

MITTWOCH, 13. JANUAR 2010

BRÜSSEL

**AUSSCHUSS FÜR UMWELTFRAGEN,
VOLKSGESUNDHEIT UND
LEBENSMITTELSICHERHEIT**

**ANHÖRUNG VON JANEZ POTOČNIK
DESIGNIERTES KOMMISSIONSMITGLIED
UMWELT**

3-002

VORSITZ: JO LEINEN

(Die Sitzung wird um 13.00 Uhr eröffnet.)

3-003

Der Präsident. – Liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Herzlich willkommen zur Anhörung des designierten Kommissars für den Bereich Umweltschutz in der Europäischen Union! Ich begrüße hierzu ganz herzlich Herrn Janez Potočnik hier im Umweltausschuss!

In den nächsten drei Stunden will der Ausschuss einen Eindruck gewinnen, ob der Kandidat generell die Kompetenz für ein so wichtiges Amt hat, eine europäische Überzeugung mitbringt und persönlich unabhängig von irgendwelchen Interessen sein Amt ausüben kann. Das Parlament beurteilt auch die spezifischen Kenntnisse für das vorgesehene Portfolio und die Fähigkeit der Kommunikation, was in der Politik generell und in der Europapolitik speziell von gewisser Bedeutung ist. So steht es in den Richtlinien für die Erteilung der Zustimmung des Europäischen Parlaments zu der neuen Kommission.

Herr Potočnik hat auf die von uns gestellten Fragen schriftlich geantwortet. Die Mitglieder haben das Fragen- und Antworten-Paket in allen Sprachen erhalten. Ich erkläre jetzt auch für diese Anhörung die Prozedur der nächsten drei Stunden. Der designierte Kommissar ist eingeladen, ein Eröffnungsstatement zu machen, das nicht länger als zehn Minuten dauern soll. Wir haben dann 160 Minuten für Fragen und Antworten. Die Fragen und Antworten folgen einem Pingpong-Prinzip: eine Minute Frage zur Eröffnung, zwei Minuten Antwort des designierten Kommissars, 45 Sekunden die Möglichkeit einer Zusatzfrage und dann noch einmal eine Minute Schlussantwort. Neben diesem Fünfminutentakt haben wir auch Fragen nach einem Dreiminutentakt. Die Prozedur hier ist folgendermaßen: 50 Sekunden für die Frage, zwei Minuten für die Antwort, keine zusätzlichen Fragen oder Antworten. Diese Dreiminutenfragen sind im Programm klar angezeigt, und die Betroffenen wissen Bescheid.

Der designierte Kommissar hat am Schluss noch einmal fünf Minuten für ein Schlussstatement, ein

Schlussplädoyer. Ist ein Fragesteller nicht da, entfällt die Frage ersatzlos. Ich bitte also, die nächsten drei Stunden anwesend zu sein.

Noch ein Hinweis: Die zweite Frage, die gestellt wird, muss sich auf die Antwort des designierten Kommissars beziehen und darf nicht ein anderes Thema aufwerfen. Der Vorsitzende reserviert sich das Recht, eine Frage zu verwerfen, wenn sie nicht dieser Regel folgt. Auch wichtig für die nächsten drei Stunden: Wir haben ein enges Zeitkorsett. Ich bitte alle Abgeordneten wie auch den designierten Kommissar, die Zeitvorgaben ziemlich exakt einzuhalten. Anderenfalls muss ich hier auf den Knopf drücken und das Mikrofon abstellen. Das geht leider nicht anders. Ich bitte dafür um Entschuldigung.

Herr Potočnik, Sie sind kein Neuling auf der europäischen Bühne. Ihre bisherige Tätigkeit als Kommissar für Forschung hatte etliche Anknüpfungspunkte zur europäischen Umweltpolitik, etwa bei der Nanotechnologie oder bei der Entwicklung neuer Kraftstoffe. Für den Umweltkommissar ergeben sich dann trotzdem neue Herausforderungen und neue Fragestellungen. Gerade jetzt, Anfang 2010, wo Herr Barroso zwei Portfolios ausgewiesen hat, ein Portfolio für den Klimaschutz und ein Portfolio für die Energiepolitik, ist es sehr wichtig, dass die europäische Umweltpolitik ein eigenes Profil, eine Eigenständigkeit besitzt, eine Perspektive, eine Vision aufzuzeigen hat und sich in der Praxis der nächsten fünf Jahre definieren und auch behaupten kann. Alles in allem sind wir sehr gespannt auf Ihre Vorstellungen für die Umweltpolitik in dieser Wahlperiode.

3-004

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – This is a rare opportunity. Inside the corridors of the Commission I can rarely speak Slovenian, so if you would allow me I will use these ten minutes to speak my own language. Later on I will answer you in English.

3-005

Spoštovani predsednik odbora, gospod Leinen, spoštovani člani Evropskega parlamenta, dame in gospodje.

Prav je, da se moram kot kandidat za odgovoren javni položaj predstaviti vam, neposredno izvoljenim

predstavnikom državljanov Evrope. Prav je tudi, da pojasnim svojo vizijo in odgovorim na vaša vprašanja. Zavedam se, da v primeru potrditve moje kandidature ne bom dobil le vašega zaupanja, temveč tudi verodostojnost pred javnostjo.

Nekateri izmed vas me že poznate, kakor tudi sam poznam nekatere med vami. Prihajam iz Slovenije. Zadnjih pet let sem bil komisar za znanost in raziskave. Morda veste tudi, da sem po izobrazbi ekonomist in da sem vodil pogajalsko ekipo za vstop Slovenije v Evropsko unijo. Sem zavzet igralec odbojke in imam dva sinova.

Naj začnem s citatom: „Evropa bo zelena celina ali pa je ne bo. Zemlja bo moder planet ali pa je ne bo.“

To je citat iz govora, ki sem ga imel v letu 2008. Ponazarja moj pogled na načelo, ki sem mu kot komisar za znanost in raziskave sledil in ki bo še naprej v središču mojega dela v prihodnosti – seveda v kolikor me boste potrdili. To je načelo trajnosti – v najširšem pomenu besede, a še posebej in najpomembneje okoljske trajnosti. Trajnostno naravnani razvoj je tema, ki je tudi v središču pozornosti evropskih državljanov.

Evropa ni pojem iz učbenika ali iz pogodbe. Je vsakodnevno življenje milijonov Evropejcev v mestih, pokrajinah, državah. Je prostor, kjer delujejo skupna evropska pravila, in je prostor, kjer je prednost skupnega sobivanja resničnost.

Pred nekaj desetletji je bila Evropa uničena in potrebna obnove, Evropejci obupani in željni sprave. Evropska unija je prinesla mir, stabilnost, obljubo blaginje in boljšega življenja. *Raison d'être* za evropsko sodelovanje je bil takrat več kot očiten.

Danes je to kar nekako samoumevno. Preveč. Motivi naših predhodnikov pred petdesetimi leti sicer ostajajo in bodo ključni za vedno, a današnjim mladim generacijam so pogosto tuji. V Evropi živimo dobro in marsikdo se sprašuje, zakaj je treba še naprej krepiti medsebojno sodelovanje.

Pa ga moramo. Ni se spremenila le Evropa, tudi ostali del sveta se je spremenil. Spremenil se je močno in za vedno, če si to želimo ali ne. Vse bolj smo med seboj povezani, soodvisni. Delimo si ugodnosti globaliziranega sveta, a tudi njegove probleme – podnebne spremembe, negotovo energijsko oskrbo, pandemije, zmanjšanje biotske raznovrstnosti, pomakanje hrane in čiste vode, strukturna gospodarska neravnovesja, varnostne grožnje in še bi lahko našteval. To so izzivi, ki ne poznajo meja, so globalni.

Novi izzivi povečujejo tako skupno odgovornost, kakor tudi odgovornost nas posameznikov. Odzivi Evrope in Evropejcev na te izzive bodo učinkoviti samo, če se bomo nanje odzvali skupaj. 21. stoletje je stoletje povečane krhkosti. Naša naloga je, da spremenimo to stoletje v stoletje trajnosti in učinkovitega globalnega upravljanja. Za uresničitev tega cilja svet potrebuje

močno in odgovorno Evropo. Evropo, ki bo sposobna prevzeti politično odgovornost in nastopati z enotnim glasom. To je Evropa, za katero se zavzemam, to je Evropa, v katero verjamem, in to je Evropa, ki jo bodo razumele in „posvojile“ tudi mlade generacije.

Smo na pragu velike preobrazbe od povojnega gospodarstva, ki je temeljilo na virih, v gospodarstvo, ki bo temeljilo na znanju. Sporočilo predsednika Barrosa je bilo jasno. Zdaj, ko se oziramo proti Evropski uniji v letu 2020, potrebujemo bolj skladen in usklajen pristop, tako na področju investicij v nove vire rasti kot tudi v političnem smislu. Potrebujemo poseben, poglobljen odnos med Evropskim parlamentom in Evropsko komisijo, ki bo nadgradil obstoječe dobro sodelovanje. To usmeritev in te cilje v celoti podpiram in verjamem, da bo z Lizbonsko pogodbo naše partnerstvo pomembnejše kot kadar koli.

Govoril sem o krhkosti našega sveta. Prav to je razlog, da mora biti skrb za okolje ključni del naših načrtov za prihodnost. Kaj bi lahko bilo pomembneje od skrbi za zrak, ki ga dihamo, tal, po katerih hodimo, vode, ki jo pijemo?

Nekoč so ljudje govorili o trajnostnem razvoju in okolju kot o moralnem vprašanju, ki je bilo glavna skrb peščice obrobnih, specializiranih skupin. Ostali smo bolj ali manj menili, da imajo sicer prav, a da ni tako pomembno. Ti časi so mimo. Skrb za okolje se razprostira preko celotnega političnega spektra. Soočeni smo s prepričljivimi, osupljivimi znanstvenimi dokazi, ki pričajo o okoljski škodi, ki je ni povzročil nihče drug kot mi sami. Prihodnje generacije Evropejcev zahtevajo od nas jasne, odločne ukrepe, ki bodo ohranili planet, ga povrnili v stanje, ki smo ga ljudje – svojevrstni vsiljivci v tem našem skupnem domu – tako močno ranili in okrnili. Sploh pa ne gre več le za vprašanje bodočih generacij, gre za naš obstoj.

Ohranjanje okolja predstavlja veliko priložnost tudi v gospodarskem, družbenem in poslovnem smislu. Čarobna rešitev, ki bi nas popeljala iz krize morda res ne obstaja, obstaja pa zelena. Ne zanikam, da je doseganje višjih ravni varovanja okolja lahko povezano z višjimi stroški, dodatno administracijo, upravljanjem. A je nujno in dolgoročno tudi smotrnejše. Hkrati izboljšuje kakovost našega življenja, pospešuje rast naših gospodarstev in vodi v ustvarjanje novih delovnih mest. Da, potrebujemo rast in nova delovna mesta, a potrebujemo tako rast in taka delovna mesta, ki bodo skladna z načelom trajnostnega razvoja – gospodarstvo, ki bo temeljilo na znanju in učinkovitem ravnanju z viri.

Pri svojem bodočem delu se bom osredotočil na učinek in rezultate. Kaj mislim s tem? Japonski pregovor pravi: „Vizija brez dejanj je sanjarjenje, dejanja brez vizije pa nočna mora.“ Potrebujemo vizijo in politike, ki temeljijo na dobrih informacijah, analizah, znanju, trdnih dokazih. Izbrati moramo najboljše instrumente za izvajanje teh politik, ki spet morajo temeljiti na trdnih dokazih.

Okolje je kompleksno kot svet sam. Zaradi tega številna okoljska vprašanja sovpadajo z odgovornostmi in interesi na drugih področjih. Če bom kot komisar, odgovoren za okolje, želel doseči resničen učinek, ne bo dovolj poskrbeti za izvršitev okoljskega pravnega reda.

Zato se bom boril za skladen in celovit pristop preko celotne pahljače politik Skupnosti. Prizadeval si bom, da bodo vsi razpoložljivi finančni instrumenti zasledovali cilje okoljske politike. Tudi. Trudil se bom za vzpostavitev novih partnerstev z državami članicami, regijami, da princip subsidiarnosti ne bo izgovor za neukrepanje, ampak motor, ki bo okreplil sposobnost za skupno izboljšanje okolja. Želim uporabiti učinkovito orožje dialoga: dialoga z vami, cenjeni člani Evropskega parlamenta, dialoga z nevladnimi organizacijami, dialoga s poslovnimi partnerji, dialoga z Evropejci, dialoga z našimi mednarodnimi partnerji.

Želim si, da bi bilo oblikovanje politike na področju okolja ozaveščeno do tolikšne mere kot še nikoli poprej: utemeljeno z dokazi ter negovano in usklajeno skozi dialog. Želim si, da bi bilo dogovorno, a učinkovito, povezano, a ciljno, temelječe na principih, a praktično.

Povsem na kratko o prednostnih nalogah.

Učinkovitost virov: moja prva prednostna naloga bo zagotoviti, da bo projekt EU 2020 o rasti in delovnih mestih zgrajen na močnih temeljih trajnosti in učinkovitem ravnanju z viri.

Pretrgati moramo povezavo med rastjo in porabo virov, kar vključuje spreminjanje pristopa v celotnem gospodarstvu in družbi. Ne bo lahko, a verjamem, da je mogoče, zato ker koncept učinkovitosti virov tudi za podjetja postaja vse bolj nujen in privlačen.

Prizadeval si bom za pretvorbo okoljskega varstva v okoljsko vrednotenje. Poiskati moramo načine, da bomo ovrednotili okolje v našem odločanju.

Drugič, biotska raznovrstnost: raznolikost in prilagodljivost naših ekosistemov, vrst in genov – vse to je naš naravni kapital. Zagotavlja življenjsko pomembne dobrine in storitve, kot je hrana, skladiščenje ogljika, regulacija vode, ki so temelji naše blaginje, družbene dobrobiti, kakovosti življenja.

Biotska raznovrstnost in podnebne spremembe so neločljivo povezane. Želim pa si, da bi z enako mero politične predanosti in javne osveščenosti se lotili tudi ohranjanja biotske raznovrstnosti, tako kot smo se lotili klimatskih sprememb.

Verjamem, da bo podvojitev okoljske prisotnosti v Komisiji omogočila, da bo biotski raznovrstnosti in drugim okoljskim izzivom namenjena pozornost, ki si jo zaslužijo.

Tretjič, upravljanje in izvrševanje: že sedaj lahko naredimo ogromno z učinkovitim izvrševanjem obstoječe okoljske zakonodaje. Ta zakonodaja ni le

dogovorjena in zapisana – in zato omogoča hitro uveljavitev – njeno učinkovito izvrševanje ponuja tudi pravno gotovost, enotne pogoje delovanja, predvidljivost, ki jo podjetja nujno potrebujejo in od nas tudi pričakujejo.

To ozadje...

3-006

Der Präsident. – Herr Kommissar, wir sind über die Zeit. Wir schaffen das so nicht. Slowenisch ist eine blumige Sprache. Ich gab Ihnen eine Minute mehr und hoffe, dass Ihr Hobby Volleyball immer hilft, bei den Umweltthemen den Ball über das Netz zu bringen.

Wir kommen zur ersten Runde der Fragen der Koordinatoren.

3-007

Richard Seeber (PPE). – Herr Präsident! Herr Kommissar, Herr designierter Kommissar, Sie haben den Vorteil, dass Sie sich schon selbst zitieren können. Sie waren ja schon Kommissar – und Ihre Reden so wichtig –, und Sie kennen das Prozedere dieser Anhörung bereits. Aber ich glaube, es hat sich doch etwas geändert, denn früher galt die Devise: „Sei möglichst wenig konkret. Dann wird das Parlament mit dir schon zufrieden sein.“ Und auch das Dossier FuE war bis jetzt eigentlich gekennzeichnet durch: Wir sind alle für Forschung und Entwicklung. Wir sind auch alle für Umweltschutz. Aber ich glaube doch, dass die Differenzen zwischen den verschiedenen politischen Gruppen und auch zwischen den Institutionen inzwischen recht groß sind.

Und wenn ich mir jetzt angeschaut habe, was Sie in Ihrer schriftlichen Beantwortung und auch jetzt gesagt haben: Sie decken sehr viel ab. Aber ich möchte Sie doch bitten, uns in dieser Anhörung konkretere Antworten zu geben, insbesondere was den Bereich Ressourceneffizienz, Ressourcenstrategie angeht, weil das doch einer der zentralen Bereiche ist. Insbesondere interessiert mich hier der Bereich Wasser. Zu sagen: „Ich komme 2012 mit einem Vorschlag“, ist zu wenig!

3-008

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – One of the things which I learnt while studying the environment in my recent free time is that the approach to environmental questions certainly needs to be horizontal. I am pretty sure that there is no way to deal with all these questions other than in a holistic way.

Many of the more prohibitive measures are in my hands, while the more supportive measures are in the hands of my colleagues across the Commission so this cooperation with colleagues in the Commission will be crucial to our success.

You mentioned one of the issues, that of water preservation. When you look at the legislation we have in this area – on the environment overall – there are 250 pieces of legislation. Those on water and waste are the

most complex. But I think we have some quite good achievements for the future.

What I want to do in the future for water is to make a clear review of how far we have gone. I would like to prepare in the next few years – the plan is until 2012 – the so-called blueprint for safeguarding European waters, in which I would like to focus on the implementation of the river basin approach, which is introduced by the new water framework legislation.

I would like to focus more on water saving, on increasing water availability, and on climate resilience. So there is no need for us to rush through major new water legislation immediately because many of the pieces are already in place. Implementation is difficult and we have to take that into account and carefully...

(The Chair cut off the speaker)

3-009

Richard Seeber (PPE). – Wenn ich Sie richtig verstehe, Herr Kommissar, dann sind Sie sozusagen mit der Implementierung, mit der Überprüfung der Wasserrichtlinie zufrieden. Sie wollen keine neue Gesetzgebung. Aber sehen wir uns an, was gerade jetzt im Hochwassersektor passiert – wahrscheinlich durch den Klimawandel induziert –, und sehen wir uns vor allem auch an, was in dem Sinne auch in anderen Bereichen zu beobachten ist. Die Industrie braucht Wasser, die Landwirtschaft braucht Wasser: Es herrscht in sehr vielen Regionen sehr starker Wasserstress. Also glauben Sie wirklich, dass die Implementierung der Wasserrahmenrichtlinie ausreicht und keine zusätzlichen Maßnahmen erforderlich sind?

Zweite Zusatzfrage: Werden Sie sich dafür einsetzen, dass in der nächsten Finanzperiode vermehrt Ressourcen finanzieller Art in den Wassersektor auf Gemeinschaftsebene fließen?

3-010

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – We have not only the Water Framework Directive, but the Urban Waste Water Directive; we also have a basin water directive and the Drinking Water Directive. The last two are pretty good. The Urban Waste Water Directive is difficult to implement and we have to look at that carefully, especially in the new Member States. I remember that from when I negotiated accession to the European Union.

The Floods Directive which you mentioned is a new piece of legislation. Then we have the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, which again is a new piece of legislation where we have to see how things will function in reality. I do not believe that we have settled everything perfectly but I would like to look at that issue in a properly horizontal way.

I think the question you posed on the question of financial support is very important, but many of the issues have to be addressed again via other colleagues. The common agricultural policy is extremely important;

the Structural Funds are extremely important. Working hand in hand is the name of the game.

3-011

Linda McAvan (S&D). – You know how important these hearings are, not just to us here in this Parliament, but to the European public, because of what they mean. This is just to say that a number of questions my group will pose today are ones which have been inspired by the public. We asked the public what they wanted to ask, and some of our questions are based on that.

You talk about your vision, and you say you will waste no time in tackling key environmental issues. What will be your legacy after five years as Environment Commissioner? If we look back at Mr Dimas, we can say he leaves a solid legacy on climate change legislation. What do you want to leave behind?

3-012

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – There is an inconsistency here between the question and the fact that I have only two minutes!

I think this is one of the things which I wanted to underline and it is also pretty much connected with my life as Commissioner in this Commission.

First I want the environment to achieve an ever higher political level of attention. I think it is extremely important that these matters are politically supported and understood.

Public acceptance is also extremely important. I will not go into all the issues which I underlined as my priorities but one of the issues which was difficult and which was critical in R&D was that people have looked at R&D questions from a kind of box perspective.

We should know that we are living in a market economy; we should know that the things which we are doing while we are managing growth and jobs should go hand in hand with the things which we have to take care of, and that definitely includes environmental issues; these are the things I am pretty well qualified to bring together.

I think this is an important thing where I can give value added: bringing things together, bringing in a holistic approach – I certainly believe there is a lot of room for manoeuvre from that point of view. I am not somebody who would try to deliver you something in half a year, or in one year.

I think it is important of course that we focus on everything that is on the table but what counts is the record in five years and I think in these five years I would certainly like you to remember this period as a period when we have really done a proper job together for the environment.

3-013

Linda McAvan (S&D). – I am very pleased that you mentioned jobs, because of course that is at the top of all

our agendas at the moment with the economic crisis. How do you respond to those who say that we cannot afford to invest in the environment now because we have to put jobs first?

3-014

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – By investing in the environment, we put jobs first. I think that should be pretty clear to everybody. I think that is the best way to explain it in the climate change story. The real question, when dealing with these issues, is whether climate change is a reality. That is the only question which is really serious and important.

If our answer to that is, yes, climate change is a reality caused by human beings, then the answers as to how business should react are pretty simple. The person who will be sooner in that job will be the profit winner. It is our job to give clear messages that this is the direction in which we have to go. And they do not need us to be polite. They need predictable and long-term positions. If we can deliver that, we have done our job.

3-015

Chris Davies (ALDE). – As to your opening remarks, your time-keeping may not have been wonderful, but I liked the words you used and I got the impression that they came from the heart.

I just want to ask, do you know of any single individual, can you name any single individual in the world who has as much potential for promoting good environmental practice as the European Union's Environment Commissioner?

I ask that because I wonder if you realise just how big a job this can be, what potential it offers for giving a steer, not just in Europe but across the globe?

So the question is: are you going to be worn down and become just another Commissioner pushing directives through the system, or are you going to provide some real leadership and be an advocate across the world for developing these sustainable environment practices which you promote? Do you have what it takes?

3-016

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – My short answer would be 'yes', but since I have two minutes I will try to elaborate.

There is one thing which I am sure you will ask me about later, and that is that the previous environment portfolio was in one pot, but now it is divided into climate change and environment. After going through all the stuff connected with it, I think there is so much on the table that having a clear vision and overview would be a minor miracle.

When I asked my predecessor, Commissioner Dimas, how much work there was in Environment, his answer was 'as much as you like'. I am very much aware that I am in the position to be between the leaders in the world. But I would like to warn you, that we are not the

only ones who understand that the world is changing and that some important changes need to be made in dealing with our fragile world.

Maybe others are not doing it in exactly the same way. Maybe some are focusing more, for example, on technological development than on our behaviour. I believe that both are needed. I think that a simultaneous approach on that is crucial.

We should not however underestimate that others understand that. We should push our agenda and we should definitely do everything so that we stay in the driving seat. If however something like Copenhagen happens, we should definitely not reconsider the plans and commitments which we put on the table. We should only reconsider how best to get others on board.

From that point of view my role in environment is extremely important.

(The Chair cut off the speaker)

3-017

Chris Davies (ALDE). – We have to practise what we preach, and in your opening remarks you touched on the difficulties of implementing legislation. We have a lot that is not being properly put into place by the Member States.

I think the Commission's enforcement procedures lack drive, they are too legalistic, and the issue of implementation never seems to be raised at meetings of the Environment Council. Commissioners in the past have just been reluctant to point the finger at ministers and hold them up for the failure of their Member States. Are you going to make a difference? Are you going to push paper round a desk or are you going to force change through the Commission, and are you prepared to point the finger at ministers for the failure to implement environmental legislation?

3-018

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – My approach to that would be a double thought. On the one hand, I think if we have adopted legislation, we have to implement it. There is no question. At the end of the day, that is legislation we have agreed upon – you and Member States – and Member States have committed to that legislation. So my legal role is to enforce it. That is what I intend to do.

On the other hand, it is, of course, extremely important that I offer a hand to the Member States so that, wherever possible, where there is not enough understanding and we can share knowledge and good examples, we do that and we help them.

I was asked in an interview in Slovenia some question about the environment. Of course, the answer was that I cannot answer because I am not yet – and so on. But actually, the question was how I would react if I had to act against Slovenia. I said I can answer that very simply: I will act as I would act against any other

Member State. Do you know why? Because it is in the interest of Slovenian citizens.

3-019

Carl Schlyter (Verts/ALE). – Jag ställer frågan på svenska. Vi tar ett specifikt exempel på implementering av Reach, EU:s kemikalielagstiftning: Ett av de största hoten mot folkhälsan är en diffus spridning av bioackumulerande, persistenta och toxiska ämnen. Vi har en kandidatlista över farliga ämnen inom Reach som är i det närmaste tom. Det är en skandal. Vad tänker ni inom två år göra för att se till att denna lista blir fullständig och bra? Den andra frågan rör definitionen av dessa substanser i Reach, som är mycket svagare än den definition som finns i Stockholmskonventionen om ”POPs” [*Persistent Organic Pollutants*]. Elva medlemsländer har redan klagat på att den definitionen är för svag. Vad tänker ni göra åt dessa två sakerna?

3-020

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – I will first tell you how, in principle, I think we should approach the legislation which we have adopted.

Implementation of legislation does not mean new negotiations about how this legislation should look. We had lengthy negotiations in which we reached agreement. That is an agreement which we have to implement in the spirit of how it was agreed. If you ask me if I am happy that on the candidate list we have 15 substances and that seven of them are in the first batch and none of them are in Annex 14, my answer is ‘no’.

I have already spoken to my colleague in the Commission, Mr Tajani, who is also responsible for that. We want to do a good job together. We want to cooperate. This is an area to which I will certainly give my attention as soon as I am in office. We have also decided that our first visit together will be to Helsinki – if I remember rightly – where the European Chemicals Agency is located. I think we should give a clear sign that we want to implement the things which we have agreed. But, if you ask me if I am happy with what I currently have on the table, my answer is ‘no’.

3-021

Carl Schlyter (Verts/ALE). – I will use the technology of microphones. The second part of the question was also on the definition of PBTs. It is weaker than in the Stockholm Convention and many Member States are unhappy with the current definition. What are you going to do about that?

Also in 2008, the Commission said, regarding nanomaterials, that they think the current legislation is enough to cope with them. However, it is like trying to catch plankton with a cod fishing net. It does not cover nanomaterials. You know that we demand from you a revision of that.

3-022

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – You talked about the PBT criteria, which is Annex 13. That is a very good question.

Again my answer would be that I will contact my colleague, Mr Tajani, immediately so that we can push things forward. I am pretty sure that there are problems with the definition. If you want my position, I think that when talking about any of these substances – either CMRs (carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic) or PBTs (persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic) – we should know what kind of substances we are dealing with. We are talking about highly hazardous substances and we should treat them in that way.

3-023

Julie Girling (ECR). – My question was also about implementation, which has been mentioned a couple of times. Your answers were somewhat general so I am going to slightly change my question on the basis of your answers.

We have, for example, in a report on waste from the Commission in December 2009, some very clear examples. I will quote from it. ‘In 2009, 11 cases for structural and wide-spread failure to address illegal waste dumping, 10 for bad application, 4 related to waste planning, and 3 on non-conformity of national laws’. It is quite clearly there in the report. The report also states ‘the practical implementation of the Landfill Directive remains highly unsatisfactory’, and I could go on quoting my way through this. There are very specific examples for you to look at, or to have looked at. I would simply say that from a citizen’s point of view, the non-implementation calls into question future legislation. They look at...

(The Chair cut off the speaker)

3-024

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – My answer would be that currently you cannot expect me to know each case in detail. I know that there are a lot of ongoing cases and there are also a lot of infringements. I know also that we have 500 to 600 complaints yearly. That is the situation.

I would do everything in my power, on the one hand, to implement what we have agreed, but on the other hand I think one eye should always be on smart regulation and simplification. That would probably be more for the second half of the mandate when I understand things better than I do at the beginning – this is also a lesson I learned from my previous mandate. We should have an eye to smart regulation and to simplification, not with the idea that we would lower our ambitions, but clearly with the idea that things are implementable, and simplify them if that is possible, because that is in the interests of nature preservation.

3-025

Julie Girling (ECR). – I guess what I want to hear from you, and I am not quite hearing, is along the lines of what Chris Davies was saying. I want to hear that the follow-up on implementation with Member States is higher on your agenda than we have seen previously.

So maybe you will come back to that – almost to the point where we should perhaps have a moratorium on new legislation until we are absolutely sure that what we have been doing is working and being implemented.

3-026

Janez Potočnik, *Commissioner-designate*. – ‘Higher on the agenda’ is a relative term, which means that this was not high enough on the agenda when my colleague was doing the job.

I can promise you that implementation will be high on my agenda and that I will certainly focus on it, because I believe that only implemented legislation is true legislation in favour of the environment. If we do not implement it, it is useless. I would certainly not put a moratorium on that, but I think that we should think through thoroughly how we can organise things so that measures are both cost-efficient and less harmful – and in fact helpful – and that they are implemented. That is important.

3-027

Sabine Wils (GUE/NGL). – Nach Ihrer Sicht soll Europa bei der Entwicklung globaler Politikgestaltungsmechanismen eine Führungsrolle übernehmen, um eine nachhaltige Zukunft für alle Seiten sicherzustellen. Welche Mechanismen sehen Sie hier konkret? Wollen Sie eine ökologisch verantwortliche Wirtschaft durch mehr Regulierung erreichen? Oder setzen Sie allein auf den Markt?

Zusätzlich würde mich noch interessieren: Was halten Sie von Wissenstransfer ohne Patente in die Entwicklungsländer?

3-028

Janez Potočnik, *Commissioner-designate*. – That was four in one! I think in essence we are talking about an area which is internationally closely connected: as I said in my introductory speech, it is a global world. Also, the consequences of many of the things we are responsible for are global, so international cooperation is a must.

The lines in which we are engaged are the United Nations Environmental Programme, then of course the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development. We are engaged – and should be engaged – in the real process. I think the things we have seen in Copenhagen concerning climate change also clearly show how serious and how deep our involvement is. I believe that attention to international cooperation should be at the core of our approach to the environment issue.

You asked me about regulation and market-based instruments and how I would approach this. By the way, everything here in front of me is handwritten, so do not think I am looking at something else. A holistic approach, if you need it to be really effective, needs political leadership, public acceptance and support, policy initiatives on the demand/supply side, infrastructure, financing, market – because we are living in market economies – price, costs, technological developments, so everything that together works. In

some cases market instruments are efficient; in some cases regulation is more efficient.

I think we should look at it carefully, but this holistic approach to solving the issues is, I think, the only way ahead. Anything else does not guarantee you proper success. In any of these areas you would have the problem...

(The Chair cut off the speaker)

3-029

Sabine Wils (GUE/NGL). – Ja, ich habe jetzt verstanden, dass Sie der Regulierung keinen Vorrang einräumen wollen. Ich hätte dazu noch die Frage, wie Sie denn ein europäisches Zukunftsinvestitionsprogramm für den ökologischen Umbau der Wirtschaft und für zukunftsfähige Arbeitsplätze einschätzen würden. Würden Sie sich für ein solches Zukunftsinvestitionsprogramm einsetzen?

3-030

Janez Potočnik, *Commissioner-designate*. – I am not saying that regulation would not be my priority. I think that regulation should be used and if I were asked for example about my position when we discussed the CO₂ car emissions, I would say that I was for strict regulation. On the other hand I was also in favour of doing everything to help the car industry because in a way we are pushing them very far and very fast. So public-private partnerships, then investments, and helping them with R&D programmes – all of which I have actually done. And they have also been helped to cross a kind of valley of death in this transitional period.

So we have gone hand-in-hand with the private sector because we are here to help them reach a position where their profits are again working for them. I think that is our role. But that does not change the position that we should be strict in our regulation. As I said, rules should be strict but predictable both in terms of what they want and deserve.

3-031

Paul Nuttall (EFD). – May I start by wishing everybody a very happy and cold new year.

Well that's the niceties out of the way, because it seems that I am one of only a few MEPs who does not seem to foam at the mouth or howl at the moon when we start talking about so-called man-made global warming. We are laying down policies here today, well over your period as Commissioner, which will go against science and common sense, because if you take the globe over the past hundred thousand years, which is a sensible period to look at the climate, what you see are massive changes and indeed a global cooling trend.

So considering the evidence over the past hundred thousand years, do you not think that we being a tad presumptuous, or even egotistical, to think that man can alter the climate?

3-032

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – Since I used to have responsibility for science and research, I know that scientists never agree on everything. However, if there is one area in which we really have a prevailing view it is that of climate change. We have the International Panel on Climate Change, where approximately six hundred of the world's top scientists are in agreement, though to be honest there are also some who are not in agreement. That said, in no other area do we have such a prevailing view.

My answer to your question would maybe be a bit provocative. Let us say that you are right and I am wrong. What would that mean? Are the policies that we are pursuing still the right ones? Is it still correct that in all areas we should try to do our best to protect our environment? My answer is clearly 'yes'. So even if this were wrong – and I do not believe that it is – I feel that the policies should still be the same.

The other scenario is that I am right and you are wrong. If we follow, let us say, some of the opinions, what would the consequence be? I think the answer is pretty clear: it would be pure catastrophe. I hope that we will not run into the same situation as in the economic crisis, when we started to learn only when the crisis was deep enough. I hope that we are politically responsible enough to respond to these issues well in advance.

3-033

Paul Nuttall (EFD). – Firstly let us talk about consensus. What about the 30 000 scientists who signed the Oregon Declaration?

Not only that, is it really worth wrecking the western economies? Because that is what you will do by raising green taxes – and putting people out of work, based on science which is looking more and more shifty? It is like the Artful Dodger. It is as shifty as the Artful Dodger and based on computer models which are about as realistic as the Wizard of Oz! Is it really worth putting people out of work on the basis of dodgy science?

3-034

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – Our computer methodology and technology is quite advanced, but what I wanted to say to you is that nobody really wants to work against business. We just want the business logic to accommodate something which is I think the prevailing view – that we should enter into a new third industrial revolution where the logic of internalising the cost of the environment is taken into account. It is as simple as that. If at the beginning of our logic we internalise the cost of that which we use as consumers and pay – and we should pay – then we are going in a sustainable direction. That would be my response.

Concerning the taxes which you mention, do not worry. The government will collect their taxes in any way you wish and they will always target the level of the taxes. If they are collecting from green sources I think it is better than from the others anyway.

3-035

Anja Weisgerber (PPE). – Sehr geehrter Herr Potočnik! Meine Frage bezieht sich nicht auf die mangelnde Umsetzung, sondern die unterschiedliche Umsetzung von Umweltgesetzen in den Mitgliedstaaten. Europäische, ambitionierte Umweltpolitik soll ja die Umwelt grenzüberschreitend schützen, aber auf der anderen Seite auch einheitliche Wettbewerbsbedingungen in ganz Europa schaffen. Beide Ziele werden aber konterkariert, wenn wir insbesondere die Richtlinien in den Mitgliedstaaten unterschiedlich umsetzen und wenn auch ihre Anwendung extrem unterschiedlich ausfällt. Beispiele sind die Luftqualitätsrichtlinie, wo es sehr auf die Frage ankommt, wie viele Messstationen an welchen Orten aufgestellt werden, oder auch die IVU-Richtlinie, wo es verschiedene Schadstoffgrenzwerte in den Mitgliedstaaten gibt, die sich um den Faktor 1 000 voneinander unterscheiden.

Herr Potočnik, Sie haben gerade gesagt, Sie möchten alles daransetzen, dass die Gesetze auch angewendet werden und umsetzbar sind. Wie wollen Sie es schaffen, dass die Kommission die Umsetzung und Anwendung auch begleitet, sie überwacht und diese Unterschiede weniger werden und dass wir wirklich einheitliche Wettbewerbsbedingungen schaffen?

3-036

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – That is a very good question; however it is quite difficult to answer. Again, something which I have learned in this process is that we are on quite a low scale when it comes to some information data and analysis; and that is an area on which I would also like to work. The SEIS (Shared Environmental Information System), which is the new database we have created to give us better information and which was created I think in 2008, should be strengthened.

I shall visit my European Environment Agency in Copenhagen as soon as possible and I will thoroughly study what we can do best. I am fully aware that only good information-based decisions are the right decisions.

I think that when we are preparing legislation and when we look at all the reviews of the reviews – which we all know are a regular part of business in the environmental area – we should take smart regulation and a level playing field into account. And we should sincerely look at regional differences where they prove to be good arguments.

I think that should be part of our logic and it should also be part of our attention in the future.

3-037

Anja Weisgerber (PPE). – Neben Umweltproblemen, die grenzüberschreitender Natur sind, gibt es natürlich auch solche, die rein national gelöst werden können und auch sollten. Für viele Abgeordnete gehören natürlich auch die Regelungen zu unserem Grund und Boden dazu, wo wir sagen: Da fehlt der grenzüberschreitende Bezug, das können die Mitgliedstaaten besser regeln.

Deswegen meine ganz konkrete Frage: Wie stehen Sie persönlich zu der Frage des Fortgangs des Gesetzgebungsverfahrens zur Bodenschutzrichtlinie?

3-038

Janez Potočnik, Committee-designate. – At the beginning I said I did not want to use subsidiarity as an excuse for not acting, but on the other hand that I would offer my help to all the Member States in the implementation issue.

Concerning the Soil Directive, which has been in the pipeline since 2006, I certainly think that one of my first tasks will be to see how we can resolve this issue in the Council.

We know there are five countries which are against adopting it, and that we do not have a qualified majority making it possible to adopt it. My intention is not to remove the Soil Directive. I think this is an issue of European interest. I think it is an area which is not well covered.

I am aware that in some Member States they do very good business. The intention of the Soil Directive is not to diminish that.

(The Chair cut off the speaker)

3-039

Andres Perello Rodriguez (S&D). – Señor Potočnik, es un placer saludarle, como lo es el hacer una pregunta tan concreta como me gustaría que fuera su respuesta.

¿Tiene usted, entre sus prioridades, dar continuidad al Sexto Programa de Acción Medioambiental, que concluye este año? Es decir, ¿está usted en condiciones de comprometerse ante este Parlamento a presentar, en la mayor brevedad posible, el Séptimo Programa de Acción Medioambiental Europeo, que concluya lo que ha quedado pendiente del Sexto y que plantee nuevos retos y nuevas propuestas?

Se lo pregunto con la preocupación de estar observando durante un tiempo las dudas negativas que presenta la Comisión al respecto, que no solamente no ha aclarado si iba a continuar por esta vía, sino que más bien se decanta por lo contrario en las dudas que presenta.

Creo que no es momento de dudas en el mundo, sobre todo después de lo de Copenhague, sino de una acción decidida y de un compromiso ante este Parlamento, que es el que le pido en este acto, si es posible para usted.

3-040

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – We have six environmental action plans running from 2002-2012. There are two things which are currently in process. One is external evaluation, which actually the European Parliament asked for, so this is going on and we will have the report on external evaluation of the six environmental action programmes. Also in preparation is the State and Outlook Report on the European

environment –SOER – which is being prepared by the European Agency.

These are two elements on which we want to prepare the final assessment, and this is planned for the first half of 2011. We should prepare it before July 2012. But your question was quite precise in asking what I think about the seventh environmental programme. If I were to follow the line which I prepared in the briefing, you know what the answer would be. From the formal point of view, I cannot commit because there should be smart regulation, there should be in-depth analysis of the achievements, and so on.

When I look at these documents, the European Strategy 2002, the Sustainable Development Strategy – which I hope will be EU 2020 – then I think that the seventh environmental plan would be an ideal opportunity to discuss some of the issues in depth. For me, having that as a core decision process is not a disadvantage but rather an advantage, through which we can thoroughly discuss the issues which we can set for ourselves for the future.

So that is my view. It is not a formal commitment, but I think it is good enough.

(Applause)

3-041

Andres Perello Rodriguez (S&D). – Muchas gracias. Espero que su esperanza sea un compromiso de verdad y que su compromiso moral se haga real.

Se ha hablado del aire también y se habla de que el aire tiene políticas nacionales y regionales. Tiene políticas muy laxas y muy tolerantes en algunos Estados, que permiten que algunas ciudades que contaminan el aire y no hacen nada por cuidar su calidad, lo resuelvan cambiando las estaciones de medición de un lugar a otro donde se puede medir menos. Ya tenemos medidas suficientes para poder tomar en la Comisión y plantear a los Estados que han de actuar enérgicamente.

¿Piensa usted tomar medidas, con los instrumentos que ahora tenemos, para que la calidad del aire sea una realidad en las ciudades europeas cuyos Estados son laxos en la aplicación de la legislación actual?

3-042

Holger Krahmer (ALDE). – Herr Kommissar! Mir geht es um das Thema Bürokratie und Regulierungsdichte. Wir haben in den letzten Jahren eine ganze Reihe von Umweltgesetzgebungen geschaffen, die eigentlich gar nicht ihre Ziele erreicht, sondern vor allem eine Umweltbürokratie geschaffen haben. Kann man davon ausgehen, dass Sie bei den Initiativen, die Sie uns in den nächsten fünf Jahren vorlegen, dem Thema Kosteneffizienz, Folgenabschätzung, Praktikabilität und natürlich auch Doppelregulierungen, die es in manchen Bereichen gibt, mehr Aufmerksamkeit widmen als Ihr Amtsvorgänger? Und sehen Sie möglicherweise Bereiche in der Umweltpolitik, bei denen eine Regulierungspause fällig

ist, nicht um weniger Umweltschutz zu erreichen, sondern um zunächst einmal das umzusetzen, was schon da ist?

3-043

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – It is in the impact assessments, which we are doing, where we should look to the environmental component. I think this view should also be very much present.

I think that complicated legislation, very costly legislation which we effectively know in advance is unimplementable, is in nobody's interest. Certainly it is not in the interest of the environment itself. That does not mean that we should not look to all possibilities. Our role is to protect the environment. That is first and foremost. Then we have to look how best we can achieve results in various areas, whichever area you take.

Simplification is one of the issues which – to be honest with you – I am most displeased with concerning my current mandate. I have really tried to do my best there. Every day I have done whatever possible to push in this direction. All I can say is that, at the end of the mandate, the conditions will be such that my successor will be in an ideal position to simplify research; because awareness is now so high and there is a clear view of what needs to be changed and what not.

This is in explanation of the principles behind the thinking on that area. So yes, I think that smart regulation, simplification and everything that gets rid of red tape should be part of our philosophy. However, we should never forget as we sit here that I am responsible for environment, that you are sitting on the Committee on the Environment and that we should do everything to have sustainability for the future.

As for legislation: a typical proposal, already in the pipeline, is the industrial emissions directive which we are putting together.

3-044

Holger Krahmer (ALDE). – Herr Kommissar, kann ich Sie darauf festnageln, dass kein Gesetzesvorschlag Ihr Haus verlassen wird, der nicht vorher einer umfassenden und ausgewogenen Folgenabschätzung unterzogen worden ist?

3-045

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – Yes, I think that is the correct way. Each regulation should go through a thorough impact assessment, but in that thorough impact assessment our voice – the voice of the environment – should be strongly present.

3-046

Esther de Lange (PPE). – My question is about biodiversity, which you mentioned yourself as a priority, and which I believe to be a priority of this House as well. One of our main tools to protect biodiversity is Nature 2000 legislation. Over 120 infringement procedures have been started against Member States on this issue, some of them because Member States, and

this has been mentioned by colleagues, have insufficiently implemented European legislation. These Member States, of course, need to be punished. But other Member States, and especially regions, struggle with certain elements of this piece of legislation – for example, the very vague definitions. What is a significant effect, and how do you measure it?

The legislation dates to 1979 and takes no account, for example, of climate change, at least as we know it today. Do you plan – and this is my question – to update EU biodiversity legislation, either through new proposals or by providing more guidance to Member States, for example by clarifying these definitions or by promoting best practices?

3-047

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – The answer goes more in the direction of the second part of your question. To be a bit more specific, I think that biodiversity really is a hell of a question.

There is a panoply of things which have to be taken into account. One of course is implementation of clear-cut legislation – Natura 2000 is pretty clear and the Birds and Habitats Directives are pretty clear. By the way, Slovenia has 35.5% of its territory in Natura 2000, so that you are aware of the situation. It is a really well preserved country.

I think it is important when we look at questions of implementation that we implement in the way the legislation was intended to be implemented, namely that any action taken in the Natura 2000 area is in accordance with the preservation of nature. But that does not mean that no activities are allowed in that area.

I think there are good examples – as you said yourself – which we should follow. I certainly intend to go in the direction of sharing the knowledge which we acquire from good examples. On the other hand, I would personally like to visit some of the countries – such as the Netherlands or Germany – where I have learned that most examples of practices which somehow cause bad feelings exist, and see with my own eyes what the real core of the problem is. I think that would be the right approach and the right way to do it.

3-048

Esther de Lange (PPE). – Thank you for having such a proactive approach and taking the lead at European level on this issue. I have one clear question. We are not going to make the 2010 target. Let us say we take 2015 as our target. What would be the main thing that needs to change in the European Union if we are to realise our next target for biodiversity, unlike the current one which we have not realised?

3-049

Janez Potočnik, Committee-designate. – The answer to the end of the first question would be: At the moment, I have no intention of changing the legislation itself.

But in answer to the question you now pose: we must first implement legislation where we have designated areas; we have to speed up designation of marine areas. Implementation is the first answer.

The second is: Fill existing gaps. We have gaps in 'invasive species' and we have gaps in 'soil'.

The third is to improve knowledge. We have a pretty weak understanding; we lack knowledge; we lack a simple matrix. There are uncertainties as to the value of biodiversity; costs and the risk of bio-loss are not clear.

The most important thing is probably the holistic approach. We have to implement that logic into the common agricultural policy and the common fisheries policy. If they all work together then we can succeed.

3-050

Karin Kadenbach (S&D). – Herr Potočník! Wir sind als EU und vor allem auch als Ausschuss Vorreiter in Umweltfragen. Es ist auch für viele Europäerinnen und Europäer ein ganz besonderer Vorteil der Europäischen Union, dass wir uns in diesem Bereich als Vorzeigeraum auf diesem Planeten entwickeln. Auf der anderen Seite haben wir aber immer wieder Schwierigkeiten, diese Vorteile zu kommunizieren. Ich denke in diesem Zusammenhang an die Situation, die wir mit der Einführung des EU-Bannes für Glühlampen hatten. Wie wollen Sie in Zukunft neue Umweltthemen, die in vielen Bereichen von der Bevölkerung in ihrer Auswirkung geschätzt werden, aber in ihrer Umsetzung als Eingriff in ihre ganz private Sphäre erlebt werden, kommunizieren? Welche Kommunikations- und Vermittlungsstrategien planen Sie, um diesen Weg fortzusetzen?

3-051

Janez Potočník, Commissioner-designate. – Again, not an easy question. The most important factor, I think, is that when we discuss these issues we should understand that, whatever we do, we do it with a long-term view and not only for tomorrow. The long-term vision is simply not taken into account often enough.

We should also be careful, when taking these measures and dealing with things which are simply irreversible, that no irreparable damage is done.

Communicating to the public and getting public opinion on your side is always difficult. However, the best communication to the people is brought about by good policies and good decisions, so they understand it. That calls for an honest explanation and not the abuse which, in fact, we often witness.

We simply have to be honest with them and explain in a way that does not involve any regional, business or other interests, but which is the pure truth and what we believe in.

3-052

Karin Kadenbach (S&D). – Dass die besten Strategien natürlich auch die besten Umsetzungsmethoden

voraussetzen, ist leider nicht immer ganz so leicht verständlich, weil wir von verschiedenen *stakeholders* ausgehen müssen. Wenn ich jetzt allein an die Frage des Wettbewerbs denke, wenn Umweltmaßnahmen sich aufseiten der Unternehmen so darstellen, als würden sie ihre Wettbewerbsfähigkeit einschränken, auf der anderen Seite aber die Bevölkerung Nutznießer davon ist: Wie wollen Sie diese *stakeholders* zusammenbringen?

3-053

Janez Potočník, Commissioner-designate. – Not only people, but also business should understand, but I think that this understanding today is becoming more and more obvious. It is not something which is self-evident, but if we are all really consistent in that message, if we are consistent also in providing scientific databases, if we are consistent in providing more knowledge, then public opinion will start to understand where we are.

On environmental issues, I think we are pretty well on the good side. So if we look at how the European barometers see these questions, it stands pretty high. So I can say, if I am confirmed of course, that I will be among the few lucky people who have taken care of two areas which are among the highest on the European barometer of European citizens. One was knowledge, science and technology; environment comes even higher.

3-054

János Áder (PPE). – A határokön átnyúló szennyezések megakadályozása az egyik legfontosabb olyan terület, ahol a következő években szigorú szabályokat kell alkotni. Öszintén remélem, hogy jelölt úr ezzel egyetért. Mondok Önnek egy példát. Tíz évvel ezelött egy Romániában működő ausztrál-kanadai aranybányavállalat óriási mennyiségű ciánnal szennyezte a Tiszát, Európa egyik legnagyobb folyóját. A környezeti kár borzalmas volt, a Tisza mentén élő embereknek okozott vesztesség pedig óriási. Eltelt tíz év, ma újabb bányákat akarnak megnyitni ugyanilyen ciános technológiát alkalmazva. Szerintem ezt a technológiát az egész Európai Unióban be kell tiltani, ahogy ez egyébként Magyarországon és Csehországban megtörtént már. Kérdezem, hogy jelölt úr egyetért-e ezzel, és támogatja-e az ilyen irányú törekvéseket.

3-055

Janez Potočník, Commissioner-designate. – I think that, in essence, you are right. Nature and the consequences of the pollution in various areas – you mentioned just one of them – do not take account of borders. In cases where the effects are cross-border, I think we have a major advantage in that we are also able to look at that question from the point of view of the European Union – a joint view and joint approach.

Of course what we have to do, from the Commission's point of view, is clearly to stick to our legally agreed possibilities and legally agreed limits. For example, we have an Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and a Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive – SEA. Whenever we approach any case that comes under

the project or the programme, we should ensure that these parts of the directive are fulfilled.

So, in essence, I agree with you, but we should be clear that we have to follow the legally agreed activities. Some things are simply in the hands of the Member States. Some of them should be implemented on their level but, if we see the cross-border effects, I think it is a good case for looking at it from another perspective.

3-056

János Áder (PPE). – Engedje meg, hogy vitatkozzam az Ön álláspontjával és ne értsek Önnel egyet, ugyanis vannak ilyen jogszabályok. Ezek a jogszabályok tíz éve nem segítenek nekünk abban, hogy ezt a problémát megoldjuk, tehát nem a jogszabályoknak a betartása a megoldás, hanem új jogszabály alkotása. Teljes tilalom. Ennek a technológiának a teljes tiltása, mert a veszély itt van újra és újra. Ennek a cianidos bányászati technológiának a teljes betiltása az, ami szerintem az egyetlen megoldás, különben itt a veszély, hogy újra szennyezzük a földjeinket, szennyezzük a vizeinket, pusztítjuk az élővilágot és veszélybe sodorjuk az embereket.

3-057

Janez Potočnik, Committee-designate. – I misunderstood your question, which was not as specific. If we do not have the directives, and if we have a serious environmental problem that we acknowledge, then we have to look at it. It is as simple as that. If it is something which requires the ban, then there will be a ban.

At the moment, that would be my position, but I misunderstood you. I thought your question was more original. I did not really understand in English what you were asking for. My principal answer is that we should implement legislation where we have it. If we do not have it and we have a serious environmental danger, then of course we should address that. When things are obvious, it will be for me to try to look from our side, get the data, get the best understanding of the problem and address that problem.

3-058

Gaston Franco (PPE). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, on a parlé de l'eau, on a parlé de l'air; je voudrais vous parler de la forêt. Êtes-vous prêt, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, à soutenir la création d'une véritable politique forestière intégrée en Europe?

Que comptez-vous faire pour promouvoir une gestion forestière durable dans l'Union européenne et pour encourager une utilisation efficace et une meilleure mobilisation des ressources naturelles, en particulier le bois et la biomasse?

Comptez-vous mettre en place un critère de durabilité pour la biomasse?

3-059

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – For me, forests are part of a very crucial and critical question. They cover 30% of the Earth and 40% of European

Union territory. They are very much connected to biodiversity, on the one hand, and climate change, on the other. So they play quite a decisive role. And I think that, up to that point, practically all of us agree.

Internationally we have to do everything we can in order to counter deforestation. We need to use all the tools we have at our disposal under the REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) and FLEGT (Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade) programmes.

As to what I intend to do inside the European Union and here, the White Paper of April 2009 on climate change adaptation is under discussion; and a Green Paper is to be prepared on forest protection and implementation – this will soon be on the table. I think these are two of the most important things that will allow for a constructive and broad debate, through which we should clearly understand how we should implement or update the European Union forest strategy, and through which we should also try to clarify an answer to the question as to whether or not a forest framework directive is the best way ahead.

A coherent forest information system is also needed. I think it is very important that we work on forest protection and forest information together.

3-060

Gaston Franco (PPE). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, je pense que votre réponse démontre que vous avez bien intégré l'importance des enjeux. En tout cas, je serai également très attentif à la mise en place de mesures destinées à vérifier que les décisions que nous aurons été amenés à prendre seront bien respectées, notamment l'accompagnement des luttes contre la déforestation.

3-061

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – Here I have one minute to repeat a few times, 'yes, yes, yes', but on the whole you are right. I think that is what we have to do.

Especially from the international point of view, I think we have to play our role significantly. There are also some consequences which came after Copenhagen, where some steps were clearly aligned and agreed in this international approach. One of the questions connected with this is clearly financing help.

On the other hand, in connection with illegal logging what we seriously need to have – and this is the legislation which is in the pipeline, as you know – is a due diligence approach. It is an area where we try to do our best; we cannot do everything via FLEGT. We have an agreement with Ghana, as you know, as a first bilateral agreement. That is good, and that is the way in which we intend to proceed, but there are some limits to that. So I think due diligence is the right way ahead.

3-062

Vittorio Prodi (S&D). – Rivolgo un saluto al Commissario Potočnik, con il quale abbiamo lavorato molto bene nel settore della ricerca durante lo scorso mandato.

Prendo atto con molta soddisfazione delle affermazioni sul suolo e sulla necessità di riprendere la direttiva, anche perché evidentemente diventa sempre più chiaro che il suolo è estremamente importante come riserva di carbonio e come potenziale mietitore di gas serra.

A me interessa in questo momento soprattutto l'adattamento al cambiamento climatico, che deve passare attraverso una manutenzione integrata del territorio e quindi una particolare attenzione al suolo. Io volevo sentire la sua reazione su questi ambiti.

3-063

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – First of all, I should say that I share the same view on our previous work, which I really enjoyed for five years. Regarding the Soil Directive, I told you what my intention is and how I want it to proceed. I fully agree with your analysis, in which you said how important it is from the various aspects.

Coordination of climate adaptation will be in the hands of my colleague, Connie Hedegaard, but to be precise about these issues (because I have seen you nodding your heads), anything which is in the portfolio of any of my colleagues is a decision which has been taken. According to the Treaty, the President of the Commission is responsible for the designations and is also responsible for its good functioning.

I am responsible in that, if the question is in any way connected to the environment (which in this case it is), I have to take care of it. The angle from my side will be covered. My responsibility is that I organise the work so that anything relating to climate adaptation that is connected to the soil – water, biodiversity, and so on – is taken care of by DG Environment. We will do that, because that is the right way. That is the responsibility which I will be taking when I take this job.

3-064

Vittorio Prodi (S&D). – È proprio su questo che vorrei ritornare, perché la mia sensazione è che ci sia una frammentazione delle deleghe e che quindi sia molto difficile, anche perché ieri, in questa sala, il Commissario designato per la cooperazione internazionale, gli aiuti umanitari e la risposta alle crisi ha detto che in qualche modo la prevenzione dei disastri naturali è di sua competenza. Sono quindi veramente molto preoccupato di questo e vorrei il suo commento.

3-065

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – In the end you have to understand that, when we work in the Commission, what we deliver together is the Commission's result. We have to take care that these results meet the expectations of what we need to do, and also your expectations.

There have been many pieces of legislation in the past which we have delivered. They were not delivered in the name of one Commissioner but there were actually two, three or even more Commissioners representing it at the same time. We will have a lot of cases like that in the future too. There will be a lot of working together, which I am very keen to do. There has been, for example, a typical set plan strategy, where a few Commissioners work together and a few cabinets work together.

I have already discussed with Connie Hedegaard in private how to organise the way ahead. This will certainly involve cooperation. I think it extremely important to understand that my proposal was, for example, to have a joint cabinet meeting regularly because it is extremely important that we deal with issues together.

3-066

Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (ALDE). – I would like to thank the Commissioner-designate for his clear vision and straightforward answers so far. I would like my question to focus on the issue of biodiversity, which I am extremely happy to hear is your second priority, Mr Potočnik. I would like to congratulate you on that already.

The task of coming up with a new biodiversity strategy is on your shoulders. The old strategy has been a failure, let us be honest about that. It is my conviction that the only way of obtaining the goals of biodiversity is by incorporating the costs of the use of natural resources into our economy. I would like to ask you if that would be one of the main focuses of the new strategy.

Second, much will rely on the progress that is made in other fields. How are you going to convince your colleagues, especially those responsible for fisheries and agriculture, about the importance of biodiversity?

3-067

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – That is a difficult one. I agree with you that we have to be clear that the target we set for 2010 is a failure. I think that is a strong enough message telling us that we have to think and rethink as regards what our approach should be. You know that 2010 is the year of biodiversity; you know that we have recently adopted a communication on that, and that the new biodiversity action plan is to be ready by the end of 2010; nevertheless, there are many questions which we have to answer in the meantime, questions which I am pretty worried about, to be honest.

As I said, there is a lack of knowledge about a simple matrix and so on, where I think we have to do serious business again. You mentioned the economic way of looking at that issue. I think it should be taken into account, or at least it should be seriously considered that we see how far it is leading. For me, the bottom line of everything is that if you live in a market economy, the costs of the things we are using should be part of the product. If that is the case, then everything else is pretty simple. But if it is not then we have to redo that again

and again, and then we have 10 correcting measures for one wrong decision taken at the beginning. The beginning is where things should be settled.

Finally, on the question of how to cooperate, I think that in essence the answer lies in the common agricultural policy and the common fisheries policy, then Structural Funds, forests, everything: all these things are extremely important for biodiversity. When we discuss the next Financial Perspective and the broadest documents, I intend to approach colleagues and try to find a line, giving them the hand of cooperation.

3-068

Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (ALDE). – Currently the Dutch Prime Minister is attacking European nature legislation, I think because it is confronting his priorities of extending agriculture and road building. One of his arguments is that public support is lacking.

I must say that if you openly attack European legislation then you should not be surprised if public support for it diminishes. What are you going to do to gain the hearts of the European people so that they support European nature legislation?

3-069

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – My first comment, which we should never forget when we talk about European legislation, is this: the way European legislation is prepared is that it is proposed by the European Commission, and agreed and accepted by European Member States and in many cases also by the European Parliament.

So it is not an invention coming from the Commission. It is always something which we agree together, and it is our Treaty duty to look at the implementation. Of course there are cases where one would need to look through specific eyes and, as I said before, one of the visits which I want to make is to the Netherlands because I would like to see what are in essence the real problems on the ground.

On communicating with people, or how to send the people the right messages, my firm belief is that it is very difficult to compete from the centre, from Brussels, with all national political environments.

I also think it is really the political duty of the European Member States, of all who are in charge of leading the countries, to shoulder their share of responsibility when we talk about some of these issues. But as I said, in all these specific cases, I would want a very close-up view.

3-070

Sandrine Bélier (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, une fois encore, une question concernant la biodiversité. Je ne vous cache pas que nous nous réjouissons que vous ayez inscrit dans vos priorités la lutte contre la perte de la biodiversité.

Vous évoquez, dans votre réponse écrite, une nouvelle vision et de nouveaux objectifs européens pour peser

dans le débat international dès 2010, appelant donc à plus d'engagement politique et à un nouvel élan ambitieux pour la protection de la biodiversité.

J'espère que nous saurons faire mieux que nous ne l'avons fait, notamment à Copenhague, dans le domaine du climat. Dans ce contexte, je poserai trois questions:

Êtes-vous prêt à porter un engagement de l'Union européenne pour limiter nos impacts et prélèvements sur la biodiversité en dehors des frontières de l'Union?

Dans l'Union, vous engagez-vous fermement à assurer et imposer le respect de la législation Natura 2000 dans tous les États membres et à ne pas diminuer la portée des réglementations existantes?

Et enfin, vous engagez-vous fermement à engager, proposer et soutenir au sein de la Commission une politique transversale intégrant la biodiversité comme un indicateur obligatoire dans toutes les politiques sectorielles, telles que l'agriculture et les transports, et leur financement?

3-071

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – I think I have explained my view on the issues when dealing internally. You are perfectly right that we have to look at the question of the biodiversity rules internationally and that we also have to look, in the light of our responsibility, at what is happening in the outside world.

A typical example would be forest legislation – illegal logging. I think we have to do our job. We have to make every effort inside not to harm activities that have an outward effect. So the answer to that is 'yes'. I think we have to take that view.

Regarding the second question, about Natura 2000: I think I was pretty clear before as to what we have to do. From the point of view of our international commitments and what we need to do next; I have two priorities.

One is the COP (Conference of the Parties) on biodiversity, which will be in Nagoya – I think close to the end of next year – where global targets will also be discussed. In the meantime, we have to be clear on what our position will be and we have to clarify our views.

The other is an issue close to my heart. Just as we have the IPCC for climate change, I support the IPBS in biodiversity. I think it is an excellent example of how the scientific prevailing knowledge could influence and help guide political decisions.

3-072

Sandrine Bélier (Verts/ALE). – Une politique efficace de lutte contre la perte de la biodiversité au sein de l'Union et au niveau international suppose des moyens: des moyens de contrôle du respect de la réglementation, d'une part, mais aussi des moyens financiers à la hauteur des ambitions et objectifs.

Je vous poserai deux questions. À ce titre, vous engagez-vous:

– à augmenter le budget nécessaire à la gestion des sites Natura 2000 au sein de l'Union et, enfin,

– à porter et soutenir, au sein de la Commission et auprès des États membres, le financement de la conservation des sites sensibles, mais plus encore de projets de renaturation dans les pays en développement, dont les ressources naturelles ont largement profité au développement des pays de l'Union?

3-073

Janez Potočnik, *Commissioner-designate*. – My approach is as follows: I have asked that they ascertain how much money goes to environmental help in various areas. The figure I have for this financial period is approximately EUR 155 billion in various areas from the Structural Funds to the common agricultural policy and also to the areas which are directly under my command, which is a very limited amount of money.

I think it is good that Life + and Life have devoted so much to Natura and I think that when we talk about the future involvement we should look more from the perspective of capacity-building in the Member States, so that they can handle the issue at home.

If I am realistic I know that I will never be in a position where I directly control as much money as we need to deal with that. It is important that I work with my colleagues and that we get a fair share which is clearly committed for our goals.

3-074

Julie Girling (ECR). – I would like to come back for a moment to illegal timber and logging. A future Conservative Government in the UK is committed to making the sale and possession of illegal timber a criminal offence. Conservatives are disappointed by the current government's stance that they are waiting for European agreement on this issue, because none is forthcoming.

In the US they have recently amended a 100-year old piece of legislation to make exporting, transporting, selling, receiving, acquiring and purchasing illegal timber a criminal offence.

I would like to know your views, please, and whether you are prepared to make a commitment that such a prohibition could take place here in the EU and, given the failure to reach political agreement in the Council, where you might stand on that.

3-075

Janez Potočnik, *Commissioner-designate*. – I have mentioned some of the things which are ongoing. One is the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade action plan, which is where we are directly combating illegal logging.

The first voluntary agreement with Ghana was reached in November 2009 and, as I said, we are looking forward

to entering into agreements with the others. It is not likely that all the countries that we import timber from would go so far.

So as a consequence of that, the regulation which you talked about, the due diligence regulation was adopted in 2008 and as you know it is now in the codecision process. There was, I understand, polarisation: either there would be a need for a prohibition approach or on the other hand, the need or the possibilities of a due diligence approach.

Honestly, I do not know enough at this moment to give a clear answer. I think that the major problem that I have seen and understood from what I have read is that the direction in which we are going is prohibition, but that would also be the direction that would open an enormous question of implementability. So although it is quite an attractive direction politically, it might on the other hand cause quite a lot of problems with implementation.

So, that is as much as I know at this precise moment but I can promise that I will look into the details of how things are evolving. You know that the decision for this due diligence regulation is currently in the pipeline but in essence I agree that we should be proactive in trying to limit the impact of deforestation all across the world. This is, if I remember correctly, connected with approximately 20% of greenhouse gas emissions.

3-076

Julie Girling (ECR). – I am happy to hear that it is on your radar. I guess, as in my previous question, I would like to hear that it is blipping a bit louder on your radar but I think we can follow that up.

3-077

Janez Potočnik, *Commissioner-designate*. – After reading everything I have had to read during the Christmas vacation, a lot gets on your radar! I can promise you that I will do an honest job. I know that this is a serious question and we have to treat it as such.

3-078

Elisabetta Gardini (PPE). – Signor Commissario, volevo tornare al summit di Copenaghen, di cui si è parlato molto, perché volevo chiederle se, visto che questo fallimento era anche ampiamente prevedibile – speriamo nel prossimo anno –, lei non pensa che l'Europa potrebbe però facilitare il dialogo aprendo una riflessione seria anche su alcuni strumenti che aveva posto sul tavolo in modo forse un po' troppo rigido.

Io penso per esempio al "cap and trade", una finanziarizzazione del tema ambientale, un aumento di regole che è complicato da applicare e ha bisogno di anni per essere messo a punto.

Sappiamo che ci sono paesi che per esempio vedono meglio la *carbon tax*. Sappiamo anche che alcuni paesi sarebbero più disponibili al dialogo se anche l'Europa fosse disposta a riflettere – non dico ad accettare – per esempio sull'introduzione di alcune misure

compensatorie alle frontiere. Volevo sapere il suo parere al riguardo.

3-079

Janez Potočnik, *Commissioner-designate*. – If I deal with the more political part of your question, asking about the follow-up to Copenhagen, I think that Copenhagen is a very serious lesson for everybody in Europe. I think it is a lesson which we get, on the one hand, when we talk about the goals themselves and commitment and, on the other hand, it is also something where we have to look very seriously from the point of view of how we are organised in Europe and what we can achieve.

Should we change the strategy, and how should we approach that? It obviously gives us a clear example of a situation where, if we weaken our voice, if we do not have a single approach, if we do not leave any room for manoeuvre or negotiation, we will be a little sidelined, and where the real commitments we are making – and we are making the major commitments – will then somehow be taken for granted by others. In essence, the leadership which we are implementing is, in a way, lost.

But there is one issue which I think is pretty important in this context. It is again something which I would take as an experience from doing things in R&D. If anybody thinks that in the United States, for example, they are not taking climate change issues seriously, they are terribly mistaken. If I look at what is happening in the technological field – how much they are investing, in what areas they are investing – they have rather their own way of approaching things. As Frank Sinatra might have said, 'I will do it my way'.

So I think we have to take that into account somewhat. They are doing some things 'in my way', but we should not underestimate things. Maybe we sometimes spend too much time in discussion instead of really focusing on going actively into that. So I think that...

(The Chair cut off the speaker)

3-080

Elisabetta Gardini (PPE). – Tornando alle direttive in materia di qualità dell'aria, una cosa magari un po' più concreta, siccome sono convinta che non sempre "equo" voglia dire "uguale". Lei sa benissimo che ci sono ampie porzioni del territorio dell'Unione europea dove è difficile conseguire il rispetto dei limiti perché proprio le peculiarità orografiche e meteorologiche, nonostante gli sforzi e gli impegni, rendono questo più complicato.

Penso per esempio, essendo italiana, al cosiddetto "bacino padano", che ha 26 milioni di abitanti, produce un PIL pari a 814 miliardi di euro, ha una media di emissioni pro-capite rispetto anche al PIL al di sotto della media, ma ha difficoltà a tenere.

In relazione a questo, si potrebbe pensare a delle specifiche e diverse modalità di conseguimento o a dei finanziamenti per aiutare?

3-081

Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines (PPE). – Señor Presidente, me congratulo de ver aquí a un Comisario con el que he trabajado muy bien y que tiene una visión realista y holística de las cosas. Ha insistido mucho sobre eso y me congratulo mucho.

En esa línea de los aspectos holísticos, yo le voy a hablar de coordinación. Me interesa muchísimo su visión de una política de medio ambiente menos emocional y más basada en la ciencia, porque precisamente hemos recibido muchas quejas de que muchos documentos elaborados por la Comisión no se han basado en la ciencia, sino en un conocimiento convencional y muchas veces emocional y político, como el tema del agua y otros temas que se han tratado a menudo, o algunos temas de cambio climático, olvidando algunos resultados de la ciencia. Me refiero al tema concreto.

Dado que precisamente los resultados de Copenhague nos llevan a una política de territorio que requiere ser holística, donde se tienen que tener todos en cuenta y donde hay que avanzar mucho en el conocimiento sobre el CO₂ en la agricultura y otras muchas políticas, ¿qué instrumento –y ésta es mi pregunta– tiene la Comisión para llevar a cabo esa coordinación en financiación, en toma de decisiones, en conocimiento y en información? ¿Qué instrumentos institucionales tiene la Comisión? ¿Cree usted, por el contrario, que habría que inventarlos?

3-082

Janez Potočnik, *Committee-designate*. – It was my pleasure to work with you too. It might sound strange, but my answer is that we cannot take the emotions out, because we are human beings and as human beings we are emotional. The problem comes when those emotions drive policies because there is simply a lack of understanding or lack of knowledge of certain issues. Certainly one direction in which we should be working is to improve the level of knowledge in this area.

I remember the Seventh Framework Programme as being very green, so whatever one takes from that programme is green. One should not only look at environmental matters – because that would be a totally wrong approach – but also at transport and at energy questions. One should also look at questions of materials and nanotechnology, and one should look at the questions related to socio-economic research, and so on.

Broadly, one could say that the framework programme is very much environmental and very much oriented in the right direction. There are also the instruments which we adopted in the recovery plan. There are three new private-public partnerships – three good instruments which go exactly in this direction – under which we would make private-public partnerships stronger with regard to green cars, greener industrial production and greening the houses in which we live. Everything has this concept in mind.

Addressing the current economic questions presents an ideal opportunity for us to restructure economies with a

view to the future – what do we want? Where are we going?

3-083

Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines (PPE). – Muchas gracias, pero insisto en un punto: creo que el problema de la coordinación es muchas veces de segundo y tercer nivel de toma de decisiones, no el Comisario ni el Colegio, que es quien elabora el documento.

En segundo lugar, me preocupa mucho el *stakeholder* que siempre ha consultado y ha tenido una gran presencia en la Comisión de Medio Ambiente.

¿Es consciente de que la política de adaptación al cambio climático y la política de uso de Fondos Estructurales requieren una mayor presencia de las regiones, de los ayuntamientos y de los reales *stakeholders*, que son los que llevan a cabo la aplicación de la política y los que conocen los costos?

3-084

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – I fully agree. I think it is definitely not the first level of coordination. It is not enough.

First of all, your role in that respect should be strong. That is clear to me. When we talk about policies in the regions and when we talk about policies on the spot, I think we have some pretty good tools which we are using relatively well already.

I am fortunate to be involved at this particular period, when we will be discussing how we will direct our new Financial Perspective. This view on how we address all the issues through our policy priorities needs to be very much present when discussing the future of agriculture.

Agricultural workers constitute 7% of the workforce. They are taking care of 50% of our land, so we cannot do without them. The common agricultural policy should seriously take them into account. They are our gardeners in fact.

3-085

Åsa Westlund (S&D). – Thank you for your answers on REACH previously. What do you intend to do in order to strengthen the legislation on chemicals, especially when it comes low volume chemicals that are not covered by REACH today?

3-086

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – This answer will just deal with the principle because I do not know enough to go into detail here.

Certainly REACH goes pretty far. We have also seen some implementation of the legislation which is also connected with our international agreements. There, things for me are still pretty clear. If there are issues which we have to take into account, of course I will first look thoroughly, based on the facts, and if there is a need to propose new measures, I will certainly do that; I will seriously consider moving in that direction.

For example, one of the issues which is highly topical and on the agenda is the issue of nanotechnology. I think that, if you look at the facts, it is getting more and more obvious – this does not mean that I am committing to anything – that the REACH legislation is simply not enough for us to deal with that area.

It is of extreme importance that we understand that such issues as nanotechnology – which economically is extremely promising – must be dealt with in such a way that responsibility is built into our thinking.

What we do not need in this area is just one incident. This is not in anybody's interest, especially not in the interest of industry, and of course not in our interest as we want to have safe products and be properly protected.

I think that this kind of logic should be clearly followed, because in the end it is predominantly in the interest of the people who want to do business in the future. That is extremely important because, if public opinion is not on your side, you have tremendous problems.

3-087

Åsa Westlund (S&D). – Thank you for that, I agree completely with you on the nanotechnology. I want to be more specific than on the chemicals, because today, babies in Europe are exposed to Bisphenol-A in milk bottles, despite there being safe alternatives. Will you take action to ban Bisphenol-A in baby bottles, as has already been done in Canada, for example?

3-088

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – I cannot, because the bare fact is that I do not know the file in sufficient detail to simply say 'yes' or 'no' or something like that. I can promise you that I will look into the details. As I said about chemical substances, I am aware that, if we talk about hazardous substances, if we talk about substances which cause negative effects, if this is a scientifically proven fact, then we have no other choice than to act.

3-089

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Commissioner-designate, I would like to stick to the subject of REACH. I noted that you will focus on this in particular and visit the European Chemicals Agency in Finland. The agency has said that this year will be their most challenging yet, and they have lots of legal deadlines looming. Do you believe that the agency has sufficient resources to meet the demands, in particular on implementation of REACH legislation?

Are you concerned about the demands of that legislation and its implementation on industry, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises?

How will you ensure that the objectives of REACH are met, while the concerns of industry are also given due consideration? I am thinking there about a need perhaps to look at an extension of some of the deadlines.

3-090

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – As I said, negotiations for REACH were lengthy and difficult. This is an existing piece of legislation, and our primary concern is to implement it.

One of the worries which you underlined concerns human resources. Not only human resources in the Helsinki agency, but also the resources – as you rightly point out – in all other areas that have to implement it.

In the Commission itself, I have found out that they are making tremendous efforts. I have established two executive agencies in my mandate which are a bit different to regulatory agencies; and one of the things which I have learned is that each agency needs some time before it is fully functional. One cannot simply establish a new organisation, in one or two years, and expect that everything, which was somehow developing in the meantime, will be fully implemented from the first moment. I know that they are still recruiting, but I do not know to what extent this will be necessary.

One of the issues which is also my responsibility, along with that of my colleague Tajani, is that we ensure that proper resources are provided and that implementation can become a reality. I understand at this very moment that this is an issue of serious concern. At this moment I think it would be simply premature, and also not correct, to talk about extensions. I think that we are simply too early on in the process for this to be the right message.

3-091

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – But I would like you to perhaps state that, should that be required, it would be done. Because you were quite, if I may say, lengthy in your response while not being very clear. There are problems with the agency and there are problems for industry, and I think you will have the responsibility to make sure that they are addressed.

There is also the issue of whether some existing legislation around RoHS, which is the removal of hazardous substances, would be brought into REACH and some industries have concerns about that.

Do you have a view as to whether that is something that might happen? Or again, perhaps given the difficulties with the agency, that it might, but not immediately.

3-092

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – I have no view yet on that. I can just promise you that these things will be very high on my agenda immediately, if I am confirmed. I know that there is a problem and I know that we have to deal with it. However, I cannot give any commitment that goes so far as to say something will happen or not happen. That would simply be saying too much.

This is also not my sole responsibility. It is something I have to discuss with my colleagues, and with the college. My promise to you is that I will look thoroughly into the problem and, if necessary, also act. That is certainly my responsibility.

3-093

Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D). – To live in an environmentally-friendly way is nice, healthy and honest, but not all the people agree with it.

What kind of economical incentive would you propose to promote an environmentally-friendly way of living? Do you agree with an approach that people using, and very often wasting, natural resources in order to ensure a luxurious or super-luxurious way of life should be made more reasonable by financial instruments?

3-094

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – Everything starts with a beginning so if things are internalised in the price of the product, then the right signal is given to the consumer. A typical example is if we think that we will have a sustainable future for society and low energy prices then we are dreaming. It is not going to be like that. We should take into consideration all those things. We live in a market economy and I think we should take into consideration that this is certainly part of our logic, which we should take into our approach.

But maybe the most serious problem and also the most difficult to deal with in reality is the coupling of resource use, on the one hand, and GDP growth, on the other hand. These two things which now go hand in hand would need to open up so that we improve resource efficiency and use fewer resources. Again, this is easy to say but difficult to do.

I think one of the concepts I would like to follow is the resource management concept where you have the product at the centre. We have a lot of quite precise legislation which deals with the waste part, but I think the most important element is the best waste is no waste, so we get rid of as much waste as possible.

That means that we should concentrate on the first two parts, i.e. production and consumption, meaning use. So how do we produce? Do we produce it? From that point of view there are many other things from the eco-efficiency directive: typically ecolabelling, public procurement. We have 17% of GDP in public procurement. We should definitely use it better.

3-095

Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D). – Thank you very much for your comprehensive and very convincing answer.

After more than two hours we are all a little bit tired, especially you, but to be frank at the beginning of this hearing I felt as if I were in the opera or in the theatre – I mean because of the applause. I have never heard so much applause in rooms like this on such occasions, neither now, during these hearings, nor five years ago.

So congratulations, and a very personal question. What do you do in your everyday life in order to save our planet?

3-096

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – Firstly, a comment about the applause; I would prefer to have it after five years rather than today, but it is still good.

What do I do? I try to think as a responsible citizen. So if you are asking if my waste is in different baskets, the answer is yes. It is in different baskets and I also take care that in my house it is in different baskets.

If you are asking me what car I drive and other things, we could easily compare notes about the Prius with my predecessor because I was the owner of the Prius at home from 2004 when it was the first that entered the market. I can tell you that it is functioning superbly. I will share with you the end of the story in my closing five minutes, because this story does not have such a happy ending.

Yes, I try to look at it from that point of view, whatever I do.

3-097

Salvatore Tatarella (PPE). – Grazie, presidente. Commissario, l'obiettivo di contenere il riscaldamento globale entro i 2 °C mira ad evitare conseguenze negative per l'uomo e per l'ambiente, contenendo la perdita di biodiversità e il degrado ambientale; esso mira anche a salvaguardare risorse fondamentali come l'aria, l'acqua, il suolo, le foreste, in un'ottica di sviluppo futuro sostenibile.

Sono tutte motivazioni condivisibili, però ci sono studi scientifici che ritengono l'obiettivo dei due gradi realisticamente irraggiungibile; alcuni scienziati parlano di una grande illusione o dell'illusione dei due gradi.

Ecco, mi consenta, signor Commissario di chiederle: qual è il suo parere in ordine a questo problema e in particolare per il suo ruolo, per la sua posizione di Commissario all'ambiente, come si pone di fronte a un possibile innalzamento del *target* da 2 °C e 3 °C? Grazie.

3-098

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – First, I hope you will repeat the question to my colleague in two days, but anyway I hope that you do not expect the still acting Commissioner for Science and Research to do nothing more than point to the level of scientific knowledge that prevails. I think it is obviously an area in which we have to invest in the future and an area in which we have to improve our knowledge and understanding. There are many things that we do not understand.

And I can repeat that we are pretty happy that we have an international panel for climate change which has done an excellent job. Why has it done an excellent job? Because not only are the major scientists gathered there but because it has made the public aware that we are taking things seriously.

There will always be moments of belief or disbelief. That is how science works but I think it is extremely

good if we have somebody that we, the political decision-makers, are able to rely on. You will remember that President Barroso has promised that he will have a chief science adviser also in the college. I think that is a great step ahead, also from the point of view of taking things into account.

Concerning the 2% or 3%, I do not know. I hope it is 2%, because that would be manageable and we will understand that soon enough and then we will take the proper measures. But in any case, whether it is 2% or 3%, let us prepare adaptation measures because we will have to adapt.

3-099

Salvatore Tatarella (PPE). – Dovremo adattarci, però io credo che per ottenere quel risultato occorrerebbe un cambiamento radicale del sistema energetico mondiale. Se questo non avviene, io le chiedo: è una buona politica indicare da un lato obiettivi ambientali non realisticamente raggiungibili e, dall'altro, non fare nulla per mettere insieme misure tali da cambiare il nostro approvvigionamento energetico?

3-100

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – Concerning energy, my answer would be that it will happen. The question is only whether it will happen soon enough, but it will happen, I can guarantee you. My prediction would be that in 50 years the major energy powers in the world will not be the ones in possession of oil but the ones in possession of the most advanced technology which is environmentally-friendly. I think we are heading in that direction. Whether we are going fast enough is the real question we have to deal with.

There is also an interesting debate which might be connected, but I will surely not have enough time to explain it. It is connected with many of the measures which we take, for example in transport – the combustion engine – but we can only push to a certain limit. We should look further. We should look at the alternatives. What is the long-term sustainable solution? I think that is what we have to look at. I am convinced that these things will happen, but the question of time is decisive.

3-101

Nessa Childers (S&D). – Welcome Commissioner-designate. I am going to return to enforcement, possibly in more detail. As you know, there is a long history from certain governments of half-hearted compliance, subtle resistance and downright breaking of European environmental legislation. I have two questions here.

I want to know: what new legal enforcement mechanisms would you take against national governments which continue to break environmental law and will you revise some legislation, in particular the EIA Directive, to add to its effectiveness because it is very problematic at the moment?

Secondly, how do you intend to counteract attempts to use the economic crisis as an excuse for slowing implementation of environmental law?

3-102

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – One thing which we tried to do, or which is in the pipeline, is, where we have a large number of complaints, to ensure that all of them are registered. The development of this new registration system of complaints is an important measure. It is an EU pilot. Whether we like it or not, I think we have to be aware that the real capacities for implementation and control lie with the Member States.

As for many things, such as access to justice, we have to continue with what is in the Aarhus Convention and the Access to Justice Initiative. There are many important things in that connection which I intend to push further, because I think it is of extreme importance that we strengthen the cooperation role between us and the Member States.

There are many other things which one can mention, and one of them is of course inspections. I remember there was an EP resolution in 2007 as to whether there was a directive needed or a European investment inspectorate. We are currently doing an impact assessment which will be on the table in March this year and I will decide on the basis of that. So if that produces a clear sign that it is needed, I intend to go in that direction of course.

As for the EIA: as I understand it, it is the silver anniversary of this directive, so after 25 years we are to start a review of the EIA. This process will certainly involve consultation and you will have every possibility to express your view on where things should go.

3-103

Nessa Childers (S&D). – I am reassured by your answer. I would just like to ask in follow-up to that, regarding these compliance issues, will you involve Parliament as much as possible in dealing with them and indeed in your whole portfolio?

3-104

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – The answer would be: as much as possible. We have had these implementing sessions and I think they worked well. We should continue in that way. My firm belief is that we both have very clear European interests, and joining our forces in that respect could certainly give better results and could give additional impetus in the right direction. So yes, the answer is true.

Now I will turn to the question of economics, which you also asked as the fourth part of the first question. I think it is simply a wrong philosophy. Anyone who does not understand that must be made aware that it is not the case. The economic crisis is the best opportunity for some of the structural changes which you normally do not make if you are not under pressure. We are currently under pressure. Let us use that and let us make the necessary changes. Many companies understand that. Many of them are making huge investments, huge

innovation efforts, and they also deserve a clear positive message, clear support. But from our side the messages should also be pretty simple.

3-105

Romana Jordan Cizelj (PPE). – Spoštovani gospod Potočnik, vprašanje imam o skladnem razvoju, in sicer iz programa Life+, ki je namenjen financiranju najboljših pobud ali perspektivnih projektov, povezanih z upravljanjem območij Natura 2000.

Evropska uredba določa okvirne nacionalne kvote za sorazmerno razdelitev projektov po posameznih državah članicah in sredstva se razdelijo, če projekti dosežejo minimalno število točk. V primeru pa, da je takih projektov iz določene države premalo, se prerazporedijo drugim.

Dejstvo je, da je v letu 2008 prišlo do precej nesorazmerne delitve sredstev in zato vas sprašujem:

Kako boste ukrepali, da se bo program Life+ izvajal celovito in uravnoteženo med državami članicami, in kako boste poskrbeli za okrepljen nadzor nad porabljenimi sredstvi znotraj programa Life, tudi v smislu uravnoteženega razvoja znotraj Unije?

3-106

Janez Potočnik, kandidat za komisarja. – Hvala lepa, zmeraj je lepo dobiti kavo v trenutku, ko lahko začneš odgovarjati v svojem jeziku.

Life je pomemben program, ki ga imamo, in jaz... Precejšen del sredstev iz programa Life je bilo doslej posvečeno oziroma namenjeno predvsem temu, da so se vzpostavila področja, ki so povezana z zaščito v okviru Nature 2000, direktive, ki je povezana s ptiči, in direktive, ki je povezana s habitati.

Jaz mislim, da se bo – da po tem, zdaj ko zaključujemo pravzaprav s tem delom – da se bo vzpostavil, da se bo naredil določen manevrski prostor, v katerem bo mogoče ta sredstva uporabiti tudi drugače. In ta manevrski prostor bi bilo smiselno uporabiti za izgradnjo okrepitev kapacitet v posameznih državah članicah.

Kako daleč je šlo pri... kako daleč je res to, kar pravite, da so bila sredstva nesorazmerno porazdeljena, tega preprosto ne vem. Ker preprosto bi si moral bolj natančno pogledati delitev in iti tudi v natančno razporeditev in pogledati, kaj je resnica na tem. Ampak v vsakem primeru bom temu posvetil pozornost.

Edina stvar, ki bi jo rad ponovno opozoril, je, da tudi približno – ta sredstva sicer so pomembna in mislim, da bi bilo tudi prav, da se v naslednji finančni perspektivi okrepijo – vendar tudi približno cilje, ki so pred nami in ki so povezani z ohranjanjem narave na katerem koli področju, ne moremo gledati in dosežati skozi te.

Zame je vendarle primaren ta horizontalni pristop in jasna vključitev vseh prioritet, ki so povezane z okoljem, v ruralno politiko, v strukturno politiko, v vse te politike, ki so ključne, in ki imajo... tudi v konec koncev

znanstveno raziskovalno politiko, vse te politike, ki so pravzaprav ključne, da lahko spremenijo ta široki, bom rekel, ta široki tok sredstev. Tu se mi zdi, da bi morala biti v prihodnosti moja ključna pozornost.

3-107

Romana Jordan Cizelj (PPE). – Strinjam se s pomembnostjo horizontalnega pristopa. Ker pa ste dejali, da nimate podatkov, morda postrežem samo z dvema: devetnajst držav članic ni izčrpalo sredstev, devet jih je porčpalo manj kot 50 procentov.

In zaradi tega tudi sama ocenjujem, da to ni problem posamezne države članice, temveč je resnično evropski problem. In zato bi zdajle tudi... vas izzivam oziroma bi želela slišati od vas, da se boste tudi osebno zavzeli, da bodo v Komisiji analizirani vzroki za tako stanje in seveda, da se sprejmejo ustrezni ukrepi, da se izboljša.

3-108

Janez Potočnik, kandidat za komisarja. – Bil sem seznanjen s tem, da so določeni problemi pri črpanju tega denarja. Tisto, kar ste dejali, to bom tudi naredil.

Skratka, bom poskrbel za to, da bo tovrstna analiza opravljena. Skorajda dvomim, da že ni. In, v kolikor še ni, zanesljivo bom poskrbel, da bo opravljena in da se bom tudi osebno seznanil z njenimi rezultati, tako da bom vedel, kako naprej.

3-109

Thomas Ulmer (PPE). – Herr Vorsitzender, Herr Kommissaranwärter! Ich habe eine Frage, die sich mehr auf technische Bereiche der Zusammenarbeit mit dem Parlament als auf inhaltliche Dinge bezieht: Können Sie sich vorstellen, dass wir eine Priorisierung von Umweltfragen und Strategien nach Machbarkeit, Erfolgsaussichten, Kosten-Nutzen-Effizienz und Gesundheitsrisiken durchführen? Welchen Kommissar der sechs, die für den Umweltausschuss zuständig sind, können Sie sich als Führungsposition vorstellen? Wer sorgt dafür, dass sich Ladenhüter, die in einigen Dossiers immer wieder vorkommen, nicht laufend wiederholen, wenn wir sie abgelehnt haben, indem sie im nächsten Dossier in einer veränderten Form wieder auftreten? Was halten Sie von Auslaufklauseln, dass wir Gesetze auch rechtzeitig beenden können? Und die letzte Frage: Wie stehen Sie zur Donaustategie?

3-110

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – I could not give you a precise answer here. My promise is that on all the issues where we are cooperating – and practically that means all of them – I will seriously and very honestly consider you as somebody who is cooperating with me in that field. For me, that is a kind of precondition, and I have always understood that as part of political culture.

The Lisbon Treaty is bringing some novelties. It is also strengthening the role of the European Parliament, which I support very much, because I think that not only your involvement but also the possibility of your influencing decisions is improving, and that is putting

more legitimacy behind the proposals, which will finally be adopted. That would broadly be my answer.

In terms of all the specific questions, I simply do not have a clear view. But my firm commitment is that I am ready, I am open and, whatever problem you might have, I will be ready to listen to you personally or in the committee.

I am committed to working with the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as I was before. To tell you frankly, I have heard the words 'directive' and 'legislation' more times in one day than in the previous five years, but that is probably the new kind of life which I will get used to.

I have also learnt a lot about the new comitology approach, where you can also expect an open hand from me. I think there are many things which will give us opportunities to work together.

3-111

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL). – Senhor Comissário indigitado, vou poupar-me a considerações porque só tenho um minuto. Passo já à pergunta. A minha pergunta tem a ver, ainda, com a biodiversidade, com o financiamento da política de conservação da biodiversidade, em particular com o financiamento da rede Natura 2000.

Concorda com o modelo de financiamento, como existe hoje, sem que exista um instrumento específico dirigido à rede Natura 2000? Ou seja, todos concordamos com a abordagem transversal (horizontal). O que existe hoje é que esse financiamento é feito exclusivamente a partir de fundos como o Fundo de Desenvolvimento Agrícola ou os Fundos Estruturais. Pergunto se concorda com esta visão do financiamento da rede Natura 2000 ou se, pelo contrário, entende que deveria haver um instrumento específico de financiamento?

Não posso deixar de reparar que escreveu nas notas que nos enviou que defende novas metas, novos objectivos em termos de conservação da biodiversidade. A questão que lhe coloco é se considera então que há um problema com as metas em si mesmas que foram definidas, mais do que com os meios que foram colocados ao dispor da consecução dessas metas, e, nessa medida, porquê então novas metas? São as metas que têm que ser novas ou o financiamento para alcançar as metas que foram estipuladas?

3-112

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – After all the discussion we have shared today in these two and a half hours, I think we can conclude by saying that in biodiversity we have major challenges – major challenges in understanding and major challenges in improving the situation.

As far as I remember, there is a binding provision in Life that a minimum of 50% should be used for the targets which are devoted to Natura. But I think it is too simplistic to think that this will enable questions

connected to biodiversity to be managed. I repeat that only a holistic, cross-sectoral approach here will give results: so the common agriculture policy itself, and the funds which are implicitly included, and the common fisheries policy, which today, as far as I have learned, is quite open concerning some of the sustainability issues.

These are the things which we have to address via the policies and, implicitly, inside the policies via the instruments because, if the policies in other areas work in a sustainable way, then also, implicitly, we will have a lot of answers as to how to deal with biodiversity. At this moment I have no idea about new instruments or new funding mechanisms for that. I think we should use what we have but, when we discuss the new Financial Perspective, we have to have both eyes wide open as to how we create all the policies across the board to ensure that they also suit the purpose of protecting biodiversity.

3-113

Julie Girling (ECR). – See the trust that they have placed in me!

I would like to ask you a more general question about your wider role in the team of Commissioners, your collegiate role, if you like.

There are many of us here who believe that Europe should keep its nose out of a lot of things that it points in, but the environment is not one of those. The entitlement of the EU to lead on environmental action is well acknowledged, but it has suffered a huge blow in the failure at Copenhagen.

This is not a question about climate change, it is more a question about the implications of Europe's leadership role following that failure and, specifically to you, asking what actions you might consider taking to try to restore the confidence of citizens and also industry in Europe as to whether Europe really does deserve and can take that leadership mandate up again.

3-114

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – Concerning the current Commission: since I am present in this Commission and, I hope, will be present also in the next Commission, I believe that doubling the forces in the Commission that will be responsible for climate and the environment is favourable as regards substance. So I think that is definitely a good sign for all of us.

In a way – maybe this will sound provocative – many issues which today are rather in the shadow of climate change, such as earth biodiversity, water issues, soil, waste and so on, could, due to the fact that I am responsible for the environment, be upgraded and could deserve proper treatment in the future. I see it, honestly, as a positive thing.

Concerning our role globally and the responsibilities which we have there, I have already developed my logic a little in one of my answers to one of our colleagues here. We should learn some lessons from what we have heard. I think we should answer the most fundamental

questions about how much we are committed all together, because it is a global question. If we are talking about climate change, that is more than obvious. It is a global issue. There is also the question of how the others are doing and what they are doing and whether all are ready to accept in some way the European approach, which for us is logical. I think is also the best. But can we really transpose it all across the globe? Because we need changes – that is important. We need changes.

In that respect, concerning the European leadership role: if we are serious politicians and also serious citizens, I think we have to take that responsibility. If we believe in what we are doing and in what we are talking about, do we really have any other possibility than to be in a leadership role?

3-115

Satu Hassi (Verts/ALE). – Commissioner-designate, I am very happy that you mentioned resource efficiency as one of your top priorities, but I would like to hear more specifically what are your plans. What change do you want to achieve in the next five years?

For example, are you ready to work towards binding targets on resource efficiency, and even more specifically, are you ready to work towards binding targets of reducing resource consumption in absolute terms because, as you know, so far the decoupling between economic growth and natural resource use has been done only in relative terms. In absolute terms resource use has been growing.

3-116

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – Even if it is close to the end it is an extremely important question. I think there are a number of facts we should take into account.

One is that Europe is a resource importer. That is an important fact which we have to take into account when we talk about how our international partners are acting globally. Another interesting fact is that Japan is better than we are regarding resource efficiency, obviously given that we are somehow reserved in that regard. The classical method of measuring GDP per tonnes is simply not optimal. These are three facts which I would first like to mention, before going into detail and answering your questions.

The concept of resource-efficiency will be central to my approach. We already have the new recycling targets; we have the eco-design directive; we have waste prevention; we have the sustainability, consumption and production action plan. Many of the pieces are already there.

Whenever we discuss setting targets, I think it is fair to say that we need to have a careful approach, avoid distortions and shifts of burden. The energy targets which we adopted are quite complex; and when we start to talk about resource efficiency and resource targets, we should be aware that these are even more complex.

But my ultimate concern is, of course, reducing environmental impacts. That is why I will consider setting targets to impose resource efficiency. However, it will not be as much about 'how much'; but first and foremost it will be 'how'. This is also a very serious question.

These are the issues which will be addressed as part of the review of the thematic strategies on natural resources and on the prevention of waste and recycling, in 2010 and 2011.

3-117

Corinne Lepage (ALDE). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, tout d'abord, je vous remercie pour la qualité de vos réponses. Je vais aborder un sujet un peu différent, dont on n'a pas encore du tout parlé, à savoir celui de l'évaluation et de l'expertise, qui est essentiel dans le domaine de l'environnement.

Comment pensez-vous pouvoir assurer la confiance légitime que nos concitoyens doivent pouvoir avoir dans les informations qui leur sont données et dans le processus de décision? Comment pensez-vous pouvoir améliorer et renforcer le contrôle des déclarations d'intérêts, notamment chez les experts?

Pensez-vous pouvoir améliorer la transparence concernant la composition et le fonctionnement des groupes d'experts actifs au niveau de la DG Environnement? Pensez-vous pouvoir renforcer la transparence dans le fonctionnement du lobbying, en répondant aux obligations du registre initié par le commissaire Kallas?

Enfin, estimez-vous nécessaire d'associer davantage la société civile dans l'expertise pour assurer son caractère contradictoire?

3-118

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – First, to clarify my position about lobbying, I can see that lobbying is a perfectly normal part of my work, so I consider it more as getting information, which does not at all mean that I have to follow what I am hearing.

But I have to hear different views, and I think I have to arrange matters so that I hear all the views, so that the views of, for example, NGOs, are perfectly clearly heard, and I can say that that will certainly be the case.

The second point is about the quality of studies. I have spent practically all my last five years in office dealing with this issue, ensuring that all the studies and everything we are doing in DG Research is transparent and has a high-quality base, that the selection process is done in a way that is independent, and that we can as far as possible eliminate from the system the nagging thought that something is wrong and something could be contradictory.

I also intend to pursue that kind of logic when dealing with the Environment DG. I think that it is important to

be able to trust the experts, but trust in the scientific papers and expert papers is of the utmost importance.

Finally, I think that this impact assessment logic which has been introduced really improved many things, and it is very much forcing us to focus. However, one thing on which we have to be pretty strong and insistent is that the quality of that impact assessment is as high as possible, because the quality determines to what extent it is useful and whether it is really fulfilling its job as it should.

3-119

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – Dear Commissioner-designate, we started our hearing today with the importance of water management and I propose finishing our hearing today with the water issue because water management has strategic importance for the whole of Europe and for the whole world. You mentioned and you emphasised that you have a firm conviction and intention to follow the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, but what specific measures have been taken for this purpose?

3-120

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – None of the measures have yet been taken because I am far from being in a position yet where I could take those measures.

When I was looking at the history of how we have managed the European acquis, I was quite surprised to see that water was on our agenda. The Water Framework Directive was adopted only in the year 2000. We started with chemicals in 1967, and then we developed other pieces of legislation. I was, as I say, quite surprised that the Water Framework Directive was from 2000. The approach taken in the Water Framework Directive is the river basin approach. But it is also very important that we achieve comprehensive assessment systems.

Transboundary cooperation is the next issue which I think I will look at very carefully. Then there is planning and planning consultation and the 'polluter pays' principle. One important issue in that connection is also the pricing of all water resources. I think that is also one thing which has been very much underestimated in the approach until now. Another issue is balance with other areas and other policies. I think that this is basically part of the logic which I also specifically intend to follow in the Water Framework Directive.

I think price, efficiency and demand-side measures are simply not looked at carefully enough. Regarding the legislation we have in place, you again have my commitment that I will look thoroughly at all issues of implementation. My policy via the Member States will be pretty simple – straightforward and sharp but, on the other hand, helpful and trying to give a hand. I sincerely believe that subsidiarity and the joint approach could be – or should be – turned into an issue of advantage, not disadvantage.

3-121

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – Please explain what innovative tools can be used in European industries, in European agriculture or in the residential sector in order to reduce water consumption and to decrease water wastage. We waste a lot of water in Europe, mainly in agriculture, which uses 70% of European water, which is a very great amount of water. How can new technologies be introduced in cooperation with agriculture and other sectors?

3-122

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – You are pretty right in pointing out how important new technological developments are. We have European technology environmental plans in place so that this new approach is strengthened and is used in favour of whatever production you talk about.

So it is important to understand that when we talk about that, we are not talking only of biotechnology, nanotechnology, information technology, which are the most advanced technologies, but that we are also talking of how we can use them best. And not just them but new technological decisions, as well as the advancement in the areas which you mentioned – agriculture, for example, and fisheries and water management also.

I share with you the concern about the efficiency of the use of water. I think it is an issue which certainly needs attention, but again I think that a holistic approach is needed.

So price, demand measures, technology measures, then certainly also the behavioural approach and stimulation of that. All these things matter and I think that is the way I would intend to go.

3-123

Peter Liese (PPE). – Herr designierter Kommissar! Ich habe eine Frage zur Zusammenarbeit mit dem Europäischen Parlament: Nach Artikel 225 des Vertrags – früher unter dem alten Vertrag Artikel 152 – hat das Parlament ein indirektes Initiativrecht. In Ihrer schriftlichen Antwort gehen Sie darauf ein und sagen, dass Sie das in Betracht ziehen. Aber schon der Vertrag sagt mehr. Sie wissen sicher, dass das Parlament mit Kommissionspräsident Barroso darüber verhandelt, dass wir gerne hätten, dass die Kommission grundsätzlich – da gibt es Ausnahmen –, wenn wir einen qualifizierten Vorschlag mit qualifizierter Mehrheit machen, ihrerseits auch einen Vorschlag unterbreitet. Meine Frage: Werden Sie das in Ihrem Bereich grundsätzlich tun? Und werden Sie auch Herrn Barroso gegenüber unsere Position vor der Abstimmung über die Kommission Ende dieses Monats unterstützen?

3-124

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – I think that the Lisbon Treaty is pretty clear. It says that ‘The European Parliament may, acting by a majority of its component Members, request the Commission to submit any appropriate proposal on matters on which it considers that a Union act is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties. If the Commission does not

submit a proposal, it shall inform the European Parliament of the reasons.’

We negotiated that Treaty for a long time so I think it is very important that we implement it. My personal opinion is of course that if the request of the Parliament is presented in the way you have presented it, then we should very seriously consider it. I was a member of the first Barroso Commission which, if we look, had a pretty good record concerning that type of request which came from the European Parliament.

In essence I think it is part of a discussion which is broader than the discussion between us here in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and me as a Commissioner-designate for Environment. I think it is something which should be part of our institutional agreement and arrangements between Parliament and Commission – so interinstitutional agreement. I think that President Barroso meant it very seriously when he spoke of a special partnership. A special partnership means open cooperation and good cooperation and I think where a serious proposal is made with this same kind of seriousness then it should be addressed.

3-125

Peter Liese (PPE). – Natürlich haben Sie Recht: Im Vertrag steht, dass die Kommission auch die Begründung geben kann, wenn sie keinen Vorschlag macht. Aber da möchte ich schon gern genauer wissen, was Sie in Ihrem Verantwortungsbereich dem Kollegium empfehlen und welche Meinung Sie in den Diskussionen gegenüber Herrn Barroso vertreten. Welche Gründe könnten dazu führen, dass die Kommission keinen Vorschlag macht? Und könnten Sie ausschließen, dass der Grund wäre: „Ich habe einen Anruf aus London, Berlin oder Paris bekommen, und deswegen mache ich keinen Vorschlag“? Dürfen wir Sie also so verstehen, dass Sie diese Partnerschaft mit dem Parlament wirklich ernst nehmen und nicht sagen: „Der Rat ist halt dagegen.“

3-126

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – I can tell you it certainly will not be the call from Berlin, London or Ljubljana. That is not something which will influence my decision in that case.

Again I would say that this is a question which has to be addressed broadly and which has to be addressed in the relations between the Commission and Parliament.

My promise is that if you to come up with serious proposals with majority support – I cannot give you a legal commitment now, you are well aware of that – I will abide by the Treaty which was agreed. I believe that any such proposal would be seriously considered, and if the Commission were to say ‘no’ – and again I refer to the experience and record of the current Barroso Commission – then we would need to have a really serious reason for doing so.

So that is the most I can say. The rest I think will be part of the additional negotiations which will take place between the institutions.

3-127

Chair. – Dear Colleagues, we are at the end of the question time. Thank you very much for helping me to respect the rules and to keep to the time management. I think we did quite well. One colleague did not turn up, so we saved five minutes.

I think that Commissioner-designate Potočnik has worked a lot over Christmas and New Year. I could see from here the many handwritten papers. He said that the European continent is green and the planet is blue. There are many more colours – pink, velvet orange, yellow, black – so he really went through the whole portfolio of the Environment Commissioner. In these three hours I think we touched the *tour d'horizon* of many questions that are close to our hearts and important to our commitment. I thank you for your questions, and the Commissioner-designate for the answers.

You promised that in your five minutes at the end you would continue the story of what your personal action plan is to save the environment, and I have a question for you. What is the normal temperature in your living room and, alternatively, in your study? Looking at the temperature in this room, it is 25°C – definitely a few degrees too high – so the environment management system of Parliament could be better, in my opinion. I know that ladies freeze a little earlier than men, but it is man-made!

I will give the floor for the final statement of Janez Potočnik. Maybe he will, nevertheless, tell me what the temperature in his house and in his living room is.

3-128

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner-designate. – I think it is not fair because we should measure the temperature at the beginning of the meeting and at the end of the meeting, so probably that would be... No, but the normal working temperature is around 21°.

I am unfortunately a person who prefers hotter places to colder, but I come from a country where we are also pretty much used to colder temperatures. But if I can just share some of my views for the end of our hearing.

When I went through all this panoply of directives and papers and new abbreviations which I have to get used to, I wrote to myself – before I actually started to go into more details and more horizontal papers, before I started to read the issues which are connected with the six environmental action plans, 2007 review and EPR 2008 summary documents and so on – I wrote to myself what the main policy orientations of my mandate are. I came to something like ‘environmental questions should be put higher on the political agenda and brought out of the shadow of climate change; sustainability should be defined in a holistic way and embedded in all policy initiatives; a cross-cutting approach should be used in all

possible synergies exploited in other policy areas, especially the synergies with climate change.’

As I said at the beginning, I have many of the prohibitive measures, but the others have many stimulative measures in their hands which certainly I would like to combine. We live in a market economy. Sustainability is a major business and employment opportunity. The environment should be seen as working hand in hand with the economy and not against it. The broadly accepted concept of the carbon-free economy should be extended into a resource-efficient economy. As much as possible, Strategy 2020 should match the strategy for sustainable development. Securing appropriate funding will be crucial for effective policies. It is important to increase direct funding for environmental goals but, more than that, it is important that all funding instruments are used in a way that is consistent with an over-reaching sustainability approach and environmental goals. More active international involvement is needed, since many of the questions could be addressed only globally, and so on. The rest are more specifically for the portfolio.

So I was, in fact, pretty much looking forward to today's debate, because I hope it will be the beginning of our good cooperation in the next five years. I sincerely believe that that could be the case. As I said, I will always be open to any of your suggestions and any of your calls to come and visit you and discuss things.

And if you want, finally, the story of the Prius. My son crashed the Prius – listen carefully – on 13 November at the 13th hour, and do not ask when the hearing was: today on the 13th at the 13th hour. So I said, if this is a bad karma, I have to crash the bad karma immediately. But we are buying a new one.

Thank you for everything, and I sincerely hope that this is the beginning of our good cooperation in the coming years.

(Applause)

3-129

Chair. – I should like to thank colleagues and Commissioner-designate Potočnik. That was a very interesting three hours. The hearing is closed.

(The hearing closed at 15.55)