



Summary of hearing of Rumiana Jeleva - International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response

The Bulgarian Commissioner-designate, Rumiana Jeleva, faced a range of questions from MEPs in the Development Committee concerning issues surrounding the new International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response portfolio for which she has been proposed, and also questions regarding possible conflicts of interest in her financial affairs.

Ms Jeleva said her priorities as a Commissioner would be the defence of International Humanitarian Law, better access to help for people in need, a clearer distinction between humanitarian and military roles and the security of humanitarian aid workers on the ground.

According to the Commissioner-designate, especially during a time of economic crisis, the available resources must be used in the best way possible. "This is why at the cornerstone of my policy will be coordination", she said.

International cooperation

Asked by Gay Mitchell (EPP, IE) to give more detail on the international cooperation part of her portfolio, Ms Jeleva insisted that there will be clear division of roles and competences among the commissioners dealing with external relations. She wanted to see reinforced cooperation with regional organisations like ASEAN and MERCOSUR. On respect for international humanitarian law she said "if silent diplomacy fails, we should go to the regional organisations and reinforce the capabilities of neighbouring countries to convince the country to provide access on the ground."

Alleged conflict of interest

Commissioner-designate Jeleva firmly rejected allegations of a possible conflict of interest and of giving false information in her declaration of financial interests – these issues were raised in questions from several MEPs.

In reply to questions asked by Thijs Berman (S&D, NL) at the beginning of the meeting and later on by Michael Cashman (S&D, UK) and Judith Sargentini (Greens/EFA, NL) about the Commissioner-designate's declaration of financial interest on her past activities with a consultancy company and when and if her role there had ended, Ms Jeleva stressed: "I don't have anything to hide (...) I would like to point out that I have been a public person since 2007. I have declared everything I have been obliged to. Any allegations against my husband or myself are totally, completely unfounded."

Antonyia Parvanova (ALDE, BG), who was mentioned by Ms Jeleva, in response repeated some of the allegations.

Security of humanitarian aid workers

Asked by Patricia Toia (S&D, Italy), Enrique Guerrero Salom (S&D, ES) and David-Maria Sassoli (S&D, IT) about the safety of aid workers on the ground and what concrete measures she proposed to ensure that their access, Ms Jeleva replied that she is prepared to work

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with everybody in the countries concerned and to have a good dialogue with all actors on the ground and that more need to be done to enhance the training of the humanitarian aid workers. "At political level, third countries must be called upon to respect International Humanitarian Law", she added.

Crisis response

Charles Goerens (ALDE, LU) asked whether the EU's capacity to respond to natural disasters are sufficient and how to deal with the deficits in this area. Ms Jeleva said: "Now we have civil protection and humanitarian aid in the same portfolio and I will do my best to have better prepared responses and to use all the capacities given by the portfolio to better urge Member States to be more active in preparing themselves and to contribute at European level."

Development Assistance in Bulgaria

Franziska Keller (Greens/EFA, DE) pointed to Bulgaria as the only Member State so far without a development assistance strategy. Replying also to Isabella Lövin (Greens/EFA, SE), Ms Jeleva said that during her six month-mandate as Foreign Minister of Bulgaria she had created two structures which will deal with development assistance.

Dealing with the food crisis

Jan Zahradil (ECR, CZ) wanted to see an appropriate strategy to deal with the food crisis. Ms Jeleva assured she would aim to be innovative and inventive in identifying new methods to help.

Michèle Striffler (EPP, FR) warned of problems if the budgets designed for civic protection and humanitarian aid are mixed. Ms Jeleva replied that these were separate budget lines and there should not be any concern: "We will have the possibility to establish more coherent and complementary ways."

Contact :

Ioana BOBES

AFET/DROI/SEDE

Press Service

BXL: (+32) 2 28 32460

STR: (+33) 3 881 76725

PORT: (+32) 498 98 39 83

EMAIL: deve-press@europarl.europa.eu

Teodor STOYCHEV

BG

Press Service

BXL: (+32) 2 28 40764

STR: (+33) 3 881 74601

PORT: (+32) 498 98 39 86

EMAIL: presa-bg@europarl.europa.eu