

COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND
FOOD SAFETY

ASSOCIATED COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY

HEARING OF WOPKE HOEKSTRA

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE

(Climate Action)

MONDAY, 2 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 18.32)*

1-003-0000

Chair. – We are going to resume our meeting and I will ask our friends from the press to kindly leave the room as we proceed to the hearing.

So first, of course, I would like to welcome Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate for Climate Action. Welcome to ENVI and also to the EPP room. As you know, we are in the EPP room, so I'm happy to have a constructive spirit from the EPP, at least sharing the room tonight.

I would like to also welcome the associated committees' members, starting of course with their respective chairs: for AFET, DEVE and ITRE, Mr Tobé, Mr Buşoi and Mr McAllister. Thank you for being with us tonight.

So I will have to recall to you in a formal manner certain elements for the procedure so that we will, of course, be in line with the guidelines for the approval of the Commission in Annex VII to the Rules of Procedure. We will evaluate the Commissioner-designate on the basis of his general competence, European commitment and personal independence. We will also assess his knowledge of his respective portfolio and his communication skills. That's the formal reading of what is expected from us tonight.

Before the hearing, as we all know, Commissioner-designate, you have replied in writing to a preparatory questionnaire and the written answers have been distributed to Members in all languages. I would also like to inform you that the Committee on Legal Affairs has raised no objection to the holding of this hearing.

I will now briefly explain the structure of the debate. The Commissioner-designate is invited to make an opening oral statement of no longer than 15 minutes and he will then also have five minutes at the end of the meeting for a closing statement. After the introduction – so these 15 minutes – there will be the time for 25 questions from MEPs.

The debate will be held in slots of five minutes each so you will have to be disciplined: 1 minute, 15 seconds for the first question, 2 minutes for the first answer from Mr Hoekstra. And then, if you want to, you have the opportunity to have a follow-up question and the question should not be longer than 45 seconds, and then 1 minute for the reply.

The first round will be made up of seven questions by political groups, coordinators or their representatives, and the second round will be 18 questions based on the overall distributions of questions among political groups. And I would like as well to draw attention to the fact that interpretation is provided in 23 languages so feel free, of course, to use your own language. And finally, I would like to inform you that the debate will be, of course, streamed live on Parliament's website.

So I now give you the floor, Commissioner-designate, Mr Hoekstra, for no longer than 15 minutes. The floor is yours.

1-004-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *commissaire désigné*. – Monsieur le Président, c'est un grand honneur de me présenter devant cette commission. Tout d'abord, permettez-moi de vous remercier pour votre «leadership» sur le Pacte vert. Grâce à votre travail, l'Europe avance d'une manière très concrète vers sa transition verte.

Si vous m'accordez votre confiance, je veux poursuivre cet héritage. Je veux apporter de la continuité, je veux saisir toutes les occasions d'augmenter notre ambition et je tendrai la main à tous et à toutes. Nous devons travailler ensemble, étroitement, pour la réussite de cette transition.

Depuis mon enfance, mes parents et mes grands-parents m'ont fait comprendre l'immense importance de notre coopération européenne. Elle nous a apporté de la solidarité, de la paix, de la sécurité, de la prospérité. Je suis un enfant de l'Europe. Et n'importe où en Europe, je me sens chez moi. J'ai eu le privilège de vivre en Italie, en France et en Allemagne, et de travailler partout sur notre continent.

J'ai beaucoup d'admiration pour notre Union, pour ses libertés, ses valeurs, sa culture, son patrimoine et notre solidarité. Et si je suis confirmé, je défendrai les intérêts de tous les citoyens européens, sans réserve et en toute indépendance.

In recent years, we faced many challenges: financial crises, the pandemic, and Russia's war against Ukraine. As Minister, I worked closely with colleagues all over Europe, on the capital markets union, SURE and weapons for Ukraine. And I have always tried to bring the national and European interest together.

And yet I want to acknowledge that precisely this did not always go well. At the start of the pandemic, I showed insufficient regard for the difficulties faced by some Member States. I would like you to know that I feel that I should have done that differently.

Now again, on climate change, it is time to show solidarity – in the EU, across the world, and with future generations. Climate change is a massive challenge, and their future depends on our decisions.

Honourable Members, as Commissioner, I will be driven by facts, by numbers, by science, and I will be convinced by evidence. But I will also be adamant in giving a voice to the next generation.

Like for many of you, this is not an abstract reality for me. At least once a week, my children ask me about two things: the war in Ukraine, and climate change. And whether these kids are sitting at my kitchen table, at yours, or anywhere else in the world, they deserve a future.

Honourable Members, as Commissioner, I would aim for continuity, for ambition, and for outreach.

This Parliament has been pivotal in setting our continent firmly on track towards climate neutrality in 2050. The EU Climate Law and Fit for 55 simply know no parallel.

With the European Green Deal, President von der Leyen and former Executive Vice-President Timmermans laid the foundations for Europe's green transformation. And I want to ensure you that continuity is in place on the entire Green Deal. In my own portfolio, I aim to swiftly conclude all pending negotiations.

But I will not be a caretaker. It simply wouldn't do justice to the scale, to the magnitude of our challenge and, frankly speaking, it is also not in my nature.

We are running a marathon here, not a sprint. Through the climate portfolio, I want to prepare the foundations of a Green Deal 2.0, on climate, biodiversity, circularity, and pollution, and help increase ambitions across the board.

To build this path, and profit from it, Europe needs ambition and predictability.

Esteemed Members, in the first quarter of next year, we will present our Communication on the 2040 target.

The Scientific Advisory Board has already published compelling evidence; with recommendations on technological feasibility, removals, environmental risk limits, international cooperation and fairness, the Board advises a minimum target of 90 % net reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.

Naturally, we will do our own thorough impact assessment and analyse different scenarios, reduction pathways, costs and benefits.

I cannot pre-empt this work, nor the final College decision. But I can offer you my clear commitment: I will act fully in line with the Board's advice. I will use all instruments available to aim to enable the EU to reach the minimum recommended target of 90 % net reductions.

And I will work to bring our industry along with instruments, like the Innovation Fund to spur innovation, and using CBAM to help create a global level playing field.

Honourable Members, climate change is truly a global crisis. We cannot master this alone. At COP28, discussions will centre on ambition and finance and, of course, both are closely linked: the more money we can muster, the more ambition we can elicit.

With Fit for 55, Europe leads the world in ambition and implementation. And by providing the largest share of climate finance, we lead the world in solidarity.

But the harsh reality is that the Paris goals are far from fulfilled. To unlock more mitigation ambition, notably from major emitters, we also need progress on adaptation and finance, of course, including for loss and damage. This is, in the end, not only about money but about restoring trust.

And the EU created a breakthrough last year. We can do this again. If we look at unorthodox solutions and dare to flip the script.

COP28 should be about operationalising the loss and damage fund and funding arrangements, especially for the most vulnerable. It is doable, if we find agreement on the governance and operating rules. And if this is the case, first pledges will become possible, and I will prepare the ground accordingly.

But for structural funding, we need systematic revenue. Ideas from the Summit on a New Global Financing Pact last June simply must become reality.

And I will talk to all partners to build a global loss and damage coalition. I want to explore an international kerosene tax, a maritime levy, a fossil fuels tax, and even a share of ETS proceeds – no stone should be left unturned.

And still, we cannot leave Dubai without more mitigation ambition. If only because no amount of money can pay if the damage is done and if we overshoot Paris goals.

On ambition, the EU should simply lead by example. And with Fit for 55, we are set to reduce 57 % of emissions by 2030. And we must spur extra ambition abroad.

I will champion the EU's push to triple of global renewable energy capacity, double of energy efficiency, and phase out unabated fossil fuels.

Fossil fuels must become history – the sooner the better. And the fact that certain oil majors have long known of their role in climate change and sought to hide the evidence, I find it truly unethical. If anything, it increases, in my view, their responsibility to contribute to solving climate change. And we should engage with them exactly along these very lines.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to be honest, the geopolitical situation we are facing is grim. It will not improve soon, and it weighs on our climate diplomacy and the effectiveness of our climate ambition.

The public expectations for COP28 are high, and rightly so. And time is running out. We must get the world on track for 1.5 degrees. I still see avenues to success in Dubai, and I will work non-stop to make it happen.

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren Abgeordnete! In zwei Bereichen benötigen wir weitere Maßnahmen: im Luftverkehr und bei den Subventionen für fossile Brennstoffe. Ich bin mir bewusst, dass die Verhandlungen über das Emissionshandelssystem für die Luftfahrt, über CORSIA und über nachhaltige Kraftstoffe gerade erst abgeschlossen worden sind. Und doch sind größere Anstrengungen notwendig, um die Umweltverschmutzung und die Emissionen durch den Luftverkehr aufzuhalten.

Beginnen wir mit der aus meiner Sicht größten Absurdität: der fehlenden Besteuerung von Flugbenzin. Wenn ich ein Auto an die Tankstelle fahre, dann sind 50 bis 60 % von dem, was ich an der Kasse bezahle, Steuern. Aber wird ein Jet aufgetankt, fallen überhaupt keine Steuern an. Null. Welcher Europäer hält das für sinnvoll, dass wir ausgerechnet beim Kerosin nicht nach dem Verursacherprinzip handeln? Schon während meiner Zeit als Finanzminister drängten die Niederlande auf die Flugsteuer in Europa. Heute möchte ich mit aller Kraft in Europa und auf der ganzen Welt um Unterstützung für eine globale Luftverkehrsabgabe werben.

Wir müssen darüber hinaus endlich die Subventionen für fossile Brennstoffe beenden. Sie sind, aus meiner Sicht, anachronistisch und kontraproduktiv für unsere Energiewende. Und ich möchte eng mit Kommissar Gentiloni zusammenarbeiten, um die Energiebesteuerungsrichtlinie im Rat voranzubringen. Und natürlich: Ich weiß sehr gut – zu gut –, wie schwierig es sein kann, Steuerpolitik zu verändern. Aber hat Italien mit der globalen Mindeststeuer nicht schon in seiner G20-Präsidentschaft bewiesen, dass es zu schaffen ist?

Meine Damen und Herren Abgeordnete! Die Klimapolitik ist eng mit den anderen Säulen des Grünen Deals verbunden. Dies gilt für die Artenvielfalt, das Naturwiederherstellungsgesetz, das Bodengesetz und das kommende Waldüberwachungsgesetz. Um unsere Klimaziele zu erreichen, müssen wir den Grünen Deal vollenden. Unsere Böden, Ozeane und Wälder sind die größten Kohlenstoffsinken, und eine gesunde Natur wird uns auf unserem Planeten, der immer wärmer wird, einfach kühl halten.

Und ich unterstütze Kommissar Sinkevičius wohl dabei, unsere ambitionierten Umweltgesetze über die Ziellinie zu bringen. Und ich verspreche, im Klimaressort meinen Teil dazu beizutragen.

Vor allem müssen wir eng mit unseren Landwirten zusammenarbeiten. Sie sollten darin unterstützt werden, nachhaltig zu produzieren, und sie haben einen Anspruch auf ein angemessenes Auskommen. Darum müssen wir unseren Landwirten ein überarbeitetes Geschäftsmodell anbieten. Dazu werde ich ganz bewusst den Dialog mit der Lebensmittelindustrie und mit den Banken suchen.

Honourable Members, Europe's green transition is a massive task. It needs the broadest possible support to maintain ambition and to take everyone along. And I will set my own bar high for reaching out, for building coalitions and for working together. I will work with you, with my colleagues in the Commission, with the Council, with European citizens, civil society and business, and with our partners across the globe.

Honourable Members, *Monsieur le Président*, I hope that I've shown you that as a Commissioner my focus would be on continuity, on ambition and on outreach that will be guided by science and always be the voice of the next generation. Reaching climate neutrality in Europe by 2050 will be a steep climb and convincing our partners across the world to keep pace with us will, frankly speaking, be even harder. But there is no alternative and we can get it done together. Thank you.

(Applause)

1-008-0000

Chair. – So we move now to the first round of questions, starting with the EPP coordinator, Peter Liese. So as a reminder, one minute 15 seconds for the first question. Peter, the floor is yours.

1-009-0000

Peter Liese (PPE). – Thank you, Chair. Dear Commissioner-designate, we can only mitigate climate change if we convince our partners also to be ambitious. You have elaborated a little bit or even quite extensive in your written questions and also in your presentation. I think you have good experience as foreign minister, but could you elaborate a little bit more on climate diplomacy? So how exactly will you bring other partners to share our ambition? And, in particular, you mentioned the aviation sector: I would ask you also to focus on the international dimension here. We have an ETS that covers only intra-European flights and I think we need to fight also for more ambition in the aviation sector, as the European Parliament always did and as we have achieved in the in the shipping sector.

1-010-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, Mr Liese. It is exactly as you say. If you look at the world, you will find that 7% of emissions take place in Europe and 93% – the vast majority – is taking place abroad.

That doesn't diminish in any possible way – let me be explicit about it – the necessity of driving down emissions in Europe much faster. But it also tells us that if we do not help out, if we do not commit to working together with the rest of the world, the problem will still be there.

We have to do that in a tremendously difficult geopolitical landscape with, of course, the horrible war in Ukraine that Russia is causing and all sorts of ramifications across the globe because of that war: tensions in the Indo-Pacific and countries feeling less at ease with Chinese assertiveness than before, and the global South – rightfully so – asking for a seat at the table. Frankly speaking, we as Europeans – and by the way, also we as Dutch – have ample experience with how not to do it, how not to interact with them.

My focus would be in driving the goals home by a tremendous amount of interaction. First liaising, of course, within Europe and making sure that we also align around money, because there will not be an alternative than raising money and spending more money as Europeans.

Secondly, of course, interacting with the largest emitters, and that also links to your question of aviation. If you look at the largest emitters, they to a large extent actually correspond with those flying the most – 100 000 flights a day, 30 000 from Europe – but particularly also the Americans and a couple of others are flying a lot.

Of course, we will need to work together in full equality with our friends in the global South.

1-011-0000

Tiemo Wölken (S&D). – Vielen Dank, dass Sie heute hier sind. Sie wechseln ja in den Sprachen schon so schnell hin und her wie die Kommissionspräsidentin.

I'll try to be at least equally eloquent, but I can only do two languages here. I'm coming back to the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change, which has recommended a 90-95% net emission reduction target for 2040 to be both fair and feasible with the cumulative greenhouse gas emissions budget of 11-14 gigatons CO₂ equivalent between 2030 and 2050. They have also recognised that overachieving the EU 2030 climate target would considerably decrease the EU's cumulative emissions and this would increase the fairness of the EU's contribution to global mitigation.

Of course, nobody wants to pre-empt the important work of an impact assessment, but the Commission sets the boundaries for these assessments. Given the board's recommendation and your commitment today, can you also commit to only assess policy options that adhere to that recommendation, mentioning the policy options that starts with a 90% decrease?

1-013-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, and also thank you very much for the opportunity to interact before and for your question, sir. It is precisely, as you say, if you read the scientific advisory board closely, and I also had the opportunity to liaise with one of the members who I know well from a previous stint in the Dutch Senate, they basically recommend three things. One is go for at least 90 in 2040. The second is truly make work of removals, because just cutting down on emissions will not do the work. So that is the second thing they're very explicit about. And third, and that is of course also clearly linked to fairness, you have to do more as Europe across the globe because you have been emitting a lot. And it is a matter of fairness. It is a matter of taking responsibility to do more over there.

On 2030, and I think that is a sliver of good news, we are likely to overachieve 55 and make it to 57.

On your question on the various variables and the various scenarios, my understanding is that most of the scenarios are almost done, but I would love to look into it and see what is possible in terms of add-ons and getting us a full picture of all different scenarios for 2040.

And the one thing I wanted to elucidate on is that one of the things the board is actually saying is that there is also a lifestyle scenario. There are three curves in the report and one of them talks a lot about diminished demand and that is actually very much related to lifestyle. And if you would actually add up lifestyle to the various, let's say, more basic scenarios, it gives you a tremendous kick going forward. And I would think that that combination actually gives each and every one of us the opportunity to assess not only the desirability, but also the feasibility and the steps that are needed to arrive at such a point.

1-014-0000

Tiemo Wölken (S&D). – Okay. Thank you very much. My second question would be on the social dimension, which is to the heart of my group. So increased climate ambitions are necessary if we were to mitigate the dramatic human, social and economic consequences of the climate crisis. But we also need increased public acceptance for the EU's climate ambitions. With the Social Climate Fund, the EU for the first time decided on dedicating a social-policy tool that will support the vulnerable citizens in the transition towards a decarbonised EU. But given your track record and your statements on financial support after the Corona crisis, can you assure my group that you will support future redistributive policy tools that enable a just transition in all Member States?

1-015-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, and thank you also for allowing me to elucidate on this. I think it is as you say – the vast majority of our citizens is actually as concerned about climate changes as we are and demands action. But it is up to us to actually be a guardian angel for the vast majority who we call the middle class, but particularly for those most in need, and they are actually worried what this might do to their wallets and to their affluence.

Now, in many of our other regulations in Europe, the MFF, the RF, the Social Climate Fund and many of the other regulations we have there is, for all the right reasons, a distribution key and we're taking into account to make sure that this lands with the people who most need it and for the right reasons.

Now, what I think we need to do is we need to continue with the journey, but at every single step from a European perspective and from a national perspective, we need to make sure that our people can actually see this through. Yes, the Social Climate Fund now is roughly 90 billion and of course it will only get into existence once the ETS 2 is launched. But if it would be necessary to do more to make sure everyone can come along, we should do that.

1-016-0000

Nils Torvalds (Renew). – Thank you Chair and thank you Commissioner-designate for being here.

You say in your written answers that you aim to adopt the impact assessment and the communication for the 2040 target in the first quarter of 2024. Do you have the backing of the President in this case and do you get it through the mill before the elections – or is it actually something just sort of meant for the election?

And can you describe the process from now on until the adoption of your 2040 proposal? What role will the Commission play? In which way? How would you have it on board? How will you be able to handle it so that we have it before this mandate is ending?

1-017-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, sir. And the honest answer is that feeling the need for speed, my initial thinking was, can we actually, is it possible? And I asked the team, is it possible to come up with a legal proposal? But I think actually their answer was much more balanced than my initial thinking, because what they were saying is, first, this needs to be absolutely coherent and needs to have all the various scenarios as we just discussed. It needs to have the feasibility analysis and then it needs to be tabled in the first quarter. Actually, if you look at our climate law, you see that after global stocktaking within half a year, that is what we are legally required to do. And by coming up with a communication rather than with a legal proposal, I think we all allow not only our citizens, but also – at the next Parliament and the next Commission to actually make a decision on what is feasible.

To your point of what I will do. I will, of course, seek to liaise as much as possible with the various parties here in Parliament and also pick up new things, new learnings during this hearing. Then I

will prepare for an internal discussion in the college and I've tried to articulate where I stand. I think we should go for 90 and make sure that that we make that feasible for our citizens and our companies alike. And then once this has gone through the college, I'll present it to this honourable Parliament.

1-018-0000

Nils Torvalds (Renew). – In the COVID case, you acted like the proverbial *schwäbische Hausfrau*. You didn't give the money. And now you said that *die Landwirte brauchen Unterstützung* and there are a lot of other people asking for money. So you have the finance side of it, and how are you going to get the money needed? Because there are going to be a lot of hands reaching out for your money.

1-019-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Sorry, sir, I couldn't... I heard *schwäbische Hausfrau*, but the last bit I couldn't fully understand, so would you mind repeating that?

1-020-0000

Nils Torvalds (Renew). – You also said that the 'Landwirten brauchen Unterstützung', and you have a lot of people there who are coming to ask for money. So you need to find the revenues to be able to reach out to all those. That's not just a social issue, that's an industrial issue, that's a European issue. And we don't need *schwäbische Hausfrau* there.

1-021-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Now I fully get it. Thank you for elucidating. Of course, that is very much true. The money first needs to be made, and I think, in any case, in all our countries. This is citizens money and we always have to deal with that carefully.

Now I do think, given the tremendous concerns people have about whether they can see through this transition, we do need to make sure with our different funds that we help out our people. The Modernisation Fund does it, the Just Transition Fund does it, the Social Climate Fund will be doing it. I think we will need these instruments and potentially more now.

Thinking about what we would also need – and that, I think, links to your question on how could you actually get more money on the table – well one way, as I said in my opening statement, is to go, for example, after aviation or take a sliver of the ETS.

As a former finance minister, I know it is always easier to take a bit out of a growing pie than to divide scarcity, which is typically difficult with finance ministers. So that will be my aim and I would hope that could also get the support of this Parliament.

1-022-0000

Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE). – Mr Hoekstra, I think everyone in this room is a bit surprised by your introductory statements because looking at your CV until now, you've not really been a climate champion. And I think that's putting it mildly looking at your Shell history, McKinsey, Minister of Finance where you gave money to KLM. So in that sense I think here we have a question on how credible is it what you're promising here? And probably that's why we want to hear more concrete promises on your side, for example on the phase-out of fossil subsidies. You said something on taxation, but you also know that you need unanimity in the Council. So it's a bit easy to say 'I want this, but you know, it can be blocked by one country'.

But you can do more, of course, as a Commissioner. You can of course also force the countries to have more clarity and transparency on how much is there of fossil fuel subsidies. For example, the Commission used for quite long the number of 55 billion. Now very recently the Netherlands, the Dutch Government said, well, the Dutch only it's 40 billion. Well, if the Netherlands is 40 then probably 55 of the Commission is underestimation of the EU. So what are you going to do and what

are you going to demand from the Member States to reduce and to phase out and to end fossil subsidies?

1-023-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much, Mr Eickhout. What I would hope is that you would also see that, as part of my previous portfolio coming up with the green bonds as Finance Minister, being a Finance Minister who was also part of the Finance Ministers for action, having helped to create an extremely green coalition agreement in the Netherlands – setting my own party on a different course – these are all points that hopefully also in your mind point in the right direction.

On your question on fossil subsidies, to me there are two core parts to that answer. The first is what we can do with our countries. And what I would seek to do is, indeed, talk to the various countries, make sure we push through this legislation that is lying on the table since 2021, together with Gentiloni. And you are right, the first thing we need is the actual numbers. By the way, the IMF has actually provided these to a large extent and, interestingly enough, the Dutch were higher in their own numbers than the IMF. So we might want to do a bit of additional benchmarking.

But you are right, in the end, any individual Member State could block that. So the second part of my answer would be to see what we can do in Europe, because we do have a lot more control over our own budget. And having gotten this question from Herr Bloss when we were discussing this as well, I also asked DG CLIMA: how should we go about this? And they said that probably the amount of fossil subsidies is actually very limited and, to the extent it exists, it is probably used to actually speed up the transition.

And still I feel we need to do more. So what I would want to commit to is that we make sure we phase these out and make sure they're no longer part of the next MFF. And I will provide you with an analysis as to what extent they actually exist today, knowing that, given that we have the 'do no significant harm' principle, that might actually be rather limited compared to Member States. So I'm optimistic about it, but I'll provide you with the information and I will do everything I can to make sure the next MFF is fossil subsidies-free.

1-024-0000

Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE). – I do have a follow-up, yes, because that's for the EU – but you already said that probably that's a lower amount than what our Member States are doing and, for example, the Commission is having a tool of the national energy and climate plans, demanding of the different Member States climate action to deliver on their targets.

Will you commit to, in those plans, and also not to accept, any plan without a clear phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies in all the Member States? I want to remind that every Member State has promised to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. It has been promised by the G20 and the G7. So I think it's about time to act – and no more promises – and the Commission has tools for Member States to make sure that they act on it.

1-025-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Yeah, and I think, as you say, there are two roads here. One is the one you're suggesting, and I would love to make that happen. I do have to admit – and I think that is something that might be tantalising to the two of us – that, you know, given that in the end taxation is also something that is up to Member States, we have influence to power. We don't have the power to influence or at least not in full.

But what I will commit to is indeed do as you say and make sure we are absolutely adamant, to the extent we legally can, to not include this in the plans the countries hand in. And secondly, to talk to

each and every of my former finance minister colleagues and see whether we can actually get that piece of legislation that is now still waiting for us that is dating back from 2021 and get that back on the table again. So these two things I would want to do.

1-026-0000

Alexandr Vondra (ECR). – Thank you very much. So my first question concerns Euro 7. So last week, the European Council has adopted the general approach which corrected the original Commission proposal, which, you know, putting it mildly, was not very good. We are now finalising the process also in the European Parliament. So my question to you is whether the European Commission, if you are there and you personally would be willing, you know, to find a constructive outcome which would not harm neither the automotive industry in this continent facing a huge challenge from China and also the medium- and lower-income people who must afford to purchase the new cars.

1-027-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr Vondra. May I briefly salute the tremendous things you did for freedom in the time I was still watching television.

I think, to your points, my understanding is that a compromise is being brokered. And on the one hand, we have tried to do as much as possible, not only from a climate perspective but also from a health perspective, and making sure we don't harass our citizens with particles which are actually extremely damaging. I think the compromise as it currently stands is probably the way forward, but the most important thing for my portfolio is to be absolutely adamant about the 2035 target, because in the end that is what drives not only the climate part of the equation, but in the end, if you go to electric cars and electric vehicles, then you would have also gotten rid of the particles discussion altogether.

Now, knowing that this is so sensitive, I would actually want to propose the following: let's organise an automotive summit. Make sure that the first question on our list should be how to make sure we reach 2035, or we reach a target earlier. So make sure we reach our goal.

The second thing is I think geared to your worry, which I fully understand, and that is let's make sure that our own industry – we have a great car industry all across Europe – actually faces a fair level playing-field and is able to succeed also in this new world. So that would be the second one. And it is particularly linked to medium and smaller-sized cars, because that is actually where the competition, and maybe you should say the unfair competition, is strongest.

And then the third angle of what I would want to discuss is how do we make sure that our citizens in all the various Member States who don't have the largest wallets then actually can afford such a car? The average car in a Netherlands is eight years old. And that tells you a lot about the state of that car. And I'm sure it is roughly the same in other Member States. So it is not that easy for all our citizens to make that jump immediately. So we should look how we make this work.

1-028-0000

Alexandr Vondra (ECR). – Maybe a quick question to elaborate further on the exchange on the fossil fuels subsidies. I understand the MFF and all that, but then there are the Member States which are facing the challenges in the area of the energy security. It was in fact the Dutch Government which put EUR 3 billion into the storages of the subsidies. So, some of our countries closer to Russia are facing real challenges here in the area of energy security. Would you be willing at least somehow to understand the Member States' needs, especially in the time of the further evolution of the energy prices, if they decide on their own.

1-029-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Well, maybe it might be okay if I could say something that is linked to your question but even more fundamental. In the Netherlands, since 2014, probably even earlier, we talked about becoming independent of Russian gas. And the only thing that has happened in the years thereafter is that we became more dependent. And that is why not only in the Netherlands, but across the Union and indeed, in particular, these countries very much dependent on Russian gas and oil had such a massive problem and why prices went up to such an extreme extent.

So I do think that in these times of maximum danger, in these extremely troubling times, you always need to take an unorthodox look – and that is, by the way, precisely what the European Union did.

The one thing I think we should, at the same time, all acknowledge, is that if you look at our energy prices and you compare them, for example, to the United States, by far the biggest chunk of the difference in price is simply driven by them having oil and gas themselves and by us needing to import it. Far less than 15% of the total package is driven by climate mitigation and our measures. And it is important to convey that message, because many people actually wrongly think that prices are so high because of our climate policy. No, they are high because we actually wanted to free ourselves of Russian gas and Russian oil. We should have done that a lot earlier. We learned it the hard way. So please, let's make sure we don't make that same mistake again vis-à-vis other raw materials.

1-030-0000

Silvia Sardone (ID). – In questi anni sui temi ambientali, dell'energia e dei cambiamenti climatici abbiamo visto molta ideologia e poco pragmatismo. L'uscita di Timmermans in questo senso può segnare un punto di svolta.

La Commissione ha presentato in questi anni una serie di proposte che, più che sostenere una transizione ecologica, sono andate verso un vero e proprio smantellamento di settori produttivi e anche della produzione agroalimentare europea, rendendo l'Unione europea sempre più dipendente dalle importazioni dei paesi terzi che non rispettano i nostri standard di qualità e sicurezza alimentare.

Quindi, a proposito di paesi terzi, volevo chiederle: avete pensato a qualche forma di impegno nel chiedere, per esempio, a paesi come la Cina circa le sue emissioni, oppure faremo solo noi politiche ambientali così stringenti?

Altro tema: la Presidente della Commissione ha promosso una svolta e ha detto che ci deve essere un dialogo più intenso con l'industria e le parti interessate come i proprietari di foreste, gli agricoltori e i cittadini. Numerosi governi europei hanno espresso la necessità di un cambio di rotta e di una valutazione più seria delle conseguenze di certe scelte. Per questo le chiedo: se fosse stato al posto di Timmermans già dal 2019, quale piano sull'ambiente avrebbe proposto? Lei ha detto all'inizio che ha intenzione di dare continuità. Io vorrei sapere se Lei è d'accordo con tutte le scelte fatte da Timmermans in merito alle proposte legislative e, in caso contrario, che cosa intende fare per correggere la rotta?

Chiudo con quest'ultima annotazione e domanda. In questi anni da coordinatrice del mio gruppo nella commissione ENVI... *(il Presidente interrompe l'oratrice)*

1-031-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – You are asking for pragmatism. And I think that pragmatism and wisdom actually both direct us in the direction of listening to our scientists. There is no workaround for seeing what they tell us. They tell us not only what is happening, but also also

in terms of the measurements that we should take. Now I'm fully with everyone who says that we need to make sure that our people, our farmers, our industry, everyone in society can actually make this through. Not hiding the fact that the world is changing. It will not stay the way it was. Not for our industry, not for our farmers, not for anyone in our society. But we have to take them along. And I think that is that is our obligation. And one of the things we do need to organise is to make sure we then have a level playing field within the European Union vis-à-vis competition outside. I have a confession to make. I'm actually in love with the ETS. I've seen many, many tools good, bad and ugly in terms of policy making. I think this is second to none. It is it is the crown jewel and the working horse of our whole system. And the good news is we've added something to it. And Mr Chahim can celebrate because yesterday it went into motion. We now have CBAM. And it is a first step, I'm sure it is not the last step, but it is a tremendous important part in making sure that what gets into the Union is actually being dealt with in a fair way. And by the way, CBAM also has a secondary effect, but I might come to that later.

So that will be a message from my perspective of continuity. I've also tried to articulate how I want to go about with ambition, but also outreach, making sure we communicate, making sure we do this together with all the various aspects of our society, of course, including industry.

1-032-0000

Silvia Sardone (ID). – Vorrei fare una domanda in merito alle valutazioni di impatto. In questi anni abbiamo visto diverse proposte legislative con valutazioni di impatto fittizie, se non addirittura assenti. Prima diceva che i suoi figli due volte a settimana le chiedono della guerra tra Russia e Ucraina o del cambiamento climatico, altri figli chiedono se il papà o la mamma avranno ancora un lavoro, perché sull'altare dell'ideologia *green* si sacrificheranno intere filiere produttive con migliaia di posti di lavoro a rischio. Quindi, vorrei sapere quale sarà il suo atteggiamento in merito alle valutazioni di impatto.

1-033-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you. And also thank you very much for elucidating that. You're absolutely right – what concerns most of our citizens the most is the issues closest to their hearts and most pressing on the table in their kitchen. That is having work, that is making it to the end of the month, and issues related to their own lives. And, of course, the large topics we are discussing today do interact with these day-to-day issues with them as well.

Now, on impact assessments, my view truly is that we have excellent people working at the Commission. We make use of the very best scientists across the globe and we will, and to my understanding we have always done, impact assessments and I will commit to doing this whenever is necessary.

The only thing we also have to accept is that, you know, we can all have our own opinions. We cannot have our own facts and our own points of proof. There, we at some point simply have to acknowledge what science says, and then it is up to us to decide on policy measures.

1-034-0000

Anja Hazekamp (The Left). – Welkom meneer Hoekstra. Uw loopbaan bij Shell en McKinsey, uw ministerschap en uw partijleiderschap van de christendemocraten zijn ronduit schadelijk geweest voor het klimaat. Uw partij heeft van Nederland een van de meest veedichte landen ter wereld gemaakt, met desastreuze gevolgen voor dieren, de natuur, de omwonenden en het klimaat. U blokkeerde als minister eigenhandig het inkrimpen van de Nederlandse veestapel, ten koste van het klimaat, ten koste van die natuur en ten koste van dieren.

In Europa worden jaarlijks ruim acht miljard koeien, konijnen, schapen, varkens, kippen en andere dieren geslacht voor de voedselproductie. En dat veroorzaakt niet alleen enorm veel dierenleed en natuurschade, maar ook gigantisch veel broeikasgassen en ontbossing. En de klimaatcommissaris

gaat de klimaatdoelen voor 2040 opstellen. Erkent u dat u daarin ook de productie en consumptie van vlees en zuivel drastisch zult moeten beperken om de klimaatdoelen in zicht te krijgen?

En heeft u het lef om als klimaatcommissaris een echte transitie in de landbouw in gang te zetten? Een transitie die boeren helpt om zonder miljarden dieren binnen de draagkracht van de aarde een goede boterham te verdienen.

1-035-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *kandidaat-commissaris*. – Ik merk dat uw waardering voor mijn inspanningen tot nu toe nog verder aan kracht kan winnen, maar daar zal ik uiteraard mijn best voor blijven doen.

Ik zal het u besparen om nog een keer toe te lichten waarom ik echt denk dat het inmiddels demissionaire kabinet veel heeft gedaan. Ook op mijn instigatie, juist op het gebied van het tegengaan van klimaatverandering. Maar ik vind wel dat u een zeer terecht punt raakt en zoals ik zo even ook al heb gezegd, voor geen van de sectoren is er hier een way out. En dat geldt voor ons allemaal. Dat geldt voor de industrie en dat geldt dus ook voor de boeren.

De realiteit is dat het niet zal blijven zoals het was, de manier van boeren zoals we die nu kennen. Die zal in Nederland - andere landen ken ik minder goed, maar ik vermoed ook daar – veranderen, en die zal duurzamer moeten. Daar zal veel meer aandacht moeten zijn voor bijvoorbeeld landschapsbeheer en hoe om te gaan met de natuur.

Mijn ervaring is, en ik ben de afgelopen jaren heel veel op het boerenerf geweest, dat het gros van de boeren dat ook ziet en duidelijkheid van ons verwacht. Dat zij uiteindelijk veel meer bezig zijn met de vraag hoe zelf een toekomst te hebben en hoe zelf ook een boterham te kunnen verdienen, in plaats van met het aantal koeien of varkens dat in de wei of in de stal staat.

En daarom denk ik ook dat die transitie niet makkelijk zal zijn, maar dat die wel degelijk mogelijk is. Ik denk ook dat zo'n aanpak waarbij minder vee de resultante is in plaats van een vooropgelegd target, uiteindelijk te prefereren is boven dat topdown opleggen. Dat heeft eigenlijk de Nederlandse situatie van de afgelopen twee jaar ook laten zien.

1-036-0000

Anja Hazekamp (The Left). – Ja, het zal u niet verbazen dat ik dit een vaag en teleurstellend antwoord vind, waarbij u eigen verantwoordelijkheid ook niet neemt. Ik ben daar ook eigenlijk niet verbaasd over, want uw partij zet alles op alles om het urgente klimaatbeleid, inclusief natuurherstel, te ondermijnen. In haar conceptverkiezingsprogramma staat zelfs dat zij geen uniforme natuurherstelwet wil, die – en ik citeer – “een nieuwe stikstofcrisis kan zijn voor een dichtbevolkt land als Nederland”. Met dit soort fakenieuws hebben de christendemocraten niet alleen in Nederland, maar in de hele EU een inquisitie gestart tegen natuur, milieu en klimaat, terwijl wij weten dat voedselzekerheid niet mogelijk is zonder natuur en biodiversiteit.

U was nationaal tegen de natuur, maar u noemt natuur nu opeens onze beste bondgenoot. Staat u nu pal voor de natuurherstelwet, ja of nee? En gaat u zelf helpen de veestapel drastisch in te krimpen, ja of nee?

1-037-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *kandidaat-commissaris*. – Ja, ik speel maar een bescheiden rol in mijn partij, dus volgens mij moet ik ook niet proberen het verkiezingsprogramma hier van verder commentaar te voorzien. Ik wil hierover wel heel expliciet zijn, dat het eerste wat ik gedaan heb nadat ik destijds in de Tweede Kamer ben beland, is binnen het CDA te zeggen dat ik een nieuwe koers wilde inslaan voor de aanpak van klimaatverandering. Dat hebben wij ook gedaan, en dat heeft geresulteerd in een coalitieakkoord dat ambitieuzer was dan ieder van de coalitieakkoorden daarvoor. Vervolgens

hebben wij inderdaad gezien hoe ingewikkeld het in de Nederlandse samenleving was om dat voor elkaar te krijgen. Dat kunnen wij als kabinet ons alleen maar aantrekken, en dat geldt ook voor mezelf. Dat neemt niet weg dat die ambitie, ook van mij persoonlijk, er altijd is geweest en er overigens ook altijd zal blijven.

Dit zijn twee kanten van dezelfde medaille: 60 tot 70 % van onze bodem in Europa ziet er niet goed uit, terwijl je de bodem nochtans nodig hebt voor de ecologie en de biodiversiteit; maar je zal diezelfde bodem en de kwaliteit ervan net zo goed nodig hebben als je de bodem uiteindelijk ook wil gebruiken als *sink* (koolstofput). Wij mensen maken een artificiële scheiding tussen klimaat, natuur en gezondheid, maar buiten in de echte wereld hoort het allemaal bij elkaar. Ik zal er dus ook vol voor staan en ik zal commissaris Sinkevičius daar ook van harte in ondersteunen.

1-038-0000

Chair. – We move to the second round and we start again with the EPP and Esther de Lange.

1-039-0000

Esther de Lange (PPE). – Commissioner-designate, let's talk about energy, because we can only achieve our climate ambitions with a good strategy for the energy transition and the availability of energy. Shifting our economy from fossil fuels. Yes. To clean energy. Yes. But preferably also coming from Europe or from reliable partners.

Our energy markets around the world, however, are highly interconnected. So looking towards the COP, it's clear that Europe cannot design its strategy for the energy transition in isolation, without the rest of the world.

So what qualities can you, as a person, as a commissioner, bring for the climate to guarantee a good and a fair energy transition in Europe, but also in the rest of the world?

1-040-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, Ms de Lange. It is absolutely as you say. This is one of the key questions we are facing. Even though I'm optimistic, when I look at the numbers, if you, for example, look at the cost price of solar panels or onshore and offshore wind, they have gone down in a way we didn't even closely anticipate only a number of years ago. You see that when you look at the cost curve of solar, but you see it also when you look at electric vehicles, where we see the exact opposite and that picking up at a level that is basically beyond grasp and extremely good news.

Now, what can I do to solidify the relationships we have across the world? I have to admit, I'm typically not in a habit of articulating why I think I should be the one doing that or what qualities I have. But I think there are three types of experience that I could hopefully bring to the table.

The first is diplomatic experience in a tremendously difficult landscape throughout the last two years with many, many interactions in the Indo-Pacific, with our friends in Africa, with our friends in Latin America. And of course with my former colleagues in Europe, who, by the way, are, and rightfully so, today all in Kyiv.

The second thing is the years as a finance minister gave me a decent understanding of the thinking not only of finance ministers and the way the European Union works from that perspective, but also of global capital markets and how to make sure we link fresh public money with loans and with private sector funding, because it will never be enough to only fund the transition with public money.

And the third, there are at least certain areas from the life of business which I know relatively well. So a bit of an understanding of where these folks are coming from and how we can make sure that

we work not only with the largest corporations, but also with these millions and millions of SMEs, great SMEs we have across the Union. That is the experience that I could bring to the table and hopefully that would help within Europe, but certainly also beyond.

1-041-0000

Esther de Lange (PPE). – Yes, I was triggered by the fact that in this room there's already now two men who are in love with the ETS. One is sitting next to me. One is the candidate commissioner. I think that's two too many, although the ETS, of course, is a brilliant system.

But let me ask a question about the ETS revenue, because you mentioned that you could see a slightly bigger part of ETS revenue to go to the European and international climate agenda, if I understood you correctly. Of course, the European Parliament will be very keen to know whether that is the part of the national revenue which is the biggest part of the ETS revenue, or that tiny, tiny budget that we have at a European level.

1-042-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Now, it would, of course, be interesting to say 'now you've got me', but I was talking about the national proportion. Let me also articulate why I think that is actually viable.

Well, first, we all know that discussions about fresh money, money that was actually allocated through painful processes in national governments, is always difficult to extract.

Now, if you look at the ETS, you don't need to be a wizard to think that this will actually grow and grow and grow. We made 150 billion, if you add it all up so far, but this will grow exponentially – and by the way, CBAM is much smaller, but it will also give at least a couple of billion in a couple of years. So given that the pie is actually increasing, I think a reasonable conversation to have with finance ministers and governments is, 'hey, would you rather have us have a discussion about fresh money or shall we take a part of the money that you get in addition, and that you will not be missing in your budget? Can we actually allocate that for loss and damage or more broadly for financing of climate action?'

I think that is actually a very decent proposal, and given the size of the ETS it is also very substantial.

1-043-0000

Mohammed Chahim (S&D). – Voorzitter, kandidaat-commissaris, onderzoek na onderzoek toont het aan: natuur en klimaat zijn twee kanten van dezelfde medaille. Als het klimaat verslechtert, verdwijnt de natuur en zonder gezonde natuur kan het klimaat niet herstellen. En toch heeft Manfred Weber, de leider van het Europese CDA, ze uit elkaar getrokken. Hij wil de natuurherstelwet tegenhouden, ondanks duidelijke afspraken – ook met de christendemocraten – om samen de Green Deal uit te voeren en zo onze klimaatdoelen te halen.

Ook u, mijnheer Hoekstra, kent een verleden met het niet nakomen van politieke afspraken. U verklaarde eerder de gemaakte afspraak rondom stikstofnormen niet heilig. U had – volgens uzelf natuurlijk – een bescheiden rol in het CDA: twee keer minister en een keer partijleider, maar u zette Nederland op slot. Ook uw handelen rondom het WK in Qatar was op z'n zachtst gezegd dubieus. Economische belangen wegen voor u blijkbaar zwaarder dan mensenrechten of klimaat.

Dat roept bij mij de volgende vragen op: is de natuurherstelwet een essentiële voorwaarde voor het halen van onze klimaatdoelen? En hoe ziet u in deze context dan de oproep van de heer Weber en uw politieke familie om de pauzeknop in te drukken voor het klimaat? Neemt u er afstand van? En drie, in het kader van het bewust terugkomen op gemaakte beloftes: hoe kunnen we er vandaag opaan dat alles wat u hier verklaart wél heilig is?

1-044-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *kandidaat-commissaris*. – Dank u wel meneer Chahim. Dit vraagt erom even terug te gaan naar de Nederlandse politiek. Misschien mag ik het ook op een Nederlandse manier, met een Nederlands gezegde, onder woorden brengen. In Nederland heb je het gezegde: hoe dichter bij de Kroon, hoe minder partijman. Dat slaat natuurlijk op onze monarchie, maar daarmee wordt tot uitdrukking gebracht dat onafhankelijkheid verwacht wordt van ministers en analoog, mag je ook zeggen, van een commissaris. Ik heb ook expliciet gezegd, ook in de gesprekken die ik zelf van tevoren heb gevoerd, dat ik dit wil doen omdat ik met volle ambitie invulling wil geven aan deze portefeuille. Ik heb zo-even mevrouw Hazekamp gezegd – en ik herhaal het graag – dat dit wat mij betreft niet alleen twee zijden zijn van dezelfde medaille, maar dat je eigenlijk moet kijken naar de driehoek klimaat/biodiversiteit/gezondheid, want die raken heel vaak alle drie aan elkaar. Uiteraard, zo vind ik, kunt u mij meer afrekenen op datgene wat echt in mijn portefeuille zit. Daarnaast zal ik de collega's ten volle ondersteunen, of het nu gaat over pesticiden, dierenwelzijn, de wolf of welk onderdeel dan ook van de gevoeligheden die bij de collega's spelen.

Misschien mag ik toch nog één ding zeggen over Qatar? Want het Nederlands parlement is volgens mij het enige in de Europese Unie geweest dat – met goed recht – heeft gezegd (of misschien een van de twee enige): “Wij vinden het niet verstandig als er een afvaardiging van het Nederlandse kabinet naar het WK gaat”. Ik vond, de minister-president vond, het kabinet vond dat onverstandig, omdat diplomatie er uiteindelijk om gaat dat je juist ook het gesprek aangaat met degenen met wie je het fundamenteel oneens bent. Ik ben dus inderdaad om die reden na het WK naar Qatar gegaan. Ik heb daar niet over geld verdienen gesproken, wel over mensenrechten. Dat is, vind ik, terecht een kernonderdeel van het Nederlandse buitenlandbeleid, maar het is ook een onderwerp dat ik waar mogelijk altijd naar voren zou willen brengen mocht ik deze rol krijgen, want mensenrechten in Nederland, in Europa en in ieder van de 27 lidstaten vormen het fundament waarop deze Unie gebouwd is.

1-045-0000

Mohammed Chahim (S&D). – Voorzitter, ik moet toch even doorgaan op de laatste vraag, waar ik geen antwoord op heb gehad. Want ik hoor u natuurlijk heel veel beloftes doen voor het klimaat, en ik denk dat dat het minste is wat we kunnen verwachten van een klimaatcommissaris. Toch denk ik ook dat u hier een beetje terugvalt in uw rol als consultant, waarbij u goed begrijpt wat de zaal wil horen en daar natuurlijk ook op inspeelt. Want het gaat uiteindelijk – en dit is een heel belangrijk punt voor vandaag – om uw geloofwaardigheid en daarmee ook om onze geloofwaardigheid.

Het is heel erg ingewikkeld om iemand voor te dragen als klimaatcommissaris, wetende dat die aan KLM een blanco cheque heeft gegeven zonder enige sociale vergroeningsvereisten. Hoe denkt u dat in te vullen? Een ander punt – al jaren een van de belangrijkste onderwerpen op de klimaattop – is de internationale klimaatfinanciering en vooral het schadeherstelfonds. Het is geen geheim dat u dit fonds als Nederlandse minister niet van harte steunde. Nu moeten we u zien als voorvechter hiervoor, als iemand die andere landen gaat overtuigen. Maar hoe?

1-046-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *kandidaat-commissaris*. – Voorzitter, over één ding moet ik heel helder zijn: ik ben hier volstrekt transparant en helder over wat mijn ambitie is voor deze portefeuille. Als ik het mezelf makkelijk had willen maken, dan had ik nog een half jaar – of gegeven de Nederlandse traditie misschien een jaar – demissionair minister kunnen blijven, maar ik ben tot op het bot gemotiveerd voor de grote opgave die hier ligt. Ik ga – wij gaan – met ieder van de punten die ik genoemd heb in de speech of deze hearing vanaf morgen aan de gang.

Dat geldt voor luchtvaart, dat geldt voor de dingen die ik heb genoemd met betrekking tot het ETS en het CBAM, dat gaat over het geld, en over ieder van die onderdelen. Waar ik zelf invulling aan kan geven, daar zal ik follow-up aan geven. Dit Parlement en u in het bijzonder heeft dan iedere dag

van de week de gelegenheid om mij de maat te nemen en te zien of ik dat wel of niet doe. Overigens zou ik hopen dat u erkent dat ik heb geprobeerd daar als minister van Financiën en als minister van Buitenlandse Zaken op proactieve manier invulling aan te geven, omdat ik vind dat je daartoe geroepen bent als het je gegeven is om een ambt als dit te vervullen. Dus dat zal ik doen, en zeker ook op het gebied van klimaatfinanciering. Waarom? Omdat ik ervan overtuigd ben dat dit uiteindelijk gaat over veel meer dan alleen maar geld. Het is geen verrassing: er is heel veel meer geld nodig vanuit de Europese Unie de komende jaren: leningen, *fresh money*, onderdelen van het ETS en vermoedelijk nog meer. Maar het gaat uiteindelijk voor het Globale Zuiden over iets groters. Het gaat over vertrouwen, en een manier om dat te bereiken is inderdaad: *to put our money where our mouth is*.

1-047-0000

María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos (Renew). – Señor presidente, aquí. En español. Pues muchas gracias por sus explicaciones.

Vuelvo a las energías fósiles. Como sabemos muy bien, el mercado financiero está muy lejos de estar cerrado a la financiación de los combustibles fósiles. Y también, por su experiencia, sabrá que desde 2016 más de 400 bancos han financiado más de 1 666 operaciones en las 222 empresas, entre las que se incluyen las más contaminantes del planeta. Una sola cifra representa muy bien que no solamente no estamos haciendo lo que debemos, sino que vamos en la dirección contraria: la emisión de bonos para estos proyectos de ampliación de combustibles fósiles representa hoy más del 52 % de todas estas empresas de combustibles. Hace diez años era una cuarta parte... (*palabras inaudibles*).

Bueno, quisiera hacerle una pregunta, comisario. Es fundamental este tema y me gustaría saber qué propuesta va a llevar usted como Comisión Europea a la CP28, en términos de plazos concretos, para la eliminación de estas energías fósiles... (*palabras inaudibles*).

1-048-0000

(*The hearing was suspended for a few minutes for technical reasons*)

1-049-0000

Chair. – If you could just summarise the last three or four sentences so that we can start again with the answer.

1-050-0000

María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos (Renew). – Efectivamente, estamos muy lejos de que los mercados financieros estén cerrados a los combustibles fósiles: el incremento, desde 2016, de financiación por más de 400 bancos, más de 1 666 operaciones a 222 empresas, entre las que se encuentran las más contaminantes del planeta.

Por lo tanto, le pido si nos puede indicar cuál va a ser la posición de la Comisión, como parte negociadora en la próxima CP 28, para llevar un calendario de reducción de estas energías — progresivamente, carbón, petróleo y gas— y también la reducción de la financiación de las subvenciones, claramente ineficientes, a estos combustibles fósiles.

El G7 acordó poner fin a esta financiación a finales de este año, pero el G20, desde luego, no ha respaldado este compromiso.

Quisiera también saber si usted considera que puede ser un obstáculo para avanzar en la negociación de la CP 28 que quien va a ser el encargado de estas negociaciones del clima no es que haya sido presidente de una gran petrolera, sino que lo sea actualmente.

1-051-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much, madam and also for your patience. And I might be tempted to say that if we take slivers out of the ETS maybe also a very small proportion for microphones, but that is not up to me. Maybe a couple of thoughts on what you were saying.

First, you were making, I think, a great point on the financial sector where we do have an obligation to do more. And we moved into benchmarking. We moved into transparency. Of course, we came up with the taxonomy. And I think those are all steps in the right direction. But given the tremendous importance, interlinking the role banks play, I think this is something where we need to do more. And you are not asking a question specifically on this, but I very much agree with, let's say, the tonality of what you were saying.

Secondly, on the COP and on our on our targets, it links back to what I said to one of the previous speakers ...

(The hearing was suspended at 19.52 for technical reasons)

1-052-0000

(The hearing resumed at 20.10)

1-053-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you. And once again, ma'am, thank you very much for your question. And just even if it is only for myself, it was divided into three packets. It was about the financial sector. It was about COP and how to dare to commit ourselves to driving down fossil fuels. And third was about Shell and me, which I would also like to address openly. Chair, I hope it is okay that I start anew with each of the packets.

On your financial comments, I very much agree, and we did come a long way, actually, in a relatively short term recently in beefing up our expectations from the financial sector in terms of transparency, in terms of the taxonomy, in terms of benchmarking. That is also all the more important given that the financial sector is so extremely important all across industries.

That is also the reason why, by the way, I would want to do more and see whether we can actually step up with the financial sector because that will drive behaviour of companies. I know you weren't asking a specific question, but I did want to acknowledge the very good point you made.

Then on COP and on subsidies, what I said to one of the previous speakers is that in my view there is the angle of the national states which will absolutely seek to influence along the two lines I discussed with Mr Eickhout. Next to that, I will do my utmost to make sure that we get completely rid of fossil subsidies by the next MFF.

However, I do want to acknowledge that I also learned from DG CLIMA that we already have the 'do no significant harm' principle. There are already very, very few subsidies to the best of their knowledge, but let's make sure we do get rid of them.

Then finally on Shell, and I know it is something that has also been in the news, I will be fully, completely, totally independent. I have been in the habit also as a finance minister vis-à-vis the financial sector, by the way, also vis-à-vis KLM and other companies, to be explicit about my expectations of business, and particularly when they were not fulfilling what I thought would be in the common and in the national interest. And now, of course, this is about the European and the global interest.

So, I will be explicit also to oil companies, and personally, I don't think that having worked for a bit over two and a half years for them after university now roughly 20 years ago should stand in the way of that.

1-054-0000

María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos (Renew). –Gracias. Sí. Una pregunta muy concreta también. Usted ha dicho... ¿no? Pues en inglés. En inglés, si no.

I am happy to hear your support for the nature restoration law. But in your opinion, what are the main elements of the nature restoration law to achieve the objective of climate neutrality, and which could be at risk if this law is not adopted? Because this is very important, it's the other phase of the reduction in climate change. What is exactly your opinion about this?

1-056-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – No, no, thank you, madam, and thank you also for allowing me the opportunity to elucidate on specifically this. And I'm truly convinced of what I said before that I, you know, for human organisation principles, if you will. We have divided the work between different Commissioners: there's one responsible for health, one for biodiversity and one for climate action. And of course, VP Šefčovič is overseeing everything that is related to it. But in real life, when we go outside, nature and the planets and people do not make this distinction. So there is no alternative for addressing the fact that 60 to 70 % of our soil is in bad shape, and that for each of the three dimensions that I just mentioned, we should do more. And therefore I will also support Commissioner Sinkevičius in full, well knowing that we have a bit of a difficult summer behind us, and that, you know, I know there was also quite a lot of tension and friction here leaving of us with the situation that is not very common, where actually the ambition of the Commission is now higher than that of the Parliament. But we have to deal with that, we have to deal with that in a fruitful manner. And what I will do is support Commissioner Sinkevičius. I think that is part of the college, if you will. Apologies for being a bit long, but I hope that that answers your question.

1-057-0000

Pernille Weiss (PPE). – Mr Hoekstra, the European climate law was adopted in Parliament in June 2021 and provided for the establishment of a European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change – a panel consisting of 15 independent scientific experts from a broad range of disciplines that evaluate policies and identifies actions to successfully achieve our climate targets. When the Scientific Advisory Board came to Parliament a few months ago, they said that they are now working to publish a report in the fall that assesses how the consistency is in the Commission's policies with another in the Fit for 55 package.

How do you expect to take into account the work and recommendations from this report? How closely are you considering to implement their advice? Because for the EPP it is important that this is done in a way that we create – not destroy – jobs and economic opportunities in Europe. We want Europe to scale up its innovation and remain competitive. So I would like to ask you: how will you take on board also these very valuable recommendations on the consistency of the Fit for 55 files?

1-058-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, designiertes Mitglied der Kommission. – Vielen Dank, Frau Weiss. Vielleicht ist es am einfachsten, wenn ich es auf Englisch mache.

1-059-0000

Pernille Weiss (PPE). – I have to say I'm a Dane, but I do speak German.

1-060-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, designiertes Mitglied der Kommission. – Es tut mir wirklich leid, das hätte ich wissen müssen.

My deep apologies, it happens to the Dutch all the time by the way, so I know a bit of the feeling. But apologies, Ma'am.

To your question, I think it is precisely as you say. The advisory board is very explicit about these three different targets, and as I said before, I truly believe we should reach all three of them. But our obligation is to take our people and our industry and our businesses alone.

Now if you zoom out and you look at this from a macroeconomic perspective, most economists actually think that, yes, whilst this whole transition will completely change the structure of our economy, we can actually make sure we do that by keeping roughly the same number of jobs and the same economic output. But that does require action, and one of the things I think we need to do – also looking at the US and the IRA – is making sure that we not only have sufficient funding through the innovation funds and beyond, but also speed up the delivery.

So one of the things I plan to do is look at the innovation fund, but also, beyond that, the scope of all our innovation money, and see whether we can land it at business more quickly than we currently do. That would be one.

The second thing I wanted to mention, if I may, Ma'am, is that we often talk about the largest corporations and they are very much the focus also of this conversation. But if you look at our economic infrastructure, you see that we have millions and millions of outstanding SMEs all across the various countries of the Union, and what I would like to organise, of course, together with others in the college, is making sure we start an SME dialogue on how to actually make it through this transition, because they are often the engines of change and I think we should make it easier for them – so for companies large and small to be part of this transition and prosper in it.

1-062-0000

Pernille Weiss (PPE). – Yes, I do. Thank you so much Mr Hoekstra for speaking to my SME heart, having had my own company for ten years before joining this Parliament.

Now, you echoed something that makes me then ask you – because you also know the climate law and that there is also in that a paragraph, a very important one, on the sector-specific climate partnerships, where research and industry and politicians, they meet and inform and inspire each other for the roadmaps of transition.

We haven't seen in the legislative packages put forward since then, in 2021, when the climate law came, actually specific proposals that show how the Commission is delivering on this promise in the law to create these sector-specific climate partnerships. Can you tell us what you will do for the next six, eight, nine months ahead of you to deliver?

1-063-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – I think it is an excellent point and I would love to make that happen and see whether we can get that dialogue started, whether we can actually set this up in a way precisely as you mentioned. Ideally, actually, that is something we do in the first quarter. So, we make work of that right in the first quarter. And I would then also have the ambition to table a proposal, and of course that is up to the next Parliament and the next Commission whether they would actually like it, but at least intellectually we have a way forward to continue to have this dialogue. So, not as a one off, but as a continuum, if you will. And, once again, apologies for using the wrong language.

1-064-0000

Marie Toussaint (Verts/ALE). – Je vais donc vous parler en français. Monsieur Hoekstra, merci de venir nous voir. Le poste auquel vous candidatez aujourd'hui requiert à la fois un fort esprit pro-européen, de la détermination et de la créativité pour donner les moyens des ambitions que vous

nous avez si joliment présentées au sujet du climat. Or, et vous l'avez vous-même mentionné, vous avez, il y a quelques années, j'ose utiliser le mot, insulté les pays du sud de l'Europe en demandant une enquête sur les raisons pour lesquelles ils ne savaient pas gérer une crise sanitaire qui nous frappait tous. Vous vous êtes également opposé fortement à des mécanismes de solidarité entre les États européens et vous faites de toute manière et depuis toujours partie des frugaux, ceux qui défendent une austérité budgétaire en Europe.

Mais, vous le savez, nos objectifs climatiques requièrent un investissement européen conséquent, immédiat et de long terme si nous voulons nous donner la moindre chance de respecter nos objectifs climatiques. Tenir ces objectifs, dégager les financements, nécessite de sortir des règles du pacte de stabilité budgétaire, ceux qui sont aujourd'hui inscrits dans la loi, mais également ceux qui figurent dans la proposition de la Commission européenne.

Ma question est simple: êtes-vous prêt, oui ou non, à défendre une réforme du pacte de stabilité qui permette cet investissement? Et la deuxième, êtes-vous prêt, oui ou non, à défendre aujourd'hui fortement un emprunt commun européen pour financer cette transition?

1-065-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Merci, Madame, and maybe you would allow me to answer along three different lines. One is that I tried to acknowledge also in my opening remarks what I did not do well in the past. And at the same time I would hope people would also recognise how I have tried to bridge the divides as a finance minister – working on SURE with Roberto Gualtieri, brokering a compromise, working with Bruno Le Maire and Olaf Scholz on the capital markets union and weapons for Ukraine, actually with all the colleagues across the Union.

And I'm actually sure that, if you asked whether it is Mário Centeno or whether it is Minister Albares or each of the ministers I've worked with as a finance minister or as a foreign minister, they would hopefully acknowledge also my capacity to build bridges.

I think on your question related to investments in the SGP, I'm actually going to make it even wider. If I look at Europe and I look at the challenges we are currently facing, I think there are three overarching challenges that will stay with us for at least the next 20 to 30 years that have a lot of differences, but a couple of things in common.

And they are climate change, clearly – they're all related – secondly, related to defence, keeping the world safe for democracy and global safety, and the third is the dramatic interruption, technological disruption, disruption that is going to reshape our lives in a way at least I cannot comprehend.

And each of these three elements needs European cooperation, because none of us can deal with them by ourselves. They need sustained effort because we will need a much longer period than just the next 10 years to deal with them. And they need substantial investments nationally and from a European perspective. So that will be my overarching approach.

Does it have consequences for the SGP? Yes, it does. And yet, of course, I'm fully committed to the changes that the Commission has already suggested to the SGP.

1-066-0000

Marie Toussaint (Verts/ALE). – C'est ce que je soulignais: c'est que la réforme qui est proposée par la Commission ne permet pas de dégager les investissements nécessaires. C'est d'ailleurs une analyse de Bruegel qui n'est pas, comme vous le savez, un «think tank» particulièrement écolo, ni particulièrement de gauche, et qui a souligné ce fait, je tiens à le souligner à mon tour.

Monsieur Hoekstra, j'aimerais poser une question supplémentaire, effectivement. Vous avez travaillé à la fois pour Shell - certes il y a un petit peu de temps - et pour McKinsey, qui est l'un des conseillers de ceux qui détruisent le climat. Je vous le demande: vous serait-il possible de nous transmettre la liste des missions que vous avez exercées au nom de McKinsey, de sorte que nous puissions étudier tout conflit d'intérêt?

Et la deuxième chose: quelle est votre réaction quand nous vous disons qu'il est difficile pour nous d'avoir comme commissaire pour le climat quelqu'un qui a travaillé pour Shell, puis pour McKinsey, lui-même au service des pollueurs? J'aimerais avoir votre avis, parce qu'au-delà des promesses que vous nous formulez, je n'ai pas entendu votre vision de ce poste et de la manière dont vous souhaitez changer de casquette.

1-067-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you again for the opportunity to articulate my thoughts on this as well. Maybe one – I didn't have time – but one part of the answer to your previous question, as I said before, I truly think that therefore one of the things we need to organise, but that is actually next to the SGP discussion, is to make sure we create an own resource, and whether that will be a maritime levy or aviation or part of the ETS or CBAM, that we can talk about. Ideally it's going to be a combination, but I think that is what we need because otherwise we will be in a difficult situation of asking finance ministers for money, fresh money, every single time. It is much easier to create such a system.

Secondly, I'll be completely transparent with you, I've never worked for the European Commission while at McKinsey. I've never worked for Shell or any other oil company while at McKinsey and, as I try to stress – and I worked for them until six years ago and then I became a finance minister – I will be very explicit to each and every company, within the Union and beyond, about my expectations. As I did before as a finance minister, and to a lesser extent – because there was less interaction – as a foreign affairs minister, I will be clear about my expectations of business.

1-068-0000

Helène Fritzton (S&D). – Thank you so much, Commissioner-designate for your presentation. To achieve the European Union's climate goals, it is critical to have action across all sectors – you mentioned that – and agriculture is the largest sector in the European Union that doesn't have a carbon price tag nor a sectorial target. Still, agriculture makes up for 11 % of EU emissions, and to get agriculture and food right is key to succeed with the Green Deal. Decreased emissions must go hand-in-hand with farmers' economy – you have spoken about that – and protection of nature, food security and increased biodiversity.

However, it is no news that this Parliament is split on this ambition. We know that the Commission is working on proposals to change that. Will you really push the work forward and lead to unite so that we can expect these important proposals early in the next mandate? And I would ask when? And if a carbon price is introduced in agriculture, do you prefer a system based on what we call farm-level obligations or on upstream commitments? How will you ensure that food stays affordable with a carbon price?

1-069-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Wow. Thank you. Thank you very much. It's a number of questions, I think, in one. I'll try to answer them as good as I can. And let me once again start by also articulating vis-à-vis your question that there is no escape for none of the sectors to make sure they live and see through this change. And that is true for industry, it is true for us as citizens, it is true for maritime, it is true for aviation and it is also true for farming. That is the reality and it will not stay the way it was. The way we are farming today. I know the Netherlands intimately well, which in some ways is specific and maybe different than in other areas of Europe, but this will have

to change and we need to take much stronger into account, not just classic farming, but also taking care of nature.

Now we have our current design with the ETS, with effort sharing and with LULUCF. Of course I would be willing to look into what we can do in addition and how we can further gear up our design. And yet I do think we need to keep this in place. We already have ETS 1, ETS 2 is coming in a couple of years. Will eventually everything be under the ETS? - and it was a bit nerdy but I already confessed that I like the system, I like ETS as a design - it might well be, but currently DG CLIMA is actually working out the ramifications, doing the analysis of how ETS might potentially also be applied to food. So I would want to have that solid bit of information to fully judge how we can continue with it. It might well be that the solution goes exactly in this direction. It could also be that the ramifications are just too complicated to do it in the short run. But rest assured, I will not only do this on my own portfolio, I'll also support Commissioner Sinkevičius wherever is needed on the areas that are closer to his part of the terrain.

1-070-0000

Heléne Fritzton (S&D). – Thank you for your answers. And then we only have the one question in the room. We still have it. If you can commit today to the ambition of bringing all major political groups, including your own, back around the table to work so we can continue all the files in the Green Deal.

1-071-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Look, I know and I've acknowledged in many of the – let me be open – many of the conversations I've had with many around the room, it became explicitly clear to me that there was a, well, 'what happened before summer', let me phrase it like that. I can only say where I stand – and I articulated where I stand in terms of my ambition for the portfolio.

More in general, I am a centrist politician with moderate views firmly held. I'm a hardliner when it comes to defence and everything related to security. I am pro-state intervention and progressive, if you will, on topics like climate change, but also education and dealing with poverty. I am deeply liberal when it comes to individual freedoms ranging from gay rights to freedom of speech.

I'm centrist in economic terms, in favour of the free markets, but also adamant about a fair distribution of income and wealth, and I'm an internationalist. Coming from a very small country, I believe in international cooperation within Europe and beyond.

So that is who I am, that is my way of thinking about politics at large. And there are many bad things to say about the fragmented political landscape in the Netherlands, but one of the things you do learn is to work with people all across the room, starting in the centre, building coalitions and doing transitions, particularly the difficult ones, with majorities as large as possible.

1-072-0000

Robert Roos (ECR). – Welkom heer Hoekstra. Volgens commissaris Breton moet de Europese Unie de elektriciteitsproductie verdubbelen omdat de vraag toeneemt vanwege de transitie van verwarming, koeling en transport.

Vorige week zei de Europese Rekenkamer dat de doelstellingen van hernieuwbare energie te ambitieus lijken, onder andere de massale toename van offshore-windenergie. De Europese Rekenkamer waarschuwt dat de ontwikkeling daarvan schadelijk kan zijn voor het zeemilieu. Tegelijkertijd kunnen we ons geen energieschaarste meer veroorloven, want schaarste leidt tot koopkrachtverlies, oplopende inflatie en verlies aan concurrentievermogen van bedrijven binnen de Europese Unie.

Maar gelukkig zijn er opties: kernenergie. U baseert zich op de wetenschap. En u zei ook dat we daar niet omheen kunnen. Nou, gelukkig zeggen ook het IPCC en het Internationaal Energieagentschap dat kernenergie een integraal onderdeel moet zijn van de energiemix. Echter, de Europese Commissie speelt een belangrijke rol bij het vaststellen van de doelstellingen van het regelgevingskader en bevoordeelt de renewables waardoor kernenergie het gewoon moeilijk heeft.

Mijn vraag: aangezien binnenkort de doelstellingen van 2040 worden opgesteld, hoe kijkt u aan tegen het principe van technologische neutraliteit? Een gelijk speelveld voor kernenergie ten opzichte van renewables? En daarmee bedoel ik een gelijk speelveld en niet tijdelijk en ook niet onder voorwaarden.

1-073-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *kandidaat-commissaris*. – Misschien dat ik daar twee dingen over mag zeggen.

Ten eerste: er zijn heel veel dingen die je kan lezen in alle rapporten die ik de afgelopen periode tot me heb genomen. Die depressief stemmen als het gaat over de enorme impact van klimaatverandering. Er is één ding waar ik wel optimistisch over ben en dat is dat de technologie ons vaak in positieve zin verrast.

En ik noemde al eerder de kostencurve van zonnepanelen. Als je ziet wat de IPCC aan kostenverwachtingen had voor 2050, nog maar een jaar of acht, negen geleden, dan zie je dat we die al bereikt hebben in 2021. Dus die transitie gaat veel sneller. Op dit moment voor solar, maar het geldt ook voor onshore- en in mindere mate voor offshore-wind. Daar zit een enorme winst in die we al geboekt hebben en dat zal naar mijn verwachting nog veel sterker worden. Dus daar ben ik optimistisch over. En ook hoe dat de sleutel kan zijn naar de toekomst.

Ten tweede over nucleair, want daar ging eigenlijk uw vraag over. Het verdrag is daar glashelder over. Dat is aan de lidstaten zelf om te bepalen en je ziet dat het onderwerp in heel veel verschillende landen op heel verschillende wijze wordt opgepakt, soms helemaal ongeacht politieke kleur. Er zijn landen waar links en rechts het hartgrondig eens zijn dat ze door moeten met kernenergie, dus ook landen waar het precies het tegenovergestelde is. In Nederland zie je dat steeds meer partijen zeggen dat het eigenlijk wel onderdeel moet zijn van de mix. Sommige partijen zeggen dan erbij dat het ook niet groter moet worden.

Ik denk net als wetenschappers dat we het ons op dit moment niet kunnen veroorloven om kennis en kernenergie uit te sluiten. Maar het is aan de lidstaten.

En wat wij altijd moeten bedenken – en iedereen die Tsjernobyl heeft meegemaakt, die herinnert zich die verschrikking – is dat de veiligheid bovenaan moet staan. Dat is één. Twee: we moeten op een verantwoorde manier omgaan met nucleair afval. En drie: we moeten natuurlijk altijd kijken naar wat het meest kostenefficiënt is.

En dan? Dan kom je op de ingewikkelde afweging tussen nucleair wat er al staat versus nucleair nieuw te bouwen.

Maar grosso modo is mijn antwoord hopelijk helder en gaat denk ik ook in de richting die u verwachtte.

1-074-0000

Robert Roos (ECR). – Het is nog niet helemaal helder, want eigenlijk vraag ik dus om technologische neutraliteit en wat er nu gebeurt is dat hernieuwbare energiebronnen, renewables, echt worden bevoordeeld ten opzichte van kernenergie. Het zou dus mooi zijn als de Commissie daar een belangrijke rol in kan spelen en daar een duidelijke uitspraak over doet. Want als er geen

gelijk speelveld is, dan is het voor lidstaten heel moeilijk om daarvoor te kiezen, want dan is het gewoon veel duurder.

Renewables hebben de eerste toegang tot het net en ze hebben ook subsidies. Het is gewoon geen eerlijke rekensom.

Frankrijk heeft laten zien dat het werkt en dat het veilig is. Maar als wij quota's hebben voor renewables – en die zitten op dit moment op 42,5 procent – dan wordt het voor lidstaten dus heel moeilijk.

Ik vraag aan u: bent u bereid om daar technologische neutraliteit in te brengen? Dus niet wat landen zelf willen, want dan moeten landen dat ook wel kunnen, omdat het eerlijk is. Uiteindelijk is het ... *(de Voorzitter onderbreekt de spreker)* ... in ieders belang, want we hebben ... *(de Voorzitter onderbreekt de spreker)* ... niet minder, maar meer energie nodig ... *(de Voorzitter onderbreekt de spreker)* ... dus graag nog duidelijkheid daarover.

1-075-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *kandidaat-commissaris*. – Ja, met alle waardering, ik denk dat ik die duidelijkheid echt gegeven heb.

Ik moet volgens mij een paar dingen uit elkaar trekken. Eén: nucleair mag gewoon onder het verdrag, full stop. En de meeste projecties gaan ervan uit dat we nu ongeveer 13 % hebben en over een aantal decennia nog steeds ongeveer 13 % zullen houden. Wat in de praktijk betekent dat er centrales bij komen.

Twee. En dat zeg ik overigens persoonlijk met waardering, maar daar gaat het eigenlijk niet om. Je ziet dat de kosten van renewables dramatisch naar beneden zijn gegaan, en dat is ongelooflijk goed nieuws. Met name solar. Ik zie u met uw hoofd schudden, maar mijn indruk is echt dat als je kijkt naar die kostencurve dat er enorme winst is gemaakt, maar ik ben heel graag bereid om daar met u nog het gesprek over aan te gaan. Ik denk dat dat wel degelijk helpt en dat dat wel degelijk werkt.

En u heeft gelijk. Landen maken hele verschillende afwegingen. Nederland heeft twee centrales en wil er meer bijbouwen. Frankrijk heeft al sinds jaar en dag centrales. Ook breed over het politieke spectrum wordt het gedragen. Hetzelfde geldt voor Finland. Duitsland heeft juist in met relatief brede samenstelling gekozen voor de Atomausstieg. Dus landen maken daarin hun eigen afweging. En volgens mij is dat ook de diversiteit die recht doet aan onze Unie.

1-076-0000

Aurélia Beigneux (ID). – En reprenant le Pacte vert laissé par votre prédécesseur, vous aurez la possibilité de continuer la marche forcée vers l'écologie punitive ou d'aller vers une écologie de bon sens qui prend réellement en compte le quotidien de nos citoyens.

Le Pacte vert a été mené sans concertation avec les acteurs locaux, sans mener d'étude d'impact quand on le demandait et sans s'assurer que notre continent reste compétitif face au reste du monde. En abandonnant la filière nucléaire, l'Europe a détruit un héritage technologique qui nous offrait la prospérité énergétique. Aujourd'hui, l'Europe revient au XVIII^e siècle en rouvrant les centrales à charbon. Le bilan environnemental est catastrophique, mais la Commission est dans un déni presque pathologique.

En février 2022, Franz Timmermans déclarait que le coût de la guerre énergétique contre la Russie serait douloureux pour les Européens, mais qu'il n'avait pas le choix et que leur seule porte de sortie pour faire baisser les factures serait d'appliquer sans limites le Pacte vert. Diriez-vous la même chose aujourd'hui aux Européens?

Nous avons besoin de remettre en cause sans tabou les traités de libre échange et de dresser des protections économiques robustes aux frontières de l'Union. Quel est votre avis sur ce sujet? Allez-vous céder aux injonctions de la Commission? Si vous prenez la place de Frans Timmermans, écoutez les contestations contre le Pacte vert, écoutez l'opposition et le peuple européen.

1-077-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, ma'am. I don't know the exact quotation you were referring to, but maybe allow me to say a couple of things. The horrible war the Russians are waging in Ukraine, of course, in the very first place affects the faith of the Ukrainian people, and I can only salute their bravery in standing up for their country. But of course, it also affects all of us in Europe and across the globe, although of course in a completely different manner than it affects the Ukrainians. Let me be clear about that.

What we have learned the hard way – and I already made the analogy to the Netherlands – what we've learned the hard way is that our ambition to be energy independent we didn't take seriously, at least not in the Netherlands and I think in many other countries it was roughly the same. We only got more dependent on Russia.

What we saw in terms of price increases was therefore not so much driven by the green transition – only by a very small proportion, actually. It was more driven by our desire to now finally get rid of Russian imports.

We should have done it earlier and to me it should be a lesson in terms of how we deal with raw materials coming from China, but also from other places across the globe. Because it is a liability. It is a liability and the price is very high, and you open yourself up to all sorts of ramifications if you are at the receiving end of diplomacy of others who might want to use this vis-à-vis Europe.

On nuclear, I've already said to the previous speaker that that is entirely up to Member States, and I'm sure you are a fan and some others might not. But that is part of not only the taxonomy but also of the Treaty, and both I will, of course, stand for in full.

1-078-0000

Aurélia Beigneux (ID). – Ma seconde question concerne l'interdiction des véhicules thermiques et nous avons bien compris que vous alliez être dans la continuité de votre prédécesseur. Vous rappelez, comme Frans Timmermans, que l'objectif est d'interdire les voitures à essence pour imposer la voiture électrique pour tous les Européens, malgré leur prix prohibitif pour la plupart des citoyens. Vous demandez même d'atteindre cet objectif avant 2035.

Comme Frans Timmermans, vous essayez de nous faire croire que la voiture ne pollue pas - la voiture électrique en tout cas - mais c'est mentir aux Européens. Que faites-vous de l'extraction des métaux rares pour produire les batteries électriques? Que faites-vous de la pollution que cela représente en Chine, au Chili ou au Congo? Que faites-vous du travail des petits enfants dans les mines du Congo, dans l'indifférence malsaine de la Commission européenne?

Sous prétexte de supprimer la pollution dans nos centres villes, est-ce que votre objectif à vous aussi est de déplacer la pollution et la misère vers le tiers monde?

1-079-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – I was indeed mentioning that I would stick in full to the 2035 target. And of course I'm very much aware what happened and ideally I would have had the law as it was initially put to the Council, but then came Recital 11, and of course we have to work with that.

By the way, I do think that if you look into e-fuels, they should be much more geared actually to aviation and to maritime rather than to chase this – according to scientists – let me say, very, very, very narrow alley to create any change. I will stand in full for the 2035 targets. No doubt about that.

I'm actually optimistic that we will see success here, and the reason is that, as with the cost curve of solar, if you look at what happened in Europe with the car sales of electric cars, you saw that it was at only a couple of percentages, or maybe even less, two, three, four years ago. Now you see that Union-wide we are 21%, last year, of total car sales electric, and some countries, for example, Sweden its already way above 50%.

My instinct is that this will only take off further, and that would mean that if we continue at this speed, we will definitely make that target.

1-080-0000

Maria da Graça Carvalho (PPE). – Thank you very much, dear Mr Hoekstra, welcome to the European Parliament. My question to you concerns European industry in the context of the Green Deal.

The Green Deal still falls short in terms of creating the adequate conditions for the industrial transformation. This is a critical point to address. We can only achieve our climate ambitions, and especially the shift from fossil fuels to clean energy, if we make the green transition a win-win situation for all: enterprises, families and people. We must stand by our industry throughout this process, ensuring that it remains competitive on the global scene.

Therefore, I would like to ask how you plan to facilitate this transition for European industry? In particular, what are your plans to co-shape an investment agenda that will allow our businesses to meet the climate ambitions? And how will you ensure that businesses and citizens get quicker and easier access to innovative and creative models to make this transition possible?

1-081-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, madam, and truly excellent points. And I think the good news is here that if you look at what has happened in the last couple of years, we saw actually very few companies leave. But there are significant worries amongst, by the way, many political groups about, at least, investment leakage and potentially more actually companies leaving. And that is something that we should absolutely prevent. And why? Well, first of all, it would have all sorts of ramifications for our people in terms of jobs, for our economic growth. And then companies would leave, but it wouldn't contribute to driving down emissions. So it is bad in two different ways. I would argue we need to do a couple of things. One is let's be much more explicit in delivering on innovation with speed. I think actually, if you compare the IRA with our infrastructure and you add up all the innovation and climate money in the MFF, in the ERF, of course, in the innovation fund itself. But also if you add up the ETS proceeds, we're doing a massive amount of money in terms of innovation. But the beauty of the US system is its speed of delivery and we should try to mirror that more. And therefore I would like to have a taskforce looking into how we can speed up not only the money we allocate through the innovation fund, but actually more broader in the innovation money we have available as a European Union. That will be 1.

2. As I was mentioning to Madam Weiss, we need an SME dialogue to make sure that not only the larger corporations, but actually also the many great SMEs we have across the Union are being helped out and are able to navigate the red tape and see how we can actually decrease the red tape.

Finally, let's create a net-zero desk at the Commission to make sure that we help companies to deal easier with all the regulations. Frankly speaking, if you see what we have, it is a fantastic

infrastructure, but it's quite complicated and I am sure we can deliver as much as we do and make it easier. So that will be my task obligation, ambition.

1-082-0000

Maria da Graça Carvalho (PPE). – On the follow-up I would like to go back to the innovation fund that is one of the main instruments to finance or co-finance demonstration projects, but has not financed enough, pilot scale, of the very innovative emerging technologies.

This is also important for Europe. How do you see the innovation fund also in that role, pushing the pilot scale and the scale-up of the very innovative technologies that the industry in Europe needs and requires?

1-083-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – It is indeed as you say. And I already made this point, you know, that I think we do ourselves injustice when we only focus on the 40 billion, which is part of the innovation fund, that it factors more if you add up all the innovation money that that we have available throughout the Union but also at Member State level. But I will be the first to seek to do more if that would be needed – I think that is one.

And indeed we are doing great projects. What I learned about, for example, TANGO in beautiful Sicily, but also the battery example of Poland – I think these are fantastic examples of how to do this and make sure we actually get this industry in Europe rather than increasing our dependency on others. Have it ourselves, and have our people work on it.

Now, one of the things we are changing, and I think that is that is actually very smart, is to not only focus on, let's say, the entrepreneurial phase and the true innovation, but also the scale up and the rollout, which was something I think slightly underdeveloped in the initial design of the innovation fund. And actually the two are extremely important, the innovation itself, but also the reach and relevance, if you will, across the Union. So both should be part of the design.

1-084-0000

Jan Huitema (Renew). – Voorzitter, ik heb dit keer geen vragen voor de kandidaat-commissaris over het cv of over Haagse politiek. Nee, ik heb een vraag over de mensen die nu zitten te kijken, zoals een Albert Tromp uit Spannum, een Erik Douma uit Sneek, een Jan van Batteram uit Elst.

De afgelopen jaren hebben wij een groot pakket klimaatmaatregelen aangenomen. Ambitieuze, en ik denk dat dat ook goed is. Maar hoe gaat u ervoor zorgen dat bedrijven in de Europese Unie kunnen blijven concurreren met derde landen? Hoe kunt u ervoor zorgen dat zij de nieuwe regels goed begrijpen en dat zij ook investeringen kunnen aantrekken om die concurrentiepositie te behouden, en dat Nederlandse bedrijven en Europese bedrijven zich de spreekwoordelijke kaas niet van het brood laten eten?

1-085-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, kandidaat-commissaris. – Het is absoluut hartverwarmend dat er in ieder geval drie Nederlanders vrijwillig of semivrijwillig naar deze hearing zitten te kijken. Het is inderdaad precies zoals u zegt. Als ik goed geluisterd heb, zijn de kijkers mensen die bij u uit de regio komen, maar dit geldt natuurlijk voor iedereen in de hele Europese Unie, voor alle mensen die met een winkel begonnen zijn of met een onderneming zijn gestart en die dolgraag mee willen doen met deze transitie, maar die zich ook afvragen hoe zij daar het best invulling aan kunnen geven en hoe zij het best omgaan met de Europese regelgeving.

Ik ben uitgebreid ingegaan op het punt over het innovatiefonds, maar ik denk dat wij daarnaast tenminste twee dingen moeten doen: heel serieus kijken naar hoe wij ondernemers kunnen helpen en ervoor kunnen zorgen dat wij *red tape* verminderen en hoe wij er bij de overheid – ook in

Nederland toch vaak enigszins een labyrint waarin het lastig is om de weg te vinden – voor kunnen zorgen dat wij het eenvoudiger maken. Vandaar het idee om met een *net zero desk* te beginnen in de Commissie, om te kijken naar met name die bedrijven die willen bijdragen aan de transitie, die een vraag hebben, die het makkelijker willen hebben: wat kunnen wij daarvan leren en wat kunnen wij organiseren?

Ik vernoemde zo-even ook al de dialoog met de kmo's. Die is ontzettend belangrijk, want de echte ruggengraat van onze economie zijn niet die paar hele grote bedrijven – ook daar wordt geweldig werk gedaan in de hele Unie –, maar de kmo's, waar miljoenen en miljoenen Europeanen elke dag vol enthousiasme aan de gang zijn: dát zijn de bedrijven die dit uiteindelijk mee moeten kunnen realiseren. Ik zou dus heel graag ook met u willen bekijken hoe wij hieraan het best invulling kunnen geven, want ik weet hoezeer dit thema u en uw partij na aan het hart ligt. Ik zou me daarbij ook willen baseren op de ervaringen van echte ondernemers, want ik weet minder dan half van hoe dat eruit zou moeten zien. Juist de kennis uit de praktijk zou daar zeer behulpzaam bij zijn.

1-086-0000

Jan Huitema (Renew). – Voorzitter, ik denk dat dit een hele grote uitdaging is en dat de welwillendheid groot is om te kijken naar een groen verdienmodel. Zeker voor kmo's, maar bijvoorbeeld ook – zoals hier al een paar keer werd vermeld – voor de agrariërs, voor boeren en tuinders.

Misschien kunnen wij daarop doorgaan. Ik denk dat het heel belangrijk is – en ik ben heel erg benieuwd naar uw mening daarover – dat wij een visie hebben en een traject uitstippelen. Dat mag ook ambitieus zijn, maar wij mogen ook niet vergeten dat wij de kmo's en ook de agrariërs iets moeten bieden – ik denk dat dit een heel belangrijk aspect is – bijvoorbeeld de toelating van kunstmestvervangers, RENURE: allemaal voorbeelden die perspectief bieden aan kmo's en in mijn voorbeeld met name aan de agrariërs. Kunt u iets meer zeggen over hoe wij perspectief kunnen bieden aan kmo's?

1-087-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, kandidaat-commissaris. – Ik vind het een uitstekend punt. En ik heb, maar dat weet u, een zwak voor ondernemers vanwege het lef dat ze aan de dag leggen om op een gegeven moment te zeggen, ik ga gewoon zelf wat beginnen en ik ga kijken hoe ver ik daarmee kom. In alle landen van de Unie kom je ondernemers tegen en ik kijk daar zelf altijd met bewondering naar.

Dus ik zou heel graag, eigenlijk voortbordurend op uw vraag en ook met mijn antwoord, willen kijken hoe we daar de boel nog meer kunnen stroomlijnen, eenvoudiger kunnen maken, ondernemers de helpende hand kunnen bieden. En nogmaals, ik vind dat ik dat juist niet zelf moet doen, of alleen maar met uitstekende mensen die werken bij de Commissie, maar dat ik juist ook input moet halen vanuit de sectoren zelf, vanuit de ondernemers zelf.

Wat betreft de boeren is mijn ervaring dat zij het meest naar duidelijkheid en zekerheid op zoek zijn. En dat gaat veel meer over de vraag of zij op de plek kunnen blijven waar hun familie al generaties lang woont. Het gaat veel meer over zekerheid op het gebied van land en inkomen dan over het aantal koeien. Vaak heeft een boer, zeker in Nederland, tientallen procenten meer koeien dan zijn vader en vaak het dubbele of driedubbele van zijn grootvader. Maar daar gaat het ze meestal niet om. Het gaat ze erom dat ze door kunnen op een manier die duurzaam is - en daar hebben wij ook met elkaar op in te zetten - maar die ook zekerheid geeft.

1-088-0000

Javi López (S&D). – Señor presidente, señor candidato a comisario, ha quedado hoy claro que en Europa estamos muy comprometidos con la descarbonización de nuestra energía y nuestra

industria, pero no somos los únicos. Existirá una fuerte competencia tecnológica entre los grandes poderes para esta carrera espacial del siglo XXI.

Nosotros estamos haciendo lo que sabemos hacer bien, que es regular en Europa, haciendo leyes para ello. Pero no se llegó a la Luna solo regulando, sino que hicieron falta recursos. Y mientras otros están movilizand o grandes cantidades de recursos públicos, nuestros recursos para apoyar a la industria y la transformación tecnológica, siempre acaban siendo pocos, llegando tarde y estando muchas veces relocalizados. Y usted se puede encontrar, como miembro del Colegio de Comisarios, con el debate sobre la creación de un fondo de soberanía europeo para apoyar a la industria y a esa transformación tecnológica.

Y mis preguntas son: ¿qué opinión tiene usted sobre utilizar esta experiencia del fondo de recuperación de la deuda común para apoyar a la industria en la transición ecológica? ¿Está preparado para dejar atrás también los prejuicios nacionales cuando lleguen los debates sobre cómo se gastan los fondos europeos?

1-089-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you and a truly excellent point and also from an intellectual perspective, I would love to continue the conversation on precisely what you said. And I think we all see that the ERF is a huge success precisely because of the link it builds between investments, reforms, – actually reforms proposed by the Commission. The country-specific recommendations were ignored for years, at least by the Netherlands, but I think by many of us. And now we are in different territory with the ERF.

And I can vividly recall when colleagues in the previous cabinet asked me, you know, are we going to vote in favour of this? I said, yes, I think we should, but the jury is out on whether it will work. And it worked much better than most of us, wherever we stood, had anticipated. So it is a recipe on which I think we should build.

So, am I open to looking into this also for climate? Yes. The thing I do want to add, though, is that if you look at the complexities and if you look at how this goes in a dialogue with Member States and knowing that actually we need something much more quickly, ideally already for the COP, I think the quickest road to success is probably to create an own resource and have the discussion on either aviation, maritime or a substantial portion of the ETS and CBAM. That in my view is - I'm thinking out loud now - is probably the quicker route to success. But I do not have a taboo if, if I may say it in that way, and I would love to continue the conversation as to how we do that in the future.

One thing is crystal clear and I try to articulate that hopefully clearly to Madam Toussaint, this will cost money – fresh money, own resources, private sector funding. This will cost money. There is no workaround and that is something we simply have to face.

1-090-0000

Javi López (S&D). –I will use my second turn to ask about climate diplomacy, and especially to ask how we should answer to the wide criticism that we are finding in the Global South of some of the climate measures we have: CBAM and especially the deforestation law – that I supported, that I really believe in. But, for example, like two weeks ago we had the letter from 17 countries rejecting the deforestation law, like big ones: Indonesia, Mexico and Brazil.

We have now the challenge of how to deal with this because they are starting to believe that we are damaging them and we are taking protectionist and unilateral decisions. And this will be one of the challenges in the COPs, and the conversations of the Commissioner with the Global South: how to deal with this.

1-091-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Now, Mr Lopez, you're absolutely right, and there's also not an easy answer. One of the things I learned once again, also in the last two years, is that, you know, even discussing something that is so close to our heart as freedom and sovereignty of Ukraine, I fully appreciate and understand that our friends in the Global South are in itself completely in tune with us on that topic but then ask, 'Well, if that is a global crisis, how about the global crisis we are facing in our own neighbourhood?' And I think it is a fair question to ask from us.

So we will need to stand with them and help them out. I think it is a matter of fairness. It is a matter of solidarity because simply we are much more affluent, and we thank that to our to a large extent to our parents and grandparents, and also articulate why CBAM, but also the ETS at large, why these are tools that in the end benefit us all and help to mitigate the effects for them and help them on the transition.

The positive thing is you already see an anticipation effect of CBAM also in terms of countries doing more. That is what we like. What we don't want to have is that actually it creates diplomatic friction – that is something we, and me personally, should then overcome.

1-092-0000

Maria Angela Danzi (NI). – Signor Commissario designato, lei ha accettato una sfida difficile oggi in quest'Aula: quella di convincerci di essere la persona giusta per affrontare la più grande sfida che le nuove generazioni devono affrontare, che è quella del cambiamento climatico. E lo ha fatto con intelligenza questo tentativo, ammettendo gli errori che ha compiuto nel passato e probabilmente mettendo su questo tavolo anche la sua alleanza passata con i cosiddetti paesi frugali, dove potrà agire, se le sarà confermato questo incarico, utilizzando la diplomazia.

Perché se è vero, come è vero, quello che ha affermato, che vuole continuare a portare avanti la strategia per il cambiamento climatico, e quindi la salvaguardia della biodiversità e il contenimento del consumo del suolo, che non ci sembra molto ambizioso in questo momento, questo può essere fatto solo se ci sono risorse finanziarie, quindi entrate nuove e quindi debito sovrano, cosa di cui noi siamo fortemente convinti.

Il mio paese, e credo che su questo lei non debba fare ulteriori verifiche, è il paese più esposto a rischi dal punto di vista del dissesto idrogeologico: l'80 % delle frane avvengono nel nostro paese. Io ritengo, visto che ha fatto l'assessore al bilancio, che lei debba parlare con la Commissione per modificare le regole sul Patto di stabilità, perché se non saremo portati fuori da quelle regole noi non potremo prevenire le calamità naturali.

1-093-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissario designato*. – Molte grazie signora e anche molte grazie per la conversazione molto personale e molto privata che abbiamo avuto. Oggi noi abbiamo parlato più o meno in italiano, ma spero che sia ok se oggi parlo solamente in inglese, perché non ho il vocabolario giusto per un'audizione in italiano.

I think you're making a couple of very relevant points, and what I've tried to do is, in response to the previous speaker, trying to articulate it, I think there are no taboos and that our approach should actually be an unorthodox one, where I think the quickest way to the goal in unleashing further European money is in all likelihood own resources along the lines I've described, but I'm open to having the discussion and see whether there are other things we can do.

One of the things, by the way, we should also do is link this to private money, because, yes, we have very substantial budgets, but if you actually zoom out and you see what capital markets could do in addition, it is huge, and we will need to have that for the transformation.

You are also touching upon a very important point that was not as prominent in the hearing so far, and that is adaptation. The results are indeed absolutely devastating. We've seen it in Slovenia, we've seen it in Spain, we have seen it in Greece, and that was only this year. Two years ago we saw it in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany – flooding. It is absolutely horrific what happens to our people and to our nature.

The price is tremendous. We're now approximately at 50 billion a year. This will go up by 2030 to 1% of our total GDP. That is exactly the amount we're currently spending as the European Union on everything together. So if we do not change this, we do have a very, very significant problem also from a financial perspective. So adaptation with allocating money, I think, for example, through the EIB – I could say more about it in the rebounds – talking with insurers and seeing how we close the insurance gap should be on the top of our list.

1-095-0000

Maria Angela Danzi (NI). – Io penso che investire nella prevenzione sia un fatto importante e chiedo a lei e a tutto il collegio consultivo di lavorare perché l'attuale meccanismo di protezione civile sia trasformato in un'agenzia che dia indirizzi sulla prevenzione, perché, mentre ci stiamo approcciando a ridurre l'impatto del cambiamento climatico, dobbiamo essere però pronti a proteggere da tutti gli effetti che il cambiamento climatico già ha sulle nostre famiglie e sulle nostre imprese. E i costi, Commissario, di quello che noi spendiamo nel mio paese – circa 300 miliardi – per riparare danni causati da disgrazie dovute al cambiamento climatico e nel nostro sfortunato paese anche dalla particolare sismicità. Quindi le chiedo se avete affrontato e come intende affrontare l'organizzazione di misure di prevenzione.

1-096-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – I think this is precisely linked to what I was about to say. I think we've taken a couple of tremendous steps on adaptation with 49 pillars. I think we're now touching 40 % of the union with I think 300 regional communities. And we're sharing best practices. We're learning from each other how to do this ideally also in a nature-based way. And yet the number of cataclysms that we are facing and that we that we are about to face are simply too large, particularly for smaller regions. So we need to step up the help that we provide all across the Union and we need to make sure we provide them with funding. I was mentioning the EIB. Why? Because actually if you look at the EIB, which is a fantastic institution, the minimum investment hurdle for them is EUR 25 million. For adaptation and an average city that is actually too high a benchmark. So what I would want to do is have a discussion with them how we can make this more tailor-made for regions on adaptation.

1-097-0000

David McAllister (PPE), Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. – Thank you, Chair, for giving me the floor. Dear Commissioner-designate, as you already mentioned tonight, the international climate negotiations, for example within the remit of COP 28, will take place in an extremely complex geopolitical environment bearing in mind Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine or the rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific.

So I was wondering, what experience can you bring to the table to achieve an ambitious climate outcome despite all these global disruptions? And who would you consider being our partners and allies in dealing with these questions of climate diplomacy?

1-098-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – I think it is a truly excellent point...

(Speaker's microphone cut out)

1-099-0000

(The hearing was suspended at 21.17 for technical reasons)

1-100-0000

(The hearing resumed at 21.40)

1-101-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Mr McAllister, once again, thank you for the excellent question and some good things come in fours. But I'll do my utmost to respond to it with all the seriousness your question deserves. And I was about to say that this is indeed the one thing that I think should most keep us awake, because, yes, there is a tremendous amount of stuff we need to do within the European Union, and there is no easy way out in driving down the 7% of emissions that on a global scale we are causing and we need to do much more in all sectors.

Having said that, the 93% is what should worry us. And it is not only a matter of solidarity and fairness, but also if that would not be sufficiently convincing, of self-interest, to make sure that these emissions are also being driven down, because if that doesn't happen, climate change will still be a fact. We will still have much worse effects, particularly in Europe, where things are heating up much more quickly than on average.

And we're facing an extremely difficult terrain because of the war in Ukraine and, of course, vis-à-vis Russia and its allies, but also given the tensions in the global Pacific, but also the more contentious situation and the disputes we might have with, for example, China on human rights or on domestic interference and a range of other topics.

But that should not keep us away from engaging with them and making sure that with the Chinese, with our friends in the US, with our friends in India and with all our friends in the Global South, we truly put this in motion and we look for what unites us, even though we can easily find a whole bunch of topics on which we actually do not yet agree. But that is what diplomacy is for: looking for what you can do together, even if you agree to disagree on difficult other items.

Let me pause there and, Chair, maybe one question – I don't have a timer here, so just to prevent that I'm going to be too long?

1-102-0000

Chair. – Okay, thank you. I appreciate it. We move to Silvia Modig from The Left.

1-103-0000

Silvia Modig (The Left). – Thank you, Chair. And Mr Hoekstra, for your sake, I hope this technique works because the next option is The Left group room.

So, Mr Hoekstra, I've been really listening to you without any prejudice, trying to listen to what you say, and your answers are not the problem here – it is the contradiction between your words here and your previous actions. Because we in The Left, we believe that we should change the system, not the climate, and looking from The Left, your track record presents the system. Working in oil companies, working at McKinsey, which is a leader in advising the most environmentally dangerous companies, is in so big contradiction to your words here, which I have liked. I have liked your answers, but you must see the contradiction yourself.

You said, for example, that you find it unethical that there are still players that, in spite of they know the facts of the climate crisis, they keep going with their destructive business models. Well, isn't that the clientele of McKinsey? So, you must see the contradiction yourself. So, that's why we need more concrete measures.

The Energy Charter Treaty, a treaty which many McKinsey clients love, that is untreated, that allows coal, oil and gas corporations to sue states if they take climate actions. As you probably know, the Parliament has taken a stand that we are for a coordinated exit from the Treaty, and even the Commission has stated that, when the modernisation is not going forward, without modernisation the Treaty is against EU legislation.

So, are you going to take us out from the Energy Charter Treaty, which is completely absurd that we even have such a treaty in these days of climate crisis that protects fossil investments? So, are you going to take us out of the Energy Charter Treaty, and what would be the concrete steps to do so?

1-104-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, and regardless of your criticism – which, of course, I fully appreciate – may I say that I tremendously appreciated the very open conversation you had on the topics that we do share.

I would argue – even though that might not be convincing for you – that as a Finance Minister working on green bonds, as a party leader establishing a very green coalition agreement, as a Foreign Affairs Minister making climate action part of the conversations even though the list was already long to discuss with my various counterparts, actually I have done justice in full to the topic, even though I was not a climate minister, I was the Finance Minister and I was the Foreign Affairs Minister.

And I hope that with articulating my crystal clear ambition – what I want to bring to the table – I have maybe not convinced you but at least given you insight into what my ambition is. And the easy thing would have been to stay at home and, as a caretaker government, see what the future would bring. But I think this is also an era where all of us should take responsibility. That is what motivates me – this and the enormity of the problem we're facing.

To the specific question you were asking, what I will do – and I'm not intimately familiar with the exact position of Parliament nor with the exact wording the Commission has used so far – but what I'll absolutely do is stick to the same line the Commission has had so far and in general – to the positive amazement of some and others might have been more critical – I will in full take the work of Frans Timmermans, go for continuity and go for ambition, and outreach should be part of the package. That will be my approach. So I hope, even if it doesn't convince you, you feel it is the right direction to take.

1-105-0000

Silvia Modig (The Left). – Financial Minister, it would be wiser for you to say that you kind of regret now that you have learned about the climate and the science and now when you look back at your actions, you see that you could have done differently. Just a hint. But you chose this line.

But, Financial Minister, let's talk about the finance. The Bridgetown agreement. What are your thoughts on that? How do you see that? Because we need global climate finance and it's really hard to earmark money in this House. It's really hard in the COP meetings to get agreements on sufficient finance for the Global South. So, how would you, as a finance guy, then renew the institutions, the global finance institutions so that we will get the money flow needed for the Global South to be able to participate? Because their demands are quite valid.

1-106-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, and I think it leads back to a couple of the things that I said before. I think there is no workaround of the fact that this will cost substantially more money than we are currently allocating to it. That is simply the reality. It will involve fresh money, as finance ministers typically call it. It will include loans and it will include a very substantial chunk of private money – and that all combined can hopefully do the trick.

One of the things I mentioned before and I would like to underline it, is that I think the way we should go is, at least, not excluding anything else, but is at least an own resource, because actually I can see, and knowing the world of finance ministers a bit, I can see how that actually not only could create very substantial money but also has a chance of success in politically succeeding and it can be established relatively quickly. And that is precisely what we need for our friends in the Global South.

And as you said, but I stated that before, we have the obligation from a fairness perspective, from an affluence perspective, we have a lot more money, but also if that all is not convincing from the perspective of doing something for a problem that would otherwise hit us, in any case, do more.

1-107-0000

Michael Bloss (Verts/ALE). – I think the big question and elephant in the room is that the EPP, your party has voted against a lot of climate legislation, against the Nature Restoration Law, the CO2 in cars, the Energy Efficiency and Buildings Directive. The leader was asking for a pause in the Green Deal. So what you need to do in order to gain trust for ambitious climate policies is breaking with the anti-Green Deal policies of the EPP. And I think in order to gain trust, it's good that you also, for instance, answer what Timo asked you. He said not to assess for the 2040 target scenarios that are not in line with science. That means that are not going below 90 %. And I want to add to this that also means assessing climate neutrality for the year 2040. Correct me if I'm wrong, but if I hear you correct, you say you will propose to the Commission and colleagues, would propose, a 90 % target for 2040. I think it has to be at least 90 %. And I think on the way there, you need to respect the carbon budget and put sufficiency in the centre of getting there. And a 2035 target is also needed because that is what the Paris Agreement requires of you. Will you do that?

1-108-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much, Herr Bloss, and also for once again being very explicit about these points because that also gives me the opportunity to the extent there was any misunderstanding on where I stand. And you're absolutely right. I said it, I think, also crystal clear in my opening statement that this is about at least 90. So, that is what I will propose and I will, of course, do my utmost to then convince the college.

But I also have to be fair. I can do as much as I can, but I am subject, of course, of the broader debate there. What I would also want to add is actually both of the points you are making. So, I can fully concur with both of them.

One is, indeed, we will need a 2035 target, if only because we're asking that from the whole wide world, including ourselves, and we need to prepare it as a next step after the global stocktaking, which is actually taking place in Dubai. So, absolutely, and I think it makes most sense if we manage to set this very ambitious, at least 90 target for 2040 to then make it linear.

You and I had a great conversation also about the room under the curve, as we call it, and of course, the lower you make it, the fewer emissions you have. But I think it is fair to there actually go for linear, and then maybe and finally, just to avoid any misunderstanding on the scenarios, what I will do, because I think it will help Parliament to make an informed decision. I will come up with various

scenarios that articulate not only specific targets where, again, my preference will be and my goal will be at least 90, but also alternative scenarios.

Now, also after our conversation, I was informed that most of this work by DG CLIMA is almost done. I will still look into whether we can have a scenario on zero, but in any case, we have this live scenario, and this live scenario actually gives a tremendous extra boost in any reductions you will do.

By the way, it would require lifestyle changes as the scenario actually says, and it would dramatically reduce demand, as we can see in the curves of the report. And I think that that would actually bring you to the scenario you are looking for. Again, it is one of the scenarios – there will be more – but I will, with a very open view, have that conversation again with CLIMA, whether it is something that comes even closer to what you are looking for.

1-109-0000

Michael Bloss (Verts/ALE). – So, with regards to building trust, I think your past is at different companies, but Shell has been mentioned. I think you need to become, you know, from Saul to Paul. You need to become a fighter against the fossil interest.

That means, first and foremost, I heard you talking about unabated fossil fuel. Unabated fossil fuels. What do you mean? Do you mean that clean coal is okay? I think you need to fight for the end of burning of coal, oil and gas. End of fossil fuels. That's it.

And, secondly, with regard to ending fossil subsidies, I think what you can do, because you're speaking about the MFF, what you can do is to say to Member States that you reject and send back any national energy and climate plan that is without a scientifically based end date for fossil subsidies and that is without the measures to get there. Will you commit to that?

1-110-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for your quotation. I would actually I would argue that the discrepancy is not as significant as some of the speakers have been suggesting. But, you know, I have to deal with the fact that each of you can, of course, look at it the way you would want.

On fossil fuels, I think I have been very clear about what my ambition level would be, clearly, for coal. Actually, I didn't even want to mention it. You and I talked about it in our conversation, but I think we both were adamant about that there's much more we need to do there. But actually, I think it will be out of the money, as the experts say, sooner than we think. Also because of what is happening on renewables. Gas is a slightly different story. And that might not be to your liking, but it is part of the taxonomy as a fuel of transition – I think that is the phrase that is being used – and I think I need to take the taxonomy in full. I cannot change it. I don't want to change it in a hearing. That's not up to me. It is something that was discussed at length here.

On subsidies, I think and hope I've given a very explicit answer also to Bas Eickhout on how I would want to go about that with, you know, full engagements, see whether I can pull that off. But in the end, I cannot trespass the legal boundaries that I have to face.

Will there be enough, sir, to earn your trust in the end? What I can do is tell you what I stand for. But in the end, that is your judgement call, whether you think that this is credible.

1-111-0000

Mercedes Bresso (S&D). – La possibilità di raggiungere gli obiettivi climatici a livello globale, come Lei sa bene, dipende chiaramente anche dalle capacità economiche dei paesi in via di sviluppo

e dalla situazione del loro debito. Ciò è particolarmente importante se si considera che il 92 % dei paesi vulnerabili sono anche paesi a rischio o in sofferenza debitoria.

Allora, considerando che l'indebitamento finanziario riduce evidentemente la capacità di transizione verso un'economia pulita, quale ruolo vede per l'Unione europea nell'affrontare questo circolo vizioso del debito e del clima? E quale ruolo potrebbe svolgere il nostro piano di investimento Global Gateway, che consente di ampliare un po' le risorse? Quali iniziative intende anche intraprendere, sia in sede di Convenzione quadro delle Nazioni Unite sui cambiamenti climatici sia presso la Banca mondiale, il Fondo monetario internazionale e tutte le organizzazioni internazionali, per affrontare questa situazione, che da soli evidentemente non possiamo risolvere, ma che, se non si affronta, non consentirà a questi paesi di accettare la sfida e, ancora più, di vincerla?

1-112-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, I think you're touching upon a couple of, I think, the most complicated things going forward. The reason why that is the case is that we're talking about money but in the end this is all about trust. The reality is there is significant distrust, sometimes even within the European Union, about, you know, are we in this together? Are we showing a significant level of solidarity within our countries, towards our own populations, but also country to country? And if that is already true within the European Union, if you then zoom out and you look at the level of trust at a global level, even though I think if you add up all the development aid budgets of the European Union, you would be impressed, even though with the global gateway, we are tremendously serious about our commitments to igniting sustainable and fair economic growth across the globe, even though we're helping out friends across the globe with the energy in the climate transition, then still, in many conversations I've had it is about, okay, but are you good for your money? Are you good for your word, what are you going to do?

And I think it was de Gaulle who said that in the end, countries have interests and not friends. And what we need to do is therefore tailor our approach, in my view, much more to the long-term interests of our friends in the Global South.

And that is typically about indeed making this transition happen and about economic activity. One of the things that is always on top of their mind is, hey, how about our access to the European markets? How about your business coming over to me? How can we actually liaise more with the European Union?

And there is no workaround here. This will take sustained long-term effort by the Union and by each of the 27 Member States, and then we might have a chance to flip the script in the years going forward. But it is not easy.

1-113-0000

Mercedes Bresso (S&D). – Sempre sulla stessa linea: come pensa di poter garantire che gli investimenti pubblici dell'Unione europea, anche quelli della Banca europea, della BEI, nel settore energetico in Africa e nel Sud globale servano principalmente i piani di transizione locali, le persone e la loro economia, in linea con le loro priorità stabilite a livello nazionale?

Quale ruolo vede per l'Unione europea nel contribuire alla necessaria diffusione massiccia delle rinnovabili anche in Africa e in tutto il Sud globale? In particolare, vede un ruolo per il trasferimento di tecnologie e lo sviluppo delle capacità di questi paesi attraverso il trasferimento delle tecnologie?

1-114-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – I think I think it's an excellent point. And actually there are I think two parts to the answer. One is indeed about financing, and there our banks could play an important role. I know from previous experience that also the World Bank and the IMF have a

role to play and what we can do more – whether it is through special drawing rights or any other part of freeing-up money, helping out our friends in Africa. And the reason that that is so important is, you know, we often have a discussion about debt levels in Europe. If you look at Africa, you see the debt levels are actually much lower. And why is that? Because actually the markets will not accept for most of the countries to increase their debt levels because the trust in them is too low and they're already paying a huge sum in terms of interest. So this is actually something we should help on.

The second thing I think is even more productive to do, and that was to your second point as well, about helping them out with technology. One of the statistics I just learned last week was that Benelux, which is a very small part of the world, has more solar panels than the whole of Africa. I mean, and then it rains always in the Benelux, as we know. This is something where we should actually help out, because it is much more fruitful if we can actually set up the businesses there, help out with technology and knowing that so many African countries – Namibia in particular, Congo to a large extent, but also others – do not just want to be players in the transition, they want to be leaders in the transition and be part of the solution. And I think that is what we should ignite.

1-115-0000

Tomas Tobé (PPE), *Chair of the Committee on Development*. – Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Commissioner-designate. It has been interesting listening to your answers, but also to some of the colleagues. It almost sounds like if you have ever worked for a private company or organisation, don't you dare seek public office – no matter what you want to achieve!

But with that said, I can inform the Commissioner-designate that from our political group we have delivered Fit for 55 in this Parliament together with other political groups and we will continue to do so. We also have the COP 28 coming up. And as you know, we need to work closely with the developing countries, our partners, because we cannot tackle climate change without them. We need to work with them to make investments, of course, but also we need them to achieve our goals.

Therefore, my question to you is: do you have any detailed strategy for dealing with especially the Global South, because we need them if we want them to come along with our climate objectives?

1-116-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – I couldn't agree more. A simple part of the answer is significantly stepping up our engagements and also seeing COP 28 as an intermediate step, but certainly not as the end result.

My view is that if there's one thing where we need to double down, where we actually might need to put much more effort in it in the next 10 years, it is climate diplomacy, and not just for diplomats, but also for our experts to make sure that we actually realise the things we were just discussing. Now that is something I cannot in any possible way just do by myself, also knowing how big the challenge is for the COP. So in our engagements with the Global South, we clearly need to focus on, as I said, their interests and their long-term desires to make this work.

Secondly, we need to work with our friends not only in the Global South, but also beyond in the US, but also many others – think about the non-European G7 members and others who are on the right side of history in terms of battling climate change to work together.

And then there's a last thing I wanted to mention, which I think is tremendously important. Again, zooming out from Europe, you know, we might have our differences here, but outside we are very, very, very much aligned. I was talking to Minister Ryan last Friday. I've had many interactions, of course, with Annalena Baerbock, not only on foreign policy, but also on greening the world. The two of them, all their colleagues, but also many of you here in the room who will play an important

role at COP, that is what we should do: compare notes, division of labour and make sure that through every possible angle, country or European level, we engage, and step by step we broaden the crowd so that we can actually change this.

1-117-0000

Tomas Tobé (PPE), *Chair of the Committee on Development*. – I think the Commissioner-designate and especially you, Chair, have already had a long night, so I will leave it there.

1-118-0000

Chair. – Thank you. I appreciate it.

1-119-0000

Emma Wiesner (Renew). – Last but not least! Dear Commissioner-designate Hoekstra, I liked a lot of what you said in your introductory speech. However, I would very much love if you could stop referring to future generations when you talk about climate policy because, dear Commissioner-designate, it's yours and my generation that needs to solve this if we are to stand a chance. So please have that in mind.

I like very much that you say that we should be science-based and you are committed to the 90% by 2040 and listen to the scientists. But if you are to listen to the scientists isn't it also 95% to 2040 to be there? And to be honest, what's in the impact assessment is not the interesting things. It's actually what's coming out afterwards in terms of concrete policy actions.

I also love that you are praising the ETS, but however, we're focusing a lot on the existing schemes that we already have on the table. I would like to take my time to ask now three questions on the policies that we do not have, that have not been mentioned today.

The first one is increased carbon removals and carbon utilisation. What role will BECCS and DACCS play in the future and how will you push the upcoming strategy on carbon removals?

Second, would you also propose a goal for carbon removals based on the climate depth – the already emitted CO₂ in the atmosphere of the Member States?

And third, would you be willing to put forward legislation that put a price on carbon going into products? We have price on carbon going out in the atmosphere, but not the fossil carbon going into products on the European market. That's a policy area that we do not have today.

1-120-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – I take your point. You're absolutely right: we are the generation that needs to fix this, and we're doing it for our own generation and for future generations. So thank you very much for the feedback. And you're right, pointing out that 95% had a budget, so to say, which the Scientific Advisory Board gives as 11 to 14 gigatonnes. And so I can only concur with that as well.

I have to admit, Madam Wiesner, that after our conversation every single pen I saw, every single printer I saw, I was thinking what you told me about the level of CO₂ being in these pens and in these printers, and how to go about it.

And I think that actually links to your third question. Frankly speaking, I don't think it is something we can easily solve because we have the classic ETS, which works tremendously well. We have ETS 2, which will actually have a different approach, and yet you are very right that we should include this. The big question is how.

What I will do is ask the team to provide us with an overview of how we could actually link your question to our current infrastructure, because I think, in the end, we will need it. But also in the conversations, after you came up with this idea, we haven't found an easy way out, so we might want to do more research on this.

Let me first say something on removals and then also come to BECCS and DACCS. Removals, also according to the Scientific Advisory Board, are absolutely part of the solution. There is no way around it. The thing is – and that is why some people are worried about it or sceptical about it – they have to be additional, they have to be certified, they have to be verified, because otherwise it is phoney, it doesn't count. And that is what we need to do in terms of removal.

Some people are even more sceptical about BECCS and DACCS, and isn't this an easy way out for the fossil industry? I can understand the scepticism, because it has been propagated by those who actually don't have the right track record. Let me say one more thing: there's no alternative to stepping up the obligations of the companies. And we spend a lot of time, and I hope I've convinced everyone here that there's no workaround there.

However, I also concur with the decision that was already made by the Commission that we should look into creating the infrastructure so that for the hardest to abate sectors, actually this might be part of the solution. It is simply something we cannot leave on the table.

1-121-0000

Emma Wiesner (Renew). – So my follow up actually is from my followers on Twitter and almost all of them asked about bioeconomy. And here we have a conflict of interest with the Commissioner and the hearing tomorrow on the Green Deal. So my question is simply, how would you enhance and increase the bio-based economy? You mentioned Sweden in one of the follow-up questions. It's a lot of things to the bio-based economy, but we see tremendous conflicts of interest there.

And secondly, I agree with Marie Toussaint from the Greens. I used to be a consultant. I have a consultancy CV. I stand by her request of seeing that consultancy CV and what projects you have been working on.

1-122-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner-designate. – Let me first start with the with the bioeconomy question. And that is one where you and I went over or where the team also went over. I think it is crystal clear that the bioeconomy is part of the future. That is, by the way, also in all the scientific advice. But we have to do it in such a way that we actually respect and further improve the use of land, because there are smarter and a more dangerous way to approach this. And you see that, for example, in the case of harvesting, and I know this is extremely sensitive - 4.5 billion people have their jobs, but I think we all agree that if we are harvesting, the best thing to do is first make sure a tree is used to build a house, then we can always reuse that wood and make it into a chair. And then finally, we can use this biomass, for example, for district heating. This is one of the things we touched upon. And by the way, I do think that these types of infrastructure should continue to exist and are part of the solution space.

On your second question, let me let me look into it. I'm all for transparency. So if there's more that I would need to provide, I will need to look into it. I don't have that with me. So please allow me to look into that.

1-123-0000

Chair. – So we are done with the 25 questions. Now, Commissioner-designate, you have five minutes to make a final formal conclusion.

1-124-0000

Wopke Hoekstra, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, Mr Chair, and may I start by thanking your commission for the thoughtful, sometimes intense, but in my view, also very, very thorough question/answer. I hope it has given you insight into who I am, and what I do want to do when I would get the privilege of fulfilling this tremendously important role.

I'm very much looking forward to not only delivering on the various aspects that I have been mentioning, but also to work together with all of you, because I genuinely believe that is necessary in such a transformative situation we are facing. You simply cannot do it with the majority plus one. In our societies, it's important to build a broader consensus and deliver on this transition.

Now, in my mind – and I said it before to one of the individuals in the room – there are three major challenges we are facing, very different, but with a couple of commonalities. Clearly and potentially the most difficult one is climate change. The second one – and we see that unfortunately happening every day – is safety and security and the pushback we are facing worldwide on democracy that will stay with us for a very long time as well. The third one is technological disruption.

These three are very different in nature, but have in common that we can only solve them together, that they will take much more focus and much more money and it will take sustained efforts for, in my view, at least 20 to 30 years before we are beyond the curve, and maybe longer. That is the task ahead of us, and I would feel tremendously privileged to work, of course specifically, on the first the first item, because we can make a change there.

Why am I so motivated to do this? Well, actually, for two reasons. One, I shifted from the life of business to the public sector in full six years ago. But 12 years ago, I became a member of the Dutch Senate and I found it tremendously meaningful to work in the public sector, work for the greater good and see how I can contribute. It gives meaning to my life and I hope that I can in that way also contribute to a better world.

The second reason is responsibility. I think that if you are allowed to live on European soil, you should consider yourself tremendously lucky, and if life were a lottery and you would have two tickets and with one you would draw the 21st century and with the second, you would draw the European Union, I am sure that the vast majority of people across the globe today – but also the vast majority of people who were ever lived – would die for changing with any one of us. If that is the case, if that is the case, then it comes with responsibility. That comes with responsibility to leave the world a tiny little bit better than we found it. That is what I would want to contribute to on climate change, in working with all of you together and making the most for – and as Emma said it – 'this generation and the generations to come'.

1-125-0000

Chair. – So, before moving to the next step, I would like to, on our behalf, thank the technicians of Parliament, because actually they made the job. Thank you also to the interpreters because it was a bit complicated to navigate, but at the end of the day we made it. Sorry for these technical problems, Mr Hoekstra.

Second, we will have the ENVI coordinators' meeting starting in, let's say, around 20 minutes and, of course, we will wait for the DEVE, AFET and ITRE coordinators' meeting results, hoping that you could be fast in your analysis. And then we will stay in that room. For those who are concerned by this ENVI coordinators' meeting, we will stay in that room.

And tomorrow, we will be at 8.30 in this room to make sure that we do not have technical problems.

Thank you. That marks the end of this hearing.

(The hearing closed at 22.18)