Reply

(26 February 2001)

1. The Council is perfectly aware of the specific issue raised by the Honourable Member, which, moreover, concerns not only the relations governed by agreement between the EU and Turkey, but also other international obligations on the part of Turkey. As early as 1998 the Presidency of the Union raised this problem with the Turkish side in the margins of a meeting at the OECD. Likewise, the matter is regularly on the agenda for the proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Customs Union bringing together the EU and Turkey, and, in particular, was discussed at the Committee's meeting on 8 December 2000.

2. In addition, at a meeting of the Council's competent preparatory bodies, the Commission, which, within its sphere of competence, also has to address the matter, announced that it had raised this problem with the Turkish side last October during the first round of negotiations with Turkey on services and public procurement. It also raises the matter regularly in its periodic reports on the progress made by Turkey towards accession, and notably in its last report dated 13 November 2000.

3. The Council would remind the Honourable Member that in its address before the UN General Assembly on 12 September 2000, the Presidency, speaking on behalf of the Union, considered that the status quo in Cyprus was unacceptable and stated that it supported the UN Secretary-General's efforts to reach a negotiated, overall, just and lasting settlement in line with the Security Council's resolutions.

(2001/C 163 E/021) WRITTEN QUESTION E-2954/00
by Emmanouil Mastorakis (PSE) to the Commission

(20 September 2000)

Subject: Presentation of report on economic and social cohesion

Under the terms of Article 159 of the Treaty, the Commission is at least a year late in submitting its second report on the progress made in achieving economic and social cohesion in the regions of the European Union.

In view of the fact that the data and proposals in the report will obviously form the basis for setting a new strategy for economic and social cohesion, when will the Commission be ready to present the report?

Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(8 November 2000)

The EC Treaty, as the Honourable Member points out, requires the Commission to report on economic and social cohesion every three years. The first report was adopted in November 1996(1), so the second one was due at the end of 1999. However, it was decided to postpone the preparation and publication of the second report until the beginning of 2001, for the following reasons.

The Sixth Periodic Report on the social and economic situation and development of the regions of the European Union(2) was published early in 1999. Since no more recent figures were available by the end of 1999 as a basis for drawing up the cohesion report, this would have meant that the Commission would have adopted two reports containing largely the same statistical data.

The first phase of implementation of the new rules for the 2000-2006 programming period, i.e. determining the areas eligible under Objectives 1 and 2, adoption of the Community support frameworks and single programming documents for Objective 1, and ex ante evaluations, will provide the Commission with more relevant information than was available a year earlier.
The publication of the report at the beginning of 2001 will also launch a wide-ranging debate at Community level on the future guidelines for cohesion policy in an enlarged European Union and on the relationship between cohesion and the other two components of Community integration, i.e. the internal market and economic and monetary union.

A forum on cohesion is to be held for that purpose in May 2001, with the participation of Parliament.

(2) http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/document/doc1_en.htm

(2001/C 163 E/022) WRITTEN QUESTION E-2965/00

by Isidoro Sánchez García (ELDR) to the Council

(25 September 2000)

Subject: Evolution of democracy in Cuba and EU-Cuba cooperation

What is the Council’s view on the evolution of the government of Cuba in relation to any progress made towards democracy, since the adoption in 1996 of a common position on Cuba? Is the Council willing, should the question arise, to maintain a position of non-isolation of the Cuban regime coupled with continued cooperation and humanitarian aid to the Cuban people?

Reply

(12 February 2001)

1. The Council has taken note of the eighth evaluation of the EU Common Position on Cuba. It has noted that, since the last evaluation in June, although there continue to be mixed signals there has not been a fundamental change of policy on the part of the Cuban Government, either towards the accomplishment of the aims of the Common Position or in the opposite direction.

2. Despite the Cuban authorities' cancellation of the visit to Havana which the EU Troika was due to make at the end of April 2000 and the withdrawal of Cuba's application to accede to the Cotonou Agreement, the Council, in its seventh evaluation of the Common Position, considered it essential that the EU deploy further efforts to engage the Cuban authorities in a constructive and frank dialogue on a variety of issues of common interest that might actually produce tangible results, particularly in the political, economic and civil rights spheres. Along these lines, at its meeting on 4/5 December 2000 the Council restated that the EU's objective vis-à-vis Cuba, as established in the Common Position, is still to encourage a process of peaceful transition to pluralist democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as a sustainable economy and economic recovery and improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people.

3. The Council notes that the European Union is currently Cuba's principal economic partner. Against a backdrop of economic problems affecting Cuba, and primarily the most vulnerable sectors of the population, the Council considers that the European Union should nevertheless continue its present cooperation effort — as described in the eighth evaluation — which might also extend to environmental protection and the prevention of natural disasters, in line with the objectives of the Common Position.

4. The Council would remind the Honourable Member that, in line with point 1 of the Common Position on Cuba established in December 1996, it is not European Union policy to try to bring about change by coercive measures with the effect of increasing the economic hardship of the Cuban people.