

COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
FOOD SAFETY

ASSOCIATED COMMITTEES:

COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM  
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

**HEARING OF MAROŠ ŠEFČOVIČ**  
EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION  
(European Green Deal)

TUESDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2023  
STRASBOURG



1-002-0000

**IN THE CHAIR: PASCAL CANFIN***Chair of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety**(The hearing opened at 8.37)*

1-003-0000

**Chair.** – Good morning, we are going to start this hearing. First, I would like to welcome Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal, Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight. That's the formal title. As you know, ENVI is the lead committee for this hearing, but we have also the ITRE, TRAN and AGRI Committees associated. And I would like to welcome Mr Buşoi, Chair of ITRE, Mr Lins, Chair of AGRI, and – hopefully later – Karima Delli, Chair of TRAN.

I have as well – like yesterday – to recall certain formal elements. We are, of course, having this hearing in line with the guidelines for the approval of the Commission in Annex 7 to the Rules of Procedure. And this time we are going to evaluate the Executive Vice-President on his knowledge of this portfolio and on his communication skills. It's less broad than what we had to evaluate yesterday because you are already a Member of the Commission.

Before the hearing, the Executive Vice-President replied in writing to a preparatory questionnaire. The return answers have been distributed to you in all languages. Again, as we did yesterday, the structure of the debate will be the following. The Executive Vice-President will make an opening oral statement of no longer than 15 minutes, then 5 minutes for your concluding remarks and, in between, 25 questions from you.

Five-minute slot and please be disciplined like yesterday: 1 minute, 15 seconds for the first question, 2 minutes for your answer, Mr Šefčovič. And if you want a follow-up question, 45 seconds for the question and 1 minute for the reply. As you know, there are 25 questions: seven questions for the first round, 18 questions for the second round. And you can use your own language as it is translated in 23 languages. And it is, of course, live streamed.

We can now formally start the second hearing of the week. As you know, the assessment after the hearing will take place this afternoon from 2 p.m. with the coordinators and with associated committee chairs. Mr Šefčovič, the floor is yours for 15 minutes.

1-004-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Vice-président exécutif de la Commission.* – Mesdames et Messieurs les présidents, Mesdames et Messieurs les membres du Parlement européen. Je suis heureux d'être ici aujourd'hui à Strasbourg pour cette audition.

Au fil des années, j'ai travaillé en étroite collaboration avec nombre d'entre vous ici, au Parlement européen, dans le cadre de mes différentes fonctions au sein de la Commission. J'espère avoir l'occasion de poursuivre cette coopération en ce qui concerne le Pacte vert européen, responsabilité que la Présidente de la Commission m'a demandé de prendre en charge.

En tant que vice-président responsable de l'Union de l'énergie, j'ai travaillé aux efforts de la Commission européenne pour élaborer une réponse au changement climatique pendant le mandat précédent, quand pour la première fois, nous avons parlé d'atteindre la neutralité climatique d'ici à 2050. Grâce au Pacte vert, et au soutien de ce Parlement, cet objectif est désormais inscrit dans le droit européen.

Les quatre dernières années ont été difficiles. Ce à quoi nous avons dû faire face a été très différents de ce que nous avons connu auparavant. De la pandémie de Covid-19 à l'agression de la Russie contre l'Ukraine, notre Europe a dû réagir, s'adapter et démontrer qu'elle restait unie. En plus de cela, nous sommes confrontés à une crise du climat et de la biodiversité, qui représente l'une des plus grandes menaces pour notre économie, notre société et notre modèle social unique.

Dans toute l'Europe, nous en ressentons les effets très concrets: inondations dévastatrices, incendies catastrophiques, graves vagues de chaleur. Des gens perdent la vie, leur maison, leurs moyens de subsistance. De vastes étendues de terres cultivables et de forêts sont dévastées. Et ce sont les personnes les plus vulnérables qui sont les plus touchées.

So, honourable Members of the European Parliament, what kind of planet do we want to live in today, and what kind of planet do we want to leave for our children?

If we are serious about keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees, we must continue to act with urgency and courage.

This is where the European Green Deal comes in, inspired by the demands of citizens, especially the younger generations. Over the past four years, a lot of work has been put into turning the European Green Deal into a reality, and I thank all of you who have been involved in this enormous effort. We have put in place a big part of the legislative foundation, having delivered on 90 % of President von der Leyen's political guidelines.

But let me be clear, our job is far from done. Now we must combine continuity with bringing the European Green Deal to the next level, with the ambition needed for accelerating its concrete roll out.

This transformation is a multi-generational task that will require effort now, and for decades to come. We will continue to meet this high level of ambition. With climate change and biodiversity loss, there is no Plan B, and I think the vast majority of Europeans understand that. We all want to breathe clean air, eat food grown in healthy soil, power our lives with clean energy, and use durable and sustainable products.

Looking ahead, I want to focus on three main tasks in the remaining months of this mandate, as I coordinate the efforts of the Commissioners working on Green Deal issues.

First, I want to focus on the support of citizens for the European Green Deal. This, as you all know better than me, is absolutely crucial. It is our role to ensure citizens see that the benefits vastly outweigh the costs. Therefore, it is imperative that we implement a fair and socially just transition that leaves no one, nowhere, behind.

That means that the solutions we put in place must be accessible and affordable. They must work for all, including the most vulnerable. The Social Climate Fund, for example, will financially support the most affected citizens and businesses in dealing with the costs of the transition. This is an instrument designed to support vulnerable people and micro-enterprises already from 2026, ahead of the introduction of the new emissions trading system for buildings, road transport and additional sectors, which will eventually provide funding.

But to be sure that the Green Deal is accessible to citizens we must step up engagement with them. That means listening, explaining, working together and providing support where needed, to come up with the best possible solutions. And I know that it works, the proof that this approach delivers

can be found in the Just Transition Fund, whose origins can be traced back to the initiative for coal regions in transition, which was a direct result of the open dialogue I had with people and local authorities in Katowice back in 2017.

So it is a clear priority for me to organise green social dialogues to fully engage with our citizens, directly. This will help us to cultivate and strengthen public support for the Green Deal, and I would be kindly asking you for the support and assistance in that effort.

In addition, we should bolster our engagement with industry. We want our message to be clear: the Green Deal is an advantage to industry, it will help them to grow and prosper, here in Europe. It should ensure predictability and transparency in planning for the future. A clear direction of travel. So we will organise a series of clean transition dialogues, with the first dedicated to hydrogen, in a few days.

It is also important to strengthen dialogue with stakeholders from agriculture and forestry, who are essential partners in the green transition. There can be no food security without our farmers. So I want to engage with them, and parties across the food chain, so that we produce better, with less environmental impact, in harmony with nature. While ensuring decent incomes for farmers.

The second task is to bring all pending Green Deal proposals to the finishing line. Honourable Members, I will seek to drive this process forward, and you will have my full support in your work, together with the Council, to get open files across the line.

As nature is our best ally in fighting climate change, and crucial for our food security, the Nature Restoration Law is of paramount importance. I understand there are strong opinions around this file, but I believe we can, with positive engagement and firm political will, find a positive outcome by the end of the year, ideally before COP28.

We cannot have food security without addressing climate change, biodiversity and the sustainability of our soil.

Regarding the circular economy pillar, ecodesign is vital. The existing ecodesign requirement is estimated to have saved Europeans more than EUR 120 billion on their energy bills in 2021 – and I'm just talking about one year alone. So I hope we can conclude the negotiations on the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation to put the European economy on a firm path towards circularity, saving energy and reducing costs for citizens.

Likewise, we should seek to finalise the rules on packaging, end-of-life vehicles, waste shipments, and textile and food waste in short order.

And the Critical Raw Materials Act will be crucial not only for circular economy by promoting recycling of these key materials, but also for reducing our dependencies and boosting our open strategic autonomy.

The outstanding climate action files include reducing the climate footprint of our transport sector, notably of heavy-duty vehicles, and I stand ready to help find an agreement.

We also need to finalise negotiations on the Trans-European Transport Networks and the greening freight package.

Work also still remains in our efforts to ensure a secure and affordable supply of energy for the EU. That means finalising the new set of rules to govern our future-proof and more resilient energy system and make it fit for the decarbonised economy, while at the same time ensuring households and businesses have access to affordable and cleaner energy.

Now we must finish work on the electricity market design, the decarbonised gas market and hydrogen package, the regulation on methane emissions in the energy sector, and the Buildings Performance Directive.

In addition, there are further measures still to be put forward under this Commission's mandate. I will oversee work on the 2040 climate target – an important sign also to the international community of the EU's commitment to the Paris Agreement.

This autumn, we will focus on wind power and grids. I will work closely with Member States on their updated national energy and climate plans for 2021–2030.

I also intend to steer an initiative on relieving water stress, that increasingly affects different parts of the economy and our societies.

Additionally, I am fully aware of the importance of the files the Commission has yet to put forward, notably on the targeted revision of REACH, animal welfare, microplastics, forest monitoring, and the food sustainability framework. Together with my team of Green Deal Commissioners, we will seek to further work on these files.

The third priority for me will be the proper implementation and roll out of the files which have been agreed. This means helping our Member States, our citizens, our industry, to take the actions necessary to achieve the green transition. And it means making the most of the opportunities our green transition provides to preserve our future prosperity.

That is why the European Green Deal is our growth agenda, proving to the world that modernisation and decarbonisation can go hand in hand. With it, we are fighting for our industry to remain a global leader when it comes to green tech, clean tech, bio-economy and net-zero technologies.

Frankly, the race is on to be at the centre of green production, rules, and financing. Which is why we need to have a Green Deal, with European capacity in key sectors like critical raw materials, batteries, and wind turbines.

Ensuring the agreed policy and regulatory frameworks are being used effectively and efficiently is of paramount importance, not only to keeping Europe on its path to sustainability but also to preserving the competitiveness of its industry and ensuring growth, green skills and, I would underscore, high-value jobs.

We must also accelerate the rollout of relevant infrastructure and installations, including by simplifying permitting procedures.

And we must help green technologies to scale up, so that they become more affordable for consumers. Sectors like renewable energy, clean fuels, and electric vehicles have proven that this sort of investment can have an important and beneficial effect.

At the same time, we must make the most of the EU's investment firepower, whether it's the Recovery and Resilience Facility with REPowerEU, the EU Innovation Fund, the Modernisation Fund, or the Horizon Europe programme. This public financing is crucial in leveraging the necessary private funding.

There is more we can do, however. For example, we can bring together Europe's financial institutions to come up with effective financial tools to make clean alternatives more accessible. But we know that Europe cannot ensure a habitable planet alone. Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are global problems. I will work to maintain Europe's leading role on the world stage. Bringing together all key partners, COP28 will be an opportunity to send the message that we must all live up to our promises.

I was happy to see that the Commission's proposal to triple renewables and double energy efficiency was taken on board by the COP28 Presidency. And the implementation of the Kunming/Montreal biodiversity framework will remain of the utmost priority.

Ultimately, we must show the world that the European Union will remain a reliable global green champion, willing to work in close cooperation and provide support to ensure fair and sustainable growth and prosperity.

Honourable Chairs, honourable Members, when we first set ourselves on the path to climate neutrality in the previous mandate, and then when we started work on the European Green Deal in 2019, we knew it would not happen overnight. But Europe's green transformation has firmly taken root, and it is time we allowed it to fully blossom.

I want to use the remainder of this Commission's mandate in this regard to the last day, and make sure that our successors have a firm basis to continue delivering on this transformational challenge of our epoch, and of our civilisation, for a common future. I'm sure that Europe will do more than its fair share in these efforts.

I once again ask you to put your confidence in me to take on these important tasks. I will, of course, continue, as always, my closest cooperation with the European Parliament. And as I have heard some of you say, we must not only ensure that no one gets left behind in the green transition, we must bring everyone forward with us.

1-006-0000

**Chair.** –Thank you, Mr Executive Vice-President. I hope that in the course of this hearing we can get some more clarity and more concrete answers to the questions that we have raised and will be raising.

We move now to the first speaker and the first round of questions, starting with the EPP and Peter Liese.

1-007-0000

**Peter Liese (PPE).** – Dear Vice-President, thank you for your presentation. And in particular as the EPP, we like your commitment to work with industry. My question is, why didn't your predecessor work with industry, as he should? In the Climate Law, it says in Article 10, we need to work on sectorial roadmaps. The Commission, Mr Timmermans didn't do it. So, did you talk to him? Was it not a priority for him? Or what were the obstacles and how will you overcome these obstacles?

And you didn't mention energy independence from Russia. So, this is so important for the European Parliament after this horrible aggression in the Ukraine that we become completely independent from Russia. And I wonder if you didn't mention it because of what happened over the weekend. You know, I was very shocked listening to Mr Fico. He's mainly a friend of Putin, as I see it. And he appointed you two times. You were in the presidential election campaign, supported by the Smer party, by Fico's party. So, how strong will you defend the European Parliament's policy for being completely independent from Russia? And how strong will you be if Mr Fico is in office again against this guy who is completely telling the opposite than the European policy?

1-008-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, Mr Peter Liese, because all your questions are absolutely legitimate, and I am very happy that I can take them on so early in the hearing. We've been working together also with you on many files, and I appreciate your support for more intensive industrial dialogues.

We as a Commission have been discussing the files with the industry in different format. You know that I started European Battery Alliance, where it was clearly proven that what you need is structured interaction with the industry. You need to have the right people in the room. You need to have good discussion, you need to make good conclusions, takeaways, you need to follow up, and then you need to meet again because only through this interaction you can actually address, optimise and present the best possible solutions.

And this is exactly what I would like to do in all sectors of the industry, which are the most affected by the green transition. And I'm sure that, of course, pending your approval, I will get your support so we can discuss it together: what would be also best formats, how to make sure that we will have the most useful feedback coming from the industry.

The first one which we will have will be on hydrogen. Then we need to work on wind sector because you know that the wind sector is going through the difficult moments, and therefore I think we have to focus all our energy that this know-how, this savoir faire which we have in Europe will prosper also in the future.

If it comes to energy independence, you probably know that I was negotiating with Ukrainians and Russians for many years. I started the common purchase of gas, which clearly is liberating us from Russia. And I can 100% reassure you that that would be clearly my position in the future.

We are in the middle of the third round of common purchase of gas, again with record levels in subscription, and I believe that we will have good offers from suppliers and I'm pretty confident that this would help us to completely be independent of Russian fossil supplies.

Mr. Chair, I have two minutes for the response. Yeah, so I have to stop it. Thank you.

1-009-0000

**Peter Liese (PPE)**. – So in the Climate Law, it says in Article 10, the Commission shall engage with sectors of the economy to prepare roadmaps. And, in fact, Timmermans was not acting. So what was the reason for that? Did you talk to him? And then, I've known you a long time, but to be honest, I was shocked over the weekend when Fico won the election to see what you did say in your presidential campaign. And some people say there are people that can sell a fridge to the Eskimos. I doubt, what is the real Maroš Šefčovič, the one in the presidential campaign in 2019 or the one that we see in Europe, and will you go against Fico on Russian and Ukrainian issues?



1-010-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – You said you know me quite well and indeed I think this month it will be actually 14 years I'm under the permanent scrutiny of the European Parliament. I think that you know me from the close proximity, you know my work.

I probably should just recall that my second mandate I was working as the Commissioner responsible for human resources. I think that there you can see that it was one of the most far-reaching reforms of the staff regulations, which govern 60 000 people who are working for all European institutions; including new elements like the special income allowances for same-sex couples, opening the kindergarten, opening the crèches and really doing everything what we should and must do against any form of discrimination.

I think that you've been scrutinising my work in that regard for four years. The fact that the formula which we approved at that time for setting the salaries and benefits for our staff is still working today is a proof that it was a good deal and that we've been working all together.

I introduced elements of gender balance and I introduced the fair approach to our civil servants. So, that's who I am, and I think that's on the record.

If you would ask, 'what is my position on Ukraine?' I think that the best answer you can get from President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Shmyhal, because President Zelenskyy awarded me with one of the highest Ukrainian decorations personally for my services for Ukraine: be it in energy independence, be it in making sure that Ukraine can be connected to the European grid, signing strategic partnerships with Ukraine on critical raw materials and simply being the friend because I was there always when they needed me. Therefore, they are part of our common purchase of gas. Therefore, the European companies are storing gas in Ukrainian gas storages despite military conflict.

So, I think that's who I am and that's how I hope you will also remember me.

1-011-0000

**Chair**. – OK, I gave you all the time you needed for this first answer, Mr Šefčovič, but please be a bit shorter for the remaining time, because otherwise I will have to interrupt you.

1-012-0000

**Mohammed Chahim (S&D)**. – Let me first salute you, Executive Vice-President, for the work that you did for Ukraine and the solidarity that you have shown for being a pro-European. We salute you.

I'm not going to ask you a question about what Mr Timmermans or Madame von der Leyen thinks about this question, so this is strictly for you, and this question is as follows. One of the main challenges we are addressing is the biodiversity crisis and the availability of resources. The biodiversity strategy identified that at least 20 billion a year should be unlocked for spending on nature.

Sufficient funding is also essential for the Nature Restoration Law and implementation. The current MFF includes a biodiversity mainstreaming of 7.5% in 2024 and 10% in both 2026 and 2027. How do you see the progress so far achieving these targets, and what concrete measures will you take to ensure that this is sufficient funding for biodiversity, including restoration?

And the final question is on the Nature Restoration Law. What concrete measures will you, from the side of the Commission, come with to ensure that the deal is reached before the end of the

year? There are several crucial issues still open in the negotiations of which the Parliament expects the Commission to be a bit more active. Can you elaborate a bit on that? Thank you very much.

1-013-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, Mr Chahim, dear Mohammed, I really appreciate your kind remarks.

And if it comes to the biodiversity, I totally agree with you. When we did our study at the beginning of this year on what are the major drivers of food security in Europe – and it was in the aftermath of the Russian aggression against Ukraine – you kind of come up with almost 40 different elements. But what have been the key ones? Of course, biodiversity, climate change, water scarcity, weather patterns, which are changing dramatically. And therefore, I think that we have to find the common solution where we would promote biodiversity and, at the same time, promote sustainable farming. And I think it's our task to find this balance, to demonstrate that this is possible and indeed goes hand in hand. And that's what I think is clearly the priority for me.

You have said that there are very clear funds for biodiversity allocated until the end of the financial perspective and indeed this EUR 100 billion, which should come in the last part of the MFF, is there, and I want to make sure that we will use this money and we will use the money efficiently. To be quite honest with all of you, very often, we are talking about the billions, but when you talk to the concrete citizens, farmers, SME owners, they tell you that it's not so easy to get the financial support from the EU. So I think it's our common task to make sure that, be it from this funding or be it from the Social Climate Fund, we need to find a way how to work among ourselves, but also with other Member States to make sure the money goes where they are needed the most, to the vulnerable who are really in the need to get them.

1-014-0000

**Mohammed Chahim (S&D)**. – Thank you very much. My follow-up is: in your role as Executive Vice-President responsible for the Green Deal and coordinating climate action, how do you plan to take the scientific recommendations of the Board into account in the preparation of the 2040 target, ensuring policy coherence and synergy? How will you reconcile what is needed, namely a reduction in the EU's greenhouse gas emissions by 90 to 95% in 2040? And how will we encourage industry to take this challenge together with us, boosting their competitiveness? Because at the end of the day, green transition means also green jobs. We need to make industry help us. There is a possibility that we can become very green and very competitive. Could you elaborate on that?

1-015-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much. I think that what is now ahead of us, it's very clear that we have clear goals for 2030 and we have a climate law which says that we have to be climate neutral in 2050. So what we need to do is to build the bridge between 2030 and 2050 so everyone will have clarity, legal predictability how to get there. I think that science has already provided us with an input. So we will, of course, if we get your support, put the wheels in motion if it comes to the impact assessment.

We want to come with the communication in this regard early next year. I'm glad that the Commissioner-designate for climate action shares my high ambition in that regard as well. We'll be working very hard to come up with this proposal early on in the next year. I believe that we will clearly demonstrate that we are predictable, there is a clarity and we are ambitious.

1-016-0000

**Nils Torvalds (Renew)**. – Thank you, Executive Vice-President, for being here. We have 204 days left, then Parliament will run out to the electoral campaign. You are probably going to need a wizard's wand to be able to do something in those 204 days.

In your written answers to Parliament, you weren't very exact about what you are going to do with all the legislative proposals. We know that they are somewhere there in the drawers of the Commission. So from REACH to the law on sustainable food, we actually need a concrete list of what you are going to offer us, because if you don't give good answers, then there is a new invention. We tested it yesterday: the microphone will go off if you don't give the right one!

1-017-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – So far it works good, so it works well, so I believe the exchange and positive atmospherics are in the in the room. No, but I will be, Mr Torvalds, as concrete as I can be. So I know that I have to be telegraphic here.

So what are the, I think, most important upcoming files? As I said, the climate target for 2040 that I said we hope we will be able to come up with ambitious proposals early next year, most probably in January.

We are working on forest monitoring, which I know is very sensitive, especially for Nordic countries. But I think that we are progressing very well there.

Then, of course, under the zero pollution headline there, I think that we already demonstrated that we can use even existing rich legislation by adopting the restriction on microplastics which are intentionally added to the products – so we are talking about detergent, toothpaste, this abrasive material which is put into these products. So it's restricted and we did it this week.

We are working on also the unintentional release of microplastics, be it through eco-design or a special arrangement for the pellets.

When it comes to the energy, I cannot list all of them, but I would say the most visible ones, which are coming very, very soon to the table, would be the European wind power package to address the situation in the wind industry and also the carbon capture and storage strategy, which is very important also to the question which Mr Chahim was asking on how to get the industry on board and how to suppress the CO2 emissions from power generation further than where we are right now.

Then we have clear tasks in the field of transport. I know that, especially in the Transport Committee, there is huge enthusiasm for the EU declaration on cycling, and I know because cycling is very popular with the people, passenger rights, digital mobility package, combined transport and, of course, initiative for the water resilience.

As I said, work is ongoing and this is very demanding work on all other files. But I am out of time and I don't want Mr Canfin to switch off my microphone, so I'll stop here.

1-018-0000

**Nils Torvalds (Renew)**. – Yes, thank you. You actually mentioned water resilience and, my colleague, you have some water here I don't have. So we're going to need some clear answers on how you are going to address this. And so far, we haven't seen in which way this is going to work. Thank you.

1-019-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – I would address the answer to you, but also to Mr Liese, because we've been already discussing how to address this issue. If you look at this summer, I was quite shocked by the numbers I have seen coming from Greece that because of the fire and floods, you can lose 20% of your agricultural production, that you can lose more than 5 000 farm crops from Italy because of be it droughts or flood waters. The same situation in

Spain. So therefore we simply need to work together with Member States, with our farming and forest management community, to make sure that we will preserve the water in the system, we will keep it there and that we use it very wisely. And this would be, I would say, the topic which you want to cover by the water resilience, because it could be one of the major challenges in the future.

1-020-0000

**Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE).** – Thank you very much and apologies for speaking from behind (*Mr Eickhout is sitting behind Mr Šefčovič*). Thank you very much for your introductory remarks and especially that you are very much acknowledging that, on the Green Deal, we are only at the beginning and that this is an effort for decades.

But then, to be very honest, when you are getting questions, you are very general. Now, we had a hearing yesterday where at least we got some clear numbers etc. So, I also want to hear that from you, where you stand. For example, on the 2040 target. You need to coordinate that.

Yesterday, we had a Commissioner-designate who was at least giving his personal kind of ambition where he wants to go. I want to hear from you where you want to go. You said, 'I share ambition.' Which ambition? What do you mean? What are you going to fight for and what's your input that you are going to put on the table in the college? Basically, we need a number also from you.

1-021-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – Thank you very much. So, I mean, I fully understand. I think that maybe I was too diplomatic in answering that question. It is very clear what the scientists are telling us between 90-95%. And as I said that I am glad that Commissioner-designate shares my ambition. He was referring to 90%. So that's the number that am referring to as well.

Of course, what I said and what I have to add is that it is a personal ambition. We, of course, need – pending the approval of your support for both of us – we need to do the proper impact assessment. We have to present it to the College and, of course, it will be collegial decision in the end. But if you need the number and my personal ambition here... (*the speaker went off-mic*)

1-022-0000

**Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE).** – I think people still want to hear the number in the mic.

1-023-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – I don't know how many times I have to repeat that. I will do it again – if you need the number, if you need to hear it, it's 90 %, as you heard also yesterday from the Commissioner-designate.

And what I think is very important to say here is that, of course, once hopefully we get your support, we can put wheels in motion on the impact assessment, work on different scenarios and then, of course, come up with a proper communication, which as you know, will be a collegial decision in the end. But if it comes to the personal intention, here it is.

1-024-0000

**Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE).** – Thank you, that is clear now. Just for the record, Mr Hoekstra said 'at least -90%'.

1-025-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – I was of course trying to do my best to watch the hearing, but you've been interrupted a couple of times. But OK, we can we can go for 'at least'. Thank you.

1-026-0000

**Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE).** – Then my follow-up question, and that is on the work programme, because also there Nils Torvalds already asked for it, what are you going to deliver? Again, it was general again. So we know very well that the work programme, and you know that very well, responsible for interinstitutional relations, how well we will regard the work programme. And this is going to be the last work programme of this Commission. And we have seen leaks, and you know how leaks work. There was nothing on the Green Deal, whereas you now said, ‘But work is not done and I will work on it’. But again, we need to be concrete on what are you going to put in the work programme, which files will still be released in the coming months?

1-027-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – If you allow me, I will look into the audience so the colleagues can hear me well. I was quite clear on this issue. Of course, I can provide you with a whole list of the initiatives that will be presented. We have a presentation of the Commission work programme, if I recall correctly, next week.

However, I am here in the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). We have a hearing on the Green Deal, so I was focusing on what are the most important files in this regard. So when it comes to climate, as we discussed a minute ago, there is: the climate target 2040 communication and impact assessment, which comes early 2024; forest monitoring, to be tabled shortly; microplastics; European wind power package; carbon capture and storage strategy; institutional declaration of cycling; passenger rights; digital mobility package; combined transport, initiative for water, and resilience.

The work continues on REACH, animal welfare, the sustainable food system and all the other difficult files, like front-of-pack nutrition labelling, and so on. I would say the work is very clear. On some files, the work is more advanced than on others, and therefore I’m telling you what we know that we can clearly deliver, but I am also being very honest with you and I’m saying where we still need more assessment, more work to be invested in these very demanding and important files.

1-028-0000

**Alexandr Vondra (ECR).** – Thank you very much, Vice-President, for your presentation. I think it’s pretty clear that my Group is not looking for another Frans Timmermans, but to have rather somebody who would really follow the golden rule of sustainable development. So yes, environment, we are doing a lot, but then there is the economy and we are totally losing ground to China, and then there is socio-political development. People are looking into their wallets and voting more and more in elections to the effect that it looks like a horror in Europe.

So what will you do to succeed in our competition with China and, most of all, the automotive industry is the crown jewel of Europe, and it is losing ground dramatically. So what is your medicine to reverse the trend?

1-029-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – Thank you very much, Mr Vondra, for this question. First, I think that I was addressing it in my introductory remarks. Simply, I think our citizens, but also our businesses, our farmers went through a lot over the last three to four years.

So we have a kind of pile-up of the consequences of COVID-19, Russian aggression against Ukraine, the energy price crisis. All this kind of brought in the anxiety which you feel in our society.

Therefore, I'm calling for this first and foremost: engagement with our citizens through this green social dialogue. But I am also fully aware, and I totally agree with you, that our industry goes through very difficult times and we are under what you can describe as a double onslaught.

There is the tough competition coming from China, where we have, let's say, no proof of any transparency if it comes to the subsidies, and to be quite honest, I think that we can avoid at all costs the negative experience we had with photovoltaic panels if this would happen for our car industry or for our wind industry.

Then, of course, from other side, we also see that the Inflation Reduction Act is also luring quite a lot of businesses from Europe to set up their factories and shops in the US or Canada.

Therefore, I think we need to intensify the interaction with industry and to focus on what are these crown jewels of the European economy, like the car industry, to make sure that they will have a smooth transition as possible.

The best cars, the most sustainable ones, the cleanest have been always manufactured in Europe and this must stay like this. We have to help them with manufacturing batteries. We have to help them with getting them critical raw materials, and we have to help them to train the workforce, which is increasingly more and more a difficult challenge.

1-030-0000

**Alexandr Vondra (ECR).** – More and more Member States are now convinced that, in this tremendous task of decarbonisation, we are not able to do without using nuclear energy. Your home country, together with France, shares the largest portion of nuclear energy in their energy mix. I noticed that your boss, the President of the Commission, had some nice words about this in Prague just a week ago. So what will you do exactly to promote technological neutrality in decarbonisation? What would you do to keep the real level playing field, when, I think, the European Commission should be the guardian of the level playing field.

1-031-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – As you know, the energy mix is a sovereign prerogative and sovereign decision of every Member State. Currently, we have 12 Member States which are operating nuclear power plants. Most of them want to stay with it. Some of them want to build the new nuclear power plants.

And what is the European responsibility in this regard is to make sure that we have clear rules on safety, on all the rules regarding proper treatment and, of course, all the safety and environmental standards harmonised across the EU. I think, over the recent years, there is a new phenomenon, the small nuclear reactors, which is a technology which is being developed and at which we are also actively looking at the European Commission. But, as I said, the decision is with the Member States. For us, technological neutrality is the key, and I think that to get to climate neutrality in 2050, we need all the low-carbon sources of energy we can get.

1-032-0000

**Paolo Borchia (ID).** – Among the various critical aspects of the ETS Directive, we would like to ask you to express your point of view on the negative consequences then that the ETS is causing to European trans-shipment ports. In a nutshell, the inclusion of the maritime sector in the ETS is causing a spike in the fixed costs of those vessels which call in a European port. When there is an available alternative to opt for, shipping lines prefer rerouting cargoes and investment to third countries where the fixed costs are way less significant. That's exactly what is happening with trans-shipment activities in the Mediterranean and in the northern range. The European trans-shipment ports will lose the traffic, jobs and investments. The corrective measure included in the

directive during the negotiation is not able to grant a level playing field between European ports and third country ports. So my question is, what do you plan to do to face this problem?

1-033-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Yesterday I heard that there was an expression of love towards ETS coming at least from two different parties. I would say that also the warmer embrace is also needed for CBAM, which probably we will still discuss later in this hearing.

But coming back to your question, sir, the question here, of course, is that also the transport must be covered by pressure to lower the emissions. Currently we have 27 % of CO2 emissions coming from the transport sector, and maritime is clearly one of them.

But I believe that the problem you are referring to is international shippers who are bringing goods from faraway lands and I understand that European foreign trade is based, if I can use that expression, or dependent on 75 % on getting the goods by ships to the European port, and your worry is that, if we introduce this mechanism, it will not come directly to Europe, but it will go somewhere to the ports in northern Africa, because then the ETS charge might be lower, and then to tranship on the short distance to European ports. I think that's the point you are making.

And, of course, we are aware of that problem and we are discussing it with the shipping maritime industry, but also with these ports in northern Africa, because we want to make sure that we would not lose any traffic, we would protect the jobs, and we will simply find the solution which would maintain the level playing field in this regard as well.

1-034-0000

**Paolo Borchia (ID)**. – I will save time for my second question. Do you think that the management of your portfolio will be different to Mr Timmermans' management and eventually in which aspects?

1-035-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – We all have our personal styles and of course I was, as you know, for most of my time in the position of European Commissioner responsible for interinstitutional relations. So, I think that I had the privilege to spend more time than anyone else from the College in the European Parliament to work closely with MEPs, with the committees. And, as you know, I was also leading the group on health in the Conference on the Future of Europe and part of this, I would say, direct interaction with the citizens.

I really believe in dialogues, I believe in exchange of views and I believe in concrete projects. I think that what I would like to bring to these very important files is how we are going to translate this very ambitious legal framework and bring it to the concrete projects: bring it to the concrete expression of business activities or people's understanding or renewed support of our citizens for the Green Deal. We are not only here to tell how it should be done, but also to listen to them, how they feel, how they approach it, how they assess it, and what they would like us to do better. So that would be what I want to bring to this job.

1-036-0000

**Petros Kokkalis (The Left)**. – Welcome, Mr Vice-President. I think that the one thing that your predecessor, Mr. Timmermans, said that we can all agree on is that this transition is going to be just or it will not happen. So I would like to ask you on the implementation of the Social Climate Fund. In particular, how do you plan to make sure that the Member States will streamline the national social climate plans, given that most of them do not have competent administrative units that can integrate climate and social policy together, which is very much central? Perhaps the

green social dialogues could take the form of specifically discussing this very important European political innovation.

Another question would be – as you mentioned preparing the European Green Deal 2.0. – how would you go about that? How would you envision integrating the Sustainable Development Goals and perhaps taking up some of the findings of the Future of Europe Conference, with some concrete and binding targets?

1-037-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much Mr Kokkalis. Your first point is absolutely fair I think. What we did and how we wanted to clearly underline that the green transition must be fair, and as we always say, that nobody should be left behind. And as I said in my introductory remarks, I think that we should transform that approach, that everyone should be pushed forward. I think that should be our task. That should be the approach, how to explain that the green transition and Green Deal is investment into the future, that actually the competition is not taking place on the technologies of the past.

But if you look where we are competing with Chinese and Americans, these are all future-oriented technologies. We are competing on batteries, on EVs, on turbines or on photovoltaic panels, on electrolyzers, on chips and on all these I would say technologies which we need for the future. And therefore the investment into this is guaranteeing us that the competitiveness and high-value jobs we need for the future.

On top of it and to be less economic and more social, we also have to highlight that sometimes we simply do not value enough the fact that we breathe cleaner air, we drink cleaner water, that we live in a better environment. And the fact that thanks to our pressure on air quality, we have 100 000 premature deaths less per year than we had just five years ago. I remember when I was here on my second hearing I was telling you that 400 000 people is dying prematurely every year because of the particles and because of the low air quality. Today it's 300 000. It's still too much. But we see that this delivers and there is progress.

And I don't know if Mr Chair allows me to elaborate on the Climate Social Fund. If not, if you can repeat it in your follow-up questions I will be very happy to elaborate on that as well.

1-038-0000

**Petros Kokkalis (The Left)**. – OK, I was planning to go on with the externalities and talk about finance, and specifically adaptation finance, and specifically the need to modernise our non-material infrastructure from the Solidarity Fund into a loss and damage fund in Europe.

But I will reiterate my question on the Social Climate Fund. How do you plan to mainstream it across the Member States? This is a fund that is not well known among our citizens. It was very well hidden in the 'Fit for 55' package.

And the question is, would you think of doing this very useful green social dialogue to go along with Madam von der Leyen's policy and industry dialogues? Perhaps you could use these green social dialogues to let people know that there is a Social Climate Fund and that Member States need to politically innovate to create the proper administrative structures to bring together social and climate action.

1-039-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to come back to this very important part of your of your question. If it comes to Social Climate Fund, what we wanted to do is we wanted to frontload it. We wanted to start a year ahead of the ETS coming in in force. And I totally agree with you, we have to avoid the situation



we have had many occasions before that the ETS revenue is just taken by the by the Ministries of Finance as a boost for the public deficit worries. And therefore I think what we need to do is to work very closely with the Member States or to have some kind of dedicated administrative body in these Member States or a dedicated tool where there will be a clear link that this money comes from the Climate Social Fund, and it goes to very concrete people, the most vulnerable ones, be it citizens with businesses. So there is this direct link where the people would see the benefits and the same goes with farmers that they would see the benefits from the ETS, from the climate financing, that we are going through the transition and this, you know, is how I am rewarded for my efforts. I think that we have to establish that link and we have to work together how to achieve that. And I agree with you, administrative capacity in some of our Member States is clearly the challenge.

How to propose or prepare European Green Deal 2.0? I think that there are two things we should do. The first one is to do our job as good as we can and accomplish as much as we can until the end of this mandate. And I think prepare very important handover note to the next Parliament, to the next Commission, clearly underlying that, this is a multigenerational task that is clearly something which goes beyond 2050. In 2050 we want to be climate neutral, but until our planet will heal, it will take much longer. So I think that recognition that we would need to work on all these files also in the decades to come is absolutely crucial. And on international finance, I will probably have to elaborate bilaterally with you.

1-040-0000

**Chair.** – A lot of questions as a follow-up. So that's why I gave you two minutes.

1-041-0000

**Norbert Lins (PPE), Chair AGRI.** – Herr Vizepräsident! Ihr Vorgänger hat eine bisher nie da gewesene Polarisierung der Landwirtschaftsdebatte in der Europäischen Union zu verantworten. Deswegen bin ich und war ich dankbar, dass die Kommissionspräsidentin die Polarisierung überwinden möchte und einen strategischen Dialog für die Landwirtschaft angekündigt hat. Wenn ich mir Ihre Antworten auf Seite 6 Ihres Antwortbogens anschau, habe ich allerdings Zweifel, dass Sie wirklich bereit sind, die Polarisierung zu überwinden.

Wenn Sie Antworten geben zur SUR und zur Verordnung über die Wiederherstellung der Natur, dass die korrekt umgesetzt werden, will ich natürlich schon ein bisschen mehr wissen, was Sie damit meinen, weil es klar ist, dass es viele Studien gibt, dass die Vorschläge der Kommission einen erheblichen Rückgang der Lebensmittelproduktion in der Europäischen Union an Quantität und Qualität zur Folge hatten. Also wie organisieren Sie diesen strategischen Dialog mit der Landwirtschaft und nicht gegen die Landwirtschaft, wie Ihr Vorgänger das gemacht hat? Da hätte ich gerne mehr von Ihnen gewusst.

1-042-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – I agree with you that, over the last years in Europe in general and on some of our files, I think, indeed, we have seen probably too much of this divisive approach and the polarisation on some of these files.

And I think that we should start to build bridges and to look for the common solutions and I cannot imagine that there will be a better place to start this than the European Parliament. You are representing directly the citizens who elected you. You are the role models for many of them. And I think we should be also the role models for consensus building, for common approach and for talking as long as it is necessary to find the best possible solutions.

And this is exactly what I want to bring to the discussion on the Nature Restoration Law. I know that the trilogues are ongoing. I know that there are discussions in the European Parliament and

you can really count on me and on the European Commission that we will do our best to come up with the possible compromise solutions which would get us over the finishing line, because this is what I think would be very important signal for the world, for Europe, for the farmers' community, and I would say also for our citizens – that we know how to bridge over even very difficult files.

How I would like to do the strategic dialogues with the farmers: I would underline the word 'with' – not 'to', not 'about', 'with' – because I think if you want to have honest feedback, if you want to be an interaction, we have to talk with the farmers, with foresters and with all this community. I know that sometimes it's very difficult, but these people are honest, they are tough, and we have to work for the people and we need to do our utmost as a legislator, as decision-makers, to base our decision on the best possible input we get from them. And that's what I would like to do and, I'm sure, in close cooperation with the Members of the European Parliament.

1-043-0000

**Norbert Lins (PPE)**, *Chair AGRI*. – In der Folge würde ich gerne fragen: Wird die Kommission weitere finanzielle Mittel bereitstellen? Denn das ist bisher ja weder bei der SUR noch bei der Verordnung über die Wiederherstellung der Natur der Fall.

Zweitens wollte ich, auf Peter Liese folgend, noch einmal die Frage stellen: Gibt es nicht wirklich zwei Maroš Šefčovič – also den in Brüssel und den in der Slowakei? Also die Frage: Werden Sie sich auch in der Slowakei klar zu den europäischen Werten bekennen, werden Sie sich klar auch gegen die potenzielle neue Regierung Fico stellen, wenn sie russlandfreundliche Aktivitäten betreibt? Wie werden Sie sich zur Frage der Verteilung von Flüchtlingen stellen, was auch ein klares Commitment des Europäischen Parlaments ist? Also gibt es nicht wirklich zwei Maroš Šefčovič?

1-044-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – No, it is... there is one. He's sitting in front of you, and I think you've already been working with me for many, many years. But thank you very much for the possibility to clarify some of these issues.

I mean, if it comes to funding, I think that I was already making a reference to this point that there is around EUR 100/115 billion allocated for the efforts in the field of biodiversity for agriculture community. And it is very clear for me, and I think we stated that several occasions, and I think also you heard it from our President that we definitely do not want our farmers to bear the cost for the transition. And I think it is our common task to make sure that this is happening.

You know that my good colleague Johannes Hahn is working very hard on the revision of Multiannual Financial Framework. And you also know that the discussion is pretty difficult, but we will be working very hard to make sure that we will look at all possible eventualities, how to improve the funding capacities of the Commission. And I think that what we need to do is, and here I'm borrowing a little bit the idea of Mr Chairman Canfin, to speak much more with the financial industry.

Simply, the economy of the 21st century would be different than the economy of the 20th century. The electric vehicles have a different lifetime than the diesels. You can do much more through leasing. And I think that the same applies to the agriculture. Simply, agriculture looks differently than it was before, and we have to find a way how we would develop the new financial instruments which would bring more investment and more money to the agriculture.

1-045-0000

**Dan Nica (S&D)**. – Domnule președinte, am să vorbesc în limba română pentru că, în primul rând, provocările pe care le aveți în fața dumneavoastră, domnule vicepreședinte, sunt foarte mari,

pentru că, pe de o parte, va trebui să vă ocupați de provocările pe care Uniunea Europeană le are în fața ei, provocări mari, și să redați în același timp și rolul de putere economică importantă, pe care Uniunea Europeană l-a avut odată în această lume.

Pentru grupul meu politic, domnule vicepreședinte, este extrem de important subiectul locurilor de muncă de bună calitate, care să fie bine plătite. Este extrem de important să știm despre investițiile pe care dumneavoastră le aveți în vedere pentru ca partea de cercetare, partea de inovare, partea de competitivitate a industriei europene să poată să fie acolo unde cu toții ne dorim.

Și aș vrea să știu, domnule vicepreședinte, care sunt măsurile precise pe care le doriți și le aveți în vedere, pentru ca aceste obiective, care sunt de mare importanță pentru grupul meu politic, să poată să fie atinse în intervalul scurt de timp pe care îl aveți și ținând cont de provocările pe care le avem cu toții în fața noastră.

1-046-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, Mr Nica, for your question indeed. Europe is the economic superpower. I think that for us it should be one of the main goals that also in the decades to come, Europe will be always among the top three most important economies in the world. We see the fierce competition from China. We see the fierce competition from the US. But we are the only economy where it's very clear that we demonstrated on the large scale that we can decrease our CO2 emissions by more than 30% and at the same time grow our GDP by almost 70% since 1990. So, we show that the 'scissors' are possible: that you can go there, that you can grow and decarbonise at the same time.

We see that, of course, the challenges now, as you said, are very fierce and therefore the decision taken to start the investigation on the Chinese electric vehicles exports to Europe is the right one. Let's investigate. We are all for trade, but the trade must be fair and we have our doubts if this is fair from that perspective.

We have to work more on competitive sustainability, as we've been introducing this aspect for the first time in the Batteries Regulation to make sure that each product would have its digital passport. It will be clear what the carbon footprint is, where the critical raw materials are coming from, what the recycling warranty is in that product. Because this is giving us the competitive edge. We are not paying the price for being green, for being sustainable, but it would be awarded and rewarded in the competition on the global scale. Therefore, I think we have to have, I would say, this new strategic approach. And then, as I said, we have to work very closely with the industry.

1-047-0000

**Dan Nica (S&D)**. – Domnule vicepreședinte, eu sunt din România și aș vrea să vă întreb cum anume intenționați să vă ocupați de un subiect foarte sensibil. Țările din centrul și estul Europei nu au acces la tehnologia necesară și la logistica necesară pentru transformarea în nota pe care trebuie să o avem de *Green Deal*. Și dacă doriți să ne spuneți, care ar fi măsurile pe care intenționați să le adoptați, astfel încât să aveți o atitudine proactivă?

Și a doua chestiune: pentru țările din centrul și estul Europei este mult mai complicat atunci când trebuie să facă față și unei concurențe neloiale. Sunt invadate de importuri din țări terțe, care vin cu conținut mare de bioxid de carbon, iar măsurile luate, cel puțin (*ininteligibil*), sunt insuficiente.

Și am un caz concret: din 30 septembrie s-a interzis importul de oțel în Uniunea Europeană din state terțe, care are componente din Rusia. Cum intenționați să vă asigurați că această prevedere se va aplica astfel încât să putem salva industria producătoare de oțel din Uniunea Europeană?

1-048-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much indeed. Central and Eastern Europe is from one side very much supported by our cohesion policies and structural funds. At the same time, we still we know that it's still not levelled up with, I would say, the European average. And therefore I think it's very important that the structural support, the cohesion policies would also continue in the future and would be targeted on the, I would say, sectors of the future 21st century growth. I think that's very important and that's crucial.

We know that in Central and Eastern Europe there is there is a lot of talented people, there is a lot of skills. The challenge is how to make sure that they will stay there, they will develop the businesses in Romania, in Slovakia, in, I would say Central and Eastern European countries. And therefore I think we have to invest even more in business development programmes, in training, in making sure that the economic development will be even faster in this part of Europe.

If it comes to the disloyal competition, here I think we just have to make sure that if it comes to foreign trade that we enforce the law equally at all external borders, that simply if these products are not permitted, it must not be permitted and must not come to the European single market. And I think here we need to work very closely with authorities of the Member States. Once we get the report that something like this is happening, we have to act very quickly to make sure that illegal imports are not allowed and they are banned.

1-049-0000

**Frédérique Ries (Renew)**. – Monsieur le Président, bienvenue, Monsieur Šefčovič. Si tout se passe bien, ce que je vous souhaite, vous allez donc succéder à Frans Timmermans, qui porte depuis quatre ans avec beaucoup d'ambition notre Pacte vert, ce qui ne fait pas plaisir à tout le monde, on l'a bien compris.

C'est en 2018, avec Frans Timmermans et Elisabeth Köstinger, à l'époque ministre de l'agriculture en Autriche, qu'on a conclu ici la directive «plastique à usage unique». Depuis lors, soit cinq ans, les choses continuent: quinze tonnes de plastique déversés chaque minute dans les océans. La Commission qui continue cahin-caha d'aborder les choses de façon morcelée: microplastiques intentionnels, microplastiques non intentionnels, limitations dans REACH, les substances...

J'ai envie de vous demander, pourquoi cette timidité? Pourquoi cette lenteur alors qu'on se bat dans le même temps pour un traité mondial fort avec une Europe unie et qui n'hésite pas à s'exprimer? Pourquoi cette lenteur?

Vous avez évoqué une «to do list», ce qui est en général la meilleure façon de ne pas faire les choses. Les microplastiques arrivent toujours au dernier point de cette liste, une fois dans vos réponses écrites mais trois fois ici. Vous avez fait l'annonce sur les intentionnels, les non intentionnels, les pneus, les textiles. Mais les microplastiques, ça vient quand? Qu'est-ce qui bloque? Dites-le nous, parce qu'on sait bien que derrière, il y a l'industrie pétrochimique. Je demande donc, qu'est ce qui bloque et comment allez-vous résoudre ce problème?

1-050-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much. If you allow me, I will respond to you in English because my vocabulary for microplastics ...

En français, mon vocabulaire est un peu limité pour être tout à fait honnête.

So if you allow me to answer in English: on microplastics, you are absolutely right. It's extremely important for the health of our citizens and also for the overall pollution. So when I was reading the last report to simply discover that these microplastics are discovered from the seabed of the ocean down to the Arctic and Antarctica and everywhere in the world is just simply prove that really this uncontrollable spread was beyond any, I would say, understanding how dramatic it is.

And therefore, I mean, we are approaching this in very, I would say, pragmatic and practical way where we want not to delay any single steps which can be taken now and not to kind of delay it to tomorrow. So if it comes to these intentionally added microplastics, as I was saying, I mean, what is added to toothbrushes, detergents and all the cosmetics, that was just banned by the Commission's adopting the restriction this week. And I believe that this would really help in many aspects.

Then we have of course much more complex issue with the unintentional release of the microplastics. And here we'll have to tackle it through different means. If it comes to the pellets, which are these small pieces of plastic used for different production, there, we are going to adopt a special legislative arrangement which would be regulating the use of these pellets because that we know how to do and that we know how to control.

And then we have the bigger issues, as you mentioned, tyres, we have brakes, we have other issues. And then we will be looking what is the best combination of the instruments. If it comes to tyres, a big part of that will be done by eco-design. Some of the issues will be covered by Euro-7. Mr Vondra is the rapporteur for that. So we are really not delaying anything intentionally. We want to deliver with the instruments which would really work and as I said, intentional is covered, pellets are coming, and for other unintentional we will be going category by category to make sure that we would deliver with concrete results.

1-053-0000

**Frédérique Ries (Renew).** – M. Šefčovič, effectivement j'ai dit que je n'aimais pas les «to do list» et vous avez aussi dit à un moment que nous devrions faire «as much as we can», mais non, là aussi, il faut faire mieux que «juste ce qui est possible».

Concernant les microplastiques et le tabac, je voudrais parler ici des filtres des cigarettes. Vous venez d'un pays où le tabagisme est un problème important, donc vous en connaissez les ravages, tant sur la santé, que sur l'environnement. Ces filtres sont composés de microplastiques, plus précisément d'acétate de cellulose. Lors de ses travaux sur les objets à usage unique, le Parlement avait voté pour que les fabricants passent à autre chose. C'est une de nos propositions, massivement soutenue, qui s'est perdue lors du trilogue. Donc j'en viens à cette question précise: quelle va être votre attitude ici? Quelle est votre position sur les mégots de tabac en microplastiques?

Et surtout il reste seize trilogues à négocier avec la Commission. Quelles indications allez-vous donner à vos directeurs, à vos chefs d'unités, pour qu'ils jouent réellement le rôle de «médiateur sincère», qu'ils continuent à porter et à défendre les positions du Parlement et à ne pas trop souvent s'adosser aux positions du Conseil, ce à quoi on assiste pour le moment?

1-054-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – For this point, I can really promise you that I will also look into this issue which you refer to again and discuss it with our services, with the Director-General and the Directors to see what the best course of action is and how we can really play this role of honest broker in the trilogues, in order to deliver the best possible results.

I can promise you that and I will come back to you with really very clear answers on where we are with this file and what we can do to make sure that we will deliver as ambitious a solution as possible in this file.

1-055-0000

**Cristian-Silviu Buşoi (PPE)**, *Chair ITRE*. – Mr Šefčovič, Mr Vice-President, in order to achieve the Green Deal targets, we need an extraordinary transformation of our energy systems. The ITER Committee is very supportive with respect to renewables, clean technologies and energy efficiency. However, in the context of an unprovoked war and illegal war in Ukraine, we experienced disruptions in the security of supply and high prices on electricity, which puts an even higher burden on our already weakened and challenged industries. How will you reconcile – and Mr Timmermans unfortunately failed to manage this – the need to remain ambitious on climate targets, on one hand, and on the other hand, to have a more balanced perspective of energy policies, with the necessity, in my opinion, to unlock the full potential of carbon capture and storage, as well as low-carbon hydrogen technologies to demonstrate a real climate-neutral and technology-neutral approach and not a dogmatic and overenthusiastic one?

And in the new political context in Slovakia and disturbing pro-Russia declarations of Mr Fico, can you reassure us that the REPowerEU objectives and new sanctions in the energy field against Russia are not in danger?

1-056-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, Mr Buşoi. On the question of high prices, I think that you clearly highlighted what is, I would say the most frequent question I am getting when we are talking to the industry. How can we make sure that the energy prices in Europe will get lower? How can we compete with Americans when their gas and electricity is 3 to 5 times lower than the price of energy in the European Union?

And, of course, there are a lot of things we have to do. First one, we have to invest much more intensively in our grid for transporting the energy. If we want to have more renewables, we have to smarten our grid. It has to be more digital. We have to be able to store this intermittent energy coming from solar, from wind. We have to be much better interconnected than we are right now and we have to prepare our grid networks for making sure that we will have in Europe 2 to 3 times more electricity power generation than we have right now, because in 2050 everything will be electric and we need to get prepared for that.

And therefore also our investment in the infrastructure in the grids through the Connecting Europe Facility or from REPowerEU instruments really have to go in that direction.

Then, of course, we have to make sure that we will accelerate the build-up of renewables because this is our energy, it's our indigenous source, it's our wind, it's our sand. I mean, we do not need to import it from anywhere and we simply have to accelerate the rollout of renewables even more than before and bet much more on hydrogen, because that's clearly the fuel of the future.

And when it comes to Russia, again coming back to common purchase of gas, that's absolutely clear that we manage to push every single business who wants to be on the platform to issue the declaration of honour that they are not going to trade with a single molecule of gas coming from Russia. We verify it, we check it, it's working, and there is no worry whatsoever that we would be ever dependent on Russian supplies in the European Union.

1-057-0000

**Cristian-Silviu Buşoi (PPE)**, *Chair ITRE*. – You mentioned interconnections. You have a lot of experience as also former Commissioner for Energy and you know the strategic role of

interconnections and the high value of TEN-E Regulation, PCI lists and Modernisation Fund for 10 EU countries, including my country, Romania.

You are also very well aware of the importance of gas interconnections for the transition at least, and, at some point, they could be used for hydrogen transport. Do you intend to give more attention to these interconnection projects in order to speed up the deployment of a just and inclusive transition?

1-058-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – I really once again would like to thank the European Parliament for the support we got for Connecting Europe facilities and for build-up of TEN-E infrastructure, because if we wouldn't do it during the time of the Energy Union, we would have totally different situations in Europe two years ago. I think that it was very dramatic. It was very difficult for us, but without the interconnectors we built at that time and the diversification routes we started to build at that time, we would be in a completely different ballgame.

So I think that the importance is to focus on the infrastructure of the future and where we can to refurbish and prepare our pipelines, our connections so that they can carry the hydrogen in the future. Because simply you have to have different steel for hydrogen than you have for gas. So to do the renovation interconnection with that upgrade, which is already now building in the infrastructure for the future, which is able to carry the hydrogen. And I think that for that we need to work not only with the public budgets, we need to work much more with the EIB, with the EBRD, with the financial sectors, because this is the investment into the future and smartening the grids, having the hydrogen-proof network of pipelines, all these are the investments we need for accelerating the green transition and to make sure that we will be climate-neutral by 2050.

1-059-0000

**Tilly Metz (Verts/ALE)**. – Dear Vice-President, I would like to use this opportunity to speak on behalf of a billion sentient beings and to ask you about your intentions regarding the long-promised revision of the EU animal welfare legislation, an essential component of this Green Deal.

In your written replies, you also state that the Commission has been making the lives of animals better for over 40 years. That might be true, but the last legislative revision happened 15 years ago. We knew much less about animal sentience then and the world was less concerned with climate change, biodiversity loss, antimicrobial resistance or zoonotic diseases, all linked to intensive animal farming. Times have changed. Standards in animal farming need to change too.

You also mentioned, and you mentioned it several times this morning, strategic dialogues. You also mentioned that work is going on and the need to assess related costs and the transition periods for higher welfare standards. We had a timeline. Let's stick to it. The appropriate support and transition periods can still be discussed once the proposals are on the table, and the proposals are ready and they are there. By stalling the publication any longer, this would clearly backtrack on the Commission's Green Deal commitment.

A big disappointment also for the citizens because, and you said it, as Commissioner for interinstitutional relations and administration, you also have been in charge of the ECIs and you advocated for this tool. Well, the ECI, we gathered more than three million signatures...

*(The Chair cut off the speaker)*

1-060-0000

**Chair.** – Keep it for the follow-up. I cannot allow it, otherwise we will never vote in the plenary either.

1-061-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Member of the Commission.** – Thank you Ms Metz for proposing the question and of course for clearly demonstrating your personal commitment to this file. And I also want to tell you that I'm also committed to this file. As you said, in my previous mandate I was actually responsible for making sure that the ECI is operationalised. And I know that support for animal welfare coming through the ECI was one of the highest. And if you look at any opinion poll, you have more than 80% of the people in Europe who wants to see that we treat animals and nature better.

And therefore, as I said, we are working with a group of Commissioners on this very complex file. It has a lot of subdivisions, a lot of aspects: transport, animals treated in cages, slaughterhouses and all these issues which we are currently impact-assessing, looking what we can achieve, what kind of transition periods there should be, what would be the cost associated with that. So I think that to be serious and honest, we have to complete the work on this very comprehensive and complex file. And once the work is done, I can assure you that we know that the citizens want us to come up with the animal welfare and when it is ready we clearly will put it on the table.

1-062-0000

**Tilly Metz (Verts/ALE).** – Yes, but the concrete timeline now, because there are four proposals, you mentioned them. I mean, the four are very important. And you mentioned them. And citizens are waiting with regard to animal transport. We need to act. It's also about the credibility of the EU institutions here. And there is also the economic argument for higher animal welfare. Yes, we need investment in order to guarantee more animal welfare, but our inaction will cost us much more. And that is something I think you are probably very aware of. If we look at all the externalities, it's even the inaction will cost us much more. So will you take this argument into account? And then let me just mention another topic is the publication of the framework of Sustainable Food, also there you said it's work in progress. I invite you very warmly to come to the Animal Welfare Intergroup where we are going to discuss this. This is also part of the Farm to Fork deal and was also promised as we need to reduce. Also livestock is part of more sustainable food systems. So I'd be happy to hear from you also on that.

1-063-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – Thank you very much, madam. I mean, on the animal welfare, I just really want to reassure you that that we are working on this file and we go on all of them one by one to have very comprehensive and complete assessment – what needs to be done, how this could be done, how much would it cost, what would be the best timeline to present it. And once I have that honest answer, I will come back to you and I will clearly inform you.

On a sustainable food systems, here again, this is the file which is from one side very important, from other side very comprehensive. What I think is one aspect which we are studying – and maybe this is where we can prolong also our discussion and conversation on this file – is the discussion I have with the mayors who introduced this public procurement for sustainable food systems for their city halls, for their cities, and I think that's one aspect where I believe we can do also much more in the European Union. Thank you.

1-064-0000

**Robert Hajšel (S&D).** – Let me let me start with one personal remark. I would say that all the questions are legitimate here, I think. And I know that there are some may be concerns, but I'm a bit surprised that Maros Šefčovič is always faced during the hearings with questions questioning



his loyalty, his commitment to EU values, because he has proven it many times, on many occasions.

Also in relation to Ukraine, if we only mention all the agreements signed with the Ukraine on critical materials, on gas and on, I would say, dealing among the EU and Russia on the gas supplies. So there is really an excellent track record proving that Maroš Šefčovič is someone who is very committed, and I know him personally and I can say that there is only one Maroš Šefčovič.

My question is about the just transition and social dialogue, climate change. The Green Deal includes commitments to leave no one behind, as you already said, Maros. But there is, I would say, only very fragmented concrete social measures. So my question is in terms of social dialogue, what are you planning? I mean, to better engage with the citizens and the stakeholders? And how do you plan to ensure the success of the transition by tackling these social economic inequalities and injustice based on income and wealth?

1-065-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – I really would like to thank also Mr Hajšel for his remarks. Indeed, we know each other for quite some time. So thank you very much for your remarks. If it comes to the to the social aspects of the of the Green Deal, I think as it was said before, we have to make sure that the Green Deal has very strong social dimension and we have to present very concrete measures where the people would feel the tangible benefits from the Green Deal. Of course, we all can talk about clean air, better environment and, of course, better managed cities and more sustainable products. At the same time, we also know that through the green transition you have vulnerable groups of citizens who would have a problem to adjust to this new type of economy. And therefore I would like to work very closely with you, with the Member States, on how to use the climate social funds in a way that there will be concrete financial benefits seen and felt for the citizens, how we are going to use biodiversity funding of EUR 100 billion to reward the efforts of the farmers and how to make sure that this will have very concrete reflections in the daily lives of the citizens.

So I think that this will have to come with all the steps which we are going to undertake in the coming years and, as I said, decades. And I think it's our common task to make sure that the funds we are using for support of this transition would be channelled not only for supporting the transition as such, but also for addressing the social aspects of the green transition.

1-066-0000

**Robert Hajšel (S&D)**. – For the social aspects, they are very important and it also leads to the quality of our lives, and here, I would say that food security is also a priority, but access to healthier and sustainable food is being a little bit neglected, I think. It was already mentioned by my predecessors.

Here, I have some concrete questions. Will you ensure that the remaining initiatives from the Green Deal and farm to fork strategy, including sustainable food systems, front-of-pack nutrition labelling and others, are delivered without delay? So I don't need maybe the concrete dates, but really can you assure on this that it will be delivered and without delay? And will you ensure that the debate around agriculture, food production and management is inclusive, but also science-based and not driven by some misleading assumptions or, I would say, unjustified fears?

1-067-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – On the last part of the question, of course we have to base our decision on the science. Therefore, I mean, we are working so closely with the Joint Research Centre, we are getting all the advice from different scientific boards like it is in the case of our proposal for 2040 targets or by UNFCCC board if it comes to the climate

change, because if you base your decision on the science you have a solid basis and you know what needs to be done, what is the evidence, and then you can take the political and legislative decisions in that regard. And that will clearly continue. I was very insistent as the Better Regulation Commissioner that we have to work with scientific base, we have to have a strong role of regulatory scrutiny board and of course the independent academic opinion.

And coming back to the files you mentioned, I think all one of the parts of the response to Ms Metz if it comes to animal welfare, I think, if it comes to transport, because I didn't respond to that question, we believe that, for example, in this case we will be ready soon, so we can look at the transport of the animals and to see how to proceed in that regard. And we are looking at all our other aspects, as I mentioned a minute ago. And the same applies also to the two other points you mentioned with nutrition profiles and nutrition labelling, where the work is clearly ongoing. And as I said, we want to present you with good products, with good results and a good proposal.

1-068-0000

**Anna Zalewska (ECR).** – Ja zupełnie odwrotnie niż moje koleżanki i koledzy, bo chcę przypomnieć, że mamy przed sobą pół roku aktywności z dwiema przerwami świątecznymi. Dlatego chcę pana zapytać nie o kilkadziesiąt dokumentów, tylko o pięć najważniejszych dla pana na ten bardzo krótki czas. To po pierwsze, bo rozumiem, że jak się przychodzi na tak krótki czas, to ma się każdy tydzień opisany i wie się, jakie są priorytety.

Po drugie, proszę powiedzieć, jak pan sobie wyobraża dialog z rolnikami. Mamy tu poważny problem. Są kłopoty z różnymi dokumentami, m.in. jeżeli chodzi o odbudowę natury. W tej chwili jest procedowany dokument o pochłanianiu, wychwytywaniu i certyfikowaniu wychwytywania dwutlenku węgla. Przebiega to w absolutnym legislacyjnym chaosie bez dowodów, dokumentów, bez wiedzy, nauki i ten dokument może doprowadzić do jeszcze większej irytacji rolników. Przypomnę: Europejczycy już wiedzą, kto odpowiada za ceny energii, już wiedzą, kto odpowiada za wzrosty cen żywności, i niestety obciążają Parlament Europejski i Komisję Europejską.

1-069-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – Indeed, you are absolutely right. Now we are in a situation that every day, every week counts. And, of course, if we get your support, we will come back to you with a very clear timeline of outstanding files so we can do our best to also coordinate your schedules, our schedules with the Council schedules to make sure that we would use every single day in the most efficient way.

If it comes to the discussion with the farmers, we would like to get them organised as quickly as possible. We will share with you the ideas, how you would like to do it, you would like to talk to, I would say, all groups of farmers: big farmers, small farmers, to farmers from all geographical locations. Because we know that the situation in Poland might be different than the situation in Netherlands, and situation in Sweden for sure will be different than the situation in Greece. So we'll be looking for the best possible way to have this variety of the opinions in the room.

One of the issues you mentioned is the carbon certificates. I think that this is clearly one of the areas where we have to work, because I think it would be important also for the farmer and forestry community actually to monetise the carbon certificates for carbon sinks. So if you are a responsible farmer, from the point of view of biodiversity, if you manage your forests in a sustainable way and there is clear carbon sink effect, in that case, we should find a way how farmers or forest managers should be rewarded for this activity and bring additional financing and funding into agriculture and forest management.

These are, I would say, some of the aspects which I think will be very important to work on because they can bring additional financial resources to agriculture and forestry.

1-070-0000

**Anna Zalewska (ECR).** – Niestety jeżeli chodzi o certyfikowanie pochłaniania to nieprawda, a dlatego, że trzeba znać dokument i propozycję. Rolnikom płaci się za to i będzie się chciało płacić za to, żeby nie uprawiali roli i tak naprawdę nie produkowali żywności. Bardzo proszę, żeby Pan się jednak zapoznał z tym dokumentem.

Ale jeszcze jedno pytanie, proszę powiedzieć, w jaki sposób widzi Pan możliwość uniezależnienia się od Chin? Mamy już przecież sprawozdanie, raczej zatrwajające, że cała zielona rewolucja, zielony Ład tak naprawdę jest uzależniony od tego, w jaki sposób będzie przebiegała współpraca z Chinami. Jak również, nie wiem, czy Pan wie, ale krąży taki ponury żart w Parlamencie Europejskim, że pakiet Fit for 55 jest po to, żeby Chińczycy na nim zarobili.

1-071-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – I was not aware of this joke. Thank you very much. What I was referring to in the first part of my answer to the question was the important work on carbon certificates, which would monetise the efforts of responsible forest managers and farmers for respecting the biodiversity and really developing the carbon sinks which are removing CO2 from the environment. And the work on this file is, of course, in the advanced stage.

But your second question is a very pertinent one indeed. I think we should learn our lessons and not repeat the situation we had with photovoltaic panels, which was an innovation from Europe but because of, I would say, predatory economic tactics of China, this industry in Europe was simply devastated. And now we are very much dependent on the imports of photovoltaic panels from China.

I think that under no circumstances we should fall in the same trap when it comes to electric vehicles, when it comes to winter binds, when it comes to batteries. We have to do everything in our power to work with our Member States and with our industry to make sure that with these very crucial technologies for the future, for the green transition, for high value jobs, we develop stronger strategic autonomy.

What it means in practice is that we should develop all these technologies as much as we can in Europe. If we need to import, be it critical raw materials or sensitive technologies, then we should clearly base our position so that we always have at least three different suppliers, so we are not over-dependent on one supplier or one country.

We have to work with early warnings. We have to work with stockpiling of these critical be it raw materials or technologies just to be sure that we can be autonomous in our action.

1-072-0000

**Roman Haider (ID).** – Herr Kommissar Šefčovič! Mit Ihrer heutigen Präsentation haben Sie dasselbe bewiesen wie Ihre Chefin von der Leyen vor drei Wochen mit Ihrer Rede zur Lage der Union, nämlich dass Sie und die ganze Kommission sich offensichtlich meilenweit von der Realität entfernt haben.

Wissen Sie, wie die Realität in Europa und der Welt wirklich aussieht? Kennen Sie die Realität des Grünen Deals? Ich werde es Ihnen sagen: Preissteigerung, Inflation und Teuerung. Egal, wie man es nennt, Ihr Grüner Deal macht alles in Europa deutlich teurer. Das beginnt bei der Energie, geht über das Wohnen und die Mobilität, endet bei den Nahrungsmitteln.

Der Grüne Deal ist damit das unsozialste Projekt der EU seit ihrem Bestehen. Das Schlimmste dabei ist diese Teuerung. Die wird von der EU vorsätzlich auch noch herbeigeführt. Über den Emissionszertifikatehandel werden Energie und Industrieprodukte künstlich verteuert, und die Menschen können sich das Heizen und die Lebensmittel nicht mehr leisten. Was sagen Sie diesen Menschen, die sich ihr Leben nicht mehr leisten können?

1-073-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, sir, also for your question. I think here we need to have a very clear clarification.

I think what has happened over the last few years, we have aftermaths of COVID-19. We have the aggressive Russian war of Ukraine, which was really linked with the blackmail coming from Russia on the fossil fuels, which just simply skyrocketed the energy prices in Europe. And as you know very well, the high energy prices are major driver of the high inflation across the EU Member States.

So, I would say these are the major reasons why we have, I would say, the anxiety among our population. So, what we need really to do – and I think we managed to stabilise the energy prices now – slowly the prices for gas and electricity are coming to the levels we had before of the war in Ukraine started.

And we, of course, are working with the Member States so that the people in our countries would feel the benefits of the Green Deal, meaning that if you look at ETS, there is EUR 152 billion which was collected through the ETS, and it went back to the Member States to support the green transition projects, to support also the vulnerable people. And I agree with you that the people not always feel the benefits.

Therefore, if it comes to the Social Climate Fund, I think we have to work with the Member States better that they would feel the financial support, they will feel the benefits, and that has to be really used as a measure to help the most vulnerable people in our society.

1-074-0000

**Roman Haider (ID)**. – Der Grüne Deal verstärkt auch das Bauernsterben und verursacht ein Sinken der Agrarproduktion. Das Verbot von Dünge- und Pflanzenschutzmitteln und diese zwangsweise Stilllegung von Agrarflächen führen zu einer Reduktion der Agrarproduktion um mindestens 10 %. Europa wird damit vom Lebensmittelexporteur zum -importeuer. Damit begibt sich Europa auch bei der Nahrungsmittelversorgung in neue Abhängigkeiten von China, von Russland, von Südamerika, von den USA, und mit sinkender Produktion und steigenden Importen werden natürlich die Lebensmittelpreise weiter steigen. Das ist die Realität.

Darum zum Abschluss jetzt keine Frage an Sie, sondern eine Aufforderung: Beenden Sie dieses grüne Desaster und suchen Sie sich einen anständigen Job!

1-075-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you, thank you for the job offer. Thank you.

1-076-0000

**Chair**. – OK, so let's move back to something more serious. Christian Ehler for the EPP.

1-077-0000

**Christian Ehler (PPE)**. – I wouldn't take that job offer.

(Laughter)

So, President of the Commission von der Leyen had been stating in their Union speech that we lack a business case for the decarbonisation of the European industry. And I think it's serious – because we are green, but we are lacking the deal.

So, my first question is, I mean, in your portfolio for the first time, other than Frans Timmermans, who completely neglected these obligations to have a dialogue with the European industry, you are supposed to do that dialogues. So, what is your idea on what we can offer sectorially, to find a deal, specifically, if we are looking to the Inflation Reduction Act and the very fact that, even on the promising part of the Green Deal, the net-zero technologies, we are lacking ground?

Second question – in your portfolio, you have the obligation for deregulation. The question is, simply, we had a scrutiny board so far, for example, on EPBT that had been considered two times as a no because it was overburdened by deregulation. It had been you in person who overruled that and brought that back in the college. So now we have a competitiveness council. What are you going to do if a competitiveness council is going to say, 'sorry, Mr Šefčovič, that regulation of the Green Deal is overburdening, industry is challenging the competitiveness'? Are you then willing to say, 'OK, then we have to have a new legislation, then you have to reconsider that'? Or are we yet again overruling all concerns, like with the scrutiny board, in the future?

1-078-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, Mr Ehler, for this question, which is indeed very pertinent.

To be concrete, as much as I can be in my two minutes, what we want to do is indeed to start intensive interaction with the industry. So we'll have a series of clean transition dialogues. What I mean concretely by that: we want to get together power generation with energy-intensive industry. We want to get in one room the industries of the future: photovoltaics, wind industry, future hydrogen producers. We clearly need to work more closely with automotive industry batteries and critical raw material processing. So these are, I would say, the three groups which we kind of set for ourselves. As I said, if it comes to the first industrial clean transition table, we are planning to have it on hydrogen and to have it already on 10 October. So, it's supposed to take place next Wednesday.

What should be the structure? Of course, these would be interactive discussions. I always, I would say, learn a lot when talking directly to the citizens or to the industry. I think that the best discussion you have if you are talking about concrete projects and concrete problems. I know that, for example, for the wind industry, the big issue is public procurement. Is it fair? Is it based on competitive sustainability? Or is it opening the doors to the unfair competition from China, where I understood that some of the operators are offering now the turbines for free, will build it for you and will pay it in 5 or 10 years? Simply, I see there the same pattern that we have for these photovoltaic panels: capture the European market, wipe out the European competition, and then develop this dependence on the Chinese exporters.

I think that this is what we have to do because it's our innovation, these are our technologies, and we have to make sure that the industry will strive and prosper in Europe. If I would have a chance in your subsequent question to answer the second part, of course, if Mr Chair would allow it, I will gladly do so.

1-079-0000

**Christian Ehler (PPE)**. – This is my second question, and it is not a tactical one, because we need for my group a serious answer from you. The last weekend and the elections in Slovakia have been changing things, because for the first time there is someone trying to build a government saying,

'We don't want to have sanctions to Russia, we don't want to ban gas'. We question all that. I'm coming from a constituency with suffering by the sanctions. We are closing industry. We are losing jobs. But we do that because we think about solidarity. And you had been taking in 2019 money from Robert Fico for your campaign, you had been stating in a campaign, 'I don't consider Russia a threat, but a strategic challenge'. My father had been beaten half to death by the Russians, and I don't want to consider what happenings in the occupied territories in Ukraine. You had been referring to your merits for the Ukraine, but now, very concise, do you stand in for the sanctions, for the ban of gas, for European solidarity, also in your home country, also if you risk that Mr Fico being in government is not appointing you the next time for a Commissioner? Because that's really important for my constituency to know and I would like to have a clear answer.

1-080-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – I would say that the answer about Russia in 2019, Russia being a strategic challenge was widely shared at that time in the European Union, including by very prominent leaders in Germany. And I think that today, in retrospect, we can see that it was also a mistake that we should have probably listened more to Central and Eastern Europeans.

And you know very well what was my position on the Nord Stream. And, you know, who was pushing me very hard to actually get it approved. And I don't have to elaborate more because, you know what I am talking about. And we insisted from the first moment until the last one that European regulations have to be respected, unbundling, third party access and all these things. Therefore, Nord Stream 2 was not operational. And I think that this is clearly demonstrating my track record.

As I was elaborating on the common purchase of gas, I was asked by the president of the Commission to get it done. I got it done and it works perfectly. And one of the conditions which I said very, very clearly there was that there should be the solemn declaration, which is verified by, again, the German company Prisma, by our DG NR, that there is not one single molecule of Russian gas traded on a common purchase platform. Thanks to the common purchase platform, we have almost 100 % filled up the storages, we are filling up the storages in Ukraine and we are really increasing our energy security.

And, of course, if it comes to the elections in Slovakia, I can tell you that this was one of the most polarising, tough campaigns and I think that if there is one message to send it would be a message of gratitude and thanks that my compatriot Slovaks came to vote in such big numbers after such a polarising campaign. But I can assure you that whatever the results of the forming of the government will be, I will always defend the European general interest, as I was doing since 2009. And I think that my track record is the best testament to this.

1-081-0000

**Emma Wiesner (Renew)**. – Dear Executive Vice-President, thank you for being here. Several of the files in the Green Deal that we've been working on during the last year, such as LULUCF, deforestation, Renewable Energy Directive, taxonomy and nature restoration, regulate the bio-based sector in one way or another, and many of them contradict each other – where one is incentivising land use in one way, another one is banning it. We see a clear overlap of regulations and this is a clear frustration for all of the landowners and farmers across Europe.

This was in your Commission. You are in charge of interinstitutional relations. But we also see that the DGs in the Commission don't seem to know what another DG is doing when it comes to land use and forestry. And we see that there is a lack of impact assessments on the food sector, even though the file is clearly impacting the agri-sectors.

So my question to you: this is incoherent. You've been a part of the Commission that had this problem. What will you do now to change this, to reverse the silo effect, to increase the cooperation between the DGs and really make sure that we have a framework that works for all of the sectors?

And second of all: you are the father of the energy union, and for that you can be proud. But what are your reflections on the fact that your gas policies actually failed us? Since the energy union was launched, we have increased the use of gas and we have increased the use of Russian gas. That is not a success story. Can I hear your reflections on that?

1-082-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much. I mean, so there are three topics you raised. The first is the coherence among the services and in the Commission. And of course, this would be one of my tasks to make sure that we are working very closely with the Green Deal group of Commissioners to make sure that we would have a coherent approach on all these overlapping files.

As you know, we always do our utmost to present the thorough impact assessment, which we always publish with few exceptions. I have to admit, when we are putting the concrete proposal on the table and I will do my best to increase that coherence also in the in the future. If it comes to the proper data, I think we've been discussing it with your colleagues.

If it comes to forestry, one of the challenges actually is that we do not have the 100% compatible data and we are actually learning from the Nordic countries how this should be done, what is the proper data, how we should manage this data. So, we would have a comparable data and it would be important not only for sound policies but also for eventual development of what I was explaining a minute ago. And these are the development of the of the carbon certificate, which could bring the benefits to the farming and forestry community.

On the gas policies, when I took over as Vice-President for Energy Union, we had a huge problem in our network. Simply, we were not interconnected, the whole gas flows coming from east to west, to put it simply from Russia to western Europe.

As you would probably recall, we had a crisis in 2009, but it was in central and eastern Europe where the people had been freezing at home in their apartments. But we had to close the schools, hospitals, industry. And that kind of prompted us to build the interconnection also from north to south, from east to west. And I think that was the start of building this integrated energy network.

Of course, we could have done more, but I think that without those interconnectors built, we would have much, much more different and more dramatic winter than otherwise we had. Thank you, Mr Chair.

1-083-0000

**Emma Wiesner (Renew)**. – Yes, but still, in between 2014 to 2020, gas use increased. But my follow-ups are on other topics.

On the animal welfare regulation that you have been working on for so many years, why do you only mention that it is work in progress and not to be put forward as regulations? That is a huge betrayal towards the animals and also the farmers across Europe.

And second of all, I've been asked to ask you, because of your relation to Fico, what is your view on sending more military supply and equipment to Ukraine supporting their defence? Clear answer on that one.

1-084-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – On animal welfare, I think I provided already quite an extensive answer. As I said, it is a very comprehensive, complex file. We are working on it. Where we see that we are the most advanced is the part of animal welfare which is linked with animal transport. We are working on all other files and once we have clarity about the feasibility, the costs and all the aspects which come together under the umbrella of better regulation, we will of course come in front of you and present the proposals.

If it comes to the European policies vis-à-vis Ukraine, I'm sorry to say that I had to answer this already many times. And I would really suggest you can ask the Ukrainian President and the Ukrainian Prime Minister who was working most closely with Ukrainians before the war and during the war. Please do so. Please do so and ask them, and you will see my track record.

I was working with Ukrainians on gas supplies, on the storage, on the grid management, on the critical raw materials. And I was the first one from the EU who spoke with Denys Shmyhal on the third day after the attack of Russia on Ukraine. So, I think that my track record is very clear. If you ask me, 'do I support the sanctions?' Of course I do. Do you ask me, 'do I support the military support of Ukraine?' Of course I do. I am surprised that I have to come back to this 10 times because I think my track record in this is absolutely clear. And if you need me to repeat it again, I will of course do so.

1-085-0000

**Petar Vitanov (S&D)**. – Dear Executive Vice-President, thank you for being here. Part of your portfolio will be to coordinate the work on reducing the carbon footprint of the Union transport sector, including heavy duty vehicles. How do you approach this role and how do you see the division of sustrans-related topics with Mr Hoekstra, if he got elected?

We definitely consider the greening of the Union transport sector to be an essential element of the European Green Deal and therefore would like to know which Tran initiatives will still be put forward within this mandate. You already mentioned the Combined Transport Directive, which has been delayed several times, but I think it is a must when it comes to shifting to more environmentally-friendly modes of transport.

How about the multimodal digital mobility services proposal that would enable citizens to travel more easily and sustainably? Will you put forward a greening corporate fleet initiative without further delay?

1-086-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – If it comes to the division of labour with Mr Hoekstra – of course pending your decision this afternoon, and of course the very important question if you will then trust us with the responsibility for these two portfolios – the idea is that I should do the overall coordination of the Green Deal policies, and Mr Hoekstra is responsible for external dimension of the Green Deal. So he will be the negotiator, hopefully the negotiations in the COP28. And there, of course, we have high hopes that European proposals, which I was very happy to present during our stay in New York two weeks ago, on tripling the renewables, doubling the energy efficiency, creating 50 million new jobs in the world, bringing electricity to 800 million people across the world and in this way decarbonising the global energy network. These have been taken on board by Dr Sultan, with whom I also had a bilateral meeting. And I believe that Mr Hoekstra will, of course, be in the seat to present these ideas and negotiate what I hope will be good outcome for the mankind and humanity in COP28 in Dubai.



If it comes to your transport questions, I'm very happy to tell you that if it comes to the combined transport where we want to find the best possible way how to move the cargos from the trucks and put it on the trains, you're right, it's delayed, but it's coming. So I mean it will end on this table. The same if it comes to digital mobility package. This should also take place this autumn. Passenger rights, where we want to make sure that let's say the intermediaries who are selling the tickets cannot hide behind the algorithm and softwares if it comes to claims for the cancelled flights or cancelled tickets. So we also are going to deal with this issue still this autumn.

1-087-0000

**Petar Vitanov (S&D).** – Just to follow up, if possible. Thank you. Thanks for your answers. And maybe a different topic because, in the very beginning, I mentioned something about the heavy duty vehicles and the Parliament and the Council are currently working on the proposal CO2 emissions for heavy-duty vehicles. So how do you intend to facilitate a timely adoption of CO2 standards for heavy-duty vehicles until the end of this legislative cycle? And how will you work towards ensuring that this final legislative act delivers a sufficient climate emission reduction?

1-088-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – If you are looking at heavy-duty vehicles, then the work of the legislator is advancing quite well. The Council of Ministers should discuss this, if I recall correctly, on 16 October, and we will definitely will be present and make sure that the position of the Council in that regard will advance.

I know that you also are planning to have discussions in in your committees in that regard as well. If you are talking about the targets for heavy-duty vehicles, there we can have quick progress because there is a good understanding of the importance of this file. What is clearly a challenge, as I hear, is how to make sure that we have emissions-free buses, simply because of the of the production capacities in Europe.

What I really want to do is to work as closely as possible with you, with the Parliament and with the Council, to make sure that we conclude the work on heavy-duty vehicles, hopefully still this year.

1-089-0000

**Edina Tóth (NI).** – Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Vice-President Šefčovič. As we all know, emissions from vehicles have a significant impact on our environment and public health. And Euro 7 standards are the latest regulatory framework proposal of the Commission aimed at reducing these emissions, but they come with many challenges and concerns that must be addressed.

First and foremost, I believe that the Commission's Euro 7 draft standards are very ambitious. They pose a considerable challenge to car makers, and achieving these lower emission levels will require substantial investments in research, in development and the implementation of these new technologies. This raises concerns about the economic viability of these standards and the potential for increased vehicle prices for our consumers. And this will have negative impacts.

Another concern is the potential impact on the automotive industry itself. The transition to Euro 7 standards may result in job displacement for those working in sectors closely related to traditional internal combustion engines. And my question to you, Commissioner Šefčovič, is the following: given the potential economic, consumer and industry-related concerns, are you reconsidering to address these challenges and ensure a smooth transition to cleaner transportation while minimising the negative impacts?

1-090-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, Madam Tóth, for your question. Of course, I mean, if you look at the logic of Euro 7 proposals, I think one of the key factors which we shouldn't forget is that – and this, I think, especially concerns central and eastern Europe – you still have an estimate that we might be in the situation that in 2050, so when we will have a climate neutral economy in Europe, we would still have millions – I even read the estimate up to 20 million – of these internal combustion engines cars on our streets.

So therefore I would say it was quite important to invest in improving the, I would say, efficiency to reduce to the maximum the emissions and pollution coming from these cars.

I think that the Euro 7 discussion is reflecting, I would say, this challenge, but we see that there are discussions ongoing in the Council but also in Parliament. We have our rapporteur, Mr Vondra, here, so he knows all the all the details of that file.

But what I really also would like to highlight is the parts of the Euro 7 which is very much focused on, I would say, the parts of the vehicle which would be the same also for EVs, when you are talking about tyres, brakes, carrosserie and all the other aspects, I think there, I think it's clear that we need to prepare for the future and we need to prepare for these emission-free cars as of 2035.

The discussion about the skills and workers, I mean I had extensive discussions with the car industry and the truth is that if it comes to electric vehicles, only the battery sector is looking for people. We need 800 000 people who would be working in that sector. And we are desperately looking to see how we can train them fast enough?

So I'm not afraid that this would have a negative effect on employment. To the contrary, we need new skills and new people coming to work for this industry.

1-091-0000

**Edina Tóth (NI)**. – As a follow-up, what is your personal outlook on the future of e-fuels in Europe concerning their alignment with the CO2 for cars regulation?

1-092-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – I think that, of course this is from one side a very, very pertinent discussion because if it comes to the e-fuels, again what's needed is a lot of support for research, innovation and to see how we can scale the production in a way that we would have high-quality e-fuels, but we will get them also at a better, more affordable price. And of course it's a challenge. But of course these are the issues which are very important and they are linked not only with the car industry, but also with the aviation, with other sectors of the economy. And therefore I think that we need to focus on this area more than before.

1-093-0000

**Herbert Dorfmann (PPE)**. – Ja, ich denke, wenn wir die Klimaziele erreichen wollen, da ist ja eine der wichtigsten Voraussetzungen, dass wir aus dem fossilen Kohlenstoff aussteigen, und zwar nicht nur als Brennstoff, also Öl und Gas, sondern auch als industrieller Werkstoff, also als Rohmaterial. Da ist die Landwirtschaft und vor allem die Forstwirtschaft von ganz zentraler Bedeutung.

Es hat Ihr Vorgänger Frans Timmermans ja immer so getan, als wäre der beste Wald ein Wald, der nicht genutzt wird, den man also nicht als Rohstoffherzeuger nutzt. Meine Frage wäre: Wie sehen Sie hier die Rolle der Landwirtschaft und vor allem auch der Forstwirtschaft, wenn es um die Produktion von gebundenem Kohlenstoff geht, auch für industrielle Nutzung? Und glauben Sie daran, dass eine nachhaltige Forstwirtschaft vor allem darin besteht, dass man einen Wald auch nachhaltig nutzt?

1-094-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, Mr Dorfmann. I really agree with you that there could be sustainable management of the forest. This is, of course, a clear ambition of the Commission's policies in this regard. And this would be, of course, one of the topics of the strategic dialogues we will have with farmers and forest owners and managers.

I think what is very important in this regard is to learn from the best practices we have in Europe. I personally visited the Nordic countries, where I was getting very thorough PowerPoint presentations for distinguished professors made in Finland or in Sweden on how this could be done. I have seen the big companies and big factories which really used the forest in a very sustainable way and producing the products which have been on the top level from all the CO2 emissions perspective.

Therefore, what we are suggesting here now is to have proper monitoring, good dialogue, adequate data, so we can really work in that area as well because bioeconomy is important and sustainable management of the forest is not only possible, it's important. I think that we have to develop this approach in good discussions with the farmers and foresters.

1-095-0000

**Herbert Dorfmann (PPE)**. – Thank you very much. Just to follow up, your chief, President von der Leyen, said ten days ago here in Parliament that if it comes to agriculture and the Green Deal, everything is on the table for this legislative term. So there will be no new proposals in this legislative term.

I didn't really understand today if you agree with this, if it comes to animal welfare, if it comes to sustainable food chain. Do you agree that for this legislative term, as von der Leyen said, everything is on the table and the proposals on these things will come after the dialogue with the farmers? This for sure will not be closed within this legislative term, because I hope it will be broader than just three weeks or three months. So these proposals will be proposals for the next legislative term?

1-096-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – I think that I was saying that what is very important also for the remaining part of the mandate is to combine the continuity with the high ambition for the future. So I think it's quite clear that if you have the files on the table where significant work was already invested and where we are going, I would say, in the right direction that we can finalise the work, then of course we want to complete our efforts. And I think I was very clear what you can expect from us in this regard. I was talking about climate target, I was talking about forest monitoring, I was talking about microplastics, I was talking about carbon capture and storage strategy, wind-power generation and all the linked files with transport and with water resilience, for which we have already the concrete dates.

And then there are, of course, the files which are very comprehensive and complex and at the same time sensitive and important for a lot of people like animal welfare, where I said we are looking at it from different aspects and I said that most advanced work here is on the transportation aspect of the animal welfare, where, of course, once it's ready, we will come up with that proposal. But as I said, I mean, it's a huge work and we still have to work on the details, on the proper assessment and proper evaluation of the proposal.

1-097-0000

**Marc Botenga (The Left)**. – Lorsqu'on vous a posé la question sur l'impact social du Pacte vert, vous avez fait plusieurs fois référence au fonds social. Mais vous savez que ce fonds social ne suffira pas, il n'est pas suffisant pour couvrir l'impact social et financier que vont subir les

travailleurs par rapport à ce Pacte vert. Et c'est donc évidemment une cause importante, la principale peut-être, du manque de soutien des citoyens vis-à-vis du Pacte vert dont vous avez parlé.

De plus, il y a une série de mesures pour lesquelles la question se pose de savoir si on en a vraiment besoin? Par exemple la qualité de l'air. Fallait-il encore une fois vraiment insister sur le parking payant ou la taxe kilométrique, alors qu'on sait que de nombreux travailleurs n'ont aujourd'hui pas d'autre choix que de prendre leur voiture pour aller travailler?

Alors, dans ce contexte-là, quelle sera votre plus-value? Parce que ce n'est pas une question de communication, c'est une question de fond! Quelle sera votre plus-value pour répondre aux besoins et aux inquiétudes des citoyens?

1-098-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – I think that the added value here is that we have to be also, I would say, fair and comprehensive when we are discussing aspects of the Green Deal. I fully understand that you are making the points on the social aspects and the costs which have to be borne by citizens.

And what I think we need to bring to the to the public domain more than before is to highlight how important the benefits that the Green Deal is bringing to them are. I was just making reference to eco-design. I mean, EUR 120 billion saved in one year because our appliances are more efficient. The fact that we have 100 000 fewer people dying prematurely because air quality is better. And, of course, the number of jobs we are creating of high value and in the industries of the future, which for sure will not disappear, they will stay here.

So all this, I think, is also important to bring to this discussion to clearly demonstrate that the benefits of the Green Deal clearly outweigh the costs. And I think to make, I would say, this valid point in our discussions.

At the same time, I recognise, of course – the area which I was referring to several times today, which is very important for me – the fact that this green transition should be socially fair. That we should really do our utmost to ensure that nobody is left behind.

And we have to work together with you, with the national governments to make sure that the people, citizens, farmers, workers feel the benefits of the Green Deal, this is very important. And we have to look at all the funding which is available at the EU level, but also to work very closely with the with the Member States on how to address these issues, especially when we are talking about the most vulnerable parts of our society.

1-099-0000

**Marc Botenga (The Left)**. – Monsieur le Président, je ne suis pas sûr que les citoyens se rendent compte aujourd'hui, ou ressentent ce que vous dites comme une évidence, parce que ça contredit souvent la réalité qu'ils vivent.

Vous avez dit vouloir impliquer davantage les citoyens dans la politique européenne. Il y a certains de mes collègues de droite qui se plaignent que l'industrie et les multinationales ne sont pas assez entendues en Union européenne. Je ne partage pas du tout cette idée. Mais comment allez-vous faire? Est-ce que vous avez, par exemple, un pourcentage? Est-ce que vous allez dire: voilà, 50 % de mes rencontres doivent se faire avec des syndicats ou avec des citoyens, par exemple. Car bien souvent, dans les négociations commerciales, environ 90 % des rencontres se font avec des lobbies et des multinationales. Dans le comité sur l'énergie, il n'y a que des grosses entreprises énergétiques par exemple. Donc qu'allez-vous faire concrètement, quantitativement?

1-100-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – I think that, of course, once – and if – we get your support, we will put it all in perspective and I can describe to you the ideas, how we want to get it organised. And then, of course, we have to prepare the concept note and start organising these green social dialogues with the citizens and then, of course, these industrial clean transition tables.

You know that we are working under the tremendous scrutiny, first and foremost of the European Parliament, but also of the NGO sector. So, I can reassure you that, if it comes to the representativeness of the personalities of the partners in these dialogues, that we will, of course, go for making sure that all parts of the society is represented, that the social partners are part of it, that NGOs are properly present there, and that we are not going to have some kind of biased lobby-type discussions behind closed doors – because this simply would not deliver the respect. And I know that the European Parliament and, of course, the media and the NGOs would be the first to point it out. So, I mean, we have it clearly on our mind and we will address it appropriately.

1-101-0000

**Jutta Paulus (Verts/ALE)**. – Thank you very much for being with us and answering our extensive questions.

I was a bit surprised by your written answers on the subject of REACH, because they fall short of the measures which were announced in the chemical strategy for sustainability. Even more, I'm concerned that you do not speak out in favour of research and development of less harmful alternatives to the so-called perpetual chemicals, the forever chemicals, the PFAS, but instead replied that these should remain available in any case.

I have had companies in my office saying, hey, we are working on an alternative, but if PFAS are allowed in this sector forever, we might as well stop our research, which is certainly not what we should aim to do.

So I would like to know, do you really believe that we should ignore the planetary boundary of environmental pollution when we are working on the equally urgent planetary boundary of the climate crisis? Because I believe that we have to tackle both.

Also, I found another bit worrying the sentence 'a ban on the production of hazardous chemicals that are not allowed for use in the EU must be legally effective while striking a balance between international trade and a high level of protection'. How do you intend to contribute to the implementation of the agreement on the reduction of global chemical pollution, which was agreed in Bonn last week? What role do you see for EU legislation in that regard? Concretely, will you deliver a REACH proposal within this mandate which delivers the announcement from the chemical strategy?

1-102-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, Madam Paulus, for these questions as well.

I mean, the PFAS, you described the situation quite well there. I mean, we have several dilemmas we have to tackle. The first one is that some of them are clearly necessary for achieving our green goals. We need them for photovoltaic panels. We need them for batteries. We need them for we need them for windmills.

Therefore, what we need to do here is to make a very thorough analysis of which ones are really hazardous – and I have no hesitation that these should be banned – and which are of essential use, which we cannot substitute up to.

I totally agree with you that we have to work on it. We have to invest research and innovation funds to really invest in developing the chemical substitutes for PFAS. All this, as you know, will be very thoroughly assessed by the by the Chemicals Agency, and by all other agencies like EFSA, and then the process on this would be concluded and the concrete proposals would be presented.

So I can reassure you that every PFAS which could be substituted will be banned, and that we always look for eventual substitutions. But we might have areas where simply this will not be possible, and in that case we have to regulate it and we have to regulate it thoroughly and regulate it in a way which would simply not put health under any question marks.

You've been asking me about planetary boundaries. Of course, this is absolutely crucial. I think if I look at also the lifestyle of Europeans, and I think we are very proud that we do better than most of the major economies anyway, if we will not change our behaviour, we would need three planets to sustain our current style of living. Therefore, I think it's very important to adjust our economies, to adjust our lifestyle in this direction.

1-103-0000

**Jutta Paulus (Verts/ALE).** – As a follow-up I still miss a bit the concrete answer to whether we will see a REACH proposal within this mandate and whether it will address those challenges. You probably know that in the PFAS restriction proposal we already have these exemptions, but for photovoltaics this proposal already states that there are alternatives available to PFAS use in PV. But never mind.

A second question is around glyphosate, because to me it's a bit weird that on the one hand we are fighting over the Nature Restoration Law, we are trying to reduce the use of pesticides, but at the same time the Commission is proposing to prolong the authorisation of glyphosate for another 10 years, nearly without restrictions, knowing very well that if you would ban glyphosate, then the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR) would be fulfilled almost by itself due to the high multiplication factor which would then apply to glyphosate use. So at the same time you could sort of remedy the problems you would have with the SUR if you would refrain from proposing glyphosate as the solution.

1-104-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – Thank you very much. I know that glyphosate is a very sensitive question and probably we would agree that this is the active substance which is most studied by the by the research community. And we are talking about relying on science in this particular case.

I mean, our chemical agency concluded that this is not carcinogen. The EFSA agency concluded that no critical areas of concern that would preclude renewal of the approval have been found. And we've been faced with this, I would say, scientific reality.

So what we are proposing to do, as you know, we would have an option to extend or renew the use of glyphosate for 15 years. But we are not going to do that. We are proposing to renew it for 10 years. But – and it is very important and I hope you can see that we are really making efforts – and real effort here is we are introducing additional safeguards. The Member States will have to look at consumers' exposure, assess protection of the groundwater, and there will be a permanent scrutiny introduced.

And if there is anything which would prove to the contrary, as the scientific evidence is telling us, we got from ECA and EFSA, of course will act immediately and there will be immediate withdrawal if warranted. And that's our clear political commitment in this regard.

1-105-0000

**Beatrice Covassi (S&D).** – We have a very last round, so some repetition and fatigue is inevitable, but we offer you the chance to show us your commitment and enthusiasm to the very last mile of a Green Deal. So let's go back to our zero-pollution ambition. We live in a polluted world. We just discussed it. Harmful chemicals and pollutants are everywhere, and we are telling our citizens that we will cut pollution because it saves lives, reduce the toll of disease and restore ecosystems. But among all these acts that we have at the moment, how will you ensure that the ongoing work on the proposals, on the current proposals and their implementations actually delivers on the zero-pollution ambition and that every sector contributes its fair share? And how can you ensure coherence and complementarity between all these various pieces of legislation and ensure also that the work stays on track with the impact of such proposals, which is indeed very important? So let us have a holistic view on this, please.

1-106-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – Indeed, the zero-pollution ambition for the Parliament and for this Commission was very important. And I think from that action plan which you proposed in this regard we already proposed around three quarters of it. And I know that there are still some issues which are either on the table or in the hands of co-legislators on the trilogue table, like soil health, air quality, sustainable pesticides and all these issues. And there clearly I also would like to help as much as I can.

And of course I would like to combine it with the question I was getting several times today and I think it would be useful to make it clear, because animal welfare is the issue which is very dear to many in this House and a lot of citizens in Europe, so what I want to reiterate is that we will be working very hard on these proposals and especially the aspect I was referring to: the animal transport proposal will come soon. I mean, we are working on it. I cannot give you the precise date, but it will come soon because we are working on this issue and I do not have to go to the details about the hours and distances, but we are really trying to deliver our best in this regard.

The same goes for forest monitoring and the same goes for intentional and unintentional use of microplastics. And I think this is just being reiterated for a clarification of the positions on these very, very sensitive files. And again, kind of reconfirmation of my readiness, full availability to work with you on the rest of the zero-pollution ambition proposals, which we still need to deliver.

1-107-0000

**Beatrice Covassi (S&D).** – You won't be surprised that as a follow-up I would like to ask you again about REACH. So can we count on your commitment as soon as possible? We heard we are 200 days away from elections, which makes some of us very nervous – I mean, at least myself. So we really need to do it as soon as possible.

And also on animal welfare, you just replied, but it is very important to take it also from the chemicals perspective because, you know, as someone who uses cosmetics, I am very reassured that we have no animal testing for cosmetics but I'm very worried that this will come back from the back door because we are not putting more stringent rules on chemicals.

So again, thanks for your commitment on this.

1-108-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, Madam Covassi. Indeed, the work on REACH is ongoing, and I totally agree with you that this is a very, very important file, which has a huge impact on the health of our citizens, on making sure that we are using the latest scientific evidence in this case. And I just want to tell all of you that my full commitment is to work on this file and to assess it from all the perspectives and to come with this file to you immediately when it's ready. So we want to do it, but we have to do it right, and we are we are really working on the REACH file.

And concerning the animal welfare, as I told you, I believe that, very soon, we will come back to all of you with a proposal for animal transport. This is a very comprehensive one and we will be working on all the other aspects linked with overall package of animal welfare.

1-109-0000

**Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE)**. – Thank you, Chair. Commissioner, I would like to kindly ask you for an honest opinion. What is worse, to work two years for Shell or to be educated five years in Moscow in Communist times in international relations, for sure Communist ones?

You answer to all questions regarding Fico, Russia, Ukraine with your track record. You were Commissioner when Nabucco was stopped, and Nabucco would have decreased dependency on Russia. So what you can tell us about this?

1-110-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – I think that what is the most important is to assess the person as he or she is. And I think when you get to know him or her, when you have been working with him or her, when they have very clear track records and when you know that you can trust the person, what they do, and this is how I build my personal relationships. All of us have our personal histories. You and I been born and raised behind the Iron Curtain. And I think when I was kind of watching from the other side of the Danube through the fence to Austria, seeing that the people are living there but most probably I would never be able to cross the Danube, of course I didn't believe that once I will have the honour to serve Europe as a Commissioner, and I would say therefore I think judge the people on their deeds, on what they do, on their track record. This is what I do, and that would be my humble request also from my side to you.

If you come to Nabucco, indeed I would, if you allow me, to correct a little bit the timeline there. When I became the Energy Union Commissioner, Nabucco was already dead. And one of the tasks I got was from the President at that time to look for alternatives. And therefore we invested a lot of efforts to build the Southern Gas Corridor, to bring the gas from Caspian Sea, which, as you know, was enormous work. But we succeeded and it's one of the alternative routes which helped us to avoid the dramas with blackouts in Europe, especially during the last two winters. Again, it's close cooperation with the Member States, with our financial institutions, and with very clear, I would say, insistence that we need to diversify our support, and you probably heard me already at that time saying many times that we should diversify our supplies and we should have at least three different key suppliers for every key commodity because that would guarantee our strategic autonomy.

1-111-0000

**Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE)**. – You know mobility, in my opinion, is not only a necessity, but it's also right. So what you will do to keep mobility efficient and affordable? Concrete things, for example what is your opinion about taxes in aviation and which is the date when the delegated act regarding neutral fuel combustion engines will come?



1-112-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, Mr Marinescu. I think that, of course, mobility is an absolutely essential part of the lifestyle of Europeans. I am, of course, a strong supporter of high-quality urban mobility.

I think the declaration that is going to be signed today on cycling, which is very much supported by this House, by the Member States, by the millions of cyclists across Europe, is proving how we can combine public transport with cycling and with sustainable means of transportation.

Then I know what you are referring to is especially if you are from the parts of the European Union that are at the external borders. We clearly need better rails and we need to transport as many people and as much cargo as possible by rail.

We have to use much better our rivers. I think that Romania is playing an absolutely crucial role in helping getting Ukrainian grain exports out of Ukraine to the developing world. Without Ukraine, without Romania, without the airports, without also the great work of Commissioner Vălean on these green lines, that simply would not be possible.

And, of course, when it comes to the aviation, the fact that they are under the ETS, that there will be gradual withdrawal of the free allowances, is kind of clearly demonstrating that every part of the road sector, of the transport sector, has to contribute to tackling climate change.

1-113-0000

**María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos (Renew)**. – Señor Šefčovič, tengo que preguntar sobre cosas que de las que ya se ha hablado, pero le voy a pedir concreción.

Señor candidato a comisario, en relación con la Estrategia «De la Granja a la Mesa» se anunciaba la presentación de una estrategia para sistemas alimentarios sostenibles, absolutamente básica para la transición ecológica. Ustedes, la Comisión, la han retrasado. ¿Puede usted decirnos, como posible nuevo vicepresidente, cuál será la fecha para la presentación de esta estrategia?

En segundo lugar, la presidenta Von der Leyen, en su discurso sobre el estado de la Unión, por ejemplo, no citó esta estrategia, apenas citó la Ley de Restauración de la Naturaleza y nos anunció un diálogo estratégico sobre el futuro de la agricultura. Quisiera preguntarle, si nos puede concretar, cuándo va a empezar este diálogo —a final de legislatura— y cuándo va a concluir. Y, sobre todo, lo más importante: ¿cuál es el objetivo? Porque no es hablar. Hablar es el medio. ¿Cuál es el objetivo? ¿Acelerar la transición ecológica en el sistema agrario? ¿O, realmente, paralizar algunas de las medidas de la Estrategia «De la Granja a la Mesa» y de la Estrategia sobre Biodiversidad?

1-114-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Thank you very much, Madam Rodríguez Ramos also for this question. So I will take it from the from the back as I as I noted it. Of course, the aim of these green social dialogues and strategic dialogue with the farming community is from one side to, I would say, consolidate the public support for the Green Deal. You would agree with me and I believe you are from Spain, that you also had a very, very tough campaign in Spain, where very often the issues of the Green Deal are instrumentalised in in the negative sense. So, I mean, it's very easy for French politicians to attack the Green Deal, to go after it, to simply just point to all the negatives. And I think that it's our common duty as a key communitarian European institutions to build bridges, but also to kind of go into the discussions with our citizens to point the benefits to point the pluses, to highlight how this is important, and to show that we are not only ready to give the recipes how this should be done or give the precise

description of what is expected, but that we are ready for the honest feedback that we want to hear from our citizens. We want to work with them. And we also want them to tell us where they believe we have to look for better and best possible solutions. So this would be, I would say, the overall approach. I'm sure that once we approach the concrete preparation of these meetings, making sure that they are properly balanced and we have, I would say, the right representations in the discussions we will have, that there will be concrete agenda that I would say are the actual points, what are the points, which be it farmers or citizens want to discuss. And coming back to the green social dialogues, I thought that this would be a welcome opportunity for having some town hall discussions with our citizens, doing it with you, doing it with regional, national leaders. Just simply to show that this is, I would say, a common European approach. That is our common aspiration and it's our common goal to make sure that we will have the green transition, which is fair to everyone, and we are ready to discuss it with our citizens. I think it's absolutely crucial, it's clear and that would be, I would say, the goal of this debate.

1-115-0000

**María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos (Renew).** – Señor Šefčovič, me gustaría hacerle una segunda pregunta en relación con la CP.28. Encima de la mesa va a estar el acuerdo sobre pérdidas y daños derivados de todas las catástrofes que genera el calentamiento en países en desarrollo, y eso se va a unir a la reclamación de los más de 100 000 millones que acordamos en 2019 para adaptación en estos países y que los países ricos aún no han desembolsado. Esto va a ser de nuevo una patata caliente en las negociaciones.

Me gustaría saber si nos puede avanzar cuál va a ser la posición de la Unión Europea en este sentido y, más concretamente, si África va a tener a la Unión Europea sentada a su lado en esta reclamación o enfrente. Creo que, dada la situación, también geopolítica, que vivimos, es muy importante la decisión que tomemos a este respecto.

1-116-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President of the Commission.** – Thank you very much, Madam. I think that this is really, I would say, a very important question for this morning. I can give you a clear foretaste of what is to be expected.

We agreed as a first major economy already in Sharm el-Sheikh that we are ready to support a loss and damage. At the same time, what we are saying is that we would like to see that the donor base is broadened. Because, if you look at the climate financing, this very famous USD 100 billion of private and public finances to be transferred to the developing countries, you may guess who is the only one who is faithfully respecting our obligation. It's the European Union. For 2021, it was in the realm of USD 23 billion.

So, we really have to talk to our American friends, to major economies like China, to Gulf countries and to everybody else who clearly can contribute more to climate finance, but also to loss and damage fund. This is what we will bring to the table. This is what we want to discuss.

At the same time, we also want to make sure that we will focus the use of loss and damage for the most vulnerable, least-developed countries and small island nations, because I think they are suffering the most. Therefore, it has to be targeted. And it should become the last piece of the mosaic which is there for the international financing instrument and mechanism to support developing countries in tackling the climate change.

1-117-0000

**Chair.** – Mr Šefčovič, you have now five minutes for your final, concluding remarks.

1-118-0000

**Maroš Šefčovič**, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – First and foremost, I would really like to thank all of you for this very intense, honest discussion. You have clearly proven that you are masters of your files, looking after the dossiers and proposals that are very important for the European citizens. Rightly so, because you are the directly elected representatives of your people.

What I would like to conclude with is coming back to the track record we established together. I have been working with many of you for many years. I believe in close collaboration; I'm always available; I'm ready to look for compromises, and what I want to see are the results. This would be my attitude if I get your support.

Also on all the sensitive and pertinent files we discussed today, for me, it's very clear that, on the one hand, we are approaching the end of the mandate and we have to put as much energy as possible into concluding and completing the files which are on the table. But, on the other hand, we also have to clearly project that message that for the next European Parliament, for the next Commission, for the next generation of European leaders, there is also a lot to be done. This has to be the continued, focussed, targeted effort of the next generation of politicians, because to get to climate neutrality by 2050 is a very challenging task.

I hope you will help me to introduce this element of dialogue, be it in green social discussions with our citizens, be it in strategic dialogue with farmers, or be it in structured clean transition dialogues with industry. We need to have all that consolidating effort to make sure that the Green Deal is widely supported and seen as our growth strategy and as a policy which brings tangible and intangible benefits to our European citizens.

I am absolutely confident that, with your expertise, your efforts and your focus on the detail and the files you are working on, we can together accomplish that, and I hope that I will have that opportunity to work with you on this generational challenge for the future of Europe and the future of our civilisation.

Mr Chair, thank you very much for being indulgent with me, given that I went from time to time a few seconds over my time limit, and I will try to get it back because now I'm not going to use all my five minutes. I would really like to thank you for the fair chairing and to thank all of you for your very fair questions and a tough but very fair hearing. Thank you very much.

1-119-0000

**Chair**. – Thank you. So we close formally this hearing, and the next step will be the assessment of the hearing that will take place from 14.00 to 16.00, together with the follow-up of the assessment of Mr Hoekstra. We will start with Mr Hoekstra's assessment and then yours during this afternoon.

*(The hearing closed at 11.33)*