of 25 % or more by 2020, and that, according to the RM, less ambitious approach would result in significantly higher costs; or recognises current 20 % climate target is not on a cost-effective pathway towards 2050; among others) it also kept very bad aspects, being the most damaging the no explicit call for move to a 30% (RCV AM1/2: 232/383/15), or 25% domestic (RCV AM1/1: 241/378/11) EU target for 2020 and the fact that Member States should have widest possible means of achieving low-carbon electricity generation (including renewable energy sources, nuclear power, use of carbon capture and storage technology, and sustainably produced biomass) RCVpara72/2: 357/238/x).

Licia Ronzulli (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) With this vote, the European Union will be in a position to continue investing in processes that use energy and resources in a much more efficient way. Europe must proceed down the path of the competitive economy, even if its decision-making process is often too slow. The European Union can develop and exercise enduring leadership that is destined to endure only by reducing CO₂ emissions and substantially increasing investment to create a cutting-edge industrial sector.

Andreas Schwab (PPE), *in writing.* – (DE) The common trade policy of the European Union must recognise the interests of workers in all Member States: this group makes a decisive contribution to the prosperity and welfare of Europeans. Against this background, the latest developments at the level of the World Trade Organisation are very much to be welcomed for all Europeans. Europe, India, China and the USA and all of South America can only cooperate in a spirit of partnership in this one world if we have open markets. This is why the forthcoming proposal for implementing the Government Procurement Agreement must serve the objective of open markets – based on the principle of independence.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) Although we are discussing an own-initiative document, the report is responding to a strategy document issued by the Commission in March 2011, in which it set out an ambitious European course for reducing greenhouse gas emissions after 2020: to reduce emissions by 40% by 2030 and by 60% by 2040, in order to arrive at a reduction of 80-95% by 2050. The draft report by Mr Davies proposes to put forward requirements more stringent than those outlined by the Commission; in particular a 25% climate target for 2020 and binding European targets for 2030 and beyond, quite apart from a global climate agreement. Moreover, the report maintains that the Commission must intervene in the current regulatory arrangements of the Emissions Trading System from now until 2020, by withdrawing emissions allowances

from the market or increasing the annual linear reduction requirement for emissions at the European level. Both measures, if introduced, would in fact involve an amendment of the decisions taken by Member States regarding Europe's commitments in the battle against climate change from now to 2020. With this explanation of vote, I wish to express my opposition to amendments that are more stringent than the commitments already entered into as regards reducing emissions by 2020.

Catherine Stihler (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted this way because I believe that unspent carbon capture and storage (CCS) funds from the European Economic Recovery Programme should be reallocated to other CCS projects. Furthermore I am not convinced by the environmental benefits of incorporating nuclear into our low-carbon energy future.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The Commission has issued a communication entitled 'Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050', which is aimed at new public policies enabling specific targets to be hit as regards 40%, 60% and 80% cuts in domestic energy emissions by 2030, 2040 and 2050 respectively. I am voting for this report because I believe that climate change is a key long-term issue for economic and social well-being, and that it therefore requires the adoption of coherent measures at EU level and in terms of international policy. In order to take an integrated approach to the area of renewable energy and climate change for the 2014-2020 period, I consider it vital to establish a strong synergy between the Structural Funds that stem from cohesion policy and the new research and innovation programme, called 'Horizon 2020'. I would also like to stress that financial attention should be given to the outermost regions, as they need to invest heavily in order to achieve greater energy efficiency.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted in favour of the Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050. I voted to set interim greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for 2030 and 2040, but voted against the call for them to follow a linear trajectory as these reductions involve medium- and long-term investments, and the effect is not linear. I voted to introduce a long-term target for reducing the energy consumption of EU building stock by 2050 and to continue to give support for investments in other forms of low-carbon energy generation. I voted against paragraph 24 (item b) which calls for the 1.74% annual linear reduction rate, envisaged by the ETS Directive, to be modified in order to meet the requirements of the CO₂ reduction target by 2050. I voted for Amendment 10 which calls for the assurance that none of the measures proposed will reduce the level of allowances for sectors that may be prone to carbon dioxide leakage according to Decision 2011/278/EU. I voted for Amendment 24 which removes the recognition of the contribution made by nuclear energy to meeting the current 20% reduction target for CO₂ emissions by 2020.

Rafał Trzaskowski (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) I voted against the report because, although the objectives were very ambitious, they were extremely unrealistic. We should move towards reducing carbon dioxide emissions, but not in a way that imposes very high costs on a few Member States. In addition, the EU's climate obligations after 2020 should be dependent on a legally binding global agreement; otherwise we are in danger of creating consequences that are very different from those that were intended.

Dominique Vlasto (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I voted for this report establishing an ambitious and realistic Roadmap to reconcile competitiveness with the fight against global warming. In terms of decarbonising the economy, Europe is setting a good example but it cannot act alone. The emissions generated by one country have an impact on all mankind. There

are no barriers to stop pollution and action must urgently be taken on a global scale. This concerns various fields: energy, transport, industry, housing, agriculture. An integrated approach is therefore needed in order to create the conditions for true green growth. The fight against global warming is dependent on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, energy transition with a view to progressively eliminating the use of fossil fuels and more responsible behaviour. We will not achieve all of this in a matter of years, but I believe that, in the long term, sustained efforts are required, as we will pay a greater price if we wait, and we cannot compromise when it comes to protecting our planet and our environment. In my view, we must rely on innovation and research to produce alternative energy sources and support companies and households in this crusade against global warming.

Josef Weidenholzer (S&D), *in writing.* – (DE) I decided to vote against this report because it contains a number of indirect and explicit statements that portray nuclear power as a solution for carbon-free or low-carbon energy production. I find this an anathema, both personally and politically. The EU should commit itself to a withdrawal from nuclear energy production and reduce greenhouse gases by promoting renewable energies. Until now, market fundamentalists have had the upper hand in determining European climate policy. This has meant that necessary developments in the energy sector have been hampered and neglected for far too long. This situation has to change. Renewable energy should be at the centre of European climate policy. We need to be more courageous!

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) Once again, we are facing a market-facing approach in the so-called transition to a low-carbon economy. Given energy consumption and the flows and patterns thereof, issues such as the production and trading models currently in force, as well as free trade and its impact on the relocation of production, are insufficiently addressed in this report. Some examples of this market-facing approach are that it focuses on private transport, advocates a Single European Sky and includes this sector in the emissions trading system.

Motion for a resolution: RC-B7-0152/2012

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I am voting for this report in view of the recent events in the Netherlands, where the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) has created a website encouraging citizens to complain about immigrants, and I urge the Prime Minister, Mr Rutte to condemn this deplorable initiative on behalf of the Dutch Government and to distance himself from it. This situation should now be used to emphasise the obligation of all EU governments to guarantee the rights of free movement and non-discrimination, so it is important that the Council also formally condemn this initiative by the PVV, since it is an affront to European values and principles. EU enlargement has had a very positive impact on European economies and has made an important contribution to sustained economic growth in the EU, including the Netherlands.

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE), *in writing.* – I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on discriminatory Internet sites and government reactions. At the beginning of February, the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) launched an Internet site calling on people to report complaints arising from the ‘massive labour migration’ of ‘Central or Eastern European citizens’, in particular Poles, Romanians and Bulgarians and asking people whether they have experienced any problems in terms of anti-social behaviour and whether they have lost their jobs to one of those citizens. This attitude is not acceptable; it represents clear discrimination against European citizens and goes against fundamental freedoms, European values of human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human

rights and risks destroying the very basis of the Union, which is pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and freedom of movement. I support the European Parliament's call on the Commission and the Council to do their utmost to stop the spread of xenophobic attitudes such as those expressed on this website and to ensure the effective implementation of the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia in all Member States.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) The Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) has caused controversy over these last few weeks because of its xenophobic remarks. The party's website encouraged the Dutch people to complain about Eastern Europeans living in their country. In this resolution, we have strongly condemned the remarks on this site as we believe it undermines the free movement of persons and openly incites discrimination against European Union workers from Central and Eastern European countries. I have firmly and without hesitating taken a position against the PVV hotline, which places online clearly ill-intentioned remarks and goes against our fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Zoltán Bagó (PPE), *in writing.* – (HU) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on discriminatory Internet sites and government reactions submitted by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) because I find all forms of discrimination and xenophobia condemnable. The Dutch complaint website openly incites hostility within Europe and encourages negative opinions about people on the basis of their nationality. This is incompatible with the values and goals of the European Union. Furthermore, I agree with and would like to highlight the idea in the resolution that such an initiative could set a precedent across Europe and could even give rise to similar initiatives in response. It is, therefore, very important that the website's operation is stopped as soon as possible. The institutions of the European Union, Member State governments and civil organisations must jointly respond to the economic, political and social challenges presented by migration within the EU. Citizens must be made aware of the advantages of migration between Member States and that even though each nation has its own unique culture and history we still all represent European principles and values.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution. The free movement of EU citizens is one of the main freedoms enshrined in the EU Treaties, and EU Member States have made a commitment not to discriminate against people who have come from other Member States and are living and working in their countries. The online hotline set up by the Dutch Freedom Party for complaints about workers that have come from Central and Eastern European countries is fundamentally contrary to basic EU values and violates human dignity, freedom and the principles of equality on which the European Union is based. From the debates that have taken place in plenary and the condemnation of this initiative expressed in solidarity by the leaders of the political groups, it is clear that actions that encourage setting the people of the EU against one another and the promotion of hatred will not be tolerated in the Union. I believe that the citizens of certain EU Member States must not be considered an underclass and the governments of the Member States must ensure that any actions promoting racist or xenophobic manifestations are strictly forbidden.

Regina Bastos (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) European integration is based on the principles of freedom of movement of citizens, including the free movement of workers, who enjoy protection from discrimination on the grounds of nationality, race or ethnic origin. The Member States therefore have an obligation to ensure that all EU citizens can live and work

in Europe, without being discriminated against in any way. At the beginning of February, the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) in the Netherlands launched an Internet hotline calling on people to report complaints arising from the 'massive labour migration' of 'Central or Eastern European citizens', thereby openly urging discrimination against EU workers from the countries of central and eastern Europe, and attacking their freedom of movement. This resolution, for which I voted, calls on the Netherlands Prime Minister to condemn and distance himself from this initiative, and calls on the Council to formally condemn the PVV hotline, since it is an affront to European values and principles. It calls on the Commission and the Council to do their utmost to stop the spread of xenophobic attitudes, and to ensure the effective implementation of the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia in all Member States.

Bastiaan Belder (EFD), *in writing.* – (NL) I abstained from the vote on the motion for a resolution concerning the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV)'s website for reporting nuisance caused by Central and Eastern Europeans. I did so because it is not up to the European Parliament to pronounce a legal judgment on the reporting website, as the resolution seems to want to do. The European Parliament cannot just appoint itself to the bench. I am no fan of this website. It is good for nuisance problems to be tackled, but that is a matter for the police and the justice system. Making a distinction by nationality or ethnic background when dealing with such matters is not good. People are equal before the law. This can also give the impression that Eastern Europeans are predominantly responsible for nuisance. That is a one-sided impression, and it is one that is unjust on these, our fellow European Union citizens, who more often than not work very hard on conditions less favourable than those of Dutch workers. However, I do not endorse the European Parliament's resolution because it is neither balanced nor nuanced.

Ivo Belet (PPE), *in writing.* – (NL) The purpose of this 'reporting' website is doubtless to stir up a row and pour scorn on people in order to gain attention or to distract attention from other issues. We all know that the originators of this website are anti-European and that they do not shrink from using whatever resources it takes to give a bad impression of the European integration project. This website is reprehensible, as it encourages xenophobia and is therefore in contravention of the Treaty. As Commissioner Reding correctly said, the Commission and the Dutch Government must investigate whether the instigators of this website have broken the law as a result. For the rest, I would suggest that we completely ignore all future (contemptuous) initiatives by this party, as that is the only way to deny them the media attention that they are currently so thoroughly enjoying.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) This is a simply scandalous website that we have no choice but to condemn. At the beginning of February 2012 the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) launched an Internet hotline openly calling on people to report complaints arising from the 'massive labour migration' of 'Central or Eastern European citizens'. In contempt of the most fundamental rights and with a clearly discriminatory aim, this site is quite simply unacceptable. In order to combat this kind of dangerous drift in democracy and to reaffirm our fight against racism and xenophobia, we have adopted a political resolution condemning this website. Blatant undermining of the free movement of persons and open incitement to discrimination have no place in the European Union. The Prime Minister must also disassociate himself clearly and swiftly from this deplorable initiative. The Commission and the Council, for their part, must immediately cooperate to curb the propagation of this kind of behaviour, which tarnishes our values and the European project.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this European Parliament resolution because we must stop the creation of websites or hotlines discriminating against workers in other EU Member States. We must defend the free movement of workers and we cannot allow the creation in the European Union labour market of an underclass of workers that faces discrimination. The actions of the Dutch Freedom Party – establishing a website discriminating against workers from Central and Eastern Europe – are deplorable. Official data clearly shows that workers who have come from Central and Eastern Europe contribute to the growth of the Dutch economy through their work and contribute to this country's budget through the taxes that they pay. Both the Netherlands and all other EU Member States must respect the free movement of workers because this freedom brings benefits for citizens of all EU Member States. The free movement of workers is one of the most important European Union values and therefore all workers must have the same rights, must be ensured the same pay for the same work and enjoy the same working conditions. We must not allow the creation of an underclass of workers that faces discrimination and does not enjoy any rights or guarantees. If we do, we will be trampling on all the social standards we gained previously.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) This website obviously provides a platform for instigating discrimination and even hatred based on nationality. I believe that Articles 18 and 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union have been violated. These articles stipulate that any form of discrimination based on citizenship or ethnic origin is prohibited. Furthermore, according to the second paragraph of Article 4(3) of the Treaty on European Union, Member States must take any general or particular measure to ensure fulfilment of the obligations arising out of the Treaties or resulting from the acts of the institutions of the Union (such as the Framework Directive concerning racism and xenophobia). I think that we are faced with blatant discrimination which institutions in the Netherlands are doing nothing about. In addition, the discrimination has the tacit approval of the Dutch Government. This is why the situation is unacceptable. In fact, the European Commission should adopt a very clear stance on initiating infringement proceedings and send a strong message indicating that such acts are not tolerated and that the Treaties must be respected, regardless of the colour of the national flag or the political hue of the government. Otherwise, we will only encourage this kind of behaviour, and governments will be able to hide behind someone else. That is when the Commission will start to lose control of the situation.

Arkadiusz Tomasz Bratkowski (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) A great deal of controversy has been caused by the initiative of 8 February 2012 of the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV). Its highly negative and discriminatory nature stems from the possibility to post anonymous complaints against citizens of Central and Eastern European states who are working in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This initiative is the work of a political party with an aggressively populist programme, but the present minority government is dependent on its support in parliament and has concluded an agreement regarding support for the cabinet. The PVV initiative itself precludes any constructive dialogue about the migration of workers from Central and Eastern Europe and fails to resolve any underlying problems such as widespread bad practice in short-term employment agencies. There are already, within the Dutch administrative system, appropriate institutions that are examining all reports and complaints in an impartial manner, without focusing on any ethnic group. In this light, there is no justification for the PVV to usurp these rights and to duplicate the activities of existing state structures. The Netherlands is a beneficiary of the free movement of people, goods and services throughout the European Union. The PVV initiative is strengthening

stereotypes of Polish workers in the Netherlands, which are contradicted by the facts – the Dutch economy gains real benefit from their work. For this reason I am counting on EU institutions to come forward with specific measures and on a public and critical response by the Dutch Government to the PVV action, which would demonstrate its constructive approach to developing bilateral relations with Poland.

Jan Březina (PPE), *in writing.* - (CS) I would like to add my voice to the majority in the European Parliament condemning the website set up by the PVV party, as it contradicts the fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, and threatens the very essence of the Union, which is comprised of non-discriminatory treatment and freedom of movement. The PVV website has the clear intention of dividing society and achieving political gain at the expense of workers from Central and Eastern Europe. The Dutch Government must clearly condemn and distance itself from this regrettable initiative. We, however, must emphasise the duty of all EU governments to uphold the right to free movement and the right to non-discriminatory treatment. In my opinion, there should be an investigation into whether this initiative amounts to an incitement of hatred. There can be no doubt that workers from the countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 had a positive impact on the economies of Member States and did not cause any fundamental disruption to their labour markets, but on the contrary contributed to the long-term economic growth of the EU. The Commission and the Council should do their utmost to halt the spread of xenophobic ideas such as those expressed on this website, and to ensure effective implementation of the framework agreement on racism and xenophobia in all Member States.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The Internet hotline launched by the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) openly incites discrimination against EU workers from central and eastern European countries. I believe that this website jeopardises the fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. I do not understand why the Dutch Government has remained silent, when it should already have condemned this initiative, thereby enabling it to live up to its role as one of the founding Member States of the EU, underpinned by a set of fundamental values, including the protection of human dignity, non-discrimination, tolerance, pluralism, solidarity and justice. The economic and political climate of recent years cannot serve as an excuse for fuelling the growing resurgence of xenophobic radicalisation and extremism that have been gathering strength in western Europe over the last decade. This has taken shape in speeches against immigration and multiculturalism, *inter alia*, using social networks, the Internet and online tools – in what is called digital populism – as means of fostering hatred and racist feeling.

Corina Crețu (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted in favour of the resolution because this website targeted against East European workers is symptomatic of the anti-European direction the Netherlands is going in. This also includes the zealous refusal to allow Romania and Bulgaria to join the Schengen area and the efforts being made by the Dutch minister for asylum and immigration to obtain support from other Member States in favour of tightening European immigration legislation. The Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte refers to the fact that this site is an initiative launched by a political party and not by his government. However, tolerance of such actions is a clear indication that his government is tacitly encouraging them and accepting views which are contrary to the spirit of European integration and the values which the European Union has been built on. It cannot be said

that this is an internal matter for the Netherlands as long as there is a clear sign of hostility involved against the citizens of 10 EU countries.

Cornelis de Jong (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (NL) Today I voted against the resolution on discriminatory Internet sites and government reactions. Although I profoundly disapprove of the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV)'s website due to its discriminatory nature, the resolution as a whole is one-sided. Of course, the influx of migrant workers from Central and Eastern Europe is a tricky business. That was also shown by the investigation by the Lower Chamber of the Dutch parliament's temporary commission *Lessen uit recente arbeidsmigratie* [Lessons from recent labour migration]. The resolution fails to mention these problems and therefore also fails to provide any solutions, while it is precisely at European level that cooperation is needed in order to face these problems.

Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted for this resolution as it strongly condemns the content of the website launched by the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV). I believe that the information on this website runs counter to the fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, and seeks to denigrate the principles underpinning the EU itself.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) It is an indisputable fact that the Internet now has a public role, influencing not only daily life but also mass movements, political initiatives and communication strategies. Although I recognise that the use and ongoing management of the Internet should be kept private, I believe that the Member States cannot opt out of a present and active regulatory role, particularly with a view to avoiding abuses and violations of the rights of citizens, as may be the case with the aforementioned Dutch sites, which urge discrimination on the grounds of nationality.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The far-right Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), which is part of the coalition government in the Netherlands, has created a website which calls for citizens to make complaints about the 'massive labour migration' of 'Central or Eastern European citizens', in particular Poles, Romanians and Bulgarians.

This resolution condemns this attitude and calls upon the Dutch Prime Minister to condemn and distance himself from this act. It also calls on the Council to formally condemn the website, and urges the Netherlands authorities 'not to turn a blind eye to the policies of the [PVV]', which it believes 'are in contradiction with fundamental EU values'.

The fact is that we are facing something very serious: namely, the growth of xenophobic forces and the far right in the EU. This is inextricably linked to the crisis of capitalism, to the failure of EU policies and to their tragic social consequences. While criticism and condemnation are vital, we should not forget that this should also apply to the policies creating the breeding ground for this type of ideology. Some of these should definitely be consigned to the dustbin of history.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), in writing. – (SK) At the beginning of February, the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) set up the hotline 'Meldpunt Midden en Oost Europeanen' and called on people to report complaints relating to 'mass immigration from Central or Eastern Europe', especially of Poles, Romanians and Bulgarians. The hotline is particularly interested in whether people have encountered problems of antisocial behaviour, or have lost jobs due to these people.

Article 21 of the TFEU, however, enshrines the free movement of citizens in the EU, whilst the free movement of workers is enshrined in Article 45 of the TFEU. The EU is based on

the values of democracy and the principles of the rule of law and unconditional respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, as set out in the Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights.

The PVV hotline, however, openly incites discrimination against workers from EU Member States in Central and Eastern Europe, and creates barriers between the communities in Dutch society. I firmly believe that such behaviour is reprehensible, as it violates the basic European values of human dignity, liberty, equality, the principles of the rule of law and respect for human rights, and risks destroying the very essence of the Union, which is comprised of plurality, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and freedom of movement. With this fact in mind, it is the duty of all EU Member State governments to guarantee the rights of freedom of movement and non-discrimination.

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D), *in writing.* – (PL) In the Netherlands in February, the anti-immigration party of Geert Wilders – the PVV – launched an Internet portal on which complaints and denunciations can be posted regarding the behaviour of economic migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, particularly against Poles. This is an exceptionally disturbing development. The creators of the portal claim that this is just a tool against negative behaviour such as crime, alcoholism, drug addiction or littering which have allegedly increased since May 2007, when the Netherlands opened its labour market to the new EU Member States, including Poland. The portal strikes at one of the pillars of the EU, which is the free movement of people, and it is discriminatory, since it is directed exclusively against specific nations. It is also potentially dangerous as it encourages hostile behaviour and provokes fear among the Dutch population. Mark Rutte, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, has refused to comment on this matter, stating that the portal arose as the expression of the views of a single political party and that the minority government has not entered into a coalition with that party as regards European issues.

Europe is a region of freedom where every citizen should feel safe and equal irrespective of their place of residence. Openly encouraging intolerance and mutual hatred on the basis of subjective views posted on a website is unacceptable in a free Europe. I would therefore ask for practical measures to be taken quickly to outlaw the existing portal and to ban the creation of similar initiatives in the future.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing.* – (FR) Why is the title of this resolution in the plural? This text is aimed at only one Internet site, that of the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), and only one government, the Dutch Government, which is refusing to condemn it. The PVV is trying to prove today that, after having campaigned against EU enlargement in its time, its analysis was correct by calling for concrete testimonies from citizens. This is being hailed as a site for denunciation. It exposes discrimination against Eastern European citizens. However, let us say this straight away: for all your talk of promoting freedom of expression and freedom of opinion in Russia or in Africa, you are quick to put up barriers to it in Europe. Here, the only opinions we are allowed to express are that the European Union is wonderful, that the single currency is a source of prosperity, that the accession of Turkey, Morocco and Uzbekistan is an exciting prospect and that immigration is, invariably, an opportunity, even if it ruins the host countries and destroys the competences of the countries of origin. The one-thought police are watching. Its chief of police, Mr Verhofstadt, even has a foolproof solution to ensure that we all conform to political correctness: banning opposition parties. He did it in his own country. Well, that is indeed democracy!

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this European Parliament resolution because the European Union is founded on the values of democracy and the rule of law, and on unequivocal respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in the ECHR. The Member States have an obligation to all EU citizens to ensure that they are not discriminated against or stigmatised when living and working across Europe. The PVV hotline openly incites discrimination against European Union workers from Central and Eastern European countries and is creating divisions between communities in Dutch society, and this cannot be tolerated. This website undermines the free movement of persons and the right to non-discrimination. We must nurture the fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. The website risks destroying the very basis of the Union, which is pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and freedom of movement.

Filip Kaczmarek (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) I voted in favour of the resolution on discriminatory Internet sites and government reactions. I believe that the Dutch Government should act in a decisive manner and condemn the website created by the Freedom Party (PVV). This portal encourages the posting of complaints and denunciations against citizens from Central and Eastern Europe living in that country. Such action is openly discriminatory. Acting in accordance with the resolution, the Dutch Government should consider whether an invitation to post complaints does not in fact lead to hatred and discrimination. It is right that we recognised in the text of the resolution that this website breaches fundamental European values such as human dignity, freedom and equality as well as respect for the rule of law and human rights. The Dutch Government should not turn a blind eye to the populist games of the Freedom Party. They are contrary to the fundamental values of the European Union. In the resolution we call on the European Commission and the Council to become seriously involved in halting xenophobic attitudes like those instigated by the Dutch Freedom Party. Both institutions should focus on ensuring that the framework decision on combating racism and xenophobia should be properly implemented in all Member States.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The case of the Dutch Freedom Party (PPV) not only represents a grave violation of the rights enshrined in our Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union but also requires us to reflect on those political actions that run contrary to European principles. The strong condemnation of the PPV's initiative, which invited people to post complaints about immigrants from central and eastern Europe on a website specially created for the purpose, is a sign that Parliament wants to take action against those who do not respect the values of democracy, solidarity and transparency on which our Union is founded. This educational and cultural programme aimed at transmitting European values must therefore be carried through if such actions are not to happen again.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) Today's vote in Parliament allowed a firm attitude to be adopted, condemning the initiative of the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), which has launched a xenophobic website where Dutch citizens are encouraged to make complaints against East European citizens in the Netherlands, especially against Romanians, Bulgarians and Poles. The responses from the Commission and Council have been muted so far. I hope that this resolution will spur these institutions on to take all the necessary steps to stop such attitudes being promoted, which flagrantly contravene the EU's

fundamental values. We have used this resolution to call on the Netherlands Government to distance itself from this discriminatory action which is creating a serious precedent.

This discriminatory attitude is backed up by the refusal to allow Romania and Bulgaria to join the Schengen area. In this context, the Netherlands Government must reconsider immediately its attitude to the accession of both states to Schengen and bear in mind the conclusions from the European Council meetings held on 24 June 2011 and 1-2 March 2012, which reaffirm that Romania and Bulgaria have met all the Schengen *acquis* criteria. Similarly, the Commission, as the guardian of the Treaties, must verify the compatibility of the Netherlands' legislation with the relevant European legislation relating to acts which instigate xenophobia and intolerance.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted for this Resolution, which strongly condemns the website launched by the PVV, as it goes against the fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights and risks destroying the very basis of the Union, which is pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and freedom of movement, and considers the PVV hotline as an ill-intentioned initiative aimed at creating divisions within society and obtaining political gain to the detriment of workers from Central and Eastern Europe. I also call on Prime Minister Mark Rutte, on behalf of the Dutch Government, to condemn and distance himself from this deplorable initiative.

Véronique Mathieu (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) We are facing not only the simple undermining of free movement but also unacceptable stigmatisation. The website set up by Geert Wilders' party allowing citizens to anonymously denounce foreign workers by explicitly targeting Central and Eastern European workers encourages confusion. It encourages the rejection of others. Intolerance is hidden behind the mask of anonymity. I am extremely surprised and shocked by the lack of reaction from Mark Rutte. Has he forgotten Article 1 of the Dutch constitution which bans discrimination and declares equality for all citizens living on Dutch soil? Has he forgotten the European values of tolerance? Or is he so afraid of losing the support of Geert Wilders' party that he would turn a blind eye and a deaf ear? Has he forgotten that as a politician his role is precisely to promote living together? Has he forgotten that it is his duty to guarantee European citizens their right to live and work peacefully in the Netherlands? Or is he hiding behind strategic political considerations to the detriment of the common good? To not condemn this degrading initiative is to support it. It is his duty to react.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted for this resolution, as it condemns the website launched by the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), which goes against the fundamental values upon which Europe was founded. The incitement of hatred and racist sentiments is something that should be rejected. The silence of the Dutch Government is incomprehensible, and demonstrates the need for the Member States to play an active regulatory role, in order to prevent violations of fundamental values such as human dignity, freedom and equality. They should also impose respect for fundamental rights and ensure compliance with the very values upon which the EU was founded: pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice and solidarity.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing.* – At the beginning of February, the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) launched an Internet hotline 'Meldpunt Midden en Oost Europeanen', calling on people to report complaints arising from the 'massive labour migration' of 'Central or Eastern European citizens', in particular Poles, Romanians and Bulgarians; people are asked,

in particular, whether they have experienced any problems in terms of anti-social behaviour and whether they have lost their jobs to one of those citizens. I strongly disagree with such practices as they go against the fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights and risk destroying the very basis of the Union, which is pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and freedom of movement.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders's Freedom Party (PVV) recently launched a website that is intended as a 'forum' for Dutch people to discuss their experiences, both positive and negative, with Eastern Europeans in a professional capacity. This is intended to offer citizens a way to pass on this information directly to their public representatives, specifically those from the PVV, who can then incorporate this information in their work. Because the opening up of the labour markets in Western European Member States has led to a dramatic influx of Eastern European workers, it is easy to understand the thought behind this step by the PVV. However, the website should not be used to name and shame individual citizens. Privacy must be respected. I did not vote in favour of the report, as I believe that the question of how to deal with this website is purely a national issue and should be examined within the Netherlands.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE), *in writing*. – (LT) I come from Lithuania, which has been a member of the European Union for eight years. Unfortunately to Western Europe we are still 'new Member States' and our citizens are considered second-class Europeans. It is a shame that political parties in EU Member States are also doing this and that the countries' governments do not oppose it. We declare that the European Union's values are pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance and solidarity. Unfortunately, for many it is more convenient not to promote these values and to ensure compliance with them, but to play to the gallery, promoting hatred on grounds of nationality. I condemn such a policy and call on the Dutch Government to stop the rhetoric, which is becoming increasingly bitter and may grow into real violence at any time.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) This European Parliament resolution on discriminatory websites and government measures represents Parliament's reaction to a website launched by the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), containing xenophobic statements. I voted for this resolution, as I too consider it necessary to stop the spread of xenophobic attitudes such as those expressed on this website. I support the call for the Council to ensure the effective implementation of the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia in all Member States.

Franck Proust (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) We have built the European Union on a foundation of values. They may be called into question at any time. As MEPs, it is our duty to defend them. I therefore voted in favour of this resolution because it is inconceivable that in Europe a government would fail to take measures against private initiatives aimed at inciting racial hatred and xenophobia. That is what is happening in the Netherlands. The government must quickly condemn the websites put in place by their partners in the Freedom Party (PVV). Furthermore, this extreme-right party is openly claiming ownership of these websites. Many questions will need to be asked.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The launch of an Internet hotline calling on people to report complaints arising from the 'massive labour migration' of 'Central or Eastern European citizens', promoted by the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) in the Netherlands,

represents a direct affront to the values and principles upon which the EU is founded, and should therefore be firmly repudiated and publicly condemned. I therefore voted for this resolution, supporting the call for the Netherlands Government to formally condemn this deplorable and malicious initiative.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – In favour of the resolution. As my colleague Cornelissen stated before, this opprobrious website, which actively promotes discrimination and xenophobic attitudes against EU citizens who are exercising their right under EU law to live and work in another member state, should be roundly condemned, particularly by the Dutch government. The EP has today spoken up in favour of core EU values but all EU governments should also do so. It is regrettable that Dutch prime minister Rutte lacks the gumption to condemn this website and defend the rights and values on which the European Union is founded. EU citizens have the right to move, live, study and work wherever in the EU they like and should be welcomed, not discriminated against.

Joanna Senyszyn (S&D), *in writing.* – (PL) I voted in favour of the resolution concerning discrimination against workers from Central and Eastern Europe in the Netherlands. As co-author of the resolution, I would like to thank those Dutch people who have criticised the actions of the Dutch Freedom Party as going too far in their xenophobic ambitions and who are looking forward to the closure of the website, and also my fellow Members in Parliament for condemning the anti-immigration portal. In this Parliament we are united by the idea that all people are equal. We do not agree with expressions of hatred, intolerance, discrimination and exclusion spoken under populist banners. The facts show that at present the principal place where discrimination is disseminated is the media, particularly the Internet, which provides anonymity. The Internet has become a very important channel of communication which makes it possible to plan and carry out actions in the real world. We must turn this situation to our advantage. For this reason our governments must take practical steps: to ensure that national laws make it possible to prosecute when crimes are committed on-line; to create or extend educational programmes in schools, so that they cover these issues, including a European community/education campaign aimed at encouraging social openness to immigrants as well as assurances that actions aimed at combating crime do not threaten freedom of speech.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) At the beginning of February, the Dutch Freedom Party (PPV) launched an Internet hotline for complaints, called *Meldpunt Midden en Oost Europeanen*, calling on people to report complaints arising from the ‘massive labour migration’ of ‘Central and Eastern European citizens’. All this is in defiance of the free movement of citizens in the European Union. With this vote, we strongly condemn the website launched by the PPV, as it goes against the fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, and risks destroying the very basis of the Union, which is pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and freedom of movement. It is also important that the Dutch Government take action and investigate whether this initiative has resulted in an incitement to hatred.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) has launched a website with the aim of inciting citizens to complain about the ‘massive labour migration’ of people from central or eastern Europe, in particular Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. However, according to Article 21 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, ‘Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in the Treaties and by the measures adopted to give them effect’. I agree with this statement, and I strongly

condemn the actions of the PVV and demand that the Dutch Government and the Commission intervene to tackle this xenophobic attitude voiced by a political party.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), in writing. – (RO) I voted for the resolution on discriminatory Internet sites and government reactions because the right to protection against discrimination on the grounds of nationality and against discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin is stipulated in Articles 18 and 10 respectively of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). In addition, Article 21 of TFEU is devoted to the free movement of citizens in the EU, while Article 45 of TFEU is devoted to the free movement of workers in the EU. We should point out that workers from the countries which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 have had a positive impact on the economies of Member States, making a substantial contribution to the sustained economic growth in the EU, and have not caused any upset on the labour markets. We call on the Netherlands Government to reply promptly to the letters sent by the Commission concerning the relevant legislation, which could breach Directive 2004/38/EC on the right of Union citizens and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, and to comply with the requests expressed by the European Parliament in its resolutions. We call on the Commission and Council to make every effort to halt the spread of xenophobic attitudes like those expressed on the website being discussed, and to ensure that the Framework Directive concerning racism and xenophobia is implemented in every Member State.

Ramon Tremosa i Balcells (ALDE), in writing. – One of the fundamental pillars of the EU is freedom of movement of all EU citizens. Another is tolerance of cultural diversity, as ours is a continent with a very rich history. This is why it is the duty of the EP to condemn actions like the webpage created by the Freedom Party in the Netherlands. This webpage may be a catalyst for increasing xenophobia against other EU citizens, and it should be condemned by the government of the Netherlands and by the European Council.

Rafał Trzaskowski (PPE), in writing. – (PL) There is no doubt that the portal in question breaches the fundamental values on which the Europe of today is founded and recalls history's most negative memories. The Dutch Government should immediately distance itself from and condemn all these practices. Its failure to do so is causing enormous damage to the image of its own country.

Johannes Cornelis van Baalen (ALDE), in writing. – (NL) The Dutch People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) rejects this resolution, which condemns the Netherlands on the basis of the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV)'s website. The head of the VVD delegation, Hans van Baalen, has announced a double 'no'. We are saying 'no' to the stigmatising and polarising PVV website, which sends a negative signal to willing workers from Central and Eastern Europe that harms the Netherlands and relations within the EU. The VVD groups in both this House and in the Lower Chamber of the Dutch parliament have therefore spoken out specifically against this website. Furthermore, the heads of the delegations of the VVD and Democrats 66 (D66), together with the chair of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, issued a statement as far back as 13 February this year. Problems need to be recognised and tackled, but this is not the way to do so. There thus cannot be any misunderstanding about the VVD's position. We are also saying 'no' to this Parliament's resolution RC7-0152/2012, which is completely disproportionate and also unfairly takes the Dutch Government to task. It is not up to the European Parliament to call the Dutch Government to order about a website for which it has no responsibility.

That is a fundamental difference with the Hungarian legislation, which represents a violation of EU Treaties. That is not the issue here.

Derek Vaughan (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted in favour for a resolution that calls for an investigation by the Dutch authorities to condemn a Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) website which invites complaints against citizens from Central and Eastern Europe living in the Netherlands, because I believe it openly incites discrimination. This resolution demonstrates that the European Parliament does not tolerate any form of discrimination and calls on the European Commission and the Council to do their utmost to stop the spread of xenophobic attitudes like those expressed on this website. The resolution also calls for the Commission to ensure that the EU Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia is properly enforced in all EU countries.

Josef Weidenholzer (S&D), *in writing.* – (DE) Websites such as those of the right-wing populist Dutch Freedom Party are alarming indicators of the mood in Europe. We need to work together on a Europe based on tolerance and respect rather than exclusion and denunciations. Accordingly, such websites are to be clearly rejected and condemned. At the same time, it also shows how important it is to actively oppose discrimination – even on the Internet.

Roberts Zīle, (ECR), *in writing.* – (LV) The resolution on discriminatory internet sites and government reactions should definitely be supported, because a situation in which a political party on which the ruling coalition relies on for its majority in an EU Member State is openly opposed to the values on the basis of which the EU was created is unacceptable. Free movement of people and workers is one of the pillars of the EU Treaty, and in addition studies clearly show that the arrival of labour from the new EU Member States has had a positive influence on the economies of the 'old' Member States. I fully agree with the call in the resolution upon the Government of the Netherlands to condemn and distance itself from the actions of its partner party in setting up and maintaining an Internet site directed against the citizens of other EU Member States. In this context I was particularly concerned about the ever-increasing intolerance and lack of solidarity between EU Member States. The EU's inability to subscribe to common values as a united bloc is reducing its influence in the world, and particularly in Eastern Europe, where Russia is trying to exploit the EU's weakness in order to retain and increase its economic and political influence. Unfortunately, the response of the EU and its Member States to the real economic problems is, essentially, aimed in two fundamentally opposing directions: on the one hand, rapid federalisation of the EU is being promoted, all too often without taking into account the interests of the Member States, and on the other hand an anti-EU attitude, motivated by a narrow nationalism, is gathering strength in the Member States.

Zbigniew Ziobro (EFD), *in writing.* – (PL) The PVV's xenophobic website deserves unequivocal and general condemnation. We cannot permit such behaviour in the European Union. The debate on this reprehensible idea is also a debate on the boundaries of free speech. Boundaries that, in this instance, have been brutally transgressed by prejudices stemming from fear. Unfortunately, the Dutch authorities too are unable to rid themselves of this fear. There is no clear condemnation of this website and its creators. This is even more serious since this is a breach of the statements adopted as part of EQUINET. This was created in order to strengthen measures supporting equal treatment on a European level. Today the Netherlands, a member of EQUINET, has quickly forgotten its obligations.

In Europe there is a certain dangerous tendency to restrict access to the common market by citizens of the new Member States. Truly awful ideas to suspend the Schengen area, to introduce limits on economic migrants from Central Europe or racist Internet websites; all of these are symptoms of the rotten mentality of their creators. Our reaction is therefore key. Commissioners Viviane Reding and Cecilia Malmström should have intervened in this matter long ago and should have considered the compliance of the translations and entries on the website with European Union law. It is my hope that the European Parliament will adopt the resolution condemning the website's creators and will ask for it to be closed down. I also hope that our debate today will encourage the Prime Minister of Holland to rebuke his coalition partner.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) Europe has experienced the tragic consequences for its peoples of the rise and history of Nazism and fascism. Those who do not accept freedom cannot be tolerated, and the resurgence of xenophobic, racist, discriminatory and pro-fascist policies cannot be accepted, as they jeopardise democratic freedoms and rights. In view of this, we believe that it is vital to condemn the website created by the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), on which it urges public condemnation of what it calls 'massive labour migration'. It is vital that we defend liberty and democracy, and that we do not return to the times when fascism promoted ethnic and xenophobic discrimination to explain the crisis of capitalism.

Motion for a resolution: B7-0177/2012

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I am voting for this motion for a resolution. It is President Medvedev's duty to ensure that his deeds match his words, and ensure the adoption of the necessary reforms of the political system. Moving in this direction means, for example, making the necessary simplifications to the rules governing the registration of political parties, and making a serious commitment to addressing the problems of media freedom and freedom of assembly and expression. In these areas, the EU should show its readiness to cooperate with Russia, in order to improve respect for human and fundamental rights. In order for this to happen, first and foremost, there needs to be constructive dialogue between the Russian authorities and the political parties represented in the State Duma and the pro-democracy opposition, in the interests of a comprehensive reform, transparency and democracy. In view of this, it would be advisable for the president-elect, Vladimir Putin, to tone down his rhetoric against the protestors and engage with them in genuine dialogue on the future of the country.

Pino Arlacchi (S&D), *in writing.* – I support the aim of this motion for a resolution because it reiterates once again our concerns for the State Duma elections of last December and for the presidential elections held on 4 March. The OSCE preliminary conclusion of 5 March states that the electoral process had been distorted through shortcomings in the registration process for candidates and unequal and biased media coverage. The Russian Federation is a full member of the Council of Europe and the OSCE and has therefore committed itself to the principles of democracy. Therefore we ask for comprehensive analyses of all irregularities with a view to strengthening democratic rules for future elections. I also believe that President Vladimir Putin should engage with protestors in a sincere dialogue on the future of the country.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) After the events which took place in Russia, the fraud reported by the European observers on the ground during the presidential elections, we wanted to inform the Russian authorities that it would be more than desirable

for them to change their electoral system. According to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 'the electoral process had been deeply skewed in favour of one candidate through shortcomings in the registration process for candidates, unequal and biased media coverage and the use of State resources in favour of one candidate'. The international observers attested to ballot stuffing and irregularities in one-third of the voting offices that were checked. We are calling, on the one hand, for the new Russian President to simplify the registration rules for political parties and, on the other, I think it is time for Vladimir Putin to engage in a 'sincere dialogue' with the protesters.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution. Russia has always been and continues to be a strategic partner and direct neighbour of the EU. As a member of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Russia has therefore committed itself to respecting the universally accepted principles of democracy and the protection of human rights. The OSCE has expressed concern over the organisation and conduct of the Presidential elections held in Russia, particularly with regard to the cumbersome registration process for political parties and the limited number of candidates. I welcome the resolution's call for the new Russian President to cooperate more closely with the EU in implementing the most important reforms and increasing the protection of human rights.

Regina Bastos (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The EU, as Russia's strategic partner and neighbour, has followed the election process and public debate with particular interest, as well as the widespread and ongoing protests relating to the presidential elections held on 4 March. Through demonstrations, the Russian people have expressed their will for more democracy and reform of the electoral system. The existence of shortcomings and irregularities in the preparation and conduct of these elections and the fact that voters' choices were limited deserve criticism. It is therefore important to ensure the commitment of the Russian authorities to adopting the necessary reforms of the political system, welcoming the much-needed simplification of the rules governing the registration of political parties, as well as a serious commitment to respecting media freedom and freedom of expression. In view of this, the EU is expressing its readiness to cooperate with Russia, in order to improve respect for human and fundamental rights, as well as the effectiveness of an independent system of rule of law in Russia. I voted for this motion for a resolution because I believe that the measures therein will contribute to greater transparency and respect for democratic principles.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) Vladimir Putin's victory in the first round of the presidential elections on 4 March signalling his return to the Kremlin after four years as Head of Government came as a surprise to no one. This vote, which was once again marred by fraud in spite of the installation of webcams that were supposed to ensure its smooth running, was a mockery of an election. The massive protest movement that has spread across Russia since the controversial legislative elections in December means that Vladimir Putin can no longer act as if the opposition did not exist. Twenty years after the fall of the Soviet regime, Vladimir Putin must listen to the opposition and implement the reforms needed for the transition to democracy and respect for human rights. It is for all of these reasons that I supported Parliament's motion for a resolution on this subject, in which the European Union is calling on Russia to implement deep reforms to its political system and put in place a true rule of law.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The EU, as Russia's strategic partner and direct neighbour, has been following the election process and the public debate, as well as the widespread protests that took place during the elections of last December and the presidential elections held on 4 March. The protestors have expressed their will for more democracy and a comprehensive reform of the electoral system. The existence of shortcomings and irregularities in the preparation and conduct of the presidential elections and the fact that voters' choice was limited should be subject to strong criticism. It is therefore important to ensure the commitment of the Russian authorities to the adoption of the necessary reforms of the political system, including welcoming the much-needed simplification of rules governing the registration of political parties, as well as a serious commitment to respecting media freedom and freedom of expression. In view of this, the EU is expressing its readiness to cooperate with Russia, in order to improve respect for human and fundamental rights, as well as the effectiveness of an independent rule-of-law system in Russia. I am voting for this motion for a resolution because I believe that the measures therein will contribute to greater transparency and respect for all democratic principles.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Unlike the Council, Parliament is not hiding behind its own interests and what is convenient, while it is clear what has happened in Russia. The existence of shortcomings and irregularities in the preparation and conduct of the presidential elections and the fact that voters' choice was limited should be subject to strong criticism. All of the international observers have indicated as much beyond any doubt. Through demonstrations, the Russian people have expressed their will for more democracy and a comprehensive reform of the electoral system. It is therefore important to ensure the commitment of the Russian authorities to adopting the necessary reforms of the political system, including welcoming the much-needed simplification of rules governing the registration of political parties, as well as a serious commitment to respecting media freedom and freedom of expression. The fact that the Russian authorities are violently repressing all protests against electoral fraud is also a matter for criticism.

Anne Delvaux (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Parliament's motion for a resolution on the situation in Russia after the elections mentions concerns about the developments in the country with regard to respect for and the protection of human rights and respect for commonly agreed democratic principles, electoral rules and procedures. We must not forget that the Russian Federation is a completely separate member of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and, as a result, it is committed to respecting the principles of democracy and respect for human rights. The OSCE and the Council of Europe have stated in a joint statement that the electoral process was clearly skewed in favour of one candidate. I strongly condemn this state of affairs and I am asking the Russian authorities and political parties represented in the State Duma to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the pro-democracy protesters and opposition in the interests of a comprehensive reform, transparency and democracy.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted for this motion for a resolution, as I believe that the Russian authorities and the political parties represented in the State Duma should engage in constructive dialogue with the pro-democracy protestors and opposition in the interests of comprehensive reform, transparency and democracy in the Russian Federation.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The presidential elections in Russia have highlighted the central role of Vladimir Putin in driving the destiny of his country, confirming the secondary role that had been attributed by many observers to the former president,

Mr Medvedev. Like those that preceded them, these elections were marked by the international community's doubts about the whole process and, while it is not likely that they have cast the winner into doubt, they may at least cast doubt on the scale of Mr Putin's victory. Unequivocal compliance with better international standards is therefore required. Russia is facing a significant strategic challenge, and it is to be expected that it will have to choose between its recent alignment with China and closeness to Europe. Despite the recent partnership between Russia and China in support of the Syrian regime, I believe that, in the medium and long term, Russia is bound to recognise that its interests will be better served if it opts for increased closeness with the West. I hope that this will indeed happen and that it will seek to adopt Western models and practices that are in line with this hoped-for future closeness.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) Despite the serious suspicions of electoral fraud in the presidential elections of 1996, neither the EU nor the US refrained from praising Russian democracy and the election of the candidate who suited them at the time: namely Boris Yeltsin. The criticism being levelled today, including that which underlies this resolution, demonstrates the EU's famous policy of double standards. The EU, like the US in fact, has already realised that the Russian Government is not prepared to submit entirely to its interests. Since it is impossible to conceal its role of serving the national plutocracy, the Russian Government has blocked the interests of these two regions, while preserving its national resources from foreign interests, particularly in terms of energy. More recently, Russia's veto in the UN Security Council on military intervention in Syria meant that the US and the EU saw their expansionist aims blocked. In short, what is worrying the EU and the US is not the defence of democracy, but their desire for Russia to have a government that is more open to satisfying their undisguisable interests and ambitions for imperial domination.

Carlo Fidanza (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution calling on Russia, as an important partner of the European Union, to open substantial dialogue with the demonstrators in defence of the principles of democracy and transparency. President Medvedev should match deeds to words and guarantee the adoption of the necessary reforms of the political system and make a serious commitment to address the numerous problems of media freedom and freedom of assembly and expression. Parliament supports this improvement and, should it be necessary, offers its cooperation, especially as regards respect for, and the reinforcement and protection of, fundamental human rights.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), *in writing.* – (SK) The EU is a strategic partner and direct neighbour of Russia, and we followed with particular interest the election process and public debate in Russia, and the large and lengthy protests in relation to last year's December elections to the State Duma, and the presidential elections at the beginning of March. Concerns persist over developments in the Russian Federation regarding the observance and protection of human rights and adherence to commonly agreed democratic principles, election rules and procedures. The Russian Federation, however, is a full member of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and therefore has an obligation to defend the principles of democracy and respect for human rights.

In my opinion, it is essential to adopt a critical attitude to Russia, but it is also right to fully support the modernisation programme, which includes dialogue on economic and political reform. This is the way to achieve the introduction and implementation of reforms targeting existing deficiencies. The criticisms of discrepancies in the preparation and organisation

of the elections are justified, but at the same time it is necessary to make an effort to strengthen democratic rules for future elections. It is important for President Medvedev to secure adoption of essential reforms to the political system, and it is also necessary for the new Russian president to be ready to continue with these reforms.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), in writing. – (LT) I voted in favour of this European Parliament motion for a resolution on the outcome of the presidential elections in Russia because there remains great concern about developments in the Russian Federation with regard to respect for and the protection of human rights and respect for commonly agreed democratic principles, electoral rules and procedures. The Russian Federation is a full member of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and has therefore committed itself to the principles of democracy and respect for human rights. President Medvedev should be true to his word and guarantee the adoption of the necessary reforms of the political system. The new Russian President must be ready to take the reforms forward, including the much-needed simplification of rules governing the registration of political parties. The problems of media freedom and freedom of assembly and expression must be addressed, and respect for human and fundamental rights (here the crucial question is releasing political prisoners) and the effectiveness of an independent rule-of-law system in Russia must be improved.

Sandra Kalniete (PPE), in writing. – (LV) I voted for this motion for a resolution because I believe that the European Parliament has a duty to give a crystal-clear assessment of the elections in Russia, which were neither free nor fair. I believe that the principles underlying fair elections were grossly contravened. These principles are: even-handed registration of candidates, free and equal access to the media by candidates, and equality between voters (one citizen, one vote). Serious contraventions were also observed in the vote-counting process. I hope that, following the ‘election’ of Mr Putin, the various democratic opposition groups in Russia will rally around a programme of positive political reforms and will offer an alternative to Russian citizens, one with a possibility of becoming a reality in free and fair elections at some point in the foreseeable future.

Krišjānis Kariņš (PPE), in writing. – (LV) In the European Parliament’s part-session in Strasbourg I supported the motion for a resolution on the outcome of the presidential elections in Russia. The motion for a resolution criticises the election process and recommends that the necessary reforms of the political system be implemented. I voted for the resolution because I believe that the principles of democracy are extremely important and that failure to respect human rights and general electoral standards is unacceptable. We cannot allow a situation to arise where the mass media deliberately disseminate unequal and biased information about the presidential candidates, allowing one of them to obtain significant advantages. Changes to the political system must be encouraged, among them the amendment of the electoral law and the simplification of the rules on registering political parties, giving them a greater chance of participating in elections, in order to prevent restrictions on political competition and, thus, democracy.

David Martin (S&D), in writing. – I voted for this resolution, which strongly criticises the shortcomings and irregularities in the preparation and conduct of the Presidential elections in Russia, and the fact that voters’ choice was limited; welcomes the significant civic engagement in the campaign; and calls for comprehensive and transparent analyses of all irregularities with a view to strengthening the democratic rules for future elections.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Enhanced cooperation and good neighbourly relations between the EU and Russia are key to Europe's stability, security and prosperity. The development of a strategic partnership between the EU and the Russian Federation can only be founded on shared values. However, concerns remain about developments in the Russian Federation with regard to respect for and the protection of human rights and respect for commonly agreed democratic principles, rules and procedures. The Russian Federation is a full member of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and has therefore committed itself to respecting the principles of democracy and human rights. On 12 April 2011, the European Court of Human Rights condemned the cumbersome registration procedures for political parties in Russia, which do not meet the electoral standards set by the Council of Europe and the OSCE, and ruled that the limitations on the registration of political parties and candidates restrict political competition and pluralism in Russia. We must continue to encourage Russia's leaders to adopt more democratic practices towards the opposition parties.

Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR), in writing. – (PL) I supported the motion for a resolution on the results of the presidential elections in Russia for reasons that included the fact that important amendments were included in the resolution concerning the situation of political prisoners. Amendment 17 tabled by the European Conservatives and Reformists Group calls for a review of the investigation in the Sergei Magnitsky case. The amendment gives a positive assessment of the instructions to the Prosecutor General to review 32 criminal cases including that relating to Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Additional calls for a review of the Sergei Magnitsky case are very important for the promotion of democracy and rule of law in the Russian Federation and are an important symbol for Magnitsky's family.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), in writing. – The European Parliament takes note of the results of the presidential elections in the light of the preliminary conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR; stresses, in full support of the modernisation agenda, which covers dialogue on both economic and political reforms with a view to introducing and implementing reforms addressing existing deficiencies, the necessity of a critical engagement with Russia; strongly criticises the shortcomings and irregularities in the preparation and conduct of these elections and the fact that voters' choice was limited; welcomes the significant civic engagement in the campaign, and calls for comprehensive and transparent analyses of all irregularities with a view to strengthening democratic rules for future elections; it also invites President Medvedev to match the deed to the word and to guarantee the adoption of the necessary reforms of the political system. However, I abstained.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) Even if everything had been completely fair, the opposition would have been able to achieve very little in view of the co-existence of completely different political goals, the lack of shared concepts and of a credible leader. Russia cannot be measured by Western standards. The journey of a post-communist country to open democracy is a long one, as the various colourful revolutions have demonstrated. The EU should refrain from trying to teach Russia lessons in democratic politics and should instead work on its own democratic deficit, putting an end to the leftist authoritarian pressure on Hungary. I therefore voted against this motion for a resolution.

James Nicholson (ECR), in writing. – I believe that the elections in Russia were unfair, unjust and riddled with irregularities. This should be investigated. We as a grouping call for free, fair and independent elections in Russia – with all political parties represented. This is what the people of Russia want. We will work closely with the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee to consistently raise the issue of democracy,

fundamental rights and the rule of law with the Russian counterparts. We also note President Medvedev's announcement of comprehensive changes to the political system. We await these changes with anticipation. We in the ECR totally and unreservedly condemn the crackdown by police on peaceful demonstrations held in protest at election irregularities. Fraud has been widely reported by independent election monitors and observers in the country in both last year's parliamentary and the recent presidential election. The Russian authorities need to engage in dialogue with the opposition. We in the ECR regret that the Putin-led administration decided to deny registration for the presidential election campaign of Grigory Yavlinsky, opposition leader of the Liberals. This stance also prevented Mr Yavlinsky's party from sending observers to polling stations to monitor events.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution. The outcome of the elections did not surprise anyone, nor, unfortunately, have the events that have followed. I would like to ask rhetorically whether the European Union is satisfied with its strategic partnership with Russia and whether the EU believes that current formats, such as the dialogue on human rights, are producing any tangible results? The EU and Russia are mutually dependent but the EU's strategic partner is not afraid of exploiting the disadvantages EU Member States face in energy for instance. Sometimes there is the impression that, as far as Russia is concerned, the EU is either wearing rose-tinted spectacles or is being purely pragmatic, which is dangerous for the EU. Friendship is highly desirable, but only if it is genuine. In the second Putin era, which has only just begun, heavy-handed rule and politics without compromise will only intensify, and the European Parliament will frequently have to return to the issue of human rights and democracy in Russia.

Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) When observing the Presidential elections in St Petersburg I did not see anyone attempting to advise or tell people which candidate to vote for, but I did notice that some loopholes created in voting procedures would make it very easy to do so. On the other hand, the 100 million invested by the Kremlin in modernising the elections has discouraged potential fraudsters. I would agree with the experts that many Russians were scared of noisy opposition rallies, and demands to change the government and organise repeat elections to the Duma. Vladimir Putin's twelve years in power are associated with stability, a steady if slight improvement in living conditions and the softening of the impact of the crisis. It is the opposite of the Gorbachev and Yeltsin eras of street politics when reforms had a severe impact on ordinary people. I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution, which highlights that the significant activity by citizens recently should continue and turn into a social movement forcing the government to completely reform the political system and also simplify the rules governing the procedures for the registration of political parties and candidates in Presidential elections and their participation in elections. Only with a reformed Russia will it be possible to continue to develop productive and dynamic relations and create prosperity for Europe and Russia.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Political dialogue between the EU and Russia is extremely important for both parties. This motion for a resolution sets out Parliament's observations on the presidential elections in Russia. I voted in favour, as I believe that the observations made are constructive and support the wishes of the Russian people, who have demanded more reforms through frequent, peaceful demonstrations bringing together a staggering number of citizens.

Alojz Peterle (PPE), *in writing.* – (SL) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution, because I believe that in our desire to strengthen our partnership with Russia, Parliament and the whole European Union should be clear about the basic pre-requisites for such a development.

Franck Proust (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution, which shows our concern with regard to the political situation in Russia. Mr Putin is turning democracy into Tsarist oligarchy; he is brushing aside freedom and civic rights. I want to show my complete solidarity and support for the opponents of this system but also to express my greatest respect for peaceful struggle.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The allegations of irregularity in the elections to the State Duma and the recent presidential elections are likely to elicit major concerns with regard to Russia's respect for human rights and democratic principles. It is therefore vital that Russian policy makers engage in meaningful dialogue with the opposition, and that they adopt the reforms needed to ensure effective political competition and pluralism by promoting the simplification of rules governing the registration of political parties, by tackling the problems of media freedom and freedom of assembly and expression, and by deepening the rule of law and democratic transparency.

Robert Rochefort (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) Following the Duma elections on 4 December 2011 and the presidential elections on 4 March 2012, the Russian people have expressed, by means of a number of demonstrations, their will for more democracy and a comprehensive reform of the electoral system. Despite the Russian authorities' recent limited initiatives to improve election laws, the general rules remain overly complex and in some cases vague, leading to inconsistent application of the legal basis. The text of this motion for a resolution strongly criticises the shortcomings and irregularities in the preparation and conduct of these elections, highlighting in particular the unequal treatment of the Russian broadcast media towards candidates during the electoral campaign and condemning the arrest of dozens of protestors during the demonstrations. Furthermore, it stresses, in full support of the political modernisation agenda, the necessity of a critical engagement with Russia on the part of the EU. The text invites President Medvedev to guarantee the adoption of the necessary reforms of the political system and encourages the different democratic opposition groups to unite more closely around a positive programme of political reforms. As I am convinced of the usefulness of this text, I have supported it.

Tokia Saïfi (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) On 4 March, the Russian citizens went to the ballots to elect their Head of State and it was Vladimir Putin, already President of the Russia Federation from 2000 to 2008, who won the election with more than 63% of the votes. The report by the international observers from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is worrying. Serious shortcomings and many irregularities have been revealed. In the context of the not-so-transparent legislative elections in December, the result of these latest elections is a cause of great concern for the European Union. Indeed, this confirms the undemocratic nature of the Russian electoral system. That is why I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution through which Parliament is inviting the Russian authorities to investigate this latest missed election opportunity. Above all else we have stressed respect for freedom of expression and encouraged the Kremlin to open dialogue with civil society as soon as possible.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) The cooperation agreement between the European Union and the Russian Federation was signed in 1997 and extended until 2010, when it was replaced by a new agreement establishing a comprehensive framework for bilateral relations. Notwithstanding the agreements that were signed, the EU continues to have major concerns with regard to the protection of human rights, and to respect for the democratic and electoral principles in force in Russia. I am voting for this report, as I agree with the electoral observation mission, which found irregularities in the preparation and conduct of the elections, and in the fact that voters' choices were limited, making it important to reform the current political system. Finally, I also believe that the growing civic participation in the electoral campaign is extremely positive, as this should enable a comprehensive and transparent analysis of all irregularities, with a view to strengthening the democratic rules for future elections.

Róza Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) I decided to support the European Parliament motion for a resolution criticising the course of the presidential elections in Russia because there are clear signals that they were not organised in accordance with democratic standards. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and GOLOS, which is an independent non-governmental organisation that monitors the transparency of elections in Russia, have flagged up that during the recent presidential elections there were irregularities both during voting and during vote-counting in one in three polling stations. According to independent observers, the results of the elections were manipulated by so-called 'carousel' voting, which involves transporting voters to different polling stations so that the same people can vote many times. There were also reports of bribery and ballot stuffing.

Many opposition candidates were not allowed to register to take part in the elections. During the election campaign there was unequal access to the media, to Vladimir Putin's considerable advantage. At the same time, however, I am pleased to see the increasing involvement of Russian citizens, whose voices, demanding democracy in their country, are becoming ever louder. I am also hoping that the pre-election promises by the Russian authorities, particularly those concerning strengthening of the rule of law, respect for human rights, independence of the judiciary, as well as steps to combat corruption, will be kept.

Vladimir Urutchev (PPE), *in writing.* – (BG) I support the motion for a resolution on the presidential elections held in Russia. In spite of the numerous infringements in the electoral process, we must acknowledge that Russians would have elected Putin as president according to the country's current legislation, regardless of whether it was in the first or second round. The next six years mean the need for cooperation with Russia under this president, the continuation of negotiations on a new partnership, the expansion of mutually beneficial economic relations and for progress to be achieved in reaching consensus on values and the protection of human rights.

One matter of particular concern is the difficult and extremely restrictive process for smaller parties, especially opposition parties, to register to participate in elections. This is an area where the EU must be very insistent on using all its leverage to ensure that the procedures are eased and more parties are allowed to take part in public and political life. The strong, unprecedented wave of protests in the wake of the Russian parliamentary elections in December and the presidential elections in March are evidence of an awakening and change in Russian society.

Although we are currently witnessing hostile rhetoric from the newly-elected president towards the opposition movements and protests, the strong central authorities will not be able not to take account of this new reality in Russia. Let us contribute in a considerate, uncompromising manner to getting rid of the policies promoting restriction and repression in public and political life in Russia.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), *in writing*. – This motion for a resolution assesses the results of the Russian Presidential elections held in March. It is recalled that, although the results of the elections have been accepted, they have generated many complaints and thousands of citizens are unhappy. The OSCE/ODIHR and other agencies have developed conclusions which reveal the existence of irregularities. That is why it asks the new government to raise awareness of the need to modernise its democratic institutions and ensure respect for human rights, which are today in question.

Marina Yannakoudakis (ECR), *in writing*. – A saying by former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin is a favourite among Russians. When an attempted monetary reform by the Central Bank ended disastrously, Chernomyrdin said: ‘we hoped for the best but it turned out as usual’. Nowadays, Russians laconically use Chernomyrdin’s fatalistic phrase to describe their everyday situation. When it comes to democracy in Russia we are still hoping for the best and yet tragically things turn out as usual. In December, this house passed a resolution on the Duma elections urging Moscow to hold ‘free and democratic presidential elections’ and yet the March vote too turned out as usual. The OSCE stated that the presidential elections were ‘clearly skewed’ in favour of Putin and that overly-prescriptive rules on registration limited competition. Russia is an important partner for the EU and it is vital for our mutual prosperity that we boost trade ties. However it is difficult to build commercial links when Russia is crying out for democratic reform. European companies are also put off by the level of corruption and the lack of respect for the rule of law. We must see real and lasting change in Russia if it is to become a meaningful partner for the EU.

Roberts Zīle, (ECR), *in writing*. – (LV) I believe that the motion for a resolution on the outcome of the presidential elections in Russia should certainly be supported, since it criticises the shortcomings and irregularities in the preparation and conduct of the elections held on 4 March this year, including the fact that voters’ choice was limited. The general election rules in Russia remain overly complex and unclear and are applied inconsistently. The resolution also calls for a transparent analysis of the electoral irregularities, so that in the future the election system may be improved. The retention of the existing system in Russia is unfortunately a precondition for it to continue to also maintain its existing conception of foreign policy, which is based on empire-building ambitions and dreams of keeping hold of and increasing power and influence in Russia’s neighbouring states. It makes me anxious that the not altogether legitimate results of the Russian presidential elections will now serve for many years as the basis for the policy implemented towards Latvia by our neighbour state in attempts both to destabilise the domestic political situation and to gain economic influence, particularly in the transport and energy sectors.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The criticisms implicit in this motion for a resolution on the results of the presidential elections in Russia merely demonstrate, once again, that the EU has double standards. It is a fact that when there were suspicions of electoral fraud in the presidential elections of 1996, neither the EU nor the US refrained from praising Russian democracy and the election of the candidate who suited them at the time: namely Boris Yeltsin. The US and the EU have already realised that the Russian

Government is not prepared to submit entirely to their imperialist interests. The Russian Government has been demonstrating this through a certain economic and political independence, as well as defending its national resources, particularly in terms of energy, and advocating the role of the state in certain strategic sectors. More recently, Russia's veto in the United Nations Security Council on military intervention in Syria meant that the US and the EU saw their expansionist aims blocked. The issue worrying the EU and the US, therefore, is not the defence of democracy, but their desire for Russia to have a government that better serves their interests.

Motion for a resolution: RC-B7-0135/2012

Damien Abad (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of a motion for a resolution condemning the ruthless repression of a social protest movement in Kazakhstan in December 2011 and calling for the government to undertake further political reforms in light of the negotiations for the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union.

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I am voting for this report because I believe the human rights situation has been deteriorating over recent months. Kazakhstan needs to give a clear signal that it respects human rights. Moreover, we must be very critical of the election of President Nazarbayev, which was clearly fraudulent and has been strongly challenged by international bodies.

Pino Arlacchi (S&D), *in writing*. – I support this resolution because the past months have been marked by a deterioration of the human rights situation in Kazakhstan. The violent crackdown by the police forces on demonstrators in Zhanaozen in December must be condemned and an independent investigation of the events is necessary. In addition to that, in the OSCE/ODIHR-led international delegation, several observers found that the 15 January 2012 parliamentary elections did not meet fundamental principles of democratic elections. For these reasons, with this text we ask the Kazakh Government to rapidly improve respect for freedom of expression and to respect international election standards.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Always with the aim of transmitting our democratic values to our neighbours, I voted in favour of a report dealing with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Kazakhstan. This agreement must depend on the progress of political reform and human rights in the country and I actively encourage Kazakhstan to strengthen dialogue with the European Union on these issues. Our cooperation is conditional: economic cooperation will not take place without political cooperation. Pluralistic elections and the freedom of all political prisoners are two examples of the prerequisites needed to strengthen any economic cooperation.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution. Relations between the EU and Kazakhstan are based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in 1999. Negotiations on a new EU-Kazakhstan agreement, which would replace the agreement currently in force, were launched in 2011. Recently there has been increasing unrest in Kazakhstan, which is claiming people's lives. Repressive measures have also been taken against trade union activities in the country, aggressive attacks against the independent media are continuing and the human rights situation in the country is rapidly worsening. I welcome the resolution's calls for the Government of Kazakhstan to ensure an independent international investigation into the events in western

Kazakhstan and to guarantee that those who organised these violent attacks will be punished.

Adam Bielan (ECR), in writing. – (PL) The Republic of Kazakhstan plays an important role for the security and stability of Central Asia. This country has also become an important partner for Europe because of its economic potential and its natural resources. The continuation of our cooperation, as well as political dialogue with Astana, require the negotiation of a new understanding to replace the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which is now reaching its term. The need to make economic and political relations both closer and deeper would appear to be fully justified. Unfortunately the recent events involving the brutal repression of striking oil workers in Zhanaozen have cast a shadow over the reliability of this country. While the involvement of the President in investigating the circumstances of this heinous act is encouraging, the authorities are still a long way at present from starting a constructive social dialogue. Instances of breaches of freedom of speech as well as arrests of representatives of the media and the opposition are also worrying. With the above in mind I abstained from voting.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing. – (LT) I voted in favour of this European Parliament motion for a resolution because the European Union and Kazakhstan could derive important benefits from closer cooperation. The European Parliament supports this objective while stressing that economic cooperation must go hand in hand with political cooperation and must be based on the political will to implement and uphold common values. It should be noted that Kazakhstan plays a crucial role for the socio-economic development of Central Asia and the stability and security of the region. The European Parliament expresses its deep concern and its condolences regarding the events that took place on 16 December 2011 in the Zhanaozen district of Kazakhstan, when 17 people died and 110 others were injured. It also strongly condemns the violent crackdown by the police against demonstrators in Zhanaozen, and calls for an independent and credible investigation into the events, with an international component. It is very important to continue to strengthen relations between the EU and Kazakhstan and political and economic cooperation, including in strategic areas such as democracy, human rights, the environment, energy, trade and transport, as well as combating terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking.

Corina Crețu (S&D), in writing. – (RO) The events which took place in Kazakhstan prior to and in the wake of the elections held on 15 January are just one case which leads us again to the same dilemma: profitable stability for European interests or respect for human rights? It is becoming increasingly evident that the regime of President Nursultan Nazarbayev is moving increasingly further away from any democratic standard. This is highlighted by the Head of State's re-election with 95% of the votes in April last year, having been in office since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Not to mention his party winning the parliamentary elections in January with 81% of the vote, along with the brutal suppression of the strikes by oil workers and of the pro-democratic demonstrations expressing solidarity with the victims of the bloody repression of the workers' protests.

However, the special importance enjoyed by Kazakhstan in the balance of stability in Central Asia and of the global oil and gas supply cannot be used indefinitely as an excuse for restricting basic rights. I believe that it is appropriate to draw the attention of our Kazakh partners to the fact that the battle against extremism, separatism and terrorism, in the name of which the regime in Astana says that it is acting, is likely to become a battle against democratic rights and fundamental freedoms, including religious.

Anne Delvaux (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Parliament has adopted an essential resolution on Kazakhstan following the violent repression of protesters in December which led to the deaths of many people. Following these events, the Kazakh authorities called a state of emergency and the independent media suffered aggressions and intimidations which are still stopping them from shedding light on the events. Generally speaking, respect for human rights has been deteriorating in the country for some time. It is important that Parliament makes its voice heard and strongly condemns the current drifts. We are therefore urging the Kazakh authorities to make every effort to improve the human rights situation in their country and underlining that progress in the negotiation of the new enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan must depend on the progress of political reform and the sensitive improvement of the human rights situation in the country.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted for this motion for a resolution, as I believe that EU-Kazakhstan relations have been improved, including in strategic sectors such as democracy, human rights, the environment, energy, trade and transport, as well as in the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking. Despite this progress, it is important to stress that the Kazakhstan authorities should make more efforts to improve the human rights situation in their country.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Kazakhstan has given mixed signals in terms of its adoption of freer and fairer political and judicial systems, and the killings that occurred in Zhanaozen last December are deeply regrettable. It is worth acknowledging the slowness with which Central Asia has been developing in terms of democracy and human rights, and the way in which the countries comprising it have not shown very encouraging results in this area. Nevertheless, in the case of Kazakhstan, it should also be stressed that some positive reforms have been undertaken, and it remains for us to hope that the government and the people will persevere with implementing them. I hope that the EU will continue to support change in Kazakhstan, that it will support the sectors of civil society that want change the most, and that it will maintain its regular contact with the country's authorities.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) The repression of striking workers in Kazakhstan has taken on brutal dimensions. We condemn it in the strongest possible terms, along with the attacks on workers' rights, and changes to the labour code enabling workers who go on strike to be dismissed; abolishing restrictions on dismissing trade union representatives in negotiations during strikes; legalising lock-outs; and enabling courts to declare any strike illegal. This repression is taking place in a context in which Kazakhstan is the subject of geostrategic interests aimed at controlling and appropriating its natural resources, in particular hydrocarbons. The interests of multinationals also come together here, and they see this country's joining the World Trade Organisation as a unique opportunity to satisfy their insatiable desire for domination. This perspective should be taken into account in the judgments that the EU itself has been making on the situation in the country and its development. This resolution illustrates this.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), *in writing.* – (SK) Both the EU and Kazakhstan could derive important benefits from deeper cooperation. The European Parliament supports this objective, while stressing that economic cooperation must go hand in hand with political cooperation and must be based on the political will to implement and uphold common values. Negotiations were launched in June 2011 for a new, enhanced EU-Kazakhstan agreement to replace the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement currently in force. In February this year the President of Kazakhstan signed several laws aimed at

improving the legal basis for labour relations, workers' rights and social dialogue and strengthening the independence of the judiciary. Proper relations between the Union and Kazakhstan are of fundamental importance, as is the strengthening of political and economic cooperation, including strategic areas such as human rights, the environment, energy, trade and transport, as well as the fight against terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking.

I firmly believe that, both for the Kazakh leadership and the wider public, there is a major justification and a benefit in adopting these measures, which will help to restore stability and security, and to revive the country's international standing.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), in writing. – (LT) I voted in favour of this European Parliament motion for a resolution because the European Union and Kazakhstan should cooperate more closely and this would be mutually beneficial. Economic cooperation must go hand in hand with political cooperation and must be based on the political will to implement and uphold common and universally accepted values. Kazakhstan plays a crucial role in the socio-economic development of Central Asia and the stability and security of the region. The European Parliament expresses its deep concern and its condolences regarding the events that took place in the Zhanaozen district of Kazakhstan, when there was a violent crackdown by the police against demonstrators in Zhanaozen. I believe that there must be an independent, credible and unbiased investigation into these events. There should also be an international component to this investigation. The European Union and Kazakhstan must aim to strengthen political and economic cooperation, including in areas such as democracy, respect for human rights, the environment, energy, trade and transport, as well as combating terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking.

Bogdan Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz (PPE), in writing. – (PL) When voting today on the motion for a resolution on Kazakhstan, I was guided by the nature of the clarifications following investigation of the Zhanaozen incident. Also, I wanted to emphasise the importance of relations between the European Union and Kazakhstan in, among other areas, economic cooperation. It is particularly important that mutual benefits accruing from greater cooperation must go hand in hand with a political and social dimension. I would also like to point out that Kazakhstan is the most effective country in Central Asia in terms of introducing European standards.

David Martin (S&D), in writing. – I voted for this Resolution, which stresses the importance of the relations between the EU and Kazakhstan and the strengthening of political and economic cooperation, including in strategic areas such as democracy, human rights, the environment, energy, trade and transport and in addition to the fight against terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking; underlines that last year was marked by increased cooperation, frequent high-level meetings and the start of negotiations for a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. However, it also rightly expresses its deep concern and its condolences regarding the events that took place on 16 December 2011 in the Zhanozen district of Kazakhstan, when 17 people died and 110 others were injured, and also strongly condemns the violent crackdown by the police against demonstrators in Zhanozen and calls for an independent and credible investigation into the events, with an international component.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Kazakhstan has not shown the necessary signs of adopting freer and fairer political and judicial systems. In addition, we must express our deep regret at the killings that occurred in Zhanaozen last December. The countries of

Central Asia have not been successfully developing in terms of democracy and human rights. In spite of everything, however, some positive reforms have been achieved in Kazakhstan. It is important that the EU continue to support change in Kazakhstan, that it support the sectors of civil society that want change the most, and that it maintain regular contact with the country's authorities.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing*. – The European Parliament stresses the importance of the relations between the EU and Kazakhstan and strengthening economic and political cooperation in all areas; it welcomes the start of the negotiations for a new agreement to replace the expired Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. It is also necessary to take into account the national mentality and a special transitional period, including results achieved in politics and economics. I do not want the screenplay of Bishkek; we should have the strongest dialogue with the Kazakh authorities.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution drawing attention to worrying recent events and the worsening human rights situation in Kazakhstan, as negotiations are held on the new enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is an important EU partner in Central Asia, but the deepening of relations must be conditional upon specific action. The Government of Kazakhstan should take further steps to implement the recommendations of the OSCE/ODHIR, find those guilty of killing the demonstrators and guarantee freedom of assembly, religion and media. Cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan should be enhanced in the areas mentioned in the resolution. At the same time I believe that there should be a particular focus on preventing radicalisation, especially through promoting employment, education and non-formal learning among young people.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that came into effect between Kazakhstan and the EU in 1999 has been under renegotiation since June 2011 and is to be replaced with an optimised agreement. Closer economic cooperation must go hand-in-hand with an improvement in the human rights situation. Although we have seen the first positive signals in this regard from the Kazakh Government, recent events in Kazakhstan give cause for concern, particularly in relation to the human rights situation and compliance with the principles of the rule of law and democracy. The important economic and political position of Kazakhstan in Central Asia requires the implementation of shared values and standards in order to promote economic progress and stability. For these fundamental reasons, I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) This motion for a resolution on Kazakhstan expresses Parliament's support for closer EU-Kazakhstan cooperation, which could greatly benefit both parties. However, such economic cooperation must go hand-in-hand with political cooperation, and must be based on the will to implement and uphold common values. I voted in favour not only because of this, but in view of Kazakhstan's crucial role in Central Asia's socioeconomic development, and in the region's stability and security.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Over recent years, the EU and Kazakhstan have established deeper cooperation both at economic and political level. However, a series of events has taken place that go against the most fundamental principles of democracy and the rule of law. Religious intolerance, political repression, restrictions on freedom of expression and demonstration, and intimidation and violent attacks against independent media have brought about a climate of fear amongst the public. It is hoped that Kazakhstan's

politicians will change their attitude, as this country has taken on an important role in the socioeconomic development of Central Asia, and in the region's stability and security.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – In favour. This important text came after the very much welcomed release of the human rights defender Evgeniy Zhovtis, director of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law and the 'Vremya' journalist Tokhniyaz Kuchukov, who were granted an amnesty by a court decision of 2 February 2012 after having been sentenced to four years in a labour camp in September 2009.

Vilja Savisaar-Toomast (ALDE), *in writing.* – (ET) In its motion for a resolution on Kazakhstan, the European Union emphasises the need to strengthen political and economic cooperation, including in the fields of democracy, human rights, the environment, energy, transport and trade, and also in combating terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking. The human rights situation in Kazakhstan has long been deteriorating, and has recently become particularly serious. Here I refer not only to the tragic events that took place in the Zhanaozen district, but also to the arrest and imprisonment of opposition leaders and journalists. Therefore it is important that the European Union should from now on very attentively monitor developments in these areas, and the next steps in partnership and cooperation negotiations with Kazakhstan should be dependent on the progress of political reforms. Since the European Parliament report strongly emphasises these principles, I also supported this report in the final vote.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) The European Union and Kazakhstan could derive important benefits from deeper cooperation. Indeed, economic cooperation must go hand-in-hand with political cooperation, and must be based on the political will to implement and uphold common values, given the crucial role played by Kazakhstan in the socio-economic development of central Asia and the stability and security of the region. However, the events that took place on 16 December 2011 in the Zhanaozen district of Kazakhstan, in which 17 people lost their lives and 110 others were injured, are of concern. With this vote, we strongly condemn the violent crackdown by the police against the demonstrators in Zhanaozen, and call for an independent and credible investigation into the events, complete with international participation.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) There have been several reports of constant human rights violations in Kazakhstan, eliciting doubts as to the implementation of the political reforms being undertaken by the country's government. The reports have included the abuse of power; the detention of political opponents, journalists and activists present at the demonstration in the town of Zhanaozen last December; religious repression; and violation of freedom of the press and the basic principles of the rule of law. I believe that it is important to clarify the way in which the government acted towards the protesters in Zhanaozen, and to wait for the investigation by the national commission that has been established, with UN monitoring. Moreover, along with the negotiations for a stronger EU-Kazakhstan agreement, the EU must show its concern about the watering down of fundamental and democratic rights, and must warn the authorities of the need for reforms. The stability and development of Kazakhstan are vital for the socioeconomic growth of Central Asia, and for international relations with the region as a whole.

Angelika Werthmann (NI), *in writing.* – The government of President Nursultan Nazarbayev has been in office since 1991 and its contribution to improving its citizens' conditions is declared to be insignificant. The stability of Kazakhstan is essential for the

economic and diplomatic balance in Central Asia. Therefore, the EU should urge the Kazakh government to improve its protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms and media independence. In view of the possible accession of the country to the WTO, the motion envisages the possibility of a close monitoring of the EEAS to support Nazarbayev's government in addressing these issues. All in all, I voted in favour of this joint motion as it represents a step forward in the democratization process of a country, which is intensifying its relations with the EU.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The EU, which is imperialist in nature and practice, is cultivating a hypocritical stance in several areas, especially in terms of foreign relations, as it often adopts positions on the basis of the prominence given to economic and political gains that can be derived from them, at the expense of honest analysis of the facts, the actual reality and the situation of peoples and workers. We reject this drift towards constant attempts at foreign interference which, curiously enough, does not apply to countries whose governments sing from the same hymn sheet. We strongly condemn the brutal repression of workers' rights and their struggle, in particular through the changes to the labour code enabling workers who go on strike to be dismissed; abolishing restrictions on dismissing trade union representatives in negotiations during strikes; legalising lock-outs; and enabling courts to declare any strike illegal. However, we would distance ourselves from those who seek to demonise Kazakhstan through interference that creates the preconditions for the appropriation of its natural resources, in particular hydrocarbons, by multinationals, which will be facilitated by the country's membership of the World Trade Organisation.

Motion for a resolution: RC-B7-0131/2012

Damien Abad (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of a motion for a resolution strongly condemning the recent terrorist attacks carried out by Islamists against Christians in Nigeria. In this resolution, we are also calling for a better distribution of the revenues which currently only benefit a minority of the population, with 60% of the population living on less than USD 1 per day.

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I am voting for this report, as it is important to insist on the need for the Nigerian Constitution to guarantee religious freedom, and to reject the imposition of any law that contradicts this principle. Human rights and freedom of expression for Nigerian citizens have been put at risk, so international actors should take action in order to try to prevent any atrocities from taking place in the future.

Pino Arlacchi (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted for this resolution because the recent violence in Nigeria, carried out by the Boko Haram criminal cartel must be strongly condemned by the international community. Boko Haram is blamed for the deaths of more than 900 people in roughly 160 separate attacks since July 2009. A contribution to put a definitive end to this awful situation is a wider examination of the root causes of the conflict. It is essential to avoid simplistic explanations based only on the label 'terrorism' or 'religion'. Although Nigeria is the world's eighth largest oil producer, the majority of its 148 million inhabitants live below the poverty line. A peaceful resolution of conflicts implies fair access to resources and a redistribution of revenues from the oil market. In addition to that, we must reaffirm the importance of an independent, impartial and accessible judiciary system to stop the impunity and to enhance respect for the rule of law and the fundamental rights of the population. For all these reasons, with this text we called upon the Federal

Government of Nigeria to fight corruption, poverty and inequality and to push for reforms aimed at creating a democratic, stable, free state which takes into account human rights.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) The history of Nigeria is marked by tensions between Muslims and Christians. However, the chaos caused by Boko Haram is unprecedented. I therefore voted in favour of the motion for a resolution strongly condemning the recent violence – in particular the attacks carried out by the terrorist Islamist sect Boko Haram – and the tragic loss of human life in the stricken regions of Nigeria. We must seek peaceful means and urge all communities to work towards a dialogue in order to put an end to the violence. However, the Nigerian Government must also promote inter-religious dialogue in order to guarantee the security and protection of its population and respect for human rights.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution. According to available data more than 935 people have been killed in violent attacks in Nigeria since 2009. Many of the problems in the country are rooted in decades of tension between local ethnic groups, which sparks ethnic, religious and political strife affecting thousands of people. This situation in the country is preventing its economic development. Nigeria is the world's eighth-largest oil producer, but the majority of its inhabitants live below the poverty line. I welcome the resolution's call for the Nigerian authorities to encourage effective inter-religious dialogue and to encourage freedom of thought, conscience and religion. There is also a need to combat poverty and inequality more effectively, particularly by combating the corruption that is rife in the country and the exploitation of Nigeria's natural resources by foreign companies. The European External Action Service should also play a more active role in establishing long-term development cooperation measures in order to contribute to peace, security and the safeguarding of human rights in this country.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this European Parliament motion for a resolution because many of the problems in Nigeria stem from a lack of economic development and the tension is rooted in decades of resentment between indigenous groups vying for control of fertile farmlands with migrants and settlers from the Hausa-speaking Muslim north. Peaceful resolution of conflicts implies respect for human rights, access to justice and an end to impunity, as well as fair access to resources and redistribution of revenues in an oil-rich Nigeria. In its resolution, the European Parliament strongly condemns the recent violence (in particular the attacks carried out by the terrorist Islamist sect Boko Haram) and the tragic loss of life in the affected regions of Nigeria, and extends its sympathies to the bereaved and the injured. Parliament thus urges the Government of Nigeria to end the violence as quickly as possible, and to guarantee the security and protection of its population and respect for human rights. It also calls upon the President of Nigeria to encourage inter-religious and inter-convictional dialogue and to enhance freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The Government of Nigeria should examine more widely the root causes of the conflict, including social, economic and ethnic tensions, and avoid broad and simplistic explanations based only on religion that will not provide the basis for a long-term, lasting solution to the problems of the region.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing.* – (PT) I voted for this motion for a resolution, as it strongly condemns the recent wave of violence in Nigeria. The Nigerian authorities should put a stop to this situation and ensure full respect for human rights. A firm message should be sent to all communities to highlight the need for restraint and to seek peaceful means for resolving disputes between different religious and ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Brutal terrorist actions by radical sectors of the country's Islamic communities have swept through the Christian communities in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the whole international community remembers the savage attack on a church on Christmas Day last year, which was preceded and succeeded by many other attacks. The adoption of Sharia law in areas of Nigeria has led to fears of an increase in the repression of Christian minorities, and requires the federal government to carry out a thorough assessment of and a timely clampdown on all judicial and extrajudicial abuses which undermine human dignity, freedom of expression, assembly and association, and the right to profess a religion. As a community which has historical ties with Nigeria and which has been an important donor, the EU cannot fail to press the Nigerian Government to ensure basic rights for its citizens and to help to put an end to their repression.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) This motion for a resolution is an example of the way in which the approach taken by Parliament can be completely differentiated, treating countries whose political leadership is favourable to the interests of big capital in the major EU powers one way, while taking an arrogant and openly interventionist approach towards countries that do not submit to its orders.

The language used in this resolution is intentionally soft in the face of an extremely serious situation, as it seeks to focus attention on what is essentially a consequence – the strengthening of terrorist organisations – and ignores the roots of the whole problem: namely, the unbridled exploitation of the country's natural resources, in particular oil and natural gas; corruption and violence fuelled by the major multinational oil companies; and massive poverty. It is not enough to ask the oil companies to contribute and take more responsibility when we are talking about companies that have committed the greatest crimes against the Nigerian people and have caused irreparable environmental damage. Environmental crimes against humanity have been committed in the Niger delta, leaving no source of income for coastal communities.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), *in writing.* – (SK) The freedoms of religion, belief, conscience and thought are fundamental and universal values and are essential elements of democracy. The EU has repeatedly expressed its commitment to defend the freedoms of religion, belief, conscience and thought, and has stressed that governments have a duty to guarantee these freedoms all over the world. I firmly believe that all the forms of violence in Nigeria are reprehensible, and that the threat of continuing ethnic, religious and political tension is also a cause for concern, leading to further suffering for thousands of people.

It is essential for the Nigerian government to find a way to end the violence as quickly as possible, and to ensure the safety and protection of the Nigerian people, as well as respect for human rights. The President should also make the necessary effort and encourage dialogue between representatives of different religions and beliefs, and in this way strengthen freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The country's leading figures should make an effort to fight poverty and inequality, and to promote social, political and economic reforms with the aim of building a democratic, stable and free state which respects human rights.

Brice Hortefeux (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Nigeria is a complex country both from a socio-economic point of view and in terms of its geopolitical situation. Although the country is the world's eighth-largest oil producer, the majority of its inhabitants live below the poverty line. The events of these last few months with the increased violence against the religious communities, in particular the persecution of Christians in the north of the

country by the Boko Haram sect and the execution of European hostages on 8 March, called for greater public awareness. That is why Parliament, echoing the High Representative's statements, has strongly condemned this violence and reiterated that religious freedom is a fundamental and unquestionable right. However, the causes of these attacks cannot be put down to mere inter-religious or inter-ethnic tensions. They are very often the result of exploiting poverty and manipulating fears. The Nigerian authorities are already taking various measures to combat insecurity and I welcome this. Nonetheless, the efforts in terms of governance and development with the help of EU support must be accentuated so as to stabilise the north of the country. For security is inextricably linked to development.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), in writing. – (LT) I voted in favour of this European Parliament motion for a resolution on the situation in Nigeria because the freedoms of religion, belief, conscience and thought are fundamental and universal values and are essential elements of democracy. The European Union has repeatedly expressed its commitment to protect the freedoms of religion, belief, conscience and thought, and has stressed that governments have a duty to guarantee these freedoms all over the world. Many of the problems in Nigeria stem from a lack of economic development and the tension is rooted in decades of resentment between indigenous groups vying for control of fertile farmlands with migrants and settlers from the Hausa-speaking Muslim north. Peaceful resolution of conflicts implies respect for human rights, access to justice and an end to impunity, as well as fair access to resources and redistribution of revenues in an oil-rich Nigeria.

Giovanni La Via (PPE), in writing. – (IT) The fresh outbreaks that have been taking place in Nigeria for over two months now required strong condemnation by the European Union. The situation in this African country is very worrying as it concerns the protection of both human and religious rights. The massacre of 185 Christians on 20 January is a cruel testimony to a climate of violence that shows no signs of letting up in its hatred and is based on religious discrimination. Among the other events, I just want to highlight the kidnapping, followed by the killing, of the Italian engineer, Franco Lamolinara, to whose relatives I extend my sincere condolences. It is our duty to put in place all the measures of cooperation needed to return the situation in Nigeria to normal as soon as possible, through the encouragement of inter-religious dialogue and, above all, of freedom of thought.

David Martin (S&D), in writing. – I voted for this resolution, which strongly condemns the killing of British citizen Christopher McManus and Italian national Franco Lamolinara – two engineers working for an Italian construction company who had been held hostage by AQMI for 10 months in northern Nigeria – during a failed rescue attempt on 8 March, and extends its condolences to the families of the victims.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The events in Nigeria, in which Christian communities have faced brutal terrorist actions perpetrated by radical sectors of the country's Islamic communities, cannot continue. We all still remember the unspeakable attack on a church on Christmas Day last year, which was preceded by other similar attacks, which have unfortunately continued to take place. The adoption of Sharia law in areas of Nigeria has led to fears that these attacks will go on indefinitely if the federal government authorities do not take concrete measures to combat them. Fundamental principles are at stake here, in particular attacks on human dignity, on freedom of expression, assembly and association, and on the right to profess a religion. The EU cannot distance itself from this process, and must put pressure on the Nigerian Government to ensure basic rights for its citizens, and thus help to put an end to their repression.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing.* – The European Parliament strongly condemns the terrorist attacks on Christian communities, their belongings and symbols and the violent clashes and the resulting tragic loss of lives. I think that it is an unacceptable crime. I voted in favour.

Claudio Morganti (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) In recent months, the situation in Nigeria has deteriorated dramatically: in last week's news we heard of the murder of two European civilian hostages, including Italian Franco Lamolinara, after they had been kidnapped by the terrorist Islamic group Boko Haram. This is unfortunately only the latest in a long series of violent acts perpetrated by this sect, which includes the profoundly significant attacks which they organised on Christmas Day last year against various Christian churches, in which dozens of people were killed. I had already expressed my concern about the situation in Nigeria earlier this year, in a question to High Representative Baroness Ashton, who assured me that the EU would take suitable action. I do not think this has yet happened, but we hope that this joint resolution, which I supported, may be helpful in trying to bring the necessary stability to Nigeria.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I support Parliament's call for all communities to exercise restraint and to seek peaceful means for resolving disputes between religious and ethnic groups.

Alojz Peterle (PPE), *in writing.* – (SL) As co-rapporteur I voted in favour of this joint motion for a resolution in the belief that, as a very important strategic partner of the European Union, Nigeria needs both to improve the quality and efficiency of its government, devoting much more attention to the sources of the conflict, and to be considered more of a partner by the European Union, especially in the fight against terrorism.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) It is regrettable that, in one of the countries with the greatest economic potential in Africa, most of the population lives below the poverty line. Many situations are causing this instability in Nigeria: the corruption and promiscuity that exist in the state apparatus, the mismanagement of oil revenues, the environmental chaos, the sexual intolerance, and the existence of terrorist Islamist groups that are sowing panic among Christian populations. In view of this, as the resolution states, it is proper that the EU combine diplomacy with development cooperation in the long term, with the aim of helping Nigeria achieve peace, security, good governance and respect for human rights.

Robert Rochefort (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) Already faced with various societal, economic, ethnic and religious difficulties, Nigeria has experienced serious violence for several weeks now at the hands of the terrorist Islamist sect Boko Haram. Targeting Christians in particular in their fight for an 'Islamist regime', this group is held responsible for the deaths of over 900 people to date. As I am extremely opposed to such a situation, I voted in favour of this resolution in which we strongly condemn this violence. We are calling for the implementation of peaceful means to resolve the differences between communities and we are stressing the importance of respect for the principles of freedom of religion, faith, conscience and thought. Furthermore, we recall in this text the need to monitor the possible connection between Boko Haram and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI) which, if it is established, would be particularly dangerous for the region's security and stability. The Union has designated Baroness Ashton High Representative for its foreign affairs. It is high time for Baroness Ashton to work for this region combining diplomacy

and long-term development cooperation in order to try to bring peace, security, good governance and respect for human rights to Nigeria.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) In Nigeria, the latest wave of gun and bomb attacks committed by the terrorist Islamist sect Boko Haram, killed at least 185 people in Kano on 20 January. Boko Haram warned Kano residents, in a leaflet distributed around the city overnight, that their strikes against security services would continue and urged perseverance as the group fights to install an 'Islamic system'. This vote emphasises the importance of regional cooperation to address the threat posed by a possible connection between Boko Haram and AQMI (Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb). Indeed, the countries in the region should deepen their cooperation, including through the relevant regional organisations, in order to prevent synergies between the two groups.

Charles Tannock (ECR), *in writing*. – The ECR Group supports the Nigerian Government in its fight against terrorism and violent crimes perpetrated by the Islamic extremist sect Boko Haram against Christian communities. It roundly condemns the acts of terrorism perpetrated by Boko Haram as well as the instigators of this violence, which come both from within and outside Nigeria. It is deeply concerned about the institution, since 1999, of shari'ah law in 12 northern states, creating a de facto state religion in contradiction with the national secular constitution. It calls upon the Nigerian Government to address the root causes of the violence, ranging from corruption to age-old sectarian strife and on the EU and its High Representative for Foreign Affairs to assist in this effort.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram has carried out a series of attacks in Nigeria, with the aim of establishing an Islamic state. The latest attack took place in the town of Kano, killing about 185 people, and was largely targeted at the police. In response, the national authorities took extrajudicial measures against members of the Islamist group. This escalation of violence and conflict between different religious and ethnic groups has led to economic, social and political stagnation in the country. Although Nigeria is a country that is extremely rich in natural resources, and the eighth-largest oil producer in the world, it is facing a social scourge whereby the majority of its 148 million inhabitants live below the poverty line. I support dialogue and cooperation with the Nigerian authorities, in order to carry out the reforms that are essential for the country, so as to stimulate growth and economic development.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) This is another example of a completely differentiated approach, treating countries whose political leadership is favourable to the interests of big capital in the major EU powers one way, while taking an arrogant and openly interventionist approach towards countries that do not submit to its orders. The language used in this motion for a resolution is intentionally soft in the face of an extremely serious situation, as it seeks to focus attention on what is essentially a consequence – the strengthening of terrorist organisations – in order to ignore the roots of the whole problem: namely, the unbridled exploitation of the country's natural resources; corruption and violence fuelled by the major multinational oil companies; and massive poverty. It is not enough to ask the oil companies to contribute and take more responsibility when we are talking about companies that have committed the greatest crimes against the Nigerian people and caused irreparable environmental damage, as in the Niger delta. It is certainly telling that the government of one of Africa's biggest oil producers has suspended fuel subsidies. We understand this hypocrisy when we discover that the EU is dependent on the import of hydrocarbons and that 20% of Nigeria's fuel is exported to the EU.

Motion for a resolution: B7-0130/2012

Damien Abad (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Alongside the 6th World Water Forum, we have debated issues related to water and called for sustainable solutions, particularly in terms of access to drinking water. Water is a vital resource but it is also a strategic one. Only 2.5% of the Earth's water may be used. The issues related to water (climate change, the growing demand for energy and agricultural products, and so on) are not exclusive to developing countries. The issue of water requires a global response.

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I am voting for this motion for a resolution, as it reinforces the message that water is a precious resource and a public good, and that it should be accessible to everyone. The EU should therefore focus on promoting free access to water for everyone in effort to conserve and manage it, taking account of the threats posed by climate change, and with a view to greater coordination at regional, national, European and global level in relation to water quality.

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the resolution on the 6th World Water Forum. Water is becoming ever more precious and scarce. Therefore we need to handle it with more care and to find ways at both European and international levels of how to deal with our water resources sustainably. Climate change and population growth amplify the problems. This is why the EU must develop a strategic and long-term water policy in close cooperation with the international community. The health and living conditions of billions of people depend on water. I support the statement in the resolution that water is a shared resource of humankind and, therefore, should not be a source of profit and that access to water should constitute a fundamental and universal right. In this regard the Commission and Member States have to reinforce their commitment to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in the field of water and sanitation.

Roberta Angelilli (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Water is the key to life, a key factor for economic growth and prosperity, through activities such as agriculture, commercial fishing, energy production, manufacturing, transport and tourism. Not only that, water has since the very beginning been the critical factor on which human settlement has depended, as well as the source of many geopolitical conflicts. Today, we face a true imbalance in our ecosystems, posing a risk not only for regulation of the climate system that enables the planet to function, but a serious danger to human health and quality of life. I hope that in the next few days, during the Sixth World Water Forum to be held in Marseille, tangible proposals will be debated using a multilevel governance approach aiming to halve poverty and hunger levels and aid environmental sustainability. Preserving water resources, ensuring their quality and availability, is a responsibility that each one of us must take.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I presented the draft resolution on the World Water Forum, an event which, every three years, brings together the political, economic and community actors concerned by the problems related to water at global level. In my view, access to water and sanitation is an essential issue because it concerns the health of billions of people. Firstly, in spite of the progress made, we must achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals and continue in our fight, particularly to improve access to sanitation. Secondly, we must ensure water management through drainage basins and deal with the problems of pollution at source. Finally, I would like to mention the idea of '1% solidarity for water', a principle that has been applied in France and that allows for the collection of funds to improve access to water and sanitation in developing countries. Following the adoption of this text by my colleagues in the European Parliament, I presented a broad

overview of it on Friday morning to the 35 000 participants at the World Water Forum. The European Union, developed countries and humanitarian aid organisations must now step up their efforts both in terms of financial assistance and technical support.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution. Population growth, deforestation, biological and chemical pollution and climate change are also threatening the availability of safe and secure water resources. Currently over 800 million people still use unsafe drinking water sources, and poor hygiene practices cause the death of more than 2.5 million children every year. In the past the European Parliament has on several occasions called on the Commission and the Council to take specific actions aimed at ensuring access to drinking water and sanitation for the poorest people, but such calls have been ignored. I agree that we must step up efforts internationally and adopt an agreement and specific obligations on the management of water resources globally at the forthcoming Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. It is also very important to introduce the latest technologies and support investment in developing research, which would maximise water efficiency.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) In December 2010, along with Danielle Mitterrand and several of my fellow MEPs, I took part in the ‘porteurs d’eau’ (drawers of water) group’s action for water to be recognised as a shared resource of humankind but also for public water management. While the World Water Forum is taking place in Marseille as we speak, the European Parliament has declared in the resolution that we have just adopted that water, a shared resource of humankind, must be accessible for all. Access to drinking water and sanitation, but also preserving water resources and guaranteeing water quality are among the challenges we must face up to, and we have recognised them in this text. What the text does not include, however, is the need for public water management. In fact, in my view, water is too precious and essential to the survival of both mankind and ecosystems to be left to private interests. Although, for some uses, water may at times be considered as a commodity, it is most certainly not a commodity like any other. That is why, in terms of access to drinking water, sanitation and maintaining affordable water prices, water should be publicly managed.

Phil Bennion (ALDE), *in writing.* – I was happy to fully support my Liberal group on this report. Whilst highlighting the importance of access to clean water, it is also crucial to recognise the need to properly manage and conserve our limited water resources, and avoid the temptation to see water as something to be wasted or undervalued. In this context we resisted cumulative amendments from the far left, which sought to bring all water into public ownership, whilst ignoring the practical challenges of developing and investing in water supply infrastructure in Member States.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing.* – (LT) I voted in favour of this European Parliament motion for a resolution because new technological developments have the potential to achieve increased water efficiency and sustainability, and can be used in particular to the advantage of developing countries. Water is a shared resource of humankind and, therefore, should not be a source of profit. Access to water should constitute a fundamental and universal right. The United Nations recognises the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, as derived from the right to an adequate standard of living, and it is therefore essential for all necessary efforts to be made to guarantee access to water for the most deprived populations by 2015. We need to balance water uses to satisfy water demand and ensure availability as well as quality, in particular in developing countries. Water is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which could lead to a decline in

the quantity and quality of water available, particularly drinking water, as well as to a rise in the frequency and intensity of floods and droughts. Risk prevention, mitigation and response strategies to prevent water-related extreme phenomena are thus crucial.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) On 28 July 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the basic right of every human being to drinking water. Access to drinking water is restricted around the world. According to the data provided by the UN Environment Programme, 884 million people do not have access to clean water, while approximately 2.3 billion people do not have the opportunity to use even the most basic sanitation facilities. The problems of dwindling drinking water resources and expanding deserts, which were more likely in the past to be issues affecting Africa and Asia, are knocking at Europe's door. In southern Spain the desert is extending by one kilometre every year. Oltenia in Romania is exposed to a similar process, but it is progressing at a slower rate, while drinking water resources in other regions of the world have become grounds for conflict between states. Last but not least, there is the well-known official statement from Yemen that by 2017 it will become the first state in the world not to have its own natural water source. In view of the above-mentioned problems, I think that the sustainable use of water is as much an economic as an environmental necessity, which would require more transparent water pricing schemes.

Philippe Boulland (PPE), in writing. – (FR) We urgently need to make concrete commitments towards the promotion and protection of water resources, for although access to drinking water and sanitation was recognised as a human right by the UN in 2010, the fact remains that water has become a geostrategic issue for some regions of the world, such as the Middle East, China and Latin America. We are therefore calling for access to drinking water to be better taken into consideration in regional development policies. In Europe too, access to water for all users must be ensured and decentralised action must be taken quickly at regional and local level. Parliament was keen to remind Member States of their obligations under the Water Framework Directive to achieve good water status by 2015. The dialogue and debates in Marseille during the 6th World Water Forum should encourage the implementation of 'water governance' and thereby allow for commitments to be made at global level during the Rio+20 conference in June in Brazil.

Jan Březina (PPE), in writing. – (CS) In connection with the resolution adopted on the 6th World Water Forum, I agree with the call to create a common body of knowledge in the area of water management, which could be used both on a global scale and within the EU. Hand in hand with this should be the drafting of the main global indicators of quality, quantity, achievability and affordability of water and indicators for the effective use of water resources at river basin level. In this context, I support the development of unified river basin plans at a global level, and I would like to emphasise the primary role of river basin plans in applying EU policy in the area of water management in line with the Water Framework Directive. Regional and local bodies must also play an important role in economic solutions to global water problems, and in preventing bribery. The Commission should accede to the UN Convention on International Water Courses on behalf of the EU, and encourage the entry into force of amendments to the Helsinki Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Water Courses and International Lakes of 1992 with the aim of extending the scope of this instrument to countries that are not members of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The EU should also encourage broader ratification of the Protocol on Water and Health to the Helsinki Convention of 1992, in

the interests of coordinated and equitable management of water in national and international river basins.

Françoise Castex (S&D), *in writing.* – (FR) I voted for this motion for a resolution. Water is a ‘shared resource’ and access to water should constitute a fundamental and universal right. All local authorities must be able to use the management method of their choice. On this subject, many people are strongly criticising the European Union, its institutions and in particular the Commission for being responsible for privatisations, but we must remember that, at present, there is no compulsory European ‘internal market’ directive, as is the case for other public service networks. We will ensure that the European Union does not commit to liberalisation policies and, on the contrary, guarantees free democratic choice for all public authorities in terms of their organisation and management methods.

Corina Crețu (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) We are clearly moving towards turning water into an ordinary commodity with everything that this entails: discrimination on the basis of income with regard to water access instead of universal access, the intensive use of sources with the risk of them running out, the intensive use of the infrastructure in the event of distribution being privatised, and a lack of investment. The consequences of climate change can only be managed jointly and only at state level. Its impact extends beyond borders, thereby making international cooperation a necessity.

The zones at greatest risk in this area are those which are the most unstable, hit by conflict, both between states and within states. Pollution is another problem which, likewise, must be managed jointly by several states. Cooperation in this area is not working as well yet as we would like. There is also the aspect relating to investments in research and development aimed at obtaining new wastewater recycling technologies or optimising the consumption of water in agriculture, not to mention making affordable, in economic terms, the desalination of seawater. We must not believe that these issues will be resolved more easily by leaving them up to the markets and removing states from the equation. The financial system crisis shows us how wrong this kind of approach is.

Rachida Dati (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) The question of access to a sufficient quantity and quality of water is a priority issue in terms of the environment, health and the economy. This resolution encourages the development of measures with a view to resolving some of the most crucial aspects of this issue. That is why I obviously voted in favour of this text. It promotes both local and global solutions, as the issue concerns farmers in our developed countries as well as citizens in developing countries, and puts this issue back into the wider context of climate change. It encourages significant investment in research and development, and the development of efficient usage of resources.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Although we all take drinking water for granted, it is not available to everyone in the world. However, it plays a key role in public health and environmental protection, so these should be priority areas for any adequate water-management policy. This is why adequate protection of drinking water resources is so important for human health and the fight against water pollution, limiting the amount of hazardous substances that enter the environment and drinking water-resource zones. In this new millennium, drinking water should be seen as a genuine fundamental right for all, so it deserves adequate protection in national, European and international legislation.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) This motion for a resolution is an amalgam of commonplaces about water, and includes incorrect generalisations that create a backdrop for a set of very serious trade-based objectives. This document distorts the text of the UN

resolution on the human right to water and sanitation, as it does not reproduce its content faithfully, although this was an extremely important decision by the UN General Assembly. Moreover, it does not make any clear or unequivocal defence of the public ownership and management of water, as was necessary, creating ambiguity which favours business and privatisation. The rejection of the amendments that we have tabled in this regard shows the intentions of the majority in this House.

Other negative aspects of the resolution include the recommendation of the 'polluter pays' principle; the launch of another tax on people for the supply of water and sanitation, which is intended to be obligatory in the EU; and the fact that the whole document is underpinned by the procurement of funds, which are to be made available to EU-based transnational companies, in particular those involved in supplying water and sanitation, and related service providers.

This model is well known. The funds are made available to developing countries as 'aid', which is then taken up by those transnational companies and considered 'debt' owed by these countries, linked to the privatisation process.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), *in writing.* – (SK) The Sixth World Water Forum, which takes place in Marseille on 12-17 March 2012, provides a unique platform where the water community and policy and decision makers from all regions of the world can come together, debate and attempt to find solutions to water issues. The EU should also support solutions in the area of water in order to secure further progress at global, national, regional and local levels, while also setting the objective of combating poverty and climate change.

With regard to the Commission's future plan for protecting European water sources and the report on application of EU legislation in the area of water, I take the view that it is essential to solve the problems which Europe and the world must face in the 21st century, in particular the developing countries, in order to protect water sources and ensure the quality and accessibility of water throughout the world. Water management impacts directly on human health, energy production, agriculture and food security. I also believe that it is right to conclude and implement international agreements for the shared management of transboundary surface waters and groundwater, which would draw populations and administrations together to ensure the sustainable management of water resources and act as a safeguard against local and international conflicts

Elisabetta Gardini (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) Despite the international community's efforts in recent decades, the figures which illustrate the global situation regarding the use and quality of water describe a scenario that is still unacceptable, both from a health and from an ethical point of view. According to the latest data, more than 800 million people drink from unsafe sources and no less than 2.5 million children die each year due to poor water supply and quality. These figures require us to take a clear stand. For this reason, I think it is vital that at the next World Water Forum to be held in Marseille from 12 to 17 March, the European Union come up with a strong common vision where the issues that the EU has long has at the top of its agenda are clearly outlined, namely the protection of water resources and better water use efficiency (and consequently a reduction in wastage).

Françoise Grossetête (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution which proposes concrete measures to address the challenges facing Europe and the world in order to preserve water resources, guarantee water quality and access to water for the whole planet.

I hope that the Forum in Marseille will, as our resolution calls for, be a step towards recognising water use as a right, which was not the case in Istanbul in 2009, where it was recognised only as a 'fundamental human need'.

Dirty water kills over 3.6 million people every year. We must speed up the implementation of major technological solutions: desalinating seawater, building large weirs, partnerships between the public and private sectors. Today, techniques for harnessing and developing water sources have been well mastered and these must be quickly put in place in cooperation with the populations.

Brice Hortefeux (PPE), in writing. – (FR) This week the 6th World Water Forum is taking place in Marseille, giving us the opportunity to recall that water is a precious resource for which we have a duty of responsibility. According to a study by the WHO and Unicef, the rate of access to water for the global population stood at 89% in 2010. This is remarkable progress. However, 2.5 billion people still do not have access to clean water. Water is a development issue, an ecological issue and an issue of health and food security within the context of population growth and climate change. More than ever, we must return this problem to the heart of our policies and develop a comprehensive EU water strategy. We must make access to water universal by 2030 and make sanitation a priority by leading actions of solidarity with developing countries. We must develop sustainable water management by fighting against waste and relying on innovation and green technologies. There are many issues to be dealt with and we are being very ambitious. I am now waiting for the conclusions from this strategic forum to be translated into concrete commitments during the Rio conference next June.

Juozas Imbrasas (EFD), in writing. – (LT) I voted in favour of this European Parliament resolution on the 6th World Water Forum taking place in Marseille on 12-17 March 2012 because almost half of the developing world's population lacks sanitation facilities, over 800 million people still use unsafe drinking water sources, and inadequate access to safe water and sanitation services and poor hygiene practices cause the death of more than 2.5 million children every year. Water management impacts directly on human health, energy production, agriculture and food security, and effective water management is a fundamental precondition for poverty reduction. New technological developments have the potential to achieve increased water efficiency and sustainability, and can be used in particular to the advantage of developing countries. The World Water Forum, which meets every three years, provides a unique platform where the water community and policy and decision makers from all regions of the world can come together, debate and attempt to find solutions to achieve water security.

Peter Jahr (PPE), in writing. – (DE) Water is the basis for all life on this planet and it is set to become even more important in the future. I therefore welcome the fact that we are also focusing on this important issue with the World Water Forum in France. Experts predict that future wars will be fought not for oil or territory, but rather for water as a precious commodity. Thus in order to ensure future peace, we must learn to handle water in a considered and sparing way. Water is a public good and should be available to everyone. That is why it is our duty to use it as carefully as possible.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), in writing. – (RO) Roughly half of the developing world's population lacks sanitation facilities, and inadequate access to sanitation services and poor hygiene cause the death of more than 2.5 million children every year. Furthermore, only

60% of the world's population has access to clean drinking water, with even regions in Europe affected by this problem.

Therefore, the delegations from more than 180 countries due to attend the World Water Forum, taking place in Marseille, are going to endeavour to find solutions to ensure access to water, since this is a basic right that must be guaranteed and enforced everywhere and for everyone. The European Union must take on specific commitments with the aim of promoting and protecting water resources. In addition, Member States, along with the Commission, must strengthen their commitment to meet the development targets set by the UN for water and sanitation services.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted for this resolution, which calls on the Commission and Member States to reinforce their commitment to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in the field of water and sanitation, and also to take into account the relevant outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, and stresses that the World Water Forum debate should aim at strategies and solutions for agricultural and economic development that can guarantee a high level of water availability and quality.

Véronique Mathieu (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on the 6th World Water Forum, intended to contribute to the debates held in Marseille on 12 to 17 March. As water management has a direct impact on human health, solutions must be found to renovate water infrastructure systems in developed countries and bring them up to standard in developing countries. Thus, water should not be a source of profit and access to water should constitute a fundamental and universal right. If we want to make progress in the field of health, we must invest in the protection of drinking water resources. We must encourage research in order to develop innovative technologies for water in all fields and, at the same time, use water in the most rational and efficient way possible. We must, from now on, commit to a long-term policy.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Contrary to appearances, drinking water is not available to everyone in the world, despite the fact that we take it for granted. However, water is vital for public health and environmental protection, and as such an adequate policy on water resources should be a priority for everyone. Proper protection of drinking water resources and combating of water pollution are essential in order to safeguard drinking water-resource zones. Drinking water should be accessible to everyone, as this is a fundamental right, and as such it deserves to receive adequate protection in national, European and international legislation.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D), *in writing.* – The oral question adopted in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety focuses on the Commission's role in the political process leading to the 6th World Water Forum as well as the concrete actions the Commission will propose in order to address the challenges that Europe and the world, in particular developing countries, have to face in the 21st century, in order to safeguard water resources, guarantee water quality and availability worldwide and improve the communication and implementation of water goals. The draft resolution ascertains that water is a shared resource of the humankind and that access to water should constitute a fundamental and universal right. Furthermore, it stresses that public health and environmental protection should be priorities for any water management policy, while addressing the role of water in economic development. As climate change and chemical and biological pollution are major contributors to the decline in the quantity and quality

of water worldwide, coordinated action is needed at national, European and global level to address these challenges. I am in favour.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) Water conservation technologies and an increasing environmental awareness have reduced consumption of drinking water enormously. The resulting longer storage periods mean that chlorine needs to be used to prevent bacterial contamination and sulphur tends to build up in waste water pipes. Thus anyone seeking to encourage people to save water by increasing water costs is not thinking with sufficient foresight. If groundwater consumption has increased threefold within 50 years, this is mainly because surface water has been rendered unsuitable or too expensive for producing drinking water due to fertilisers or pollutants. EU development aid will therefore not only have to deal with reducing population growth, but also increasingly with the disposal of waste water. As well as exploiting potential savings in agriculture in southern Member States, it is also necessary to reduce the volume of fertilisers and pollutants. This motion for a resolution contains a number of good ideas, which is why I have voted in favour of it.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE), *in writing.* – (LT) Water is the essence of life and the most abundant natural resource on our planet. Unfortunately, many of our planet's inhabitants still do not have full access to safe drinking water. On the other hand, the seas washing the shores of the EU (above all I have the Baltic Sea in mind) are also becoming more and more polluted. I therefore welcome the provisions that maximum attention should be paid to all measures aimed at conserving water resources of all types and improving their quality. These measures should be broadly included in other EU policies, above all agriculture.

James Nicholson (ECR), *in writing.* – Along with my ECR colleagues, I voted in favour of the motion for resolution about the 6th World Water Forum. The World Water Forum only meets once every three years so we need to make sure that we make the most out of this platform to discuss aspects of water policy. At the end of the day, we need to ensure that the human right of access to water as a basis to ensure wellbeing is upheld. We need to bring the World Water Forum into our fight against climate change and poverty, both of which are linked with water access. We need to make sure that regional and local roles are clearly defined, as this is where the bulk of the work is being and will be done. We need to continue with the good work outlined in the 'Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources' report.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) In the developing and emerging countries in particular, significant portions of the population still do not have secure access to clean water. More than half a billion people are forced to drink contaminated water and over 2.5 million children die every year because of a lack of access to clean, hygienically safe water. I believe that secure access to clean water is a basic right for everyone and regard a secure water supply as being of particular importance in ensuring peace on both a domestic and international level. For this reason, steps must be taken on all levels to make the consumption and treatment of water more efficient, particularly in the sectors with the greatest potential for savings. On the one hand, suitable steps must be taken here within the EU. On the other hand, it is also necessary to permit the transfer of know-how for the efficient use and recovery of water in developing countries. Last but not least, it is also necessary to reduce the contamination of water by chemicals, for example. I therefore voted in favour of the motion for a resolution.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), *in writing.* – (EL) The UN Millennium Declaration of 8 September 2000, which set out the Millennium Development Goals, made provision, among other things, for a 50% reduction in the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, an objective which we appear to be far from achieving. Today, nearly half the world's population has no sanitation and over 800 million people are still using unsafe sources of drinking water. The European Parliament states in this motion for a resolution, which I supported, that, as a shared resource of mankind, water should not be a source of profit. Access to it must be a fundamental and universal right. As such, it calls on the Commission and the Member States to reinforce their commitment to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals and, among other things, for integrated water resource management plans to be adopted together with land planning at the international, national and local scale.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Water is a resource that belongs to all humanity, so access to it should be universal and should be a fundamental right. I voted for this motion for a resolution, in which Parliament welcomes UN recognition that access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation is a human right, derived from the right to an adequate standard of living. I support the call for every effort to be made in order to ensure that the most disadvantaged populations have access to water by 2015.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) Water is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which could lead to a decline in the quantity and quality of water available, particularly drinking water, as well as to a rise in the frequency and intensity of floods and droughts. I voted for this motion for a resolution in order to get all the actors together so that we can draft policies for mitigating and adapting to climate change, giving due consideration to the impact on water resources and addressing the risks relating to the prevention of extreme water-related events.

Franck Proust (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Water is a precious but rare commodity. It is, however, the source of all life. We must fight to preserve it for the benefit of future generations. I would like to commend the initiative taken by France to host this world forum. For dialogue must of course be opened at global level. Only by giving states greater responsibility for their day-to-day water management will we be able to avoid a catastrophe that would cost us dearly. That is why I am voting in favour of this text. However, aside from preservation, I would like to specify that water supply is another major problem. It is the cause of many diplomatic tensions, territorial disputes and unfortunately sometimes even armed conflicts. Water must be given the same recognition in the collective consciousness as climate change. Of that I am sure.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Water is a resource that is increasingly under threat, in view of current demographic growth, urbanisation and all kinds of pollution. To make matters worse, not everyone has access to this resource. As a result, every year, millions of people die and suffer from diseases related to a lack of access to water, as well as to poor sanitation infrastructure. In order to ensure the well-being of all, water should be seen as a common good for all humanity, not as a source of profit. Access to water should therefore be a fundamental and universal right. In addition, the aim is for all countries to set, by 2015, a quantitative target for reducing chemical and biological pollution from urban wastewater and land-based activities, in order to protect and restore water quality and to support the sustainability of water resources and ecosystems. Finally, in economic terms, it is vital to urge public and private investment in research into and development of innovative technologies for water in all fields.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) The declaration made today by the European Parliament on the occasion of the 6th World Water Forum in Marseille is symbolically important: water is a shared resource of humankind and should not be a source of illegitimate profit.

I am pleased about the following aspects: one of the eight Millennium Development Goals has been achieved (ensuring a sustainable environment). Eighty-nine per cent of the global population now has access to water, meaning that over six billion human beings are connected to a drinking water network or have access to clean wells.

However, I do have some concerns. Almost 800 million people are still unable to drink clean water. Where is Europe in all this? In view of the scarcity of water resources and the repeated droughts, Europe must obviously secure its supply of water through efficient use in agriculture and the urban environment. There are also other paths to explore: on the one hand, developing woodland areas with a view to protecting soils and water, on the other, turning to good agricultural practices in order to fight against abusive use of water contaminants (nitrogen, phosphorus and pesticides) which have harmful effects on human health and the environment.

Jean Roatta (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Water is a resource for humankind and access to water is fundamental. Due to climate change, there are fears of a decline in the quantity and quality of water available, particularly drinking water, as well as a rise in the frequency and intensity of floods and droughts. It is therefore necessary to rationalise water use and the European Parliament's motion for a resolution calls for more efficient water usage especially in the sectors where most water is used, such as the agriculture sector. Also, the resolution underlines the need to make concrete commitments towards the promotion and protection of water resources, especially in light of the upcoming Rio+20 conference. That is why I voted for this resolution during the very week when the World Water Forum was taking place in Marseille.

Robert Rochefort (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) Deforestation, population growth, and even climate change put increased pressure on the availability and quality of water resources, and water infrastructure systems are often inadequate in developing countries and outdated in developed countries. The 6th World Water Forum – a unique platform where the water community and policy and decision makers from all over the world worked to draw up solutions to achieve water security – was a crucial meeting, and I am pleased with the adoption of this resolution by the European Parliament. The text recognises – and I strongly supported this idea during the vote – water a shared resource for humankind. Therefore, it should not be a source of illegitimate profit: access to water should constitute a fundamental and universal right. We are therefore calling on the Commission and on Member States to reinforce their commitment to achieve fully the Millennium Development Goals in the field of water and sanitation. Finally, we must increase public and private investment in research and development for water in all fields.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing.* – (FR) I am in favour. Water is a source of life and not of profit. It is the only essential resource for which there is no substitute. We must therefore do all we can to ensure both the quality and the quantity of water available for each human being and for maintaining ecosystems. Water does not belong to anyone; it is not a commodity but a universal shared resource.

In addition, as my colleague Ms Rivasi said earlier, access to drinking water has been recognised as a fundamental right since 2010, but we must do more. We must constitutionalise this right and promote comprehensive management of water as a global shared resource. In order to do so, we cannot allow private companies to hold the reins of the water market. In France, the delegation of public services has again been called into question and we are seeing an increase in local authorities taking back control of water management, which ecologists are delighted about.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) Efficient management of global water resources directly affects human health, energy production, agriculture, and food security, constituting a fundamental prerequisite for reducing poverty. The World Water Forum is a platform where the water community politicians and decision-makers from all around the world come together to seek solutions, in order to achieve water security. It is my hope that tangible commitments will be made during the Forum to take action on the key priorities for action which have been identified in this area, ensuring the welfare of all and contributing to global economic development.

Nikolaos Salavrakos (EFD), *in writing.* – (EL) I voted in favour of the European Parliament's motion for a resolution on the World Water Forum, because I consider that water is a shared resource to which all populations should have access without discrimination. Protection of the environment, including drinking water resources, and protection of public health must continue to be priorities in all water management policies. Finally, I consider that water plays an important part in sectors such as peace, cooperation and economic development and in keeping our planet blue.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) Almost half the population living in developing countries does not have sanitation facilities, over 800 million people still drink from unsafe water sources and have inadequate access to safe water and sanitation. A situation that is critical and at times dramatic for millions of people. This vote will attempt to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in the field of water and sanitation as soon as possible, taking into account the results of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. The debate at the World Water Forum, indeed, should aim to come up with agricultural and economic development strategies and solutions capable of ensuring good access to water resources and good water quality.

Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) The quality of drinking water in the European Union is increasingly affected not only by climate change, but also by people discharging certain substances into the water. I think that the EU must take an active role in ensuring that water resources are managed efficiently at global level through compliance with public health and environmental protection regulations. Adopting this motion for a resolution marks an important step towards this.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Many developing countries do not have basic sanitation-infrastructure systems that enable the effective management of water resources, which are a key prerequisite for reducing poverty. It should be noted that over 800 million people use unsafe water sources every year, leading to the death of approximately 2.5 million children. In view of this, I am voting for this report, as it is necessary to ensure that access to water is a fundamental and universal right; it should not be a source of profit, but rather should help to improve people's quality of life. I therefore believe that public and private organisations should increasingly invest financial resources in research into and development of innovative technologies for water in all fields,

encouraging the use of new technologies in agriculture, to produce sufficient and safe food. I believe that it is vital for the Member States to reinforce their commitment to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and also to take into account the relevant outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted for the motion for a resolution on the 6th World Water Forum taking place in Marseille on 12-17 March 2012 because water is a resource shared by humankind which should not be a source of profit but a fundamental, universal right. Water management impacts directly on human health, energy production, agriculture and food security, and efficient water management is a fundamental prerequisite for reducing poverty. I should emphasise the importance of transferring knowledge and technology relating to water conservation, water collection, irrigation techniques, groundwater management and wastewater treatment. Climate change, deforestation, urbanisation, population growth and biological and chemical pollution place ever-increasing pressure on the availability and quality of safe and healthy water resources, as well as causing increased risks of extreme water-related events occurring, with poor populations being affected the most. I urge the Commission to devise policies for mitigating and adapting to climate change, giving due consideration to the impact on water resources.

Dominique Vlasto (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Our water consumption is constantly increasing. Today it takes 11 000 litres of water to make a pair of jeans and 15 000 litres of water to produce one kilogram of beef. We tend to forget that water is the source of everything. With the coming rise in the global population, it will become an even more precious resource. In some parts of the world, satisfying a need as basic as drinking can be an impossible task. The terrible drought that hit the Horn of Africa last year, forcing women and children into a veritable exodus, reminds us of the urgent need for global coordination in order to face up to this challenge. In my constituency, we are also feeling the need to better preserve this gift of nature. The water shortages facing our farmers and the pollution of rivers and coastal regions are problems to which the EU must respond. This issue is all at once global, European, national and local. I therefore voted for this motion for a resolution which proposes solutions which take into account the different levels of the water management challenge and will stimulate the debates that will take place at the World Water Forum in Marseille.

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL), *in writing.* – (PT) This document distorts the text of the United Nations resolution on the human right to water and sanitation, as it does not reproduce its content faithfully, although this was an extremely important decision by the UN General Assembly. Moreover, it does not make any clear or unequivocal defence of the public ownership and management of water, creating ambiguity which favours business and privatisation. Other aspects which we do not accept are the recommendation of the 'polluter pays' principle; the prospect of another tax on people for the supply of water and sanitation; the procurement of funds to be made available to EU-based transnational companies, in particular those involved in the supply of water and sanitation, and related service providers.

13. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

(The sitting was suspended at 13.40 and resumed at 15.00.)

IN THE CHAIR: ISABELLE DURANT*Vice-President*

14. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting : see Minutes

15. Council positions at first reading: see Minutes

16. Debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (debate)

16.1. Human trafficking in Sinai, in particular the case of Solomon W.

President. – The next item is the debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law and first of all the debate on human trafficking in Sinai, in particular the case of Solomon W.

Judith Sargentini, *author.* – (NL) Madam President, refugees from the Horn of Africa seeking safety often travel to Israel via Egypt. That means that they have to cross the Sinai Desert. This desert is a no-man's land on which the Egyptian Government seems unable to get a grip. The journey through the desert is facilitated by Bedouins, people smugglers, who exploit the vulnerability of these refugees. Women are raped, people are locked up for months on end in order to extort even more from them, people are killed for their organs or just because it is possible.

This resolution takes the example of a young Eritrean named Solomon, but there are many, many more Solomons and Myriams who find or have found themselves in the same circumstances in the Sinai Desert. It strikes me as telling that female refugees are asking for an abortion as soon as they manage to get to Israel. They have become pregnant in the desert.

Egypt is making too little effort to bring the Sinai under control and to prosecute the gangs and smugglers. Egypt also still lacks a working asylum policy, which raises the suspicion that it would rather see the back of the refugees and that it is not interested in their welfare.

The European Union is attempting to help get democracy going in Egypt after the Arab Spring. This is not how refugees are treated in a democracy, and Europe should make recognition of the Geneva Conventions a prerequisite for its help.

However, it is not only Egypt that is guilty of abusing refugees. Israel sends people back to the desert. Israel is currently building the world's biggest detention centre for refugees, but you do not lock up refugees. Imagine you have fled from Sudan, Eritrea or Somalia. What happens? You get to Egypt or Israel, and end up in a situation that is barbaric. I call on Baroness Ashton to point this out to Egypt and Israel and to firmly protest about it.

Ana Gomes, *author.* – Madam President, the CNN reportage 'Death in the desert' broadcast last November gave me the shivers. It exhibited the horrific and inhumane trade going on in the Sinai Peninsula with tremendous specificity at best, or deep complicity – most likely of the Egyptian authorities – with the organised criminal networks that kidnap refugees in order to extract and sell their organs, butchering their bodies cruelly and disrespectfully.

This resolution of the European Parliament is long overdue, since the monstrosity of the criminal activity conducted by some Sinai Bedouin tribes, at the service of some well-known

health professional vultures with connections well beyond Egypt, is undeniably documented, and it is the poorest of the poor – men, women and children, refugees trying to escape oppression and misery such as the Eritrean Solomon W. whom we speak about in this resolution – who, instead of protection and support, are experiencing detention, rape, forced labour, ransom, torture and death in the most obscene and primitive ways.

This is a matter that must be taken up as a priority by the European Union High Representative, with the Egyptian and Israeli authorities at the highest level, and that should be referred by the European Union to the UN Security Council if no resolute action is taken soon to stop the criminal networks operating in the Sinai, to make stringent efforts to punish those responsible and to afford protection to the victims and any passing refugees.

Mario Mauro, *author.* – (IT) Madam President, Madam Vice-President, ladies and gentlemen, last December, yet another group of Eritrean refugees was kidnapped by human traffickers from *Rashaida* and sold to a gang belonging to the Ramailat tribe. Amongst them was a group of 27 Eritreans, including four girls and a woman with a small infant who were taken to Rafah. The group was subjected to terrible violence. Several were killed and their bodies abandoned in the desert.

One of these refugees, twenty-five-year-old Solomon, a few weeks later managed to escape from the prison where he was being held and took refuge in a mosque run by a group of Salafis who for the moment have not agreed to hand him back to his torturers. A bounty of USD 50 000 has been placed on his head. The European Union must make it clear whether the lives of Eritrean refugees are worth less than others.

We need a coordinating body to go via the African Union, as European Union partners, explicitly committed to the universal values of democracy and human rights. Given what is happening in the Sinai, one wonders what the point of the revolutions of the Arab Spring was. If no one does anything to free Solomon, what is the point of our proclamations about models of democracy?

Charles Tannock, *author.* – Madam President, the current situation in Sinai is deplorable. Many asylum seekers are reported to lose their lives there each year, with still more being kidnapped and held hostage.

Others are arrested by the police and are then detained and denied the right to make an asylum claim. It is also reported that those that do not manage to pay the price for their release are killed and their organs traded.

We welcome the efforts of human rights organisations in Israel and Egypt in providing medical assistance to the victims of trafficking in Sinai, and we urge the governments of Egypt and Israel, as well as the rest of the international community, to intensify their efforts to combat the atrocious human smuggling and trafficking that seems to be taking place.

Of particular concern today is the case of Solomon W. and we urge the Egyptian authorities to intervene as quickly as possible to ensure his protection from the organ traffickers that are currently in pursuit of him, given the huge price that his pursuers have placed on his head and the fact that he knows the exact location of their prisoners and apparently has witnessed the atrocities committed against these prisoners.

Jiří Maštálka, *author.* – Madam President, I too am deeply outraged by the tragic fate of the migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. I support the proposal for the European Parliament to join those demanding that the Egyptian authorities review their policy towards migrants

and people traffickers. However, I do not want it to be said again that we notice the problems of others while ignoring our own. I would like to emphasise above all that not every refugee is a political refugee. Many are fleeing for religious reasons and most are social migrants. Do we know how many of these migrants perished last year on the borders of Europe - or the Schengen borders, if you prefer? Piecemeal measures cannot prevent people being treated like commodities. In today's world, rich nations, states and regions have a specific responsibility - a responsibility for the development of poor countries, so that there will be no reason to flee Sub-Saharan Africa, whether for social, religious or political reasons.

Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, *author* . – (NL) Appalling things are happening in the Sinai, where hundreds, if not thousands of people who have fled insufferable situations in their African homelands fall into the hands of human traffickers, are treated appallingly if they do not bring enough money or are even murdered and have their organs removed.

We are also very concerned about the fate of Solomon W., who, as mentioned earlier, knows a great deal about this situation and is being pursued by human organ traders, who have even put a price on his head.

We applaud both the Israeli and Egyptian NGOs who look out for the fate of these people. However, we call on the authorities in Egypt and Israel to live up to their international obligations and to prevent this calamity from growing still further and to help those who have fallen into the hands of these human traffickers.

Edit Bauer, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Madam President, this week, besides this case, I have some other news about trafficking in human beings: one case from Sweden and one from China, where more than 24 000 victims were discovered last year.

As CNN reported (as was mentioned), bodies of African refugees have been found in the Sinai Desert with organs missing. According to the testimony of victims and witnesses, corrupt Egyptian doctors are directly involved in organ theft, coming to the Sinai region with mobile hospital units, buying organs from Bedouins and performing operations, mostly removing corneas, liver and kidneys. Organs are taken from refugees while they are still alive; the organs are not useful if they are dead. They drug them first, remove their organs then leave them to die and dump them in deep dry wells along with hundreds of bodies.

In a recent report the World Health Organisation called Egypt a regional hub for the organ trade. There is no doubt that the driving force of trafficking is demand. Where the legislation is missing and law enforcement is weak, trafficking is flourishing. I am convinced that the issue of human trafficking should be put higher on the agenda of bilateral negotiations.

Mitro Repo, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (FI) Madam President, human trafficking is the scourge of our times. This form of slavery is inhuman and violates human rights in every way. It is also a very profitable business, along with arms and drug trafficking.

Sinai is a major route from the extreme poverty and deprivation of sub-Saharan Africa towards Israel and other countries in the Middle East. Human trafficking is rife along this route, and human life has no value for the traffickers in their quest for profit. With support from the EU, the countries in the region must together try to stop the traffickers and the networks of organised crime that they use.

Victims of human trafficking must be treated humanely. They should not be returned to countries where a renewed risk of torture and ill-treatment awaits them. The fate of human

beings in Sinai is often linked to the same root cause: wretched conditions in the place which they set out from, extreme poverty and a lack of opportunities. Given all this, even a precarious escape to the affluence of the north is better than life back home. The European Union must take steps to do everything it can to contribute to eradicating poverty, wherever it occurs.

Sari Essayah (PPE). - (FI) Madam President, Commissioner, a number of international human rights organisations have reported on the plight of hundreds of refugees in Sinai. Around a year ago, a European Parliament resolution on Eritrean refugees taken hostage in Sinai called for the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to make this matter a priority in the political dialogue between the EU and Egypt. Today we are citing the case, in particular, of Solomon W; nevertheless, no significant progress has been made and, in the wake of the Arab Spring, the situation with regard to refugees is still very alarming.

How does the Commission intend to make genuine progress on this issue with the current Egyptian leadership? Is the Commission aware of the continuing trade in organs? What measures is the Commission going to take to end these human rights violations in the area, such as torture and people smuggling?

Bogusław Sonik (PPE). - (PL) Madam President, I would like to condemn the macabre trade in humans and organs in the Sinai peninsula in the strongest possible terms. It is in this way that Bedouin tribes are taking advantage of the dramatic situation and the uncertain circumstances of refugees fleeing towards Israel or Europe to escape war and starvation. It is estimated that in 2011 some 10 000 refugees crossed the border between Egypt and Israel; we do not know how many of them became objects to be smuggled.

In one of its reports, the World Health Organisation described Egypt as the regional centre for trafficking in human organs. In 2011, medical sources reported that about 1 500 illegal organ transplants take place there each year. Corruption, poverty, ignorance among patients and a total lack of medical ethics are the causes of the growth in organ trafficking. Unfortunately this illegal and criminal market continues to grow. Both Egypt and Israel must finally take legal steps to combat these groups of organised criminals who at present go unpunished. I also call on Commissioner Ashton to take up this matter with some urgency.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Seán Kelly (PPE). - Madam President, it is a most vile situation to have people who unfortunately have to leave their own home in search of a better life falling into the hands of human traffickers and organ harvesters and ending up being mutilated in the most terrible way and left to die.

All of this is happening while we elsewhere in the world look on. It is certainly appropriate that we should be discussing this issue and passing a resolution today to try to bring some improvement to this unfortunate situation.

Long term, the solution is obviously to try to eliminate poverty and to improve and develop democracy in the countries which these people unfortunately feel they have to leave – and those in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular. There also needs to be a greater UN presence, and particularly human rights organisations, etc., in Sinai itself, so that this situation can be monitored. Hopefully the people involved can be persuaded or forced to desist from their activities and then we can move towards a solution.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR). - (PL) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the issue of trafficking in human organs and trafficking in lives is something that is disturbing to the highest degree. Of course it is a good thing that we are dealing with this matter. The perpetrators must be brought to justice; we must prevent doctors from taking part in such procedures, betraying their Hippocratic oath. It is important, however, to understand the deeper causes of these awful practices, which are wars, poverty and unrest, particularly in Africa, as it is from there that the largest number of refugees are coming. Thus we can remedy this terrible situation both by dealing with its specific symptoms through punishment, through attempting to find out who are the perpetrators and, even more importantly, who profits from it, but we can also help to overcome this awful practice by helping to increase levels of prosperity and, even more so, by helping to establish peace in Africa.

Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE). - (FI) Madam President, the government appointed last December in Egypt has mentioned Sinai as one strategic priority that deserves greater attention. This makes us slightly more hopeful that the fight against organised crime involving human trafficking will be stepped up and that the situation with respect to refugees held for ransom by human traffickers in Sinai will be resolved.

It is mainly in certain areas that refugees are at great risk of falling victim to human trafficking. Human trafficking is a lucrative source of income for organised crime and a modern form of slavery. Sometimes it is used in the organ transplant business. The Sinai border area has also become known as a route to Israel for African migrants seeking work and a better life.

Egypt, Israel and the international community need to focus more attention on the region, and that is why we are having this debate. Both Egypt and other countries have a duty to comply with international agreements regarding the treatment of refugees. All resources available must be employed to end the torture of refugees who have fallen victim to human trafficking and to end the criminal practice of slavery.

George Sabin Cutaş (S&D). - (RO) Madam President, the Sinai region is a transit area for people from Sub-Saharan Africa, attempting to enter Israel while fleeing from conflicts, political instability and natural disasters which they experience in their countries of origin. Unfortunately, they encounter groups of human and organ traffickers. Solomon is obviously a special case, being the sole survivor from a group of people who were kidnapped, and is currently being pursued by the organ trafficking network and is in urgent need of protection.

We cannot sit back and ignore these inhumane practices. It is the duty of the Israeli and Egyptian authorities to take the measures required to combat human and organ trafficking and to protect and respect the rights of asylum seekers, while cooperating on this with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Against this background, I call on Baroness Ashton to make the subject of combating human trafficking a priority as part of her dialogue with Egypt and Israel.

Hannu Takkula (ALDE). - (FI) Madam President, human trafficking in Sinai is stirring up debate, and, indeed, that is what it should do as far as the European Union is concerned. We are committed to defending human dignity, whatever the circumstances, and we must do so in partnership with the international community.

The particular case of Solomon W. is now before us. As we now have Commissioner Reding with us, I would like to ask her what sort of practical measures the Commission has taken

– given that we have known about the situation for more than a year now – to prevent human trafficking and to restrict it. I also want to ask what sort of dialogue the Commission has been engaged in with the Egyptian Government and with the administration there. We know, of course, that the Egyptian Government and administration do not respect human rights in the same way, because, unfortunately, they basically see things differently, but what concrete measures have been taken now with Egypt in that region, and is there anything positive to report to us about them?

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) Madam President, the story from December last year of a group of Eritreans brought from Sudan by people traffickers to the village of Al Mahdya, near Rafah, bears striking testimony to the moral squalor of a criminal community that feeds on human misery and poverty. The sole witness to the murder, torture and rape – the 25-year old Eritrean Solomon – who escaped from the captivity of the abductors, poses a serious threat to a criminal gang trafficking in human beings and the organs of their victims, and it is therefore necessary to take all measures to safeguard and protect him. The fact that the criminals at risk from Solomon's testimony have put a reward of USD 50 000 on his head shows, on the one hand, that the people traffickers are making a lot of money, but also that they are aware of the threat posed by the testimony in the event that they are apprehended.

Commissioner, we all – the EU, Egypt, Israel and the entire civilised world – want to see these appalling events in Sinai brought to an end as quickly as possible and the criminals brought before a court. We must therefore be more active in this matter.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) ... that I have the opportunity to participate in this debate. We are talking today about Solomon, a young man of 25, from Eritrea, who has lived through some terrible experiences. It is quite unbearable just reading the account of these events. In an age of civilisation and progress some people are being treated with excessive barbarity by their fellow human beings. Human beings are sold like mere commodities, subjected to atrocities, kidnapped, tortured and cruelly killed. Solomon successfully managed to escape his kidnappers, but he is still in danger. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of nameless people are in similar situations. They have fled the conflicts in their country, seeking asylum elsewhere, and have fallen into the hands of human traffickers. I appeal to those who can take action. Do everything you can to save the lives of these innocent people.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Viviane Reding, *Vice-President of the Commission.* – Madam President, honourable Members, the case of Solomon W. is emblematic of the tragic experiences of hundreds of Sub-Saharan refugees in the Sinai region.

In seeking a better life, many of these vulnerable persons are kidnapped by traffickers in human beings when crossing clandestinely the Egyptian border or being smuggled directly from neighbouring countries. The Egyptian authorities are facing enormous challenges to ensure the security of their borders as well as of the whole Sinai region. As a matter of fact, the Sinai is at risk of becoming a safe haven for criminal gangs and terrorist movements; the gas pipeline which crosses Sinai towards Israel and Jordan has also recently been bombed for the 13th time since the ousting of President Mubarak a year ago.

High Representative Ashton has followed very closely the issue of the Sinai refugees through the delegation in Cairo and she has expressed our concerns on numerous occasions to the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the Ministry of the Interior.

Very recently, on 14 March, the EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, Mr Alexander Rondos, raised the issue of Solomon W. and of the Sinai refugees during his meeting with Foreign Minister Amr in Cairo. The Egyptian side took good note and promised to follow up on the matter.

As you have understood, progress so far has been very limited. We believe that the best way to improve the security of this volatile and strategic region would be through a thorough reform of the security sector, allowing the Egyptian authorities to fight traffickers and to control the borders in a more efficient manner while fulfilling their international human rights commitments. The EU stands ready to support Egypt in this endeavour, but our Egyptian partners have been rather slow to engage on these sensitive matters for the time being.

We will continue to urge the Egyptian authorities to take the appropriate measures in order to address the problem of human trafficking in the Sinai and to ensure that the human rights of migrants and refugees are respected. We have repeatedly invited Egypt to improve the quality of the assistance and protection offered to asylum seekers and refugees residing on, or transiting through, its territory. We have also pressed the Egyptian authorities to ensure that the principle of non-refoulement is observed for all migrants in need of help. The UNHCR should be given full possibility to implement its mandate on the entire territory of Egypt, including the Sinai region and we hope that with the end of the post-Mubarak transitional phase and the appointment of a democratically-elected government, the security and human rights issues in the Sinai region will receive greater attention from the new Egyptian leadership.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, outside there are huge mountains of crates and the noise of hammering and shouting is deafening as things are dismantled. I have been a Member of this House for 18 years, but in all that time I have never seen such a pigsty, if I may say so. Although we are still working, we are behaving as if we were already on our way out. As per our own decision, Thursday is a full working day, so that we will be busy not just for the morning, but also until the evening. For this reason I would ask for the dismantling work to wait until the sitting is over. We have visitors here today and the whole thing looks really terrible, a bit like a bad restaurant, where they start stacking the chairs on the tables and putting the lights out while guests are still eating.

Véronique De Keyser (S&D). – (FR) Madam President, I fully support what Mr Posselt says. I would like to mention that the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, this afternoon wished us a good journey home and a pleasant weekend and I complained to him, saying, 'But do not forget that the sitting will continue'. I therefore think that many people believe that the Thursday afternoon sitting has finished.

President. – In accordance with Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure, I have received seven motions for resolutions ⁽¹⁾.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place at the end of the debates.

Written statements (Rule 149)

⁽¹⁾ See Minutes

Monica Luisa Macovei (PPE), *in writing*. – Human trafficking became a thriving business for organised crime syndicates. Insufficient international attention makes trafficking more profitable, due to the ongoing crisis in Eritrea and the uncertainty produced during the Arab Spring. Mr Solomon, a young man from Eritrea, was kidnapped, tortured and held for ransom. He is one of the many refugees from war-torn countries that have been victims of human trafficking in the Sinai. Yet the region is only lightly policed by Egyptian authorities. Egyptian authorities claim to have no knowledge of human trafficking or torture in the region. This is an alarming and unacceptable statement. We must do our best to ensure the safety of Mr Solomon's life. This way we can save the lives of hundreds of victims of human trafficking. This Parliament must make it clear that saving this young man's life is a must for the Egyptian authorities. Egypt should demonstrate its commitment to upholding international standards against the trafficking of persons.

Kristiina Ojula (ALDE), *in writing*. – Refugees as well as irregular migrants are among the most vulnerable people all over the world; therefore it is particularly cruel to take advantage of their fragile situation. Although the Egyptian authorities are preoccupied by nation-building, the situation in the Sinai desert must be addressed promptly and effectively. The people in Sinai need to have their human rights safeguarded; the Egyptian authorities must apply the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Family, and respect their international commitments. I would call the Egyptian authorities to protect Solomon W. as a victim of human trafficking and investigate thoroughly all the cases of murders, tortures and rapes that have taken place in the Sinai desert.

16.2. Palestine: raids by Israeli forces on Palestinian TV stations

President. – The next item is the debate on Palestine, and in particular the raids by Israeli forces on Palestinian TV stations.

Raül Romeva i Rueda, *author*. – Madam President, like many others I am deeply shocked and that is why I condemned the raids that the Israeli troops carried out on the two Palestinian TV stations in the West Bank on 29 February, seizing equipment and thereby forcing the station to close. As many others have also said, this can only be considered to be an arbitrary and illegal operation, again serving to intimidate the Palestinian media and journalists.

These are the usual victims of repeated attacks by the Israeli defence forces. That is why we have to urge – and that is what I hope we are going to do, when we vote the resolution – the Israeli military to return the confiscated equipment and allow the two stations to resume broadcasting. Let us remember these raids were carried out by the IDF, accompanied by intelligence officers, on Al-Watan in Ramallah and Al-Quds Educational TV in Al-Bireh about two kilometres outside Ramallah. Both stations have been working with the European Union for many years.

There are no excuses any more. Baroness Ashton, the Council and the Commission should put the issue of the Israeli intimidation of the Palestinian media on the agenda of the EU-Israel dialogue and take this into consideration in the EU-Israel bilateral relations. In this context, it is the EU's obligation to ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between this and each other's policies, as mentioned in Article 21 of Treaty on the European Union.

Finally, I have to remind you as well that this is not the first time that it has happened. It happened before, on 20 November 2011, when the Israel Ministry of Telecommunications ordered the closure of All For Peace, the radio station based in East Jerusalem. It is again a moment to react.

Véronique De Keyser, *author.* – (FR) Madam President, my speech will not be very different to that of my colleague. I believe that what has happened is completely unacceptable. We will not accept it and, let me say this, we will not accept it across the political groups.

Indeed, Israeli forces have carried out raids on Watan TV and Al-Quds Educational TV. This is not *Radio des Mille Collines*; this is not Rwanda. These are not incitements to hate. These are television stations that we have worked with.

The argument put forward by Israel – even though the Ramallah jurisdiction is a Palestinian jurisdiction – is that the broadcasts interfere with Ben-Gurion airport. Very well. We would like to believe that there is a technical argument and that the stations had been warned of this in advance. However, that does not justify the Israeli forces' cowboy attitude, the confiscation of equipment, and so on.

Ms Reding, we are calling for clarification on this. My colleagues have been extremely measured in this resolution, since we do not know the nature of the equipment; we do not know if there is technical interference, and so on. We are asking if this is true. If it is not true, then this represents a significant violation of freedom of opinion and expression. The Israeli Government – I am no longer talking about the Israeli people but the Israeli Government – will therefore have to make us aware of this since we are in fact allies of this government. Voilà.

Therefore, we are calling for clarification, and above all we are calling for attacks on freedom of expression to never be allowed here. I believe that all of the MEPs were in agreement and I would also like to thank my colleagues in the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) for agreeing to sign this resolution with us, which is nonetheless fraught with meaning.

Bernd Posselt, *author.* – (DE) Madam President, our group did not consider this the most urgent matter still outstanding. The over 200 rockets that have landed on Israel from the Palestinian side in recent days would have been a much more urgent issue, as would the problems in many other parts of the world.

Nonetheless, in this resolution we have focused on this specific issue, which was right and proper, because we believe that we want a close partnership with Israel, as Ms De Keyser has said. I am also in favour of bringing the agreement to a swift and successful conclusion.

Our resolution also expressly commits us to the two-state solution and to the peace-keeping function of this two-state solution. However, we also clearly state that the events leading up to the closure of the broadcasters must be investigated. We have two different, contradictory versions. We identified these in the resolution, however we want this question to be addressed and examined in a structured dialogue with Israel. That is what we are asking of the Commission and the Israeli Government, after all – as Ms De Keyser has already pointed out – Israel is an important partner for us.

Paul Murphy, *author.* – Madam President, I agree that the raids on Al-Watan TV and Al-Quds should be condemned very clearly by this Parliament. They highlight the attack

by the Israeli establishment on the freedom of the media. This is not an accidental policy or a one-off incident; it is a conscious policy to undermine the freedom of the media to prevent the reporting of the real situation facing the Palestinians on the ground. I personally am still awaiting the return of a laptop which is the property of this Parliament, and of my own mobile phone, which the Israeli security forces have now had for over four months.

It also illustrates the conscious strategy of the Israeli elite in relation to the West Bank, which is to undermine any prospect of real self-rule by the Palestinians, even within Area A. It is part of the same strategy of which the settlements are part: to undermine any capacity for self-rule. It is also completely in breach of the Oslo Accords.

I have to take the opportunity to speak about the murderous assault on Gaza. Benjamin Netanyahu proudly proclaimed that the Israeli establishment has exacted a very high price. Let us look at that price. It is the murder of Ayub Asaliya, a 12-year-old boy who lived in Jabaliya refugee camp, and the killing of at least 22 other Palestinians and the injuring of around 100 Palestinians, including children. This was a barbaric, murderous assault on the people of Gaza. It has nothing to do with stopping terrorism and everything to do with the continuation of the military and psychological warfare and collective punishment against the Palestinians living within the Gaza Strip. And what was the response of the so-called international community? Again, unfortunately very predictable: an underscoring of the complicity that imperialism has with the oppression of the Palestinians.

From the US we had the usual blaming of the Palestinians for their own oppression, and simply a condemnation of the rocket fire from Gaza, ignoring the murderous bombing raids by the Israeli forces. From the EU we had the striking of the usual even-handed pose (supposedly), an incredible statement by Catherine Ashton deploring the loss of civilian lives – essential to avoid further escalation – and urging all sides to re-establish calm: incredible in the context of a murderous assault on the people of Gaza. There must be a condemnation from the EU of this assault. It should go beyond words. The EU-Israel Association Agreement should be suspended.

It is clear that international imperialism will not provide a just solution here. The only solution will be found on the basis of a joint struggle of the Palestinian masses together with the Arab masses generally, and ordinary Israeli workers and poor who share the same enemy of the Israeli capitalist elite and the right-wing establishment in a joint struggle for a secular, socialist Palestine with a capital in East Jerusalem, alongside a secular, socialist Israel, part of a socialist confederation of the region.

Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, *author.* – (NL) Madam President, it will not surprise you to hear that I in no way share the ideological bias of the previous speaker. That said, like my fellow Members, I too am particularly concerned about what is happening in the Gaza Strip, and we are very concerned about the major risks of escalation, but we have resolved that we will come back to that extensively in the next part-session.

What is more, this Parliament is very concerned from the outset about freedom of expression and of the media, both within our own borders, within our own Member States, and in countries with which we have association and cooperation agreements. Against that backdrop, my group can scarcely or indeed cannot accept how, on 29 February, the Israeli military silenced two television stations in Ramallah, a city under Palestinian jurisdiction.

Given that the technical aspects of the case are not entirely clear, we believe that there is every reason to seek clarification when we next have a meeting with Israel. In any case, Israel must ensure that these stations are able to resume their broadcasts without delay.

Elena Băsescu, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (RO) Madam President, I do not think that it was appropriate to include this item on the agenda for today's emergency debates. Indeed, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) did not agree to discuss this topic in this context, a point which we stressed. This is a dispute over telecommunications. It is not appropriate or fair to equate it with serious human rights violations. Through the use of methods like this, we will only add to the tensions in the region at a time when the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue is already experiencing enough difficulties.

The European Parliament should adopt a constructive attitude which supports finding a solution in the Middle East. I should also point out that, with this kind of behaviour, we are also at risk of jeopardising our own credibility. It is not as if we do not have any other urgent topics to debate.

Ana Gomes, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – Madam President, who is afraid of free media broadcasting? It looks like Israel is, considering the assault the Israeli defence forces and Ministry of Communication carried out at the end of February on the Palestinian Al-Watan TV and Al-Quds Educational TV, confiscating equipment and documents and holding journalists and employees for hours, on whatever pretext.

In doing so Israeli forces not only violated Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which includes the right to impart information and ideas through any media, but Israel also committed a gross and glaring breach of the Oslo Accords.

Israel must be urged to immediately return the confiscated equipment, allow the resumption of work of those Palestinian TV stations and compensate them for the losses suffered. As this European Parliament resolution demands, this matter must be put on the agenda of the EU-Israeli Association Council.

Alexandra Thein, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, as a member of both the Palestine and Israel delegations, I welcome the fact that Parliament has decided to speak out on these unacceptable Israeli raids on two television stations in Ramallah. I would remind you that Ramallah is located in Zone A of the West Bank, in other words in the small area that the Palestinians are permitted to administer for themselves. This means that there is no legal basis in any agreement for such action by the Israeli authorities, particularly since it was unannounced. In addition to the fact that this action ran contrary to the right of free expression and freedom of information, what we have here is the illegal destruction of Palestinian property by the Israeli occupying powers, something that is stereotypically defended by Israel as necessary on security grounds, which does not make it any less illegal under international law: we witness the destruction of drinking fountains and energy sources, the almost weekly destruction of agricultural land and olive trees, as well as the continuous demolition of hundreds of Palestinian homes, including in Jerusalem itself.

What is particularly galling is that the Israeli authorities do not even baulk at the destruction of infrastructural projects financed by the EU or its Member States. According to a recent

report in *Der Spiegel* and elsewhere, solar energy systems funded by German taxes are once again being torn down.

Charles Tannock, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Madam President, the events reported last week in which Israeli soldiers raided the Palestinian television stations of Al-Watan TV and Al-Quds Educational TV, confiscating administrative files and broadcasting equipment, do indeed show that tension between the two communities is high.

Palestinians are using approximately 100 unauthorised transmitters on various frequencies and we urge the PA Government's Communications Ministry to work more closely with the Israeli authorities to ensure that the facilities that they are using are within the law. While we recognise the fact that the PA has jurisdiction in the West Bank, where the raids took place, we must also recognise the right of Israeli authorities to safeguard their own nation's security to be paramount.

This most recent incident highlights the need for improved communications and cooperation between the various parties. The ECR believes that ultimately a two-state solution is the only way forward. We call upon the authorities of both territories to re-enter peaceful negotiations so that a sustainable solution to the conflict can be found for the future.

Jaroslav Paška, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (SK) Madam President, the armed attack on the Palestinian educational television station of Al-Quds by units of the Israeli armed forces at the end of February this year can be described as an absurd and unnecessary act of hostility and violence by the Israeli state against the Palestinian population. The additional argument used to justify to the public this attack on a television studio and theft of television equipment appears false. Prior to the attack on the TV studio, Israeli officials gave no warning to Palestinian officials that the frequencies used to transmit television signals were causing technical problems. They also failed to inform the Joint Technical Committee established under the Oslo Accords.

The EU supports Palestinian efforts to develop a civil structure and institutions helping to stabilise the political environment in the Middle East. We must therefore condemn every unnecessary provocation disrupting the coexistence of peoples in the Gaza Strip.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Madam President, on 29 February, as part of a raid, two Palestinian television stations were closed down. The equipment was confiscated and, according to the Israeli Ministry of Communications, warnings had been repeatedly issued to these broadcasting companies for supposedly broadcasting without a licence on frequencies that interfered with Ben-Gurion Airport.

For their part, the Palestinians claimed that these warnings had not been issued and that all of these accusations were to be rejected. The High Representative must therefore call on the two sides to clear up these points of dispute, so that the EU can act as an impartial mediator in this case. A joint Israeli-Palestinian Commission for Technology could also help establish clarity here.

As we continue to strive towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, it is important to uphold the fundamental freedom of the press and freedom of expression for the whole region and for all groups, even if one of our colleagues from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) unfortunately sees this as purely a communications problem and has refused to accept a blue-card question on this issue.

Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE). - (FI) Madam President, as my fellow Members have said, our group is doubtful about the urgency of this matter, although we consider it to be a balanced text and we support it. We also reconfirm our position regarding support for a two-state solution.

The attack against Palestinian TV stations by troops and officials at the end of February gives rise to many questions, especially as this is a matter of stations with which the EU has entered into a partnership. Israel says that it repeatedly warned both stations that they were violating agreements and operating on frequencies that disrupted communications and broadcasting systems in Israel. The Palestinian Administration denies the accusations. These contradictory statements need to be examined impartially, and, technically speaking, that may be possible.

All matters connected with telecommunications in the region should be dealt with by the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Technical Committee established by the Oslo Accords, so that problems relating to television channel broadcasting can be resolved promptly. We can do nothing more now than make an appeal for the use of peaceful, non-violent means, as the only way to achieve a sustainable solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Emer Costello (S&D). - Madam President, the raids on the Palestinian stations in Ramallah Al-Watan TV and Al-Quds Educational TV by Israeli defence forces on 29 February were unwarranted attacks on the freedom of the Palestinian media. The fact that the IDF confiscated computer equipment, including hard drives and other files, seems to contradict the claim that the reason for the raid was that the station's transmitters interfered with air traffic signals at Ben Gurion airport.

Both televisions were reputable, they had been broadcasting for many years and indeed the EU has worked with both stations in the past. Moreover, the raids took place in Area A, which is under the control of the Palestinian authority. Israeli incursions into this area serve only to undermine the nation-building efforts of the Palestinian authorities and hinder the peace process in the region that we are all striving towards. The EU must act to ensure that the Israelis return all of the equipment and we must support the TV stations in their efforts to continue broadcasting.

Finally, strong words and resolutions are not sufficient. We have an obligation to ensure consistency between our policy resolutions on the one hand and our external actions and bilateral arrangements on the other. I commend the resolution.

Cristian Silviu Buşoi (ALDE). - Madam President, I strongly believe that this conflict has lasted for too long now and we desperately need a long-term solution to solve it, with two states that should respect each other and live in peace. Unfortunately, there are always incidents that permanently endanger the peace process.

I agree with the fact that the Israeli military operations in Palestinian territory were a radical solution and there should have been further efforts to solve the problem in a peaceful manner. However, I think we should also be reminded of the fact that there is a 1995 Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement, which lays down the conditions in which Palestine should operate in the independent telecommunications market in some areas, namely prior authorisation by a telecommunications staff officer. In this case, prior to these operations, Israel has requested Palestinians to close down the unapproved television stations which interfered with Israeli communications. I think we should be fair and ask

both parties to respect the rules they agreed on, and to cooperate in a loyal manner in the peace process in order to stabilise the region.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR). - (PL) Madam President, I too am under the impression that the European Parliament has more important things to consider today than another unfortunate incident in relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

I would like to say that, to me, the complaints about the issue of media freedom sound completely hollow. I would like to tell you that press freedom does exist in Israel. Israel is a country where not only can the media freely criticise the government – and they do this very frequently – but in the Israeli parliament there are Members of Parliament who are fighting against the government, who constitute an opposition to it, and there are also Palestinian Members of Parliament, Arab Members of Parliament, who are completely opposed to the existence of the state of Israel. Israel sets democratic standards that would make us all very happy if they were observed throughout the Arab world, but unfortunately this is not the case. I must also add that one of today's speakers, Mr Murphy, who uses the language of violence in this Chamber, to some extent compromises at least some of those who tabled this resolution. I would like to say that this is the language with which the masses were called to overthrow capitalism, the language that brought unfathomable suffering to the country that I represent, Poland, as well as to Russia and all of Central and Eastern Europe. This is the language that is still bringing suffering to Cuba and to North Korea. I wish to say 'no' to communism!

Catch-the-eye procedure

Sari Essayah (PPE). - Madam President, peaceful and non-violent means are the only way to achieve a sustainable solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is vitally important that both Israel and the Palestinian Authority make the best possible use of the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Technical Committee established by the Oslo Accords, in order to address any issue arising in the telecommunications field.

This controversial technical issue should be resolved in that Committee as well, and between those parties. The EU as a member of the Quartet should always support peaceful solutions, and the parties should reach mutual understanding on this issue as well.

Mitro Repo (S&D). - (FI) Madam President, nobody can deny that the attacks on the Palestinian TV stations on 29 February and the seizing of property during them constituted heavy-handed behaviour on the part of Israel. The TV stations are located in territory administered by Palestine. Such unilateral measures are liable to jeopardise the progress that has been achieved in the Middle East conflict.

Peaceful and non-violent action is ultimately the only way to achieve sustainable peace and the rule of law alongside open dialogue between the Israelis and Palestinians. The European Commission and the European External Action Service should raise the issue of the raids on the Palestinian media as a matter for dialogue between the EU and Israel, and monitor developments closely.

The European Union is committed to a two-state solution in the Middle East. The current situation does not go far enough. The only way to achieve lasting peace for the region is through political dialogue, and we have to get the negotiating parties around the table and discuss the issue.

Norica Nicolai (ALDE). – (RO) Madam President, even though we have been discussing the Oslo Accords since 1993 and the recent statements made by the Quartet are very clear, and even though Israeli and Palestinian leaders – by which I am referring to President Peres and President Abbas – firmly believe that the future in this region belongs to both states, I think that we need to do more as members of the Quartet to clarify matters and to get the parties to put an end to these situations which are controversial and may lead to disagreement.

In my view, we need a report from the Joint Technical Committee set up under the Oslo Accords and, as part of our Association Agreement with Israel, we are going to have to request a conclusion from this report on the incident that took place. Since either side may be telling the truth, I find it difficult to accept that both parties are right.

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D). – (PL) Madam President, the Israeli attack on Palestinian television stations that took place on 7 March is yet another unnecessary act of aggression and an unfortunate episode in the unending conflict in this region. The Israeli authorities claim that the signal from the Palestinian television stations interfered with communications at the Ben Gurion international airport and that the intervention took place after the stations failed to respond to warnings that had been sent earlier. The Palestinians took the air strike to be an attack on freedom of speech and on their governments in the West Bank. The television stations had been broadcasting for a long time and somehow their signal had not created any interference before.

Israel must respect the existing agreements with the Palestinian Authority that were reached in Oslo. It is only peaceful – and not brutal – conflict resolution methods that can bring about measurable results and ensure long-lasting peace and stability in this region. Every nation has a right to self-determination and its citizens have a right to a life in peace. Two separate states for two different nations is the only way to resolve this long-standing conflict. I therefore call on both sides to renew peace talks immediately in accordance with the guidelines set by both countries.

Hannu Takkula (ALDE). – (FI) Madam President, I do not think that this is such an urgent subject, and the right place to discuss it would be on the autonomous Israeli-Palestinian Joint Technical Committee. However, I understand that it is difficult to place it with the Technical Committee, because Hamas is represented in the Palestinian Government, and that organisation has not as yet met the requirements set for it by the international community. That is to say, they have not ended terrorism, accepted former agreements between Israel and Palestine or recognised the state of Israel.

Consequently, as the basic situation is the same, it has to be said, unfortunately, that Palestine continues with its various acts of terror against Israel, now including the disruption of radio traffic. The examples of this in the last few days are an indication to us – and all international observers say the same thing – that Palestinians have fired more than 200 rockets. Palestinian autonomy has started these strikes against Israel again.

It is obvious that the time is not ripe to build the future, and that is why we have to get the parties involved around the table. Naturally, free mass communications would be needed in the region, and Israel is the only country to have such a system at present. Nevertheless, the parties concerned must be brought back to the negotiating table. Only in that way can we find a solution to these issues and take matters forward.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Viviane Reding, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Madam President, Honourable Members, the High Representative is concerned by the incursion into Ramallah by Israeli security forces to seize equipment from the Palestinian television stations.

Incursions by Israeli forces into Palestinian cities where the Palestinian Authority, under the Oslo Accords, assumes the powers and responsibilities for internal security and public order are a breach of those accords and puts in jeopardy the internationally-recognised success of Palestinian institution-building efforts.

The European Union has worked with both stations, which have been broadcasting for many years. The Oslo Accords established an Israeli-Palestinian Joint Technical Committee to address any issues arising in the telecommunications field. In the light of this incident, the High Representative has called on Israel and on the Palestinian Authority to use this mechanism to urgently resolve any issues concerning broadcasts by these companies. A statement along these lines was issued by the High Representative on 2 March.

We continue to urge both sides to exercise maximum transparency and cooperation in the context of the framework provided by the Joint Technical Committee, in order to ensure that appropriate action can be taken in the appropriate timeframe. Furthermore, the EU believes that the best possible use should be made of the Joint Technical Committee, in particular to seek upstream solutions to emerging disputes in this area.

The EU Delegation in Tel Aviv is seeking further clarification from the Israeli Government on this incident, and the EU Delegation in Jerusalem remains in contact with the relevant Palestinian authorities and the two broadcasters affected by the seizure of equipment.

The European Union attaches the greatest importance to the principle of freedom of expression, and we support a vibrant and diverse Palestinian media sector operating in a clearly-defined and secure regulatory environment, as provided for in the Oslo Accords.

The EU urges both sides to seek a rapid resolution to this matter through consultation and encourages the Israeli authorities to return all the equipment seized during the raids so that the television channels can resume broadcasting on agreed frequencies as soon as possible.

President. – In accordance with Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure, I have received six motions for resolutions ⁽²⁾.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place at the end of the debates.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) Just like other colleagues who have participated in the debate, I would like to stress that the incident which took place on 29 February in Ramallah is regrettable. It is regrettable first and foremost because the Israeli-Palestinian agreements linking both parties contain clear rules regarding television stations. They oblige both parties to refrain from any actions amounting to interference in the communication and transmission systems or the infrastructures of the other side. It is the Palestinian Authority's duty to ensure that television stations operate according to the law and are secure. It is also regrettable because there are cooperation mechanisms

(2) See Minutes.

available which both sides could use to address these issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Technical Committee, set up by the Oslo Accords. Lastly, it is regrettable because this incident highlights to us once again what the actual nub of the problem is – the parties' inability to reach a lasting peace based on a two-state solution. I cannot but endorse the appeal made by the Quartet on Monday for both parties to remain committed and to refrain from any provocation.

16.3. Human rights violations in Bahrain

President. – The next item is the debate on human rights violations in Bahrain.

Carl Schlyter, *author.* – (SV) Madam President, here we are once again facing a country in which the people are forced to defend their human rights. They want to speak out, they want to express their views and they want to influence the people who hold power there. They are doing this peacefully, and then they are crushed with the use of violence. We have seen far too much of that this year.

This time, it is Bahrain's problems that are drawing our attention. Bahrain has taken certain measures, however. We see that it has introduced human rights instruments and also carried out investigations. However, we are calling for full and independent investigations and the complete release of all of the imprisoned activists. People must not be imprisoned for expressing their views. That is completely unreasonable. I do not know how many times we need to demand this of other countries.

There are also other things in the resolution that I welcome, however, namely the fact that the United States has abandoned its arms exports. I think it is extremely important that we follow the arms export rules to the letter. I really do call on the Commission to ensure that this happens. We cannot earn money from regimes violating human rights and using our weapons to crush peaceful people – or of course using our weapons to start wars.

I therefore call on the Commission to carry out a complete review. In this regard, I am also thinking of Saudi Arabia and many other countries in this region. Thus, I call on the Commission to take control of arms exports – that is what we can do here – and then to increase protection of human rights in Bahrain and ensure that we now have a reconciliation process in the country and that the wishes of the people can be safeguarded in a lasting way. Then Bahrain will have a chance to develop in the right direction and to not allow the Arab Spring to turn into winter.

Véronique De Keyser, *author.* – (FR) Madam President, even though everyone seems to think that we are doing nothing this Thursday afternoon, I do not believe, in any case, that the people of Bahrain would agree. Over the last few hours, with regard to Bahrain, we have heard nothing but speeches from the Bahraini Embassy and from all the friends who are familiar with it and who would have been in Bahrain saying, 'Yes, this is not how it should be done. You do not realise there is a process of change taking place, you are going to have a counterproductive effect'.

Now, very clearly, what are we seeking with this resolution? We are seeking respect for the human rights of the activists and all those who protested peacefully for a little more democracy in Bahrain. We are aware that since last year, since the tragic events of last year, there have been changes.

There have been changes and I will very quickly give you two examples. The fact that the Independent Commission of Inquiry, which was set up by the King, arrived at conclusions, albeit terrible conclusions, speaking of torture – ‘they were tortured to death’, and so on. – of things that happened, and the fact that this commission brought them to light, is positive. I hope that those responsible will be punished; this will be another issue and we will pay close attention to this.

Second example: I had a call from the Bahrain Institute of Technology (BIT) yesterday and a tripartite committee created by BIT several months ago between employers and workers’ representatives in Bahrain reached positive conclusions yesterday with pre-signatures from the government. All of these are positive signs.

Perhaps the resolution does not talk about this enough, perhaps we are too negative, but nonetheless we are not going to buy a pig in a poke. In my view, I say that we must trust the forces seeking to reform democracy and bring democracy to Bahrain, but we will remain vigilant while encouraging the most progressive forces.

Charles Tannock, *author.* – Madam President, last month marked the anniversary of the peaceful popular movement calling for respect for fundamental human rights and democratic reforms in Bahrain. There was evidence of disproportionate use of force by the security forces to crack down on protestors, and then came the controversial arrival of Gulf Cooperation Council troops. However, the government, led by the King, has listened to the international community and engaged in meaningful dialogue with the protestors and their groupings, and also with the Shia majority parties, and has established an independent commission of inquiry, as well as proposing constitutional amendments to address all these concerns.

The setting up of a Ministry for Human Rights and Social Development is also a step in the right direction to make sure that basic civil rights are being restored; that Ministry will uphold the highest international human rights standards.

The ECR Group calls upon the Bahraini authorities to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, but also to allow entry into Bahrain for foreign journalists and international human rights organisations so that the criminal investigations which are now under way, and indeed are already taking place, can be observed by outsiders, and that the implementation of the announced reforms, which I welcome, will be monitored by independent observers.

Cristian Dan Preda, *author.* – (RO) Madam President, I wish to begin by welcoming the debate which we are having today on the situation in Bahrain because this country, as many are saying, features among the forgotten Arab Springs. For well over a year, the demonstrations have been continuing in succession and the repression is also continuing, with almost total indifference being shown by the international community. Some commentators have talked, on this point, about the revolution which we do not want to see.

Through today’s debate, the European Parliament is highlighting that it can see the revolution and the human rights violations, and it condemns these violations. First and foremost, it condemns the excessive violence used by the security forces against ordinary citizens. It condemns the unfair trials which have assumed a key role in repressing the democratic protests. It condemns the restrictions which the Bahraini authorities are imposing on NGOs. It is time for the promises made by the Bahraini authorities on human

rights to be followed up by concrete actions, with priority being given to the implementation of the recommendations made by the Independent Commission of Inquiry.

Marie-Christine Vergiat, *author.* – (FR) Madam President, there are some countries that attract less media attention, and therefore have less of an impact on public opinion, than others, and this is the case of Bahrain. However, in the wake of the Tunisian revolution, the Bahraini people have also risen up. Yet, there too, the revolution has come up against bloodthirsty repression and this repression has taken place with the support of the Saudi Arabian army, which we would have liked to see condemned more strongly and not just denounced by the European Parliament.

I do not share the optimism of some of my fellow Members. Behind the promises, there is still repression. It was still there on 14 February during the mass protest commemorating the first anniversary of the popular uprising. Journalists, human rights defenders, trade unionists and many others are still being brought before tribunals, even doctors who dared to treat protesters, even innocent citizens who dared to speak to journalists. Thousands of people were dismissed from their jobs for having participated in the protests and have still not been reinstated. Hundreds of students still cannot resume their studies and, as far as I know, the Bahraini Government is still calling for the visit from the UN Special Rapporteur to be postponed.

It has to be said that the Bahraini Government feels strongly supported by the presence of the 5th United States fleet and its arms agreements with certain European countries, including the United Kingdom. Some European States are even guaranteeing training for riot police within this government; as a French citizen, this brings back bad memories for me. We can take comfort in the fact that the United States have suspended their arms exports and we could charge the British Government to do the same. Yes, it is time to put pressure on the European enterprises that dismissed workers and have still not reinstated them. In my view, this resolution falls far short of what the Bahraini people should expect from the European Union. The European Union that continues to proclaim that it defends human rights and democracy and does very little to apply itself.

Marietje Schaake, *author.* – Madam President, the sponsoring of the World Economic Forum in Davos this year by the Government of Bahrain shows its ambition to belong and to be taken seriously by the international and business communities.

Bahrain's authorities can only be credible if they respect its citizens' human rights, period. In a country that heavily restricts freedom of speech and of the Internet and has people fired for expressing their political opinions, business development is impossible. When tens of thousands of peaceful protestors are met with violence and doctors face political trials, investment is unattractive. Where tensions between Shia and Sunnis are growing and citizens face military trials, there is a risk of a proxy conflict involving Saudi Arabia and Iran.

EU-based companies in Bahrain should take back fired employees, and we should freeze the export of weapons and technology from the EU that is used to repress people. Bahrain's authorities should put themselves on the right side of history and show their unconditional commitment to respecting human rights and make reforms.

The release of political prisoners, especially of Abdulhadi Alkhawaja and Mahdi Abu Deeb, are of particular urgency to this House.

Monica Luisa Macovei, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Madam President, the situation in Bahrain worsened following the violent suppression of the peaceful pro-democracy demonstrations. Despite the recommendations of the Bahrain independent commission of inquiry and the government's promises to pursue those recommendations, the violence continued. Thirty-five people died up to the end of martial law in June 2011, and this figure has risen to over 60, with an avalanche of deaths related to the violence since December 2011.

The Bahraini authorities must stop the violent suppression of peaceful protests. It is reported that political and human rights activists, journalists and medical personnel are being unfairly tried in military and civilian courts. Such prosecutions must be stopped immediately, and those officials who fail to implement the fair trial rules must be held accountable. We also condemn the continued repressive measures in the area of Internet censorship, as over one thousand websites remain blocked in Bahrain.

This Parliament must take a stronger stance and the EU must increase pressure on the Bahraini Government to honour its promises of democratic reforms and investigate human rights violations.

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (PL) Madam President, inspired by last year's successful protests in Egypt and Tunisia, the people of Bahrain also took to the streets en masse, starting a wave of anti-government protests, demanding the introduction of a constitutional monarchy and an end to discrimination against Shiites. Following a brutal attack by the police and security forces on the demonstrators on 17 February, 60 people were killed and over 3 000 arrested. The Bahraini authorities are continuing their repression against society, censoring the media, restricting Internet access and also placing restrictions on the universal right of assembly and association and even on free movement of citizens and humanitarian aid.

In the light of the continuing repression, we demand an immediate cessation of acts of violence and call on the Bahraini authorities to restore fundamental freedoms and civil liberties. Only a constructive dialogue with society can help to produce a solution that will make it possible to end the state of emergency in the country.

Kristiina Ojula, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Madam President, Bahrain has already gone through a significant change. Although through the blood of many innocent citizens, the country has now turned to reform itself. The reforms cannot succeed, however, when people responsible for the torturing and killing of Bahraini civilians are not brought to justice.

I encourage the Bahraini Government to drop the charges against peaceful protesters and medical personnel who helped the injured, release the detained and start independent investigations into the grave acts of violence against peaceful pro-democracy protesters.

The Bahraini Government has made many mistakes and has lost international credibility and respect. They should not forget the lesson and I hope that the way forward to democracy will be paved with sophisticated reforms.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, it is my sincere belief that there is no area of civilisation, no nation and no religion that is not destined to live, to a greater or lesser degree, in freedom and democracy. For this reason it was with great joy and, to be honest, considerable emotion, that I observed events in the Arab world in the spring of last year. Echoes of that spring, of that air of

freedom, also reached Bahrain. I do not deny that the king of Bahrain and his regime made certain concessions, are trying at least to give the impression that they understood the situation, that they must respond to their nation's expectations, but this is nowhere near enough. I would like to make it absolutely clear that what is happening in Bahrain is just not enough. Independent observers and independent journalists are still not allowed into the country, which contradicts the stated good intentions of the King of Bahrain. I would also like to say that one cannot speak of freedom or justice if those who only a year ago were torturing and killing innocent people, who were only asking for greater freedom, are not brought to justice.

Jaroslav Paška, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. - (SK) Madam President, during the Arab Spring last year, a wave of civil unrest also swept through the moderate Islamic regime in Bahrain, during which 35 people lost their lives and hundreds were imprisoned. At the request of the international community, the Sultan of Bahrain established an independent investigative committee which, among other things, stated that during the suppression of the unrest, five people were tortured while in prison, and that unreasonable force was used against peaceful demonstrators and political activists. Many people were condemned and imprisoned in trials that did not comply with international standards or even with Bahraini criminal law. In accordance with the recommendations of the commission, a special investigating unit was set up, the aim of which is to determine responsibility for the death and torture of civilians and the unlawful actions of the courts.

However, these efforts must go further. In addition to the continuing investigation, it is necessary to restore the social consensus, improve the protection of human rights and strive for constructive dialogue. In my opinion, it is our duty to remind the Sultan of Bahrain of this.

Franz Obermayr (NI). - (DE) Madam President, the unfortunate fact is that the Arab Spring has become an Arab Winter. At present, the international press mainly reports on the tragic events in Syria, or perhaps Libya, however the massacres of the Coptic Christians in Egypt and, of course, the incidents in Bahrain seem to have been forgotten.

In Bahrain alone, more than 45 people have lost their lives in the outbreak of Shiite protests against the Sunni royal family. As recently as Saturday, the police once again used tear-gas against peaceful demonstrators. It is not just the security forces in Bahrain that are heaping blame on themselves, however. Saudi Arabian troops are also supporting the regime with Western weapons, meaning that the US is also indirectly involved in the conflict.

This enables them to ensure that the forces for the status quo are at present stronger than those for change. Conservative fundamentalist forces are thus being consolidated here, and the negative impact on the reform process in Bahrain means that hope is dwindling that the democratisation process will also be set in train in the other five Gulf States.

The demands of the Bahrainis for social justice, reforms and a constitutional monarchy should therefore be taken seriously by the EU and we should not apply double standards, particularly in relation to events in the Arab world.

Seán Kelly (PPE). - Madam President, Bahrain is not the worst country in the world, nor is it the poorest, nor is it the most undemocratic, nor is it the most backward. Nevertheless, the issues we are discussing here today are of the gravest import and we would hope that as a result of our resolution pressure might be brought to bear on the Bahraini authorities so they make the necessary reforms.

The establishment of the Bahraini Independent Commission of Inquiry is welcome but, unless it is seen to have implementation measures which will bring concrete results, it will not be of any value, especially in bringing people who have been guilty of human rights violations to justice. Also Bahrain needs to establish the right for peaceful protests. Those who have been arrested for engaging in peaceful protests must be freed; in particular those who have lost their jobs because of being involved in peaceful protests must have their jobs given back.

Finally, the First World itself must desist from selling military equipment to Bahrain until these measures are implemented.

– (GA) If this is done, we will have made progress. Thank you.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Sari Essayah (PPE). – (FI) Madam President, the security situation in Bahrain is still very precarious, with more and more clashes between security forces and demonstrators constantly being reported around the anniversary of the popular uprising on 14 February.

The report by an independent commission that was published in November says that there has been continuous unreasonable use of force and widespread torture on the part of the authorities, with those who participated in the uprising the victims. According to the report, Bahrain's Sunni-led Government has not embarked on any of the recommended measures. For example, members of the government found guilty of abuses have not been brought to justice. The report also says that political prisoners have been systematically tortured, and the High Representative in her statement has appealed for an end to the violence, as has UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The international community cannot stand by and watch while the brutality that is taking place in that country continues.

Ana Gomes (S&D). – (PT) Madam President, this resolution is appropriate and balanced, acknowledging some positive steps that have been taken, in particular with regard to the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, which recognised that excessive force had been used and that there had been torture and unfair trials in response to the protests of last year. However, this resolution also acknowledges the shortcomings and slow implementation of the reforms and the redress of injustices, particularly in relation to the failure to release political prisoners.

Last week, I met a group of women in Brussels; delegates from Bahrain, of all faiths, who came to say that there had been political and religious manipulation of the demonstrations by obscurantist forces. If that is the case, why is Bahrain continuing to prevent journalists and human rights organisations from entering the country? Why has the UN special rapporteur on torture, who wanted to visit Bahrain, been prevented from doing so? Why has Bahrain still not extended an invitation for the Special Procedures Branch of the UN Human Rights Council to visit and ascertain what has happened?

Through the High Representative, the EU must demand that Bahrain does, in fact, carry out the necessary reforms and rectify the abuses that have been committed. As several fellow Members have said, it is also imperative that she demand that the Member States ensure complete compliance with the criteria for the common position on arms exports, so that they are not complicit with the internal repression in Bahrain.

Norica Nicolai (ALDE). – (RO) Madam President, I believe that Bahrain is a typical example of what it means to take a few steps forward with impetus from the international

community and many steps back, because we cannot interpret in any other way the results of the Independent Commission of Inquiry, which presented last year its report which was given a positive assessment. However, this commission of inquiry makes it clear that international standards on human rights have not been complied with during trial proceedings. Following this commission of inquiry, the King appointed another commission to submit a plan for implementing the reforms. This plan is due to be presented on 20 March.

It might have been interesting to wait and see whether there is actually any political will in Bahrain. In my view, however, there is the will to continue the repression and curbing of fundamental rights and freedoms. This is why I welcome this resolution, and I believe that only pressure from us can make them take serious, firm steps, based on the reforms.

Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE). - (FI) Madam President, in October we adopted a position on the situation in Bahrain, highlighting the arrests and imprisonment of doctors and nurses treating those injured in the demonstrations.

On 14 February, the anniversary of the popular uprising, new incidents of violence erupted when Bahraini security forces suppressed peaceful demonstrations with the use of force, and several activists were hurt. It is a positive step that the United States has interrupted the export to Bahrain of weapons and other equipment used for the violent oppression of its citizens. The recommendations of the Independent Commission of Inquiry have also been taken seriously.

However, the harsh sentences handed out to human rights activists with no proper justification and heavy censorship on the Internet speak of opposition to reform. The protests have continued to be put down, as usual, by means of force. The King of Bahrain and the authorities have given repeated assurances of their commitment to improving human rights and cooperation with international organisations. It is high time we saw more obvious examples of this.

Mitro Repo (S&D). - (FI) Madam President, the Bahraini people are calling for democratic reforms and a respect for fundamental human rights. The demands for improved living conditions and a respect for rights are not extravagant, and they do not in any way pose a threat to the Bahraini Government.

Instead of listening to the justified demands of the people, however, government security forces have continued to use heavy-handed tactics against demonstrators. There is no justification whatsoever for using tear gas and stun grenades against unarmed demonstrators. Bahrain must end this brutal treatment of demonstrators. No one involved in peaceful demonstrations should be imprisoned for expressing their opinion.

The Bahraini administration should instead show more support for civil activism and civil society. If it wishes to avoid demonstrations, Bahrain needs greater democracy, more dialogue with civil society and robust measures to create jobs, especially for the young.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). - (DE) Madam President, I have known Bahrain for more than 30 years and would simply like to say that this country was previously on a good path and can also return to a good path. This is despite its exposed position in relation to Iran, something that should not be forgotten. Naturally there are attacks from the ruling family, from the security service and from the Saudis, who are behind these developments and who would seek to incorporate Bahrain into their own country. This is something else we

must not forget. On the other hand, we have systematic Shiite agitation controlled by Iran and by extremist leaders inside the country itself.

Both of these factors are extremely dangerous, and our task is not to take sides here, but rather to act as intermediaries and to help ensure that a fully functioning constitutional monarchy is created there with a reasonable balance between Shiites and Sunnis, as otherwise we can expect a terrible blood-bath. It has already been said that the so-called Arab Spring is more a step in the direction of extremism in most countries at the moment and that the justified criticism of the attacks in Bahrain may be abused by extremists.

Alexandra Thein (ALDE). – (DE) Madam President, I welcome the fact that Parliament has taken up the issue of human rights violations in Bahrain. According to the list kept by the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, the number of fatalities since 14 February 2011 is much higher than indicated in the resolution. The number quoted there is 63. The debate is made all the more important by the fact that a large number of Member States were very quiet and indecisive about the events in Bahrain, when they actually should have made their voices heard. If one compares the way the Member States reacted to the very first killings in Syria, then it is apparent that the response was quite different. In the final analysis, this is what leads me to hope that the standards applied in the European Parliament at least will be the same, whatever country is under consideration. We cannot use a different yardstick here simply because Bahrain is the location of a US naval base rather than a Russian one, because it receives supplies of US weapons rather than Russian ones and because our trade relations with the country are better than with Syria. The same standards need to apply in Bahrain and in all the countries of the Arab world when it comes to compliance with human rights.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Viviane Reding, *Vice-President of the Commission.* – Madam President, the EU is paying great attention to the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Bahrain, especially since the major resurgence of unrest in that country, which started in February last year. In recent months we have unfortunately witnessed arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment and sometimes even torture of detainees, trials carried out without the appropriate guarantees, and restrictions of fundamental freedoms.

Respect for human rights standards still needs to be improved and the national reconciliation process still has to be put on a more solid footing. The EU's response to this worrying situation has been consistent. High Representative Catherine Ashton issued last year no less than eight statements on Bahrain calling for dialogue, respect for human rights and avoidance of violence. She raised this matter several times with the Bahraini Foreign Minister and she met with the King himself in April last year. The Foreign Affairs Council reiterated the same messages in its conclusions in March, April and May. The EEAS and the EU delegation in Riyadh, which is accredited to Bahrain, are engaged in regular visits and dialogue with the Bahraini authorities.

The EU welcomes the decision taken by the King in June 2011 to set up an independent commission of inquiry to shed full light on the human rights violations during the unrest. The Bahraini Government is now implementing the recommendations contained in the report that the Commission published in November. The EU has expressed its willingness to provide concrete support to the Bahraini Government in this challenging task, through the provision of assistance and expertise.

It will be very important to implement these recommendations fully and rapidly. It also remains essential that a serious dialogue be opened between the authorities and the opposition. The opposition groups have to play their part in making this possible, because in the absence of such a dialogue genuine and lasting national reconciliation will not take place.

Finally, it is our hope that the sentences given by the so-called 'national safety courts', notably to the group of some 20 medical staff and to several human rights defenders, will be revoked. All those individuals must be given a fresh trial before civilian courts with all the guarantees arising from Bahrain's domestic legislation and from the relevant international conventions.

Ana Gomes (S&D). - Madam President, before passing to the vote, I would just like to give Parliament the information that news agencies are reporting an attack by Ethiopia inside Eritrea, in which a number of people have been killed and two German citizens kidnapped.

These are two countries who fought a bloody war in the nineties. I believe the EU has a tremendous responsibility, because it has not only been giving massive support in aid to one of these countries, Ethiopia, but actually not doing what it should in terms of demanding that both countries respect the arbitration decision on the border issued a couple of years ago, which is something that favours Ethiopia.

I would like to ask, through you, that when Baroness Ashton comes to Parliament next week, to the meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, she will be prepared to give us information on what is happening between these two countries.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, I have just learned that the Conference of Presidents has decided by a majority, contrary to the wishes of our group, to drop the urgent matters from the agenda for the next part-session, which, because of the Orthodox Easter celebrations, begins on Tuesday and runs until Friday. I do not believe this is right, because a lot of important issues are sure to arise in the four weeks leading up to the April part-session. I wish to protest against this decision, which breaches our own rules, and would ask my colleagues from the other groups to have a word with their group chairs, so that this misguided decision can be revised by April.

President. – Mr Posselt, measures were taken, as before, when the meeting began on Tuesday but only the Conference of Presidents, and possibly the president of this group, may return this matter to the table. We shall therefore pass on your request.

In accordance with Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure, I have received six motions for resolutions ⁽³⁾.

The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Tokia Saïfi (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) Bahrain will end up as the poor relation of the Arab Spring. Just one year ago, when the opposition tried to rise up against the monarchy, the neighbouring states offered their support to the government and repressed the protests, which led to the deaths of dozens of people. Political and social reforms have been promised

(3) See Minutes.

but, for the time being, no significant progress has been observed. In order to stop the law enforcement authorities and the population from coming to blows again, we must urgently speed up the process of democratisation in the country. Above all else, the political stage must gradually start to open up to the different movements and a multi-party system must begin to take shape. In this regard, the release of political prisoners is a priority that we wanted to highlight in our urgent resolution. No progress will be made as long as the government refuses to shed light on the violence committed against civilians in 2011. Also, the European Parliament is inviting Bahrain to submit as quickly as possible to the United Nations Human Rights Council special procedures.

Tadeusz Zwiefka (PPE), in writing. – (PL) In 2011, Bahrain's cities became the scene of regular battles between demonstrators and the police and army. The first such event took place on 17 February, when the forces of order attacked peaceful anti-government demonstrators. After this unjustified aggression by government forces, events took a serious turn for the worse for thousands of citizens of that country. The list of human rights violations by the authorities in Bahrain is a long one. There is a failure to respect the fundamental rights of the people involved, even indirectly, in last year's events. The problems that have led to today's discussion, are, firstly, groundless arrests of citizens, including children, and, secondly, the use of torture, poor treatment and abuse of detainees, including instances of people beaten to death. Another problem is that of unjust trials, in which the right to a defence is refused, including the right to a lawyer. These trials end with disproportionately severe sentences, the aim of which is to strike fear into potential critics of the monarchy. Repressive measures against lecturers, teachers and students are the order of the day, and people who took part in last year's demonstrations are being fired from their jobs. It is important that Europe should speak with one voice and say that the events in Bahrain should be condemned. Political pressure should be exerted in respect of behaviour that undermines fundamental values. In this way we can give a clear signal that the same standards apply to everyone.

17. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

17.1. Human trafficking in Sinai, in particular the case of Solomon W. (B7-0158/2012) (vote)

17.2. Palestine: raids by Israeli forces on Palestinian TV stations (B7-0160/2012) (vote)

17.3. Human rights violations in Bahrain (B7-0171/2012) (vote)

18. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

19. Composition of committees and delegations : see Minutes

20. Decisions concerning certain documents: see Minutes

21. Written declarations included in the register (Rule 123): see Minutes

22. Forwarding of texts adopted during the sitting : see Minutes

23. Dates of forthcoming sittings : see Minutes

24. Adjournment of the session

(The sitting closed at 16.45)