



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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Gianni Pittella
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**Gianni
Pittella**

New European Commission

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This is a balanced new Commission that will hopefully open up a new phase for the Commission, with an innovative structure and new development plans to overcome the crisis. However, the S&D Group is worried about the financial services and education and culture portfolios. We welcome the introduction of six new vice-presidents with horizontal portfolios, as we are certain it will help put the commitments Mr Juncker made to the Parliament into practice, especially on the promised €300 billion investment plan. Financial services is too important and sensitive a job to be given to a conservative with a liberal, free-market approach. The financial sector urgently needs better regulation and we will not accept any backward step on this issue. It's a matter of principle. We promise to be very tough with Lord Hill. We look forward to listening very carefully to the hearings with every single commissioner. The S&D Group will make a decision whether to back Juncker's team based on their agendas and their willingness to promote the fundamental values of the European Union. Tibor Navracsics has been warned.



**Knut
Fleckenstein**

Situation in Ukraine and state of play of EU-Russia relations

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As the crisis in Ukraine has unfolded, EU-Russian relations have reached their lowest point since the end of the Cold War. We welcome the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine and ask all sides to respect it. Further sanctions should be implemented only if Russia continues to escalate the crisis in Ukraine. However, the EU should focus on supporting direct talks between Ukraine and Russia, as well as OSCE (the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe), in its efforts to assist Ukraine with regaining stability and implementing crucial political and economic reforms. The territorial integrity of Ukraine must be respected. Russia's international partners still expect Russia to cease supporting pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine and to stop the flow of military equipment and soldiers through the Russian-Ukrainian border.



**Elena
Valenciano
Martinez-
Orozco**

Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU

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In Palestine, there is political stalemate and a desperate humanitarian situation. The Gaza war has caused 2138 Palestinian deaths – 490 of them children – and 70 Israeli deaths in 50 days. Moreover, there are 36 Palestinian members of parliament – elected by citizens – imprisoned in Israeli jails. Many have been judged by military courts and others held without charge or trial. This is unacceptable and the European Parliament must speak out on this very important issue. We recognise the good work of many civil society organisations and political parties in Israel that are working for peace and reconciliation with Palestine, and we believe in the legitimate right of Israel to live in security. However, this cannot be the only argument to be taken into account in this conflict and it cannot be used as a pretext to commit a humanitarian massacre like the one in Gaza. This is the worst political and humanitarian situation in Palestine I have seen in the last 20 years. The people of Palestine live under daily threat of death and destruction, and the Palestinian political leaders are exhausted and at the end of their patience. Thus, the S&D Group and the European Union have a responsibility and a role to play in helping both sides to come back to the peace process. The only possible way to do it is to support the efforts and strengthen the position of Mahmoud Abbas, the best peace ambassador in the Middle East.



**Maria
Joao
Rodrigues**

Preparation of the Eurozone summit

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Following the European Council's decision to organise the first ever Eurozone summit in October, the S&D Group requested a plenary debate to discuss the issues. The sheer fact that such a summit is happening should be 'recognised and valued' by the European Parliament with a proper preparatory debate, as is the case before European Councils (at least by those who are in favour of strengthening economic and monetary union (EMU) at political level). Considering the importance of pursuing efforts to strengthen EMU democracy, it would be illogical for the Parliament not to get involved in this debate during the preparatory phase leading up to the summit.



Victor
Bostinaru

Situation in Iraq and Syria and the ISIS offensive

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The extreme and unprecedented violence deployed by the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria is extremely worrying. Our group was deeply shocked by the executions of James Foley and Steven Sotloff, and we believe the EU and its member states must do everything necessary to help free all the other prisoners.

In addition, we are concerned about the large number of European jihadists involved. The EU countries should find a common solution to bring them all to justice. In the meantime, it is important not to forget that IS represents a minority group of fundamentalists. Islamic and Arab countries are our allies in the fight against these extremists.



Norbert
Neuser

EU response to the Ebola outbreak

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We seriously underestimated Ebola. Right now, it seems that the epidemic will continue to worsen in the next six months with about 20,000 people infected in Western Africa. In the long run, only a comprehensive strengthening of health systems will stabilise the situation in a satisfactory way.

It is not only about the disease however. Ebola also has consequences for food insecurity as trade and food harvesting are severely limited. The Western African countries affected fear an economic drop of up to 4%. We have to look seriously at food supply if we want to avoid chaos and even more deaths.



Ana Maria
Gomes

Situation in Libya

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The EU must co-operate with the UN Special Envoy to support Libya in securing a ceasefire between the warring parties and putting the country on the path to peace. The international community must focus on helping Libya build state institutions and that requires support to build up national security forces. Without security, the prospects for a true democratic transition will be further jeopardised and the suffering of the people will increase. EU security interests are at stake as well. The EU should actively promote a partnership with regional players, namely Egypt and Tunisia, to help bring governance and help rid Libya of violence, terrorism and crime, and deliver on the expectations of the February Revolution.



Richard
Howitt

Human rights and democracy in the world

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Socialist and Democrat MEPs will welcome the Annual Report on Human Rights and are proud of the role played by Parliament itself as a champion of democracy and human rights. It is encouraging that almost 150 human rights country strategies were adopted and also that, at a civil society level, more than 530 new EIDHR initiatives were launched. However, the challenge remains for the newly agreed country human rights strategy papers to be fully implemented and to make good the words about upholding human rights through the EU's trade, investment and development actions.

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