

MONDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2014

BRUSSELS

THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND
FOOD SAFETY

THE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

WITH THE ASSOCIATION OF
THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

HEARING OF KARMENU VELLA

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE

(Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries)

1-002

PRESIDENZA DELL'ON. GIOVANNI LA VIA*(La riunione è aperta alle 14.30)*

1-003

Giovanni La Via, *presidente della commissione ENVI*. – Il portafoglio del Commissario designato copre un largo spettro di politiche e una grande parte dei lavori legislativi del Parlamento. La commissione per l'ambiente è molto impegnata nel proteggere l'ambiente, così come nel promuovere uno sviluppo che sia efficiente e sostenibile. Un argomento centrale e trasversale che dovrebbe essere integrato in tutte le politiche, in linea con l'impegno del Presidente eletto, Jean-Claude Juncker, a favore di una *green growth*.

Vorrei ricordare che, in linea con le *guidelines* per l'approvazione dei Commissari, il Parlamento valuta i Commissari designati sulla base delle loro competenze generali, dell'impegno europeo e dell'indipendenza personale. Verifica inoltre la conoscenza del rispettivo portafoglio e delle capacità di comunicazione.

Prima dell'audizione, il Commissario designato ha risposto per iscritto a un questionario scritto. Le risposte in inglese sono state distribuite ai deputati venerdì 26 settembre e tutte le altre versioni linguistiche sono state distribuite ai deputati questa mattina.

Circa la struttura del dibattito, il Commissario designato sarà invitato a fare una dichiarazione introduttiva per non più di dieci minuti e avrà inoltre cinque minuti alla fine della riunione per una dichiarazione di chiusura. Dopo l'introduzione da parte del sottoscritto e del collega presidente della commissione per la pesca e dopo lo *statement* del Commissario ci sarà tempo per quarantacinque domande dei deputati, che saranno divise in blocchi tematici in accordo con le competenze del portafoglio del Commissario designato: un primo blocco di venticinque domande da parte dei membri della commissione ENVI, un secondo blocco di diciassette domande da parte dei membri della commissione PECH e un terzo blocco di tre domande da parte dei membri della commissione TRAN. Il dibattito si svolgerà in accordo con il principio del ping-pong, con tre blocchi di tre minuti domanda-risposta: un minuto per la domanda e due minuti per la risposta, senza domanda di follow-up.

1-004

Alain Cadec, *président de la commission PECH*. – Monsieur le Président, d'abord tout comme toi, je voudrais souhaiter la bienvenue parmi nous à M. Karmenu Vella, commissaire proposé, et rappeler que son portefeuille est très large puisqu'il comprend l'environnement, les affaires maritimes et la pêche. C'est une volonté du président de la Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, de lier plus étroitement la croissance verte et la croissance bleue.

La lettre de mission de Karmenu Vella indique précisément qu'il lui reviendra, s'agissant de la pêche, de mettre en place la réforme récemment adoptée de la politique commune de la pêche pour mettre de manière ferme l'Union européenne sur la voie d'un secteur de la pêche durable.

C'est la seule chose qu'il y a dans sa lettre de mission, en quelque sorte, et il n'y a rien d'autre sur la pêche. C'est un peu un regret, je dois le dire dès le départ.

Par ailleurs, je pense qu'il y aura deux points importants, qui seront abordés sûrement tout à l'heure. C'est le contexte de la mise en œuvre de la réforme de la politique commune de la pêche, notamment

l'obligation de débarquement, et également la prochaine révision du cadre des mesures techniques selon le principe de la régionalisation.

Je voudrais simplement rappeler au candidat commissaire qu'au Parlement, nous sommes très attachés à un certain nombre de nos prérogatives et, en particulier, à l'application stricte du traité de Lisbonne. En clair, la Commission propose, Monsieur Vella, le Parlement et le Conseil disposent. Tout cela à travers les trilogues, évidemment, où la Commission doit bien sûr jouer pleinement son rôle de facilitateur, mais sans aller au-delà.

Par ailleurs, les actes délégués sont un élément important pour toutes nos commissions parlementaires et le Parlement est déterminé à être associé à leur élaboration le plus en amont possible.

En ce qui concerne les questions, Giovanni La Via a expliqué comment nous comptons les gérer: à savoir une minute de question, plus deux minutes de réponse. D'abord, la commission de l'environnement, de la santé publique et de la sécurité alimentaire, puis la commission de la pêche.

Par ailleurs, un certain nombre de questions ont été adressées par écrit à M. Vella. Je regrette que les réponses apportées soient un peu trop générales et je ne doute pas que, à l'occasion de cette audition, M. Vella nous donnera des réponses un peu plus précises à ces questions. Je pense que cela comptera sans doute de manière significative dans l'évaluation que nous aurons à faire, a posteriori, après cette audition.

Voilà ce que je voulais dire en préambule. Je ne vais pas être plus long comme le temps nous est compté. Encore une fois, je vous souhaite la bienvenue, Monsieur Vella, et je vous donne donc tout de suite la parole pour dix minutes.

1-005

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Mr Chair, honourable Members of the European Parliament, I have been given the mandate by President-elect Juncker to assure the sustainability of our environment, the preservation of our natural resources and the conservation of our marine biological resources. I was also asked to focus on the contribution that the green economy and the blue economy can make to competitiveness, growth, jobs and stimulating investment. Let me start with green growth as my first priority.

With continuing record levels of unemployment, Europe must continue its efforts to strengthen global competitiveness while creating jobs and growth. This will be the over-arching priority of this Commission. But despite Europe's economic challenges, 95% of its citizens still care about the environment. As one of them, I strongly believe that growth will be impossible if it is not fair and sustainable.

Mr Chair, please allow me to say a few words in Maltese.

1-006

Is-sostenibbiltà mhijiex kapri – hija kru jali g all-futur ekonomiku tag na.

Din tg allimtha matul l-esperjenza tieg i b al Ministru tat-Turi mu g al Malta. It-turi mu jikkontribwixxi g al terz tal-GDP ta' Malta, i da fih innifsu t-turi mu jiddependi 100 % mill-ambjent: arja nadifa, ib ra ming ajr periklu u bajjiet nodfa huma ftit minn afna e empji.

1-007

The Seventh Environmental Action Plan sets out a road map for stimulating resource-efficient low carbon growth and innovation, while protecting our natural capital and safeguarding the health and well-being of our citizens. If I am approved as your Commissioner, this will be, for me, the guiding framework. It is my firm belief that real sustainable growth can only be achieved by a change towards a more circular economy.

We need a systemic change in the use and recovery of resources to assure competitiveness and the jobs of the future. This entails keeping resources in use for as long as possible, extracting maximum value from them, and re-generating materials from products at the end of their life-cycle. Promoting close cooperation between business and policy-makers is also essential to achieve these goals.

My second priority will be protecting the natural capital on which sustainable growth depends. The Natura 2000 network covers nearly one fifth of Europe's territory, but only 17% of our habitats and species are in a good state. We must step up efforts to meet the 2020 biodiversity targets with a legal framework that is fit for purpose. Any scope for simplification should be identified. Therefore, my task to carry out an 'in-depth evaluation of the Birds and Habitats Directives' is an assignment to maintain and, where necessary, improve the protection for our ecosystems and vulnerable species.

My third priority will be to safeguard the Union's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health. Much remains to be done to improve the quality of the air we breathe, and of the waters in our lakes, rivers and oceans. Our citizens continue to suffer from the effects of air pollution, especially in urban centres. They deserve that the necessary action will be taken.

The earlier we act, the less costly the remedial actions. And we must continue implementing REACH, as the Union's instrument to address the risks from chemicals. Together with my fellow Commissioner Ms Bienkowska, I will ensure that our objectives are met in the most effective way.

Work on all these priorities will require the following: first, improving the state of the environment cannot be delivered through environment policy alone. I am confident that my Commission colleagues will support me in mainstreaming environment into their policy areas.

Second, Member States need to improve their performance. In some respects significantly, and working with them to promote compliance and developing the necessary tools will be important. But I will not hesitate to make full use of the Commission's legal enforcement powers whenever and wherever this is necessary. Finally, the EU will need to maintain its international lead in environmental issues and in developing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Let me now turn to maritime affairs and fisheries. It is no accident that RIO+20 identified the oceans as the next big challenge for assuring sustainable development. I was born and brought up in a fishing village in the South of Malta, an island heavily dependent on marine economy. I therefore have some personal understanding of the concerns of fishermen and the importance of the sea for the economy of many regions in the European Union.

With the reform of the CFP the fishing industry and the environmental organisations have recognised both the common interest in rebuilding the stocks of fish, as well as the social and economic needs of the fishermen and the coastal communities. A successful policy needs both the fish in the sea and the people that can make a living from fishing it. I am committed to seeing the reform put in action as it was agreed.

We have collectively agreed to achieve maximum sustainable yields by 2015 where possible and at the latest by 2020. The sooner the better. This means putting in place the multiannual plans and a regionalisation that maintains the European nature of the policy while respecting the particularities of each fishing region. We also need to implement the discard ban. We must not underestimate the difficulties but let us find a way to do this by creating a buy-in from our fishermen to ensure its full implementation.

I want to make sure that the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the EMFF, will help this process. Implementing the reform means that we also need to ensure that non-EU Member States will equally respect the need for sustainability and protection of stocks.

Which takes me to my second priority: better international governance. We must use our weight in the international community to guarantee that our own conservation mechanisms will be matched by similar international measures to preserve the fishing stock. And we need to use the full range of instruments at our disposal to tackle illegal fishing, to tackle IUU.

But international governance goes beyond fisheries; it also includes the maritime environment. Our overall goal must be to work towards achieving a level playing field in the international governance of fisheries and the maritime environment. Those who play by the rules must not be penalised. And this brings me to my third priority, blue growth.

There are 3.6 million jobs in the EU maritime economy and in a number of sectors there is still potential for further growth, especially in renewable energy, aquaculture, and possibly in biotech. Many of these activities go well beyond our coastal regions and involve economic activities inland: ports need transport links, energy from our oceans needs to be transmitted.

So our integrated maritime policy is central to achieving growth and jobs as well as for assuring sustainability in our maritime and coastal activities. These need to be properly planned using the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive.

I look forward to cooperating with all my colleagues in the Commission to deliver blue growth. For instance in intensifying our research: our oceans make up two thirds of our planet but we know less about the bottom of our seas than we do about the surface of the moon.

To conclude, I believe that environment, maritime affairs and fisheries are a natural fit. Green growth and blue growth are two sides of the same coin. Sustainability is the key principle in all areas of my portfolio, with its economic, social and environmental dimensions. Together with you it can be achieved. If confirmed, I hope I can also count on you as my partners in getting it done.

1-008

ENVI committee

1-009

Ivo Belet (PPE). – Mr Vella, a very warm welcome to our committee. In your answers to Parliament's questionnaire you said that you want to continue with the evaluation and also with possible reform of the Habitats and Birds Directives and to prepare for 'merging them into a more modern piece of legislation'.

Of course we are not against that, but the PPE Group's first priority is the pragmatic implementation of these directives and, of course, their correct and equal implementation in all Member States: above

all, their correct interpretation by the Maltese Government. You were a member of that government, and we know that the Maltese Government weakened the interpretation of the Birds Directive – something which has been heavily criticised.

I have two questions. Firstly, how, concretely, do you intend to reform the Birds Directive; and, secondly, how do you want to deal with the exception – the derogation – by the Maltese Government, which weakened it? How do you intend that it should be interpreted correctly?

1-010

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Let me start from your last question with regard to the directives in Malta.

First of all, I want to make it very clear that I myself am neither a hunter nor a bird trapper, so you can set your mind at rest on that. I can outrightly say that I condemn any illegal hunting. Another thing which I want to make very clear is that I am not here as a Commissioner for Malta. I do come from Malta but I am here as a Commissioner for the European Union and my interests are the interests of the European Union. As such I would expect each and every Member State to implement all the directives, whether they be the country I know most or any other Member State if it comes to that. With regards to the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive and any other directive, I would simply say that abuse cannot be tolerated. As I said earlier it is not my role here to defend Malta.

Coming back to the Birds Directive, I think you are very right. I think both these directives were the cornerstone to safeguard our ecosystems and to safeguard also our biodiversity, and I have taken note of your concerns. The only thing that I would like to say is that the Birds Directive was adopted in 1979, some 35 years ago, and it has never been reviewed since then. Most of the interpretation of the Birds Directive is not actually from the directive itself, but there have been some 30-odd court cases, and everyone is interpreting this Birds Directive simply from the court cases and not from the directive itself. Plus there is the fact that, since 35 years ago, science has made giant steps and I do not believe that this science was actually envisaged 35 years ago when we had the Birds Directive. So, again, reviewing is not revising and in anything I do I would simply consult with...

(The Chair cut off the speaker)

1-011

Matthias Groote (S&D). – Herr Vella, Ihr Portfolio ist nicht nur exklusiv der Umweltpolitik unterstellt, sondern es gibt noch andere Bereiche, die Sie betreuen und die Sie auch gerade vorgestellt haben. Für unsere Fraktion stellt sich die Frage: Wie kann sichergestellt werden, dass dieser Politikbereich in der zukünftigen Arbeit ausreichend berücksichtigt wird?

Das Thema der Nachhaltigkeit, das im Ausschuss für Umweltfragen, öffentliche Gesundheit und Lebensmittelsicherheit natürlich sehr wichtig ist, wird in der neuen Struktur der Kommission auf der Ebene der Vizepräsidenten bearbeitet. Wie wollen Sie als für den Bereich Umwelt Zuständiger sicherstellen, dass die Themen der Ressourceneffizienz, der grünen Wirtschaft in der legislativen Arbeit auch den Stellenwert bekommen, den sie verdienen? Herr Juncker hat in seiner Rede im Plenum deutlich gemacht, dass in diesem Bereich 300 Mio. EUR investiert werden sollen. Wie wollen Sie das aus Ihrem Portefeuille heraus flankieren und begleiten?

1-012

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > I could sense this sense of concern about the size of this portfolio and the fact that the environment has been added to fisheries, but I would like to make it very clear also that DG MARE, whose portfolio is maritime affairs and fisheries, is not simply about

fisheries. It goes well beyond that. My portfolio is also responsible for the governance of the ocean and this is where there are many links between the environment and DG MARE. Let us not forget that very often when we speak about the environment we are referring to the environment on land, so on and so forth, but keep in mind that our planet is made up of 30% land and 70% ocean.

I think that both portfolios can work together. I think they could reinforce, rather than diminish, each other. If we are going to talk about the future, it is all about – as Mr Groote mentioned – sustainability. If someone were to ask me – and I made this point during my meetings with some of the MEPs – what the environment has got to do with fishing, I would say ‘nothing’, and what the environment has to do with the economy, I would say ‘nothing’. But the environment has got a lot to do with sustainable fishing and the environment has got a lot to do with the sustainable economy. I think that if we are going to look at the future we cannot talk about the economy: we have to start talking about the sustainable economy. I think the work can still be handled, because both the services are going to be kept there, so there is no one portfolio moving at the expense of the other.

1-013

Bolesław G. Piecha (ECR). – Commissioner-designate, I want to ask you about the very important problem of shale gas. What will you do to ensure that the Commission’s review of the recommendation on minimum principles for the exploration and production of hydrocarbons using high-volume hydraulic fracturing takes account of other choate evidence in relation to practical implementation and does not result in unnecessary proposals for legislation?

Will you be able to resist political and ideological pressure to introduce legislation at EU level if there is no real need for it?

1-014

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Here we have an issue which is also closely linked to the environment. First of all, let me point out that it is a Member State’s decision with regard to the energy mix it adopts. It is not up to the Commissioner to decide on that. My role, if any Member State opts for shale gas, would then be to see that any operation in that regard is carried out in accordance with protection of the environment and in accordance with the Treaty. The important thing is that if any Member State decides to go for shale gas it has to do it in the proper way.

I think we have learned, or we should learn, from past mistakes. I know that the Commission – at least from the information that I was given – launched its Shale Gas Initiative in January, basically advising Member States that if they opt for this type of energy there will be some initial guidelines. I say ‘initial’ because apparently the guidelines would not be binding, but there would be initial guidance as to how that Member State should operate. I think the initiative includes some minimum principles for fracking as well. It is best to wait to see how the Member States implement these initiatives and then, possibly knowing what the outcome would be, to decide on a way forward.

1-015

Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (ALDE). – Mr Vella, the past five years have shown that the portfolio of the Environment Commissioner is a fighting portfolio. Economic growth and the creation of jobs in Europe is impossible without sustainability as a cornerstone of that same growth agenda. Nevertheless, both the political guidelines and – especially – your mission letter show us that sustainability is seen by President Juncker as slowing down economic growth. Do you agree with me that sustainability is a prerequisite for economic growth, and do you share my analysis that this is not reflected in the political guidelines or the mission letters?

In its reply to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety's letter sent last week, President Juncker responded today that sustainability is so self-evident that it is not even necessary to mention it. History shows that is intellectually right, but politically naïve. How are you going to assure that sustainability will be a cornerstone of the Juncker growth agenda?

1-016

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > I would like to point to the mandate letter that I was given by President-elect, Mr Juncker. I will just read out one sentence from a whole paragraph of my mandate: that my mandate is also to ensure the sustainability of our environment, the preservation of our natural resources and the conservation of our maritime biological resources; and these are the key policy objectives requiring action at all levels.

I totally agree with you, Jan, that we cannot talk about the economy – as I said earlier on – without sustainability. But I would differ a little bit from what you said because sustainability today is not seen as something hindering the economy, but it is sustainability and the environment which should be pushing future development – future sustainable development. For me, the environment could be looked at as an end in itself, or it could be looked at as a means to an end. I think we should look at the environment as both. The environment is an end in itself because we need clean air, clean water, forestry, whatever. That is achieving the environment as an end. The environment could also be seen as a means to an end because it can help Europe in our future growth. I do believe that the mandate for growth and jobs using policies for blue growth and green growth is exactly this. As I said, we will be guided for our framework by the Seventh EAP, which is totally dependent on future sustainability.

1-017

Kateřina Konečná (GUE/NGL). – Mluvíte o realizaci balíku opatření pro čisté ovzduší, ale podle našeho názoru zatím velmi nekonkrétně. Konečně se ptejete také k tomu, že budete muset celou agendu teprve prozkoumat. Proto se Vás ptám: ve chvíli, kdy existují problémy s aplikací standardu ochrany ovzduší v pohraničních oblastech, v případech, kdy jedna ze zemí má vyjednané výjimky a druhá nikoli, jenže znečištění ovzduší nezná hranic a znečištění ovzduší tak může stážovat život i v zemi, která dodržuje přesné limity a investovala velké peníze do odstranění zdrojů znečištění ovzduší.

Předchozí Evropská komise nám jakkoli nepomohla, toto se stává velkým pohraničním problémem a já chci vědět, jak budete tento problém řešit, aby byli ochráněni obyvatelé i stát Evropské unie, které se chovají zodpovědně, na úkor těch, které se chovají velmi nezodpovědně.

1-018

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Yes, I take your point, which I think is very important. You mentioned that there might be some Member States which do not have enough finance and so on to safeguard and protect their citizens from environmental negative impacts, and I tend to agree with you. I acknowledge your concern that there is a difference of potential between Member States.

Not all Member States can safeguard the environment for their citizens to the same extent. But we cannot compromise when it comes to standards. We have to keep the same standards for all Member States, we have to guarantee the same level of protection to all citizens all over Europe, and we also have to have a level playing field when it comes to European standards. As you mentioned, there are structural funds which could be provided, and the Member States which require more assistance should be supported.

If Member States cannot cope with the standards for which the European Union is legislating, or which it is laying down in directives, there are two ways to address this: either to shame them or to

help them. I think the first approach should be to support these Member States, not only financially but also through the roadmaps which the Commission is drawing up with a number of Member States with regard to the environment. Then, if nothing works, we have to shame them and, definitely, to take infringement proceedings as well.

1-019

Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE). – Mr Vella, you know there are very grave concerns about the structure of the new Commission and about how Mr Juncker is more or less downgrading environmental concerns, or at least making the environment a key priority of deregulation. You have stressed the importance of sustainability but I would like to hear something rather more concrete, so I will ask you two concrete questions and I expect concrete answers to them.

Firstly, if the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Fisheries adopt opposing opinions, for example on the listing of bluefin tuna in Appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), how are you going to prioritise?

Secondly, the Seventh Environmental Action Programme is, as you mention in your answers, more than a relevant framework. It gives us guidelines on what kind of legislative proposals will come forward. We know there are some issues ready to go and I would like to hear what you are going to do in the next six months in relation to the proposals on access to justice, legislative proposals, environmental inspection, the strategy on endocrine disruptors and the communication on sustainable food?

1-020

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > That is a very tall order, but I will try! Let us start with sustainability. I do not agree that the Juncker administration has devalued or in any way downgraded the environment. I do not agree with that. As I said, the environment, sustainability and the economy go hand in hand.

I think you asked how I would react if the Environment and Fisheries Committees had a problem concerning bluefin tuna. I think the decision about the quotas for bluefin tuna is never taken as a political decision, but any decision about quotas is always taken after getting the best available scientific advice, so here there is no room for manoeuvring by the Commission.

You mentioned a number of other directives – access to justice and so on. I think that a lot of work has already been done by the services on that. I will have to look into it because I do not think I am well enough informed about it. You also mentioned endocrine, biocides and so on. That has now been passed over to the Commissioner for Health. It does not mean that it is not of interest to us; obviously it is of interest to us.

The last points were access to justice, endocrine and environmental inspections and sustainable food. I think it is still possible to revive those proposals, but I have to discuss this with my services to see the way forward on them.

1-021

Piernicola Pedicini (EFDD). – Noi abbiamo letto con molta attenzione la *mission letter* del Presidente Juncker a lei indirizzata, specialmente al punto in cui viene definito il portafoglio per l'ambiente, gli affari marittimi e la pesca. Ancora una volta leggiamo delle buone intenzioni per assicurare la sostenibilità ambientale e preservare le risorse naturali, biologiche e marine. Questi sono tutti obiettivi che sono già presenti nella strategia dell'Unione europea per il 2020, che viene resa attuativa nella fattispecie con la direttiva quadro sulle acque e con le misure relative alla tutela del

suolo, all'uso sostenibile dei terreni nonché alla protezione degli oceani, dei mari e delle riserve ittiche.

Alla luce di questo eccellente quadro programmatico, lei come giudica i provvedimenti che mirano a raddoppiare le estrazioni petrolifere in terraferma e in mare nel Sud Italia e in Croazia, laddove le estrazioni già in essere hanno fatto registrare l'inquinamento delle risorse idriche, con superamento del contenuto di idrocarburi e metalli pesanti di oltre duemila volte i limiti ammissibili? Quindi, quali provvedimenti prevede, a differenza della domanda di prima, per i paesi che sono già in infrazione?

1-022

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > I take note, and I think during our meeting this issue has already been done by our colleague, Mr Pedicini. I think when we are talking about oil extraction and its effects we have to consider two things: first there is the economic issue and then there is the environmental issue. The decision on the economic issue – whether to authorise oil extraction or not – again, as I mentioned earlier, lies with the Member State.

I know there is a lot of economic debate going on at the moment, with the European Union wanting to go for more energy dependency, with the European Union wanting to move towards cleaner energy and with the European Union discussing energy efficiency and so on. Those are all economic arguments which have to be taken, and obviously will have to be taken by the Member States. The role of the Commission is to see that if that Member State, when exercising the authorisation to extract oil, is not doing it in a manner which is consonant with the protection and environmental directives, then the Commission will obviously intervene.

I take it that before such authorisations are given there are various environmental impact assessments that should be done and that should be done in a serious manner as well. So the important thing is that if a Member State continues with its decision to go for oil extraction then it has to abide by all the environmental rules, and if it does not the Commission is there to take all the necessary action.

1-023

Françoise Grossetête (PPE). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur Vella, vous avez parlé au début de votre intervention d'économie circulaire et de durabilité des ressources. Dans ce domaine-là, la Commission européenne, justement, considère que le passage à une économie circulaire est au cœur de l'initiative sur l'utilisation efficace des ressources qui est établie dans le cadre de la stratégie Europe 2020. Seront présentées des propositions législatives qui vont concerner la directive-cadre sur les déchets, la directive sur la mise en décharge et la directive sur les emballages et les déchets d'emballages.

Il va donc y avoir des propositions législatives qui vont être transmises au Conseil et au Parlement européen, mais pour cela, il y a quand même une difficulté: les politiques publiques doivent normalement être basées sur des connaissances réelles et fiables. Or, concernant la gestion des déchets, la méthodologie et le système statistique en Europe sont encore trop disparates et peu fiables. On ne peut donc pas avoir une vraie comparaison des performances entre États membres. Alors, considérez-vous comme prioritaire d'harmoniser la mesure des performances des États membres en matière de gestion des déchets avant de mettre en place de nouvelles politiques publiques?

1-024

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > With regard to the circular economy, I agree on its importance and its positive aspects. Why? Because it is in accordance with our guiding directive, which, as we said earlier, has a resource efficiency approach.

You mentioned the waste recycling and waste packages. I think the relevant proposals have already been tabled and the information I have is that, before being tabled, these proposals underwent accurate scientific and cost-benefit analyses. When it comes to harmonising all the standards across all the Member States, I repeat what I said earlier: we cannot compromise on standards. We cannot have different standards for different Member States.

If I am not mistaken, the waste recycling proposal is awaiting reaction from Parliament and the Council. My assessment would have to be made after we get the reactions from Parliament and the Council but, yes, I agree with you that, when it comes to the waste package, this is one of the best ways forward for making more use of our resources.

The idea now is to have not only sustainable production but also sustainable consumption. This is where the waste package directives come in. Not only addressing waste at the production stage, but also addressing waste in consumption.

1-025

Susanne Melior (S&D). – Herr zukünftiger Kommissar Vella! Das siebte Umwelt-Aktionsprogramm 2014–2020 – Sie haben es vorhin schon erwähnt – legt ja die Schwerpunkte der EU-Umweltpolitik für die nächsten sechs Jahre fest. Dieses Programm hat für uns in der S&D-Fraktion eine sehr hohe Priorität. Wie wollen Sie sicherstellen, dass die Umsetzung dieses Programms auch in das Europäische Semester Eingang findet und damit die Mitgliedstaaten besser als bisher darauf verpflichtet werden können?

1-026

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > With regard to the Seventh Environmental Action Programme (EAP), as I said, it is a mandate, because it has already been co-decided by Parliament and the Council. I find this very convenient for me because, having adopted these as my guiding principles – having adopted something which has already been co-decided and co-legislated by Parliament and the Council – we have something in common that we can start working on.

With regard to ensuring that environmental policies are mainstreamed into other areas – where the responsibility lies with other Commissioners – and the idea that we should also ensure the greening of the semester, I think that is the only way forward. We need to make certain that environmental policies are streamed – integrated – into every economic policy. If we are going to look at a sustainable future, we cannot have the economy going north and the environment going south. That is where we need more integration and more mainstreaming, and that is one of the reasons why President-elect Juncker is always talking about moving away from the silo mentality. Everyone benefits from the environment, so the environment should be everyone's responsibility.

1-027

Mark Demesmaeker (ECR). – Dank u wel, mijnheer Vella. De achteruitgang van de biodiversiteit stoppen is een belangrijke uitdaging. Ik deel de bezorgdheid van collega Ivo Belet over de aangekondigde modernisering van de vogel- en habitatrictlijnen en ik voeg daaraan mijn achterdocht toe, gelet op het omstreden beleid in uw eigen land en de veroordelingen die het heeft opgelopen.

U heeft nog niet geantwoord - u heeft wel een aanloop genomen maar ik bleef een beetje op mijn honger zitten - op de vraag hoe u die modernisering dan precies ziet. Kunt u mij overtuigen van uw ambities?

Ik wil ook een bijkomende vraag over biodiversiteit stellen. Eén van de meest dringende problemen is de dramatische bijensterfte. De oorzaken daarvan zijn divers en een gecombineerde aanpak is nodig.

We hebben een tijdelijk verbod op neonicotinoïden, maar er moet meer gebeuren. Erkent u bijensterfte als een belangrijke uitdaging? Welke initiatieven zult u nemen?

1-028

Karmenu Vella, *Commissioner-designate*. > With regard to the Birds Directive, I will repeat again that, if we agree to review them, obviously there is no idea to deregulate or to demote them. We are not revising, but we are only reviewing. But again, we will have time to discuss this in more detail.

With regard to the pesticides used which are killing the bees, I think that is also a very important issue not only environmentally but also – as you mentioned – with regard to biodiversity. I am aware and totally share your concern because bees obviously are not only protecting biodiversity but they are protecting our food as well. It is in the interests of my portfolio, again from the biodiversity side, although it is not the responsibility of my portfolio when it comes to the pesticides side, and I can confirm that I can work on this with my colleague the Commissioner for Health.

But when it comes to bees, I think we have to play a more important monitoring role because the problem with regard to bees is not coming only from the chemicals side. There are other issues which are harming the bees. There are agricultural issues, mainly because many Member States – or many farmers in many Member States – are opting to go for a monoculture when it comes to crops. Obviously, they have economic reasons if they think that cereals are selling at a higher price than whatever, but I think that it is in our interests to look at the environmental interests as well and I know that, from the Commission, the services have made a number of suggestions about this. They are encouraging more the idea of mixed crops rather than a monoculture crop. I know that at the moment there is a ban in place – if I am not mistaken for a period of two years – and I think it is best to see and wait for the evaluation to see whether this ban is effective or not before we take any further decisions.

1-029

Catherine Bearder (ALDE). – The EU Timber Regulation came into force in 2013 and yet there are many EU countries which still do not comply with its provisions. It is important to note that around 20% of all greenhouse gas emissions are the result of deforestation. In the EU we are hardly better, with around 46 000 to 58 000 square miles of forest lost annually, both legally and, more worryingly, illegally.

Will you ensure that the Timber Regulation is effectively and uniformly applied across the EU, and do you plan to take measures against non-compliant countries? How will you work to persuade your fellow Commissioners that environmental protection measures, such as the Timber Regulation and the EU action plan on deforestation, are key to securing a sustainable future for us all? And lastly, will you use your position as Commissioner finally to ensure that the Maltese Government enforces EU legislation so they stop killing our birds?

1-030

Karmenu Vella, *Commissioner designate*. > Again, with regard to birds I can give my commitment again that I will do whatever it takes not only with regard to the country I know best, but to each and every Member State.

With regard to birds, I think I have to say something about my experience as Minister for Tourism in Malta. As I said in my speech, tourism contributes about one third to Malta's economy, but it depends 100% on the environment. I remember every morning, going into the office, I had two trays for correspondence. One I kept for general correspondence, the other for complaints about birds, so if there is someone who had problems with this, it was me as Minister for Tourism for Malta.

I used to get letters – especially from the UK, and the UK is our number one tourist market – saying Mr Vella your country is beautiful, Mr Vella, we enjoyed our holiday, Mr Vella... but – and there is always this but – we will not be coming back because we met hunters, we met..... I am saying this so that you know that the portfolio I held twice in Malta totally depended on the environment. When you talk about the lack of controls and so on, you are preaching to the converted. So please, take it from me that I will not defend anyone with regard to breaking any directives.

1-031

Stefan Eck (GUE/NGL). – Herr Vella! Mehr als 50 % der europäischen Bürgerinnen und Bürger sprechen sich laut Umfragen für eine drastische Reduzierung von Tierversuchen aus. Trotzdem werden nach wie vor Millionen grausame Tierversuche jedes Jahr in Europa durchgeführt, darunter auch Tierversuche für Haushaltsprodukte wie Geschirrspülmittel, Möbelpolitur, Schuhcreme, Waschmittel usw. und Tierversuche für deren Bestandteile. Tierversuche für Kosmetika sind seit dem Jahr 2007 und für die Bestandteile von Kosmetika seit 2009 verboten. Seit 2009 ist die Vermarktung von Kosmetika, die an Tieren getestet wurden, verboten. Können wir nach dem Verbot von Tierversuchen für Kosmetika damit rechnen, dass Sie auch ein Verbot von Tierversuchen für Haushaltsmittel einführen, die ich vorhin genannt habe?

1-032

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > This is a very important question because a lot of concern has been shown, including during my meetings with a number of MEPs.

I think a first effort has already been made. As you mentioned, there is a ban on animal testing of cosmetics and so on. I think it is only right that we should see what the outcome is. I also have to say that I am not fully comfortable with this subject. I have spent two weeks going through dossiers which, had I studied them at university, would, I think, have got me my PhD in a week! I have had some very interesting meetings, at some of which this concern was mentioned. But so far I do not have an opinion.

What I can promise is that I can discuss this in more detail with the departments concerned to see not only what they are proposing but also perhaps what NGOs are proposing and whether there is any experience in Member States that we can share, including sharing best practices and so on. This is a very important question and it merits attention. I am not saying this simply to have said something: I promise that, if need be, we can continue discussing this further. If I am confirmed in post, we can meet and discuss this in more detail if you would like to do so.

1-033

Benedek Jávor (Verts/ALE). – The structural problem of merging the environmental and fisheries portfolio was already mentioned, but there is another structural problem in the new Commission. President-elect Juncker will only place a new initiative on the agenda of the college if it is recommended by one of the Vice-Presidents. Mr Vella, according to your mandate, for all your initiatives in the field of the environment and fisheries, you depend on Mr Katainen, the Vice-President for jobs and growth. However, there is no reference whatsoever to environmental protection or sustainable development in the mandate of Mr Katainen. So my question is: how will you deliver the Treaty obligation to ensure sustainable development, a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment given that you depend on a Vice-President who is structurally blind in that regard? Sustainability is not even mentioned in his mission letter.

1-034

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > I know that this was a concern and it has been discussed and debated and mentioned in every meeting I had, with a number of MEPs. But I do not think it is

that alarming, in the sense that the principle of sustainability and the principle of sustainable development, lies also in the Treaty. Actually, if President-elect Juncker were to mention sustainability to just one Commissioner, I do not know but that might be interpreted that it was specifically that Commissioner who is being entrusted with the responsibility of sustainability, whereas according to the Treaty – and all the Commissioners will have to vow and take an oath that they will have to defend the Treaty – all of us, each and every one of us, is responsible for sustainability, for sustainable development.

As regards the way we will be working with the various Vice-Presidents, obviously the Vice-Presidents will be there to coordinate more than anything else. I am not saying that they will not have a say in whatever projects we are implementing, but I think it is very remote for me to understand how any Commissioner does not have the value and the principle of sustainability not in mind, but in heart, when the first priority of every Commissioner is to defend the Treaty, and sustainable development is entrenched in the Treaty. I am not saying that President Juncker did the right thing or President Juncker did the wrong thing, but certainly in the mandate President Juncker gave me – and I can refer to it again – there is a whole paragraph specifically on sustainability and sustainable growth.

1-035

Marco Affronte (EFDD). – Signor Vella, lei conosce l'importanza del ruolo biologico che hanno gli squali per gli ecosistemi marini. Negli ultimi anni l'Europa ha fatto qualche passo avanti per la conservazione degli squali – penso ad esempio al bando relativo al *finning* – però ancora un numero molto significativo di squali vengono sbarcati nei nostri porti e nei porti dell'Europa, senza che esistano degli *stock assessment* e senza che esistano delle misure reali che assicurino la sostenibilità di questo tipo di pesca. Penso in particolare al blue shark e al mako, ma anche a molte altre specie.

Le chiedo quali misure precauzionali e quali iniziative intende attuare per assicurare che la pesca degli squali rispetti la sostenibilità e l'ambiente.

1-036

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > As we all know, sharks are among the species that we have to look after. One of the best tools for us to use to look after these endemic species is the recently reformed common fisheries policy (CFP).

Why am I saying that? Because some of its measures will help to reduce the catch of sharks as well. I am specifically talking now about the landing obligation – whereas, previously, discards were allowed at sea and we could not tell how many sharks were being caught without us even knowing. So at least, when I mention that we have to implement the CFP as agreed, and that one of the measures in the CFP which we have to start implementing is the discard ban, I think that will help us to eradicate the unwanted catch of sharks.

Let us not forget that now, when fishermen have to land their catch, they will hopefully – and I am sure they will – aim for greater selectivity. This means that, whilst fishing, they will care about the fish they catch, and the unwanted fish they catch will not simply be discarded in the sea (and I am not saying that fishermen necessarily do that). Now we have the landing obligation, and at least we will know – and we can control better – the catch of sharks and other endemic species as well.

1-038

Karl-Heinz Florenz (PPE). – Herr Kommissar Vella! Ich muss leider Gottes eine Frage stellen, die ich schon vielen Ihrer Vorgänger gestellt habe, nämlich die Frage der Implementierung. Ich bin jetzt ziemlich lange hier in diesem Parlament, und jeder Kommissar hat mich enttäuscht, weil die Implementierung von europäischem Recht nicht läuft. Ich will jetzt gar nicht auf Ihr Land zu sprechen

kommen eller till Italien, jag skulle också kunna nämna mitt land. Den implementering av europeiskt lagstiftning är en katastrof. Ni var ju själva en gång ministrar, ni vet ju, hur det går. Det ligger också i andra europeiska texter. Varje kollega här har en viktig fråga, jag naturligtvis också, och för mig är det den viktigaste frågan: När vi till slut blir trovärdiga, eftersom vi en gång gör det som vi här gemensamt har beslutat, då har Europa en ganska mjuk framtid.

Den andra frågan gäller cirkulär lagstiftning: Vi får varje dag 200 000 människor nya på denna jord. För de som inte vet: Det är varje år så mycket som hela Förbundsrepubliken Tyskland. Det borde oss alla göra uppmärksamma. Jag är av den mening, att cirkulär lagstiftning, om det överhuvudtaget finns i Europa, helt enkelt, med alla medel måste stötts, och då måste ni sätta en tydlig prioritet.

1-039

Karmenu Vella, *Commissioner-designate*. > I cannot agree more with what you said when it comes to implementation. Implementation is the key challenge in the European Union, and it is useless to carry on coming up with more and more legislation unless we start implementing.

At times it is better to see how we can implement existing legislation before coming up with additional legislation. This is precisely one of the priorities set out in the Seventh Environmental Action Plan: apart from the three objectives, there are four enablers – investment, implementation, information and integration – and I think we have to look more closely at implementation.

Unfortunately, there are a number of Member States which are possibly less responsible than others. I would like to use your question as an opportunity to comment further. I downloaded the record of environmental infringements in 2013, Member State by Member State. The total infringement number is some 350 – 353 to be exact. There are some countries with 29 infringements in environmental areas only: other figures are 25, 20, 19, 17 ... Here I would like to point out that the country I know best – which is perceived as being non-compliant when it comes to the environment – has one of the lowest numbers of infringements. The country I know best, along with two or three others, has five infringements, compared to the 29, 25 or 19 of other countries. I am saying this firstly to confirm what you are saying: that it is useless to set rules unless we are prepared to implement them.

1-040

Jytte Guteland (S&D). – Herr Vella, jag hörde i inledningen att du talade om Reach, vilket är mycket bra. En stor utmaning för den framtida miljöpolitiken är ju inte bara att bekämpa farliga kemikalier utan också att komma till rätta med de hormonstörande ämnena framför allt. Hormonstörningar hos människor och djur ökar. Vi ser tydliga samband med exponering av hormonstörande ämnen. Detta kan leda till många svåra saker, exempelvis cancer, och också till reproduktionsstörningar. Den första delen av min fråga är därför hur du tänker komma till rätta med detta för att skydda miljö och människors hälsa.

Det fanns ett förslag på kriterier för att definiera hormonstörande ämnen enligt kommissionens föredragande för en vecka sedan. Jag undrar därför om du kan lova datum för när vi kommer att få se det förslaget.

Vidare har frågan om bin tagits upp här nu under utfrågningen, vilket jag tycker är mycket bra, och att vi är flera som verkligen vill se en kraftfull politik. Bisamhällen skadas hårt i Europa i dag. Vi kan se att det beror på en cocktaileffekt av kemikalier. Det beror på bekämpningsmedel.

(*Talaren avbryts kort av talmannen.*)

Vad avser du göra? Svaret var lite svagt.

1-041

Karmenu Vella, *Commissioner-designate*. > Again, with regard to the bees I think the question has already been raised, and as I said there is a lot of concern and the Commission has already proposed some other ways how the eradication of bees could be avoided.

When it comes to endocrine disruptors – I think Jan mentioned them and biocides and so on – obviously these are related more to health. Previously they were the responsibility of REACH – which by the way I think is making good progress – with substances having to be registered, evaluated and authorised – I am referring to chemical substances – the objective of which is to identify and eliminate dangerous chemical substances. At the moment, I was told, there are some 12 000 dossiers with REACH, most substances that are being used in industry. Out of these 12 000 substances, some 1 000 were identified to be analysed and so on. And all this is being done by ECHA in Helsinki, which is doing a very good job.

Coming back to endocrine, I will repeat again that from a health point of view this is very much of concern to us, to my portfolio, but these have been referred to the Commissioner for Health. Here I think I can easily say that I will work hand in hand with Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis, because after all health is one of our priorities as well. Eliminating environmental risks to health is one of the objectives, as well, in the Seventh EAP. So I cannot make an individual commitment on this. What I can commit myself to do is to work closer with the Commissioner for Health on this.

1-042

Jørn Dohrmann (ECR). – Deres forgænger, Janez Potočnik, har fremsat forslag til en ny luftkvalitetspakke, som indeholder mål for reduktion af ammoniakudledning i 2020 og 2030. I 2020 er EU's reduktionsmål for ammoniak kun 6 % i forhold til 2005, men allerede i dag har man opnået en reduktion på 5,7 %. Så helt uden hensyn til at de miljømæssige fordele er meget beskedne, er nogle lande udpeget til at skulle reducere ammoniakfordampingen med fire gange mere end EU-gennemsnittet. For Danmarks vedkommende, som er sat til et reduktionsmål på 24 % i 2020, anslås det, at udmøntningen af en sådan politik vil føre til tab af 11 000 arbejdspladser og medføre et tab i landbrugseksporten på omkring 1 mia. euro. Hvad er Deres syn på den meget høje uoverensstemmelse i fordelingen af byrderne imellem EU-landene som følge af det ovennævnte?

1-043

Karmenu Vella, *Commissioner-designate*. > You spoke about the air quality package as proposed by Mr Potočnik – and here I have to take the opportunity to wish him well and praise the work that Janez has been doing over the last years; I met him and it was one of the most interesting meetings I had – and there is still a very big problem with regard to air quality. It has very negative effects, both socially and environmentally and also economically. I think we have to act very fast on this, because the cost impact of bad air quality, especially but not only on health but also on absenteeism at work, is also having an economic impact as well.

I know that the services have been doing a wonderful job in identifying the sources, whether they be from transport, agriculture or industry. I know that there were some very serious proposals and I know a lot of monitoring and control is being done when it comes to national emissions ceilings. I also know that the number of Members of Parliament that raised this issue during our meetings is a very good indication of the seriousness of this, and precisely because of the seriousness of this issue I told each and every Member of Parliament that this will be one of the first priorities. I have already alerted

services that if I am confirmed this is one of the first things that we have to go through together. We also have to see whether the measures on the other hand are going to have a negative economic effect, such as the ones you mentioned.

1-044

José Inácio Faria (ALDE). – Mr Vella, under its blue growth agenda, the Commission intends to support seabed and deep sea mining. Yet there are major uncertainties regarding the environmental impact of such activities: concerns about the geomorphology of the seabed, its ecosystems and, in turn, the potential impact on marine ecosystems more generally.

What do you think should be done, or what should be the Commission's role in pushing forward an adequate legal framework for the environmental protection of international waters, and marine protected waters, in respect of seabed mining? Do you plan to put forward proposals for better management of marine protected areas?

1-045

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > The concept of marine protected areas is already in place. It is a sort of extension to Natura 2000. I believe it is very important to have these kinds of initiative because when we talk about the sustainability of our fisheries, our waters and so on, we can tend to take it for granted that limiting fishing to a maximum sustainable yield is going to solve everything.

There are other things which are harming the fish stocks in our seas and we have to address them as well. We cannot expect that measures will apply only to fishermen and that we need not take any measures against the other factors – such as pollution in our oceans and deep-sea mining – which are polluting our seas and causing the diminishing of our stocks.

So yes, I think something will have to be done. As I said, I also need to get more acquainted with this issue because it needs a lot of thought and a lot of discussion. It is going to affect a number of Member States not only environmentally but also economically. The environmental interest should always be kept at the forefront of these discussions, especially when we are talking about areas where we do not have any formal experience at all. We have to move into these areas with a precautionary approach. We have to be careful, and we have to discuss and analyse what is on the table.

1-046

Claude Turmes (Verts/ALE). – Commissioner-designate, I have heard that you are under instructions from the President-elect not to commit to any new initiatives and, worse, that you have even been told not to commit to maintaining existing legislation. As Greens, but also I think much more broadly in this room, there are Members of Parliament who are fighting for the environment. So come on, if you have an attitude of just following what some pro-business Commissioners tell you, then we will go nowhere. We need somebody who fights for us and who stands up to fight, and we need somebody who is concrete and somebody who commits here to concrete legislation – so inspections, access to justice, air pollution. Otherwise, where will we go, and how can we have any assurance that you are the right person to do this job?

1-047

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > To be honest, if I do not give any commitment today it is not because I have been given any instructions to do so. I cannot pretend to come here, I cannot pretend to know everything, and I cannot pretend that I can start giving commitments left, right and centre unless I am 100% certain that I will be able to deliver tomorrow on the commitments I give here. So I do not have such instructions, but I will not give any commitment and I am sure, Claude,

that you will understand this, especially knowing that this is a new Commission. We have to take stock of what was left, even in terms of legislation. Taking stock is normal; it is only natural. It always happens. When a new government takes over, the first thing that that government does is to take stock of all the legislation that was there and of the financial situation that was there. So I think that it is only natural when we say we are going to take stock of whatever is left.

You ask who is going to fight for us. The way forward is not going to be a fight between the economists and the environmentalists. I think that – forgive me for saying this – we have to change that idea. When we talk, and that is why when I said the environment can promote the economy, maybe today we have an expired economy. Why? Because when it was being planned, the environmentalists were not part of that planning. What we want to see, as of today, is that if we are planning any economic policies for the future, then the environment has to be part and parcel of the initial decision-making process as well. So this is not a win/lose situation. It is not the economy versus the environment. We are saying today that the environment has got a very important part to play...

(The Chair cut off the speaker)

1-048

György Hölvényi (PPE). – Nem elzmények nélküli ügyr l van szó. Az Európai Parlament 2010. májusában fogadta el az Áder János által indítványozott határozatot, melyben felszólította az Európai Bizottságot a cianidos bányászati technológiák uniós tilalmának kezdeményezésére. Szinte teljes egyetértés volt a parlamentben a bányászati technológia efféle megszüntetésér l, a folyamat azonban elakadt, mert az Európai Bizottság a mai napig nem szerzett érvényt a parlamenti határozatnak. Majdnem 15 év telt el, és a cianidos bányászattal kapcsolatban 15 éve volt ugye a nagybányai katasztrófa, és ez a bányászati struktúra ma sincs véglegesen betiltva az Európai Unióban. Elkezd dött egy munka. Három konkrét kérdésem lenne. Mit kíván tenni a biztos-jelölt, hogy megoldja ezt a problémát? Mit kíván tenni a biztos-jelölt, hogy érvényt szerezzen az Európai Parlament itt... *(Az elnök megvonta a szót a képvisel t l.)*

1-049

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > I understand that there is or was a Mining Waste Directive in place and that it has been there – I think – since 2008. Under that Mining Waste Directive, again if I am not mistaken, cyanide was allowed in gold mining provided that it was used under very strict conditions. As you said, there was a European resolution – I do not remember in which year, but you mentioned 2010 – to ban it again. I think that no other product has been identified which can substitute for cyanide in this operation, either because of cost, or because of the environment, and so on. I also understand that banning cyanide would, from an economic view, probably mean banning gold mining in Europe as well.

I know that there are these two great concerns – economic and environmental – and I think that the Commission is monitoring and it may reassess this position. If I am not mistaken, the Commission is waiting for some technical developments and also some assessments of any new risks which might arise from these operations. The Commission is waiting to see whether there may be any positive technological developments to try and substitute for cyanide in gold mining. It is also on alert, lest there be any negative environmental impacts as well. But again, we will look into this and see what the position is.

1-050

Nessa Childers (S&D). – Mr Vella, I am asking you a question about investment in the green economy. President Juncker has announced a specific commitment worth EUR 300 billion of investment. A significant part of these investments, as stated by President Juncker in his address to the

European Parliament in July, would be dedicated to projects related to energy efficiency and green jobs. Could you define your EU strategy for promoting a more efficient use of the available funding, for example structural funds, as well as envisaging innovative ways of financing in the future, for example the European Investment Bank, in order to boost investments in the green economy?

1-051

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > As you said, one of the commitments that has been given by President-elect Juncker is the EUR 300 billion package, whose objective is jobs, growth, investment and so on. The EUR 300 billion could obviously be taken from the EU budget, the European Investment Bank, plus any other investment coming from the private sector as well.

I attach a lot of importance to this last factor, namely the private sector. Why? Because no matter how much we talk about growth, no matter how much we talk about jobs, in my opinion no government on its own can come up with the incremental number of jobs for economic growth unless the private sector is also involved. I think that the future role of many of the governments in many Member States will have to be a supporting role, a facilitating role, rather than them having a regulatory role.

I think one of the ways we can entice the private sector to contribute towards this growth is by making available the amounts of finance already mentioned. However, I must say now that since this finance is coming out of the European Union there is no harm in tying it in with certain environmental rules and regulations. If we are going to make available more finance I think it is only fair, if we are talking about a future sustainable economy, then we will not simply give finance for the growth of the economy but we will give finance for the growth of a sustainable economy.

1-052

Bolesław G. Piecha (ECR). – There are opportunities to improve the effectiveness of European legislation while still protecting the environment. What will you do to ensure a rigorous approach to carrying forward the Commission REFIT programme on the environmental dossier? Will you look for opportunities to improve the quality and coherence of the EU environmental acquis, whilst taking account the outcome of work undertaken by the Member States? Will you take into account the core principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and attempt to avoid unnecessary burdens on business, and particularly on SMEs?

1-053

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Yes, I take your point. There is, as you mentioned already, the REFIT agenda. This is not something that is going to be introduced now, but something that has already been introduced. REFIT is a fitness check and not a deregulation exercise. I do not think that the intention of REFIT is to deregulate, but rather it is to see how we can make legislation – even existing legislation – more efficient, and also perhaps more coherent.

It is important to stress that, in the REFIT agenda, the objectives of legislation being considered and the objectives of the legislation being assessed must remain there. The aim is not to have a REFIT agenda which changes the objectives. I think that, as regards the study of this REFIT agenda and of its outcomes and evaluation, a lot is already under way or is in the pipeline. I would be wise to say that we have to wait for the conclusions once this fitness check has been carried out. The options will be open; there may be a number of options, but the options will be decided upon when we have more information on the conclusions of the fitness checks on most of the legislation which are being undertaken and which are already in the pipeline.

1-054

Francesc Gambús (PPE). – Señor Presidente, señor Vella, como ha manifestado en su intervención inicial, desde su ámbito de actuación como comisario será el responsable de potenciar las políticas de crecimiento azul, así como la política marítima integrada, debiendo mantener en todo momento la preservación del ecosistema marino junto al crecimiento económico.

Desde Cataluña, pero no solo desde Cataluña, somos muy conscientes del potencial que tiene para nosotros el Mediterráneo y también siendo una de las regiones de Europa que más fondos atrae para investigación somos conscientes de que la investigación y la innovación nos llevan a crear un valor añadido a nuestra economía y a la formación de talento. En este sentido, señor Vella, ¿qué acciones específicas tienen pensado desarrollar para reforzar la innovación en la economía azul? Y en este contexto, habiendo ya escuchado algunas de las respuestas, ¿qué rol tendrá la investigación en la implementación de la política marítima integrada y cómo enfocará en este campo la cooperación con otros comisarios?

1-055

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Yes, I think that when we talk about the blue economy we cannot simply talk about the blue economy in isolation without also talking about the need to give more protection if need be to our seas and to our oceans. After all, if we are planning for any kind of economy, whether it be a blue economy or a green economy, the only way forward to ensure that economy lasts longer is to do it sustainably. This is where marine and maritime protection needs will come in handy.

You spoke about research and I think research will have to be one of the priorities of our marine protection and our maritime organisation of all the activities that go together. Why am I saying this? Because we have spent a lot of money. We are spending hundreds of millions or billions trying to discover what is in outer space and so on, and if, as I hope, we do get something out of it, it is going to be not for the ‘long’ term but for the ‘long, long’ term. And perhaps we are not giving enough attention to the opportunities and the potential that we have in our seas and in our oceans, provided that anything we consider is considered in a sustainable way. If we are going to touch our seas and our oceans, we need to know more about them. If we go into no-man’s-land without any research data, without any scientific data, that is the worst thing we can do. Research, innovation, scientific advice and so on are imperative before we even start thinking about touching our oceans and our seas.

1-056

Nicola Caputo (S&D). – Io torno al modello di economia circolare, un ambizioso obiettivo che si è posta l'Unione europea per la cui realizzazione sarà necessario modificare i nostri stili di vita e quindi porre in essere anche dei cambiamenti strutturali.

Io vorrei chiederle quali saranno gli strumenti che intenderà impiegare per incoraggiare gli investimenti nel settore privato e per sviluppare quindi opportunità sia nella fase della produzione che nella fase del consumo. Inoltre, considerando il ruolo fondamentale che gli Stati membri dovranno giocare per un uso intelligente dei fondi europei, vorrei chiederle quali sono le misure che vorrà mettere in campo per sensibilizzare gli Stati membri in questa direzione e quali sono le misure che intende proporre per incentivare gli investimenti nelle nuove tecnologie per la gestione integrata dei rifiuti.

1-057

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > I think what we can give to the private sector, to incentivise the private sector to participate more in any economic activity we are promoting, is firstly the tranquillity to know that the rules are not always changing. The private sector wants more stability, not changing rules, not changing regulations, and so on. Secondly, I think that if we are moving into

new areas of the economy, if we are going for blue growth, for example, the private sector would want to have available a pool of already-skilled labour in that sector.

The private sector would also want the availability of and access to finance. Most of the finance that is available is tied mainly to the traditional economy. As soon as someone comes up with an innovative idea, as soon as someone comes up with a new economic venture which did not exist before, the available finance gets more and more limited. In this situation we can give a private sector operator access to finance, adequate labour skills and funds to help him market his products, and the best help that we can give him is to direct him towards a circular economy. We are saying that the future we want is a sustainable economy, so if we direct more of the private sector into the circular economy the more guarantees we can give operators that their enterprises will last for the longer term.

1-058

PRÉSIDENCE DE M. ALAIN CADEC

1-059

PECH committee

1-060

Gabriel Mato (PPE). – Señor Presidente, señor Comisario, ha hablado mucho de medio ambiente y comenzamos ahora a hablar de pesca. Y precisamente por eso me gustaría oír de su boca su compromiso con el sector pesquero en su conjunto, también con la industria pesquera cosa que no ha sucedido hasta ahora y con la sostenibilidad en un amplio sentido de la palabra, más allá de lo estrictamente medioambiental.

Tenemos una nueva PPC. ¿Cómo va a afectar, a su juicio, su puesta en marcha en el establecimiento de los nuevos TAC y cuotas a partir del año 2015 tras la política de no descartes?

Por otra parte, ha contestado usted a una pregunta sobre el atún rojo. Dijo que es una decisión no política, y hay poco margen de maniobra. No ha sido así hasta ahora. Por eso, a mí me gustaría que nos diga si eso significa que si los informes científicos así lo establecen usted va a defender en la CICCÁ un aumento de la cuota de atún rojo.

Por último, estoy convencido de su lucha contra la pesca INDNR. Hay diferentes posiciones en los 28. Le pido simplemente que me diga cuál va a ser la posición de la Comisión para tratar de unir la lucha de esos 28.

1-061

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner designate. > Yes, Mr Mato, with regard to IUU, it is already spelt out in the CFP that we have to go all out against IUU. Why? Because it is not fair that we impose conditions on our fishermen to ensure that our stock does not diminish while we let IUU continue to grow. So I agree with you that we have to tackle this as soon as possible. There are ways in which the Commission proposes to tackle this IUU, especially with regard to the new measures, in accordance with which fisheries which send their exports to the European Union will – if the Commission has evidence that they were caught in an unregulated manner – impose trade measures against that IUU product.

When it comes to bluefin tuna: this is indeed something of great importance to all fishermen, and especially to fishermen in the Mediterranean and Atlantic and so on, because bluefin tuna migrate widely. There will be a meeting in Genoa in November, if I am not mistaken, and the majority of fishermen are indicating that they expect to see some kind of quota increase. The indications – and as

of today we cannot speak of any facts because scientific evidence is not yet available – are that the fishermen are contending that there are indications of improvement. But we cannot simply work on quotas on the basis of indications; we can only work on quotas – and the ICA can only work on quotas – on the basis of hard scientific evidence. It is good to note that, if there is improvement, this would serve to illustrate that the measures which have been taken in the past at least are giving good results.

1-062

Ulrike Rodust (S&D). – Herr Vella! Die Fischer in Europa sind sehr frustriert und unsicher darüber, wie die Anlandeverpflichtung, die am 1. Januar 2015 gilt, ihren Berufsstand beeinflussen wird. Bisher ist nur wenig bekannt, wie die ökonomischen, die technischen und die administrativen Anforderungen der Anlandeverpflichtung umgesetzt werden sollen. Wie werden Sie, Herr Vella, sicherstellen, dass die Anlandeverpflichtung nicht zu einer Anzahl an komplizierten und kompromisslosen Regeln führen wird?

In diesem Kontext möchte ich Sie auch gerne fragen: Was werden Sie tun, um die Umsetzung der Mehrjahrespläne zu beschleunigen, zum Beispiel in der Nord- und Ostsee? Ich sage das deshalb, weil wir, wenn wir das Vertrauen der Fischer am Anfang unterwandern, die Fischereireform nicht werden umsetzen können.

1-063

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Starting with the landing obligation I think this is a key element of the reform and the fact that we are ending discard bans sets the minds of many citizens to rest. However, it is a challenge – I would not say it is a problem – but it is a challenge for most fishermen. I must say that it is ambitious, but I must also say that it is possible.

You mentioned the multiannual plans in the Baltic: with regard to the discards, experience so far shows that there have been positive results and positive feedback in the Baltic area. I can share the concerns of many fishermen because obviously they would not want to have unnecessary burdens added to existing ones. One of the best tools we have to implement the landing obligation is to go through regionalisation. I think regionalisation is one of the feathers in the cap of the reform. I know that you were heavily involved in it, with Mr Mato and Isabelle and so on, and I think it was a very good exercise that had a good number of results. I think that going through regionalisation would give fishermen the opportunity to be actors in how they are going to implement the landing obligation as well, because they would be going through their Regional Advisory Councils.

With regard to the Baltic, as I think I mentioned there has been a good response already and I know that the Baltic multiannual plan will be adopted soon.

1-064

Marek Józef Gróbarczyk (ECR). – Dzi kuj bardzo, Panie Przewodniczcy! Ja również chciałbym zada pytanie, chociaż z innego zakresu – dotyczy ce Morza Bałtyckiego.

Od siedmiu lat mamy długoletni program ochrony dorsza. W rezultacie tego programu obecna rekomendacja Komisji Europejskiej to ograniczenie o blisko 25 procent połowów tego gatunku. W zasadzie wyrzucono w błoto miliardy euro, które nie przyniosły żadnego skutku – mamy załamanie tego gatunku. Rybacy mówią o „chudy dorsz”, który nie ma powodzenia, ponieważ wzrosły kwoty połowu innych gatunków, takich jak łódź czy szprot, które są naturalnym pokarmem dorsza.

Moje pytanie dotyczy, Panie Komisarzu, przyszłych mam nadzieję, kwestii połowów przemysłowych. Czy zajmie się Pan połowami przemysłowymi, które niszczy drobne rybołówstwo i środowisko naturalne i są tak szkodliwe dla Morza Bałtyckiego, bo ono jest inne niż cała reszta? Dzi kuj bardzo.

1-065

Karmenu Vella, *Commissioner-designate*. > Yes, I agree perfectly with your last sentence that the Baltic is totally different from other seas. Coming from the Mediterranean, I can appreciate how different it is because the problems that we have in the Mediterranean probably would not be dreamt of in the Baltic. But I agree that there are a number of factors at play. Fishermen want to catch more fish, and other fish are eating more fish, so it is always a question of balance. But when you ask me what I can do about all this, to be honest there is very little. I, myself as an individual, cannot do anything with regard to quotas and plans and so on as these will always have to be agreed upon and decisions will always have to be taken after getting the best available scientific advice.

If stocks are shrinking this is not only because fishermen are catching more. There have been instances, because of climate change, where fish stocks have migrated to different areas. There have been instances where one particular stock has grown at a faster rate than we thought, and also starts eating other fish stocks. Again this is something we have to look into. I am not saying that things will change: things will not change unless justified by scientific advice.

1-066

António Marinho e Pinto (ALDE). – Senhor Vella, qual a real... estou aqui Senhor Vella, aqui, muito obrigado. Qual a real influência de países terceiros como a Noruega na definição da política de pescas da União Europeia? E qual a posição, a sua posição, sobre este assunto? O que é que vai fazer em relação aos planos multianuais de pesca do bacalhau, da cavala e da anchova que se encontram, segundo o CESE, sequestrados no Conselho há vários anos? Como vai responder às necessidades da indústria de pesca à linha, de mar e de água doce, que envolve cerca de vinte milhões de pessoas e movimenta entre oito a dez milhões de euros? Finalmente, como vai responder às necessidades de consumo de peixe na União Europeia, cujas importações são cada vez maiores? Vai desenvolver a aquacultura? Como? Que apoios dará a este setor? Muito obrigado.

1-067

Karmenu Vella, *Commissioner-designate*. > With regard to Norway I think that the Commission is on an annual basis not reaching agreements with Norway but they are discussing how the quota between Norway and the European Union is shared.

With regard to multiannual plans I think, yes, we need them, because unless we have multiannual plans in place it is going to be difficult to implement the CFP so multiannual plans should be a priority on our agenda and I think we have to step up the multiannual plans as well even because now we have had the experience of the interinstitutional taskforce which I think has done a wonderful job and if need be we can even learn from their experiences when we are preparing the multiannual plans as well. Again, when it comes to multiannual plans we have to do them also through regionalisation because different seas have got different characteristics and they have different conditions and they have different fish stocks and one might have a single stock, the other one might have a multifish stock and so on and so forth. But I agree with you that the multiannual plans should be a priority.

With regard to the regional approach, again there are different ways of how we can do them because there are regions where we can only rely on the RACs, the Regional Advisory Councils. There are other regions, like the Mediterranean region, where we have to go through either international or we have to go through RFMOs, the Regional Fishing Management Organisations, especially in the Mediterranean where we have the problems of a number of EU Member States and a number of non-EU Member States and we have to see how we can convince them to work on the same regulation and legislation.

1-068

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL). – Muito obrigado presidente, Senhor Comissário, este Parlamento aprovou, na anterior legislatura, um relatório sobre a pesca de pequena escala, a pequena pesca costeira e a pesca artesanal no contexto da reforma da Política Comum das Pescas. Nesse relatório, avançou várias propostas respeitantes a este segmento específico da frota. Propôs uma descentralização significativa da gestão das pescas, a recusa de um modelo de gestão único, uma discriminação positiva da pequena pesca, mecanismos para apoio em situação de emergência, medidas de melhoria do rendimento da atividade. Aquilo que lhe queria perguntar é se conhece este relatório, que propostas concretas tem para o segmento da pesca de pequena escala e, no que respeita à informação escrita que nos deu, às respostas escritas, devo dizer que é pouco convincente no que se refere à descentralização, à regionalização, sobretudo no que respeita às medidas técnicas, portanto, pergunto-lhe que passos concretos espera dar neste domínio?

1-069

Kamenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Yes I agree with our friend João Ferreira that small-scale businesses will have to be taken very seriously. I am saying this even from an environmental point of view, as they are the sector of the industry that causes the least damage to the environment. They generate a large number of jobs and most of them are family-run businesses. There are already special arrangements in place, especially financial arrangements, when it comes to financing and assistance under the new MFF. They could get a lot of help to market their products, as well as administrative help to draw up business plans and so on. There is also a number of SSFs which are opting to get some training and some training-related funds. Therefore, what the Commission needs to do now is to make sure that the majority of the funds which are being given under the MFF to the Member States go to SSFs.

I know that they have privileged access to finance – a higher and more intensive availability of finance. We should continue to encourage this sort of fishing in the sense that, from my experience – I come from a small fishing village in the country I know best – I know two small fishing communities, and one of them was given the opportunity to enable family-run fisheries to be able to invest in their own restaurants. Others were given help to branch out into other sectors, such as tourism, and this also helped them.

1-070

Isabella Lövin (Verts/ALE). – Three points: the Greens think that one of Commissioner Damanaki's main achievements was to establish the fight against IUU fishing as a cornerstone of the CFP. We shall be watching carefully to ensure that you continue her tough approach. I would like to hear if you will commit to allocating sufficient personnel and other resources to continue this fight. Secondly, another accomplishment under Mrs Damanaki and the European Parliament was to ensure that the objective of the CFP was to have abundant fish stocks above levels which can produce MSY in order to have healthy seas. So concerning fishing opportunities will you commit to propose fishing quotas below FMSY so that we will have these abundant stocks? Thirdly, on the external dimension, which is now a former part of the CFP, including a requirement to limit EU catches in the fisheries partnership to a surplus as defined by the UN law of the seas, will you commit to respecting this requirement so that the EU does not exploit developing countries and compete with poor fishermen over the same fish stocks?

1-071

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Yes, Isabella, and I have the chance to say a big thank you to Mrs Damanaki for her work as well. We have to continue to fight IUU just as aggressively as before. I think it is only fair to our fishermen that we protect them from this illegal activity.

With regard to the CFP and MSY, I know this is your pet subject and you have made good a contribution. I think the MSY approach to ensure the replenishment of fish stocks is a top priority and is the fulcrum on which the whole CFP is built. The challenge is not only to restore the fish stock but to maintain it, to sustainably maintain it. So we have first to restore it and then to maintain it. I know that you often speak about above-MSY levels and so on, and I think that is something that is envisaged, but in order to go forward and above MSY we first have the challenge to at least reach the MSY level.

With regard to the external dimension and the sustainable fishing partnership agreements, yes, I agree with the conditions you mentioned: first the agreement that EU registered vessels only fish for the surplus that third countries are not fishing. That is always in there in any SFPA.

There are two other requirements that the Commission and the European Union always insist on, namely that these countries with whom we are making the SFPAs stay away from cheap labour, and respect human laws, sustainability and so on.

1-072

Raymond Finch (EFDD). – Mr Vella, I want to ask you about a terrible example of bycatch, namely that of Britain's drift-net fishermen, who have always played by your rules and obeyed your laws. In your speech earlier, you said that those who played by the rules must not be punished. However, they have suffered the most drastic possible punishment for the actions of others. Because of what happens in the Mediterranean and the failure of other nations in the EU to enforce your own laws, the EU now plans to ban all drift-nets everywhere. Mr Vella, will you help me to stop this terrible injustice to law-abiding British fishermen who will lose their livelihoods for what is done in another sea, hundreds of miles away – in ecological terms a world away – but which is unfairly and unjustly treated by the EU as if it were all the same?

1-073

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > The total ban on drift-nets is at the moment one of the hottest issues and is something that most of the people I have spoken to have been concerned about. Most MEPs say that a total ban is not the best solution. The same results, they insist, could be achieved through other measures.

I know that the Commission proposal was the start of a legislative procedure, so possibly there will now have to be a transparent political debate in Parliament, between Parliament and the Commission. I think it is only fair that the Commission will take an overall stakeholder's view of this. Again, as I said, this is a very hot issue and while I am confident, I will commit myself to continue to listen carefully to all the concerns that you express. I think perhaps even in the discussions between the European Parliament and the Council, and in their assessments, the Commission will be able to play a good coordinating and facilitating role as well.

If the European Parliament considers that in order to assess this proposal as the start of a legislative proposal process we should have more information or should even discuss further then I will certainly try and look into this very, very carefully. I will be open to explore all options as long as they are reasonable options in the interest of the Union and the interest of the citizens and in the interest of the sustainability of the fish stocks as well.

1-074

Sylvie Goddyn (NI). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, le 30 juin dernier, votre prédécesseur, Maria Damanaki, lors d'une Commission Océan mondial, s'est prononcée en faveur de la suppression des exonérations fiscales sur le gasoil au profit des pêcheurs et a appelé les

États membres à supprimer toute aide financière aux flottilles. Le monde de la pêche est extrêmement préoccupé par ces déclarations car, sans ces exonérations, la quasi-totalité des entreprises de pêche mettraient la clé sous la porte.

Ma question est la suivante: êtes-vous sur la même ligne que Mme Damanaki? Êtes-vous en faveur de la suppression des détaxes sur le carburant accordées aux pêcheurs et sur la fin de toute aide financière par les États membres aux flottilles?

1-075

Kamenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > I honestly think – but I am not certain – that tax exemptions, state aid and so on probably have to be considered at Member State level. I do not have any background information on this. I will try and get some more information from my colleagues, but I will get back to you on this. If need be – and if I am confirmed – I can ask my personnel to get in touch with you and maybe we can. However, I do not think that tax exemptions and so on are something that the Commission can decide on. Even if it is up to the Member States to decide, I am not sure we can have different playing fields for different fishermen within the same European Union. If you have any information, you have to help me in this regard. I will get some more useful information from my services as well.

1-076

Jarosław Leszek Wałsa (PPE). – It is time for the implementation of the CFP reform. How will you influence the process of preparing the multi-species plan for the Baltic Sea to allow for a quick reaction – and this is the key point – a quick reaction to the changing state of the fishing stocks covered? It is especially important given the current difficult situation of the Baltic cod stocks caused mostly by the flawed architecture of the currently applicable plan.

My second question is: how do you intend to ensure good economic conditions for fishing fleets, and especially the coastal fleets, given the necessity to implement certain environmental rules such as Natura 2000 or the Maritime Strategy Framework Directive, which have the potential to significantly reduce the ability to operate fisheries?

1-077

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > With regard to the Baltic and so on, I think that the only way to start implementing the CFP in the same terms as it was agreed is through, as we have mentioned before, the multiannual plans. The multiannual plans started with single-species fisheries, and they will now start moving into multi-stock fisheries too. This is where I think the scientific advice and the work of the advisory councils will have to come in.

With regard to the economic conditions of the fishing fleets and the restrictions with regard to Natura 2000 and so on, I think it is only fair to say that, if we are taking environmental precautions – talking about restricted areas for fishing and Natura 2000 – then it is not only in the interests of the environment, but indirectly it should also be in the interests of the fishermen. In the same way that, whenever we embark on specific economic measures we have to keep in mind environmental issues as well, we have to do it the other way round as well. Whenever we embark on environmental measures, we also have to keep in mind – as you said – the economic repercussions. In this case, we have to keep in mind the economic impact such decisions will be having on fishermen, especially small-scale coastal fishermen. If they are, as João Ferreira has said, the SSFs, then we also have to take a lot of care of them when we are taking environmental decisions.

1-078

Isabelle Thomas (S&D). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur Vella, pendant des décennies, les Européens ont puisé inconsidérément dans la ressource halieutique, mettant en danger la survivance d'espèces sauvages. Depuis quelques années, l'Union a enclenché un coup de barre salvateur, avec le rendement maximum durable pour point d'orgue. Mais, déjà, la moitié de la flottille européenne est décimée et l'Union importe aujourd'hui 65 % des produits de la mer qu'elle consomme.

Pas facile de trouver l'équilibre et de placer les grands marqueurs du développement durable que sont le climat, les ressources naturelles et les emplois, surtout quand la concurrence est à nos portes. Comment procéder avec nos voisins moins exigeants en matière de développement durable? C'est le cas, notamment, en Méditerranée, mais aussi en mer Celtique avec nos voisins très concurrents et très concurrentiels d'Islande et de Norvège et, évidemment, pour nos régions ultrapériphériques, qui connaissent à la fois les écosystèmes les plus vulnérables et les pêcheries les plus vivrières. C'est pourquoi les questions de voisinage pour les régions ultrapériphériques peuvent parfois être vitales.

Que nous proposez-vous?

1-079

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > I share your concern here, especially when you mentioned our relationship with third countries and how we are going to convince them to fish under the same regulations as our EU-registered vessels. I think the Mediterranean is the area where we have most of these problems. The Mediterranean has not only the problem of having a mixed stock: it is very difficult to work in the Mediterranean because of the other third countries. We try to go through the GFCM, but it takes time. I think the best way to deal with these third countries, as you mentioned, would be first of all to dialogue with them – there is no other way unless we dialogue with them. The other way of doing it is this: if we have agreements with them, if we help them with finance, plans and so on, then we make it imperative that they have to come on board on our restrictions as well.

It is not going to be easy, because some of these countries with whom we have to discuss and dialogue are, unfortunately, going through some problems as well, so for most of them it is not the right time to sit down and discuss these issues. But these are certainly issues that we will have to consider. It is very frustrating when fishermen in the Mediterranean tell you they have fish passing by but they cannot touch those fish because they have to abide by EU rules and regulations, but then as soon as the fish swim a further 50 metres, someone else gets them.

1-081

Liadh Ní Riada (GUE/NGL). – The issue of the fisheries has always been a contentious one and now times are particularly tough with the shortages in the areas needed for scientific data collection, which as you know affects the ability to set accurate quotas. This has a knock-on effect and has a serious impact on an already tough livelihood for our fishermen. So can you tell me how you are going to ensure that this is resolved and that it is not going to be a continuing situation year in and year out?

1-082

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Yes, it is a concern, and I agree totally with you that that data collection has certainly got to improve. The only way that data collection can improve is through Member States complying with it and improving their feedback. There is scientific progress which totally depends on the data which are being collected: they have to be the right data, and they have to be collected on time. It is going to make it very difficult for the scientists, as you said, to give us their advice. The idea about data is to simplify and build on what exists already, but perhaps also to simplify. There are lots of data which are being collected but not being used, so if data are being

collected and not being used, we should simplify that and maybe introduce more important and more relevant data.

When we talk about data, it is also important that we disseminate this data. These data are not something that should be kept in a drawer; rather, they should be disseminated to the Member States which are really interested in them. Another way in which we can improve on data collection is through the funds of the EMFF, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, which has already allocated certain amount for the improvement of data collection. As I said, a lot could be done through regionalisation as well. I think that many regions know their area much better than other regions, so it is only fair and logical to say that there should be regionalised data collection points which could be more professional in the areas with which they are dealing.

1-083

Raymond Finch (EFDD). – Mr Vella, do you share my view that the EU is responsible for a new form of colonialism? I refer of course to fishing agreements with third-world countries which hand money to élites whilst depriving local fishermen of their chance to earn a living. Will you stop the EU buying off the rich of poor countries so that they can plunder the waters of those countries, thus ensuring that ordinary folk have no way of making money and no means of subsistence and therefore being forced either to starve or indulge in illegal activities? Will you stop a system that even forces European taxpayers to subsidise such wicked colonial exploitation?

1-084

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > I beg to differ a little bit on this because I do not think that the European Union going into agreements to help EU fishermen is a sort of colonialism. It would have been colonialism if the European Union had just gone in, had not paid anything, and had just gone to where all the fish are. But the European Union is paying and it is paying high access fees.

This is an act of support towards these third countries as well. I think FPAs are showing a good positive result in the sense that I think there was even an increase: in 2010-12 if I am not mistaken, there were nine agreements, and last year or this year we had about 13. All the SFPAs are very transparent and all are regulated. They are respectful of the stocks that they are fishing. As Isabella said, if we are going to fish through these SFPAs we can only fish on the extra bit, and I think that they are beneficial not only to the EU fleet but also to the third countries with whom we have these agreements. The important thing is that there is no competition with the locals and, as I said earlier on, there are some clauses which the Commission always insists on when dealing with these SFPAs, those conditions being obviously that there should be no lowering of labour standards and that human rights in these third countries are observed.

1-085

Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE). – Señor Presidente, señor Comisario, yo también creo que los acuerdos con terceros países son esenciales. Por ejemplo, el Acuerdo de negociación con Mauritania. Es necesaria la inclusión del pulpo, tan importante para la flota española y, en particular, la de Galicia. Se dice que las existencias de pulpo son escasas, y que por ello deben quedar reservadas para la flota mauritana. Pero parece que el aumento de las existencias de esta especie ha provocado recientemente una bajada de los precios y que por ello Mauritania ha decretado la paralización de las capturas desde agosto. ¿Sabe usted esto? ¿Sabe usted que una empresa china estaba pescando pulpo en esas aguas? Quisiera escuchar hoy su firme compromiso, precisamente para conseguir la inclusión del pulpo en el nuevo acuerdo. Es un tema de gran impacto en la economía y también en el empleo, que usted mencionaba al principio de su intervención.

Con respecto al impacto, en los últimos años muchas propuestas legislativas de la Comisión se han basado esencialmente en razones medioambientales, ignorando el impacto económico y social. Un ejemplo muy reciente es el carácter radical de la propuesta relativa a la prohibición de la pesca con redes de deriva. Sus palabras hoy han sido esperanzadoras. Señor Comisario, quiero saber si es usted plenamente consciente de que las propuestas deben venir acompañadas de estudios de impacto económico y social y basarse en datos científicos rigurosos.

1-086

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > As I said before, I agree with you that these SFPAs are very important, and they are perhaps more important for some Member States than for others. But at the end of the day we are all 'in the same water', as we say. So the SFPAs are of economic importance.

You mentioned Mauritania, which I know is very important for the fishing sector in your region. What I know about Mauritania is that negotiations are still on-going. Not only with Mauritania; the Commission takes the approach that, on each and every SFPA, the cost efficiency and sustainability element is always there, and the value for money that these third countries would be asking from the Commission always has a big role to play. So let us hope that with Mauritania an agreement can be reached – provided obviously that cost efficiency and sustainability are there.

With regard to the cephalopods, again I refer to the scientific data. At the moment there is some scientific data indicating that cephalopods are over-exploited. That is the information I have, so we have to abide by this scientific advice. Even if we want to change anything, we have to wait until scientific advice changes. I think that the Commission should continue to work with Mauritania and continue working at a scientific level as well.

1-087

Renata Briano (S&D). – La mia è una domanda che è già stata posta in ottica diversa anche da altri colleghi. Io credo che occuparsi di ambiente e di pesca possa essere anche una grande opportunità perché mette assieme un'attività produttiva e gli aspetti della sostenibilità.

In sede di commissione per la pesca ci stiamo già occupando di un dossier piuttosto delicato, di cui anche i colleghi hanno già parlato, che riguarda l'utilizzo di alcuni attrezzi e in particolare delle reti derivanti. La Commissione precedente aveva inviato una proposta che, per un approccio precauzionale, vietava l'utilizzo di queste reti. Visto che noi invece vorremmo tenere insieme gli aspetti della sostenibilità, e farlo fra l'altro con dati ambientali che ci confortino in questo senso ma anche tenendo conto degli aspetti socio-occupazionali, avremmo bisogno di capire da lei qual è il suo approccio e soprattutto la sua disponibilità a lavorare insieme a noi nel caso ci fossero dati ulteriori, che arrivano anche dagli Stati membri, per affrontare insieme questo dossier.

1-088

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > I think this point was already raised by someone earlier, and I can say once again that I agree. I mentioned earlier on that there is widespread concern about this issue. It was raised by a number of Members whom I met in Strasbourg and Brussels. Their idea is that a total ban is perhaps not the best solution and that there might be some other measures through which we could get the same results.

As I said earlier on, the Commission proposal was only the start of a legislative proposal which now requires a transparent debate in Parliament and also in the Council. Obviously, the Commission will take a stakeholder's view on all of this. As I said earlier, I will continue to listen carefully, because at

the moment this is the only thing that the Commission can do. Perhaps it could even play an important role in facilitating the discussions, both in the Council and in the European Parliament too.

You also mentioned gears. Gears have different characteristics and different effects on protected species, and there are different uses for different conditions and so on. But I think that, even as regards gears, we cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach. This is another instance in which regionalisation can also play an important part. I think that any of the proposals should be supported by solid assessments – both environmental assessments and economic assessments.

1-089

Annie Schreijer-Pierik (PPE). – Ik wil een paar korte vragen stellen. Hoe staat de kandidaat-commissaris tegenover een mogelijke uitzondering, zeker voor de Nederlandse vissers, op de aanlandplicht, bijvoorbeeld tot een bepaalde scheepslengte, in het licht van het noodzakelijke gelijke speelveld in de EU? Hoe gaat u dat oplossen?

En de tweede vraag: hoe staat u tegenover de toelating van de nieuwe vangstmethoden, zoals de gerichte pulsvisserij?

Maar mijn allerbelangrijkste vraag deze dag - en daar heb ik ook echt de verkiezingen mee gewonnen - luidt: hoe gaat u het sociaaleconomische effect van de nationale implementatie van Natura 2000 in aanmerking nemen? Ik vind dat u veel te veel aan de linkerkant zit, ik sta helemaal achter Juncker. Het gaat om duurzaamheid, maar in Nederland bijvoorbeeld hebben wij te maken met gigantische nationale sectoren waar de rechter het beleid bepaalt. Het is niet alleen de visserij. Duizenden melkveehouderijbedrijven krijgen geen vergunningen, toeristische recreatieve bedrijven krijgen geen vergunningen. Ik vraag u dan ook concreet de knelpunten zo snel mogelijk goed te inventariseren ...
(*De voorzitter onttrekt de spreker het woord*)

1-090

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Even if you are not allowed to ask those questions here, we can always come back to meet and discuss anything. I think that the most important point you mentioned, which was perhaps not mentioned earlier on, was the question of pulse fishing. Again, this is a debateable issue. At the moment, I know that it is being used a lot in one particular country, and it is still being used as a pilot project which is allowed under the CFP.

There are various points of view on pulse fishing. First of all, there is the point of view that it is an innovative technique which avoids unwanted catches and that it also limits the negative environmental impact on the ecosystem, because it is no longer necessary to trawl the very bottom of the sea. There are also differing views, according to which electric pulses could have negative effects on the vertebra of the fish and so on. There is always this debate on the pros and cons. On this particular issue, though, I received some information stating that even some environmentalist NGOs – including one of the largest environmentalist NGOs – had positive comments about it. The data on harm done to fish vertebrae have not yet been confirmed by scientists. On the contrary, the scientific advice seems to imply that there is no problem provided that the pulses are emitted under strict conditions.

1-091

Clara Eugenia Aguilera García (S&D). – Señor Presidente, señor Vella, aunque ya ha hablado sobre este tema, quisiera preguntarle por la pesca costera artesanal. Es muy importante para algunas localidades de mi país, España, y considero que es fundamental que en la política pesquera haya una diferenciación —en la aplicación de la política— a favor de la pesca costera artesanal, porque es una pesca que genera empleo en un gran número de localidades y, además, tiene un escaso impacto medioambiental.

Pero además quiero decirle, con relación a los acuerdos con terceros países, que estoy a favor de esos acuerdos, que deben ser transparentes y son necesarios para la flota española. Concretamente, con respecto a Marruecos, ¿sabe usted que esta noche, después de dos años y medio y desde el 15 de septiembre que está la flota en Marruecos, 17 barcos no han podido faenar porque se lo impedían los pescadores marroquíes? Y también quiero decirle que, en el caso de Mauritania, es importante cerrar ya ese acuerdo e incluir a los cefalópodos.

1-092

Karmenu Vella, *Commissioner-designate*. > With regard to coastal communities and small-scale fishing, I think before coming to that and repeating myself, maybe a few comments about the SFPAs with Morocco. I think we just spoke about Mauritania. With regard to Morocco, I agree that this is another important SFPA. I promise that I will continue in my efforts to conclude this kind of SFPA with Morocco and any other third country.

The Morocco agreement gives fishing opportunities to some 11 Member States, if I am not mistaken, and the most important thing is that there are a number of artisanal and small-scale fisheries which also depend a lot on this agreement. Vessels from two Member States in particular are getting a lot of fishing opportunities from this agreement. I think that the new protocol with Morocco has just been finalised, and fishing opportunities have increased by some 30% if I am not mistaken. At least that was the information that I was given, but if you tell me it is not the right figure I promise I will check again.

But again, with regard to this SFPA I think it is not only important that we reach an agreement but that once the agreement is reached we do not forget all about it until it comes up for renewal. I think here the implementation and monitoring aspects have to be at the forefront as well. So rather than simply making an agreement and forgetting about it, I think that we should continue to monitor that all the environmental and economic aspects are being observed.

1-093

Gabriel Mato (PPE). – Señor Presidente, señor Comisario, es mi última intervención y, por tanto, no le voy a hacer una pregunta. No espero una respuesta. Le voy a hacer un ruego, y sí espero compromisos. No le vamos a pedir mucho: respeto al Parlamento Europeo y a sus competencias. Juntos trabajaremos mucho mejor y tendremos mucho mejores resultados.

Decisión en la puesta en marcha de la nueva política pesquera común que entre todos hemos elaborado. Seamos ambiciosos en su ejecución. Regionalización, descartes, rendimiento máximo sostenible, dimensión exterior, planes plurianuales, pesca INDNR, fondo de la pesca artesanal, acuicultura, evaluación de impacto, respeto a los informes científicos rigurosos, son mucho más que palabras. Son una responsabilidad y requieren un compromiso serio, y también diálogo. Diálogo con todos y, muy en concreto, también con los consejos consultivos. Y, sobre todo, transparencia. Creo que como le decía al principio no le pedimos mucho. ¡Le deseo mucha suerte!

1-094

Karmenu Vella, *Commissioner-designate*. > I know how active you are in this area and rest assured that I will count on the experience that people like you have in this industry. When we talk about the implementation of the CFP I agree 100% with you. I think that the reform of the CFP was intended to benefit and cater for all interests, be they economic or environmental. I also appreciate the input that came from you, the Members of the European Parliament, because the European Parliament played a very decisive role with the Council in this reform. The only way forward now is to implement it in the most effective way: we have to turn this reform into reality. As you said, Mr Mato, it is all about

good scientific data. As you said, these objectives have to have an ecosystem- and resource-efficiency-based approach. But most important of all is that we start implementing them.

Marine research can help a lot in this regard as well. When we met, we discussed a number of things, especially marine research and the fact that we cannot build a future economy based on assumptions, on what we read, on what I think, on what hittings and so forth. We have to build a sustainable future economy on facts. Facts which probably only good research and good data can help us to build. I think we need first to go for the research, then we have to identify, when we are talking about the oceans, we go for the research, we identify their potential, then we have to turn that potential into economic reality and we do that always in line with our environmental aspirations as well. Otherwise we will not be thinking long term enough.

1-102

Le Président. – Je vous repasse la parole, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, puisque vous avez désormais cinq minutes pour conclure votre propos. Donc là, vous êtes totalement libre. Nous vous écoutons.

1-103

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner-designate. > Finally we are concluding three hours of long, intensive discussions. We have touched, during this afternoon, on many different aspects of both environmental policy and the policy for marine affairs and fisheries. The great number of questions is also an indication of the importance and the size of this portfolio. I want to thank you all for the very frank and open discussion that we had this afternoon. I would also like to express the hope that I have convinced you of my sincerity to carry out the task given to me in the best possible way. I also hope that I have given proof of my willingness to work in close cooperation with you, the Members of the European Parliament, in carrying out my duties. At the end of this meeting I would just like to remind you of the priorities I want to address when you decide to confirm me – or otherwise – as a Member of the European Commission.

With regard to environmental policy, this will be to assure that our growth will also be environmentally sustainable and that sustainability will be part of the European Commission's overall actions; to assure that our natural capital and biodiversity will be protected in the best possible way for the future; and to ensure that our policies will protect our citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health.

With regard to the policy for maritime affairs and fisheries, this will be the implementation of the reform of the common fisheries policy; to use this common fisheries policy to get an effective leverage for better international governance; and to develop the full potential of our maritime policies to promote blue growth.

Let me finish by assuring you that I want to achieve real progress in all of these six priority areas. I cannot do this alone. I need your help and cooperation. If confirmed together, we will be able to make the difference in this field. I thank you all and I really appreciated the frank discussion we have had during our meetings.

One last thing that I want, this is not in the script. A few years ago, way back, I had two heroes in my life: I had my parents. For me they were my superheroes, and I always looked at them as if they were the ones who were giving me the access to the planet. Both my parents passed away, but now I have to more superheroes, and I want to show them to you: that is Adam and Jack. And for me, believe me when I say that what I inherited from my parents, I have every obligation to pass on to them in a better

form. From experience I have learned (and it is not just because I have read it) that we do not inherit the planet from our parents but we borrow it from our children. Thank you very much, and please help me work towards that objective.

(Applause)

1-104

PRESIDENZA DELL'ON. GIOVANNI LA VIA

1-104-500

Giovanni La Via, *presidente della commissione ENVI*. > Signor Commissario, credo che a nome di tutti i colleghi siamo anche noi a ringraziarla per essersi sottoposto a questo ping-pong di domande, così come previsto dal regolamento di procedura. Mi scuso con lei e con i colleghi se in alcuni passaggi sul rispetto dei tempi siamo stati un po' più rigidi, ma purtroppo il regolamento prevede che entro tre ore bisogna chiudere l'hearing e, se avessimo lasciato a tutti la possibilità di esprimersi e, ovviamente, tempi liberi, saremmo andati probabilmente ben oltre quello che il regolamento prevede.

Ora abbiamo previsto nel calendario che ci sia un arco temporale libero perché i colleghi possano tra loro scambiarsi le opinioni e formarsi un libero convincimento da trasferire ai coordinatori. Alle sette ci vedremo con i coordinatori delle due commissioni separatamente e alle otto e mezza in una riunione congiunta nella quale valuteremo questa sua prestazione – mi scusi se la chiamo così, perché forse non è giusto. Credo che lei sia stato sottoposto a una pressione forte e quindi valuteremo le sue risposte per accertare la rispondenza delle sue affermazioni a quanto richiedono i diversi gruppi e la competenza mostrata sui temi, perché possa essere un componente del collegio dei Commissari e perché possa avere affidato il portafoglio che il Presidente della Commissione Juncker le ha proposto.

Qualora non ci fosse l'accordo tra i coordinatori, saremo costretti a convocare stasera una riunione della commissione per domani alle 12.30 perché ci sia un voto distinto su questi due aspetti per la sua persona. La ringrazio ancora e passo la parola per le conclusioni al collega Cadec.

1-105

Alain Cadec, *président de la commission PECH*. – Je n'ai pas grand-chose à ajouter à ce qu'a si bien dit mon collègue Giovanni.

Je voulais d'abord vous remercier tous pour les questions et aussi pour votre discipline, je sais que ce n'est pas toujours facile. Je sais que M. Eickhout aurait bien voulu poser encore davantage de questions. Je sais que ce genre d'exercice est frustrant, ce n'est pas simple. Quoi qu'il en soit, félicitations d'avoir tenu ces trois heures, c'est un véritable marathon. En tous les cas, il faut la condition physique.

Merci à tous. Comme le disait Giovanni à l'instant, nous allons maintenant nous retrouver pour analyser le contenu de cette audition, pour en tirer les conclusions, puis nous verrons si nous sommes obligés de nous retrouver demain. J'espère que tout sera réglé ce soir. En tous les cas, tu l'as bien dit, il y a désormais une réunion à huis clos des coordinateurs de chacune des commissions de 19 heures à 20 h 30, puis une réunion conjointe des coordinateurs de la commission de l'environnement et de la commission de la pêche entre 20 h 30 et 21 h 30 pour prendre la décision concernant M. Vella.

Encore une fois, je le redis – et c'est vrai –, c'est parfois frustrant pour les uns ou pour les autres de ne pas pouvoir poser toutes les questions qu'on souhaite poser, mais on est obligé de respecter le temps qui nous est imparti. Nous y sommes parvenus et c'est grâce à vous.

Maintenant je vous dis bonsoir, Monsieur Vella, et nous, chers collègues, nous n'avons pas fini notre journée, parce qu'il va falloir trancher.

1-106

(La riunione è tolta alle 17.35)