

# **January 2010 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 January 2010.

In January, I was one of the Socialist & Democrats Spokespersons in the European Parliament organising the Hearings for European Commission candidates. Our Group rejected the EPP (conservative) candidate for Development on the grounds of a lack of commitment to this important issue. We overall pursued a tough agenda to ensure the European Commission is one that reflects our centre-left values as far as possible. Other important issues in January included the report back on Copenhagen, the start of the Spanish Presidency of the EU and the intense debate over new anti-terrorism measures.

### **NEWS FROM BRUSSELS, STRASBOURG AND LONDON**

#### **Parliamentary Hearings for Commissioner Designates**

We previously have written about the hearings process and that the Commission can be rejected by the European Parliament. As the Socialist & Democrats Group spokesperson on Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs, I questioned Commissioners Designate, Cecilia Malmstrom for Home Affairs and Viviane Reding for Fundamental Rights. Both Commissioner Designates performed well and in particular Cecilia Malmstrom demonstrated a clear understanding of her portfolio. Our Group opposes the separation of Home Affairs and Fundamental Rights as every key issue in this area – asylum, migration, data protection, anti-terrorism and cross border justice combine both security and fundamental rights.

The Bulgarian nominee, Rumiana Jeleva was forced to withdraw her candidacy for Humanitarian Aid Commissioner after a poor performance in her confirmation hearing. Socialist nominees including Spain's Alumnia on Economic Affairs performed well and Labour's Cathy Ashton was approved following a rigorous hearing.

#### **Copenhagen Conference - Outcome**

As I have previously reported, Labour MEPs were heavily involved in the EU's preparations on Copenhagen. The conference on a successor to the Kyoto Treaty ended with no internationally binding agreement. However, significant progress was made and the talks will continue later this year in Mexico. The EU is committed to some of the toughest regulations on CO2 in the world and was prepared to go further if other countries would match that level of commitment. France and the UK made a joint proposal on funding for

developing nations to help them adapt to climate change and also on a reforestation fund. Even though a final agreement wasn't reached at Copenhagen, the conference highlighted the value of cooperation in Europe on key global issues allowing the EU to negotiate as an equal with larger countries such as the US and China.

### **SWIFT Data transfer and Body scanners**

I have previously written about an agreement between the member states and the US government that would enable US law enforcement agencies to access records of financial transactions of European citizens in the fight against terrorism. These transactions are managed by an organisation known as SWIFT. For many years the US authorities were accessing this data without any limits on the use or retention of this personal data. Member States agreed to a temporary deal that would enable the US authorities to continue to use this data with some limited protections against abuse or excessive use. However, this deal was agreed before the Lisbon Treaty, directly between the member states and the US government. It has yet to come into effect and now that the parliament has full co-decision powers over justice policy, some MEPs would like to scrutinise this deal. MEPs are concerned about the lack of proper safeguards for personal data and the blanket nature of the deal. Under the deal, the US authorities can use 'data mining' techniques to capture large amounts of personal data, rather than a targeted approach on a case-by-case basis.

I am leading for our political group on the issue of body scanners, data transfer (SWIFT & PNR) **for more information please contact our office.**

### **Spanish Presidency**

Spain, a Socialist governed country took over the Presidency of the Council in January taking over from Sweden. The Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero came to parliament to outline the priorities for the Spanish Presidency. Among the priorities for the Spanish Presidency are the economic recovery and fighting unemployment. They are proposing measures on harmonising elements of family law, action on gender inequality and implementing the Lisbon Treaty, which is a priority for the Presidency and includes progressive new laws such as a European Protection Order for the victims of domestic violence

Spain is the first country to hold the rotating Presidency under the Lisbon Treaty and will have to balance their Presidency with the new position of permanent President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy.

### **Air Quality Directive**

The European Union has set legally binding targets for each member state to reduce air pollutants known as particulates. Particulates can exacerbate existing respiratory problems and has been attributed thousands of premature deaths.

London has some of the worst air quality of any major city in the EU. Every other UK region except London has met these tough targets on particulates pollution. The commitment to improve air quality, under Ken Livingstone, has waned and subsequently the European Commission issued a rare public rebuke to the Mayor of London for failing to take action on particulates. The UK is now at risk of being fined by the EU , potentially costing UK taxpayers millions.

**Parliamentary Questions asked in January** included, asking the Commission how it plans implementing the Citizen's Initiative, contained within the Lisbon Treaty. I also asked the Commission (as a direct result of a constituent's enquiry) whether EU public procurement rules restrict public authorities from implementing the London Living Wage.

## **LABOUR PARTY NEWS**

Our office is involved in preparations by Labour CLPs across London in the run up to the General Election. London's two Labour MEPs will be playing a full part in your campaigns and please continue to copy us into your campaign plans and I will campaign across London in the run up to the General Election.

I will be speaking at the '**A Progressive Agenda to stop the Right in 2010**'. Keynote speakers will include Harriet Harman, Ken Livingstone, Ed Miliband and a range of speakers from London Trade Unions and NGOs. If you would like to attend the conference is on **Saturday 30 January, 10am-5:30pm, Congress House, Great Russel St, WC1**. For more information please visit [www.progressivelondon.org.uk](http://www.progressivelondon.org.uk)

## **MY VISITS AND MEETINGS IN JANUARY**

11-14 Jan – Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs Committee  
12 Jan – Parliamentary Hearing on the appointment of Viviane Reding for Fundamental Rights  
13 Jan – Meeting with Ambassadors EU Middle East Ambassadors  
12-14 Jan – Political Group Meetings, EPLP & S&D  
18-21 Jan – Plenary Voting Session, Strasbourg  
19 Jan – Parliamentary Hearing on the Appointment of Cecilia Malmstrom for Home Affairs  
21 Jan – Meeting of All Party Group on Ageing & Older People where I was elected Chair  
25-28 Jan – Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs and Internal Market & Consumer Affairs Committees  
25 Jan – Meeting with Alan Johnson MP, Secretary of State for the Home Office  
27 Jan – Meeting with charity SENSE, the leading UK charity for people who are deafblind  
28 Jan – Vauxhall CLP Report Back  
30 Jan – Speaker at Progressive London Conference

## **GET IN TOUCH**

If you would like detailed information on any of the items in this roundup, or would like to invite me to a meeting or event for a report-back in person please let me know by email at [claude@claudemoraes.net](mailto:claude@claudemoraes.net)