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EUROPE MATTERS: MARCH 2009

E-NEWSLETTER

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the March edition of my newsletter! Please feel free to pass this to friends, family and colleagues. If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please email me with "unsubscribe" as the subject header.

*Thank you for your support,
Catherine*

Gordon Brown's Address to the European Parliament

On Tuesday 24 March 2009, Gordon Brown delivered a powerful speech to the European Parliament on preparation for the G20 Summit on 2 April. The Summit will be held against the backdrop of the worst financial crisis since the 1930s.

On 2 April 2009 world leaders – who represent 85% of the worlds output – will meet in London to lay the foundations for a sustainable economic recovery.

Gordon Brown's speech today in Strasbourg illustrates Labour's commitment to strong European cooperation to tackle the global economic downturn. We cannot act alone. We need to act together. There is a European way and the Prime Minister is taking the lead in contrast to the UK Tories and the SNP. The forthcoming G20 summit is an opportunity for Gordon Brown, and other world leaders, to push for internationally co-ordinated policy measures, which will help to kickstart the world economy and prevent our economies from slipping into a deeper recession.

Icelandic Financial Crisis

Could Iceland become the next member of the EU?

Last autumn the global financial crisis claimed its first victim: Iceland. By January 2009 the Icelandic government had collapsed. Relative to the size of its economy, the Icelandic banking collapse is the largest suffered by any country in economic history.

At this moment in time, Icelanders are contemplating the values of their country and are asking lots of questions. Nevertheless, although Iceland is the first victim of the global economic crisis, it is likely to be the first country to come out of it. Iceland has a lot to offer the EU. It is rich in natural energy and could readily find a market in energy exports to the EU. There is the potential that the EU could jointly fund an energy pipeline from Iceland, via the Faroes and into Scotland, to be hooked up the EU grid. And could the EU not learn from Iceland on fisheries management?

The 50th Anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising

The European Parliament has followed the events in Tibet closely over the years. To mark the 50th Anniversary of the Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule, the European Parliament adopted a resolution urging the Chinese government to resume talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives. The Parliament's resolution condemns all acts of violence and repression toward the Tibetan people and requests that the Chinese authorities allow foreign media access to Tibet.

I recently met with a former Tibetan political prisoner Palden Gyatso. Mr. Gyatso spent over 30 years in Chinese prisons and labour camps, yet he has never given up the struggle for the Tibetan people. Since his release in 1992, he has toured the world highlighting the cause of Tibet and advocating non-violence around the world.

Mr. Gyatso was in Edinburgh for a screening of *Fire Under Snow*, which is a documentary on his life and time in prison.

The Crisis in Darfur

The United Nations (UN) has described Darfur as the 'worst humanitarian crisis' in the world. The situation is desperate. According to the UN, up to 4.7 million people, including 2.7 million internally displaced persons, are in need of urgent assistance.

The Sudanese government want to expel 13 non-governmental agencies from the area. This cannot be allowed to happen. The UN estimates that this move will put more than 1 million lives at risk.

I cannot stress enough the overriding need to allow agencies to continue with their life-saving work.

White Ribbon Alliance for Safer Motherhood

I was appalled to discover that 40% of women globally give birth without any skilled assistance. On any day over 1400 women will die during pregnancy or childbirth, either because there is no health care service available or they cannot afford it.

This is a humanitarian crisis that is affecting the poorest women in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The global financial crisis brings real challenges to funding global health care; however, we cannot neglect the fact that there is lack of effective medical care in many parts of the world.

On Mothers' Day, Labour MEPs added their support to the White Ribbon Alliance for Safer Motherhood. It is vital that the EU reaches its target of spending 20% of development aid on building more adequate health care systems to make childbirth safer.

European Elections 2009: Awareness Campaign

On 17 March the European Parliament launched a European Elections Awareness Campaign. One of the highlights of the campaign is the construction of 3D sculptures that illustrate the way in which the European Parliament has an effect on people's lives and why voting in the elections really matters. Another exciting aspect of the campaign is that there will also be multimedia "Choice Boxes" placed in towns and cities all over the UK, which will give voters the chance to record their opinions on the issues and choices facing the European Parliament. A sample of these recordings will be presented in Brussels on big screens and also on EuroParlTV and YouTube. Keep your eye out for the sculptures and "Choice Boxes" in Edinburgh and Glasgow! For more information, log onto <http://www.europarl.org.uk>.

The campaign for the European elections is certainly in full swing! Over the next few weeks, I will be travelling the length and breadth of Scotland to meet with constituents and to listen their concerns. If you would like an update on the campaign and to learn more about what Labour in Europe can do for you, please contact my office.

Get in Touch

For more information about my work in the Parliament, or if you require any additional information about the forthcoming elections, please do not hesitate to contact my office – I am happy to help!

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