



## Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament

**PRESS CONFERENCE with Hannes Swoboda**  
 Tuesday 13th March at 09.45 LOW N-1/201

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**Hannes Swoboda**

### Debate - Conclusions of the European Council meeting 1-2 March

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Tuesday, 13 - March 2012

We have been clear from the start that the Fiscal Pact cannot be the answer to the crisis. This Pact calls for stricter austerity instead of coming up with substantial measures for growth and employment. The latest alarming figures on the high rate of youth unemployment in Europe require action. It is unacceptable that the Fiscal Pact comes up with harsh sanctions for violations of budgetary discipline but only with guidelines and recommendations on action on youth unemployment. As representatives of European citizens our focus was on reducing the damage of this pact and introducing concrete measures to help the people. We are therefore grateful that the EU Council has taken the decision to step up its fight against tax evasion and to submit a report by June 2012 on this important matter - which could result in savings of up to €1 trillion according to a study commissioned by the S&D Group.



**Vital Moreira**

### International Cocoa Agreement

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The main objectives of the International Cocoa Agreement, renegotiated at the United Nations Cocoa Conference in 2010, are to promote international co-operation in the world cocoa economy, to promote a sustainable cocoa market in economic, social and environmental terms and to strive for cocoa prices which are fair for both consumers and producers. The European Union, as one of the largest and most consistent importers of cocoa beans, is one of the main partners to this agreement. Our Group believes the European Parliament should say "yes" to the International Cocoa Agreement; in addition, we want to use this opportunity to raise the important issue of child labour in cocoa production. This is why the rapporteur has linked consent to the agreement to a resolution and Commission statement on child labour in the cocoa sector. Children working in cocoa fields are exposed to a range of health risks and this is unacceptable. It is important that different organisations involved in the fight against child labour develop a holistic strategy to counter the root causes of the problem. The European Union has an important role to play as different policies can be used to tackle the problem. The European Commission should look into the possibility of developing an effective system for tracing goods that are produced using child labour.



**Emine Bozkurt**

### 2011 progress report on Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Wednesday, 14 - March 2012

The S&Ds are committed to encouraging Bosnia to take concrete steps to put the country firmly back on track towards the EU. Bosnia can only enter the EU as a single country, so undermining state institutions will only deprive its citizens of the benefits of EU integration. The Group has asked the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to actively engage in combating discrimination and defending individual rights. We have asked for constitutional changes to make BiH an effective and fully functional state, including compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights, an independent judiciary and better co-ordination mechanisms to implement the EU accession process. The EU Special Representative needs more support and resources to achieve these objectives. We have pointed out that there is still the need for a lasting solution for refugees and internally displaced persons and for a change in the law on citizenship. We have again highlighted the importance of combatting serious organized crime like human trafficking. In addition we have praised the strategy developed for victims of war crimes involving sexual violence, and asked for all sides to participate in its development and implementation throughout the country.



**Richard Howitt**

### 2011 progress report on Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

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Wednesday, 14 - March 2012

The resolution requires a very limited number of adjustments for plenary. These include several 'update' amendments: on the outcome of the last Council meeting, on the launch of the high-level accession dialogue led by Commissioner Füle in Skopje and a reference to a change in the domestic legislation to remove defamation from the penal code. This is an important development since it implies that all ongoing lawsuits against journalists for the offence of defamation are to be suspended. The resolution urges Skopje and Athens to use the International Court of Justice's ruling of 5 December 2011 with regard to the dispute over the name of the country as a stimulus for further talks leading to a solution that is acceptable to all. MEPs expressed deep regret that this dispute is blocking the country's path to the EU.

**Göran Färm****Enlargement report for Iceland**+ 33 3 88 17 52 62 [goran.farm@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:goran.farm@europarl.europa.eu)**Wednesday , 14 - March 2012**

This is the second resolution on Iceland's progress since the launch of its EU membership negotiations two years ago. It supports Iceland's progress in the accession process and welcomes Iceland's stated ambition to open all negotiation chapters during the Danish presidency. The resolution again welcomes the prospect of having a new EU member with a historically long and strong democratic tradition and in addition a well-functioning market economy. However, some sensitive issues remain, such as the Icesave dispute, whale hunting and also the chapters on fisheries and agriculture.

**Jo Leinen****A roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy by 2050**+ 33 3 88 17 58 42 [jo.leinen@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:jo.leinen@europarl.europa.eu)**Thursday, 15 - March 2012**

The transition to a low carbon economy in 2050 needs commitment from all stakeholders to be a success. The European Union must step up its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% by 2050 and foster sustainable growth. An immediate step is the adjustment of the emission trading scheme (ETS) which is currently not functioning as designed. Therefore the European Parliament calls on the Commission to recalibrate the ETS to restore scarcity and a suitable carbon price on the market. Even in times of austerity we need incentives for investments in low-carbon technologies and energy efficiency measures which will boost the European economy and create additional jobs.

**Véronique De Keyser****Situation in Nigeria**+ 33 3 88 17 57 74 [veronique.dekeyser@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:veronique.dekeyser@europarl.europa.eu)**Wednesday , 14 - March 2012**

There is ongoing violence in Nigeria in the areas where Christian and Islamic populations live side by side. Some of these groups belong to the Boko Haram Islamic sect, which has links to the 'Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb' and has called for the introduction of Sharia law. The S&D Group condemns terrorism and, as the Nigerian constitution guarantees religious freedom, is strongly against the imposition of religious laws on a population that does not want it.

**Katarina Nevedalova****Equality between women and men in the European Union**+ 33 3 88 17 54 86 [katarina.nevedalova@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:katarina.nevedalova@europarl.europa.eu)**Monday, 12 - March 2012**

This is the yearly report on the gender equality situation in the European Union. The S&D Group has successfully argued for a stronger line in the report for plenary, which was at first very weak. The main focus of the report is on equal economic independence including progress on the new directive on maternity leave and equal pay for work of equal value. The report also looks at equality in decision-making, respecting women's dignity, an end to gender-based violence – including the need for a legislative criminal-law instrument – improving gender equality beyond the EU and better governance. The report calls for a 10% reduction in the gender pay gap, reiterates that corporate management should include 30% women by 2015 and 40% by 2020, and also encourages other member states to take up the electoral quotas that have been successfully introduced in a number of EU states.

**Luigi Berlinguer****The Contribution of the European Institutions to the Consolidation and Progress of the Bologna Process**+ 33 3 88 17 55 04 [luigi.berlinguer@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:luigi.berlinguer@europarl.europa.eu)**Monday, 12 - March 2012**

The European institutions must support the Bologna Process and strengthen the European Higher Education Area. This is a fundamental goal for the strategies of growth and employability, and the European Parliament report highlights the key tools for this issue: improving the mutual recognition of qualifications; the definition of common university curricula and standards; and the evaluation of universities across member states. Ministers responsible for higher education from across Europe will gather in Bucharest in late April for the biannual Bologna Process ministerial summit. The European Parliament resolution will send a clear message calling for stronger action at EU level, through new policies of incentives for European universities and the creation of joint degrees. In order to strengthen European integration, the EU institutions and the member states must take action to implement the European Education Higher Area, with the goal of setting up a truly European university system.

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