

(2003/C 280 E/011)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2607/02

by Graham Watson (ELDR) to the Commission

(18 September 2002)

Subject: EU aid to Afghanistan

Would the Commission confirm whether the EU's pledged contribution of EUR 22 million of humanitarian aid for Afghanistan has been received in its entirety?

If it has not, how much aid has been received to date?

Can the Commission explain the reason for any delay, and advise of the timescale it has for fulfilling the pledge?

Answer given by Mr Nielson on behalf of the Commission

(8 November 2002)

The humanitarian aid office (ECHO) has so far committed EUR 63,254 million. The initial programming of EUR 35 million clearly proved insufficient. Therefore, ECHO requested from the EC emergency reserve a strengthening of its funding capacity. A further EUR 25 million was granted to ECHO for the region. A second request was presented recently to the budgetary authority to increase the global allocation to EUR 70 million.

This clearly shows that ECHO has far exceeded the EUR 35 million which had been initially programmed for the region; this is partly due to the necessity of sustaining the massive return of Afghan refugees to their homeland after years spent in Iran and Pakistan.

Out of this EUR 63,254 million, EUR 45,609 million has already been allocated to the NGOs as well as international organisations and operations are on going. The latest financing decision amounting to EUR 17,645 million is about to be approved by the Commission. Once approval of the EC is granted, the contracts will be issued shortly afterwards.

Please find below a short explanation of each of the decisions adopted so far this year:

- a first decision amounting to EUR 17,085 million was approved on 5 April 2002. The projects aim to relieve all the vulnerable populations still affected by the drought as well as the remaining caseload of Internally Displaced People present in the country. At that time the inflow of returnees had already started on a massive scale, therefore ECHO had to respond by shelter and primary health care programmes to sustain the reintegration. Some projects are about to finish but most of them are on going;
- a second decision amounting to EUR 2,050 million was approved on the 26 April 2002 to bring emergency assistance to the people affected by the earthquake, which devastated the district of Nahreen. All projects are on going;
- a third decision amounting to EUR 9,250 million was approved on 11 June 2002. This decision aimed to support the repatriation and reintegration process of returnees. Some assistance was also provided to the new Afghan refugee caseload in Pakistan. All operations are on going;
- a fourth decision amounting to EUR 0,5 million was approved on 24 July 2002 to bring emergency assistance to the people affected by the earthquake in Iran. The operation with IFRC is on going;
- a fifth decision amounting to EUR 16,724 million was approved on 9 August 2002.

The main focus are the following:

- assistance to the drought affected population in Afghanistan and Pakistan,
- support to the returnees before winter through shelter and health programmes
- assistance to the new Afghan refugee caseload in Pakistan.

Operations are well on track.

The sixth decision amounting to EUR 17 645 million is currently at the internal consultation stage and should be approved by the Commission shortly.

A table indicating precisely the contents of the decision is sent direct to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat.

(2003/C 280 E/012)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2641/02

by Daniel Hannan (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(20 September 2002)

Subject: EU sanctions damaging EU businesses

In my constituency there is a company which imports apples from America outside the English season. These are now subject to 100 % import duty. The result is that the company fears for its own viability and for the futures of its 70 employees.

This seems wholly unjust, as well as illogical. EU business interests, EU jobs and EU consumer choice are being damaged by these sanctions.

Will the Commission reconsider this question and remove apples from the list of sanctioned goods?

Answer given by Mr Lamy on behalf of the Commission

(8 October 2002)

The Honourable Member is misinformed. Apples are not currently subject to 100 per cent import duty.

In response to the protectionist and World Trade Organisation (WTO) incompatible American steel safeguards, the Commission acted to preserve all the Community's rights under the WTO agreements. This included putting forward the proposal that was adopted by the Council on 13 June 2002⁽¹⁾.

The purpose of this Regulation was to encourage the United States not to apply additional tariffs to steel products of interest to European exporters and to withdraw its safeguard measure as soon as it is condemned by the WTO. Failing to act in this way to limit the damage the American measures will cause to the European steel industry would indeed have threatened Union business interests and Union jobs.

The Regulation has two annexes. Annex II lists products originating in the United States on which additional duties ranging from 8 to 30 % would be imposed unless the United States withdraws its safeguard measures when they are condemned by the WTO (sometime next year).

Annex I lists of products on which a 100 % additional duty could be imposed before that date. However, the effective application of this additional duty would require a new Council Decision, as specified in Article 3 of the Regulation. This issue will be considered at the Council's September 2002 session. As a result, although red apples are indeed listed in Annex I, no additional duty has yet been imposed on these or any other products.

Finally, to take account of the exclusion of some steel products from the American safeguard measures, the Commission will re-examine all the products included on the lists before any additional duties are levied on imports from the United States.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1031/2002 of 13 June 2002 establishing additional customs duties on imports of certain products originating in the United States of America — OJ L 157, 15.6.2002.