

Reply

(21 November 2001)

The meeting that took place on 5 March 2001 in Brussels between the Belgian Prime Minister, Mr Guy Verhofstadt, the Belgian Foreign Minister, Mr Louis Michel and President Mugabe of Zimbabwe was organised at the request of President Mugabe.

The private meeting that took place on 6 March 2001 in Paris between the President of the French Republic, Mr Jacques Chirac and President Mugabe of Zimbabwe was requested by President Mugabe. The Council was neither instrumental in the setting up of either of these meetings, nor did it participate in them.

Since the beginning of March this year the EU has decided to enter into a constructive, critical and balanced dialogue with Zimbabwe guided by the spirit of Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement. The EU started this dialogue with the objective of exchanging information and fostering mutual understanding on issues which the EU considers to be fundamental in the relationship between the parties, and which are also covered by the text of the above Agreement (Article 9).

At its meeting on 25 June 2001, the Council noted the lack of substantial progress in the ongoing political dialogue with the Government of Zimbabwe and expressed its deep concern over recent developments in that country. It stressed that as a first priority the dialogue should yield rapid and tangible results in a number of areas (an end to political violence, full access for the EU, concrete action to protect the freedom of the media, independence of the judiciary and respect for its decisions, and an end to the illegal occupation of properties).

The Council agreed to closely follow developments in these areas, as well as on overall questions regarding the rule of law, economic policies and the land reform, over the following two months, and to take appropriate measures if substantial progress had not been made.

(2002/C 81 E/028)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1384/01

by **Marco Pannella (TDI) to the Commission**

(27 April 2001)

Subject: Vietnam

On 10 April 2001 the deputy leader of the Unified Buddhist Church in Vietnam, the Venerable Thich Quang Do, informed the International Buddhist Information Office that the Vietnamese police had cut the telephone lines of the Thanh Minh Zen monastery in Ho Chi Minh City. Communications by means of mobile telephones were subsequently jammed, since when nothing more has been heard of Mr Thich Quang Do.

On the eve of the Ninth Congress of the PCV [Vietnamese Communist Party], Mr Thich Quang Do issued a call for democracy in Vietnam to the country's leaders, whom he asked to initiate a process, based on a broad popular alliance of groups and individuals of every political and religious hue, which would bring about a peaceful transition to democracy. Following this call, Mr Thich Quang Do was threatened with arrest.

What information does the Commission hold regarding Mr Thich Quang Do's whereabouts and his state of health? Has the Commission already taken (or does it intend to take) steps to remind the Vietnamese communist authorities of their obligation to guarantee freedom of opinion and association in Vietnam?

More generally, what action does the Commission intend to take in order to ensure that the new leaders of the PCV finally initiate the political and institutional reforms which will enable democracy, constitutional government and a proper market economy to be established?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission

(31 May 2001)

Mr Thich Quang Do has been located at the Than Minh Zen Monastery in Ho Chi Minh City. He is reported to be in good health, taking into account his age (75 years) and the fact that he suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure.

The Delegation of the Commission in Hanoi, together with the diplomatic missions to Vietnam of the Member States, follows closely matters of concern in the field of human rights and participates in all actions to convey the Union's concerns to the Vietnamese authorities. The Commission will continue to raise particular issues of concern in the course of these contacts.

(2002/C 81 E/029)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1400/01

by Christos Zacharakis (PPE-DE) to the Council

(7 May 2001)

Subject: Situation in Turkish prisons

In its resolution of 18 January 2001 Parliament called on the Turkish authorities to take the necessary legal and administrative measures forthwith to put an end to the dire situation in Turkish prisons, and urged Turkey to respect its obligations as a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights and the international conventions on torture. Three months on, however, the situation has deteriorated. According to reliable information, 49 people have died, dozens have suffered permanent damage to their health, and the number on hunger strike has risen to 2000.

Given that Parliament's appeal to the Turkish Government and the Council of Europe's representations have been ignored, what immediate measures will the Council take to make it clear to Turkey that respect for human rights and the rule of law are a condition of any cooperative relations between that country and the European Union?

Reply

(27 November 2001)

The Council deeply regrets that the hunger strikes have led to loss of life. Turkey has adopted new laws, which inter alia reduce the isolation of prisoners. Further measures to improve prison standards are in preparation. The Council recalls the medium term undertakings given by Turkey in the framework of the Accession Partnership in relation to adjusting detention conditions in prisons to bring them into line with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and other international norms.

More generally, the Council reiterates the priority undertakings given in the short term, in the same context, to:

- strengthen legal provisions and undertake all necessary measures to reinforce the fight against torture practices, and ensure compliance with the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture.
- further align legal procedures concerning pre-trial detention with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and with recommendations of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture.

The EU will continue to press for the early entry into force and full and genuine implementation of these measures including implementing fully the recommendations of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture issued in January 2001.