Joint answer
to Written Questions E-0170/03 and E-0242/03
given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission

(25 February 2003)

In the session of the Parliament of 21 November 2002, the Commission expressed the Union's grave concern about the human rights situation in Bangladesh, the deterioration of law and order in the country and the continued reports about torture and deaths in custody, following the launch of the Operation Clean Heart. Only recently, the Member of the Commission responsible for External Relations has conveyed to the Minister of Finance of the Government of Bangladesh his regret about the Government's decision to grant immunity to the joint law enforcement agencies for acts committed during the operation. He urged the Government of Bangladesh to launch a fully transparent investigation into the custodial deaths, as previously promised by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, and to ensure that legal action is taken against any law enforcement personnel found responsible for breaches of human rights.

Article 1 of the Cooperation Agreement between the Community and the People's Republic of Bangladesh on partnership and development, states that respect for human rights and democratic principles as laid down in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights underpins the domestic and international policies of the Union and Bangladesh. It constitutes an essential element of the Agreement. On this basis, the Union offers the Government of Bangladesh and Bangladesh civil society a constructive and comprehensive dialogue on human rights, democracy, and governance issues. One element in this process of engaging with the Government of Bangladesh is the upcoming first meeting of the Joint Commission's Specialized Sub-group on Human Rights and Governance.

Furthermore, the National Indicative Programme 2003-2005 for Bangladesh, which the Government of Bangladesh has subscribed to, foresees an amount of EUR 9 million for the promotion of democracy and human rights.

Finally, the Commission would like to point out that it actively participates in the Local Consultation Group in Dhaka, as well as in the Bangladesh Development Forum, both of which are platforms for conveying Community concerns on Human Rights and Democracy to the Government of Bangladesh and for engaging with it on these issues.


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WRITTEN QUESTION P-0176/03
by Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(24 January 2003)

Subject: Consequences of the liberalisation of agriculture worldwide

The 6 November 2002 issue of 'Agence Europe' refers to a study drawn up by the Commission on the consequences a complete liberalisation of agricultural trade worldwide would have for farming in the EU countries.

The article points out that Commissioner Pascal Lamy said that liberalisation would mean the disappearance of around 85% of farms in the European Union, in particular small and medium-sized family farms. This would obviously mean the end of farming in the EU countries and the end of their food sovereignty and regional equilibrium.

It should also be pointed out how paradoxical it is that at a time when the United States has decided to step up aid to its own farmers, the European Union is deciding to take steps to reduce aid to farmers in its member countries.

Can the Commission say on what data it based the conclusions of its study?
Answer given by Mr Lamy on behalf of the Commission

(27 February 2003)

The 6 November 2002 article of Agence Europe does not refer to a specific study of the Commission as suggested by the Honourable Member. Given the special nature of agriculture in the provision of food and other benefits, a sudden and complete liberalisation of world agricultural trade as demanded in some quarters could not be envisaged. Such a complete liberalisation would certainly have serious implications for the sustainability of European agriculture in social, economic and environmental terms. The numbers cited in the article are an illustration.

Having said that, the EU is committed to the objectives reflected in the Doha Declaration, which foresees negotiations aimed at, inter alia 'substantial improvements in market access'. The EU will negotiate on that basis.

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WRITTEN QUESTION P-0207/03

by Daniel Hannan (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(27 January 2003)

Subject: Maltese referendum

Would the Commission say how much EU money from information or from other funds is going to Malta before the referendum? How much money has the Commission allocated for referendums in the applicant countries in general?

Answer given by Mr Verheugen on behalf of the Commission

(14 February 2003)

The total amount of pre-accession funds allocated by the Community to Malta from 2000 to 2004 is EUR 38 million, in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 555/2000 of 13 March 2000 on the implementation of operations in the framework of the pre-accession strategy for the Republic of Cyprus and the Republic of Malta(1). However EUR 2 million, which were earmarked for 2004, will not be committed because of Malta’s foreseen accession in 2004. Therefore, Malta will effectively have received EUR 36 million of pre-accession aid. From this amount, EUR 0.7 million has been allocated for activities related to information.

With regard to referenda in other Candidate Countries, Article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union states that the Accession Treaty 'shall be submitted for ratification to all the contracting States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements'. The responsibility for organising a referendum is that of the relevant authorities in each country concerned. The Commission does not fund, nor is it otherwise involved with, the organisation of the referenda or the campaigns associated with them in any Candidate Country. The Commission operates a Communication Strategy for enlargement in all Member States and Candidate Countries. The strategy is largely decentralised. In the Central European Candidates, it is financed by the PHARE budget and implemented by the Delegation of the Commission. Details of the precise funding for the overall and individual programmes, and the actual implementation of the Communication Strategy can be found in the regular updates that are available on the web site of the Commission at http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/communication/index.htm.