

November 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 November 2009.

This month our newsletter will focus on the new European Commission, the Stockholm Programme on Justice and Home Affairs and the upcoming Copenhagen Climate Change Conference. The Parliament also debated key issues such as preparing itself for the increase in its powers under the Lisbon Treaty and voted on the controversial Telecoms Package.

I also want to thank everyone who has helped our office throughout the year especially during the June European elections.

New European Commission

The European Parliament has the power to reject the new Commission and will hold a series of hearings with the new Commissioners-Designate. I will be leading for the Socialist & Democrats Group in the hearings for Cecilia Malmström who is the Internal Affairs Commissioner-Designate and Viviane Reding who is the newly created Fundamental Rights Commissioner-Designate.

Member states had some difficulty in appointing the new President of the European Council. This is intended to be a chairperson role and not as the media suggested, 'a new President of Europe'. You may also have seen the negative press surrounding the British Commissioner, Baroness Cathy Ashton of Upholland. We now have a Socialist appointee and the Socialist Group will be supporting her candidacy throughout the hearings process.

For more information on the new European Commission, please contact our office.

EU Stockholm Programme on the area of freedom, security and justice

European Union policy on Justice & Home Affairs is determined by a five-year agenda known as the Stockholm Programme. The programme is the next phase of the 'area of freedom, security and justice'. It aims to increase cooperation in European security, policing, justice, asylum & immigration and data protection issues.

The Programme was discussed in Stockholm, in July, and will be adopted by EU Heads of State and Government in December, with the UK reserving the right to opt out of individual measures. The Programme has particular importance now that the Lisbon Treaty has been ratified.

Lisbon gives the European Parliament powers of “co-decision” to decide matters relating to Justice & Home Affairs equally with the governments of member states.

I am leading for the Socialists and Democrats Group (S&D) in the European Parliament on Justice & Home Affairs and have been involved in discussions on the programme and helped co-ordinate the final parliamentary report.

Key measures in the programme included improving protection of our personal data, combating people trafficking, improving asylum & immigration policy, and working towards mutual recognition of civil partnerships.

The Programme also lays out your rights if you are detained by police in another European country and will focus on the individuals’ rights in Europe. Co-operation in such areas as the transfer of data of EU citizen’s personal information is now seen as necessary in the fight against cross border crime and anti-terrorism but it is vital to protect the privacy of citizen’s data and fundamental freedoms of EU citizens.

Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change

The conference to work on a replacement to the Kyoto Protocol is soon to be held in Copenhagen. The Conference aims to agree a comprehensive climate change treaty covering all aspects of carbon reduction. This time all parties are included in the talks, whereas previously the US and Australia failed to ratify the Kyoto treaty and large polluters like China, India and Brazil were not covered and classed as ‘developing’ nations and exempt from the final treaty. However, today China is now the world biggest emitter of carbon (although still a smaller emitter on a per capita basis). The US has also agreed for the first time to introduce mandatory reduction target of 25% of 2005 levels and up to 83% reduction by 2050. Measures to meet this goal such as a version of the EU’s emission trading scheme are still to go through Congress and any international treaty from Copenhagen will also have to be ratified by the US Senate and this is by no means guaranteed.

The EU has led the world on a comprehensive climate change reduction strategy. The Emission Trading Scheme is now four years old and into the second phase of further reductions and the scheme will include aviation for the first time. The EU also agreed a package known as the 20:20 in 20. We have previously reported this is a 20% reduction in carbon emission by 2020, a 20% increase in renewable energy by 2020.

This could rise to 30% if other countries also propose this level of reduction. This was intended to provide leadership for the EU going into the December conference. For the first time the EU will be negotiating on behalf of all 27 member states as climate change is a good example of where the EU’s collective size will result in a stronger negotiating position for the bloc as a whole.

The Parliament’s Environment Committee recently visited the US Congress to encourage them to take a positive view of any climate change treaty and

stressed the importance of the US agreeing for binding emissions targets and briefed Congressman on the EU's Emission Trading Scheme.

We will be keeping you informed on the outcome of the Copenhagen Conference in December's issue. If you would like some background on the Parliament's Copenhagen position please contact my office.

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS ASKED IN NOVEMBER

Removal Flights of Afghan Asylum Seekers

Some member states have started to forcibly repatriate Afghan asylum seekers back to areas of Afghanistan that are still unsafe. I asked the Commission whether in their view the necessary checks were carried out by member states and that the removals do not threaten the safety and security of those forcibly repatriated.

Spam

Despite EU efforts to stamp out spam, over 65% of EU citizens are still affected by spam. I asked the Commission what further action is being taken to reduce the level of spam in Europe further, particularly when 85% of spam originates from outside the EU.

LABOUR PARTY NEWS

New Book on Labour MEPs

A new book on Labour MEPs, by a former Labour MEP, has just been published. Anita Pollack (London South West 1989 – 99, who also worked for the leader of Labour's Barbara Castle from 1980 – 89, has written a history of Labour MEPs covering the first twenty years of the election European Parliament.

"Wreckers or Builders? A History of Labour MEPs 1979-1999" ISBN number 978-0-9556202-9-4, is available for £20 from Turpin Distribution Services. If you would like a copy (free delivery in the EU) please contact 01767 604 951 or email: custserv@turpin-distribution.com

MY VISITS AND MEETINGS IN NOVEMBER

01 Nov – Trade Union Labour Party Liaison Meeting – London

02 Nov – London Regional Board

03-05 Nov – Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs Committee, Brussels

04 Nov – Meeting with head of Equality and Human Rights Commission, Trevor Phillips, Brussels

05 Nov – Eurodac Report Meeting (I am a Rapporteur on the asylum fingerprinting report), Brussels

05 Nov – Chatham BLP Report Back, London

06 Nov – Meeting with Janet Napolitano, US Secretary of Homeland Security,

Brussels

11 Nov – Heathrow Trade Union Liaison Committee, Brussels

11 Nov – Plenary Voting Session, Brussel

12 Nov – Civil Liberties & Justice & Home Affairs Committee on Stockholm Programme

16 Nov – Internal Market & Consumer Protection Committee, Brussels

17-19 Nov – Political Group Meetings, EPLP and S&D

18 Nov – Meeting with leader of Cypriot Democrats Party, Brussels

19 Nov – Meeting with Social Platform of European NGOs (includes the umbrella organisations for UK NGOs working in human rights, the labour market and anti-discrimination fields)

24-26 Nov – Plenary Voting Session, Strasbourg

25 Nov – European Trade Union Congress Meeting with John Monks, Strasbourg

26 Nov – Romford CLP Report Back to members, London

26 Nov – Transatlantic Working Group, Strasbourg 30 Nov – Meeting with Lord Bach to discuss EU legislation on child exploitation and the internet, and the new Criminal Procedures Directive, creating better rights for UK citizens travelling in the EU.

30 Nov – Meeting with Human Rights Watch, Brussels

30 Nov - Gave evidence to the House of Commons and Lords and European Scrutiny Committee on the Hedge Fund Directive and Copenhagen Climate Change Summit

7 Dec - PES Congress, Prague