



Committee on Development  
The Chair

CONFIDENTIAL

ACCES RESERVE

315361    03.10.2014

Jerzy BUZEK  
Chair  
Conference of Committee Chairs

Dear Mr Buzek,

In accordance with Rule 118 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, the Committee on Development held a public hearing on Tuesday, 30 September 2014 with Commissioner-designate Christos Stylianides who, subject to the positive outcome of the nomination procedure, will be responsible for humanitarian aid and crisis management.

Prior to the hearing, Parliament had sent the Commissioner-designate a list of written questions. My committee noted that Mr Stylianides answered those questions satisfactorily.

Mr Stylianides opened the hearing by giving a short overview of the major humanitarian crises in the world and outlining his vision for the next five years. He said that he intends to consolidate the work of his predecessor, Kristalina Georgieva, and continue with the core mandate of providing life-saving assistance to victims, including to those in forgotten crises; he promised to be the "voice of the voiceless" and pay special attention to women and girls in conflict situations; he committed to defending humanitarian principles and making sure that humanitarian aid is not instrumentalised within the EU Comprehensive Approach; he also promised to continue investing in resilience and protecting European citizens through the Civil Protection Mechanism.

Members then asked questions on the following subjects in particular:

- The Ebola crisis and the necessary steps to fight the disease in a coordinated way in order to stop the epidemic and restore the health systems of affected countries;
- The need to revise the Humanitarian Aid Regulation that dates back to 1996;
- The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul and the ways to include the European Parliament in the preparatory process;
- The ECHO financing crisis (gap between commitment and payment appropriations) and how to remedy the situation;
- How to prevent corruption and maladministration of humanitarian aid through strengthened control mechanisms and the transparency of aid;
- How to accommodate the special needs of minorities, children, women and people with disabilities in conflict situations and natural disasters;
- Practical solutions for protracted refugee crises; the risk of lost generations; how to enhance cooperation with UNHCR; refugees' rights and the link to EU migration policy;
- The Civil Protection Mechanism and coordination between the Commission and Member States in this context; capacities for responding to nuclear accidents and multisectoral disasters such as Fukushima;
- Cooperation with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President (HRVP) in the framework of the EU Comprehensive Approach;
- Respect for humanitarian principles in order to facilitate access to people in need and guarantee the safety of aid workers; how to reverse the trend of shrinking humanitarian space;
- Disaster risk reduction and strategies to improve resilience; linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) and specific lessons drawn from the Global Alliance for Resilience in Sahel and West Africa (AGIR) and from the EU's initiative "Supporting the Horn of Africa's Resilience" (SHARE);
- The Hyogo Framework for Action for Disaster Risk Reduction and its upcoming revision in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan;
- The lack of visibility of EU aid on the ground and the need to develop a clear communications strategy;
- The Haiti earthquake and lessons learned from the uncoordinated response; the UN humanitarian aid transformative agenda;
- Sexual violence against women and children in humanitarian crises and sexual and reproductive health and rights in this context;
- Hunger and how to ensure that food aid does not disrupt local markets; innovative cash and vouchers systems;

- Specific crises, such as Syria (including the recent influx of Kurdish refugees to Turkey), Iraq, South Sudan and Nigeria, and "forgotten" crises;
- Military engagement in humanitarian crises and *The Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (Oslo Guidelines)*;
- The risk of increasing resistance to antibiotics during their widespread use in humanitarian crises; traditional healing methods;
- The situation in Gaza and Israel's responsibility for destroying EU-financed schools and hospitals; Israel's failure to respect the Geneva Conventions as an occupying power; the possibility for the EU to seek compensation for damage caused in Area C;
- The involvement of local communities in responding to humanitarian crises;
- Climate change, environmental refugees and sustainable responses to humanitarian crises;
- Cooperation with new donors, such as Brazil, Russia, Turkey and the Gulf States; trust funds.

During the debate, Mr Stylianides made specific commitments regarding his future Commission portfolio. He said that he would:

- Engage in dialogue with the European Parliament ahead of the revision of the Hyogo Framework for Action and the 2015 Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan;
- Ensure that his first official visit as a Commissioner will be to Ebola affected countries in West-Africa;
- Involve the European Parliament in the preparatory process of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul;
- Start a consultation with the European Parliament with a view to a possible revision of the Humanitarian Aid Regulation;
- Suspend aid programmes in cases of corruption or fraud;
- Urge Israel to pay compensation for the destruction of schools and hospitals financed by EU funds;
- Develop a culture of prevention in local communities in order to build up resilience.

Before the end of the hearing, the Commissioner-designate made a brief closing statement in which he added that:

- Frankness will be the basis of his cooperation with the European Parliament in the face of tremendous challenges;

- He values democratic procedures that enable the European Parliament and the Commission to engage in political dialogue and to find solutions even if there are some disagreements;
- He would expand his learning of the policy areas under his portfolio;
- He would solve the ECHO financing crises and ensure that the commitment and payment appropriations are balanced.

On the basis of the responses to the Members present at the hearing, as well as the assessment made by the Coordinators of the Committee on Development who met after the hearing under my chairmanship, I hereby give the following assessment:

Mr Christos Stylianides, both in his written replies and in the hearing, showed his commitment and passion to contribute independently and whole-heartedly towards the objectives of EU humanitarian aid and crisis management laid down in the treaties, in particular to deliver needs-based assistance and relief, in compliance with international law and with the principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity and independence. He embraced the legacy of his predecessor, Ms Kristalina Georgieva, and assumed ownership of the portfolio.

Commissioner-designate Christos Stylianides also presented his willingness and commitment to work jointly with the HRVP, the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, the Commissioner for Migration, the UN Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other donors and humanitarian workers. The Members of my Committee were especially pleased to hear of the Commissioner-designate's readiness to negotiate with whoever necessary in order to get humanitarian access to populations in need. The committee recognises that he has the integrity, professional aptitude and necessary experience to be a member of the College of Commissioners.

Members welcomed the Commissioner-designate's strong commitment on protecting minorities and implementing the anti-corruption measures in EU aid throughout all stages of the programme cycles, and would like more clarity on how actively he will contribute to the shaping of climate policy initiatives and implementation within the College of Commissioners.

Based on the commitments made during the hearing, outlined above, the Committee trusts that Mr Stylianides will seek regular and enhanced dialogue with, and the involvement of, the Committee on Development. The Committee looks forward to future cooperation and believes that Mr Stylianides will stay true to his words to consult the European Parliament on the possible revision of the Humanitarian Aid Regulation. During his mandate, the Committee on Development would like to see Mr Stylianides solve the ECHO financing crisis in close cooperation with the Commissioner for Budget, maintain the European Union's strong voice in global humanitarian action and ensure that humanitarian policies feature prominently in the Commission's thinking.

The general outcome of this hearing is that the Commissioner-designate gave a very convincing impression of his aptitude to be a member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the specific tasks assigned to him.

This represents the consensus of the Members who attended the hearing.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda McAvan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Linda McAvan