

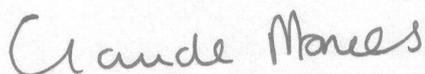
# February Report from Claude Moraes MEP

## Report and Newsletter from Claude Moraes MEP, Labour Member of the European Parliament for London

Dear Friends

Please find below my report to you for February 2010.

In February, I was involved in two of the major votes in parliament. This month Parliament voted to approve the new European Commission. Also in February, Parliament voted to reject the EU-US data sharing agreement, called SWIFT, a controversial deal which was struck down by the parliament. Parliament also debated the introduction of body scanners and voted on people trafficking.



### Greece Crisis

The economic crisis in Greece has threatened to destabilise the euro area. At the recent meeting of Member States, they were broadly supportive of Greek efforts to reduce its budget deficit. The current situation has been precipitated by the downgrading of Greek debt by credit reference agencies. Such agencies have been widely discredited and in a European context have targeted centre-left governments rather than countries with similar debt problems such as Ireland.

Although the UK is outside the Euro zone, it comprises our single major trading partner by far. Within the Euro zone, Greece will in time succeed. An article on this subject can be found in this months Tribune.

### Labour MEPs Response to the Haiti Earthquake

The aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti is the one of the most serious humanitarian crises for decades. The European Union response to the crisis was quick, with European countries sending aid and assistance within hours of the disaster striking.

The European response to the earthquake in Haiti is not, however, limited to the immediate aid response. In a country where 12 million inhabitants lived on less than 2 US dollars a day before the earthquake, the European Union is keen to see important, long-term reconstruction take place in Haiti. One main way in which the EU is supporting this important goal is to get behind the G7's

cancellation of Haiti's international debt – a debt burden which stood at 1 billion US dollars at the time the earthquake struck.

In February, a Resolution of the European Parliament on the Haiti earthquake addressed the outstanding long-term problems in the country. If you would like more information on the EU response to the earthquake please contact my office.

### **New European Commission**

MEPs voted in February to confirm the new European Commission. MEPs secured the withdrawal of the candidacy of Rumania Jeleva of Bulgaria, who was weaker than other candidates. After securing a new Bulgarian nominee, MEPs voted to approve the new Commission. Parliamentarians have also secured agreement from the Commission President to give the Parliament increased powers. Under an agreement to manage the new relationship between the Commission and Parliament post-Lisbon, MEPs will get the right to ask the Commission to examine a legislative area for possible action. MEPs also secured the right to dismiss or approve individual Commissioners. A further key reform will be the expansion of Question Time with individual Commissioners.

### **Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme – SWIFT**

As the Group Spokesperson for the Socialist & Democrats on Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs I have been heavily involved in discussions on the SWIFT data transfer agreement between the EU and US. This agreement, in place since the Bush era saw the bulk transfer of all our financial transactions (SWIFT is a private banking consortium which includes all the UK High Street banks) to the United States Treasury & Department of Homeland Security. There were no safeguards or legal redress for EU citizens and any extracted data could be kept by the US for up to 90 years under US law. The agreement, as with so many excessive actions during the Bush administration was designed to track terrorist financing. The disproportionately and ineffectiveness of these bulk transfers was challenged by the European Parliament using its first consent procedure under the Lisbon Treaty. The agreement was struck down and in the interim an existing EU-US mutual assistance agreement with safeguards will apply, and a brand new agreement with all requested safeguards will now be negotiated. It is important to tackle terrorism, but to get the most effective policies that safeguard privacy is also critical. If you would like more information on SWIFT please contact my office, I have also written on this subject in The Guardian.

### **People Trafficking**

The European Parliament passed a Resolution demanding that victims of people trafficking, particularly women and children should receive “unconditional” assistance. As the Group Spokesperson on Justice & Home

Affairs matters, I coordinated an this debate. According to Europol trafficking for sexual exploitation has remained static and trafficking for forced labour is increasing. Under the Lisbon Treaty, the parliament has full co-decision powers in this area and the Resolution serves as a good example of how any future Justice & Home Affairs matters in this area will be viewed by Parliament. If you would like more information on the Resolution please contact my office.

### **Bodyscanners**

I led the debate for my Group on body scanners as a tool to prevent terrorist attacks. Some member states including the UK have started to introduce these scanners at airports. I, along with many of my colleagues in the Parliament are concerned about the application of these scanners. They raise considerable questions over issues such as the dose of radiation pregnant women may be subject to, child protection laws and the protection of personal and intimate data. Some recent tests showed that they do not detect all forms of explosives and they also cannot stop items smuggled internally. We need the most effective use of technology to tackle terrorism and the European Parliament will have enhanced powers in the area.

**Other News in Parliament this month:** - Parliament Position on Online Gambling - Outcome of Copenhagen Summit - Framework agreement on health & safety in hospitals - Taxation of financial transactions and Tobin Tax.  
**For more information please contact our office.**

**In February, I asked Parliamentary Questions on improving passenger information on Europe's railways to enable airline style booking systems. I also asked the Commission how is it responding to the increase in homophobic legislation in Africa.**

### **LABOUR PARTY NEWS**

The General election and London Borough elections are rapidly approaching. I am aware that many of you will be canvassing and campaigning in the coming weeks – I have already begun assisting CLPs before the General Election. If you would like me to assist or speak to your members please contact my office and I will endeavour to get to as many London CLPs as I can.

### **MY VISITS AND MEETINGS IN FEBRUARY**

01 Feb – Meeting with EPLP with Gordon Brown and Europe Minister, Chris Bryant

01 Feb – Meeting with Lord Mandelson, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation & Skills

01 Feb – Meeting with Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Energy & Climate Change

01 Feb – Meeting with Parliamentary Labour Party, House of Commons  
01 Feb - Meeting with Alicia Kennedy, Deputy Secretary General of the Labour Party discussing MEPs involvement in the general election campaign  
02 Feb – Meeting with US Ambassador to the EU on the SWIFT Agreement  
02 – 04 Feb – Political Group Meetings, EPLP & S&D including with Glenis Kinnock, Minister for Africa on development issues  
02 Feb – Meeting with German Marshall Fund  
02 Feb – Meeting with Stockholm Programme Task Force  
04 Feb – Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs Committee  
08 Feb – Meeting with London Trade Unionists (TULO)  
08 – 11 Feb – Plenary Voting Session, Strasbourg  
08 Feb – Internal Market & Consumer Affairs Committee voting on consumer protection reports  
10 Feb – Meeting with Roma Task Force  
10 Feb – SWIFT and body scanners debate and vote  
11 Feb – Meeting with LGBT All Party Group  
11 Feb – Meeting with Anti-Racism & Diversity All Party Group  
13 Feb – Meeting with members of the London Tamil Community on the Transitional Government of Tamil Eelam, Wembley  
17 Feb – Report Back to Queen Mary, University of London Labour Society, London  
22 – 24 Feb – Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs and Internal Market Committees  
22 Feb – Meeting with Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for the Home Office  
22 Feb – Meeting with EUs Fundamental Rights Agency Director, Morten Kjaerum, Brussels  
23 Feb – Meeting with Board of British Deputies of Jews, Brussels  
28 Feb – Meeting with German Social Democrats, London