

TUESDAY, 12 JANUARY 2010

BRUSSELS

INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMITTEE

HEARING OF KAREL DE GUCHT

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE

TRADE

2-002

IN THE CHAIR: Vital MOREIRA

(The hearing opened at 09.05.)

2-003

President. – I would like to welcome Commissioner-designate Mr Karel De Gucht to this parliamentary hearing. Let me draw your attention to the importance of this procedure, emphasising that this is a crucial moment in the nomination of the European Commission that will serve European citizens over the next five years.

Such hearings are of great importance because they embody the democratic control that only the European Parliament can exert on the formation of the executive branch of the European Union's system of government.

The significance of this hearing has been increased by the fact that the Lisbon Treaty has given to this Parliament and to this committee increased powers and responsibilities in the shaping of EU trade policy. As such this Parliament must be fully informed on what it can expect from the future Trade Commissioner before we cast our votes on the whole college in the coming weeks.

By granting the European Parliament co-legislative powers, the Lisbon Treaty has made it the only directly elected institution that legitimises European trade policy. This is naturally a very welcome constitutional development, and on behalf of the members of this committee I can tell you that we are very much looking forward to exercising our new powers in cooperation with the Commission and the Council.

I shall start by recalling that, in the light of the guidelines for the approval of the Commission, under the Rules of Procedure, Parliament evaluates the Commissioners-designate on the basis of their general competence, European commitment and personal independence. It also assesses knowledge of their prospective portfolios and their communications skills.

I should also point out that before this oral hearing the Commissioner-designate replied in writing to a preparatory questionnaire. His written answers to this have been distributed to the Members in all the

languages. At the same time, we have, in accordance with the Rules, received from the Commission the declaration of interests of the Commissioner-designate and his curriculum vitae.

Some remarks now about the procedure. The interpretation of this hearing is being provided in 22 languages. For the benefit of the interpreters, may I ask you not to speak too quickly, so that interpretation can follow smoothly. May I also inform you that this hearing is being streamed live on Parliament's internet site and it will also be possible to access a video recording of proceedings via the same site. In addition, there will be a verbatim report which will be made available as soon as possible after this hearing. Please note that, in addition to this meeting room, an additional listening room has been made available, to which images and sound will be relayed. That room is A5G3.

The hearing will be structured as follows: our time this morning is limited to three hours and the structure of the hearing is in your dossiers. The Commissioner-designate will first be invited to make an opening oral statement of no longer than 10 minutes. This will be followed by a debate lasting approximately two hours and 40 minutes, which will be held in accordance with the 'ping pong' principle, with slots of five minutes and four minutes respectively.

We will start with contributions from one representative of each political group, with slots of five minutes each. This means that, when there is a question of one minute, the reply by Mr De Gucht will be for two minutes, the follow-up question one minute and the follow-up reply one minute. That makes five minutes. As for the four-minute slots, the question will be one minute. Again the reply will be one minute, the follow-up question one minute, and the follow-up reply one minute.

Members' speaking time should be strictly limited to one minute per question. I should make it clear that the question and follow-up questions within each block must be asked by the same person and that the follow-up question must relate to the Commissioner-designate's reply. Follow-up questions may not be used to raise any other different matters or subjects. The Chair reserves the right to disallow follow-up questions that do not

meet these criteria. Speaking time limits will be strictly enforced.

May I inform you also that the Committee on International Trade secretariat has attempted to contact the non-attached Members, but without success. Therefore the five minutes that should be allocated to those Members has been added to the time available for the closing statement of the Commissioner-designate and the Chair at the end of the hearing. The time allotted to the closing statement will now be 10 minutes, therefore, rather than the five minutes I mentioned earlier.

A press point will be held for the Commissioner only immediately after the hearing.

That is all as regards the proceedings. Let us start our hearing proper. Mr De Gucht, I give you the floor for your initial presentation.

2-004

Karel De Gucht, *Commissioner-designate*. – I welcome this opportunity to introduce myself today to your committee, in the presence of representatives of other committees with an international remit, and to set out my views on international trade. I hope this will be the first and not the last of many discussions we will have.

2-005

Mijn 15 jaar ervaring als Europees Parlements lid en mijn huidige post als commissaris voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking hebben me een scherp inzicht gegeven in de centrale rol die uw instelling speelt om de verantwoording en de legitimiteit van de Europese Unie te verzekeren.

Met het Verdrag van Lissabon zal de rol van het Europees Parlement in de Europese besluitvorming sterk toenemen, in het bijzonder over handelswetgeving en handelsakkoorden.

Ik ben vertrouwd met de wereld van de internationale handel. Als minister van Buitenlandse Zaken en Handel heb ik flink wat ervaring opgedaan op het vlak van handel en ontwikkelingsbeleid, en met name internationale betrekkingen in het algemeen. Ik vertegenwoordigde België in ministeriële vergaderingen van de Europese Unie en op de ministeriële WTO-conferenties van Hong Kong in 2006 en in Genève in 2008. Bovendien heb ik in die periode handelsmissies naar een dozijn derde landen geleid.

In de meer dan 30 jaar waarin ik aan politiek doe, heb ik bovendien de nodige vaardigheden opgedaan waarover een onderhandelaar moet beschikken. Zowel uit mijn periode als Europees Parlements lid als uit de Belgische, nationale politiek heb ik ervaring met het smeden van brede coalities en met samenwerking over de partijpolitieke en ideologische grenzen heen. Dit is immers de dagelijkse gang van zaken in zowel de Belgische als de Europese politiek.

2-006

Turning to my portfolio, trade has always been a powerful engine for growth and opportunity in Europe and elsewhere. Even today, it is helping to pull us out of the difficult economic situation.

I am a long-standing supporter of the twin tenets of EU trade policy: open markets, backed up by a rules-based international trading system. However, this is not a simplistic belief in free trade or open markets as goals in themselves. Free trade must be a tool to generate prosperity, stability and development. When supported by the right rules and institutions, free trade delivers win-win outcomes. When part of a wider set of measures, it is a potent lever promoting European values abroad, like sustainable development and human rights. In addition, the openness of our own market fosters innovation and creativity at home and is the best way to ensure, thanks to our weight in global trade, similar openness abroad. The EU must lead by example. However, that does not mean we should accept unfair trade practices or protectionism by others.

This is why, in replying to your written questions, I have insisted that trade must be put at the service of the EU's broader policy goals. One of the latter goals is development. Since joining the Commission last July, I have come to understand better the necessary interaction of development and trade and – subject to your approval – I will continue to pay close attention to this interaction as future Trade Commissioner. EU trade policy must offer a strong hand to the least-developed countries of the world, helping them to integrate better into the global economy and raising living standards in a way that delivers both greater political stability and social progress.

Let me suggest five priorities for EU trade policy in the next five years.

Firstly, we must preserve and further strengthen the multilateral trading system. At present, the WTO is under pressure. Its flagship project since 2001, the Doha Round, is making little headway. All the same, building an open, rules-based and transparent multilateral trading system, where members subject themselves to the rules of dispute settlement, has been one of the major achievements of the 20th century. The WTO – be it as a forum to solve the long-running banana dispute or in helping to stop the world slip into a protectionist spiral – has proved itself an invaluable public good. Thanks to WTO monitoring, the world has avoided a wave of protectionism in the current economic crisis. Let us not forget: compared with other international organisations, the WTO is the most advanced model of global governance that exists, and we must continue to invest political capital in it.

We must, secondly, deepen trade and investment at bilateral and regional level as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, what can be achieved multilaterally. India, Canada, Ukraine, Latin America and the Euromed are likely to dominate our agenda over the next two years. They mark – together with upcoming

talks with Singapore and the updating of our trade relationship with China – a shift to economically important markets, particularly in Asia, as well as a deeper level of integration with our neighbourhood.

More immediately, the agreement with Korea, once signed, will be submitted to you for approval, alongside its implementing rules. I believe it is a good deal, which will greatly benefit our economy, and I am looking forward to discussing it here with you in this Committee, and in the plenary.

Thirdly, we must take economic cooperation with the world's other leading economies to a higher level, notably with the US and China.

With the US, the real challenge is not tariffs at the frontier, but the barriers behind the border, predominantly owing to differences in regulation. The recent study made for the Commission at the request of the European Parliament shows the major gains from overcoming non-tariff barriers. They are a multiple of the benefits typically expected from the bilateral FTAs we are currently negotiating. Also, the sensitive issues of environmental or social 'dumping' hardly arise in the EU-US context. Tackling non-tariff barriers will be my primary focus in the Transatlantic Economic Council, of which I will be the European co-chair.

We must also intensify our dialogue with China on trade and investment as Beijing gradually assumes larger responsibilities as a global player. I hope that China will continue to improve its openness to trade and investment, but it must show its responsibility by being able to address thorny questions, such as currency misalignment.

Fourthly, we must bring the negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements with ACP countries to a successful conclusion. These agreements have come in for a lot of criticism, from partner countries as well as civil society in Europe. I am determined to maintain the open and flexible approach of recent months, providing the results are WTO-compatible and can foster development.

In the development area we will also have the chance to review and shape the new generation of our General System of Preferences, when the current system expires on 31 December 2011.

Finally, and definitely in testing economic times, the Commission must make sure that European companies, be they exporters, importers or competing with imports, are treated fairly and given opportunities to expand their businesses. This is why I plan to build on the efforts of the previous Commission to improve our access to third markets. I also intend to apply transparently our current trade-defence instruments. Once the economic crisis has subsided, I plan to revisit the question of whether our instruments can be further refined, also in the light of any changes which may be required as a result of the Doha round. Moreover, we should also examine how to

use the EU's new powers on direct foreign investment to expand opportunities for, and protection of, EU companies. Here I believe we should secure first that existing agreements between individual Member States and third countries stay valid. Subsequently, we should decide on the priorities for a new EU investment policy, on both legislation and the countries to negotiate with.

All this represents a full agenda, but I need your help to deliver it. I cannot achieve this alone. In the months to come we will put in place the building blocks enabling Parliament to exercise its new competences to the full, including a new Framework Agreement between our institutions. You have my commitment as regards the trade area that I will work with you – here in your committees and in the Plenary – in full transparency, providing you with the information needed to do your job.

We may not always agree, but you will find my door is always open and that I am ready to listen, learn and debate. We can perhaps return to the details of our collaboration in the questions and answers, but my starting point is to recognise that the Lisbon Treaty requires a qualitative change in the way we work together.

2-007

Monsieur le Président, Mesdames et Messieurs les députés, je n'ai pas pu parler, vu le temps imparti, de tous les sujets qui le méritaient. Je pense notamment au lien entre le commerce et le changement climatique ou à la question du respect des droits de l'homme. J'espère que vous les soulèverez dans vos questions afin que je puisse vous donner ma vision politique sur ces sujets.

Mais permettez-moi de conclure avec ce message: la politique commerciale est, certes, un levier essentiel de notre politique économique, mais elle reste au service d'objectifs plus larges de notre société, tels que le respect des droits sociaux, la bonne gouvernance ou la protection de l'environnement. Il s'agit donc d'un instrument politique par nature, à propos duquel la voix – par définition – politique du Parlement européen doit se faire entendre plus clairement.

(Applaudissements)

2-008

Daniel Caspary (PPE). – Herr Kommissar! Ich freue mich sehr, dass kurze Zeit nach Inkrafttreten des Vertrags von Lissabon ausgerechnet Sie heute zu uns kommen, haben Sie doch als Mitglied des Europäischen Parlaments im Institutionellen Ausschuss erfolgreich für mehr Rechte für das Europäische Parlament gekämpft. Ich möchte deswegen auf zwei Punkte eingehen.

Erstens, Freihandelsabkommen: In Ihren schriftlichen Antworten haben Sie dargelegt, dass bei künftigen Mandatserteilungen das Parlament eng eingebunden werden soll. Wie stellen Sie aber sicher, dass es nach Abschluss von Verhandlungen zu keiner vorläufigen Anwendung von Freihandelsabkommen kommt, solange das Parlament sich nicht positiv dazu geäußert hat?

Zweitens, die Eigenständigkeit der Handelspolitik. Der neue Vertrag stellt die gemeinsame Handelspolitik unter die gemeinsame Außenpolitik. Wie werden Sie sicherstellen, dass die Außenhandelspolitik trotzdem eigenständig bleiben kann und nicht auf Kosten unserer Wirtschafts- und Handelsinteressen durch andere Politiken überfrachtet wird, wie das gestern in der Anhörung der Kommissarin leider manchmal etwas durchgeklungen ist?

2-009

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – The matter of early application will very soon come before us with the Korea Free Trade Agreement.

With the Lisbon Treaty, something has changed. You have become co-legislator and you have to give your assent to all free trade agreements. Early application is not something new that has appeared all of a sudden in the free trade agreement with Korea. It is normal practice in international trade.

But, on the other hand, I understand that early application before the European Parliament has given its assent causes a political problem. We will have to sort this out in the framework agreement, as far as the agreement with Korea is concerned. I would be open to discussing this with the committee and seeing whether we can agree on a timeline that, if respected, would obviate the need to propose early application.

Regarding the independence of the trade policy vis-à-vis the other policy – independence is of course always very relative – I think that the nature of the common commercial policy means that it will be able to keep its independence because it is an exclusive competence. It is one of the few exclusive competences that the European Union has. As, in addition, you are the co-legislator and have to give your assent, I think you will also be anxious to keep that independence.

We also keep our independence vis-à-vis the European External Action Service. We will work closely together with them but nevertheless we are independent. We are not part of them. So let me just cite these two elements to support my thesis. I have some more to say, but I only have two minutes.

2-010

Daniel Caspary (PPE). – Herr Kommissar! Ich möchte gern in dem Bereich bleiben. Sie haben ja angesprochen, dass mit dem Vertrag von Lissabon der Bereich Außenhandel so gestaltet wurde, dass Rat und Parlament jetzt auf einer Stufe stehen. Was wollen Sie konkret dazu beitragen, dass diese gleiche Augenhöhe auch in der Praxis stattfindet? Wie wollen Sie beispielsweise auch unter den bestehenden Regelungen sicherstellen, dass das Parlament bei Antidumpingverfahren in Informations- und Entscheidungsprozesse eingebunden wird?

Eine andere Frage in diesem Zusammenhang: Als Außenhandelskommissar sind Sie ja regelmäßig zu Gast

bei unseren Handelspartnern. In vielen Mitgliedstaaten ist es üblich, dass zuständige nationale Minister Abgeordnete auf diese Gesprächs- und Informationsreisen mitnehmen. Können Sie sich vorstellen, dass Sie in Zukunft beispielsweise Abgeordnete zu Ihren Gesprächen ins Ausland mitnehmen, um auch hier den parlamentarischen Dialog weiter zu fördern?

2-011

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – With respect to anti-dumping, yes, you will have your say on that. We will discuss it, but the decision lies with the Commission and is part of the comitology procedure, so giving veto rights on anti-dumping does not fit in with the Lisbon Treaty. I will, however, be open on this with respect to anti-dumping and my approach will be rules-based – not political – staying as close as possible to what is in the text and what is in the anti-dumping regulation. That will be my approach, but we will discuss it.

About taking parliamentarians with me on trips, I would be very happy to do so. First of all, I do not know whether I have a budget for that, which is also important. Secondly, we have to make a distinction between multilateral negotiations like the WTO, for example, where you are part of the EU delegation, and bilateral ones, where this is much more difficult, because they also involve third countries, and it is not always obvious they would be very pleased with that.

2-012

Kader Arif (S&D). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, vous avez la réputation d'un homme au franc-parler. Je vous remercie donc par avance des réponses claires que vous nous apporterez.

Grâce au traité de Lisbonne, le Parlement est pleinement associé à la politique commerciale de l'Union. Cela mérite donc que les députés participent à la définition des mandats de négociation en dépit des réticences du Conseil. Serez-vous à nos côtés dans cette demande?

Plus largement, une nouvelle stratégie doit guider la politique commerciale de l'Union dans le cadre de la vision de l'Union européenne pour 2020. Cela ne peut être la stratégie *Global Europe*, qui est aujourd'hui en échec. Je voudrais connaître votre position à ce propos.

Enfin, je suis convaincu qu'une politique commerciale doit se conjuguer avec une véritable politique industrielle créatrice d'emploi. L'actualité m'amène à vous poser la question suivante: défendrez-vous l'industrie aéronautique publiquement, en particulier dans le conflit Airbus face à Boeing, qui les oppose à l'OMC et qui aura des répercussions sur le futur marché des ravitailleurs aux États-Unis?

2-013

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – Firstly, with respect to the collaboration with your committee in negotiations, I have gone through this also with the services and the Secretary-General. A large part of that

will come into the framework agreements, but, in response to remarks I have heard from several committee members, I want today to concretely commit to the following.

Secondly, there should be a broader and faster information flow from the Commission to your committee, where we would need to see together what can be done with regard to the handling of restricted or confidential documents – that is a real problem – or helping your committee process the sometimes very large volume of information, in particular through more ad hoc briefings.

Thirdly, to increase contact between your committee and its secretariat and the senior staff of DG Trade, in order to improve our operational interaction.

Lastly, regular debriefings of trade negotiations here in Brussels, but also at those ministerial events where Members of this Parliament are part of the EU delegation. That is something that I would like to take as a starting point and then we would have to see, within the framework agreement, what more can be done.

For your second and third questions, I could not follow the speed of your questions. There is limited time but I also have limited capacity to listen to something at very high speed, so please repeat your question, because I simply did not understand it. It is not a language problem: it is a speed problem.

2-014

Kader Arif (S&D). – Je vais reposer les deux mêmes questions.

Je vous disais qu'une nouvelle stratégie devait guider la politique commerciale de l'Union dans le cadre de la vision de l'Union européenne pour 2020. La stratégie *Global Europe* est pour moi un échec. Je voudrais donc connaître votre position à ce sujet.

Enfin, je vous disais qu'une politique commerciale devait se conjuguer avec une véritable politique industrielle créatrice d'emploi. L'actualité m'amène à vous poser la question suivante: défendez-vous publiquement notre industrie aéronautique, en particulier dans le conflit qui oppose Airbus à Boeing, à l'OMC, et qui aura des répercussions sur le futur marché des ravitailleurs?

2-015

Karel De Gucht, Commissaire désigné. – Monsieur Arif, l'agenda 2020 peut difficilement être un échec parce que l'on est en train de le concevoir. Donc, c'est peut-être un peu prématuré.

Ceci dit, je pense que la politique commerciale est un atout très important et, en fait, ce qu'il faut comme résultat pour 2020, c'est avant tout plus de croissance et plus d'embauche, avec toute la protection que cela implique aussi pour les droits sociaux. Mais il faut avant tout la croissance, qu'il faudra largement chercher

ailleurs, ce qui supposera une politique commerciale bien conçue.

Deuxièmement, en ce qui concerne Airbus, vous savez qu'il y a en fait deux plaintes. Il y a une plainte d'Airbus contre Boeing, et une plainte de Boeing contre Airbus. Il y a déjà un rapport préliminaire sur Airbus, ce qui n'est pas encore le cas à propos de Boeing. On attend plutôt cela vers le mois de juin de cette année.

Je pense que ce serait bien qu'on prenne la décision lorsque les deux rapports seront disponibles parce que, en fait, les mêmes questions se posent. C'est un effet miroir et il faut donc traiter cela ensemble. Mais il faut également se rendre compte qu'il s'agit d'une procédure au moins quasi-judiciaire, et cela aussi il faut le respecter.

2-016

Метин Казак (ALDE). – Благодаря, г-н председател. Г-н кандидат-комисар, бих искал да Ви попитам как Виe виждате взаимоотношенията между общата търговска политика и общата външна политика на Европейския съюз. Как смятате да си взаимодействате с върховния представител по външната политика? Смятате ли да отстоявате независимостта и спецификата на общата търговска политика и да гарантирате това общата търговска политика да не стане заложник на дребни политически интереси за сметка на общите глобални търговски интереси на Европейския съюз е първият ми въпрос.

Вторият ми въпрос се отнася до заседанията на Комитета по търговската политика. Комисията ще бъде председателстващ на този комитет, смятате ли да поканите и да включите представители на Европейския парламент на ниво парламентаристи и на висши представители в заседанията на този комитет?

Благодаря.

2-017

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I think that, on the one hand, trade policy is part of our external policy and should be part of our external policy, but it also has its specificities and, as already stated to Mr Gaspari, I think there are some safeguards for that: the fact that it is an exclusive competence; the fact that the Commission plays a central role in it – it is the Commission that negotiates in trade agreements; the fact that we get more competences under Lisbon for example, also for foreign direct investment, which means that our tools to exist on the international economic scene are upgraded. So I am not that much concerned about it. On the other hand, I think it is very important to have good collaboration within the committee and also with the High Representative because, obviously, there are also political questions that have to be resolved. We just talked about anti-dumping for example. I will have a rules-based approach but I can imagine that, at a certain moment in time in the college, political arguments will also be mentioned so we will

have to work closely together and I don't think this will cause any problems, knowing the High Representative a little bit, who, by the way, is my predecessor as trade commissioner, so she knows what the specific problems with respect to trade are.

With regard to the presence at international conferences, yes, I think that that is a given, and also in the WTO. I sense that you were also asking a question on Committee 133 and that's more difficult, because we could only do that provided that we come to an agreement with the Council about this and with the Member States. So, I presume that this is something that will be discussed in the framework agreement, but it is obviously different to the question you put on the international trade conferences.

2-018

Метин Казак (ALDE). – Да, благодаря, г-н комисар, разбираам спецификата и тънкоостта на тази процедура с оглед на това, че тепърва действието на Лисабонския договор трябва да бъде изяснявано, да се изработят правилата за взаимодействие между различните институции. Все пак бих искал да почувствам във Вас, наистина, реална воля за това участието на Европейския парламент в целия процес на вземане на решение, особено на ниво Комитет по търговската политика, т.е. бившият комитет по чл. 133, да бъде наистина гарантирано по възможно най-ефективен начин, и затова бих искал да Ви попитам дали смятате да представите същата информация, каквато предоставяте на Съвета, в същия обем и в същия обхват, и на членовете на Европейския парламент. Благодаря.

2-019

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – As far as Commission documents are concerned, there is no problem. You will have exactly the same ones as the Council at the same time – which I think is also important. It is not only about documents, it is also about when you get them and the manner in which you get them. As far as the documents of other participating groups are concerned – countries, Council, Member States – that is another matter.

We will also share all our studies with you. We will discuss planning with you. I will try to be as open as possible with you.

You should remember that I was a Member of this Parliament for 15 years and I fought for openness and for more parliamentary powers. That has not changed. The only thing that has changed is my position. Now I am on the other side of the table. I am not alone at that table: I have the Council; I have the Member States; I have the college. I will have to manage this as well. You can count on me for that.

2-020

Yannick Jadot (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, la stratégie *Global Europe* a été élaborée avant l'émergence ou l'approfondissement des crises alimentaires, de la crise économique, de la crise

financière, de la crise sociale, et avant la montée en puissance des négociations climatiques. Et de fait, notre interprétation est que l'agenda de cette stratégie, comme le travail de la Commission, s'est peu à peu réduit aux aspects strictement commerciaux du travail de l'Europe.

Est-ce que, comme vous l'avez dit dans votre introduction, vous allez considérer que les aspects financiers, climatiques, alimentaires, sont importants, mais que vous n'avez pas le temps de les traiter, ou est-ce que vous allez être le porteur d'un agenda très ambitieux, large, de la diplomatie commerciale européenne pour traiter justement de ces questions financières, monétaires et climatiques?

2-021

Karel De Gucht, Commissaire désigné. – Monsieur le Président, je suis compétent en matière de politique commerciale. C'est mon portefeuille et les autres aspects que vous venez de mentionner dépendent d'autres commissaires.

Mais la Commission est aussi un collègue et je suis tout à fait convaincu du fait que la politique commerciale ne peut pas se développer en vase clos et qu'elle a des incidences sur le système financier dans le monde, dans les discussions sur les services par exemple.

Aussi, que faut-il faire dans le domaine de l'ouverture du marché des services, vu ce qui nous est arrivé lors de la crise financière? Il y a l'aspect climatique – Copenhague vient d'avoir lieu et a eu des résultats assez mitigés.

Comment la politique commerciale peut-elle aider à lutter contre ce problème? Je pense qu'elle peut largement y contribuer, parce que les financements nécessaires, notamment dans les pays en voie de développement, devront provenir d'un essor économique et que le commerce est essentiel à cet essor économique dans ces pays en voie de développement.

Je suis donc tout à fait convaincu qu'il faudra une approche holistique de la politique commerciale de l'Union européenne, comme c'est d'ailleurs le cas en politique. Je ne pense pas qu'on puisse faire de la politique en segmentant les problèmes. Il faut toujours avoir une approche holistique.

D'un autre côté, il faut aussi concevoir que ce sont d'autres collègues qui sont compétents dans ces dossiers. Cela veut donc dire qu'il faudra beaucoup de concertation également au sein de la Commission européenne. Mais, en ce qui me concerne, ce sera toujours dans une approche holistique.

2-022

Yannick Jadot (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, là où vous avez compétence, c'est par exemple sur la dérogation qui est accordée à l'industrie automobile européenne, dans le cadre de l'accord avec la Corée du Sud, pour obtenir des dérogations en termes d'émission de CO₂, ce qui nous apparaît totalement incompatible avec un agenda ambitieux sur le climat.

Là où vous aurez aussi compétence, c'est sur la taxe d'ajustement aux frontières. Êtes-vous favorable à une telle taxe?

Enfin, vous avez marqué du courage sur la question de la République démocratique du Congo. Est-ce que, enfin, la Commission européenne aura le même courage vis-à-vis de la Colombie?

2-023

Karel De Gucht, Commissaire désigné. – Monsieur le Président, je m'excuse beaucoup, mais j'imagine que la question relative à la Colombie reviendra encore. Je ne peux pas répondre à ces deux questions en une minute. Je ne tiens pas à le faire parce qu'une minute ne suffit pas.

En ce qui concerne les ajustements à la frontière, je ne suis pas pour. Je ne crois pas que ce soit la bonne approche. C'est une approche qui se heurtera à beaucoup de problèmes pratiques. On a vu cela dans le passé. Par ailleurs, le risque est grand que cela débouche sur une guerre commerciale, sur une surenchère au niveau global.

Il est clair que, dans la politique commerciale également, il faudra tirer les conséquences de ce qui se passe sur le plan de la préservation de notre environnement et du climat, mais je pense que, pour ce faire, il faut recourir à d'autres approches: une approche politique qui soit à la fois ferme et compatible avec les lois du marché.

2-024

Jan Zahradil (ECR). – Moje otázka se bude týkat Ruska. Rusko je důležitým sousedem Evropské unie, budeme mít novou dohodu s Ruskem. Chci se zeptat, jestli ji vnímáte jako počátek nového strategického partnerství a jestli ji vnímáte jako nástroj, který odstraní netarifní obchodní bariéry na straně Ruska a který také umožní nediskriminační přístup ke strategickým surovinám, jako je ropa a zemní plyn, které jsou důležité pro ekonomiku Evropské unie a pro její energetickou bezpečnost.

2-025

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – Energy security is of course a very crucial matter, and DG Trade plays an important role in this also, because, for the free trade agreements, we take the lead, for example in negotiations with Ukraine; it is DG Trade that has the lead role. We will take care that in this and all free trade agreements and other negotiations this issue is duly taken care of. It is very important that there are real obligations that have to be respected within a framework of agreements which also entail a dispute-settlement mechanism, which I think is one of the most important features in free trade agreements.

As regards your question on non-tariff barriers, I am personally convinced that this will be one of the biggest problems for our commercial policy in the years to come. It is even more important than trade agreements, because once you do away with tariffs by trade

agreements – be it WTO or free trade agreements – you see a surge of non-tariff barriers. We have also seen that in the European Union. Once we had done away with tariffs we fought for about a decade to get rid of the larger part of non-tariff barriers. There will be more and more non-tariff barriers, and everybody will have their own speciality.

I also believe that, at least in the coming years, approaching this problem will largely have to be done on a bilateral and plurilateral basis rather than at WTO level because we do not have the right tools and the right agreements for that yet. This is a very important subject that I will handle with great care.

2-026

Jan Zahradil (ECR). – Já budu pokračovat v otázce o Rusku. Chci se zeptat, jestli podporujete členství Ruska ve Světové obchodní organizaci, když je zároveň v celní unii s Běloruskem a Kazachstánem, a jestli také podporujete začlenění asociačních dohod, nebo dokonce dohod o volném obchodu s Běloruskem nebo případně s Kazachstánem do Východního partnerství.

2-027

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I support Russia's entry into the WTO, but of course it depends on Russia. They have been concluding a customs union with Belarus and Kazakhstan and, although President Medvedev stated at the summit in October that they would try to get into the WTO as soon as possible, we will have to see what happens in practice. Will they give pre-eminence to the customs unions or to the WTO? It also causes additional problems with respect to tariffs for example. Tariffs have gone up.

Russia is also currently acting contrary to the engagements that they took with the European Union concerning their entry into the WTO. Although these are temporary measures, we will see what happens in practice. So this is a very touchy subject.

(The Chair cut off the speaker, stating that the speaker could return to the matter during a subsequent answer.)

2-028

Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL). – Herr Vorsitzender, Herr Kandidat für den Kommissionsposten! In Ihren Prioritäten haben Sie sowohl die Doha-Runde im Rahmen der WTO als auch die Strategie 2020 als Schwerpunkte Ihrer künftigen möglichen Tätigkeit genannt. Insofern möchte ich nach Ihrer Analyse für die Gründe des Scheiterns der Doha-Gespräche fragen. Wollen Sie angesichts dieses Scheiterns wie bisher weiterverhandeln oder meinen Sie nicht doch, dass das alte, 2001 formulierte Mandat, das meines Erachtens im Jahr 2010 wie ein Dinosaurier daherkommt, an die realen Bedingungen der heutigen wirtschaftlichen Situation in der Welt, insbesondere angesichts der Finanz- und Wirtschaftskrise, angepasst werden sollte?

2-029

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – What are the reasons? First of all, I would not like to talk about failure, because we have agreement on 90% of the topics

we had to address in Doha and I am personally confident that we are going to conclude the Doha Round. I do not know whether it will be in 2010 or 2011, but I am quite confident about it and that is why I mentioned it as my first priority. We have to do that deal. What comes afterwards – that is another question.

That also indicates my view on the mandate. No, we should not change the mandate. I do not think you should do that in the course of a negotiation. It would only cost more time; it would make problems more difficult. It is also obvious that we are not going to tackle all the problems in Doha, but there is still time afterwards.

What we should now try to do is close this deal as soon as possible. I know there are also questions as to whether we should change the decision-taking mechanisms and so on. It is not realistic. You can only have a Doha Round closure – and subsequent multilateral negotiations – on the basis of consensus. There are no other possibilities. When you look at where it failed in the end, it was between the United States, China and India. Even if you had a majority rule, I think you will agree with me that they would still have a veto right. Therefore, the explanation is not that it was not by majority. No, it is because there are still some basic differences of opinion on some topics, most notably agriculture.

2-030

Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL). – Meinen Sie nicht dennoch, dass gerade auch vor dem Hintergrund der Fragen, die Kollege Jadot gestellt hat – also die Fragen der Klimaherausforderungen, die Fragen der Überwindung der Armut, der Nahrungsmittelkrise und des Hungers in der Welt –, gerade dieses Umdenken in der WTO notwendig wäre? Wäre es nicht sinnvoll – meinerseits neben der Frage, die Sie gerade zur Doha-Runde formuliert haben – darüber nachzudenken, wie die WTO generell reformiert werden sollte, damit sie solchen beschäftigungspolitischen, menschenrechtlichen und klimapolitischen Fragen anders entgegenzutreten kann, als – wie Sie sagten – „das am meisten und am besten entwickelte Modell internationaler Zusammenarbeit“? Würden Sie sich dafür einsetzen, dann dort einen neuen Mechanismus der parlamentarischen Versammlung aufzubauen, sodass Menschen aus allen Ländern, die versuchen wollen, diesen Handel als ein wichtiges Instrument internationaler Kooperation neu zu organisieren, an einer transparenten Arbeit einer solchen internationalen Handelsorganisation teilnehmen könnten?

2-031

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – What is important is that the Doha Round, which was conceived as a development round, also has a development outcome. I think that is very important. This applies to the developing countries, to the North-South and also to the South-South elements in this. I think this can be seen in the results up to now. As the European Union, we are the staunchest supporters of it being a development round. It also implies a climatic change and how trade

can contribute, because obviously the financing for it will have to come from somewhere, most notably from economic growth in the developing world, apart from public funds.

Regarding whether the WTO should have a broadened agenda and could also tackle problems like climatic change: yes, its trade components should also be discussed in the WTO. I think that this will happen but that it is also important for an organisation to stay focused. The WTO is an organisation that, qualitatively, is higher than the United Nations, for example, and I think we should keep to that.

2-032

William (the Earl of) Dartmouth (EFD). – The 27 Member States of the European Union have economies of different size, different structure, different characteristics and different requirements in trade policy. However, the only representation which EU members, including the UK, have at the WTO, the World Trade Organisation, is through the EU Trade Commissioner.

How, as EU Trade Commissioner, will you be able to advance fully and equally the trade interests of each and every one of the 27 Member States, especially as you apparently also have a very full political agenda which you referred to twice in your opening remarks and also in answer to several previous questions?

2-033

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I think that the unique feature of the European Union is precisely that we can come to a common position and defend it effectively on the international scene. That is what the European Union is about, because the remark you are making about trade policy can be made about any policy.

Obviously we are different. We are 27, and we have upgraded our decision-taking rules in the Lisbon Treaty. We also did that with respect to trade. Parliament will be fully involved and, of course, you will see not only political differences in this Parliament but obviously also, on some topics, national differences, and that is why we have the European Union to overcome those differences.

I think this is a very basic difference of opinion between yours and mine, but you are in Parliament and you have your own opinion. I also have my own personal opinion, but I am not reflecting my personal opinion here: I am reflecting the opinion of the College of the European Commission.

Now, if a problem is very complicated – and obviously trade is not simple, because it is a very vast subject and has a lot of political connotations – I would be inclined to think it better that you have only one trade commissioner. I do not think it would be easy if you had two or three to manage the job.

2-034

William (The Earl of) Dartmouth (EFD). – It is very impressive to get a reply which is 40% under the time to a very complicated question. I particularly asked this question as a United Kingdom MEP because, before Britain joined the then Common Market in 1973, we enjoyed a very large trade surplus with the member countries of the European Union. Since we have been a member, we have had nothing but a large and mounting trade deficit, so our view is that we are better off having our own representation.

Incidentally, I must crave the indulgence of the Chair to ask a question to which I did refer in my opening question. Perhaps you would tell us something about your political agenda and the extent of it. It is mentioned in 4.3 of your written statement.

2-035

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – Perhaps it would be a good idea to discuss your first question in Westminster as well. I have no specific opinion on that. Trade grew tremendously in the 1970s and 1980s, so I will not dwell on what seem to me to be somewhat internal questions.

With respect to my political agenda, I think that I made explicit in my speeches what I am going to do in my job. The political agenda is that I am convinced that our commercial policy will be served by a better and more integrated external policy of the European Union. I am also convinced that we will have to take care that we stay independent and that we keep our specificity because, if not, it could make negotiations much more difficult. So I will not allow the political approach to take precedence over the commercial approach. On the other hand, I imagine the High Representative will not allow commercial policy to be solely based on economic and trade judgements, but that politics will also come into this. That is why we have a college and why the double-hatted role for the High Representative, shared between the Council and the Commission, is a very good idea.

2-036

Eva Joly (Verts/ALE), Chair of the Committee on Development. – I should like to ask Commissioner-designate De Gucht to give us some specific examples of how you will ensure that all new trade agreements comply with Article 208 of the Lisbon Treaty, which requires the EU to take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies which it implements that are likely to affect developing countries. Would you go as far as the Court of Justice to interpret this article?

2-037

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I am presently the Development Commissioner, though not for very long any more, but I will keep that in mind and I will make sure, for example, that the outcome of the Doha Round is a development outcome that really helps the developing countries, because I am intimately convinced that, unless developing countries become part

of the overall world economy on a fair basis, they have no real future.

What we really urgently need is a take-off in Africa. We will only be able to do that if trade evolves, not only North-North but a great deal South-South. That is why I think that for example the EPAs – the economic partnership agreements – should take the development aspect fully into account. Maybe even the name of those agreements is not the right one. It should be partnerships for development or something like that. I think it would considerably ease the temperature in Africa.

2-038

Fiorello Provera (EFD), Vicepresidente della commissione AFET. – Signor De Gucht, l'industria europea, composta per oltre il 90% da piccole e medie imprese, si aspetta che le istituzioni dell'Unione europea si adoperino per combattere con determinazione pratiche sleali e distorsive della concorrenza, all'interno di un contesto economico e mondiale dove la competizione tra le imprese è già molto difficile. È importante dunque assicurare che il sistema di difesa commerciale dell'Unione europea sia rafforzato.

Alla luce delle difficoltà riscontrate con gli Stati Uniti per armonizzare la legislazione commerciale e con la Cina in materia di lotta alla contraffazione, e per garantire i diritti di proprietà intellettuale, come intende procedere la Commissione per sviluppare relazioni commerciali più equilibrate tra l'Unione europea e questi partner commerciali, intendo la Cina e gli Stati Uniti?

2-039

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – Mr Provera, you rightly point out the importance of SMEs in many of our national economies, and it is true that SMEs are much more vulnerable to non-tariff barriers than multinational companies, so we should pay special attention to that issue. As I have mentioned already, it is very important to address it in all the FTAs we make with third countries or groups of third countries. As far as trade defence instruments are concerned, it is part of my mission statement that we should revisit them but I think we should do so after the conclusion of the Doha Round and on the basis of our experience.

Secondly, the volume of trade affected by TDI measures is about 2% whether you look at China or whether you look at the United States, which means that in the case of the remaining 98% there are no real problems. So we should not overestimate this either.

Thirdly, as I already explained, I am in favour of a rules-based approach and not bringing in too many political considerations. If there is dumping we will act.

2-040

Fiorello Provera (EFD), Vicepresidente della commissione AFET. – A livello di accordi commerciali bilaterali, quali strategie intende attuare la Commissione per far progredire i negoziati con importanti regioni del mondo quali il Mercosur e l'ASEAN?

2-041

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – The Commission is in favour of a regional approach, but we also have to witness that this makes for considerable problems because not all countries in the region are necessarily at the same level. That is the problem we have with ASEAN, and that is why the Commission has proposed – and the Council has followed up this proposal – that we should try to revamp the negotiations with ASEAN by starting with bilateral negotiations, most notably with Singapore and probably also with Vietnam and Thailand – but a within regional political approach. The other idea is that the others could follow suit afterwards.

Mercosur is a little bit more difficult. The discussions halted in 2004. We are ready to start them up again immediately, provided that our counterpart is also of that opinion. I think it would be excellent to do this, but it takes two to tango.

2-042

Tokia Saïfi (PPE). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, je voudrais revenir sur les mesures antidumping. C'est un sujet qui nous a beaucoup préoccupés au cours de la dernière législature, et je pense que nous serons très vigilants sur cette question au cours de la législature actuelle. Vous savez que notre industrie a besoin de mesures antidumping efficaces pour lutter contre la concurrence déloyale et, dans vos remarques liminaires, vous avez dit qu'il n'y aurait pas de pratiques commerciales déloyales. Je voudrais d'ailleurs ajouter que j'adhère complètement au point de vue que vous avez exposé, selon lequel il ne faut pas avoir de croyance simpliste en ce qui concerne le libre-échange, mais des règles.

Vous nous dites donc que vous allez améliorer ces mesures antidumping. Donnez-nous plus de détails. Nous serons très vigilants, parce qu'un de vos prédécesseurs, M. Peter Mandelson, sous couvert d'améliorer ces instruments de défense commerciale, avait entrepris de les affaiblir. J'aimerais donc, Monsieur le Commissaire, que vous nous donniez plus de détails sur cette question.

2-043

Karel De Gucht, Commissaire désigné. – J'ai déjà répondu dans une certaine mesure à cette question parce que je suis d'avis qu'il faut attendre la fin du cycle de Doha – pourvu que, naturellement, cela se passe dans un délai raisonnable – pour aborder ce problème, qui fait d'ailleurs partie de ma mission. Donc, je suis censé le faire.

Je comprends aussi que vous ayez peur que cela évolue plutôt dans une direction plus laxiste, mais telle n'est pas mon approche. Je pense qu'il faut une politique antidumping qui soit à la fois efficace et fiable, une politique dont nos partenaires savent ce qu'ils peuvent attendre si certaines choses se passent. Je pense que c'est important parce que cela a aussi un effet prohibitif, et je pense aussi qu'il faut utiliser nos atouts si nécessaire.

Il faut bien réfléchir à ce que l'on fait, mais il faut aussi avoir le courage d'agir, et je suis convaincu qu'il faut des mesures antidumping dans certains cas. Enfin, ce que j'ai surtout voulu dire, c'est qu'il ne faut pas surestimer ce problème non plus parce qu'il ne concerne qu'un pourcentage limité de notre commerce.

2-044

Tokia Saïfi (PPE). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, on n'a pas plus de détails, mais je pense qu'on en aura par la suite. Est-ce que vous allez conserver, sous votre mandat, l'indépendance des autorités chargées des enquêtes et – je vous repose la question – garantir que les principes fondamentaux du règlement antidumping resteront intacts?

Et est-ce que vous vous engagez à consulter le Parlement européen sur cette question, qui n'est pas sans importance?

2-045

Karel De Gucht, Commissaire désigné. – Je pense que les services d'enquête sont très indépendants et de très haute qualité. Toute procédure antidumping doit commencer par une enquête professionnelle, et j'attacherai beaucoup d'importance au fait que ces services puissent travailler en toute indépendance.

Je suis également convaincu qu'il faut garder les atouts de la politique antidumping et du règlement antidumping, mais il se peut qu'il y ait des choses qu'il faille éventuellement adapter à de nouvelles circonstances. En résumé, je suis quelqu'un qui pense qu'il faut une politique antidumping dans le climat commercial qui est le nôtre en ce moment et qui sera encore le même d'ici une décennie. Donc il faut garder cette politique, en l'adaptant éventuellement, mais pas forcément dans une direction plus laxiste, bien au contraire.

2-046

David Martin (S&D). – Karel, I know from our past dealings that you are an honest and robust politician. I have been slightly disappointed this morning when on occasions you have said that you have your personal opinions but that this is the 'College position' or this is the 'Commission position'. This morning we want to hear your own personal views. Every other time you come before us you will be defending the Commission's views. Today we want to hear your views.

I want to ask you about policy coherence. As Development Commissioner, you are well aware that we spend millions tackling HIV/AIDS and cancer in the developing world, yet at the same time our trade policy sometimes denies access to medicines to the same people through bilateral trade agreements and other trade agreements we enter into. Will you ensure that our free trade agreements do not include TRIPS-Plus provisions? Will you also look at the Indian negotiations, where I understand their officials, despite the views of this Parliament, are still pushing TRIPS-Plus provisions?

2-047

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – First of all, I think that in 99% of cases my personal opinion is the same as the opinion of the College in my portfolio. Let me keep that 1% for myself today! Apart from that, I am a strong believer that every human being has a fundamental right to medicines. This is not an easy subject. It has to do with intellectual property rights, but I really believe it should be a policy of ours – and it is – that we preserve this right.

We do that in our customs policy, although there have been some problems, but then you look clearly into it. There are problems, but the end result has always been that the medicines have been delivered.

I know that there is a discussion on whether you should have TRIPS-Plus provisions in certain free trade agreements. I would not necessarily be against this, but I think it is quite possible on the one hand that you have those kinds of provisions for specific products and for specific reasons and on the other hand this is compensated, for example, by the possibility of parallel imports.

2-048

David Martin (S&D). – Notwithstanding your comments on the customs problems, will you as Commissioner look at revising Regulation (EC) No 1383/2003, which deals with this matter?

Secondly, can I specifically come back to the Indian FTA, because this is particularly important in relation to medicines. India is a big producer of generic medicines. If India is constrained, it does not just harm India but it harms many African and other developing countries in terms of their ability to access cheap medicine.

2-049

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – The free trade agreement with India is still under negotiation. I will very closely monitor that it does not impede the free trade in generic medicines. I will take care of that. But there can be specific problems for specific products which result in a TRIPS-plus exception. So I am not going to rule it out in advance, but this is certainly not my approach. The idea should really be that developing countries have a right to those medicines and that we should do everything to realise this also in practice – and, yes, I will be revisiting the Regulation you were just mentioning. It will take some time to do that, but there are certainly some adjustments that should be made to avoid what has happened in the past, for example in the Netherlands. I think we should do that, yes.

2-050

Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl (PPE). – Hartelijk welkom, mijnheer de kandidaat-commissaris voor Handel. Ik hoop op een goede samenwerking hier tussen ons. Ik denk dat ik het enige lid van Vlaamse oorsprong ben hier in deze commissie.

2-051

Herr Kommissar, ich möchte auf das zurückkommen, was Sie über Russland gesagt haben. Sie haben selber

am Anfang einmal geschrieben, dass Sie Russland als einen sehr wichtigen Teil unserer Handelsbeziehungen ansehen, was für die Europäische Union auch ein Fakt ist. Sie merken auch, dass hier die verschiedenen Nationalitäten in ihrer Meinung, wie man mit Russland umgehen soll, eine unterschiedliche Perspektive haben. Sie haben auch zu Recht gesagt, dass man noch nicht einmal sicher ist, ob Russland selber Mitglied in der WTO werden möchte. Deshalb meine Frage: Wie stellen Sie sich vor, dass man das Wachsen unserer Handelsbeziehungen fördern kann, mit oder ohne eventueller WTO-Mitgliedschaft? Wie wollen Sie das in Zusammenarbeit mit der Kommissarin sehen, in Zusammenhang mit dem PCA? Wollen Sie es eher pragmatisch wirtschaftlich betrachten oder wollen Sie mehr fundamentale politische Elemente hineinbringen?

2-052

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I will acknowledge that it is very difficult to give an answer to that in 60 seconds. But I believe that we have an essential interest in the European Union to have good relations with Russia, be it politically or be it economically. This will be preserved I think by contractual obligations; that is why I think the agreement which we are presently negotiating with Russia is very important, that the trade chapter in it should be very well developed; that is why I believe that it is good that Russia comes into the WTO as soon as possible because that it is also about contractual obligations which have to be respected. I believe that also politically it is very important to engage with them because they are our neighbours and they are going to remain our neighbours.

2-053

Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl (PPE). – Es hat auch viel mit Russland zu tun, aber nicht nur. Es ist natürlich sehr wichtig, dass wir uns bei unserer Energieversorgung auf zuverlässige Lieferungen stützen können. Sie werden da mit einer Reihe von anderen Kommissaren zusammenarbeiten müssen, nicht nur im Zusammenhang mit Russland, sondern z. B. auch mit der Ukraine, mit dem Iran, Irak usw. Wie sehen Sie konkret diese Zusammenarbeit und wie wollen Sie versuchen zu verhindern, dass die Rolle des Handelskommissars dann auch für uns im Parlament, im Handelsausschuss in diesem komplexen Feld an Bedeutung verliert? Noch eine andere Frage: Meine Kollegin, Frau Saïfi, hat gefragt, ob Sie das Parlament an den Antidumpingverhandlungen beteiligen wollen. Wollen Sie das, ja oder nein?

2-054

Karel De Gucht, Commissaire désigné. – En ce qui concerne les négociations antidumping proprement dites, je pense qu'elles doivent être conduites par la Commission, mais je suis prêt à discuter de ces sujets avec vous et à écouter attentivement vos propositions. Mais les négociations relèvent de la compétence de la Commission, et je pense d'ailleurs que c'est mieux comme cela.

Deuxièmement, en ce qui concerne les livraisons énergétiques et la sûreté de l'approvisionnement, je n'ai

pas peur que, finalement, l'indépendance de la politique commerciale soit affaiblie. Je pense par contre que le fait que nos relations économiques extérieures soient de plus en plus développées, soutenues aussi par une approche plus politique, peut servir notre politique commerciale.

Je n'ai aucun problème à travailler avec le service d'action extérieure mais, d'un autre côté, je constate aussi qu'on n'en fait pas partie et qu'il est donc indépendant. Je suis quelqu'un qui aime beaucoup l'indépendance et je ne pense pas que, dans ce cas, il y ait beaucoup de risques.

2-055

Gianluca Susta (S&D). – Signor Commissario designato, la crisi economica e finanziaria da cui non siamo ancora usciti richiede, a nostro giudizio, una serie di misure legislative che accompagnino il rilancio dell'economia reale e, in particolare, dell'industria manifatturiera.

Qual è la sua posizione sulla proposta di regolamento sull'introduzione dell'obbligatorietà del marchio d'origine sulle merci extra-Unione europea per tutelare i consumatori e su cui il Parlamento si è già espresso a larghissima maggioranza qualche settimana fa? Quali sono le proposte per coordinare meglio la lotta alla contraffazione sul piano europeo e mondiale?

Mi permetto poi di invitarla ad un supplemento di riflessione sull'accordo con la Corea, che va visto più per il suo impatto sull'economia reale che non per la sua metodologia quasi accademica, che potrebbe fare scuola ma penalizzare fortemente alcuni settori produttivi italiani ed europei.

2-056

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – There is a difference of opinion on the 'made in' proposal. Parliament is in favour of it and the Council is not in favour of it, so we will try to have a proposal that makes it possible. My predecessor, Catherine Ashton, made some proposals back in October, and I hope this will facilitate the decision-making process.

As regards counterfeiting, I know that the supporters of a 'made in' directive – that will have to be decided by codecision under Lisbon – argue that it would help to combat counterfeiting. Probably, yes, but I think what is still more important is that we get a good agreement, the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA). I will do everything possible to come to a positive outcome on that as soon as possible, within the WTO.

2-057

Gianluca Susta (S&D). – Un approfondimento sull'accordo di libero scambio con la Corea era più un invito, visto quello che ha detto, ma credo che valga la pena di approfondire la questione.

2-058

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I do not think it causes problems within the free trade agreement with Korea. There are sectors that we said we will have to discuss – for example the automotive sector – but, as far as textiles, for example, are concerned, this is a very

limited part of the trade flow between the European Union and Korea. I think it is also adequately tackled in the free trade agreement – the basic provisions and also the safeguard measures that can be triggered for a period of four years.

There are things we have to discuss, and I am very open to doing so as soon as possible, but I do not especially see them in the manufacturing sector – much more in other sectors.

2-059

Iuliu Winkler (PPE). – Let me quote from your opening statement this morning. You said that trade is a powerful engine for growth in Europe and elsewhere. As a former minister for trade for my country, Romania, I hear this with full satisfaction, and I took note of this type of very constructive approach. I would be very interested to hear your comments on the importance and role of the Central European Free Trade Agreement, the so-called CEFTA 2006, as a valuable tool for enhancing the European Union membership perspectives for the Western Balkan countries.

It is widely accepted that the CEFTA 2006 is a preparatory exercise for those countries from the Western Balkans in applying the EU's common trade policy. I personally think it is much more than that, and I wonder if you share that vision with me.

2-060

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – The CEFTA is part of the pre-accession approach. I think we should realise that, for a new Member State, it is simply not easy to digest all the *acquis communautaire* at once, because we are a very developed economic area which is also well integrated.

This is a very good preparatory approach, on the basis of free trade and doing away with tariff barriers. So, I see this as a very valuable tool for the integration of the Western Balkans into the European Union, which is the political goal. Obviously, the political goal of the European Union is that the Western Balkans should be integrated into the European Union, not only as soon as possible but also in the most optimal way. It is very important politically; it is also very important economically and is most important for the 'historic' members of the European Union, because we are creating the biggest market in the world.

2-061

Iuliu Winkler (PPE). – If we can stay, Commissioner-designate, in the same geographical area, in the eastern part of Europe: in your communication to Parliament I found the mention that the multilateral trading system is very efficiently complemented by bilateral agreements and I found a mention of Ukraine in this perspective, as well as other neighbours in the eastern part of Europe.

Mention should also be made of the Republic of Moldova, which, very interestingly, is also a member of CEFTA 2006. So I wonder whether you will be active in using trade, and of course development and economic

cooperation, as tools in also bringing those countries towards a sort of European Union perspective.

2-062

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I am not going to commit myself to a European Union perspective for Moldova. That will have to be discussed and decided later on, but I think it is very important that it becomes, in the first instance, part of the European Economic Area in broad terms.

But you know that there are also political problems concerning Moldova that will have to be resolved, so we need to have a gradual approach. I think that more specifically within the neighbourhood policy we have a gradual approach which is country-specific. Also the approach for Moldova is country-specific, and within that country-specific approach CEFTA is certainly a valuable tool.

So we are in favour of promoting this, we are in favour of integrating them, but we also should realise that this is not only an economic problem – although there is an economic problem. I understand the question coming from the Romanian side, but there are also some political sensitivities.

2-063

Niccolò Rinaldi (ALDE). – Signor Commissario designato, molto è stato chiesto in termini di questioni specifiche. Io faccio riferimento a quello che lei ha risposto al collega Arif all'inizio di questa audizione. Lei ha detto che l'obiettivo del commercio internazionale è la crescita e l'occupazione nel rispetto dei diritti sociali, e ha anche aggiunto che a volte la crescita bisogna trovarla altrove.

Io sono un nuovo membro di questa commissione e alcune volte abbiamo cercato di discutere con la Commissione su alcuni dati, ad esempio sul fatto che l'accordo con la Corea, secondo alcune informazioni, può comportare la perdita di molti posti di lavoro e che il deficit commerciale con la Cina negli ultimi cinque anni è triplicato. Quando discutiamo con gli interlocutori ACP, questi sostengono che l'impostazione attuale degli EPA può aumentare il libero commercio con i loro paesi ma può degenerare in una situazione sociale e produttiva propria peggiore.

Vorrei capire da lei quali sono i suoi parametri di successo di una politica commerciale, se è l'aumento dello scambio del commercio di per sé o se invece ha intenzione di introdurre e di condividere con noi dei criteri di valutazione e dei parametri di economia reale diversi.

2-064

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – It is true that our trade deficit with China has become bigger, but we are not the only ones: you see exactly the same pattern between the United States and China.

By the way, when you take Asia as a whole the trade deficit has not gone up, so there are also a lot of shifts within Asia itself.

Is the goal growth or trade per se? No, but look at the recent economic crisis resulting from the financial imbalances and you will see that as soon as trade halts you get into very difficult economic problems as well, so we cannot conceive of the world economy without trade, and I think that to have that trade we need to set rules, and that is what my job is about. It is not only trade promotion. Trade promotion is largely the job of the Member States and, within certain Member States, even of the regions.

But my job is the legal and political framework that makes trade possible and pursues goals, these being growth, being protection of social rights and also being projecting our European values on the world scene.

2-065

Niccolò Rinaldi (ALDE). – Signor Commissario designato, quando lei ha occasione di viaggiare io la inviterei a visitare un supermercato in Asia o in America latina. Si possono vedere delle cose anche divertenti su quella che è una non vera e propria contraffazione ma comunque una sorta di carnevalata, di mascherata di alcuni prodotti di largo consumo che vengono venduti come se fossero stati prodotti in alcuni paesi europei.

A questo proposito, vorrei sapere se lei ha intenzione di proporre l'estensione dell'articolo 23 del TRIPS, che oggi si limita alle bevande alcoliche, anche agli altri prodotti che sono propri di un'indicazione geografica tipica europea. Si tratta di una misura per certi aspetti relativamente semplice, ma che potrebbe offrire in sede internazionale una vera e propria garanzia di tutela di queste indicazioni geografiche.

2-066

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – Yes, I have already been travelling around a little bit. I was the Minister for Foreign Affairs for five years so I have seen parts of the world and also some markets, because that is always very interesting when you visit a country. Having said that, I am not sure that you could extend Article 23 of TRIPS to manufacturing goods, for example. That is not obvious to me. I think you have to do that in another way.

I am in favour of a 'made in' proposal, as has been put down, but I need an agreement between the European Parliament and Council on that. I think the proposals made by Catherine Ashton in October could help. It will limit the scope – that is obvious – but it would be a very good approach, and I will certainly support it. On the other hand, concerning TRIPS, I do not think you could easily compare beverages with, for example, shoes.

2-067

Peter Šťastný (PPE). – On 15 October your predecessor Catherine Ashton signed a free trade agreement with South Korea, and this agreement is right

now pending ratification by Member States and by this Parliament.

I have a specific question: Are you aware that the concessions granted to South Korea on duty drawback and rules of origin will put European manufacturers at a disadvantage in competing with South Korean manufacturers in the European market?

How do you propose to remedy this situation and preserve a level playing field in the European market?

2-068

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I know that duty drawback is a very touchy subject. I have tried in recent days to get a more tangible idea of what it is really about and what its consequences would be. A rather simple calculation suggests that for a car of a value of EUR 10 000 it would make a difference of EUR 100. That is what we are really talking about, so let us try to stay calm and discuss this thoroughly.

On the other hand, duty drawback is an internationally accepted practice. Europe is also doing it – we are also applying duty drawback. It is not something that all of a sudden appeared with Korea, but, if there are problems, we can react. There is a special mechanism that has been foreseen whereby it can be limited to 5%, whereas it is now about 8%. So we can limit it. We can also react on the basis of the safeguard measures that can be triggered. So, if duty drawback has the results that you envisage, then we could also use the safeguard measures, and if that problem occurs we will do so, but let us now look at the agreement as it is and judge it on its merits.

2-069

Peter Šťastný (PPE). – I still feel that the playing field is a little bit uneven, and you said yourself in your opening speech that it is a good agreement. In my vocabulary ‘good’ means ‘average’. Whenever we have an average agreement, we have a lot of unsatisfied participants, and I would just like to know if you see this the way I see it. There might be a trend where European manufacturing will be gradually replaced by more and more imports, which might have a negative impact on jobs and employment in the European Union.

2-070

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – Dear Member of Parliament, for me ‘good’ is ‘good’, because ‘average’ does not exist in the real world. My judgement is that this is a good agreement. I will defend it before the European Parliament. I am ready to discuss the implementation of the safeguard measures with you. We are ready to share with you all the data that we have to support our thesis that this is an agreement which is beneficial for the European Union.

I am also confident that it does not really cause a problem for the manufacturing sector, because we have safeguard clauses whenever imbalances occur. Looking specifically at those who manufacture goods, I think that Korea is certainly not the biggest problem in Asia. There are other problems and we will have to tackle them. It is

certainly not Korea, because the standard of living is already much higher there. They are increasingly committing themselves at all levels with respect to ILO treaties and with respect to the rights of workers. Therefore, this is certainly not the principal problem with respect to manufacturing goods in Asia.

2-071

María Muñoz De Urquiza (S&D). – La Comisión ha sufrido, con razón, un cierto cansancio negociador en sus relaciones con algunos de los procesos de integración latinoamericanos; en concreto, en el caso de la Comunidad Andina. La falta de acuerdo en el interior de la Comunidad Andina a la hora de negociar con Bruselas ha propiciado que algunos de sus miembros iniciasen negociaciones bilaterales individualmente con la Comisión. Son los casos de Perú y Colombia.

En relación con Colombia, que usted ha vaticinado que se iba a volver sobre este tema, existe un fuerte debate sobre el grado de respeto de los derechos humanos y sindicales en este país. Hay un sector de opinión que estima que la violación de los mismos es grave y que, por ello, la Comisión no debería suscribir ningún tipo de acuerdo con Colombia y hay otro sector que piensa que la situación está mejorando, pero, sobre todo, que hay que establecer lazos a través de un acuerdo formal que suponga un vínculo más estrecho con este país, lo que permitirá ejercer una mayor presión a favor de los derechos humanos.

¿Cuál es su opinión?

2-072

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – Next week a technical mission of the European Commission will go to Lima for a further round of discussions. I guess that we will not come to an ultimate decision concerning closing of discussions because there are still quite a number of points that have to be tackled. But it will be a discussion at the technical level, not at the political level and, in any circumstances, we will only initial an agreement with Colombia after a thorough political discussion on this subject.

So the eventual closure of the technical discussions does not mean that initialling would automatically follow. It will happen only after a thorough political discussion on the matter.

2-073

María Muñoz De Urquiza (S&D). – Mi pregunta suplementaria se refiere a las negociaciones en la OMC sobre las indicaciones geográficas, en las que se está planteando dejar fuera de protección a las producciones típicas vinculadas al territorio distintas de los vinos y las bebidas espirituosas.

¿Cuál es su estrategia para obtener una protección eficaz de las indicaciones geográficas en el marco de la Ronda de Doha?

2-074

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – The discussion within the WTO is still taking place on

geographical indications; it is something that is very important for the European Union. We have seen in the European Parliament that it will come up time and again. We will pursue an ambitious agreement with respect to geographical indications within the WTO. We are addressing the issue in bilateral negotiations and in regional negotiations, but also within the WTO, and we intend to secure an ambitious agreement.

2-075

Caroline Lucas (Verts/ALE). – I wanted to raise a question about corporate influence on EU trade policy and to go back to the question of independence.

In your written answer to Parliament's questions, you stressed very strongly the need for independence. You connect it to what you call the readiness to listen and to seek the opinion of the widest range of stakeholders and experts. You conclude that independence allows for constructive resistance to counter third-party interests where these have undue influence.

We are very happy with those strong words from you and will be keeping a vigilant eye on how they are translated into practice, especially with regard to the successor to the Lisbon Strategy, which President Barroso has announced that he plans to present early in the next Commission's mandate and in which you want trade to become an integral part.

But I think some of us here have the impression that not all your predecessors have upheld independence as such a key value. Thanks to the work of an NGO which obtained a judgment for access to documents from DG Trade, we now know that, during the genesis of the Global Europe Strategy, Business Europe had at least seven meetings on global Europe with top officials at DG Trade, whereas trade unions and civil society had very little.

How will you make sure that you resist undue influence of particular interest groups when it comes to the revision of the Global Europe Strategy?

2-076

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – This is above all a matter of personal integrity. I have no problem with there being full transparency on who is meeting whom at the services level.

There is also a register of lobbyists. It is a fact of life that there are a lot of lobbyists – it is because you have become important that there are a lot of lobbyists. I have met once with the chairman of Business Europe, which is of course an interlocutor, and will do so again in the future. I am ready to have consultations with civil society, including within the civil society initiative that was launched by Commissioner Lamy about 10 years ago.

On the other hand it is very important to be informed about what really is at stake in negotiations, and you can only find that out by meeting with all stakeholders, which I will do on an equal basis.

2-077

Caroline Lucas (Verts/ALE). – I am glad you say an equal basis because the issue is obviously not the access of lobbyists in general: it is the disproportionate role of industry lobbyists in particular. For example, during your time as Belgian Foreign Minister, which included the trade portfolio, you created something like an informal Belgian business council, which consisted exclusively, as I understand it, of captains of industry, to advise you on trade policy. And yet, as far as I know, you never took an initiative to set up a parallel body of trade unions and civil society, for example, even though requests were brought forward for that.

Can you assure us that, as Trade Commissioner, you will employ a more balanced model of taking advice and developing trade policy?

2-078

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I already mentioned earlier in the debate that the roles of a Member State and of the European Union, and in particular of the Commissioner for Trade, are quite different. Member States are concerned above all with trade promotion, and I established the Business Council to discuss with business how we could better promote their products in third countries. I hope that my successor will continue that approach. As Minister of Foreign Affairs I also consulted civil society, on a regular twice-yearly basis, on Belgium's general foreign policy issues. And I have always maintained an open-door policy if they wanted to come and see me. They always had that possibility and that will be my policy also in my new task.

2-079

Michèle Striffler (PPE). – Maintenant qu'un accord est intervenu au sein de l'OMC dans la dispute qui opposait les États-Unis à l'Union européenne sur les bananes, quelles mesures allez-vous prendre pour garantir que les pays ACP soient en mesure de continuer à produire des bananes de façon compétitive sur le marché mondial, sans avoir à recourir au dumping social?

2-080

Karel De Gucht, Commissaire désigné. – Tout d'abord, je suis très content qu'il y ait finalement un accord sur les bananes, qui est nécessaire si on veut vraiment conclure le cycle de Doha. Il est très important d'avoir cet accord, parce que traiter cette question dans le cadre de l'OMC impliquerait une diminution d'à peu près 80 % des tarifs, tandis que l'accord "bananes" implique une diminution de 35 %. Je pense donc que c'est beaucoup mieux comme cela. Il s'agit en fait d'une sorte de *early harvest* pour le cycle de Doha.

Deuxièmement, nous avons aussi prévu, dans l'accord, un montant de 200 millions d'euros pour soutenir les producteurs locaux des pays ACP. En ce qui concerne la production européenne de bananes, il existe également, dans un certain nombre de pays extrapériphériques notamment, une "boîte verte", qui contient des mesures destinées à apporter un soutien direct aux producteurs de bananes.

Je pense donc que nous avons vraiment pris soin de préserver ces droits.

2-081

Ioan Mircea Paşcu (S&D). – By creating the position of High Representative, the Lisbon Treaty wanted to really give a signal that it wants more coherence in the EU's external relations.

Trade is a major component of our external relations. You have already mentioned that you will collaborate with the High Representative – who happened to be your predecessor in this post, which is helpful – but do you have an opinion on partnership and cooperation agreements versus free trade agreements? How do you handle these instruments? Do you have a certain pattern in this respect?

2-082

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – The difference is that for a free trade agreement trade takes the lead and the Trade Commissioner takes the lead. For a Partnership Agreement, it is the High Representative who takes the lead. That is the difference.

The decision on whether we engage in a free trade agreement or in a partnership agreement of whichever sort – there is a very interesting collection of acronyms for these – is a political decision taken by the Council on a proposal from the Commission, so we will have to address that.

We are also part of the negotiations on a partnership agreement with Russia, for example, as far as trade is concerned. We are anxious to make sure that we are intricately involved – not just implicated – in the negotiations. It is true that this is a kind of political decision. There are also good grounds for doing this. For example, with respect to Russia, it is obvious that this is not only about trade, but about a lot of other topics we have to address. This is a good question that you put.

2-083

Jan Zahradil (ECR). – That is exactly why I do not have a further question!

2-084

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – Trade is not part of the External Action Service. It stays out because there we have exclusive competences.

On the other hand I think it is invaluable that we have good cooperation with the External Action Service. The External Action Service will exist in Brussels and in third countries – especially in third countries. In certain countries we have trade delegations that will work with the External Action Service, although they will not be part of the External Action Service as they are directly responsible to DG Trade. I am of the opinion that hierarchically they should not be under the External Action Service, but on the other hand I think it is very important that we work closely together.

I am not afraid about that because I have some experience with diplomats abroad, with the different

embassies that we will still have for some time in third countries. You see that on the spot they are working very well together. I think exactly the same will happen between the External Action Service and Trade and between the External Action Service and the bilateral embassies. It works very well abroad.

2-085

Jan Zahradil (ECR). – It will be about deregulation because Mr Barroso has said a lot about better regulation in the upcoming term. So do you plan actively to help Mr Barroso in his plans, for instance by identifying those elements of the *acquis communautaire* and internal market regulations that are not particularly trade-friendly and might possibly be modified or removed?

2-086

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner designate. – I do not mind replying. I am not only there to help Mr Barroso – he is my boss, so I will work together with him – but obviously I have to put my own mission statement into practice.

You can look at EU legislation from different angles. Trade people might say, look, there are some non-trade friendly measures in your legislation and we should address them. You will have the same approach from the development people, from the structural fund people, from the tax division and so on. But European legislation is the compromise of all this.

I am ready to answer a specific question and address a specific measure. As I see it now, I would not say that overall there is a trade-unfriendly approach in our legislation; I would not say that.

2-087

Joe Higgins (GUE/NGL). – You replied to Parliament's questionnaire: you are quite bullish in wanting to go further and faster in promoting what you say is openness and integration of markets through free trade agreements and economic partnership agreements.

Now, Commissioner-designate, is not the reality of many EU trade agreements that they allow EU-based multinational corporations to swamp the markets of poorer countries, destroy small producers, cause massive social dislocation and destroy potentially millions of jobs, as in the case, for example, of the proposed EU-Mediterranean agreement? So how can you pretend that pushing further and faster for more liberalisation is anything more than representing nakedly the interests of European big business? Do you accept that there is a conflict of interest between what is good for the super-profits of EU multinationals and the welfare of working people, and that there is also a conflict between them with regard to human rights?

2-088

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I guess it could be that we have a somewhat different approach on that matter. But let me say two things: first, I do not believe that a country can develop without developing its economy, and it cannot develop its economy without developing its trade. When you have no trade, for

example in agriculture, you have subsistence agriculture. It is only when you have trade that you have also commercial agricultural production. So I believe that, yes, you have to free markets.

On the other hand, and I say it also very clearly in my written statements, the aim of our commercial policy is also to project our values with respect to human rights, with respect to the protection of the environment, with respect to climate change, with respect to the rights of workers, and they are, and they will be, an integral part of my approach with respect to trade policy.

2-089

Joe Higgins (GUE/NGL). – Trade can be on the basis of human solidarity, or it can be on the basis of a predatory relationship, which I say is the EU relationship.

Can I press you further on the human rights issue? You said that only after a political discussion or debate would you consider signing a trade agreement involving Colombia. But is it not clear that the people on the ground in Colombia, the non-governmental organisations, perhaps the Permanent People's Tribunal for one, have already clearly produced evidence implicating the Colombian Government and 43 multinational companies, including European-based multinationals, for their role in the violence, especially against trade unionists, 49 of whom were murdered in 2008, and over 30 last year?

Yet are not big businesses, including European businesses, the beneficiaries of repression against trade unionists? So what steps will you take to investigate this situation before you even consider signing an agreement with Colombia?

2-090

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – What I said was that we are not going to initial an agreement before there is a full political discussion. When a trade agreement is negotiated, first you have the negotiation, then you have the initialling, and it is only afterwards that the signing takes place. So I say that, even before the initialling, there will be a political discussion and I will personally look very thoroughly into the matter.

Secondly, in the negotiated texts up to now there is already a human rights provision where measures can and will be taken if there is an infringement, but it is an engagement on my behalf that you will have a political discussion on this, and I will also see how I will do this with the counterpart before even the initialling of this agreement will take place.

2-091

Bastiaan Belder (EFD). – Voorzitter, ik ben niet degene die u aanduidt, maar ik ben ook lid van de fractie; ik ben Bas Belder uit Nederland, dus ik voel me in ieder geval erg verwant met de geachte kandidaat-commissaris omdat we toch een gemeenschappelijk verleden hebben. Niet altijd vreedzaam, maar tegenwoordig erg goed.

Mijnheer De Gucht, op de Westelijke Balkan stuiten we op het fenomeen van de *tycoons*, kartelvorming, marktmonopolisering, en dat verdraagt zich natuurlijk buitengewoon slecht met onze eigen handelsprincipes. Het gaat om landen die aspireren toe te treden tot de Europese Unie. Hoe denkt u deze handelsbarrière te overwinnen - want dit is urgent, als men kijkt naar de gemiddelde inkomsten van bijvoorbeeld de Servische bevolking en de levensmiddelen, en u bent ook een kijker en koper, dus prijsbewust. Daar moet toch wel wat aan gedaan worden. Hoe denkt u aan deze barrière een eind te maken?

2-092

Karel De Gucht, kandidaat-commissaris. – U spreekt over *tycoons* en het is natuurlijk een feit dat er kartelvorming is en er altijd pogingen tot kartelvorming zijn in de marktsystemen, dat is evident, maar die *tycoons* zullen bijzonder klein worden als ze in de Europese Unie terecht komen. Ik denk dat we juist dan ook de remedies hebben om daar een eind aan te maken, namelijk door ons concurrentiebeleid. Dat is niet mijn verantwoordelijkheid, het concurrentiebeleid. Daarover moet u een collega van mij ondervragen, als u dat wenst, maar ik ben er in ieder geval van overtuigd dat juist hun toetreding tot de Europese Unie zal maken dat deze soms nogal historische monopolies doorbroken worden en dat je daarbij inderdaad een marktwerking krijgt met als bedoeling dat er betere producten komen voor een betere prijs.

2-093

Bastiaan Belder (EFD). – Mijn vraag nu wijkt enigszins af van de vorige, maar het is wel een urgente, namelijk aan uw voorganger, barones Ashton, heb ik gevraagd vorig jaar om met haast een mededeling van de Commissie voorgelegd te krijgen, zowel bij de Raad als bij het Europees Parlement, over de bestemming van kinderarbeid in de handelsgerelateerde gebieden.

Mijnheer de kandidaat-commissaris, op welke termijn kunnen we die belangrijke mededeling tegemoet zien hier, alsook bij de Raad? De Raad heeft er ook in december nog om gevraagd. Het duurt al een tijdje en vooral mijn land en mijn regering hechten daar zeer sterk aan.

2-094

Karel De Gucht, kandidaat-commissaris. – Op verzoek van het Europees Parlement heeft de Commissie inderdaad een verslag opgesteld over kinderarbeid. Dat verslag is klaar en dat zal dus eerstdaags voorgelegd worden aan de Raad en aan het Europees Parlement. Ik heb begrepen - maar dat zullen we zien in de komende dagen - dat dit trouwens nog zal gebeuren onder de huidige commissaris voor Handel, mevrouw Ferrero-Waldner, en daar heeft ze op het eerste gezicht nog tijd voor tot en met de 27ste januari - en dat is mijn verjaardag.

2-095

Pawel Zalewski (PPE). – Traktat lizboński tworzy europejską służbę zagraniczną. Daje także Unii nowe kompetencje w zakresie inwestycji zagranicznych. Moje

pytanie brzmi następująco: w jaki sposób będzie Pan wykorzystywał te instrumenty, aby bronić interesów handlowych i inwestycyjnych poszczególnych państw członkowskich, naruszonych przez działania państw trzecich?

Nie chodzi tutaj wyłącznie o bariery taryfowe narzucane na produkty z całej Unii, ale o działania pozataryfowe, skierowane przeciw poszczególnym państwom. To samo dotyczy nierównych warunków inwestowania w państwach trzecich, oferowanych firmom pochodzącym z różnych państw Unii Europejskiej. Takie działania podejmowane są - na przykład z przyczyn politycznych - przez takie państwa, jak Rosja.

2-096

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – Investment is a completely new competence for DG Trade. It is a very important enlargement of its competences as it is, of course, part of the trade scenario. We will have to address a lot of issues in this respect, and I suggest that some time soon we should have a follow-up discussion on this matter on the basis of a communication on how the European Commission is going to address it.

There are existing investment agreements, by which I mean agreements for protecting investments. There are about a thousand of them. We are going to do away with them. First of all we will preserve legal certainty, then we will look closely at what initiatives we should take, and towards which countries. Within our prerogatives with respect to investment, legal certainty for investments in third countries is a main topic that we should certainly address very soon because, for example, it has a lot to do also with energy security. I could say a little more about that, Chair, but I understand you have no possibility to allow me to do so.

2-097

Paweł Zalewski (PPE). – Moje drugie pytanie będzie rozwinięciem pierwszego i będzie dotyczyło ochrony wolnego handlu i wykorzystania go do promowania europejskich wartości. Mówił Pan o Ukrainie, o umowie o wolnym handlu z Ukrainą. Czy uważa Pan, że ta umowa powinna mieć charakter całkowicie autonomiczny, abstrahujący od sytuacji wewnętrznej tego państwa? Czy też inaczej, poprzez udostępnienie stronie ukraińskiej szeregu zachęt, stworzenie dla niej korzystnych rozwiązań? Czy umowa ta nie powinna właśnie zachęcać do wprowadzania reform umacniających w tym kraju rządy prawa i reguły wolnego rynku?

2-098

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – The free trade agreement that we are negotiating with Ukraine at present is part of a much broader package that also entails a very important political chapter. But the free trade agreement is very instrumental in energy security. That is one of the reasons why it is considered by the European Union to be a priority.

On the other hand, I think it is very important that we would also have provisions in the free trade agreement

with respect to labour. We would have provisions with respect to the preservation of the environment. So, we will not have a simple approach focused only on trade as such. We will address all the topics that we are addressing in free trade agreements with other countries, like, for example, we did with South Korea recently. We will also do that with the Ukraine, although it is obvious that it is of major importance for the energy security for Europe.

2-099

George Sabin Cutaş (S&D). – I would like to discuss an important topic which you have already mentioned in your introductory statement but did not have time to develop. I would like to give you the opportunity to develop on it now.

I am talking about respect for the environment, labour rights and fundamental human rights criteria. How do you feel about automatic inclusion of those criteria within bilateral and multilateral agreements?

2-100

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – If you mean by automatic that we address the matters, yes, we will do so and we will make sure that the result is duly reflected in the agreement. On the other hand, I do not think that you can speak of automaticity in the sense that the provisions would be identical in all agreements, because obviously the degree of development differs from one country to another. But I do firmly believe that we should use our trade policy to project our values, although this is of course a balancing exercise. I really believe that by trade you can foster human rights in trading partners – you can do that. It is not an automatic process but you can do it and I think you should try it all down the line. I am sure that you should include references to the ILO treaties on labour, and that failure to respect those treaties should have consequences.

I believe that we should take care of the environment, and this concern should be addressed in respect of specific countries. So, while all this should play a larger part in our negotiations, these are still trade agreements, and the idea is to foster trade, though with due respect to the points to which you have just referred.

2-101

George Sabin Cutaş (S&D). – Remaining on the same topic, I would like to continue by pointing out that the United States already introduced a Trade Act in 2009. That Trade Act proposed including those standards in new trade agreements.

I am concerned about what you think the necessary action from the Commission side will be in order to move the European Union into a new trade and globalisation model.

2-102

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I think it is very important that, for these kinds of topics, the US and the European Union have the same approach, to the extent that the United States is also moving in this direction to address all these topics in their agreements,

and not simply to address them but also do this in a way that they have real impact.

It makes it easier for the European Union to do the same because in trade there is also a lot of competition – competition between trading partners – and I think it is very important that the European Union and the United States would have the same approach. You should not forget that, together, we represent more than 50% of the world economy, so that if we really want to set standards we should set them together.

2-103

Pablo Zalba Bidegain (PPE). – Volviendo al tema de Corea, usted ha dicho que algunas de las condiciones, como el *duties drawback*, que tanto preocupan a algunas industrias de la Unión Europea, como el automóvil o el textil, no son un problema debido al tamaño de Corea y al elevado nivel económico del citado país.

No obstante, creo que debemos ser muy cuidadosos con estas condiciones porque sentarán un precedente, insisto, un importante precedente, en futuros acuerdos con otros países que tengan otras condiciones y otro tamaño. Esto es un hecho que también preocupa a algunos miembros de esta comisión y me gustaría conocer su opinión al respecto.

Por otra parte, siguiendo con la relación estratégica con América Latina, ¿va usted a impulsar, en lo que al capítulo comercial se refiere, el acuerdo de asociación con América Central, ya prácticamente concluido, y, una vez solventado en el marco de la OMC, el acuerdo del banano, a la luz de las limpias elecciones que se celebraron el pasado mes de noviembre en Honduras?

2-104

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I agree with your remark on duty drawback. In any individual negotiation we should consider what attention should be given to that. I mentioned earlier that duty drawback is not something that suddenly appears in the free trade agreement with Korea. For example, it is also part of our existing agreements with Columbia. So Columbia will have address this too. It is not a novelty. But I agree that we should give due attention to that.

With respect to Latin America, there is a political problem, namely Honduras. The question is whether we are ready to engage with Central America with Honduras being present. There are differences of opinion on that. We will have to reassess the situation once the government is in place but that is a political decision that will have to be taken and where you, too, will have your say. I believe very much in responsibility so I will ask you what we should do: should we negotiate with them or not?

2-105

Pablo Zalba Bidegain (PPE). – Usted también ha mencionado, en relación con Colombia, que existe la cláusula de salvaguardia, pero, como usted sabe, entra en vigor cinco años después del Tratado. En el caso de que el Acuerdo no fuera tan equilibrado como usted piensa,

¿no cree que puede ser ya tarde, respecto de algunas industrias clave, para el empleo en Europa?

2-106

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I think your question refers to Korea. You said Colombia in your question.

(Pablo Zalba Bidegain confirmed that he had meant Korea.)

Concerning the reason why this remedy for duty drawback comes into place after five years, I was also asking myself: why is this? What is a good reason for that? It is quite a natural question. It is because that is the moment when there are no more tariffs, and it only comes into play when there are no more tariffs. As long as there are tariffs this will be a contradictory approach. That is the answer to your question.

2-107

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE). – Vous avez dit, à plusieurs reprises, que pour vous, le commerce international n'était pas une fin en soi, mais devait être un instrument au service de politiques et d'objectifs. Je suis absolument d'accord avec cela et heureuse de l'entendre. Mais si on ne veut pas que ce soit simplement des propos d'intention, alors il faut que vous soyez porteur de changements ou d'un esprit de réforme.

Est-ce que vous êtes prêt à défendre l'idée que l'Union européenne demande un changement, une modification des règles et du mandat de l'OMC, pour y inclure un certain nombre de normes sociales, environnementales, sanitaires ou de bonne gouvernance? Est-ce que vous êtes prêt à aller jusque là, dans un esprit de réforme, ou pas?

Et puis, vous avez tout à l'heure, d'un revers de la main, rejeté cette idée de taxe carbone aux frontières, qui est pourtant défendue par un certain nombre d'États membres. Je ne sais pas si c'est une bonne idée ou une fausse bonne idée. Mais j'aurais préféré que la Commission, ou la future Commission, nous dise: "Écoutez, nous allons, sur cette question importante, lancer une étude d'impact, et après nous aviserons".

2-108

Karel De Gucht, Commissaire désigné. – Madame, je pense qu'il faudra parler de certaines modifications à l'OMC une fois que le cycle de Doha sera conclu. Je ne pense pas que ce serait une bonne chose de le faire maintenant.

Il faut à présent essayer de vraiment conclure, avant de regarder ce que l'on fera concernant les questions que vous avez posées sur l'environnement, les droits de l'homme, les problèmes climatiques avant tout, et donc la négociation actuelle.

En ce qui concerne la taxe carbone, je pense qu'elle est très difficile à mettre en œuvre. Vous l'avez d'ailleurs déjà vécu dans votre pays puisqu'il y avait une taxe carbone, qui a été annulée par la Cour constitutionnelle

parce qu'elle ne respectait pas le principe d'égalité. Le problème se posera donc encore à l'avenir.

J'imagine que, maintenant, une nouvelle mouture de cette législation va être présentée, mais on a vécu cela aussi chez nous dans le passé. Il n'est pas facile de mettre cela en place en respectant le principe d'égalité.

Par ailleurs, je suis vraiment convaincu que, si on fait cela, il y aura une surenchère et que l'on arrivera à une guerre commerciale. Je ne pense pas que notre système économique soit vraiment servi par cela. Avant de le faire donc, il faut vraiment très sérieusement réfléchir à cela.

Vous parlez d'une étude d'impact. Je ne sais pas ce qu'il en est. Je pense qu'on a déjà lancé une telle étude. Parlez-en avec mes services. Je pense que, sur ce point, vous avez raison, mais il ne s'agit pas seulement de l'impact; c'est aussi la faisabilité de tout cela qu'il faut examiner.

2-109

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE). – Je pense que l'on aurait intérêt à mener davantage d'évaluations dans la politique conduite par l'Union européenne. Sur cette question, on peut mener une étude.

Sur la question du développement – je sais que vous êtes commissaire au développement –, je crains que le résultat de la politique de développement et de la politique commerciale à l'égard des pays en voie de développement ne soit pas satisfaisant, ne soit pas bon.

Et je ne crois pas que, au fond, l'ouverture à tout prix des marchés pour les pays en voie de développement les serve. On a une croissance terrible des inégalités, un accroissement de la pauvreté, notamment de tous les paysans pauvres qui n'arrivent même plus à vivre de leurs terres – je pense notamment à l'Afrique.

Je crois qu'il faut aussi se reposer profondément la question des enjeux de la politique commerciale européenne à l'égard des pays en voie de développement. Je pense qu'il faut peut-être une réforme et une politique différente pour les amener à davantage de développement.

2-110

Karel De Gucht, Commissaire désigné. – J'ai déjà beaucoup réfléchi dans le passé, également ces derniers mois, à ce qu'il faudrait vraiment faire pour donner plus de chances aux pays en voie de développement et ce n'est pas une réponse facile. Mais on ne peut pas non plus en rendre coupable l'OMC ou le cycle de Doha.

Parce que, par exemple, les pays les moins développés ne changent pas leurs tarifs. Ils ne doivent pas baisser leurs tarifs et ne le font pas dans le cadre du cycle de Doha. Par contre, tous ces pays ont un libre accès notamment au marché européen, au nom du mécanisme "Tout sauf les armes", que nous sommes d'ailleurs les seuls à appliquer au niveau mondial.

Ce que nous voudrions, c'est qu'il soit généralisé dans le cadre du cycle de Doha. Je ne pense pas que l'on fasse des choses qui vont à leur rencontre ou leur causent des difficultés. Au contraire. Mais il faut aussi se rendre compte que le développement est une matière très compliquée et je m'en rends de plus en plus compte jour après jour.

2-111

Christofer Fjellner (PPE). – Först vill jag säga att jag är glad att höra att den nominerade kommissionsledamoten är villig att se över de handelspolitiska skyddsinstrumenten. Jag tror att det är väldigt viktigt.

Jag är också glad att höra att ni avfärdar idén om koldioxidtullar, något som jag tror kan leda till grön protektionism som hotar fattigdomsbekämpning och rentav hotar miljön. Det är ju nämligen inte handel i sig som skapar miljöproblemet, utan handel är snarare en förutsättning för effektiv resursanvändning, dvs. något som löser miljöproblemen. Därför undrar jag hur ni kan se framför er att man kan bekämpa miljöproblemen med metoder som ger mer frihandel i stället för mindre frihandel.

I efterdyningarna av Köpenhamnskonferensen om klimatförändringar är det många som vill ha nya begränsningar av handeln, trots att det snarare både riskerar att hota fattigdomsbekämpning och effektiv resursanvändning, som kan lösa miljöproblemen.

Har ni några idéer om hur man kan bekämpa miljöproblemen utan att ha mindre frihandel, utan snarare mer frihandel? Det vore spännande att höra.

2-112

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – One of the approaches we could have is to try to get to an agreement on real free trade in environmental goods and that we would abolish tariffs on that. We have made a proposal. Obviously, it will not be possible at WTO level at this moment in time, but we will try to find a coalition of countries – not only developed countries but also developing countries – who could come into such a scheme, although there are difficulties.

Brazil, for example, wants bioethanol to be included in the list, and that is something we should discuss much more thoroughly because there are different types of bioethanol. Are they sustainable, are they not sustainable, and so on. I believe that abolishing tariffs with respect to environmental goods and with respect to environmentally friendly practices and techniques would be very important, but we have to translate that into goods because of the WTO rules of course.

2-113

Christofer Fjellner (PPE). – Tack för svaret. Jag tänkte precis nämna just möjligheten att införa ett avtal, s.k. *environmental trade agreement*, liknande det vi har för informationsteknik. Det är därför glädjande att ni är inne på samma spår.

Nu är det aktuellt med väldigt mycket miljölagstiftning runtom i världen som riskerar att skapa nya icke-tariffära handelshinder. Jag tror att man skulle kunna försöka använda de erfarenheter vi har från Europa för att bekämpa den typen av icke-tariffära handelshinder. Det vore intressant och spännande att höra hur ni ser på det. I Europa har vi valt Solvit, till exempel, som en lösning för att ta bort onödiga, oönskade handelshinder inom unionen.

Tror du inte att det kunde vara en bra idé att försöka göra liknande insatser inte bara i de frihandelsavtal som vi har med andra länder utan också på multilateral nivå, för att se till att miljöregler inte skapar nya, onödiga handelshinder, eftersom de då blir mindre effektiva?

2-114

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – When you want to establish a market you start by abolishing tariffs. That is also what we have done in Europe. You see that, once tariffs disappear, non-tariff barriers have a tendency to become more prominent and more sophisticated. That is what we have witnessed in Europe. We needed a decade to do away with them and we will probably need more time at the level of the World Trade Organisation and worldwide. But we have to address them.

You are perfectly right that when legislation is passed it may not only have adverse effects, but sometimes also be designed to create those effects, and it would not surprise me to see environmental legislation too that, in the end, is largely protectionist. But that is not new. You get that with all kinds of legislation and there is no reason why it would not happen with environmental legislation.

2-115

Bernd Lange (S&D). – Herr Vorsitzender, Herr De Gucht! Ich glaube, wir sind uns einig, dass Handelspolitik den gemeinsamen Besitzstand der EU nicht in Frage stellen kann, also weder unser Sozialmodell, noch den Grad der Freiheit. Wir haben z. B. im Telekom-Paket vor einigen Monaten den Schutz der Internetnutzer beschlossen, um Internetnutzer vor Ausschluss und Restriktionen zu bewahren. Das war eine heftige Auseinandersetzung. Ich höre nun, dass im Rahmen der ACTA-Verhandlungen mit den Vereinigten Staaten genau dieser gemeinschaftliche Besitzstand wieder in Frage gestellt wird. Meine Frage ist also: Können Sie garantieren, dass die ACTA-Verhandlungen nicht den gemeinsamen Besitzstand des Telekom-Pakets in Frage stellen und den Internetzugang schützen? Gibt es angesichts des Lissabon-Vertrags mehr Transparenz in den Verhandlungen?

2-116

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – With respect to transparency, I think I have already answered in one of the first questions what I am prepared to do, and I will obviously also do that with respect to ACTA.

I will abide by the Telecoms Package in relation to ACTA; ACTA should not be designed to be something

of a key to close the internet. That will not be our approach. I believe that what we should address in ACTA is the trade in counterfeit goods; and not to target somebody, for example, who brings a T-shirt which is counterfeit home with him – that is not what it is about either. What we are addressing here is organised counterfeiting, in most cases by organised criminals.

That is what we are addressing in ACTA and the idea is certainly not to limit the freedom of expression through the internet.

2-117

Bernd Lange (S&D). – Der zweite Bereich ist ja unser soziales Zusammenleben, unser Zusammenhalt. Wenn man Handelsbeziehungen zu Ländern unterhält, die andere Regeln haben, wo Lohndumping gilt oder wo Streiks verboten sind, so wie in Südkorea, gibt es natürlich Wettbewerbsnachteile und es wird Druck auf unser Sozialsystem ausgeübt. Das kann man im Bereich der Automobilindustrie schon sehr deutlich sehen. Welche konkreten Maßnahmen werden Sie ergreifen, damit grundlegende Arbeitsnormen erhalten bleiben und unser Sozialsystem geschützt wird?

2-118

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I am really sorry that I have only a minute to answer that question, but I believe that we will need trade, and more trade, to preserve our social system of protection in Europe because for that we need growth.

It is obvious that this growth will not come automatically after the economic crisis that we are going through now. We need trade and I think that you agree with that. What shall we do? Well, we have the trade defence instruments; I will use them. When necessary and where conditions on the basis of a further analysis are fulfilled, we will use them without inhibition. I have no problem about saying that. In the free trade agreement with Korea for example, which you just mentioned, there are provisions with respect to labour rights, explicit references to the ILO Treaties, and we will monitor very closely whether they are respected and whether there is progress in respect to that, not only with Korea, but for example with China. In the agreement we are negotiating with China – which is a cooperation agreement so I am not in the lead on that – one of the chapters we have a basic agreement upon is about economic and social rights, and we will watch closely to see they are respected.

2-119

Georgios Papastamkos (PPE). – The European Union is one of the most open markets. However, the same does not apply to many of our trading partners who maintain high tariff and non-tariff barriers. Moreover, as far as imports to the EU market are concerned, there are often practices of economic, social and environmental dumping and compliance with less stringent production standards. These not only constitute a competitive disadvantage for European producers, but may also pose a risk for EU consumers. Which do you identify as the *sine qua non* parameters from the EU side for an

ambitious, comprehensive and balanced outcome of the DDA negotiations?

2-120

Karel De Gucht, *Commissioner-designate*. – This is a somewhat complex question I would say, but, as regards the Doha Round, I think we should go to the origin of this round. It is a development round, so we have to make sure that the outcome serves the purposes of the developing countries and makes it possible for them to become an integral part of the world economy.

I think that this is essential and the European Union is, in a very decisive way, taking this stance in the negotiations. By the way, there is not only a problem North-South, there is also a problem South-South, and there is the whole differentiation between different categories of developing countries. So we are not the only ones that could possibly be blamed in this respect and I think that on the contrary we tried to be very helpful and we will continue to do so.

What I would also like to say is that you always need a balance between imposing on developing countries criteria which are in fact more normal within the European Union and giving them a fair chance to become economically active. That is also the approach that you are immediately faced with when you put the different kinds of categories of norms on the table that you just mentioned.

So this is an agreement that has to be found. I personally think that we should press them to go in that direction, but we also need to take into account that the degree of development is quite different between themselves and us.

2-121

Georgios Papastamkos (PPE). – The outgoing Commission set out the Global Europe and Market Access strategies. What will your action plan be for ameliorating the current environment for free and fair multilateral trade?

2-122

Karel De Gucht, *Commissioner-designate*. – Let me say something about market access, which is a very important part of our activities.

This is defensive, but you have to use offensive actions. It is fair to say that we have been achieving some successes recently with regard to market access – for example with Egypt as regards mobile telephones, and so on. It is an integral part of our strategy, which involves combating, within legal frameworks, regulatory problems and problems with non-tariff barriers. It is an integral part of trade and should remain so. It is one of the successes of Global Europe.

2-123

Véronique De Keyser (S&D). – Monsieur le Commissaire, en matière de franc-parler, vous êtes devenu un dangereux récidiviste. Vous savez que l'on vous avait interrogé, lors de la précédente audition, sur votre franchise légendaire – vous vous en étiez d'ailleurs

très bien défendu –, et puis il y a eu le nouvel incident de la République démocratique du Congo, qui ne nous a pas étonnés. Et, comme il s'agit, en général, de pousser les idées de bonne gouvernance, de justice sociale, de droits de l'homme, vous savez qu'on est avec vous.

Mais la question que je vous avais posée, je l'ai toujours en tête. C'est-à-dire que, finalement, c'est bien de lancer une bombe, encore faut-il que ça fasse de l'effet et encore faut-il pouvoir contrôler les dégâts. Vous avez dit que vous alliez vous y employer. Est-ce que vous avez l'impression de contrôler parfaitement les dégâts, notamment pour la République démocratique du Congo, sachant que cela se produira encore dans le futur, puisque cela fait partie de votre stratégie?

2-124

Karel De Gucht, *Commissaire désigné*. – Madame De Keyser, je ne vais pas rentrer dans une discussion belgo-belge à ce sujet. Mais laissez-moi vous dire que le discours que j'ai tenu au Parlement européen le 16 décembre - si je me rappelle bien - a été applaudi unanimement, également par votre groupe politique d'ailleurs.

Alors, je peux conclure en vous disant que je ne pense pas être un récidiviste mais que j'essaie d'être cohérent.

2-125

Véronique De Keyser (S&D). – Bien sûr, vous ferez certainement preuve de cohérence. Mais, je pense que c'était plutôt un compliment, tout en disant: "Attention, ça produit des effets". Alors, en matière de cohérence, vous vous êtes expliqué longuement sur la manière dont vous alliez traiter le cas colombien. Je dirais que, s'il y a un lieu d'application, pour le moment, de la bonne gouvernance, des droits de l'homme, etc., ce sera celui-là et que, là aussi, nous souhaitons vraiment que vous fassiez preuve de cohérence et que vous vous préoccupiez des faits.

2-126

Karel De Gucht, *Commissaire désigné*. – Ce n'est pas vraiment une question mais, enfin, je pense avoir explicité mon point de vue sur ce problème, qui n'est pas limité à la Colombie. Je pense que c'est un problème qui se pose dans pas mal d'accords qu'il faut négocier. Et la situation se présente toujours différemment, c'est pourquoi la cohérence est importante.

2-127

Cristiana Muscardini (PPE). – Signor Commissario designato, lei è un uomo grandemente esperto e preparato. Tuttavia, nella risposta all'on. Saifi e ad altri colleghi sul problema del *dumping* si è dilungato molto parlando di Doha – che sappiamo da molti anni dovrebbe arrivare in porto e non arriva in porto – e si è dilungato anche nelle risposte scritte a parlare di Organizzazione mondiale del commercio.

Però, mentre ci ha detto qui – e ha anche scritto – che lei crede molto nel rapporto tra il Commissario e i parlamentari europei, in nessuna delle risposte scritte lei ha ricordato, à propos di OMC, le proposte che il

Parlamento europeo ha fatto e ha votato in Aula nella scorsa sessione.

Inoltre, parlando del problema della denominazione dei marchi di origine, lei prima ha detto che c'è un dibattito perché il Consiglio non è d'accordo – diciamo pure, una parte del Consiglio, non tutto il Consiglio – ma poi, parlando di ottobre, non ha specificato come si vuole impegnare, cioè non ha parlato del programma di ottobre del Commissario Ashton.

2-128

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I know that Italy is one of the countries where this is debated. That is understandable, but you should also understand that we can only have such a regulation provided that we come to an agreement between Council and Parliament, because it is part of codecision.

Catherine Ashton has made some proposals which try to do away with the stumbling blocks. I will continue to do so. I believe it would be a good idea to have such a 'made in' regulation, so I will work towards that. I think it is true that the Council does not agree – there is a split in the Council. You need a majority of the Council and it is not obvious that this exists at the present time. However, I will try to make progress in that respect.

I think it would probably be better if you asked me that question again in a couple of months when I have some experience of what is possible and not possible on this specific topic.

2-129

Cristiana Muscardini (PPE). – Registriamo positivamente la sua buona volontà, ma qualche mese per noi è troppo. Noi vorremmo che questa indagine fosse fatta in tempi brevi per studiare, noi Parlamento insieme alla Commissione, cosa fare verso il Consiglio. Altrimenti, la codecisione rimane sulla carta e i buoni propositi tra Commissione e Parlamento europeo rimangono un *fair play* che non si estrinseca in atti concreti.

Le chiedo, approfittando di questa sua apertura verso la denominazione di origine e questa proposta di regolamento, se intende magari anche studiare un modo per armonizzare il sistema doganale dei paesi europei, visti i problemi connessi alla contraffazione, all'ingresso di merci illegali e a tutta una serie di problemi che ben conosciamo.

Su questo credo si possa ragionare con un programma comune, anche rispetto a quello che è un commercio illegale e al problema della vendita dei medicinali via Internet che è molto pericolosa.

2-130

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – With respect to Regulation 1383/2003 concerning customs, we will revisit that regulation because it could be that in the Dutch cases, where things were really about generic medicines, this regulation was not applied in a natural way. Maybe we should fine-tune that regulation, not

least to guarantee that medicines and generic medicines can be freely exported and not hindered.

With respect to the 'made in' regulation, we are talking about codecision. Codecision is not simply words; it is a procedure with deadlines, with possible initiatives by the participating bodies – the Council and the Parliament – and with the Conciliation Committee, where a result may or may not be achieved. I will try to facilitate that but in essence, under the codecision procedure, it is up to Parliament and the Council to come to an agreement.

2-131

Caroline Lucas (Verts/ALE). – Apologies for the second question from me, it is just that a colleague was unable to be present.

I wanted to go back to the question of Bernd Lange on ACTA, the anti-counterfeiting trade agreement, and in particular to focus on the issue of transparency again because Parliament has largely been kept away from these discussions. We have never seen any of the drafts of the ACTA chapters for example, and DG Trade argues that the participants agreed beforehand on confidentiality. However, we understand that that is on the basis of a request put forward by the US because they are working under the premise of the fast-track rules under which the US Administration has to act on this matter.

In the EU of course we have very different procedural legal frameworks, and under the Lisbon Treaty Parliament must be consulted and will have to agree on ACTA. As Commissioner for Trade, what will you do to inform Parliament on the same terms as the Council about the ACTA negotiations so that there is a timely opportunity for us to express our views and to take our recommendations into account? At what stage of the negotiations do you plan to transmit the draft texts of the chapters to Parliament and are you willing to challenge the understanding on confidentiality and inform the ACTA participants on the basis of the requirements set by the Lisbon Treaty?

2-132

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – If there is a confidentiality agreement between the participating parties I will respect it – and I think I have to respect it – but it does not mean that we cannot have a thorough discussion on what ACTA is about, what the guidelines for the European Union should be. You may start from the assumption that in my answers I will fully take into account what is on paper, but if you engage in a negotiation on certain terms you cannot change those terms in the course of the negotiation. I will be obliged to respect them, and I will do so. But I will also make sure that you are duly informed and can express your views, and I will take those views duly into account.

2-133

Caroline Lucas (Verts/ALE). – I wonder then whether it was right to have accepted those terms of confidentiality? I appreciate it was not you, but should the Commission have accepted conditions of

confidentiality given that, under our own legal framework, it is clear that for Parliament to be able to have a full role in the debate and the discussion about this, we need to have access to full information?

So my first question is: should that confidentiality have been agreed to and secondly, how do you propose to involve us, for example, with the FTA on Canada, which is coming up very soon? It has got IP chapters as well. Maybe you have got an opportunity with Canada to try to agree different terms, so that it is not held on a basis of confidentiality?

2-134

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – You probably know that your new competences with respect to trade are brand new. It is only on the basis of the Lisbon Treaty that you have the right of codecision and that you have the right of consent on treaties. It means, I think, that this confidentiality clause was conceived under the previous regime which was of course completely different.

Now we will have to judge whether we can engage in confidentiality agreements or not. I imagine that you will put questions on that as well, but you should also realise that sometimes negotiations are only possible provided that you respect certain confidentiality agreements.

That is a balancing exercise that we will have to make together with respect to Canada. We are in the new regime and I will make sure that you are duly involved, bearing in mind that we are nevertheless still talking about a bilateral agreement, which means that this is different from a multilateral agreement.

2-135

Jan Zahradil (ECR). – Ten tlak na dodržování lidských práv a funkční státní správu v rozvojových zemích, se kterými obchodujeme, je určitě správný. Ale platí to i naopak. Je tady třeba příklad Srí Lanky, kde Evropská komise navrhla dočasné zmrazení systému GSP+, přestože situace v dodržování lidských práv, v boji s terorismem apod. se na Srí Lance výrazně zlepšila. Takže se chci zeptat, jestli uvažujete o tom, že byste navrhl zrušení nebo opětovné zvážení toho dočasného pozastavení právě ve světle těch pozitivních změn, ke kterým na Srí Lance došlo.

2-136

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – The Commission conducted a thorough analysis of what has been happening and came to the conclusion that three ILO treaties are not being respected. It proposed that the Council take measures with respect to GSP Plus, and that proposal is now on the table at the Council. They have six months, and within that period we will continue to discuss with Sri Lanka changes with respect to these ILO treaties.

That is what we will do, and we hope that we can take advantage of that period of six months to arrive at solutions that will not make it necessary to take measures with respect to GSP Plus. However, we are of

the opinion that, at the moment, there are serious reasons to take those measures. It is up to Sri Lanka to get to a better situation in the period of six months that it has been allotted.

2-137

Jan Zahradil (ECR). – Vy jste, jak už tady bylo zmíněno, správně zdůraznil potřebu dodržování standardu lidských práv, fungování státní správy v jiném případě, to byl případ Konga, což je země postižená dlouhotrvající válkou. Není jediná, takových zemí je ve světě celá řada, v subsaharské Africe je jich celá řada, jsou to země, se kterými Evropská unie obchoduje. Domníváte se, že můžeme použít ještě nějaké další nástroje k tomu, abychom těmto zemím nějak pomohli, aby dosáhly funkční státní správy a zlepšení standardu lidských práv a nějakého systému posíleného ekonomického partnerství nebo něčeho podobného. Máte něco takového v plánu?

2-138

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – We are currently negotiating the Economic Partnership Agreements. I said earlier on in this hearing that I believe they should be very much development-centred, but I also believe that trade should play a very important part in their being development-centred. I believe that we have a lot of work to do with respect to aid for trade.

To a very large extent, trade between Africa and the European Union is not a matter of tariffs because for the least developed countries there are no tariffs. It is about Everything But Arms. It is also about the physical opportunities to export. It is about logistics. It is about the legal framework. That is why we have focused a lot as a European Union – and also in the WTO – on trade facilitation and on aid for trade. This is a very important tool that we should use even more in the future.

2-139

Miloslav Ransdorf (GUE/NGL). – Commissioner, you and your colleagues are our captain in the storm. We are living in stormy times of economic crisis and this year unemployment will reach more than 57 million. It is an enormous problem. The best way to fight unemployment is to introduce innovations because some 75% of all GDP growth in developed countries is connected with science and research and innovations. What can you do, as Commissioner, to improve the way in which innovations are put into practice?

2-140

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I think the Commission can do something or try to do something about that. I think this is one of the major deficiencies of Europe. Look at the micro-electronics revolution – all the imported inventions are European, but the industrial production largely outside of Europe.

I think we should take care, for example with respect to the green economy, that the same does not happen and that we have the inventions, that we have the technology and that we also put this into products that can be marketed. But how do you do that? What should be done

within the European Union? I have some ideas, but I think you should put that question to other colleagues.

2-141

Miloslav Ransdorf (GUE/NGL). – It is not 100% too because the products are marketed and the international market is your field as Commissioner-elect. I hope that we can hope for new branches of production and new forms of production. There are some branches where we are leaders, like eco-technologies, nanotechnologies and nanosciences. These products can be marketed, also with the help of the Commission.

2-142

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – You are talking about the general framework of trade, and we attach a lot of importance in our negotiations to those products, also to NAMA and to services, and try to get to an ambitious agreement on that.

I already mentioned that we are also for abolishing tariffs with respect to environmental goods and trying to come to an agreement in that respect on selling those products. What is very important first of all is that I think we still have some deficiencies in translating innovations into actual products, because you can only sell what you have and what you have produced. That is a very interesting discussion, but I do not think I should really engage in what exactly should be done with respect to that.

2-143

William (The Earl of) Dartmouth (EFD). – I am speaking a second time because a colleague was unable to be present.

Sir, if I may say so, you are an impressive man and this has been a very impressive presentation. As this is the 37th question, there is not that much left to say. However, in your answer 4.3, you say ‘trade must be put at the service of the broader policy goals’. As David Martin said earlier on, this is the one moment when you are able to speak personally and we are able to question you personally. I would like therefore to ask you what you personally perceive as being the ‘European values’ to which you refer later on in the same paragraph, and what do you personally mean by ‘human rights’? One of the things I have learnt here is that ‘human rights’ means different things to different people.

2-144

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – My personal belief is that the model of society we have in Europe is to be preserved. I think it is invaluable that we have the combination of a free economy with large social protection, extensive respect for human rights, which are also justiciable at the level of Europe, being aware that we have to do something about climate change and being the leaders in that respect – leaders that could not be followed by the others in Copenhagen – but it is not we who are to blame but the ones who did not follow in this respect.

I believe that we have a mission with respect to development and we are far and away the leaders in

development for ODA. This should also be addressed horizontally in all the policies that we deploy. So, yes, I think that our society is a values-based society and I am proud to be part of that.

2-145

William (The Earl of) Dartmouth (EFD). – Your note seems to imply that you think that trade policy should be used as an instrument to export European values to other societies. That is, at least, how I read it. Would you perhaps care to clarify that?

I would further add that the politicisation of trade policy was a hallmark of your predecessor. To take a parochial point, I would like to ask a question on behalf of the UK. Because we are members of the European Union, we are represented by the Trade Commissioner, which is bad enough, but we also have to put up with the politicised trade policy as well. So, is this politicisation going to continue? Are you going to use trade policy to export European values, or your definition of European values – which, actually, I happen to rather agree with – to other countries? Would you perhaps clarify that?

2-146

Karel De Gucht, Commissioner-designate. – I do not see why I would not be convinced of values that are underpinning our European society and being inspired by them when you conduct trade negotiations. It does not exclude the fact that trade in itself is a value, and not only a value but also a necessity. We need trade. Trade is not always a favour. It is only a favour when you give favourable conditions to trading partners. I do not see the contradiction in this respect and, with due respect, I am not going to reflect on my predecessor, apart from saying that I think he did a very good job.

2-147

Chair. – We are coming to the end of our question time. I will give the floor to Michael Theurer from the ALDE Group. May I take an unofficial break just to congratulate him on his birthday. I think he will recall this birthday after participating in this hearing.

2-148

Michael Theurer (ALDE). – Sehr geehrter Kommissarskandidat! Vor dem Hintergrund der neu geschaffenen Freihandelszone zwischen der ASEAN und China stellt sich die Frage, ob wir nicht gegenüber Singapur anders vorgehen sollten, z. B. mit den ASEAN-6 zu verhandeln.

Die zweite Frage bezieht sich auf die Rohstoffsicherheit. Sie haben Rohstoffe angesprochen. Rohstoffe sind für die europäische Industrie entscheidend für Wettbewerb, für Innovation, für Technologie. Wir denken bei Rohstoffen gerne immer zuerst an Öl und an Gas. Aber es gibt noch ganz andere Rohstoffe, seltene Erze beispielsweise, auch Lithium, Elektromobilität. Das ist ein entscheidender Faktor und hat auch einen Bezug zur Handelspolitik. Deshalb meine Frage: Welche Bedeutung hat die Frage einer sicheren Rohstoffversorgung für Sie persönlich als zukünftiger Handelskommissar? Sehen Sie da ein Handlungsfeld – natürlich in Abstimmung mit anderen Ressorts –, um

eine Strategie für die Rohstoffsicherung der Industrie und des Gewerbes in Europa zu entwickeln?

2-149

Karel De Gucht, *Commissioner-designate*. – Concerning Singapore, we have come to the conclusion that at this moment in time it is not possible to have a free trade agreement with ASEAN as a whole. That is why we decided to go for the bilateral approach, but within the political framework that remains region-to-region. Let us say that the situations are different from one country to another.

The question on raw materials is very important, in fact. With China alone we are talking about 4.5 billion on a yearly basis, and we see that they have export quotas as they have export duties; they have minimum export prices and also procedurally they are making full use of their inventiveness. So this is certainly a problem we have to address, and it should also be addressed in the high-level economic dialogue with China. That is something of crucial importance for European industry and also for the security of getting those deals at the right price and not being confronted with distorted practices.

2-150

Michael Theurer (ALDE). – Ihrer Antwort entnehme ich, dass Sie das Thema für wichtig halten. Können Sie schon sagen, wo die Federführung, wo die Verantwortung in der Kommission für dieses Thema liegen wird, und sind Sie bereit, dieses Thema auch hier mit uns im Ausschuss für internationalen Handel zu diskutieren? Ich möchte auch noch sagen, dass ich von den bisherigen kompetenten Antworten sehr beeindruckt bin.

2-151

Karel De Gucht, *Commissioner-designate*. – I do not see the discussion as being within the Commission. I look upon this as being trade matters which we have to discuss. But we also of course have a political content, so I imagine that when we come to an EU-China Summit this will also be discussed, because it is difficult not to argue from the European side that it is not a deliberate policy.

I am not saying that it is a deliberate policy with political goals, but it is a deliberate policy with economic goals. For example, when you have to pay a higher price for raw materials than, say, the market prices in the country of origin, this is a trade distortion, so I think it is about trade distortions. I do not believe it is about a deliberate political strategy.

2-152

Chair. – That is the end of this question time. It has been a very demanding exercise for our Commissioner-designate, who is now entitled to make a final declaration to the committee and to Parliament.

As the committee chair, I am not supposed to put any questions to you myself, but I would like you to address, if possible, a topic that I think should be addressed at this hearing, which is to what extent and in what manner

you think that this committee and Parliament could be associated in defining the negotiating mandate of the Commission in future trade negotiations. You are free of course to make your final statement.

2-153

Karel De Gucht, *Commissioner-designate*. – First of all I would like to thank you, Chair, and all the colleagues for this hearing and the open discussion we have had – and also the openness of mind on both sides.

Let me first address your question. The mandate is decided by the Council. That is in the Lisbon Treaty. I cannot change anything about it. That is what it is. But I truly acknowledge that you have a major role to play in the definition of that mandate and I will make sure that you are duly consulted on this. I will make clear before your committee what I see as the aims of the mandate – its political environment, its economic environment and the impact studies that we have been carrying out. I will make sure that you have time to vote in the explicit resolution on that. I will duly take this into account in my negotiations with the Council. So I will do everything possible to make you an equal partner in defining the mandate and, not only defining it, also following it up during the negotiations, but with due respect to what is in the Lisbon Treaty. The Lisbon Treaty can only work if we respect what is in it.

My final remarks – I do not have that much to add. I have been going through all these sometimes very difficult topics in the last weeks, studying – and it is not easy when you are 55, I must say – but also discussing a lot with the services what the actual problems are, what we are facing, what our position is and how we can make sure that we deliver.

What I will do in the years to come – provided that I am confirmed – is make sure that we deliver. I am supposed to deliver on trade, but with due respect for what I have already mentioned as being the key objectives of our European society – respect for human rights, environmental protection, what to do about climate change, labour rights, and also growth. I think it is very important for the rest of the world that there is a sustainable growth pattern in the developing countries. It is also very important that we have this in Europe. If you really want our social system to be sustainable we will need growth. I do not think the discussion is really about growth but how we do this in a sustainable way.

(Applause)

2-154

Chair. – My thanks to all of you, dear colleagues and Mr De Gucht. This was a wonderful exercise in European democracy. It was a frank and open discussion. Now it is time for us to assess and evaluate the answers we have to the many questions we have put to Mr De Gucht.

That evaluation will take place immediately after lunch, and you will have the outcome this afternoon. Thank you very much again.

(The hearing closed at 12.15.)