



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2008)1823 final

Brussels, 2 April 2008

MINUTES

of the 1823rd meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 19 March 2008

(morning)

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PV(2008)1823 final

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Single sitting: Wednesday 19 March 2008 (morning)

The sitting was opened at 09.07 hours by Ms WALLSTRÖM, President BARROSO being absent.

Present:

Ms WALLSTRÖM	Vice-President	
Mr VERHEUGEN	Vice-President	
Mr BARROT	Vice-President	
Mr KALLAS	Vice-President	
Ms REDING		Items 1 to 12 (in part)
Mr DIMAS		
Mr ALMUNIA		
Ms HÜBNER		Items 9 (in part) to 13
Mr BORG		
Mr POTOČNIK		
Mr FIGEL'		
Mr REHN		Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr MICHEL		
Mr KOVÁCS		
Ms KROES		
Ms FISCHER BOEL		
Mr McCREEVY		
Mr ŠPIDLA		
Mr MANDELSON		
Mr PIEBALGS		
Mr ORBAN		
Ms VASSILIOU		

Absent:

Mr BARROSO

President

Mr FRATTINI

Vice-President

Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ

Ms FERRERO-WALDNER

Ms KUNEVA

(19 March 2008)

The following sat in to represent absent Members of the Commission:

Mr QUEST	Chef de cabinet to Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ
Mr GUEREND	Deputy Chef de Cabinet to Ms FERRERO-WALDNER
Ms ZWAENEPOEL	A member of Ms KUNEVA's staff

The following also sat in:

Mr THEBAULT	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Ms DURAND	Acting Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr SØRENSEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Ms AHRENKILDE	DG Communication – Spokesman's Service	
Ms CARVALHO	Bureau of European Policy Advisers	
Ms MARTINHO	Chief adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 1 to 8
Mr KLAUS	A member of the PRESIDENT's staff	Items 1 to 9
Mr LE BRET	Chef de cabinet to Mr BARROT	Item 9
Mr LEMAITRE	Chef de cabinet to Ms HÜBNER	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Ms ÅSENIUS	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr REHN	Items 8 (in part) to 13
Mr DOENS	Chef de cabinet to Mr MICHEL	Items 1 to 11

Secretary: Ms DAY, Secretary-General, assisted by Mr AYET PUIGARNAU, Director in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2008)1823/3; SEC(2008)339/2)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(SEC(2008)1823)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 17 March 2008.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND SPECIAL MINUTES OF 1822ND MEETING

(11 MARCH 2008)

(PV(2008)1822; PV(2008)1822, PART II)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 1822nd meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) Action to be taken on Parliament's opinions

(SP(2008)1415)

The Commission decided to empower the Commission Members responsible for the sectors in question, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms WALLSTRÖM and, if necessary, with the other Members concerned, to adopt the amended proposals for transmission to Parliament and the Council,

as set out in SP(2008)1415, drawn up following the March part-session of Parliament, the contents of which were noted.

4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL

ii) Programming of Council business

(SI(2008)159)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2008)163 on the Council meetings between 13 and 26 March.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

iii) Results of Parliament's March part-session

(SP(2008)1482 to /3)

The Commission took note of the information in SP(2008)1482 to /3 on the proceedings of the part-session of Parliament held in Strasbourg from 10 to 13 March.

5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2008)340 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 10 and 14 March.

5.2. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2008)341/2)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired on 19 March.

5.3. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2008)342 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 10 and 14 March.

5.4. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation procedure between 10 and 14 March, as archived in "Grefte 2000" (Registry).

6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2008)343/3)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2008)45/3)

**6.1. DG ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS – APPOINTMENT OF
AD14 DIRECTOR (EU-12)**

(PERS(2006)167 TO /4)

The Commission had before it the applications under Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director, Economic Studies and Research, in the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (PERS(2006)167 and /2).

The Commission took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 24 May and 14 June 2007 (PERS(2006)167/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr ALMUNIA, it then decided to appoint Mr Istvan SZEKELY to the vacant post.

This decision would take effect on 1 May 2008.

6.2. DG RESEARCH – APPOINTMENT OF AD14/15 DIRECTOR

(PERS(2008)10 TO /3)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director, Interinstitutional and Legal Matters – Framework Programme, in the Directorate-General for Research (PERS(2008)10).

The Commission took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 14 January and 21 February (PERS(2008)10/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. It also considered the applicants' ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr POTOČNIK, it then decided to appoint Ms Clara DE LA TORRE to the vacant post.

This decision would take effect on a date to be determined.

6.3. DG INFORMATION SOCIETY AND MEDIA – TERMINATION OF EXTERNAL SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR THE AD14 FUNCTION OF CHIEF ADVISER (EU-12)

(PERS(2006)172 TO /5)

The Commission took note of the procedure followed, as set out in point 3 of PERS(2008)45/3, and, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms REDING, decided:

- to terminate the selection procedure COM/2007/10044 for the function of Chief Adviser in the Directorate-General for the Information Society and Media, without making an appointment;
- to maintain the assignment of this function for external publication (EU-12).

(19 March 2008)

This decision would take effect immediately.

6.4. DG RESEARCH – APPOINTMENT OF AD15 DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL

On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr POTOČNIK, the Commission decided, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, to fill the post of Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Research by transferring in the interest of the service Ms Anneli PAULI, an AD15 official, currently Deputy Director-General of the Joint Research Centre.

This decision would take effect on 16 April.

6.5. DG RELEX – APPLICATION OF THE ARTICLE 50 PROCEDURE (SECOND STAGE) WITH RESPECT TO AN AD15 OFFICIAL (PERS(2008)46)

The Commission continued its discussions on this matter, begun on 30 January 2008 (PV(2008)1816).

On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms FERRERO-WALDNER, the Commission adopted the decision set out in PERS(2008)46 applying the second stage of the procedure laid down in Article 50 of the Staff Regulations to Mr Percy WESTERLUND, an AD15 official and currently Head of the Commission Delegation in Oslo, in the Directorate-General for External Relations.

This decision would take effect on 1 August 2009.

**6.6. DG AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT – AMENDMENT
OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2008)369)**

The Commission took note of the information in point 6 of PERS(2008)45/3 and, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms FISCHER BOEL, decided:

- to set up a new Directorate AGRI.H (Sustainable Development and Quality of Agriculture and of Rural Development);
- to set up three new units: AGRI.D.3 (Cross-compliance, Food and Nutrition Legislation, POSEI), AGRI.F.4 (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia) and AGRI.G.3 (European Network and Monitoring of Rural Development Policy);
- to transfer, in the interest of the service, Mr José Manuel SOUSA UVA, currently Director of AGRI.E.I (Rural Development Programmes), to the post of Director of AGRI.G (Horizontal Aspects of Rural Development);
- to transfer, in the interest of the service, Mr Nikiforos SIVENAS, currently Director of AGRI.F (Horizontal Aspects of Rural Development), to the post of Director of AGRI.A (International Affairs I, in particular Multilateral Negotiations);
- to transfer, in the interest of the service, Ms María Angeles BENITEZ SALAS, currently Director of AGRI.K (Relations with other Institutions, Communication and Documentation), to the post of Director of AGRI.H (Sustainable Development and Quality of Agriculture and of Rural Development);
- to approve the amended organisation chart of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, as set out in SEC(2008)369.

These decisions would take effect on 1 July 2008.

(19 March 2008)

6.7. DG AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT – EXTERNAL PUBLICATION OF VACANCY NOTICE FOR AN AD14 FUNCTION OF DIRECTOR (EU-12)

(PERS(2008)48)

On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms FISCHER BOEL, the Commission decided to authorise the publication, under Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2008)48 for the function of Director, Rural Development Programmes I, in the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

This decision would take effect immediately.

6.8. DG AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT – EXTERNAL PUBLICATION OF VACANCY NOTICE FOR AN AD14 FUNCTION OF DIRECTOR (EU-12)

(PERS(2008)49)

On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms FISCHER BOEL, the Commission decided to authorise the publication, under Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2008)49 for the post of Director, Relations with other Institutions, Communication and Documentation, in the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

This decision would take effect immediately.

6.9. DG FISHERIES AND MARITIME AFFAIRS – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART

(SEC(2008)370)

The Commission took note of the information in point 9 of PERS(2008)45/3 and, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr BORG, decided:

(19 March 2008)

- to change the acronym and title of the Directorate-General from "FISH – Fisheries and Maritime Affairs" to "MARE – Maritime Affairs and Fisheries";
- to convert the Director-level Maritime Policy Task Force into Directorate MARE.A Policy Formulation and Coordination;
- to set up three new units: MARE.C.1 Maritime Policy – Atlantic, Outermost Regions and Arctic, MARE.D.1 Maritime Policy – Mediterranean and Black Sea and MARE.E.1 Maritime Policy – Baltic Sea and North Sea;
- to close down before the end of 2008 unit MARE.C.4 Research and Management of Scientific Data, and one unit of Directorate MARE.B;
- to increase the quota of non-structural adviser functions from 1 to 3, and thus to create two new temporary adviser posts;
- to transfer, in the interest of the service, Mr César DEBEN ALFONSO, currently Director of FISH.D (Control and Enforcement), to the post of Director of MARE.A (Policy Formulation and Coordination);
- to transfer, in the interest of the service, Mr Reinhard PRIEBE, currently Director of FISH.A (Conservation Policy) to the post of Director of MARE.C (Atlantic, Outermost Regions and Arctic);
- to transfer, in the interest of the service, Mr Emilio MASTRACCHIO, currently Director of FISH.E (Resources and Relations with Stakeholders), to the post of Director of MARE.D (Mediterranean and Black Sea);
- to transfer, in the interest of the service, Mr John RICHARDSON, currently heading the Director-level Maritime Policy Task Force, to Directorate MARE.E (Baltic Sea, North Sea and non-coastal Member States);

(19 March 2008)

- to transfer, in the interest of the service, Ms Daniela GHEORGHE, currently Director of FISH.C (Structural Policy), to the post of Director of MARE.F (Resources);
- to approve the amended organisation chart of the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, as set out in SEC(2008)370.

These decisions would take effect on 29 March 2008.

6.10. DG HEALTH AND CONSUMER PROTECTION – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART

(SEC(2008)371)

The Commission took note of the information in point 10 of PERS(2008)45 /3 and, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided:

- to change the title of the Directorate-General from "Health and Consumer Protection" to "Health and Consumers";
- to set up four new units: SANCO.B.1 Consumer Markets, SANCO.D.5 Animal Welfare, SANCO.E.5 Application of Legislation and SANCO.F.6 Animal Health and Welfare;
- to increase the quota of non-structural adviser functions from 4 to 5, and to create a new adviser function in Directorate D (Animal Health and Welfare);
- to approve the amended organisation chart of the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers, as set out in SEC(2008)371.

These decisions would take effect on 16 April 2008.

6.11. PUBLICATION OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR THE FUNCTIONS OF EUROPEAN DATA PROTECTION SUPERVISOR AND DEPUTY DATA PROTECTION SUPERVISOR

(PERS(2008)52)

The Commission took note of the information in point 11 of PERS(2008)45/3 and, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided to authorise the publication, in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) 45/2001, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2008)52 for the functions of European Data Protection Supervisor and Deputy Data Protection Supervisor.

This decision would take effect immediately.

6.12. DG ENVIRONMENT – RENEWAL OF THE MANDATE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Commission took note of the information in point 12 of PERS(2008)45/3 and, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr DIMAS, decided to propose to the Administrative Board of the European Agency for the Environment (AEE) that the mandate of Executive Director of Ms Jacqueline McGLADE be renewed with effect from 1 June, to regard this as the Commission proposal under Article 9 of Council Regulation (EC) 1210/90, and to ask the Commission Member responsible to communicate this decision to the Administrative Board of the EEA.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

OTHER MATTERS

6.13. AMENDMENT OF ORGANISATION CHARTS – 2008 SPRING PACKAGE

(SEC(2008)367)

The Commission took note of the information in point 13 of PERS(2008)45/3 and of the amendments to the organisation charts of the Directorates-General for Competition, Health and Consumer Protection, Agriculture and Rural Development, Energy and Transport, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, and the European Personnel Selection Office, as set out in SEC(2008)367.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

TRIPARTITE SOCIAL SUMMIT FOR GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT (BRUSSELS, 13 MARCH 2008)

(SEC(2008)382)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr ŠPIDLA in SEC(2008)382.

8. RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

8.1. SITUATION IN CROATIA, KOSOVO AND TURKEY

Mr REHN began by reporting on recent developments concerning Croatia, particularly suspension by the Croatian authorities of the application to the EU Member States of the environmental and fisheries protection zone in the Adriatic. He welcomed this decision, which should make it possible to press on serenely with the negotiations for Croatia's accession to the Union, and now to envisage their conclusion at technical level before the end of 2009, a

prospect the PRESIDENT had presented at his meeting on 13 March with the Croatian Prime Minister, provided that Croatia honoured its obligations and the conditions laid down. This indicative timetable could be taken up in next autumn's reports. In view of the ground that still had to be covered, he did, however, call on all the Commission Members to encourage Croatia to muster all its forces into implementing the necessary reforms. He felt that Croatia could become a point of reference on the road to accession for all the countries of the western Balkans.

Mr REHN then spoke about the situation in Kosovo, in particular the violence that had broken out in Mitrovica on 17 March, leading to the death of a Ukrainian policeman and a large number of injured among the forces of order and the demonstrators. He regretted this escalation of violence, blaming the Serbian nationalists, and stated his support for the action of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). He highlighted the challenges that would be facing the EU mission in Kosovo under the European security and defence policy. He expressed the hope that the general election on 11 May in Serbia would, in the event of a victory of the democratic forces, open up new channels of communication.

After this presentation, the Commission held a brief exchange of views during which the following aspects were raised, concerning the situation in Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo, and also in Turkey.

Croatia

- the determination to move forward in the accession negotiations with Croatia, but also the need to pursue the efforts with regard to the other countries of the western Balkans, and in particular to support, at technical level too, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to provide backing for the democratic forces in Serbia;
- the importance of the solution to the issue of the environmental and fisheries protection zone, which was an indication of Croatia's positive

commitment on the European road, but without forgetting that the conditions attaching to the accession process must be fully respected.

Serbia and Kosovo

- the very delicate phase that Kosovo was currently going through;
- the reaction of the Serbian nationalists, which could have been expected, and the likelihood of tension remaining high for what could be a relatively long period;
- the importance of maintaining efforts to avoid outbreaks of violence and serious disturbances in the run-up to the election on 11 May in Serbia;
- the need to be aware of the serious risks connected with the state of preparation of the nationalist forces in the region, particularly in terms of networks, weapons and strategies;
- questions about the risks of a possible partition of Kosovo;
- the importance of staying on course and particularly Kosovo's European perspective.

Turkey

- concerns about the present political situation in Turkey;
- the opportunity now available, following the positions taken by the new President of Cyprus, Mr Demetris Christofias, of relaunching with Turkey the search for a settlement of the Cyprus question.

Mr REHN then responded to some of these observations. He commented first on the reaction to Kosovo's declaration of independence by the Serbian authorities, which had not gone as far as putting in place economic sanctions. He hoped that order and calm could be preserved in Kosovo over the coming

months, particularly before the general election on 11 May in Serbia, but he was particularly concerned by the situation in the northern part of Kosovo.

He also referred to the situation concerning the elections in Serbia, pointing out that the democratic and pro-European forces did not want to make Kosovo a source of lasting conflict. He would like to see the election confirming the positive trend that had already been apparent with the result of the presidential election.

In this connection he asked the Commission Members to provide real indications, in their field of activity, of Serbia's prospects in Europe, citing as an example the regional conference on transport to be held a few days before the election. He also referred to the question of the signing of the stabilisation and cooperation agreement with Serbia, on which for the time being there were no developments in the Council.

On Turkey, Mr REHN referred to the political situation resulting from the case brought on 14 March by the chief prosecutor of the Court of Appeals before the Turkish Constitutional Court, seeking a ban on the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) for what are considered anti-secular activities. In his contacts with the Turkish authorities and the media, he had expressed his concern about this situation and the prospects for progress on reforms in Turkey. Separation of powers was a fundamental principle of democracy. The issue of the secular nature of the state ought to be addressed in discussions and elections, not before the courts.

The Commission took note of this information.

8.2. VISIT TO ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES (7 TO 11 MARCH 2008)

(SEC(2008)383)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr ŠPIDLA in SEC(2008)383.

8.3. MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT ON THE SAFETY OF PLANT PRODUCTS FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION EXPORTED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

(SEC(2008)380)

The Commission took note of the information note from Ms VASSILIOU in SEC(2008)380.

It also authorised the Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection to sign, on behalf of the Commission, the memorandum of understanding on the safety of plant products for human consumption exported from the European Community to the Russian Federation, as set out in SEC(2008)380.

8.4. INVITATION TO THE COMMISSION TO PARTICIPATE AS OBSERVER IN THE WORK OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES

(SEC(2008)378)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr MICHEL and Ms FERRERO-WALDNER in SEC(2008)378.

9. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL FACILITATING CROSS-BORDER ENFORCEMENT IN THE FIELD OF ROAD SAFETY

(COM(2008)151 TO /4; SEC(2008)351 AND /2; SEC(2008)350 AND /2; SEC(2008)352; SEC(2008)349)

Mr BARROT presented the proposal for a Directive which he was tabling for adoption. The main objective of this proposal was the establishment of a system for the exchange of data between the competent authorities in the Member States in

order to identify the holder of the certificate of registration of a vehicle involved in an offence.

He explained that this initiative aimed to facilitate cross-border enforcement of legislation in the field of road safety. By way of a preface, he emphasised that progress towards the target set by the European Union in 2001 of halving the number of deaths on European roads by 2010, from 54 000 to 27 000, appeared to have stalled, since the death toll of 43 000 in 2007 did not represent any reduction with respect to 2006.

He reminded the meeting that in order to tackle this death toll from road accidents, an integrated Community approach had been taken from the outset which fully took into account the principle of subsidiarity not only with respect to the vehicles themselves (for example, with the roadmap drawn up by the CARS 21 task force and also by encouraging security considerations in the design and construction of vehicles), but also as regards infrastructures and the behaviour of drivers.

In this connection, he also referred to the widespread use since 2006 of digital tachographs in lorries, the adoption of the European driving licence and the introduction in 2007 of a European road safety day.

He considered that follow-up and proper enforcement were a key factor in changing the behaviour of European drivers and that the countries with the lowest death toll from road accidents were those which had developed an effective control and penalties system.

Mr BARROT then turned to the situation regarding non-resident drivers who committed offences. So far this situation had not been regulated other than by specific bilateral agreements, which was not satisfactory in terms of the equality of European citizens before the law and the simplification of procedures. He pointed out that this proposal for a directive concerned only a limited number of offences (speeding, drink-driving, non-use of seatbelt and failing to stop at a red traffic light), which were the cause of three-quarters of deaths in road accidents. He also pointed out that the purpose of the proposal was to enable the competent authorities in the

Member States to communicate with one another through the simplified exchange of certain information, which would not be stored, allowing the offender to be identified. The aim was not to harmonise national highway codes or to create new bureaucratic structures.

He concluded by emphasising that this proposal should act as a deterrent to all drivers and that it represented a modest but real and significant step forward in the fight against dangerous driving.

The Commission then held an in-depth exchange of views, the points raised including the following aspects:

- the appropriateness of the measure chosen for achieving the objectives aimed at;
- the need for this proposal to be accompanied by an appropriate communication strategy detailing the concrete benefits and results expected;
- the scope of the proposal and the offences covered;
- the need to work towards more ambitious solutions in the framework of police and judicial cooperation and to hold a broader political discussion on the issue of road offences and the related penalties;
- the importance of the public health dimension of this question, which was a cross-cutting issue affecting various sectoral policies;
- the reduction in accidents, that could also be brought about by environmentally-friendly behaviour;
- the high social cost and human consequences of road accidents, as well as their financial cost;
- the responsibility of the Member States in effectively prosecuting and penalising offending drivers;

- the need to avoid imposing an overly heavy additional administrative burden on the Member States;
- the significant role of drug use in causing road accidents.

In reply to these points, Mr BARROT expressed his deeply-held conviction that the proposal represented a valid tool, among the myriad possible or available measures, which would contribute to gradually achieving the overall objective of reducing fatalities on European roads.

He stated that in cases of drink-driving, in addition to stopping and testing drivers, it was also necessary to carry out in-depth verifications of the data concerning them in order to enforce the related penalty in compliance with the legislation of each Member State. He reminded the meeting that the proposed system was designed to be used before a penalty was enforced and that it authorised the exchange of information where necessary, without storing this information. He added that such a system could work efficiently, as had been demonstrated by the experience with the database relating to the introduction of digital tachographs in lorries.

Lastly, he agreed on the need for appropriate presentation of the proposal for a directive, which should enable the Member States to prosecute non-resident traffic offenders more effectively and would provide an additional tool among others included under a broader road safety programme.

Ms WALLSTRÖM concluded by thanking the Commission Members for their contributions to the discussion, which had highlighted the Commission's support for this proposal, the need for pragmatic and effective implementation of the proposed system and the importance of careful presentation of the proposal to the public and the Member States.

Following this discussion, the Commission adopted, subject to general linguistic revision, the proposal for a Directive in COM(2008)151/4, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee, the

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Committee of the Regions and the European Data Protection Supervisor and to the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment and summary contained in the staff papers distributed as SEC(2008)351/2 and SEC(2008)350/2 respectively, the contents of which were noted.

It also took note of the opinion of the Impact Assessment Board on the above proposal for a Directive, as set out in SEC(2008)352.

**10. 13TH PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ON THE SINGLE EUROPEAN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS MARKET 2007
(COM(2008)153 TO /3; SEC(2008)356 AND /2; SEC(2008)363)**

Ms REDING presented the main results of the report she was tabling for approval. She pointed out that this document was the 13th in a series of reports, which had been issued regularly since 1997, on the implementation of the European regulations on the single telecommunications and electronic communications market.

She explained that the report examined developments in 2007 in the electronic communications market throughout the European Union and in each Member State, as well as the main regulatory issues arising.

She emphasised the importance of the electronic communications sector, which represented a significant proportion of the European economy, and of the positive developments in the sector in 2007. These included the considerable growth in broadband services, with penetration of 20% of the market, the development of mobile telephony and the benefits for consumers of lower prices in the sector.

However, she pointed out that certain serious problems still remained, such as obstacles to access to national telecommunications markets and to cross-border competition between operators. She also drew attention to the considerable potential benefits, which had not yet been fully realised, to be gained from improved services, increased consumer choice and lower prices.

In 2007 there had been a significant increase in broadband services, bringing the number of fixed broadband access lines to over 99 million at 1 January 2008. However, although penetration had reached 20% for the EU as a whole, and although in eight Member States penetration of broadband services was higher than in the US, significant challenges still remained to be addressed in a number of Member States, such as the clear difference still existing between urban and rural areas (the "digital divide").

Ms REDING also mentioned developments in the mobile telephony sector, which was a growth market, with penetration in the EU at almost 112% in 2007. She noted with satisfaction the fall in retail prices in 2007, while emphasising that mobile termination rates were still high in some Member States. These differences represented an obstacle to cross-border telephone communications.

She pointed out that while revenues and traffic volumes continued to decline in the fixed voice telephony sector, the national market share of incumbent operators, who also operated 46% of fixed lines for access to broadband, had stabilised. Against this background, she spoke of the considerable benefits for broadband services resulting from enforcement of regulations based on best practices, referring to certain Member States which had experienced higher broadband penetration and increased competition between service providers.

Ms REDING concluded by referring to the benefits that implementation of European regulations would bring to consumers and the developments in the electronic communications market. She highlighted the fall in prices – owing to the general reinforcement of competition and, more specifically, to the entry into force of the roaming regulation – and the increase in speed as a result of broadband as well as the increase in consumer choice, bundled services and price transparency.

She also highlighted the importance of the freedom of users to switch operator while retaining their telephone number (portability), although the time taken to do so still varied.

Lastly, she called for continued efforts to ensure, in the interest of consumers and the industry, a coherent regulatory environment and a single electronic communications market guaranteeing effective competition between operators. The Commission would monitor this matter carefully, paying particular attention to the development of the broadband sector, which she considered could reach penetration of 30% by 2010.

The Commission then approved the report in COM(2008)153/3, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and to the national parliaments, accompanied by the staff paper distributed as SEC(2008)356 and /2 (volumes 1 and 2), the contents of which were noted.

**11. COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION ON THE FOLLOW UP TO THE SECOND AFRICA-EU SUMMIT: ENGAGING THE COMMISSION IN A PARTNERSHIP OF RESULTS
(SEC(2008)353 TO /4; SEC(2008)354)**

Mr MICHEL presented the communication to the Commission on the follow-up to the EU-Africa summit held in Lisbon on 8 and 9 December 2007. He thanked all the Commission Members for their contribution to the measures already undertaken and for their involvement in the action to be taken on the summit. He reminded the meeting of the challenges arising for the Union in Africa and the need to fulfil the commitments undertaken, and pointed to the importance of translating these into operational measures.

He mentioned in this connection the matters agreed on at the Lisbon summit, which included the joint strategy and the action plan. The latter consisted of eight strategic

partnerships relating to: (1) peace and security; (2) democracy and human rights; (3) trade, regional integration and infrastructure; (4) millennium development goals; (5) energy; (6) climate change; (7) migration, mobility and employment; and (8) science, information society and space. Each of these partnerships was based on a list of specific targets. He reminded the meeting of the need to identify and develop priorities for each partnership by the end of the current year, when the first progress report would be presented.

He emphasised the fact that the Commission should continue to be the driving force in EU-Africa relations, in particular as regards the following three issues: (i) maintaining the momentum established for developing these relations, particularly through annual meetings between the European Commission and the African Union Commission, the next of which was to be held in October; (ii) support for the action of the Member States and of the Council, with a view to the creation of "implementation teams" for each of the strategic partnerships, to be led by one or more Member States and in which the Commission would participate; and (iii) establishment of an internal organisation in the Commission to ensure active participation by the various departments in implementing the partnerships, particularly through the "Africa" inter-departmental task force and the appointment of focal points for each partnership within the Development DG.

Mr MICHEL stressed the importance of using all the instruments and powers at the Commission's disposal to further specific, effective and coordinated action. He called on the Commission Members, the Members' Offices and departments to contribute to the achievement of these objectives in their respective subject areas and to continue the excellent cooperation that had so far prevailed in this area.

After this presentation, the Commission held an in-depth discussion during which the following aspects in particular were raised:

- the importance of the commitments made at the Lisbon summit and of the expectations that the results had raised in public opinion;

- support for the approach proposed by Mr MICHEL, which responded to the need to modernise relations between the EU and Africa and to take up the new challenges of development;
- the importance of putting in place appropriate tools, but without introducing cumbersome mechanisms or additional administrative burdens;
- the importance of the role played by trade, and the need to develop the regional dimension, in accordance with the rules of international trade, particularly through economic partnership agreements;
- the need to work with the private sector, especially industry, in particular under the strategic partnership on science, the information society and space, and to ensure appropriate planning under the 10th European Development Fund;
- the importance of addressing the problems of climate change and food shortages;
- the need to analyse the increase in food prices and the potential effects of this increase for Africa, and the importance of cooperating with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in order to step up financing of agricultural support programmes;
- the importance of training programmes for Africa, including programmes for establishing plant health services in African states in order to facilitate imports of products into the Union;
- the importance of highlighting the educational dimension of development policies;
- the need to measure and monitor closely the growing investment by third countries in Africa, particularly by China.

Following this discussion, Mr MICHEL highlighted the catastrophic impact of price increases, particularly of cereals, on humanitarian and food aid, which made it

imperative to focus efforts on supporting agricultural production in the countries most affected.

He also pointed out that in certain regions of Africa the development of bio-fuels was having an adverse impact in terms of the structure of agricultural production, deforestation, primary foods and local job losses, and that the European policies in question therefore needed to be made more coherent.

Lastly, he referred to the seriousness of the effects of climate change in developing countries. It was necessary to give consideration to the means of financing the fight against climate change and the need to provide Africa with specific support in this area so as not to put a strain on the development budget.

The Commission adopted the communication in SEC(2008)353/4.

12. TRENDS IN THE MEMBER STATES

(SEC(2008)384)

Ms WALLSTRÖM briefly mentioned the main subjects addressed in her information note on trends in the Member States, viz. the results of the spring European Council – particularly as regards climate change, energy, growth and employment –, sovereign funds and tax havens.

She noted that following the European Council of 14 and 15 March there appeared to be a preference for use of the phrase "strategy for growth and employment" as being more readily understandable than "Lisbon strategy".

Ms WALLSTRÖM also referred to the latest developments on ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, particularly the debates in the lower house (*Sejm*) of the Polish Parliament on the ratification bill, a point on which Ms HÜBNER also commented.

The Commission took note of this information and of Ms WALLSTRÖM's note in SEC(2008)384.

13. RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES (CONTINUED FROM ITEM 8)

SITUATION IN TIBET

Ms WALLSTRÖM referred to the statement of 17 March by the Council Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the situation in Tibet, the text of which was distributed during the meeting, the contacts being made with the Chinese authorities and the close monitoring by the Commission of the development of the situation.

The Commission took note of this information and, following a brief exchange of views, agreed to discuss the issue of relations with China and the situation in Tibet in greater depth and detail at a future meeting.

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The meeting closed at 11.30 hours.