


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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Gianni Pittella
Tuesday 10 March at 10.10 LOW N-1/201

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**Gianni
Pittella**

Statement by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy - Mali peace agreement

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Wednesday 11 March 2015

After eight months of tough negotiations and amid an upsurge of violence that threatened to jeopardise the whole process, Malian ministers and six armed rebel groups reached a peace agreement in Algiers on Sunday 1 March 2015. We welcome this peace agreement for all the people of Mali as they will be the first beneficiaries, after months of instability and insecurity. We regret the delay demanded by the northern rebels and call on all parties to follow in the footsteps of the Malian government and immediately sign the agreement. We congratulate Algeria on its leadership, as well as the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, Federica Mogherini, and the EU member states for their mediation efforts. This is the effective diplomacy we support and we are pleased to see such positive early results.



**Marc
Tarabella**

Progress on equality between women and men in the EU in 2013

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The report has two key aims: examining the state of progress of gender equality in terms of wage equality, employment equality and representation in national assemblies; and shedding light on gender equality matters that are under threat, such as abortion rights or maternity leave. The verdict is not encouraging: changes are slow and women's rights are suffering as a result. A majority vote on the report would have a strong symbolic value, as it would mean that the European Parliament speaks with one voice in favour of our fight on issues such as wage equality, abortion rights, maternity leave or the fight against violence.



**Tanja
Fajon**

2014 progress report on Serbia

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Tuesday 10 March 2015

The S&D Group is in favour of starting the first phase of EU accession negotiations with Serbia as soon as possible, including chapters 23 and 24 (covering the judiciary and fundamental rights, and justice, freedom and security). We stress the need for greater respect for freedom of the press, minority rights and the role of the independent institutions in Serbia. We support the position of the Parliament's lead negotiator, who urges Serbia to join the EU sanctions against Russia. Furthermore, the Serbian authorities should refrain from anti-European rhetoric. Croatia's bilateral issues with Serbia should be resolved bilaterally and not by attempting to hinder Serbia's EU integration. The issue of jurisdiction over war crimes is an issue for both countries, therefore demanding that Serbia changes its law on this topic would create a bad precedent.



**Jörg
Leichtfried**

Dimensions and weights of road vehicles circulating within the community

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Tuesday 10 March 2015

The Parliament's vote on the second reading on the revision of the Weight and Dimensions Directive will approve a text already agreed with the Council. Although the S&Ds were very critical of the proposal in the beginning, a good outcome has been achieved. Changes will now allow manufacturers to introduce newly designed lorries, which may exceed current weight and length limits to improve the truck's overall environmental and safety performance. This includes the use of alternative fuels, a more streamlined cab, as well as aerodynamic devices at the rear. An additional 15cm length extension would be allowed for trucks carrying 45-foot standard containers to facilitate the delivery of goods using several modes of transport. On the controversial issue of 'megatrucks', the Commission's proposal to further liberalise cross-border operations was rejected by both the Parliament and Council, which means that the text of the current directive will remain.



**Norbert
Neuser**

Outcome of the high-level conference on Ebola 'From emergency to recovery' (03/03/15)

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International efforts have helped reduce the number of people affected by Ebola but the crisis is still ongoing. While we must keep up the momentum and continue to steadily eradicate the disease, we must also begin to look at the devastating economic, social and political consequences of the last year in West Africa and address the root causes of the epidemic to prevent similar outbreaks happening again - there or anywhere else in the world. We welcome the EU's leading role in responding to the short-term and long-term crisis, and look forward to seeing the conclusions of this high-level event implemented and delivering results.



Richard Howitt

2014 progress report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

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Tuesday 10 March 2015

The S&D Group will use the debate on the progress report for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to express concern about the current political crisis in the country, in which leaks appear to show high levels of illegal surveillance and political interference in the judiciary and the media. S&D MEP Richard Howitt will report back on his visit to the country with the PES last week and comment on talks with the country's opposition leader, who is threatened with charges of espionage which could lead to a jail sentence of up to five years. The S&D Group remains ready to take part in cross-party mediation efforts to help overcome the current crisis, but political will within the country is essential if it is to succeed.



Nikos Androulakis

2014 progress report on Montenegro Tuesday

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Tuesday 10 March 2015

The S&D Group acknowledges the progress made by Montenegro in its EU accession negotiations and welcomes the reforms that are currently being planned or implemented. The Montenegrin government should now focus on reforms relating to the rule of law, the improvement of public administration and increasing transparency in the political system. The S&Ds also call for further progress in fighting inequality, social exclusion and high rates of unemployment. We will continue to support Montenegro's European integration and we call for progress to be made in the accession negotiations without undue delays, in line with our position that 'the EU should deliver, as long and as soon as the candidate countries deliver.



Georgi Pirinski

Annual report 2013 on the protection of the EU's financial interests: Fight against fraud

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Tuesday 10 March 2015

The draft motion for a resolution on the Annual report 2013 on the protection of the EU's financial interests points out that in 2013 non-fraudulent irregularities reported amounted to €1.84 billion while fraudulent irregularities involved a financial impact of €309 million. These figures clearly demonstrate that non-fraudulent irregularities represent by far the greatest threat to the financial interests of the EU. It is therefore necessary, while maintaining a strict policy of combating fraud, to at the same time step up efforts to eliminate the causes of irregularities that are not fraudulent. The negotiator's objective was to clearly outline a two-fold and mutually reinforcing approach.



Francisco Assis

Political and social turmoil in Venezuela

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Thursday 13 March 2015

The S&D Group is concerned over the political and social turmoil in Venezuela following the escalation of tensions between the government and the opposition parties, especially over the detention of mayor Antonio Ledezma in a military prison and the death of a fourteen-year-old schoolboy during protests last month. The lack of judicial independence, the intimidation and detention of leading opposition figures, the widely circulating conspiracy theories and the violent repression of demonstrators are contributing to the growing international isolation of Venezuela since the protests of February 2014. Venezuela is becoming a focus for instability in South America and its people are tired of social and political unrest, as well as the severe economic crisis. The assistance of the European Union in settling the conflict and its support for regional efforts to this end are of the utmost importance. The Parliament's resolution this week must call on the Venezuelan government to release all political protesters and opposition leaders detained in military prisons, and to create the conditions for the country to hold parliamentary elections in 2015, as well as encouraging opposition parties to keep political struggle within the bounds of constitutional order.



Pier Antonio Panzeri

Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world 2013

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Wednesday 12 March 2015

This year, the report is particularly important as it coincides with the conclusion of the human rights cycle initiated in 2012 by the European External Action Service (action plan, strategic framework and the nomination of an EU special representative for human rights). The Parliament's negotiator has chosen to use a thematic approach instead of the usual geographical one as it is very difficult to include all the countries concerned in the world without opening a Pandora's box which would undermine the main objective: promoting human rights in our European external action. Some new issues, such as welcoming the legalisation of same-sex marriage or same-sex civil unions in an increasing number of countries, have been introduced in the report.

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