The Council is aware of the heavy dependency of the Community on hydrocarbon fuels and believes that there is a need for vigilance in both the short and the long term.

A significant part of Community actions in this context is contained in programmes which aim at contributing to the achievement of the priority goals of energy policy: security of supply, competitiveness and protection of the environment. Such programmes complement national energy policies through Community actions proposed by the Commission.

Since 1975, financial aid has been granted to the hydrocarbons sector mainly in the context of the Thermie Programme, in order to achieve safe, clean and efficient exploitation of hydrocarbons. With regard to the detail of such support measures, the Honourable Members are invited to address their question to the Commission which is responsible for the implementation and management of these programmes.

The Council is fully aware that the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions requires adequate responses in the energy sector. It is why in its conclusions on climate change of May 1998 (1), it noted the need for a sustained commitment to energy efficiency and energy saving and for the reduction of the environmental impact of the use of energy sources with high carbon content.

(1) Doc. 8357/98 Presse 136.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2132/99
by Olivier Dupuis (TDI) to the Commission

(24 November 1999)

Subject: The situation in Saudi Arabia


The UN Commission on Human Rights has condemned the use of arbitrary detention, torture, forced or involuntary disappearances, and extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions by the Saudi authorities (for example, those executed in 1997 included over 70 foreign nationals and the death penalty is carried out even against people who were minors at the time they committed the offence). The authorities in Riyadh routinely exercise very heavy repression against political opponents (total ban on political parties) and religious minorities and subject the press to total control. Arrests for expressing certain views are increasing. Amputation as a punishment is still widely practised.

What is the Commission's position on the situation in Saudi Arabia?

What action has the Commission taken or does it intend to take to make the Saudi authorities show at least minimum respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission

(8 December 1999)

The human rights situation in Saudi Arabia does indeed give cause for concern. There is no specific agreement between the Community and Saudi Arabia which would provide the framework for direct exchange of views and dialogue. A regular political dialogue has been established between the Community and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries within the context of the Union’s cooperation agreement with the GCC countries, which include the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait.
At a meeting of regional directors between the Community and the GCC in Riyadh in mid-October 1999, the whole range of political and social matters were discussed, including human rights. In this forum, in particular the questions of women's and children's rights, the death penalty, and human rights in general were discussed.

(2000/C 219 E/126)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2133/99
by Vitaliano Gemelli (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(24 November 1999)

Subject: Procedural time limits laid down for the allocation of resources to the new territorial employment pacts

On 9 June 1999 the ICEP (Interministerial Committee for Economic Planning) adopted Decision No 77/99 'Allocation of resources for the financing of new territorial employment pacts', which lays down terms and procedures for obtaining financing for the implementation of projects targeted at production facilities.

One month later the decision was published in the Italian Official Journal of 5 August 1999 (General Series, No 182).

The decision provided for an enquiry period of four months, and therefore set a deadline of 10 October 1999, while the addressees only learnt of it at the time of publication, which was 5 August 1999, a month later, and hence had one month less in which to complete the enquiry stage.

The procedures for joining the territorial employment pacts are as follows:

- joining procedure by the public bodies,
- request for declaration of consistency from the CNEL (National Council for the Economy and Employment),
- ensuring publicity for the measures and programmes,
- evaluating the projects' advantages,
- carrying out the enquiry,
- publishing the findings,

It is clear that the delay in publishing the decision, which sets 10 October 1999 as the deadline for completion of the four-month enquiry period, has led to a discrepancy whereby the time available for the enquiry has been shortened.

In order to ensure that those concerned are able to benefit from the right to use the measure, will the Commission make serious representations to the Italian Government with a view to restoring the (minimum) four-month period laid down for the carrying out of the set procedure?

Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(6 January 2000)

The grant of funds for new territorial employment pacts in Italy, and the associated procedural deadlines, were decided under a national procedure adopted by the Interministerial Committee for Economic Planning. The Commission is therefore not competent to deal with the question raised, which is purely a matter for the national authorities.