

March Report from Claude Moraes MEP



Dear Friends

Welcome to my March Newsletter. If this is the first time you are receiving this Report, it is a chance for me to keep you up to date on what your London Labour MEP is doing on your behalf in Brussels, and to give you a regular analysis of what progressives are doing in the EU.

As I write this, British, French, US and other forces are enforcing a “no fly zone” over Libya, with all the concerns I and others have about the implementation of Resolution 1973. As a Labour representative, I have serious concerns that I know many share about exactly what the end game is and whether we are already moving well beyond a “no fly zone” scenario in Libya.

My work in the European Parliament as Socialists & Democrats Group Spokesperson on Home Affairs is to be involved primarily with the refugee and humanitarian situation caused by the changes in North Africa and the Mediterranean. Also in this newsletter are the monthly issues that Labour MEPs work on that affect Londoners.

I regularly update my website and Facebook page on these themes and hope that this Report will be informative and establish an accountability link with you.

Please feel free to get in touch.

Claude Moraes MEP

Labour MEP for London

Middle East and North African Protests and EU Asylum and Immigration Policy

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 and North Africa should be a wake up call, not just in the short-term, but also for the future of 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.

[We need practical ways of helping people as they flee brutality in Libya](#) and we need to support their [calls for democracy in other Middle Eastern and North African countries](#).

Recent events in North Africa have made plain the real need for practical burden sharing and clear procedures for helping those most in need.

I've written about [the ongoing situation in Libya](#), the calls for [democracy in Egypt](#) and about how [European asylum and immigration policy](#) is at an urgent crossroads.

UK government U-turn on human trafficking

Labour MEPs have welcomed [news that the UK government will finally opt in to EU proposals to combat human trafficking](#).

During its final plenary sitting before Christmas, the European Parliament endorsed a deal with EU governments to tackle illegal human trafficking. However, in August the UK government decided to opt out of those plans.

[I argued against the UK government's position on human trafficking](#). Other countries were agreeing to work together to tackle the scourge of human trafficking, and Britain should have been leading the way in fighting against this abhorrent practice.

As the Socialists & Democrats (S&D) Group's Spokesperson working on this issue with my Swedish S&D MEP colleague Anna Hedh MEP, I welcome the UK government's belated decision to finally opt in to these important proposals. It is however shameful that it agreed only after months of pressure from campaigners and the Labour Party. The UK also lost any chance it might have had to make the Directive even stronger or more effective at the beginning, although the most important thing now is fighting human trafficking in tandem with our European Partners.

Strasbourg travelling circus challenged by Euro-MP vote

Labour MEPs have won a significant victory in their battle against the European Parliament's [wasteful practice of decamping and moving to Strasbourg for four days every month](#). A procedural amendment was backed in a secret ballot of MEPs, which it is hoped will reopen the debate about changing the rules that currently require the European Parliament to meet in Strasbourg, even though most of our work is done in Brussels.

EU crackdown on fake medicines gets green light

The European Parliament has approved new measures to [crack down on the illegal market in counterfeit drugs](#), a trade that can lead to NHS patients being given simple sugar pills rather than life-saving medicines.

Labour MEPs hail disabled passengers' win in Europe

Labour in Europe has welcomed a new agreement that will make it [easier for disabled people to use bus and coach services](#).

The new EU rules mean that bus and coach company staff will need to know how to take some simple steps to make their services more accessible. Disabled passengers who take longer journeys, of more than 160 miles, will also have the right to free assistance at bus terminals and for a carer to travel with them for free if that makes the difference between whether they can travel or not.

S&D calls for Export Ban on Lethal Injection Drugs

Following some media reports claiming that a London based company has supplied the state of Arizona with the drugs needed for the execution of a convicted murder, I've called for an immediate EU-wide export ban on the export of lethal injection drugs.

As the EU is a death penalty-free area, our bilateral agreements also prohibit extradition to third countries where the death penalty is imposed. This should mean we cannot allow European companies to cooperate with countries that execute prisoners by exporting lethal injection drugs. [I oppose capital punishment wherever in the world it is applied and hope that this potential ban will help end the use of the death penalty globally.](#)

Labour MEPs back 'Robin Hood' tax

Labour MEPs have won the support of international colleagues in their campaign for a Robin Hood tax to ensure that the financial services sector pays its fair share

The European Parliament this month adopted a position backing the idea of a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT), which could raise billions and ensure that the financial services sector makes a significant contribution towards the cost of recovering from the banking crisis. [Labour MEPs backed the idea, but the Conservatives refused to support the report, which calls for banks and other finance companies to pay a fairer level of taxation.](#)

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.

Opposition Watch

French Front National Leader Le Pen "Congratulates Cameron"

Marine Le Pen, the new leader of France's extreme right National Front, has [congratulated David Cameron, UK prime minister, for what she claimed was an endorsement of her party's views on the failure of multiculturalism and immigration.](#)

Ms Le Pen, elected to lead the National Front last month, said Mr. Cameron's rejection of multiculturalism in a speech in Munich last week marked a clear shift in British and European politics. "It is exactly this type of statement that has barred us from public life for 30 years," she told the Financial Times. "I sense an evolution at European level, even in classic governments. I can only congratulate him."

[I've written on the politics of diversity in Europe, highlighting my concerns at a growing trend.](#)

Dutch Politician in anti-Islamic court appearance

The far-right Dutch politician Geert Wilders, facing a retrial on charges of incitement to hatred and discrimination, used a court appearance on Monday to engage in harsh anti-Muslim rhetoric, calling Islam a "totalitarian ideology" that seeks to "destroy" European civilisation. Mr. Wilders faces charges before the court of Amsterdam that his anti-Islamic statements have led to discrimination against Muslims in the Netherlands. The trial's significance grew after elections last year made the PVV the third-largest party. It now provides the swing votes that give the Netherlands' governing coalition its majority in parliament.

Labour Party News

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

Ilford South CLP - March 24th 2011

Greenwich and Woolich CLP – March 31st CLP

Islington North CLP – April 20th 2011

Hornsey and Wood Green CLP - April 27th 2011

Romford CLP – May 26th 2011-04-01

In Parliament

I regularly speak and ask Parliamentary Questions in plenary sessions of the European Parliament and [all of this work can be found here](#).