

February Report from Claude Moraes MEP



Dear Friends

Welcome to my February Newsletter.

The last few weeks have seen dramatic and unprecedented events in the Middle East. The European Union has a major role to play here, where so called “Neighbourhood Policy” is a critical element of EU strategy with third countries. MEPs and the EU were fully aware of significant changes in Libya and to a lesser extent Tunisia because of increased refugee flows to southern Member States.

As the Socialists and Democrats Spokesperson in this area, I have been working with EU Commissioners and the Council on our policy in the Mediterranean, particularly in relation to Frontex (the EU’s border agency) and the new refugee problems in the Mediterranean.

Labour MEPs have also been working hard on a whole host of other issues this month, including the rights of victims package, resisting an EU-Columbia Trade Deal until human rights concessions are won, blocking US-style prescription drug advertising and continuing our work on important counter-human trafficking efforts.

I regularly update my website and Facebook page on these themes and other issues and hope that this report to you will be both informative and interesting.

Please feel free to get in touch with any of the issues below,

Claude Moraes

Labour MEP for London

Protests in the Middle East

I’m pushing for a greater sense of urgency in the EU’s immediate and longer term immigration and asylum policy. The situation in the Middle East should be wake up call, not just in the short-term, but also for the future such policy in Europe. I’ve made this point to the Hungarian Presidency, the Commission, the European External Action Service and Frontex in the European Parliament. You can see what I said to these representatives last week in

Brussels using the link below. One critical point here is Member States no longer blocking the fair Asylum Package, which would allow for burden sharing and relocation – both practical ways of helping people as they flee brutality in Libya and repression in other Middle Eastern countries.

[I have written about the situation in Egypt](#), and also regularly update my Facebook on the current situation in Libya

[To read more about this important issue, please click here](#)

The Rights of Victims of Crime – a Major London issue

Many thousands suffer crime across Europe and incur huge difficulties in seeking legal and medical redress. I have recently brought attention to this issue in the European Commission, where European Commission Viviane Reding will imminently announce a complete package of victim support rights in law across the EU. The European Commission intends to adopt a package of measures, including a Directive on minimum standards for victims of crime, in the first half of 2011 to replace the 2010 Framework Discussion on the standing of victims. This will include stronger legal protection, guaranteed EU assistance in each EU Member State as well as medical and other funding assistance for victims of crime.

Our work was also filmed for ITN.

[To read more about fundamental rights in the EU, please click here](#)

Britain absent as other countries agree to tackle Human Trafficking

During its final plenary sitting before Christmas, the European Parliament endorsed a deal with EU governments to tackle illegal human trafficking. However, the agreement on a new directive to combat trafficking was struck without a British voice at the negotiating table. This is because the UK government decided to opt out of the plans in August.

I've argued against the UK's position on human trafficking. While other countries are agreeing to work together to tackle the scourge of human trafficking, the British government is nowhere to be seen. While Britain should be leading the way in the fight against this abhorrent practice, the UK government has decided to sit it out.

The agreed text includes an agreement by governments to coordinate sanctions against traffickers and special procedures to protect child victims of trafficking.

[To read more about this important issue, please click here](#)

MEPs stiffen resolve on EU-Columbia Trade Deal

Politicians from across four political groups and six EU countries have vowed to build their campaign to resist an EU free trade agreement with Colombia unless and until there are concrete improvements in its human rights record. The initial stages of an agreement to open up trade have already been provisionally agreed by the EU, but the text will need to get the European Parliament's approval before it can come into force.

MEPs have agreed a joint statement which says that Colombia's President Santos has simply not lived up to the assurances on human and trade union rights that were made to a delegation of European parliamentarians in July.

The statement reads: "For those who have lost their lives and those who live in daily fear, we believe that the European Parliament has an obligation not to ratify the free trade agreement before concrete improvements on human rights are demonstrated. Today, we vow to ensure that all members know of these stories and we will build the campaign to ensure that the free trade agreement will face firm resistance from the European Parliament without those improvements."

[To read more on this important issue, please click here](#)

Labour blocks US-style prescription drug advertising

Labour MEPs have blocked changes to EU law on how pharmaceutical companies provide information to patients. This is to prevent introducing US-style drug adverts. At present, drug companies are banned from advertising prescription-only medicines to consumers in the EU. The type of information they can supply to patients is also strictly controlled.

However, proposals put forward by the European Commission could have allowed pharmaceutical companies to directly target consumers with promotional material in health magazines and to push specific medicines to patients through their doctors. Labour MEPs and their socialist colleagues succeeded in defeating the move.

[To read more, please click here](#)

Opposition Watch

Labour MEPs this month called on David Cameron to condemn comments made by Conservative MEP Roger Helmer, or risk associating his party with highly offensive homophobic views.

The Tory MEP caused a storm of protest on Twitter after publishing a homophobic tweet about psychiatrists "turning" LGBT individuals.

Michael Cashman MEP, who chairs a European Parliament group dealing with LGBT rights, commented that David Cameron has made much of his 'apology' for the Tory Party's discrimination of gay people through Section 28 and his claims that his party has changed. He added that if Cameron was

sincere, he must take action against Helmer. If he does nothing, he will be condoning Helmer's view and proving that the Tories are still the nasty party without the guts to stand up for minorities.

Seven Lib Dem MEPs refused to back improved passenger rights for disabled people on long distance bus and coach journeys on Tuesday. Despite support for the package from several disability organisations, Catherine Bearder, Andrew Duff, Edward McMillan-Scott, Bill Newton Dunn, Diana Wallis and Graham Watson abstained. UKIP MEPs voted against the deal, while Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons also abstained.

Labour Party News

In the coming weeks, I'll be reporting back to the following Labour CLPs personally:

Hackney North CLP - February 24th 2011

Iford South CLP - March 24th 2011

Islington North CLP – April 20th 2011

Hornsey and Wood Green CLP - April 27th 2011

Ealing Central & Acton CLP - April 28th 2011

Romford CLP – May 26th 2011

List of events and meetings

February

- 01 February - IMCO Committee Meeting
- 01 February - LIBE Committee Meeting
- 01 February - Meeting with Hungarian Presidency on Seasonal Workers
- 02 February - S&D Group Meeting
- 02 February - EPLP Group Meeting
- 02 February - Migration and Employment Working Group
- 03 February - Meeting with European Confederation of Police
- 03 February - Meeting with Michele Le Voy, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants and Seasonal Workers
- 03 February - Meeting with European Roma Policy Coalition
- 03 February - LIBE Committee Coordinators meeting
- 07 February - EPLP Meeting with Ed Miliband MP
- 08 February - Chaired Copyright Taskforce meeting
- 08 February - Chaired HWG E Citizens' Europe meeting
- 08 February - S&D meeting on Hungarian media law
- 08 February - S&D Group meeting
- 09 February - S&D Group meeting
- 09 February - Meeting with Austrian Chamber of Labour

09 February - Meeting with Chair of the LIBE Committee on Seasonal Workers
09 February - EPLP Meeting
09 February - S&D Organised Crime hearing
10 February - Organised Crime hearing
10 February - IMCO Committee Meeting
11 February - Policy Network's London conference
14 February - S&D Group Meeting
14 February - Extremism Working Group
14 February - Extraordinary LIBE meeting
15 February - S&D officers meeting
15 February - LIBE Working Group
15 February - Plenary debate with European Commission on European Asylum system
15 February - S&D Coordinators meeting
15 February - S&D Group meeting
15 February - Plenary debate with European Commission on Bulgaria
16 February - Prayer Breakfast
16 February - S&D Officers meeting
16 February - EPLP meeting
16 February - Plenary debate with European Commission on Hungarian media law
16 February - S&D Group meeting on Hungarian media law
17 February - Working group on Transatlantic Relations
17 February - Plenary debate Transparency of Commission expert groups
19 February - Fabian Society Conference "Britain: in, out or somewhere in between"
23 February - Meeting on MLA Norway and Lichtenstein
24 February - Hackney North CLP visit