

COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES
COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND
FOOD SAFETY

INVITED COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM
COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT

HEARING OF VIRGINIJUS SINKEVIČIUS
COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE
(Environment and Oceans)

THURSDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2019

BRUSSELS

1-002-0000

PRÉSIDENCE**PASCAL CANFIN**

*Président de la commission de l'environnement,
de la santé publique et de la sécurité alimentaire*

CHRIS DAVIES

Président de la commission de la pêche

(L'audition est ouverte à 14 h 33)

1-003-0000

Pascal Canfin, *Président ENVI* – Je voulais souhaiter, au nom de la commission de l'environnement, de la santé publique et de la sécurité alimentaire et de la commission de la pêche de ce Parlement, la bienvenue au commissaire désigné pour les sujets liés à l'environnement et aux océans.

C'est la deuxième audition de la commission de l'environnement, et c'est une audition que nous allons mener conjointement avec la commission de la pêche parce que les sujets liés aux océans sont bien évidemment des sujets conjoints et partagés entre ces deux commissions.

Quand nous avons découvert la liste des commissaires, ce qui a retenu notre attention, c'est d'abord votre âge, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné. Et on a dit: «C'est le commissaire de 28 ans. Est-ce que ce n'est pas un problème?» Évidemment, je pense que non, ça n'est pas un problème, et j'espère, au contraire, qu'il y aura encore davantage de commissaires de 28 ans demain, parce que nous avons besoin que toutes les générations soient représentées au sein de la Commission.

Vous avez une responsabilité particulière aujourd'hui, c'est de répondre précisément aux questions des membres des deux commissions. En ce qui concerne les sujets qui sont spécifiquement ceux de la commission de l'environnement, vous avez la responsabilité et le *leadership* sur l'ambition «zéro pollution», sur la stratégie en faveur de la biodiversité, sur l'économie circulaire et, bien évidemment, sur l'océan, sujet que nous partageons avec la commission de la pêche.

Vous avez une lourde responsabilité dans le cadre du *Green Deal*, qui a été désigné comme étant la première priorité de cette nouvelle Commission.

Nous attendons donc des réponses précises aux questions précises qui seront posées. Je vais maintenant passer la parole à Chris Davies pour l'organisation de cette audition.

1-004-0000

Chris Davies, *Chair PECH*. – I feel obliged not to give my age, though it's obvious to me that I'm the oldest person on this platform – by some way, in some cases!

Welcome, Commissioner-designate Sinkevičius; you will understand that my Lithuanian pronunciation is dreadful, so I use the name by which you were no doubt called during your three years at university in Wales.

So, the structure of the debate: we start with an opening statement from the Commissioner-designate, which will last for 15 minutes. We then open to a total of 25 questions from members of the two committees. Members will have a maximum of one minute, thirty seconds to ask their first question, though we would advise them to use less time than that. The Commissioner-designate will then have two minutes in which to respond. The original questioner will have a follow-up of 30 seconds, or – if you have kept to well within your time – perhaps a little more, and there will be a one-minute response from the Commissioner-designate.

We'll take this in rounds: the first round will be a series of seven questions on environmental themes, the second round on fisheries matters. At the end, the Commissioner-designate will have some five minutes to make a closing statement.

I am reminded to tell you that interpretation is provided in 23 languages. All speakers can use their own language. Speakers are reminded not to speak too quickly, or the interpreters may not be able to follow you, and I also report that this debate will be streamed live on Parliament's internet site and it will also be possible to access a video recording of the hearing.

Commissioner-designate, in the mandate given to you by the President-elect, she points to the fact that you have to achieve maximum sustainable yield of our fisheries. You have to stop overfishing in our seas by the end of next year. You have to ensure that the landing obligation, the discard ban, is complied with; at present, it is not so being. And you have to put an end to environmentally-harmful subsidies that lead to over-fishing. So no controversy; not much to do!

(Laughter)

The first session will be for environment questions, though, so you have time to relax and think about fish a bit later. The floor is yours. Your opening statement.

1-005-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Honourable Members, good afternoon, and thank you for this invitation to share my vision for my coming mandate. It's a great honour for me to be here as the first Commissioner-designate born after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It's a sign of trust in my generation – a generation with the European idea in its DNA. To me, Europe means freedom and fairness, openness and opportunity. At the same time it means taking responsibility.

The latest wave of climate strikes shows that Generation Y and Generation Z are ready to take responsibility. Being a tiny part of this young generation, and a father, I am determined to take this path. For us, 2050 is not just a target on a piece of paper. We will have to live it.

Now I will turn to my mother tongue to address you in my native Lithuanian.

Mano politinė karjera prasidėjo rinkimais į parlamentą gimtojoje apygardoje Vilniuje. Aš buvau Seimo nariu, Ekonomikos komiteto pirmininku. Pastaruosius dvejus metus ėjau Ekonomikos ir inovacijų ministro pareigas. Aš išmokau tarnauti savo šalies gyventojams. Aš suvokiau, kaip svarbu būti šalia kiekvieno iš jų, suprasti jų rūpesčius ir lūkesčius taip, kaip tai mokate ir Jūs. Lietuva, ačiū už suteiktas galimybes ir kartu nueitą kelią.

I learned the importance of building bridges instead of burdens. Some see a confrontation between economic growth and environment, between the digital economy and industry, between innovation and social wealth. That is not my belief.

The path of challenges is a path of opportunity. It leads to a more sustainable, healthier and more prosperous society. Our journey to a green climate neutral planet has started - it will be hard. As a Commissioner, I will do everything in my power to take us down that road.

We are many on this journey. We see this from climate protests, European elections and the Eurobarometer. 92% of Europeans want a climate neutral EU by 2050. We need to listen. And by presenting the Green Deal as her first priority, President-elect von der Leyen has done exactly that. My greatest ambition, if confirmed, would be to make the Green Deal a reality on the ground. A deal that works for oceans, for the environment and for our citizens who should be front and centre throughout.

Honourable Members, some of you were surprised to see oceans in the name of my portfolio. I understand your concern. You want an assurance that the new Commissioner will have the well-being of our fishermen and women in mind. I can give you that assurance now.

We live on a blue planet. Fisheries and the oceans have to remain a cornerstone of our policies, and those policies have to deal with many things. The future of our fishermen and women, of course, but the environment as well. We have to deal with climate change, as we saw from the recent IPCC report. We have to deal with plastic pollution that affects the entire food chain and we have to deal with nutrient runoff from agriculture that caused dead zones in our seas.

My portfolio brings all these things together. Healthy oceans means healthy fish stocks, and healthy the fish stocks means a thriving community of fishermen and women. A healthy environment means healthy citizens, with a lower burden of disease. I will strive for a joined-up approach throughout my mandate in close cooperation with you.

For the environment. The President-elect has asked me to lead on three key initiatives in the European Green Deal. I will do this under the leadership of the Executive Vice-President, Frans Timmermans, whose experience and support will be vital.

These areas are: Biodiversity, the circular economy and zero pollution.

Biodiversity is disappearing. The Sixth Mass Extinction has already begun. If confirmed as Commissioner for the Environment, I would represent Europe at the Convention for Biological Diversity in China next year. That conference will be a critical opportunity to turn the tide. I would like to return with three things. The first is the development of the biodiversity equivalent of the Paris 1.5° climate goal. Secondly, I believe that national commitments on ways to meet the overall objectives would help to deliver on that. Thirdly, we need a mechanism for measuring progress. Our partners are looking at us for enhanced support, and a more focussed development cooperation in the fight against biodiversity loss. But our international credibility will also depend on the progress at home. We need to lead by example with concrete measures. This requires action on pressure points, like forestry, soil, the food system, energy and climate change.

It's time to show how these problems can be solved with solutions designed for the future, not borrowed from the past.

The President-elect is demanding new standards for biodiversity. Wide-ranging standards for trade, industry, agriculture and the economy. I'm determined to deliver. But here again, Honourable Members, I need your help in mainstreaming biodiversity across EU and national policies.

My second priority would be the circular economy. I want to raise the profile of circularity. I want to make sure it is not only a word, but also an action. If we ensure the circular use of just 4 materials: steel, aluminium, cement and plastic we cut their industrial emissions in half. Going circular makes sense. I believe the action plan could involve 3 major strands.

It could start with a look at that way we produce and consume goods, with action on eco design and focus on the reuse and repair. It could also take circularity to new sectors, like textiles, construction, food and ICT. The second strand is helping consumers to make informed choices. When they see a product claiming to be green, they need to believe it. And thirdly, we need to move beyond the recycling. We don't just want to minimise waste, we want to prevent it completely. Wherever we can, in textiles, in construction and many other areas.

My last action area is zero pollution. As a father, as a citizen, and as a European Commissioner, I want to make pollution a thing of the past. I want Europe offering clean air, clean water, clean tech and safer chemicals. Zero pollution will demand a wide-ranging approach. It will mean specific initiatives in key areas, and reinforced measures to address the main sources of pollution. For chemicals, it will mean looking at hazardous substances and endocrine disruptors. For water, it will mean tackling new and harmful pollution sources, like nutrients, micro-plastics and pharmaceuticals. And it will mean a new approach to pesticides, in synergy with the work of the Commissioner for Health, on the farm to fork strategy, it's hard to stimulate take-up of non-chemical alternatives. Our policies have always been rooted in rigorous science. That approach must continue under the Eighth Environmental Action Programme, which will help to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals.

I turn now to my aims for oceans. The first will be the full implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy. We must strive for balance. Wherever we fish sustainably, fishing profits rise. By 2022, I will evaluate the Common Fisheries Policy to identify how to address issues not sufficiently covered in the current policy, because we need policy that works for our fishermen and women, our coastal communities and our environment.

It must also deal with many differences. What works in the North Sea may not apply in the Mediterranean. Every sea basin is unique, and we must take that into account. Our efforts for sustainable fisheries and healthy productive oceans must not stop at our borders. The EU is a global leader in ocean governance. I would use that leadership to enforce our sustainability principles worldwide, to make sure that we can deliver on sustainable development goals for life below water.

I will work with the Trade Commissioner-designate Phil Hogan to reach a global agreement on banning harmful fishery subsidies. I will push for more Marine protected areas, and for more effective management in our waters.

On the high seas and pristine areas, like the Antarctic, we need new rules for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity on the high seas. And I will continue our fight against illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. This problem threatens responsible fishermen and women in particular those working on a small scale who suffer from and fear competition and depleted resources. Fishing is a noble profession. Every day, our fishermen and women do hard and risky work to supply us with the highest quality protein. We must stand by their side.

The well-being of our coastal communities is at risk. Our policy against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is considered to be the best in the world but these rules are useless without effective implementation. I want to work with you to make sure that our fisheries control system

is fit for purpose and ensures a level playing field. I will address shortcomings wherever I find them.

Third, I want to invest in the potential of sustainable seafood to deliver farm to fork strategy on sustainable food. European seafood plays a major role in our diet. Our fishing fleet lands over 5 million tonnes, and aqua culture brings 1.4 million tonnes on to the market.

I will also lead to develop a new approach for a sustainable blue economy. This should bring together everything from marine knowledge and research to maritime spatial planning. Marine renewable energy, blue investment and regional maritime cooperation. 3.5 million people work in the blue economy. To some of you that may sound a small number, for me, it's more than the number of inhabitants in my home country.

As the President-elect reminded us, legislation is only as good as its implementation. I would work closely with the Member States to improve that implementation in all policy areas. Using every tool at my disposal, that includes dialogue, the Environment implementation review, infringement proceedings and the EU court. We need laws that work for our citizens, for environment and for oceans and fisheries and for businesses across the EU.

Honourable Members, we face new challenges. Success will depend on our working together. You will see me regularly, in your corridors and meeting rooms, I will be here for bilaterals, debates and trilogues. We need more direct exchanges. I will visit your countries, not only the capitals, but also the regions and the coastal communities as well. My thanks for invitations that I have already received.

As I said that the beginning, we have to be close to our citizens. You are their legitimate representatives. I would place my trust in you. I would relish the opportunity to work closely with you for the next five years.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your questions and I will answer them the best I can.

1-008-0000

Jessica Polfjärd (PPE). – Miljö- och klimatfrågan står högst upp på agendan över hela världen. För att nå våra gemensamma mål måste vi ha tillit och tilltro till vetenskap och forskning. Forskningen är tydlig. Skogen spelar en nyckelroll för klimatet, då välskötta skogar binder koldioxid, trädbaserade produkter fortsätter att lagra koldioxid under hela sin livstid och skogsmaterial kan ersätta både fossilbaserat material och bränsle. Detta är någonting som måste värnas och uppmuntras.

I ditt uppdrag ingår det att lägga fram en ny biologisk mångfaldsstrategi för 2030, vilken också inkluderar skogen. I det uppdraget är det viktigt att hitta en balans mellan att vårda den biologiska mångfalden och den hållbara skogsförvaltningen. Stora delar av de europeiska skogarna har påverkats hårt av de senaste årens värme och torka. Följden av detta har blivit att stora skador på skogarna har orsakat bland annat skadedjur. För många skogsägare innebär detta ekonomiska svårigheter och påverkar i förlängningen möjligheterna att bruka skogen, vilket också får effekter för de tre miljoner européer som är sysselsatta i branschen.

Med detta sagt är det viktigt att den biologiska mångfaldsstrategin tar hänsyn till den uppkomna situationen. Min fråga lyder: Hur kommer du i din eventuella framtida roll i kommissionen att arbeta för att säkerställa att skogens möjligheter tas tillvara i strategin och inte missgynnas?

1-009-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – I'm aware Parliament has called on the Commission to step up forestation a number of times, and forests are important. Around 40% of the EU land surface is covered in forests and they have to be protected and well maintained.

First of all, it is important also to bear in mind new challenges. It is important, because of forest fires, that each Member State has an effective management plan on forests. We saw what happened in Siberia and in the Amazon, but we had the same in Greece. It is very important not to forget management plans. It is important also to address the uneven implementation of the EU Timber Regulation and of legislation already implemented but not among all the Member States.

But the cornerstone of forest protection would fall under the Biodiversity Strategy 2030. The Biodiversity Strategy will be one of the key pillars of the EU Green Deal. I don't think the Green Deal is possible without effective management of biodiversity. So it is important for us to address forest degradation and, especially, poor conservation, habitats and species protection, and Natura 2000 areas. With reference to Natura 2000 areas, I'm talking not only about the number of protected areas – or the proportion, as much as 25-30% in some cases – but also about real implementation. This doesn't mean that all human activities will be halted, but we have to assess them. It is, of course, important to have concrete, measurable actions and – most importantly, of course – funding.

1-010-0000

Jessica Polfjärd (PPE). – Eftersom kommissionen kommer att arbeta tillsammans så är min andra fråga hur du kommer att säkerställa att du och Frans Timmermans kommer att ta tillvara skogens potential i allt klimat- och miljöarbete.

1-011-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much. This is a very good question, and this is exactly the key to our work with Frans Timmermans.

In my mission letter it's clearly stated: deliver the EU biodiversity strategy. It is important that, working together with Frans Timmermans, we will make sure that it's actually included in other legislation: agriculture, energy, transport and so on, basically everything that is causing trouble today and leading to the sixth mass extinction.

It is important to address, and I want to be very firm here because we talk about more resources and funds being needed, but it is very important for us to be strategic on this goal. Other areas should also involve biodiversity in their spheres so that we are all reaching the same goals, because we cannot have business as usual regarding agriculture while having ambitious goals for biodiversity 2030.

1-012-0000

César Luena (S&D). – Señor candidato, ahora tenemos que derribar el muro del negacionismo y de la indiferencia ante la crisis climática. Y le voy a hablar de contaminación atmosférica, que causa más de 400 000 muertes prematuras en la Unión —como usted sabe—, agrava las enfermedades crónicas, causa enormes costes sanitarios, medioambientales, económicos. Por tanto, la reducción de la contaminación ambiental puede salvar vidas y reducir, además, el número de enfermedades. Y le pregunto: ¿Qué medidas concretas e inmediatas prevé usted para reducir las emisiones en origen, incluidas las procedentes de la industria, el transporte, la agricultura y la calefacción doméstica, y para garantizar que se respeten las normas de calidad del aire vigentes en todos los Estados miembros? ¿Piensa usted proponer una nueva medida que adapte la legislación de la Unión sobre calidad del aire a las últimas directrices de la Organización Mundial de la Salud? ¿Se compromete a proponer medidas concretas de la Unión para introducir zonas de aire limpio

en las ciudades europeas? Y, por último, ¿propondrá normas más estrictas de emisiones de vehículos Euro 7?

1-013-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Indeed, I share the same feeling. It's an unreasonable situation when 400 000 people are dying every year because of the air pollution in the EU. To look at it through a different lens, in terms of the economy, it's EUR 24 billion a year. And, most importantly, the laws are there – but we haven't yet managed to achieve full implementation of those laws.

With regard to the World Health Organisation, our standard, for example, for fine particulate matter is at the level recommended in 2006.

So I will present for the College's endorsement a clean air action plan, setting out, first of all, a zero-tolerance policy on non-compliance with the current air quality standards. We have to address the EU legislative framework, mapping it and adapting it to the latest WHO recommendations.

You asked about cities? First of all, it's about dialogue and a mechanism for enhancing assistance to Member States and cities to adjust. Regarding clear zones, I would be very specific here that local authorities may choose to introduce traffic restrictions or CO₂-free zones.

Regarding the Euro 7 standard, I think, and there is a mandate for it, that in five years it will be possible to have Euro 7, working together with the Commissioner-designate for the Internal Market.

1-014-0000

César Luena (S&D). – Sobre los coches diésel contaminantes, permítame que le haga dos preguntas más. ¿Piensa usted aplicar, junto con el comisario de Mercado Interior, la retirada obligatoria de estos vehículos en toda la Unión Europea? Y, por último, ¿van a abordar juntos, con más rigor, el posible segundo escándalo «Dieselgate» que está apareciendo ya en los medios de comunicación europeos?

Usted ha recordado que nació después del Muro y yo le animo a que juntos, con este Parlamento, derribemos el muro del negacionismo y de la indiferencia ante la crisis y ante la emergencia climática.

1-015-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. –With regard to Dieselgate, I think it taught us a very serious lesson – we cannot have another Dieselgate. That's for sure. I think manufacturers and industry also realise this.

With regard to recalling vehicles, this House adopted an EU vehicle type-approval framework, which will be in place from 1 September 2020, and there will be such opportunity. But I think we should help our industry to be competitive. Let's look where the industry is going – hydrogen, electricity. I think our car manufacturers, which are among the top in the world, can definitely catch up with some popular American electric vehicles. But we already see that they are shifting. We have to help them through research. We have to help them through public transport, which has to be green and, of course, uses clean alternative fuels.

1-016-0000

Frédérique Ries (Renew). – Bonjour Monsieur Sinkevičius, et bienvenue au Parlement européen. Votre désignation est en fait une double première: vous êtes le plus jeune commissaire désigné de

l'histoire et vous héritez des océans. Au-delà de l'effet d'annonce qui est sympa, il ne faut pas le nier, il s'agit maintenant d'arriver à des résultats, bien entendu.

En tant que rapporteure sur la directive sur le plastique à usage unique et les engins de pêche, je vais vous parler bien évidemment océans, je vais vous parler pollution, je vais vous parler plastique. Les produits dont je viens de parler sont responsables de 70 % de la pollution marine. Nous avons bien travaillé ensemble, mais nous devons aller plus loin maintenant.

Vous indiquez dans vos réponses écrites à la page 11, et je vous cite:

'I want to identify plastic applications for which biodegradable applications can bring added value for the environment'.

Vous enchaînez en parlant d'établir ici un cadre réglementaire. Alors, vous avez certainement raison de parler d'innovation, bien évidemment, mais en l'occurrence, sur le sujet de la biodégradabilité du plastique, je suis perplexe – et j'use d'un euphémisme. Vous le savez: il n'y a actuellement aucun standard européen en la matière, établi dans des conditions réelles et particulièrement en milieu marin.

D'où ma question: dans ces conditions, êtes-vous certain que cette voie est la bonne? Ce que je crains, moi, monsieur Sinkevičius, c'est qu'au lieu du changement de mentalité et de paradigme que nous voulons, que nous devons impulser sur la question, on assiste au contraire à un gigantesque appel d'air qui ne fera pas changer les mentalités et qui concernera aussi bien les producteurs que les consommateurs.

Je prendrai sur mon temps suivant, alors dans la foulée, rapidement, une deuxième question sur le suremballage plastique, que vous dites également vouloir aborder. La révision de la directive emballage est attendue pour l'an prochain. Question simple: est-ce que vous êtes prêt à vous engager en faveur d'objectifs de réduction contraignants et chiffrés?

1-019-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Of course, I agree. Business as usual – if nothing changes, it will mean that in 2050 we will have more plastic in our seas and oceans than fish. I have to say that the Commission took a really great step together with Parliament: the single use of plastic items ban. This is a great step forward.

We cannot stop at that and I am going, of course, to seek the full implementation of the plastic strategy, but the next step has to be microplastics, especially in textiles, tyres and pellets, that's where the main source is; biodegradable plastics, which you have mentioned, we have to establish a clear regulatory framework and identify some applications for which biodegradable plastics are made of – chemicals, mainly – and then of course plastic packaging.

I think the next key step is to decrease overpackaging, tackle overpackaging, and I think this must go not only changing society but it must go also with the business needs. They can cut on their expenses. And of course, it is important not to be on our own with this international action. So in the UN and the G7 but also in bilateral relations with our partners, we have a great example to show, a great example to follow and I will definitely do so.

1-020-0000

Frédérique Ries (Renew). – J'entends bien l'engagement du commissaire désigné en ce qui concerne les micro-plastiques: je note, c'est important. Nous avancerons ensemble.

Peut-être une question dans le cadre européen de l'écoconception : pour améliorer la durabilité et la recyclabilité des produits en plastique, avez-vous déjà réfléchi, M. le commissaire désigné, à introduire des filtres à micro-plastiques (puisque nous en parlons) dans les machines à laver, pour éviter que ce poison qu'ils constituent ne finisse dans nos rivières, et donc aussi dans nos assiettes?

1-021-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – You noted very well, washing machines are one more area where we can widen ecodesign. But I think we can widen it even more. Ecodesign for me is something really great and which was created in this Chamber. I remember those first debates regarding ecodesign and people were saying, so now the EU is going to regulate light bulbs in our countries. But at the end of the day, from the introduction of ecodesign the EU has saved an amount of electricity equal to Italy's yearly consumption.

Of course, we have to keep that ambition and I think we have to go for a non-toxic cycle. It is very important that plastics are made from non-toxic chemicals, which can be later reused in the circular economy and then, through innovation, we can have many different appliances.

1-022-0000

Sven Giegold (Verts/ALE). – Commissioner-designate, in your written answers you stress the fact that Europe's most vulnerable populations remain disproportionately affected by health hazards – and you are right. Our children remain exposed to endocrine-disruptors, persistent chemicals and nano-materials. According to WHO studies, the number of people affected by many endocrine-related disorders is increasing. It is estimated that 25% of all children in Germany – including my own children – suffer from so-called chalk teeth, a disease found to be linked to bisphenol A, a well-known endocrine disruptor. So my question is: what concrete steps will you take to protect our children and other vulnerable groups from continuous release of dangerous chemicals such as endocrine-disruptors? As a litmus test, will you deliver finally the non-toxic environment strategy with all its four legs: nano-materials, endocrine-disruptors, cocktail effects and exposure to chemicals from products?

1-023-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much for your question, and I completely understand you: not as a Commissioner-designate but also as a father, as a customer; as a father of a three-and-a-half and as a father which – my daughter is going to be born on 20 October, so soon to become a second-time father. So I definitely understand: chemicals are around us; they're around us everywhere in our daily life and also in over 100 EU legislation acts. So it is important, of course, that chemicals would be addressed, as it was stated in the 7th Environmental Action Programme (EAP). It is important that ensure that safe, non-toxic materials and products – we have, we are champions in REACH-compliance. REACH is something that doesn't have alternatives in the world; we have to make use of it even more. So it is important to boost innovation. Specifically on endocrine-disruptors, of course, it is important to fully implement the new strategy, which would be a serious step forward. Most important, it is based on the precautionary principle. And I think that endocrine-disruptors have to be standardised and perceived as the CMR in the same level.

Secondly, it is important that we would protect the most vulnerable: elderly people, children. It is important that endocrine-disruptors would be prohibited from toys, cosmetics which we apply directly on our skins, food-contact materials.

1-024-0000

Sven Giegold (Verts/ALE). – Thank you for that commitment, but what about the non-toxic environment strategy? Will you deliver that with all four legs, as I mentioned?

1-025-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Under a zero-pollution ambition, we will have three main pillars: a clean air action plan for all, a clean water action plan, and the non-toxic environment strategy, which has to go further than planned. We have moved a lot through these five years and really the basic work was done extremely well, many chemicals and legislation have undergone fitness checks, and REACH was reviewed with the identification of 16 objectives. So we can definitely build on that basis some very, very solid legislation.

1-026-0000

Simona Baldassarre (ID). – Buonasera Commissario designato. È un portafoglio molto importante il suo. Sono certa che il suo lavoro verrà guidato non dal desiderio di seguire delle emergenze del momento, secondo una logica di stato di eccezione perenne, piuttosto da studi scientifici condotti secondo il metodo scientifico e anche da quel minimo di buon senso e sensibilità socio-economica necessaria a chi assume incarichi di governo.

Io sono un medico e mi chiedo se la Commissione ha intenzione di dare seguito alla sua comunicazione sull'impatto ambientale da farmaci. Come giustamente rilevato dalla Commissione stessa, in tutta l'Unione sono stati individuati i residui di svariati farmaci nelle acque superficiali e sotterranee, nei suoli e nei tessuti animali. Queste concentrazioni hanno provocato effetti comprovati sull'ambiente e, anche se risulta improbabile che i farmaci presenti nell'acqua potabile possano rappresentare un rischio per la salute umana alle basse concentrazioni, in assenza di prove scientifiche sufficienti sarebbe necessario adottare delle misure precauzionali. Ben venga, quindi, l'approccio proposto dalla Commissione. Ma quale sarà il suo seguito? La nuova Commissione ha intenzione di proporre un provvedimento legislativo sull'impatto ambientale da farmaci?

Grazie.

1-027-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Pharmaceuticals have already been included in the water legislation regarding chemical pollution for quite a while now, and it is important under the water action plan to strengthen its monitoring. Fitness checks are currently being carried out on the directives concerned, the water framework directive and the directive on environmental quality standards. After that we can make an assessment to see if changes are needed.

I think we all see that pharmaceuticals is an increasing threat. It is very important to preserve our water so the main prevention is to tackle the problem at the source and strengthening monitoring under the zero-pollution ambition which the Commission plans to pursue.

1-028-0000

Simona Baldassarre (ID). – In conclusione, la Commissione adotterà un provvedimento legislativo o no? E, se sarà così, un regolamento o una direttiva? Perché, tra le due opzioni, non trova che la direttiva sarebbe più appropriata per garantire il pieno rispetto del principio di sussidiarietà e di sovranità nazionale?

1-029-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Of course, it is early to say and I'm ready to discuss it later on with the Committee to brief them because, as I said, pharmaceuticals are already included in the water legislation but also the directive for water is undergoing its check and we'll see if there is a need. After the check we can then say, is there a need to include additional pharmaceuticals or not? As I said, I'm open for additional discussions with the Environment Committee on this issue after the check is done and then present it to you.

1-030-0000

Pietro Fiocchi (ECR). – Commissioner-designate, in the last decade we have witnessed an exponential growth of the population of large carnivores. We have also witnessed an invasion of

wild boars, cormorants, crows and other conflict-prone species, with increasing damages to agriculture, loss of human life due to traffic and especially a catastrophic effect on biodiversity. I think we need a European action plan which allows us to combine our ambitious goal in terms of biodiversity with the safety of the people and the farm animals, not to mention the economic survival of smaller farmers and fishermen.

Are you aware of the frequent calls, including from Members of this Parliament, to change the EU legislation in response to the increasing conflicts with these species, especially the wolf? What would be your guidance as a Commissioner to balance strict protection laws and the derogation of the same legislation, such as regulated hunting quotas? Some of the hunting and fishing communities in Europe have shown a strong commitment to habitat restoration and preservation. We are talking of more than 25 million EU citizens. What would be your opinion on using such categories as a tool to maintain a balanced biodiversity and to restore polluted areas to their correct status?

1-031-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – I fully understand your question. The country I come from and know best has a lot of agricultural activity and I understand that when farmers lose their livestock the first thing they think about is a bullet. But I'm afraid it's not a silver bullet: it's not going to resolve the issue.

Regarding wolves, they are still quite endangered, and I think it's a question here of coexistence. Wolves have been there all the time: we are just trying to restore their levels. Coexistence can be resolved with measures like protection. First of all, was there a fence? Was the livestock protected enough so that the wolf couldn't get in? I think we have to work on raising awareness among farmers and the public generally and on resolving this through coexistence.

The Habitats Directive guidance on species protection has some flexibility. Countries can apply some of the changes. However, I think the best way to resolve this is through the manners of coexistence, understanding and protecting your livestock and using all the measures that are available, and, importantly you can even get funding for that from the LIFE programme.

On the other hand, if you lost your livestock, let's not forget the fact that you are completely refunded for it.

1-032-0000

Pietro Fiocchi (ECR). – As a continuation of the question, I'd like to have your opinion on the fact that the Habitat Directive is not applied in a very harmonised way throughout the Member States. What would be your approach to this problem?

1-033-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – First of all, I think the directive has undergone a fitness check and it's fit for purpose. Flexibility actually represents a chance for countries to resolve issues if protection is needed for other species. We have 66 endangered species, you know. It is not only wolves and bears – there are others as well. If there is conflict, countries' authorities have been given the flexibility to resolve it.

1-034-0000

Malin Björk (GUE/NGL). – Commissioner-designate, you have a very, very important portfolio, as you highlighted yourself. Not only young people but very, very young people are watching us, to see that we deliver. Climate justice and biodiversity are the questions that will determine our future. We need systemic changes, and I think many of us here don't really feel confident that the EU is on a path to deliver those systemic changes. When I hear 'action plans' I see endless scoreboards and the risk of getting lost with another set of tables.

So my question to you – and I will focus on biodiversity as other issues have already been raised – is that we don't have enough tools at European level, so which ones will you actually develop in relation to other areas that sometimes are defined as competing, such as the Common Agricultural Policy, EU trade policy and EU industrial policy, in order to change consumption patterns in Europe? What concrete policies will you put into the Biodiversity Action Plan?

1-035-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – What you have noted is absolutely correct, and I wouldn't single out any of those areas you mention. That's what the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 has to be about. It has to be sectoral: it has to be included in the agriculture, industry, transport and energy sectors. They are all important: they are all causing biodiversity losses.

We have a strategic goal. Halting action on biodiversity might make funding easier but it would be a waste of money if the Biodiversity Strategy is not going to be mirrored in other sectors.

I think, too, that it was clearly stated in Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans' mission letter that, as a Commissioner, I have to deliver the strategy but the Vice-President will make sure it is delivered, helping through coordination to see that it is mirrored. I think we will then achieve some great results, rather than just having scoreboards – though we still do have to check how we are doing, to measure the results. We have to be accountable and results have to be measured but it is also important that they be mirrored in other sectoral areas which today are causing the most extensive biodiversity extinction.

1-036-0000

Malin Björk (GUE/NGL). – I still think that you will have to have some important fights even before it comes to Timmermans' table and that the farm-to-fork strategy will be one of your tools. So how do you think that you can be able to influence the common agricultural policy so that it can deliver for climate justice but for the consumer and for health and biodiversity?

1-037-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – First of all farm-to-fork has to be a very good tool to halt deforestation, and I'm not only talking about the EU – it has to assess our footprint overseas. I see my mandate in farm-to-fork as concerning the fishing sector, so that we know and we can trace fish from the net to the can, and so that we know what is being served up here in the EU. We have high market standards but we have a very good market.

Secondly, of course, the same goes for deforestation: we have to know what the supply chain is and it must be a deforestation-free supply chain.

1-038-0000

Chris Davies, *Chair PECH*. – Commissioner-designate, you concluded your opening remarks by saying that you relish the opportunity to work with members here for the next five years. Can I just say, as a British member, that I welcome having that opportunity too.

So we've had team ENVI; now we have team PECH and a series of questions on fisheries issues. We start with EPP: Mr Millán Mon, 1.5 minutes.

1-039-0000

Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE). – Señor comisario propuesto, yo agradezco que usted al comienzo de su intervención haya comprendido nuestro deseo de que la mención de «pesca» sea añadida en la denominación de su cartera. Lo que quisiera es que usted la apoyara y que también se lo transmitiera así a la señora presidenta Von der Leyen.

Y me voy a referir ahora, con permiso del presidente, al *Brexit* precisamente. No muchos queremos que la asociación económica futura que se establezca entre la Unión Europea y el Reino Unido

vaya acompañada de un acuerdo que mantenga el acceso recíproco a aguas y recursos. Me gustaría oír su opinión al respecto.

Y otro asunto importante: asegurar el relevo generacional en el sector de la pesca. Es un tema conocido. Para atraer a los jóvenes necesitamos mejorar las condiciones de vida y trabajo a bordo. No se trata de que los barcos pesquen más. No se trata de que haya sobrepesca. Se trata de que pesquen mejor. Y creemos que el Fondo Europeo Marítimo y de Pesca también puede ayudar en estas mejoras. Me gustaría oír sus puntos de vista sobre este relevo generacional tan necesario.

Y me refiero a un punto importante que es la pesca artesanal. Sector muy cuantioso en la Unión Europea —el 75 % de la flota—, es muy tradicional, por su propia naturaleza, y poco aficionado a los cambios bruscos. A mí me gustaría que esto lo tuviera en cuenta en las reformas legislativas que ponga en marcha; que haya estudios de impacto y que esas reformas sean de aplicación gradual a este tipo de flota.

1-040-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Regarding Brexit, yesterday we had a plan proposed, but we still don't know when it will happen and how it's going to happen. Nevertheless, I really have to thank Mr Barnier for making himself available in these two weeks to meet me a couple times and brief me on Brexit. I can say that, in any scenario, we will be prepared. We will be prepared, of course, to talk with Great Britain and there will be negotiations on a Brexit deal. That could be a Brexit with a deal, which would, of course, be easier and we would have a transition time. With a no-deal Brexit, there are a few scenarios which will be discussed afterwards. But let me assure you that we are prepared.

On youth employment, we met in Strasbourg and we talked about it. Other Spanish MEPs also raised this question, as well as Italian MEPs, and I've been giving thought to it. Would that improvement on board really attract more young people to fishing? I'm not sure, honestly. I'm a young person as well. If I were choosing, what would be the key element to help me make my choice? I think it's certainty about the future, and that's what we have to ensure – that there is certainty about the future. By striking a balance between social, economic and sustainability concerns, we can ensure for them that there is a future within the sector and then, of course, through the EMFF funding and through other funds, we can improve conditions and help our fishermen and fisherwomen out there.

1-041-0000

Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE). – Gracias por el compromiso sobre el relevo generacional. Yo creo que es un reto que tenemos por delante, muy muy serio, y creo también que unas buenas condiciones de vida y laborales a bordo de los buques son importantes para hacer el relevo más atractivo.

En cuanto al *Brexit*, no me refería solo a si hay o no *Brexit* o al período de transición. Me refiero a la relación futura si hay *Brexit*. Yo quiero una relación futura ambiciosa con el Reino Unido, una gran asociación económica, pero la pesca no puede ser sacrificada. En esa gran asociación económica es donde yo veo también que tiene que haber un acuerdo bilateral que mantenga el acceso a aguas y a recursos. Ese era el sentido de mi pregunta.

La relación futura en caso de *Brexit*.

1-042-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – I agree, regarding young people. We have to deal with this challenge together. I hope we will have a dialogue. We'll invite stakeholders and we'll do our best in order to make being a fisherman and woman a noble profession.

Regarding Brexit, of course there will be a relationship. But let's not exclude fisheries – there will be a deal, and I have to assure you that for Mr Barnier this question is very important. He used to serve as the Minister responsible in France for fisheries. He knows the sector very well, he knows the problems and this question is definitely covered.

1-043-0000

Clara Aguilera (S&D). – Bienvenido, señor candidato. El sector pesquero en la Unión Europea tiene una gran importancia en términos de renta y empleo, pero también para la gastronomía, la identidad cultural y la seguridad alimentaria. Para muchas comunidades costeras, este sector pesquero representa hasta la mitad de los puestos de trabajo. En algunos pequeños pueblos del litoral, representa este sector la mitad de estos puestos de trabajo.

Mi Grupo, el Grupo de Socialistas y Demócratas, no puede olvidarse de estas comunidades, más aún cuando —y permítame que insista en ello— ni siquiera se menciona la palabra «pesca» en ninguna de las carteras de los candidatos a comisario.

Debido a esta importancia, ¿apoyará el mantenimiento sin recortes del Fondo Europeo Marítimo y de Pesca, como solicita este Parlamento, para poder abordar todos los retos a que se enfrenta nuestro sector?

La dimensión social, la dimensión socioeconómica, es también uno de los pilares importantes de la política pesquera, y uno de los principales problemas a los que se enfrenta el sector de la pesca artesanal, y una de las cuestiones importantes a tener en cuenta para la incorporación de jóvenes ¿Cómo pretende abordar la dimensión socioeconómica de la política pesquera?

Y los planes plurianuales, en tercer lugar. La diversidad de cuencas me ha gustado —que admita que hay una diversidad entre unas cuencas marítimas y otras—. ¿Cómo piensa abordar especialmente la necesidad de planes plurianuales para todas las cuencas, especialmente para el Mediterráneo y el Mar Negro?

1-044-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – Regarding coastal communities, I agree with you. It is important not to let them down. I still serve as Minister for the Economy and Innovation, and what I did when I was appointed was, for two years, every Friday I went to a different region in Lithuania. We have in total 60 and I have visited about 52. I did it not because someone asked me to come, but because I cared. I visited from large industrial plants to very small shop owners. I did it because I cared how they really live with the legislation we vote for and which they then have to, basically, apply on the ground.

The same goes for the fisheries community. As I have said, we will engage in a dialogue. I think the Common Fisheries Policy is exactly about that, about striking a balance between sustainability, social and economic aspects. The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is just one of the tools with which we can improve and can help us in reaching those targets.

Regarding multiannual plans, I think every sea basin is unique and has to be assessed. And, of course, it is important to engage in dialogue, take into account advisory councils, talk with the Member States on their positions and then come up with a plan which would, again, strike a balance. But we have to maintain sustainability. Sustainability is that long-term game which can attract young people into a sector. I agree security is important. Conditions on the board are important, I agree. But again, they have to see a future in the sector, that they can provide for themselves and for their families, that profits might rise, that they have a possible career path to expand their fleet.

1-045-0000

Clara Aguilera (S&D). – Me gusta que reconozca la importancia de todos los pilares: el medioambiental y el socioeconómico. Yo creo que a veces no se reconocen todos. Sí me gustaría una concreción: si se va a poner del lado del Parlamento para que no haya recortes en el Fondo de Pesca. Es decir, que no haya ningún recorte. Es un fondo pequeño y necesitamos todos los recursos.

Y una última cosa: ¿Que hará usted para abordar el papel de las mujeres en el sector pesquero, que a menudo ni está reconocido ni regulado? Una palabra: al menos las ha mencionado; sus antecesoras, ni eso, así que le animo a que tenga en cuenta a las mujeres en el sector pesquero.

1-046-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – Regarding the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) the proposal is already in-house, and I hope we will be able to maintain a sustainability ambition, an economic social ambition in there, and we'll find what best helps our fishermen and women out there.

Regarding women, regarding gender balance. Unfortunately, I have seen the recent WWF report, which struck me and we have to do a lot more to improve conditions. I think the first problem is that it's focused mainly on the catching sector, where of course most of the job is done by males. But let's not forget who is running businesses, who is making those calls, who are the ones actually waiting and getting the first signal if something happens. Who is dealing with the government, with the regulation. It's women, and they have to be paid, they have to be equally respected, and I will try to do it by arranging it, first of all, that we have to have in advisory councils, equal representation. In our events and so on, setting by example of course, we have to go even deeper and discuss it with the sector and with the stakeholders from small to large.

1-047-0000

Pierre Karleskind (Renew). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, la dernière réforme de la politique commune des pêches, en 2013, a permis la mise en place de nombreux outils de gestion de la pêche – je pense au plan de gestion pluriannuel, à l'obligation de débarquement ou bien aux mesures techniques qui ont comme objet la réduction des captures de juvéniles.

Tous ces outils ont pour objectif de réduire l'impact de la pêche sur les écosystèmes marins et d'atteindre une gestion durable des pêches. Si des progrès sont à souligner, c'est tant mieux et il faut s'en féliciter. On voit pourtant que ces outils n'atteignent pas toujours et partout les résultats escomptés.

Je voudrais prendre l'exemple du plan de gestion pour la mer Baltique, mer que vous devez bien connaître. Ce dernier a été mis en place il y a trois ans et le niveau des stocks, – on l'a vu récemment sur le cabillaud – est extrêmement bas.

Ce que l'on comprend des différents rapports qui nous ont été présentés, c'est que ça ne dépend pas que de la pêche et de la pression de la pêche mais c'est aussi lié au changement climatique, aux pollutions de la mer venant de la terre.

Alors ma question est simple. Vous avez un portefeuille qui est étendu, vous avez une vision globale sur la ressource, la mer, les océans, l'environnement. Est-ce que vous pensez que la politique commune des pêches, telle qu'elle est aujourd'hui focalisée sur la pêche comme seul facteur de pression sur la ressource et l'écosystème, est suffisamment armée pour répondre aux défis d'une pêche durable à l'horizon 2030? Et est-ce que vous comptez justement utiliser l'étendue de vos portefeuilles pour mieux prendre en compte l'ensemble des facteurs qui affectent l'état des ressources halieutiques?

1-048-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Indeed, you are right. Fishing is not only causing a loss of biomass and a decline of stocks, but it's the health of the ecosystem. By talking about the EU biodiversity 2030 strategy, I definitely don't mean only land. I mean a marine area as well – seas and oceans – because healthy seas and healthy oceans absorb enormous amounts of CO₂, which provides food, jobs, even energy now. So, we have to maintain this spirit.

The CFP was reformed in 2013. I will have it in my mandate to review it by 2022. We will definitely address the shortcomings, but we have to be very realistic. CFP is not a holistic legislation which is going to address all the causes. The causes have to be addressed now with the biodiversity strategy. Make it early, and then of course we can make it in line. The Green New Deal is going to take many areas into account. It will, of course, have to be in line with the Green New Deal as well as new challenges, so we will definitely do it very carefully in 2022. I hope I can also count on the Parliament committee's help, as this is a very technical file. It is important. There are not only environmental, but social aspects with it and I truly count on our cooperation.

1-049-0000

Pierre Karleskind (Renew). – Merci pour votre réponse, je l'ai bien entendue.

Je me félicite d'un point que vous avez abordé dans votre propos introductif, c'est que vous voulez sortir de votre bureau pour aller rencontrer les acteurs sur le terrain. Je vous en félicite et je pense que c'est extrêmement important.

Je vais vous proposer une chose, c'est que toutes ces réformes que nous allons mettre en place, que vous allez mettre en place, que nous allons voter, je vous invite à les préparer aussi avec nous. Ne restez pas qu'avec votre administration, qui est pleine de gens compétents, pleine de bonnes idées et pleine de grandes études, mais parlez-en avec nous. Nous représentons le terrain aussi, nous représentons les électeurs.

Je vous propose de venir régulièrement, pas une fois par an, mais venez régulièrement dans un cadre formel ou informel, avec nous, en commission, pour en parler. Voilà ma proposition.

1-050-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, Mr Karleskind, first of all, for your invitation when we met in Strasbourg to visit Brittany. If I'm confirmed, I will definitely do so. And, of course, thank you for your cooperation and I truly hope that I can count on you.

1-051-0000

Grace O'Sullivan (Verts/ALE). – My question to you is regarding the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), the latest version of which has been under discussion in the Fisheries Committee since July. Framing that discussion has been the glaring fact that the EU is still overfishing, well beyond the capacity of the seas. As the latest assessment from the Scientific Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries has shown, 41% of the fully assessed stocks in the North East Atlantic are overfished. Improvements have been too little too slow, especially given that in the Mediterranean Sea basin a staggering 87% of stocks are overfished. The current position of the Council and Parliament on the EMFF revision might actually increase existing overcapacity in the sector, in contradiction with the stated aims of the EU common fisheries policy. Capacity-enhancing subsidies lead to overfishing, and you don't need to believe me in this regard: there are economic reports from the World Bank and the European Court of Auditors that have laid the problem out in stark terms.

My question to you, Commissioner-designate, is what will you do to bring the current position of Parliament and the Council back in line with the objectives agreed under the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) and the commitments of the WTO efforts to ban destructive subsidies that would increase the excess of capacity?

1-052-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – I agree. The EMFF needs to support our goals: common fisheries policy implementation, commitment to implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14. It is also important to take into account that its budget is not unlimited and it's public money. Being the Minister of Economy and Innovation in Lithuania, I have had a huge envelope, let's say for a country, of EU funding. My main principle was to look at and not to overlap with private funding. If we see that some areas can be funded by private money, we shall not spend public money on it – because there's just not enough public money.

Secondly, of course, I hope that ambition will be kept, and I will definitely, if confirmed, make myself available for dialogues in the Committee, in trilogues, of course, in order to keep that ambition, together with the Member States. I do understand their concerns as well and we will try to find the best possible solutions to address important issues, such as small-scale fishermen. But, as I said, it cannot contradict our goals: CFP and sustainable development.

1-053-0000

Grace O'Sullivan (Verts/ALE). – Thank you very much for your response, and I suppose that was my central point. You have said that you will not allow EU policy to contradict the best available scientific data, and I understand from you that you would be prepared – and this is a question, too – would you be prepared to withdraw a proposal in terms of funding if you felt it was literally contradicting good sustainability policy?

1-054-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Let's not rush into withdrawals and draw red lines, because usually there will be someone to tackle your red line and then you have to respond.

I think we have to engage in a dialogue, and address the issues as well. I agree that public money has to be spent on reaching our goals. It is a sensitive period we're living in: Brexit might happen, and we will have it in that period where EMFF funding has ended, and it will only start in 2021, so a further delay of the EMFF funding would also not be acceptable. So, through dialogue, saying out loud our arguments, putting them on the table, we have to find the best solution to strike a balance.

1-055-0000

Rosanna Conte (ID). – Egregio signor Sinkevičius, dal 1977 ad oggi si sono succeduti 11 commissari che hanno occupato il ruolo per cui lei è stato designato. In tutti questi anni la parola "pesca" è sempre comparsa nei titoli dei portafogli dei suoi predecessori. Oggi troviamo un generico "ambiente e oceani" e una lettera di mandato che dedica alla pesca solo poche righe finali. Questo ci allarma molto e fa riflettere sulla scarsa rilevanza che la signora von der Leyen riconosce a questo importantissimo comparto economico. Ci appare evidente che la Commissione europea non abbia ben compreso la fondamentale rilevanza del settore e per questo le chiedo: cosa dobbiamo aspettarci da lei? La parola "pesca" è stata cancellata, saranno cancellate anche le risorse per questo settore?

Questa Commissione deve rispettare la dignità dei pescatori e il valore della produzione ittica europea. Bisogna restituire alla pesca l'attenzione che merita. In quanto custodi dei nostri mari, bisogna coinvolgere i pescatori nella gestione delle risorse e non imporre le leggi dall'alto che troppo spesso si sono rese inefficaci per l'ambiente e dannose per l'economia. Quindi vorrei sapere: rispetto a quanto impegnato nella legislatura precedente, lei intende incrementare, confermare o diminuire le risorse per la pesca? Non crede opportuno insistere per modificare la

denominazione in Commissario per l'Ambiente, gli oceani e la pesca per rappresentare al meglio un comparto tradizionale per l'Europa?

1-056-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – First of all, with regard to the title: let's look beyond the title, let's look into content. That's the important thing.

Today you can evaluate me as a person who will represent and try to help the community – and the title is not going to represent the community. I think we should focus on, and put all our energy into, what is needed today so that fishermen and women can deal with their problems.

As you rightly noted, the MFF funding proposal is here and it's not going to be changed, it's already before the House and it is being discussed.

What is important too, in terms of helping our fishermen and women to tackle environmental issues, is to understand that biomass decline affects not only fisheries activities, it's much broader than that, and we have to be firm on this and not separate environment and fisheries. They go together. A healthy environment brings healthy fish. Larger fish mean larger profit for fishermen and women – for coastal communities. This has to be our goal and we all have to reach for that goal together.

1-057-0000

Rosanna Conte (ID). – Anche se il nome quindi non è nel suo portafoglio, non dimentichi però che lei potrebbe essere il futuro responsabile della pesca. Quindi, auspico che sappia riconoscere la pesca come un comparto economico fondamentale per l'Unione europea.

In particolare, vorrei sottolineare la difficile situazione della pesca nel Mediterraneo e nelle RUP, dove piccoli pescatori artigianali, anche di isole e aree costiere, compiono giornalmente sforzi per migliorare la situazione degli stock e combattono sfide che spesso vanno oltre la loro capacità di sopravvivenza. Quindi le chiedo: che tipo di strategia dobbiamo aspettarci per il Mediterraneo? Perché dovremmo scommettere su di lei?

1-058-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – First of all, a level playing field is important. It's important to halt unregulated illegal fishing, because, first of all, small-scale fishermen and women have problems with illegal fishing. We have to look at illegal fishing not as a problem of fish being caught illegally, but as a whole set of problems – economic problems, unpaid taxes, the labour situation, labour safety is absent and so on. We have to make sure we are fighting it properly.

Regarding trust, today – before these hearings – I visited the European European House of History. There was a funny story about the Treaty of Rome and the struggle to get it to Rome in 1957, and it actually had to be signed on the first page and a couple of the last pages. So this Union is built on trust, and we have to trust each other to reach for our goals and not let down the communities we care about.

(Chair cut off the speaker)

1-059-0000

Chris Davies, *Chair PECH*. – Okay, Commissioner-designate, you are exceeding your time, of course. Can I remind everyone about their time, and I'm going to just ask you from the chair here – could you also respond to Ms Conte's point about the Mediterranean, which, of course, is said to be one of the most overfished seas in the world?

1-060-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – I think there has been progress regarding programmes, regarding multiannual plans in the Mediterranean. We have to continue in this path, we have to assess as many as possible stocks, because stocks are not assessed properly, and if we will gather as much as possible data, then we can provide a proper sustainability approach to fishermen and -women communities. It is important also bilateral agreements with the other countries which also fish in the Mediterranean Sea. It is important to engage with them and make sure that not only we who subordinate who respect the laws, but also our partners as well.

1-061-0000

Ruža Tomašić (ECR). – Gospodine predsjedniče, gospodine kandidatu za povjerenika, regionalizacija je iznimno važna i nalazi se visoko na listi prioriteta država članica. Zajedničkom ribarstvenom politikom propisana je regionalna suradnja o mjerama očuvanja, a posebno u dijelu koji se odnosi na višegodišnje planove i upravljanja ili specifične planove u vezi s odbacivanjem.

Zanima me konkretno, na koji način ćete osigurati da principi regionalizacije budu sadržani u budućim prijedlozima propisa, a pogotovo kada se priprema višegodišnji plan za pridnene, odnosno *demersal* stokove u Jadranskom moru?

Na koji način ćete osigurati da regionalni pristup bude osnova izrade višegodišnjeg plana kako bi izbjegli nedostatke koje trenutno imamo u višegodišnjem planu za malu plavu ribu u Jadranu, koji je predložen na način da nisu uzete u obzir specifičnosti Jadrana ni Mediterana u cjelini?

1-062-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – As I said, every sea basin is unique and needs its own assessment. Of course, we have to maintain sustainability: as I said, sustainability is the key for a long-term game.

I am also an elected Member of Parliament in Lithuania and I truly believe in dialogue. I think multiannual plans are precisely about achieving that dialogue – creating dialogue with local communities of fishermen and women, even within non-EU Member States. It's about finding the best possible solution in that regard and I think we should continue this way.

Multiannual plans show there has been progress on extremely over-fished stocks. By reaching agreements, we can fish better and more sustainably, but of course we will have to do much more than that, and find agreements not only between EU Member States but also between non-EU member states.

1-063-0000

Ruža Tomašić (ECR). – Hvala lijepa na odgovoru. Sada me još samo zanima hoćete li i na koji način osigurati da mišljenja savjetodavnih vijeća budu više uzeta u obzir tijekom pripreme propisa kako bi se osigurala regionalizacija i uravnotežena zastupljenost svih dionika?

1-064-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Regarding RFMOs and their advice, I think they've been reliable partners for many years for every sea basin, for migration of tuna, and so on. I don't see any obstacles so as not to get involved in further dialogue. But I would also like to bring your attention to advisory councils: these are also important, because their speciality is that they represent both large-scale fishermen and small-scale fishermen, and this is the chance for them to get their voice heard.

1-065-0000

Manuel Bompard (GUE/NGL). – Monsieur Sinkevičius, le GIEC a publié, il y a quelques jours, un rapport spécial sur les océans, qui est très inquiétant et nous force à agir désormais de manière résolue pour faire face aux multiples pollutions.

Il y a d'abord une crise d'asphyxie. Les zones mortes en mer ont été multipliées par 10 depuis 1950 et les océans ont perdu 77 milliards de tonnes d'oxygène. Que comptez-vous faire pour réduire drastiquement notre recours aux engrais chimiques et à l'élevage intensif, qui en sont en grande partie responsables?

Nous subissons aussi des problèmes de pollution sonore. Le trafic maritime, la prospection sismique, les sonars ou les forages sous-marins perturbent les espèces animales, notamment les cétacés, dont la communication et les techniques de chasse reposent sur le son. Êtes-vous prêt à réduire la vitesse des navires et à interdire le trafic maritime à l'intérieur et aux abords des aires maritimes protégées?

Enfin, il y a le problème du tourisme, notamment dans les zones polaires. Son expansion pose des problèmes de pollution par le fioul lourd, par les eaux usées, et d'introduction d'espèces invasives, notamment de certaines algues. Vous engagez-vous à agir pour la limitation du tourisme dans les régions polaires et à prescrire l'utilisation d'un carburant hautement raffiné en Arctique, comme c'est déjà le cas pour l'Antarctique? Bref, vous avez dit vouloir un traité global rattaché à la convention des Nations Unies sur le droit de la mer: quelles mesures concrètes voulez-vous inscrire dans un tel traité?

1-066-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – You're absolutely right – oceans are key, and it's key to keep them healthy. It will be good for the environment, for our fishermen and women and for coastal communities. We know the main issues that have to be tackled: over-fishing; the fact that there are not enough protected areas; pollution and marine litter. We also have to improve the international legal framework so that not only EU Member States will be on board, subordinate to and observing the rules, but the others as well.

I think this portfolio has everything required to tackle these issues successfully. First of all, the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 is important and it will include oceans. Secondly, this is a circular-economy plan. When we talk about marine litter, when we talk about shipments of waste, again I think there are opportunities for our economy. With a working circular economy, and with the resources we use, we can very successfully tackle these causes.

Of course, it will require much more. We will need to have on board other sectors. Agriculture is extremely important – we already have problems in the Baltic Sea, for example, mainly due to nutrient run-offs from industrial, unsustainable agriculture. We will definitely have to tackle all the causes, and it is within the scope of this portfolio. If I am confirmed in post, it will be one of my key duties to show that it was a great solution to put this portfolio together – environment and oceans and fisheries. These are sectors which cannot exist without each other: they are all connected.

1-067-0000

Manuel Bompard (GUE/NGL). – Merci pour votre réponse. Je suis 100 % d'accord avec vous quand vous dites que cette question-là ne peut pas être traitée uniquement par l'Union européenne.

Je profite donc de cette relance pour vous poser une question à propos de la mer Méditerranée, une mer qui m'est chère, qui est chère à un certain nombre d'entre nous. C'est une mer extrêmement polluée, où la concentration des plastiques est quatre fois plus élevée que dans l'océan Pacifique.

Ma question est simple: il existe une organisation qui s'appelle l'Union pour la Méditerranée. Êtes-vous d'accord pour activer ce cadre, afin d'obtenir des actions concrètes pour dépolluer enfin la mer Méditerranée?

1-068-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much for your question and care regarding the Mediterranean Sea basin. Of course, it is important and it's important to work with our partners – not only on cleaning up, on using our tools, we are happy to share our best practices – but it is also important for the CFP implementation.

It is important to tackle illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. So, I think this is the best way to spend resources: helping our partners, as well, fight with the causes, help them by giving best advice, by showing our best practices and having them on board, that's the only way. Of course, the EU has a unique position to lead this way.

1-069-0000

Pascal Canfin, *Chair ENVI*. – So we are going to enter into the second part, Commissioner-designate, of the hearing. We are going to have the 11 remaining questions, following the d'Hondt rule to start with, and then we will mix the committees, so no ENVI on one side and PECH on the other side, which is, in my view, a good way to proceed. We will start with the EPP, Mr Mažylis.

1-070-0000

Liudas Mažylis (PPE). – Mr Commissioner-designate, I want to come back to your answer on wolves. The number of them is increasing, up to 13 000 or even 14 000 individuals throughout the EU. The ecological balance has been disturbed and agriculture is suffering permanent damage. Similarly, since the adoption of the updated Bird Directive, the population of birds such as cormorants has increased. Angling and fishery stakeholders claim that it came to be an unacceptable and unsustainable threat to fishery interests. This problem is relevant for the Baltic Sea region, including our Lithuania. Do you agree that more flexibility should be given to the Member States when regulating the population of some protected species?

1-071-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Paskirtasis Komisijos narys*. – Gerbiamas profesoriau Liudai Mažyli, dėkoju jums už klausimą, pirmiausia. Iš tiesų, tai tikrai aktualus klausimas, užduotas jau vieno iš kolegų. Būtent direktyva, apie kurią jūs kalbate, suteikia lankstumo šalims narėms, ir, kaip ir sakiau, aš puikiai suprantu ūkininkus, tikrai suprantu tą, sakykime, skausmą, kai yra prarandama avis, tačiau tai koegzistavimo klausimas.

Aš manau, kad mes jį pirmiausia turime spręsti ne kulka, o būtent spręsti, ar visos priemonės buvo įgyvendintos siekiant apsisaugoti nuo to paties vilko, ar buvo pastatyta tvora, ar buvo panaudotos kitos priemonės, kurios yra siūlomos, ir – kas svarbiausia – tai jau dabar yra finansuojama Europos Sąjungos lėšomis. Lygiai taip pat ir praradus, praradus, sakykime, gyvulį yra visiškai – šimtu procentų – kompensuojama. Iš kitos pusės, direktyva suteikia lankstumą, ir, kalbant apie tuos pačius kormoranus, kuriuos mes matome ir matome jų padarinius, ypač mūsų nuostabioje Neringoje, aš manau, kad ši direktyva suteikia pakankamai lankstumo būtent šalims narėms, sakykime, įvesti savo savireguliaciją šioje vietoje ir, jeigu yra grėsmė žuvininkystei ar tai pačiai augalijai, bioįvairovei, – pritaikyti tas priemones.

1-072-0000

Liudas Mažylis (PPE). – Tai ne tik pajūryje, jau du šimtai kilometrų nuo jūros – mano gimtajame Kaune – aš pastebėjau kormoranus, kurių anksčiau, na žinote, per mano gyvenimą, dar tikrai nebuvo užtikta, ir manyčiau, kad čia ne tokia paprasta išeitis, juk Pagal paukščių direktyvą sąmoningas gaudymas, žudymas, trikdymas, lizdų ardymas, kiaušinių atėmimas iš paukščių, visa tai yra draudžiama. Kita vertus, labai jau platus žvejų pažeidžiamas interesas, ir, kaip Jūs čia

teisingai užsiminėte, ko gero, netgi yra grėsmė biologinei įvairovei. Tai norėtusi vis tiek konkretesnio Jūsų požiūrio ir konkretesnių siūlymų šiuo atžvilgiu.

1-073-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *paskirtasis Komisijos narys*. – Šiek tiek grįžtant prie direktyvos, nes aš jaučiu tokį norą galbūt atverti direktyvą. Būtent šie rūmai – komitetas – balsavo, kad direktyvos nereikėtų atverti, kad direktyva yra gera. Ir, aš manau, vėlgi aš grįžtu prie savo nuomonės, kad jis suteikia pakankamai lankstumo, ir mes turime pasižiūrėti, ar mūsų šalies ar kitų valstybių atveju, ar vis dėlto tas lankstumas buvo pakankamai panaudotas. Ir aš tikiu, kad žmonės, dirbantys Komisijoje, tikrai gali padėti, gali konsultuoti ir, akivaizdu, ką Jūs ir paminėjote, jeigu yra grėsmė bioįvairovei, žuvininkystei, tai yra pakankamos priežastys būtent ir nurodytos tame lankstume įstatymo taikymo.

1-074-0000

Delara Burkhardt (S&D). – Herr Sinkevičius! Sie haben heute schon sehr oft über die wichtige und große Rolle des Schutzes der Artenvielfalt im Kampf gegen die Klimakrise gesprochen, und Sie haben auch zu Recht das Wort „Massensterben“ benutzt, denn wenn eine Million der Lebewesen und Pflanzenarten vom Aussterben bedroht sind, dann kann man ruhig von einem Massensterben sprechen. Gleichzeitig wird die EU in ihrer eigenen Strategie zur Erhaltung der biologischen Vielfalt ihre festgelegten Ziele bis 2020 nicht erreichen, und sie wird den Verlust der biologischen Vielfalt nicht aufhalten.

Vor diesem Hintergrund möchte ich Sie fragen: Werden Sie ehrgeizige und verbindliche Ziele und Maßnahmen in der EU Strategie zur Erhaltung der biologischen Vielfalt bis 2030 festlegen, und wenn ja welche? Wie stellen Sie sicher, dass der Schutz der biologischen Vielfalt die notwendige Finanzierung und auch die notwendigen personellen Ressourcen erhält, und wie wollen Sie den Rückgang von Bienen und anderen Bestäubern – denn Bestäuber spielen eine gewichtige Rolle für die Aufrechterhaltung der Ernährungssicherheit und für die biologische Vielfalt – bekämpfen?

1-075-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much for your question. First of all, I think we had targets. We had targets for 2010, we had targets for 2020 and we will definitely have targets and they will be ambitious – because there is no other way – for 2030. Unfortunately, I think targets are not enough. They have to be measured and monitored. It is important to have a review mechanism.

Secondly it is of the utmost importance, talking about major causes, because it's land and sea use change. It's an over-exploitation of natural resources, climate change, pollution and invasive alien species. So it's all concerned with climate change. So we have to fight the causes and as I mentioned at the beginning, and you very well noted, yes, that will need funding – especially recreation of species, Natura 2000 areas and proper protection, that will need funding.

But funding is not enough and I truly hope that cooperating with Vice-President Frans Timmermans, we will achieve this ambitious goal of biodiversity 2030. Those targets are also implied in other areas of legislation, like agriculture and one of the key industry activities – transport. We have to use the tools which are provided for us. Impact assessment: these have to be done very carefully. Sometimes I think Member States, as we see from experience, try to change it or go around it and that's not a good practice, especially when we are speaking about Natura 2000 areas, where we have many protected species out there.

1-076-0000

Delara Burkhardt (S&D). – Vielen Dank für Ihre konkrete Antwort. Ich hätte da gleich die Anschlussfrage: Sie haben auch über messbare Ziele für die Verhandlungen in Kunming gesprochen. Ich glaube eben auch, dass es sehr wichtig ist, diese messbaren Ziele zu haben.

Vielleicht könnten Sie da noch konkreter ausführen, mit welcher Zielsetzung Sie in die Verhandlungen reingehen wollen. Die zweite Frage, die ich noch anschließen möchte: Sie haben gesagt – auch völlig zu Recht – dass Ziele nicht reichen. Deswegen frage ich Sie, gerade mit Blick auf die Einhaltung und die Vielfalt: Werden Sie – um den Einsatz naturbasierter Lösungen in Europa zu steigern – ein rechtsverbindliches Ziel für die Wiederherstellung degradierter Ökosysteme vorschlagen, also eine Rechtsverbindlichkeit, damit wir uns nicht auf die groben Ziele verlassen müssen?

1-077-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Regarding measurable targets, of course, measured targets for protected areas can be increased. For the oceans and sea basins, they can be increased, for example, to 30%. But I think I'll definitely be flexible here regarding biodiversity 2030 targets, and I'll be open to discuss these also with the committee.

What is the committee's vision? What are the key objectives which we have to achieve? I think it is very important to ensure implementation. When we talk about binding legal acts, there are lots of binding legal acts which are not properly implemented in Member States, and zero tolerance on the non-implementation of legal acts is the way to approach it.

Regarding the targets, we will deliver a biodiversity strategy, but of course now I don't have it yet, I am open to discuss this as well with the Committee.

1-078-0000

Niclas Herbst (PPE). – Herr Sinkevičius! Ich möchte gerne den Fokus auf unsere gemeinsame Heimatregion lenken, den Ostseeraum. Wir haben dort bei den Hauptfischarten eine krisenhafte Situation, die nicht durch Fischerei verursacht ist. Vor diesem Hintergrund würde ich Sie gerne fragen, welche konkreten Maßnahmen wir dort einleiten können: Wir haben die schwierige Situation, dass wir einerseits den jetzigen Fischereifonds kaum ausgenutzt haben, dass dort noch sehr viel Geld liegt, dass wir offensichtlich Schwierigkeiten haben, Geld abzurufen. Andererseits ist es leider auch so, dass wir jetzt wissen, dass, wenn die Kommissionsvorschläge in ein paar Tagen vom Ministerrat angenommen werden, eine ganze Reihe von Unternehmen und von Fischern nicht nur in Deutschland, auch in Dänemark und in Ihrer Heimat, in den baltischen Staaten, aber ganz besonders auch in Polen, vom Markt verschwinden werden. Wie können wir diesen Menschen, die unverschuldet in Not geraten sind, helfen? Die jetzige Regelung für vorübergehende Stilllegungen reicht offensichtlich nicht aus. Es gibt zu wenig Möglichkeiten für dauerhaftes Ausscheiden, für das Abwracken. Vielleicht müssen wir auch darüber nachdenken, wie wir die Mitgliedstaaten unbürokratisch und schnell mit an Bord holen können. Ich rede ausdrücklich nicht über den nächsten MFR – da sind wir als Parlament und Kommission auf einem guten Weg –, sondern über das nächste Jahr. Was können wir dort konkret für diese Menschen machen?

1-079-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Indeed, this problem will be one of the first things to tackle if I am confirmed. Of course, the Commission already started and have a conversation dialogue with the Member States regarding the current situation and potential financial support.

We are at the end of the EMFF period, and of course there will be a struggle to mobilise all the possible resources. I'm sure the Commission, together with the Member States, will find a solution. I can only promise you that, if I'm confirmed, we will continue a dialogue to look at the best possible solutions. But the question is not an easy one, and here we will need a solution, analysing carefully the situation. And we cannot stop it this year; we will have to look way more into the future regarding the decline of stocks, especially eastern cod. We have to be very vocal

about the causes, about the activities which actually caused such a decline of stocks. And, of course, fishermen and -women communities are the first to suffer, and it is a great example that environment and those changes which are affecting firstly those and the most vulnerable ones, and then we need to find solutions. Solutions might not be easy. We might be looking at the tools of how to retrain people: how to give them another, different opportunities. The region you're coming from is also a very famous tourism region.

1-080-0000

Niclas Herbst (PPE). – Vielleicht ergänzend dazu, da wir ja gemeinsam festgestellt haben, dass es nicht an Überfischung liegt, sondern an anderen Gründen, die man auch im weitesten Sinne unter dem Klimawandel subsumieren kann: Wird die Kommission unter Ihrer Führung auch einen *holistic approach* – also einen weiter gehenden Ansatz – wählen, damit nicht immer nur über das Thema Quoten geredet wird, weil das ja nur ein sehr bedingt sinnvolles Instrument ist in diesem Zusammenhang?

1-081-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – Indeed, climate change is the reason behind it, the water temperature in the Baltic Sea has risen and this has had an enormous effect on the eastern cod. For this reason, we have a poor biomass – not poor, but our cod stocks are actually on the verge of extinction. Of course we have to come to this reasoning holistically through the tools that I have mentioned before. But legislation has to be applied in other areas, too. Agricultural activities also play a very important role – the pesticides and fertilisers used play a very important role given the situation we currently face in the Baltic Sea.

1-082-0000

María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos (Renew). – Señor comisario propuesto, efectivamente usted es el encargado de poner en marcha la nueva estrategia de biodiversidad y, tal y como le ha encargado la presidenta electa de la Comisión, nuevas medidas de biodiversidad en el ámbito de la economía agrícola, de la producción.

Señor comisario propuesto, tenemos dos importantes problemas: uno es el presupuestario — usted lo ha citado—, pero es enorme, porque tenemos un presupuesto muy insuficiente para proteger la biodiversidad. La Red Natura 2000 necesita 6 000 millones al año y los fondos europeos solo cubren el 20 %. Pero no todo es aumentar el presupuesto: es ser eficientes con el que tenemos. Y la propia Comisión nos ha dicho que el incumplimiento o la incorrecta trasposición de las normativas europeas ambientales por parte de los Estados miembros suponen al año 55 000 millones en costes de salud y en costes de deterioro ambiental.

¿Puede usted comprometerse hoy, en esta comisión, a incrementar el presupuesto para la protección de la biodiversidad en la nueva estrategia de biodiversidad?

Y le pregunto también si contemplará alguna medida para mejorar los sistemas de control, seguimiento e implantación de la legislación ambiental comunitaria en los Estados miembros por parte de la Comisión, como guardiana de los Tratados y de su acervo.

1-083-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for your question. Regarding the budget, I will definitely be vocal about the need for an increased budget, working together with Vice-President Frans Timmermans and other Commissioners. The President-elect stated very clearly that it is a strategic goal and I think strategic goals have to be funded sufficiently.

It is of course a College decision, and we will engage in talks and negotiations about what the priorities should be. But biodiversity, if you look at the main priorities, the sustainable development goals, is basic in order to reach the sustainable development goals. If you talk about

climate change, a recent UN report says that biodiversity and a good ecosystem helps oceans and land. Healthy biodiversity could be made 37% responsible in combating climate change. So I think these are strong arguments and inaction will definitely cost us much more than action.

Regarding environmental laws, the President-elect was very clear and it's stated in the mission letter as well: zero tolerance for non-compliance. That is very important. I said in my speech that I will definitely be looking at all the possible tools in the toolbox. First of all, it is important to engage and help Member States within the dialogue but – if nothing is left and there is not enough done – that can end up with infringement procedures. Many of them are already happening.

1-084-0000

María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos (Renew). – ¿Podríamos esperar durante su mandato algún nuevo instrumento ambicioso para la protección de los bosques? No solamente los europeos, sino los de terceros países que se ven muy afectados por nuestro consumo. En especial, le preguntaría si tiene alguna medida concreta para mejorar la certificación de las cadenas de producción y suministro de productos libres de deforestación.

1-085-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – Regarding deforestation and the situation beyond the EU, of course we have to reassess our footprint, and I will definitely be working closely with the other Commissioners. It is important that resources – funding – that we are allocating to other countries won't actually lead to deforestation: that's one thing. Secondly, it is important to improve labelling and, as I've said, it is important to have deforestation-free supply chains. But, in order to reach that, we have to improve monitoring mechanisms, and I'll definitely be working on that.

1-086-0000

Ivan Vilibor Sinčić (NI). – Poštovani gospodine Sinkevičius, Vi dolazite iz Litve i ovdje ste kandidat za povjerenika za zaštitu okoliša i oceane. Postavit ću Vam pitanje koje nisam još čuo ovdje dosad, a koje se tiče onog dijela zaštite okoliša koji se bavi zaštitom od neionizirajućeg zračenja, odnosno unutar toga na elektromagnetske valove. Prvo ću reći nešto općenito, a nakon toga ću se usmjeriti na situaciju u mojoj Hrvatskoj.

Sadašnji standardi zaštite su postavljeni 1998. godine, prije više od 20 godina. Tada je to učinila Međunarodna komisija. Oni su propisali isključivo dakle termičke razine. Međutim, u dvadesetak godina znanost se razvila, napravljeno je niz drugih istraživanja. Mi danas znamo mnogo više, znamo i za neke netermičke učinke.

Problem je, zapravo, bio sličan tada koji danas imamo s pesticidima ili endokrinim disruptorima. Nisu uzeti u obzir sinergijski učinci, kumulativni učinci i, dakle, drugi netermički učinci.

Situacija je posebice aktualna s razvojem novih tehnologija kao što je 5G, 6G, 7G i tako dalje te Vam postavljam pitanje:

Hoćete li uzeti u obzir 20 godina razvoja znanosti i postaviti bolje standarde zaštite od ionizirajućeg zračenja?

1-087-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – On non-thermal radiation: first of all, as far as I know – and I'm not an expert on non-thermal radiation – the sun is also in the group of non-thermal radiation. So are many things, including human activities, 5G networks and so on, pesticides and endocrine disruptors as well. On this issue, first of all we have very clearly set priorities – as I have mentioned regarding zero-emission pollution – on tackling endocrine

disruptors and regarding the use of pesticides. It should be looked at very carefully through zero-emission pollution.

We have to subsidise ecological farming more and more. I'm always ready to take scientific advice. I'm always ready to look at it. I know that the World Health Organisation is always on top of such issues. They usually issue advice to Member States on how to deal with one or another issue, and, if confirmed, I will always be ready to listen respectfully to scientific advice if such threats, especially to human health, are raised.

1-088-0000

Ivan Vilibor Sinčić (NI). – Uvodno ste rekli da ćete putovati diljem Europe, evo ja Vas pozivam da dođete u Republiku Hrvatsku. Kod nas bazne stanice, odnosno antene, nažalost niču kao gljive poslije kiše. Naše slabe institucije nisu u stanju dovesti situaciju u red.

Hrvatska je jedina zemlja Europske unije gdje vam ne treba građevinska dozvola za postavljanje takvog građevinskog objekta. Rađeno je istraživanje na nasumično izabranih stotinjak baznih stanica u Zagrebu: 90 % njih je ilegalno.

Postoje rezolucije Europskog parlamenta kao što je ona iz travnja 2009. i ona iz rujna 2008. godine koje propisuju standarde za antene blizu vrtića, blizu škola i drugih objekata. One se u Hrvatskoj ne poštuju. To Vas pitam i na to stavljam fokus tijekom svojeg izlaganja.

Pozivam Vas da posjetite hrvatske institucije kao što je Ministarstvo zdravstva, koje je po zakonu prije deset godina trebalo objaviti registar tih stanica da se pojača zaštita, nakon deset godina nisu napravili ništa.

1-089-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – I actually visited Croatia two years ago with my wife, and I think it left a fantastic feeling, especially people – how warm they were – and in regards, of course, it is important to keep their health in a good status. An important tool to use is, of course, impact assessment. An impact assessment is in the legislation of every Member State. It has some flexibility, but that flexibility cannot do too much and overlook major issues, which can cause problems to human health.

1-090-0000

Mohammed Chahim (S&D). – Studies have shown that a circular economy strategy can help to reduce the EU emission gap by half. During the last mandate, Parliament and the S&D Group strongly pushed the Commission to put in place policies to support transition towards a circular economy, which resulted in the Circular Economy Action Plan. However, the actions focused mostly on the end-of-life phase, whereas it is necessary to look at the entire life cycle of products, starting from the design.

With this in mind, what measures will be part of the new circular action plan and how do you plan to bring the EU closer to achieving a non-toxic circular economy? Would you create a new, specific, product legislation or broaden the scope of the ecodesign directive to tackle issues linked to resource efficiency?

Moreover, there's an increased concern, especially with the younger generations, about the throwaway culture, in particular when it comes to clothing. What measures do you intend to propose in the framework of the circular economy in regard to the textile sector?

1-091-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – On the circular economy. I think it is an exciting opportunity to you to maintain sustainability and, most importantly, to reuse our

resources. Eighty-eight per cent of our resources are thrown away. Only 12% are used, so we see huge potential.

First of all, of course, we have to tackle all phases of this cycle from design – because usually, as you have mentioned, it's already incorporated in the design phase that the device or any appliance will serve for a short period of time and will be thrown away. Objects are also designed so that we cannot disassemble and we cannot change batteries, screen or microphone, so it is important, of course, to tackle this in the design sphere and to tackle the throw-away culture. I think here is the best way, of course, so that one changes the design so that you can have a longer cycle.

But secondly, we have to use our SMEs, and I have a very great example which many might know: a Lithuanian start-up, Vinted, which actually created a platform for selling textile products, basically your clothing, and this has enormous potential and I already see it being used in Belgium, France and other countries. It is very important that for the circular economy we use new technologies, digitisation – it's a chance – blockchain. We can track resources, we can track materials and have a cycle that really works. It is important also to mention the construction sector, which is responsible for one third of waste, and it will be among the priorities in the action plan as well.

1-092-0000

Mohammed Chahim (S&D). – As a follow-up: we strongly believe that the efforts to tackle plastic pollution must be accelerated and stepped up. Other than the actions included in the plastics strategy, what kind of measures would you take to reduce plastics? How do you plan to address not only intentionally-added micro-plastics that can be found, among other products, in cosmetics, but also non-intentionally-produced micro-plastics? And in your written answer you talk about better exploiting green public procurement.

We from the S&D believe 'sustainable public procurement' is a better term, because it's more inclusive when it comes to the social dimension. This can be a very important enabler and multiplier for the circular economy. Which measures would you take to accelerate the use of green – or as we call it, sustainable – public procurement?

1-093-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – As a minister I was encouraging a lot to use innovative public procurement. I was responsible for public procurement, and it makes people think completely differently, and we have to move. I think Member States have to have goals – how many per cent they will use in green procurement – and increase those goals. Of course, we can assist with the help – how to do it.

Regarding plastics: as I've mentioned before, we cannot tolerate that culture that it takes five seconds to produce, five minutes to use, and then it's five centuries to degrade. So biodegradable. Of course, micro-plastics. And most important that it's non-toxic, so that we can definitely use it in cycle.

1-094-0000

Chris Davies, Chair PECH. – Commissioner-designate, you have been under scrutiny for two hours now, but you can relax. This is the last session of five questions, so the end is in sight.

1-095-0000

Edina Tóth (PPE). – Tisztelt Biztosjelölt Úr! Az Európai Unió nemzetközi szintén élenjár a biológiai sokféleség védelme tekintetében, azonban nem elegendő, ha csak egyetlen kontinens tesz meg mindent a föld ökoszisztémájának védelme érdekében. Úgy gondolom, hogy globális összefogásra van szükségünk. Ön egyik feladatául azt kapta, hogy a világ vezetői jövőre Kínában ambiciózus megállapodást fogadjanak el, és javaslatot tegyenek egy, a 2030 -ig tartó időszakra

szóló, új biológiaisokféleség-stratégia elfogadására. Írásbeli válaszaiból megtudtuk, hogy Ön azt szeretné elérni, hogy az Európai Unió vezető szerephez jusson nemzetközi szinten, a biológiai sokféleség csökkenésének megállításában. Azt kérdezném, hogy milyen módon kívánja elérni ezt, valamint vannak-e konkrét tervei annak elérése érdekében, hogy a harmadik országok is szigorítsanak a természetvédelmi követelményeiken.

1-096-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Of course, it is important to have an ambitious goal. In order, first of all, to have other countries on board, we have to lead by example, so it is important that we show that the Biodiversity Strategy is ambitious and also that it's being implemented in the EU.

Secondly, it is important to have measurable goals that can be monitored. It is very hard to say now what those goals could be. We have to engage in dialogue with our partners, with the countries concerned. I will definitely be looking for advice and, if I am confirmed in post, I would love to travel to China not on my own but with a delegation from the ENVI Committee so that we represent a strong position with, of course, a discussion and dialogue on possible goals.

When I was thinking about what those goals might be – and this is purely my opinion – I think 30% would be a great goal for the percentage of protected areas in the world, and then 70% sustainably maintained. On top of that, I think we have to have a separate article on Arctic policy. We can see that the changes in the Arctic, with the melting of the ice, are putting more and more pressure on it. We have to maintain sustainability and we cannot make the same mistakes that were made in the past.

That's my thinking about ambition in China. As I said, I will be open to discussion with the Committee in order to elaborate on it, and it is important too that our partners sign up to it.

1-097-0000

Edina Tóth (PPE). – Említette, fontos, hogy a biológiai sokféleséggel kapcsolatos célkitűzéseket beépítsük az EU és a tagállamok minden érintett szakpolitikájába. Írásbeli válaszaiban példaként hozta fel, hogy a jövőben kötendő nemzetközi kereskedelmi megállapodások során a legmagasabb környezetvédelmi előírásoknak kell majd megfelelniük a feleknek. Hogyan kívánja elérni, hogy a harmadik országok a nemzetközi kereskedelmi megállapodásban vállalt környezetvédelmi kötelezettségeiket teljesítsék, illetve hogyan kíván Ön fellépni, amennyiben egy harmadik ország nem tudja teljesíteni, nem teljesíti a vállalt kötelezettségeket?

1-098-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – First of all, of course, it is going to be important to work closely with the Commissioner-designate for Trade, Phil Hogan, and it is important to raise those questions for attention at the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is important, of course, that the sustainable development goals, which were signed by 197 countries, are not only used but it is everyone's goal to achieve them. It is important to make sure.

So, I think we have to work closely with the Commissioner responsible for trade, and I will definitely make myself available in order to give a certain knowledge of what we are basically looking for. And of course, it is important also to protect our market, as we said, from unsustainable supply chains.

1-099-0000

Richard Corbett (S&D). – Commissioner-designate for Oceans – and seas, I might add – you might want to have your title adjusted to make that clear – do you agree that the problem of marine litter in our oceans and seas has become one of the biggest threats to our marine environment and also causes huge economic and social damage to coastal communities?

Fishers often pick up marine litter in their nets. Historically, they were penalised for that – they had to pay to dispose of it if they brought it back to port. That's beginning to change in some countries and, of course, our EMFF does support investments, including waste and marine litter collection investments and the Fishing for Litter programmes, which have been partially successful – a low take-up so far of that fund, but it has been partially successful. Do you agree that it's now time for comprehensive European legislation aimed at tackling the disposal and recycling of marine litter in EU waters, and how do you intend to tackle that in your term of office?

1-100-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – I think it is important that under the EU Green Deal, I will, under my mandate, develop an initiative for clean, healthy and of course sustainably managed seas and oceans. It is important for reaching the 30% goal of marine protected areas under Natura 2000, and not only that 30%, but, of course, it has to be very well maintained, very well implemented. That's one.

It is important to know that this doesn't mean that if it's a Natura 2000 protected area, that activities cannot be done, economic activities like fishing. It's way away from that. Of course it is important to ensure sustainable fishing and in talking about reducing pollution, including marine litter, it is important that the circular economy plan kicks in and we don't throw away resources which can have value, but that we put them back into our economy, reuse them, make out of them different appliances.

Regarding incentivising fishermen and women, many countries already do that, but I think we have to go even further than that. Ports, they do a lot of activities and we have to ensure that those activities are sustainable, that water which is taken and then returned back will be cleaned up and so on. In order to reach all those goals, of course we have to look at having a proper dialogue and to incentivise those sustainable goals which we want to reach.

1-101-0000

Richard Corbett (S&D). – This, and many of the other issues addressed in the question and answer session, might lead to the need for new measures to be taken by the EU.

But in your mission letter, it implies with this 'one in, one out' principle that any new measure requires the repeal of an existing measure, no matter how necessary that existing measure might have been. Do you accept that measures and legislation that we adopt should be evaluated according to their merits, and not according to some statistical fetish about the total number?

1-102-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – As Minister of Economy and Innovation, I also worked a lot in Lithuania to decrease the administrative burden. However, it is very important to know that it cannot be a mechanical move, and – as was discussed with previous Commissioners-designate – it will not be.

Most importantly, I will definitely ensure that, in decreasing the administrative burden, we don't lower our environmental legislation, which is important and which we will have to increase. As I have said, regarding biodiversity, we have ambitious goals, but those ambitious goals can only be achieved by implementing that environmental legislation across the sectors.

1-103-0000

Pär Holmgren (Verts/ALE). – As you mentioned, you will lead both on the zero-pollution ambition and on the circular economy. In other words, it's in your hands to create synergies between them.

According to the 7th Environmental Action Plan, we should develop non-toxic materials cycles so that recycled waste can be used fully as a reliable source of raw materials. Unfortunately, the previous Commission did more or less the opposite. It authorised substances of high toxicological concern that should not be recycled. Such an approach to the circular economy works directly against zero pollution. Toxic substances remain in our society for a longer time – they get a second life – and that undermines REACH, the chemicals legislation.

So my question to you is this: will you link these two issues, zero pollution and the circular economy? Will you work towards a non-toxic circular economy, one that clearly prioritises the phase out of substances of very high concern over the recycling of such substances?

1-104-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – There is a clear link in the portfolio as a whole between what is stated in my mission letter: zero-pollution strategy, biodiversity and the circular economy. If we take one of these out, the others will not really succeed. This is very important.

That's why all of these actions are going to have to form the central part of the New Green Deal. Of course zero pollution is linked with the non-toxic strategy. Why? Because, first of all, only by not wasting our resources can we successfully put them back into the cycle. Secondly, the circular economy will only be successful when we actually find a way to have a non-toxic cycle. So basically, with plastics that are made of friendly chemicals – let's call them this – we know that we can reuse them in many, many other ways, and they can then be applied in different sectors. This is the only way for a successful circular economy, and throughout my mandate I will be reaching for that.

1-105-0000

Pär Holmgren (Verts/ALE). – The European Parliament has objected so far six times to REACH authorisations, which have been granted by the Commission against the provisions of the law.

Back home in Sweden our government, together with the Parliament, also won a court case against the Commission for unlawfully granting such an authorisation. So my next question is how will you follow up on these objections? Will you bring about a change, respect our objections and the court judgment and ensure that the provisions of REACH with regard to the substitution of substances of heavy high concern are properly applied?

1-106-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – I think REACH provides us with the best and most comprehensive approach in managing chemicals in the world, and there should definitely be compliance with REACH. The REACH review has been done, and those shortcomings regarding some dossiers, one-third of all dossiers, will all be addressed by the Commission. I look forward actually to including REACH as one of the key pillars of the non-toxic strategy. On the basis of what we have in REACH in terms of data, we can build a very strong non-toxic environment strategy, especially with regard to chemicals, and then even go beyond, for example to endocrine disruptors. These are currently under review, but as soon as we finish we will definitely be working on them.

1-107-0000

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (Renew). – Señor candidato a comisario, los hombres y las mujeres del sector pesquero necesitan sentir su apoyo, y por ello le pedimos que intente incluirlos en el nombre de su cartera. En el Parlamento estamos retomando los trabajos del Reglamento de control y será una de las prioridades en la primera parte de esta legislatura, y usted ha mencionado en su intervención que necesitamos normas exigentes para los productos pesqueros y ha mencionado «de la red a la lata».

El sector pesquero que utiliza técnicas artesanales y sostenibles, en el que las mujeres —rederas, nescatillas, empacadoras— tienen un papel crucial, elabora productos de excelente calidad. Pero este sector ve en la inclusión de la trazabilidad en el etiquetado de los productos de conserva una oportunidad para mejorar su posición en la cadena de valor y ayudar también a diversificar la renta de sus comunidades.

Además, hay que decir que los consumidores tenemos derecho a saber qué compramos y qué consumimos, y cuál será su posición al respecto. ¿Va a proponer una propuesta legislativa para favorecer esta vía? ¿Cree que la regionalización de los fondos pesqueros podría favorecer el papel de los hombres y mujeres de las zonas costeras y también la rentabilidad de su actividad? ¿Piensa defender esta regionalización?

1-108-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – First of all, the question on women's role: a report recently showed that, first of all, it will be important to work with Commissioner-designate Dalli on tackling this issue. This is also one of the areas where you can make a sector attractive to young people – by making sure that everyone in the sector is respected. You rightly noted that working with fish afterwards is very hard work and it's not equally paid, so it is also going to be an important question on the agenda.

Regarding traceability, I think we all agree that we like good-quality food and it is important for our EU standards to be maintained. One of the key things is, of course, labelling, so that a consumer knows what he is buying and that the green label really means something.

We need to have traceability, as we have said, from net to can and it is important to work on it. It is important to use all the possible digitisation tools on that, not only here in the EU, using programmes like CATCH, but help our partners as well to use such programmes. I think then we can definitely improve and have a further discussion on possible better labelling and, of course, market standards, which are very high in the EU and we have to maintain this.

1-109-0000

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (Renew). – Gracias por su respuesta. Efectivamente, el papel de las mujeres es importante y además de su integración necesitamos un reconocimiento de sus enfermedades profesionales a nivel europeo, que no se ha mencionado.

Respecto a la trazabilidad, es verdad que tenemos que mejorar, pero a mí me gustaría escuchar de usted si, además de trabajar, avanzar, usted considera que debemos incorporar el origen de los productos en el etiquetado de los productos de conserva pesqueros, que es la demanda. Y, en segundo lugar, me gustaría que me respondiera al tema de la regionalización de los fondos, que parece que podría ser una oportunidad para mejorar y además respondería a la coherencia de los objetivos de la PPC.

1-110-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – Origin, as we said, is very important, but we have to make sure, first of all, that what is on a label is true information. This is the important step to tackle and I think it is possible to do through digitisation processes for our market. Then, when we know for sure, we can put it on the label because we all know that our consumers have the right to make an informed choice. Regarding regionalisation, as I've said before, I think it's a great tool for now, especially used a lot regarding the Mediterranean basin, and we will definitely continue using it, involving advisory councils. It is important that it again facilitates dialogue, not only between EU Member States, but also non-EU member states who also share the same sea basin.

1-111-0000

Peter van Dalen (PPE). – Voorzitter, dit Parlement, en in het bijzonder de Commissie visserij, heeft een flink dispuut met de Europese Commissie als het gaat over het nieuwe Europese visserijfonds. De Commissie is tegen de positie van dit Parlement omdat ze vreest dat onze opstelling zal leiden tot meer nieuwbouwschepen. Men zegt dan: meer nieuwbouw is ongunstig voor de visbestanden.

In mijn land, Nederland, zijn de afgelopen jaren enkele dure kotters in de vaart gekomen die zeer selectief vissen en dankzij hybride aandrijving bovendien zeer milieuvriendelijk zijn. Als je met dat soort schepen vist in de Noordzee, hoef je niet bang te zijn voor overbevissing. Want ook dat soort schepen moet zich houden aan de totaal toegestane vangsten (TAC's) en aan de quota. Als we weten dat schepen in de toekomst emissieloos moeten gaan varen, dan is mijn concrete vraag aan u: waarom bent u zo bang voor nieuwbouw van schepen die goed zijn voor het milieu en de selectiviteit? En waarom blokkeert u de positie van het Parlement? Want wij vinden nieuwbouw goed voor het milieu en zeggen: emissieloos varen, daar moeten we naartoe. Dat moet u niet blokkeren, ook niet in het nieuwe EFMZV.

1-112-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – As I understand, it mainly concerned pulse fishing. I apologise, but it was translated as 'we are afraid of new vessels' in my earpiece. Could you please repeat the question? I would appreciate that and could then answer it fully.

1-113-0000

Peter van Dalen (PPE). – Mijn vraag heeft niets met pulsvisserij te maken. Ze gaat over de besteding van het nieuwe Europese visserijfonds. Wij van onze kant zeggen: het nieuwe Europese visserijfonds moet ook gebruikt kunnen worden om nieuwbouwschepen een financieel steuntje in de rug te geven. Waarom is dat nodig? Nieuwbouwschepen zijn milieuvriendelijk en selectief, maar wel duur. Daarom zeggen we: geef ze ook een kans vanuit het nieuwe visserijfonds.

1-114-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – Regarding the EMFF and possible building of new boats, we need to have a further discussion on that because I'm not sure that this is the best area where public money could be spent. I think this is the investment which could come, actually, from private money, from reinvestment private money. We have a lot to improve. The colleagues before asked about improvements of the current conditions. Some of the small-scale fisheries fleets are 30 years old, so we should talk about their security.

It's an important question, but I'm not sure that building new boats would definitely go in line with our goals which are agreed under the CFP implementation. In regard to more selective gear, I think we definitely should look for it through research, through science, but improve it, and this is where we can definitely invest public money – into research, into new decisions, which will help our fishermen and fisherwomen fish more sustainably and more selectively and provide the best possible solutions.

1-115-0000

Peter van Dalen (PPE). – As I said, we need ships that are environmentally friendly, without emissions in the coming period. For me, it's clear we should support them out of the new Fisheries Fund, and I call upon you not to have a strict position on the side of the Commission, but to support our industry to have good fishing ships that are environmentally friendly.

1-116-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate. – I agree with you. The goal is, of course, to have environmentally-friendly decisions. As a Minister of Economy, I can say that usually small businesses struggle for R&D funding, and I think this is the area where public money could be spent: on R&D, actually, on facilitating, helping them with the research and the decisions which

can be applied later. The intention is good, but I'm not sure that it would lead to the result we do want to achieve.

1-117-0000

Chris Davies, *Chair PECH*. – Thank you, all. Thanks to all the Members who have asked questions. The Commissioner-designate now has the opportunity to make a five-minute closing statement so, Commissioner-designate, this is the sprint to the finishing line.

1-118-0000

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *Commissioner-designate*. – Honourable Members, thank you again for this opportunity to make my case. I was most interested to hear the commitment with which you made your comments and asked your questions. I know how much you care, and I particularly noted that biodiversity, circular economy, small / large-scale fishermen and -women communities are the most important for you. For my part I hope I have been clear about my desire to work in partnership with you.

Sustainability is a shared responsibility. I want to share that responsibility. This mandate will be the greenest that Europe has ever seen. We see that from the turnout in the European elections, from the size of the Environment Committee, and from the mission letters that the President-elect has sent. It will be also very blue. The recent IPCC report has shown just how important healthy oceans are for the future of our planet.

The European Green Deal is a thread that runs through the next Commission, from the very top down to individual portfolios: from climate and oceans to fisheries and agriculture; from transport and investment to foresight and health.

But the deal is not only about policies. It's not only about environment, and it is certainly not about the economics. It's about the sort of society we want. It's about the fishermen and -women who can no longer go out to the sea. It's about those who have been disadvantaged by economic transformation. I want to ensure that policies under my mandate contribute to a fairer society – a society that leaves no citizen behind. I want to ensure that we will be successful with just transition, with benefits enjoyed by all. We need targeted measures for the vulnerable.

I want to be part of a team that leads Europe towards a more ambitious approach. Because when we are ambitious, we aren't just improving the environment; we are creating social justice. We are improving the health, quality of life and the well-being of our citizens.

When Europe fails to act on issues like pollution, we don't just fail the environment; we fail the economy, we fail human health, and we fail the well-being of our citizens.

On many fronts this joint portfolio is a huge opportunity. Our President-elect has asked her team to ensure that Europe leads on the transition to a healthy planet and to make sure we become the first climate-neutral continent. A healthy planet means a healthy environment, and it also means healthy seas. A marine protected area is a safe haven for biodiversity, but it also brings long-term gains for fisheries, and gains for fisheries is a win for the fishermen and -women who rely on our seas.

Honourable Members, we cannot protect our oceans unless we protect our land. An ambition like zero pollution will have enormous consequences for our seas. When so much marine litter originates on land, more than 40% of marine mammals and sea birds are already affected. They need urgent help.

Biodiversity, zero pollution, farm to fork: so many of our priorities now acknowledge the advantages of joined-up approach.

I ask your help to get closer to the citizens and reach out to our local communities. I want to rely on your knowledge and your advice when I travel to your Member States. You know your constituents best: the forester who is building resilience into our woods; the fishermen and - women who fear the disappearance of their catch. You are a bridge to our citizens, and I hope my journey will take me across that bridge. Thank you very much.

1-119-0000

Pascal Canfin, *Chair ENVI*. – Thank you very much to the Commissioner-designate. You can have a beer and relax. Now it's up to us and the coordinators, so the coordinators of the two committees will meet at 18.00 and jointly at 19.00 for the evaluation.

(The hearing closed at 17.08)