

**ANSWERS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE
Federica MOGHERINI
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy
Vice-President of the Commission**

1. General competence, European commitment and personal independence

What aspects of your personal qualifications and experience are particularly relevant for becoming Commissioner and promoting the European general interest, particularly in the area you would be responsible for? What motivates you? How will you contribute to putting forward the strategic agenda of the Commission?

What guarantees of independence are you able to give the European Parliament, and how would you make sure that any past, current or future activities you carry out could not cast doubt on the performance of your duties within the Commission?

I have been dealing with foreign policy for the last 20 years: first through civil society, by actively participating in various non-governmental organizations and international campaigns, and in my own national and European political party. I then continued within the Italian institutions, for six years as a member of the Italian Parliament and most recently as Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs. As for most people of my generation, Europe is the place where I've grown up, my natural political endeavour, Europe is above all a space of shared values, personal freedoms and democracy, in which I believe and which I intend to foster, as a committed Europeanist, in my new capacity. This is not for me just a commitment, but the chance to make a dream come true.

In my capacity as Minister, and with the Italian Presidency of the EU, I have worked to affirm the need for a common European action to face the global challenges, starting with the dramatic challenges at the borders of our continent looking at East or South.

Now more than ever I believe that we need to take a far-reaching look at the global landscape. We need a strategic approach not only to current crises but also to potential ones and the impact that seemingly distant problems can have on our societies and our security. I am thinking of the thousands of migrants in search of asylum or a new life in Europe, and I am also thinking of the many terrorist threats we face. Recent history demonstrates that when Europe has courage and vision, it can truly have a central role in global politics. It is this awareness that will guide me in my work as High Representative and Vice President of the Commission.

The independence of Commissioners is not only anchored in the founding acts of Europe, but must also be the binding principle of anyone who is called upon to perform a task of such great responsibility in the public domain. Every Commissioner should be guided by the pursuit of the interests of European citizens and the European Union as a whole. This is the commitment I have publicly taken on a few hours after the European Council designated me as High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. I confirm this commitment before the European Parliament and, if confirmed, intend to honour it in my every day work over the coming years. I will bring with me my ideas, my experience and my relations, putting them at the exclusive service of our Union and all European citizens.

I hence undertake, as Commissioner, to comply fully with the obligations set out in Articles 17.3 TEU and Article 245 TFEU, along with the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, laying down the guarantees of

independence and the ethical principles by which members of the Commission must abide. To safeguard the independence of the Commission, I also undertake not to take any instruction from any government, other institution, body or entity and to act in view of serving the European general interest. I will refrain from any action incompatible with my duties or the performance of my tasks. During my term of office, I will not engage in any other occupation, whether gainful or not. I have completed my Declaration of interests as stipulated in the Code of Conduct of Commissioners, and it is publicly available. I will immediately inform the President-elect and update my Declaration should there be any changes.

2. Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament

How would you assess your role as a Member of the College of Commissioners? In what respect would you consider yourself responsible and accountable to the Parliament for your actions and for those of your departments?

What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of enhanced transparency, increased cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with information and documents on an equal footing with the Council?

The High Representative is also Vice-President of the Commission, and I intend to play this role to the full. I will be responsible for steering and coordinating the work of all Commissioners with regard to external relations. I will chair a Commissioners' Group on External Action to develop a joint approach. This Group will meet at least once a month in varying thematic and/or geographic formats, according to what the needs may be. If necessary, I will ask the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations and other Commissioners to deputize for me in areas related to the Commission's competences.

The European Commission is accountable to the European Parliament which, as the only directly elected institution, enjoys the highest democratic legitimacy. The European Parliament has played a crucial role in the process of European integration, which the Lisbon Treaty has further enhanced and consolidated. Having been myself Member of the Italian Parliament, I attach particular importance to establishing a close and fruitful relationship with the European Parliament. We share the ultimate objective of delivering for our citizens and I thus believe it is our common interest and shared responsibility to perform our duties in a spirit of trust and cooperation.

In performing my duties I will fully implement the Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the European Commission (FA), in particular as regards the follow-up to European Parliament's positions and requests. In my areas of responsibility, I will make sure that the Commission responds to parliamentary resolutions or requests made on the basis of Article 225 TFEU, within 3 months after their adoption. In this context, I support and fully endorse the commitment made by President-elect Juncker that the future Commission will be particularly attentive to legislative initiative reports. In my capacity as High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and in accordance with Article 36 TEU, I will keep the Parliament regularly informed of the main aspects of my work and consult the Parliament on the fundamental choices of our Common Foreign and Security Policy. In accordance with my obligations under the inter-institutional agreement, I will consult the EP on forward-looking documents setting out the main features and basic choices of the CFSP, including the financial implications for the general budget of the Union.

As I outline in my reply to the second portfolio-specific question of the AFET Committee, I will cooperate closely with the European Parliament so that it can fully exercise its scrutiny role. With respect to the issue of access by the EP to classified information in the area of CFSP, I will support the early resumption of the negotiations on the review of the 2002 CFSP Inter-Institutional Agreement in close cooperation with the Council Presidency so that we can reach a satisfactory agreement as soon as possible. It is in our mutual interest to guarantee adequate protection of classified material, while ensuring that the Parliament has access to the information it requires to carry out its functions and responsibilities under the Treaty.

I fully support the new commitment to transparency set out in the Political Guidelines by the President-elect and I shall apply it.

Questions from the Committee on Foreign Affairs

3. Accountability and scrutiny:

Do you agree to develop further the commitments contained in the Declaration on Political Accountability signed by your predecessor, as regards EP's involvement and input into upstream policy planning, with a view to achieving true joint strategic reflection? For that purpose, can you commit, amongst others, to hold regular ex-ante exchanges of views with this Committee on the agenda of the Foreign Affairs Council meetings, ex-ante consultation on CFSP strategies and mandates, and consultation in the framework of the Special Committee?

I consider my relationship with the EP an essential and valuable component of my work. As High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission I am and will be accountable to the European Parliament. I acknowledge the invaluable contributions and political support given by the EP to the creation of the post of HRVP and the EEAS from the very first day. It is in our mutual interest, and most of all in the interest of a strong and coherent European foreign and security policy, to build on this and work together as closely as possible. I will seek the advice and cooperate with the EP so that it can fully exercise its scrutiny role. In this context, I undertake to fully respect and implement Article 36 of the TEU as well as the Framework Agreement (FA), the Declaration on Political Accountability (DPA) and other applicable inter-institutional agreements (IIAs).

The DPA was negotiated with the EP together with the EEAS Decision back in 2010 to adapt the institutional relationship with the EP to the new Treaty. It remains an important achievement and has proven its value, but I am convinced that we can and should improve the concrete implementation of some of its elements. I undertake to find pragmatic solutions with the EP to implement it more fully and systematically, for instance with regard to information on international agreements and exchanges prior to the adoption of new strategies and mandates.

My commitment is to enhance structured political dialogue with the European Parliament. In accordance with Article 36 TEU, I will consult the European Parliament on the main aspects and basic choices of the CFSP and will ensure that the views of the European Parliament are duly taken into consideration. To facilitate this and ensure a truly regular political exchange, I will make full use – in agreement with the EP - of the different channels available at different levels (committee, plenary, other bodies, Joint Consultation meetings, special committee) and I will be present in Parliament as often as possible. I will also be available for informal meetings. I believe that, in full openness and transparency, it is in our mutual interest to agree on how to better organize my presence in the EP and the system for deputizing. This will benefit the organization of parliamentary work and will ensure that I am able to respond to the different demands in an organized and fully satisfactory way. As part of this general understanding, I agree with your suggestion and undertake that - either I or my representative – will hold meetings with the EP prior to and/or after FAC meetings.

I will also instruct EEAS services and the top management in particular, to continue engaging with the Parliament on a regular basis. More specifically, I will instruct the services to proactively and consistently provide the relevant parliamentary committees with an opportunity to express their views in the appropriate format prior to the adoption of new communications, strategies and mandates. In this context, I would also like to breathe new life into Joint Consultation meetings. It is my intention to keep the Parliament fully informed of the planned mandates of civilian CSDP missions and I will also instruct the services to show flexibility regarding the scope of the Joint Consultation meetings to keep the EP informed on military CSDP missions and more broadly on the work and the agendas of the PSC.

Art 218(10) TFEU foresees a genuine parliamentary scrutiny: which actions will you take to ensure that the Commission and the EEAS will pro-actively and systematically provide this Committee with concrete information about all stages of the negotiations, signature and implementation of international agreements? How will you assist this Committee in the monitoring of the implementation of these agreements? Do you commit yourself to ensure that signed agreements will be referred for consent to the EP without undue delay?

I undertake to inform the EP fully and immediately at all stages of the procedure both on CFSP and non-CFSP agreements, as Art 218 (10) TFEU is of general application. In accordance with the Treaty, FA, and relevant IIAs, I will make sure that this is fully respected and effectively applied by the EEAS when it is in charge of negotiations in its different capacities (on behalf of the HR and/or on behalf of the Commission). The recent judgment by the ECJ in case C-658/11 was clear – the information requirement is there to ensure that the Parliament is in a position to exercise democratic scrutiny of the Union's external action, from the beginning of the process up to the conclusion of an international agreement by the EU. I will ensure that the Parliament is kept informed and has the opportunity to express its views and make recommendations at all stages without prejudice to the powers and responsibilities exercised by the Council, including as regards signature, provisional application and conclusion.

To achieve this, I will instruct the services – and Chief Negotiators in particular - to consistently and proactively offer to the European Parliament (by means of a letter to the AFET Committee as the competent Committee and focal point) to brief and inform the EP in the appropriate and agreed format. This will apply at the beginning of negotiations (including prior to the start of negotiations), during the conduct of negotiations (after each negotiating round or when significant developments occur) and upon the finalisation of negotiations (whenever negotiations are completed, an agreement is initialled, provisional application is proposed or there is the intention to suspend or modify an agreement).

During the implementation phase of an agreement, I will instruct the EEAS competent services to accept the requests from the Parliament to discuss the implementation and the state-of-play of the agreement. The services will brief and regularly inform specific "ad hoc parliamentary monitoring groups" on important agreements, if so requested by the EP.

I agree that signed agreements should be referred to the EP as soon as possible. I will work closely with the Council and the Commission to ensure that the EP is informed immediately after the adoption of a decision on signature and provisional application if appropriate.

Which concrete action do you intend to take to enable EP office holders to receive regular political reporting from EU Delegations, assessments from your services on current major international crisis situations, and classified information?

I recognize the value of reporting from EU Delegations for the work of the EP as a precious source of information. I am ready to explore arrangements for the transmission of specific reports originating in the EEAS to specific EP office-holders, as necessary for the exercise of Parliament's prerogatives and competences. Such arrangements should respect the existing IIAs and FA to prevent unwarranted disclosure of information.

One potential difficulty is that political reports from EU Delegations are generally classified information. The inter-institutional agreement between the Council and the European Parliament concerning classified information on matters other than those in the area of the CFSP has entered into force. This IIA makes the basic principles and minimum standards for protecting classified information applicable respectively under the European Parliament's and the Council's security rules the same. However, pending the formalization of the agreement on the review of the 2002 IIA concerning the forwarding to and handling by the EP of classified information in the area of the CFSP, I must continue to respect and apply the existing 2002 IIA. I should also underline that reporting from EU Delegations has informative and analytical value but does not constitute policy nor does it establish the official position of the EU, the EEAS or myself.

I am also ready to reinvigorate the IIA 2002 Special Committee with more frequent meetings to share confidential information on CSDP missions and operations as well as on CFSP matters generally in full implementation of points 4 and 8 of the DPA.

4. Triple hatted position of the HR/VP:

How do you intend to ensure, in line with Art 18.4 TEU and Art 9 of the Council Decision establishing the EEAS, the coordination, consistency and effectiveness of EU external action? Which concrete measures will you take to improve the coordination of external policies and the international dimension of internal policies? Which structure could best ensure the coordination of strategic policy guidelines between the EEAS and the relevant Commission services, and what practical changes are required to the structure of the EEAS (streamlining of the decision making structures, so as to enable effective decision-making, establish clear hierarchical lines and enhance the comprehensive approach in EU foreign policy)? Which steps (legislative, organisational, etc.) will you take to improve the management of crisis and the adequate coordination between their civilian and military dimensions?

How will you make the best use of your triple-hatted position to develop a long term strategy for a successful and relevant EU foreign policy, and take institutional and political initiatives in that regard? To what extent do you intend to use the provisions of the Treaty allowing for qualified-majority voting decisions on CFSP in the Council (Art. 31.2 TEU)? How will you promote and support permanent structured cooperation between willing Member States, in line with Art.42.6 and 46 TEU?

The current network and staffing of delegations does not always reflect the geopolitical reality of the 21st century and needs to ensure that political reporting and flow of information to Headquarters effectively

contribute to the definition of an independent and proactive EU foreign policy. Following which principles and with which timeframe would you review the network and staffing of EU delegations?

I am determined to make the most of my position as Commission Vice President to project a strong and coherent external agenda for the EU. The structure of the new Commission will facilitate this task. Working together with President Juncker I intend to guide the work of the External Relations Commissioners and work closely with others whose portfolios have important external implications. As agreed with the President of the Commission, strategic guidance will be provided through the meetings of the Commissioners' Group on External Action that I will chair. This Group will meet in varying thematic and/or geographic formats. They will take place regularly and whenever the need arises. I will report to my colleagues in the College and find pragmatic arrangements to draw on the Commission's policy instruments and expertise. I will also work with the Vice-President for Budget and Human Resources to ensure that we do not make commitments that we cannot deliver.

Furthermore as agreed with President Juncker I intend to ask the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations as well as other Commissioners as appropriate to deputize for me if and when necessary in areas related to the Commission's competence.

Cooperation with Member States is also vital at all levels and on a regular basis. I intend to discuss with Foreign Ministers how best they can all contribute to EU's external action. As the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) remain largely intergovernmental and since decisions in these areas are subject to unanimity among EU Member States, it is important to set strategic priorities for the EU foreign policy with the full co-ownership by all member states. This requires more coordination not only across the different tools of the EU's external action but also as regards the contributions that MS are able to provide in the areas where they retain competence.

In the face of growing international challenges, the EU can only be effective through collective action by all national and EU actors. In this context, I plan to fully implement the measures put forward by the EU's Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises. Furthermore, I will also continue to seek a coordinated approach between the external and internal security aspects: the ongoing crises in Europe's immediate neighbourhood clearly demonstrate that Europe needs to take concerted action also in this regard. As President Juncker has indicated, our objective is to show unity of purpose and unity of action as EU institutions if we want to affirm the EU as a truly global actor.

With regard to the Council's decision making procedures the Treaty of Lisbon has enlarged the possibilities of using the qualified-majority voting rule. The Council in its practice has so far not used this possibility as decisions have been taken by consensus. Together we can achieve objectives that individual Member States cannot. As HR, I have a mandate to contribute to the development of the CFSP and I will not hesitate to recommend the use of qualified majority voting as provided by the Treaty as long as it can help us to better achieve our goals.

The provisions of the Treaty on permanent structured cooperation have not been used yet and therefore are part of the untapped potential of the Treaty. Military capabilities remain with the Member States, and in line with the Treaty, it is for Member States that fulfil the criteria and which have made the commitments on military capabilities set out in the relevant Protocol to notify their intentions. I will work towards creating a better understanding of the potential usefulness of this provision to support deeper defence cooperation among the Member States in line with the guidance from the European Council of December 2013. The streamlining of the EEAS decision-making structures will be one of my first priorities. This has to be done in parallel with the equally necessary streamlining of Commission and Council decision making processes: the gears of the different "machines" must be brought to a better match and synergy. For this, I will build upon the ideas in the 2013 EEAS Review. The EU is increasingly interested and expected to be a security provider in its neighbourhood and beyond. It therefore needs to continue improving its ability to anticipate events and to respond to crises, not only through civilian and military crisis management, but also by employing its broad array of instruments strategically and coherently to enhance overall effectiveness and sustainability. In structural terms, and as highlighted in the EEAS review, there is still work ahead towards improving the integration of the crisis management structures into the EEAS. I intend to streamline the internal delineation of work, to avoid overlaps and enhance civil/military synergies. I will closely look into how to establish an effective link between those structures and the HR, taking into account their specificities.

More generally on the organization of the service, the top management team that was put in place for the launch of the EEAS could be streamlined in the future, now that the establishment phase has been completed. I will

want to undertake an overall assessment of priorities and resources before taking any decision. EU Delegations will be an essential tool of our work, as they represent the Union abroad, manage community policies and are a key direct service of information. As with Headquarters structures, the decisions regarding deployment of staff in delegations has to be dynamic and responsive to changing political priorities and circumstances on the ground. Equally the overall budget constraints may require tough decisions. Eventual changes will be agreed in the network with the Council and the Commission and in full transparency with the European Parliament.

5. Policies:

How do you intend to implement the December 2013 European Council Conclusions on reviewing the EU's strategic priorities for foreign and security policy and on further progress on European defence cooperation? As regards the European Defence Agency, how can you ensure it has sufficient resources, could be used to its full potential and can smoothly cooperate with the Commission on synergies between civilian security and defence research? How can you create incentives to Member States to take part in pooling and sharing projects? As a member of the College, which steps would you take to ensure that the rules on defence procurement can help build a truly European market in defence equipment?

Which concrete measures do you intend to take to ensure that Human Rights are not overshadowed by competing priorities of EU external action, and that obligations of Art 21 TEU to mainstream Human Rights across all external action are duly implemented, also in cooperation with international and regional Human Rights organisations? To what extent should trade be considered as a tool for foreign policy, and which steps do you intend to take to ensure that decisions taken under trade policy reinforce EU foreign action and do not undermine its coherence and its impact? What actions would you take to reinforce the EU's energy security in the short and medium term given that the EU is currently heavily dependent on one oil and gas supplier, which in the past has used the cut of gas supplies as its foreign policy tool ? How do you link migrations, security and stability of the EU and its neighbours, with development policy, and what actions would you take in that regard?

In line with the provisions contained in the legal basis of external financial instruments, can you confirm that the Commission will adopt amending delegated acts at mid-term review to confirm or amend the priorities defined in their annexes? How do you intend to engage in the Strategic Dialogue with this Committee? Which actions do you intend to take to ensure coordination, coherence and synergies between these financial instruments and with other policy instruments of EU external action (CFSP, Humanitarian Aid, Macro Financial Assistance etc.)?

I greatly welcome the mandate from last December's European Council to "assess the impact of changes in the global environment" and report back next year on "challenges and opportunities arising for the Union". It is clear that this environment has changed significantly, rapidly and dramatically, and that the EU cannot simply carry on with existing policies as if nothing had happened. So a comprehensive stock-take and reflection is needed, to ensure that our approaches are relevant and realistic - and based on a shared strategic outlook. So I will aim to stimulate a wide-ranging and inclusive debate, involving not just the EU institutions and member state governments but the wider foreign policy community as well. In the dramatically changed world in which we live, protecting and promoting European interests and values will become increasingly difficult unless Europeans increasingly combine their efforts and resources, and act together. I know that some good preparatory work has already been undertaken cooperatively amongst the EU institutions, including the EP: this should be a helpful basis for the strategic debate that must follow. The experience from the 2003 European Security Strategy indicates that the process of reflecting strategically and collectively on EU foreign policy is crucially important to define how we want to act in the world. In light of the radically transformed global and regional circumstances we live in, a joint process of strategic reflection could eventually lead the way to a new European Security Strategy.

This same effort to re-establish common strategic assessments and approaches is equally essential to re-invigorate cooperative efforts in the defence sphere. The logic for greater pooling of defence efforts and resources is compelling, and largely uncontested: but the difficulties of translating that into concrete action are only too familiar. In the EDA we have a valuable instrument of which much is expected. But it can do little without the necessary resources, and the committed, constructive cooperation of its many stakeholders. So I greatly welcome the growing cooperation between EDA and Commission, especially in the sphere of research and technology. I would also welcome the Commission's involvement in capability projects, alongside Member States.

The principal incentive for cooperation between Member States is the conviction of the Member States themselves. So I am heartened that national leaders in the European Council have re-committed to working together; identified a short-list of priority projects for cooperation; and called for reports on progress. I shall ensure that the EDA does all in its power to help the Member States achieve the tasks they have set themselves. In particular, I believe that EDA has a key role to play as the architect of new capabilities, with an immediate focus on the areas identified by the December 2013 European Council.

The achievement of a real European defence equipment market is essential to the long-term health of the defence industrial base in Europe, as well as our ability to equip our armed forces cost-effectively. So as an early priority I will call for a clear assessment of the impact of the 2009 package on defence cooperation and industry in Europe.

Beyond defence, unprecedented political events in our neighbourhood have demonstrated that energy security is a collective responsibility for Europe, for which we have to show unity of purpose and action. With my colleagues in the Commission I will ensure that efforts to implement the European Energy Security Strategy are well coordinated. The most critical challenges we face regard gas, for which the answer is two-fold: on the one hand, we must work on the establishment of intra-EU interconnectors; on the other, we must work on the diversification of sources and routes.

Human rights will be one of my overarching priorities and I intend to use them as a compass in all my relations within EU Institutions, as well as with third countries, international organizations and civil society. Article 21 of the Treaty is all about mainstreaming human rights in our external policies. To this end, the EU's Strategic Framework and Action Plan, which commit the Union to promoting human rights in all areas of foreign relations "without exception" is a crucial step forward. Our efforts must now be tailored to implementation. In this regard I intend to continue and expand best practices, especially on negotiating human rights clauses in all international agreements, incorporating human rights considerations in CSDP missions and ensuring Human Rights-compliance of our counterterrorism policy. As I realize that there is still much to accomplish, I intend to work with my colleagues in the Commission in order to mainstream human rights in vital policy areas such as migration, development, environment, internet governance, trade, investment and technology and business, to name a few. In this context, I will deepen the engagement with our interlocutors in international and regional organizations, regularly engage NGOs and civil society groups and closely coordinate with Member States. As traditional champions of human rights in the EU's external action, I look forward to working closely with the European Parliament and in particular the human rights sub-committee on all these matters.

Trade is a key source of EU growth and jobs and should therefore be pursued in its own right. At the same time, trade policy is one of the most important foreign policy tools at our disposal. In order to ensure that trade policy is coherent with and complementary to our foreign policy goals, I intend to develop a joint approach through the Commissioners' Group on External Action. In this regard, I shall pay special attention to the EU's relations with ACP countries, in close cooperation with the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development. Trade policy in fact can represent a key instrument to eradicate poverty and promote the economies of countries, as well as to induce integration in the global economy and respect for values such as human rights, labour rights and environmental protection.

Beyond trade, I would like to emphasize the importance I attach to development, taking into account the new paradigm to be set up for the post-2015 agenda. I strongly believe that our relationship with the so-called developing world, especially Africa, will need to be re-calibrated. Some of these countries are nowadays capable of important innovation. Their economies are growing and they have the capacity to develop in a way that is sustainable, equitable and just. Europe has a lot to offer in terms of both technological and social innovation. Our development model, which has always tried to marry economic and social development with equity, can be a powerful reference point for our neighbours' neighbours to the south. We need to use our limited aid resources strategically and support those initiatives that are designed to encourage prosperity and well-being. As Africa's most longstanding partner and neighbour, Europe has a responsibility to ensure that African societies can achieve their development objectives fairly and sustainably. This will require innovation and new thinking on our part too.

Equally important is the need to work on the link between development and migration. The international community has pledged to put people at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda. I believe that, as requested by the EU-Africa Summit, global partnerships on migration and human mobility should be a core component of the post 2015-development agenda as a key factor for sustainable development. We need to address the root causes of displacement through EU development policy addressing humanitarian, human rights

and developmental needs in countries of origin. The EU's strategic framework for human rights and democracy does not talk about migration. It should. When forced migrants leave their countries because of human rights abuses, the EU should intervene early on, mainstreaming human rights, with specific reference to migration, in its development policy.

In crisis situations, humanitarian assistance can and should be expanded towards first reception countries of forced migrants in East Africa and Middle East in order to improve reception capacities and the living conditions of de facto refugees in these countries. Alongside its efforts towards a common asylum policy, the EU must reinforce its action to support host and transit countries' capacities with a view to helping these countries fulfil their international obligations. Humanitarian Aid is an expression of solidarity with the most vulnerable, irrespective of colour or creed, and should be delivered without preconditions based on the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Those principles and objectives are those of the Treaty and of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Assistance. In full respect of these, we will improve our common EU response by improving analysis of fragility, designing programmes to improve resilience and tackling the root causes of instability and poverty.

This brings me to the broader question of migration policy's link to foreign policy. Awareness of migration and mobility challenges must be factored into foreign policy-making. Migration policy should continue to influence EU external action with a focus on the immediate neighbourhood, on migratory routes and on countries of origin and transit. In this respect, we do not start from scratch. The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) should continue representing the overarching framework of the EU's external migration policy, focusing on four objectives: better organising legal migration and fostering well-managed mobility; preventing and combating irregular migration, and eradicating trafficking in human beings; maximising the development impact of migration and mobility; and promoting international protection. I believe we need to multiply our efforts in this direction as an important tool for the construction of a structured global political role of the EU in migration and human mobility management. Mobility partnerships and Common Agendas for Migrations and Mobility should continue to be the core of this cooperation framework, including targets, commitments and specific support measures and addressing mobility issues, security issues and the need to facilitate return and readmission of irregular migrants.

Security has been and will continue to be an equally important component of migration policies, including in the external dimension. Human trafficking and smuggling has become a core business for organized crime and terrorist networks and mixed inflows from conflict areas need to be closely monitored. The problem of foreign fighters, although not directly linked to migration flows, is a specific issue that needs to be duly addressed. In this respect the active collaboration between foreign and home affairs ministers should be strengthened, particularly concerning judicial and police cooperation and information sharing. We need to ensure coherence and complementarity between the internal and external aspects of EU security policies.

I would also wish to express my full commitment to continued engagement with the EP and this Committee in line with the provisions and agreement contained in the legal basis of external financial instruments. The Commission will carry out a mid-term review report to the European Parliament and to the Council. Based on the recommendations of this mid-term review report, the Commission shall adopt a delegated act. I can confirm that the Commission will hold a Strategic Dialogue with the European Parliament in preparing this mid-term review and also before any substantial revision of the programming documents during the whole period of validity of the mentioned Regulations.

My responsibility as High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission is to take a comprehensive approach at EU external action, ensuring coordination, coherence and synergies between the different instruments, both financial- and policy-wise. This is particularly important also at the country level, where our EU Delegations enjoy a privileged position in this regard with their local Governments.