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**EUROPE MATTERS: JANUARY 2010**

**E-NEWSLETTER**

*Hello! Happy New Year and welcome to the first of my e-newsletters for 2010.*

*Please feel free to pass this onto friends, family and work colleagues.*

*Thank you for your continued support,*

*Catherine*

## **20:20 Vision**

The next decade will be a critical period in the economic history of Britain and Europe. The collapse of the global financial markets, in late 2008, underpinned the sheer importance of inter-dependency and working together to fight crises.

The EU 2020 – currently in its consultation stage – is being designed as the successor to the Lisbon Strategy. A key focus of the EU 2020 Strategy is to create a well resourced, knowledge-based economy. It cannot be understated how vital it is for people to have at least basic skills and knowledge in subjects such as mathematics, science and languages, in order to equip them for the work force. Knowledge and practical skills are the tools most needed for successful transition from education and industry.

Unfortunately millions of people throughout Europe are effectively excluded from the labour market, due to their lack of skills or education. I was shocked to discover that one in five Scots have known reading or writing difficulties. That is why I fully support investing more in education, work place training and lifelong learning. By doing this, we will go a long way toward building a British and European work force that is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

For more information on the EU 2020, please visit <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/>

## **Copenhagen Outcomes Disappoint**

Copenhagen was hugely disappointing. Despite all the warming signs of global climate change and the impact that is already having on Earth, we were unable to secure a concrete agreement at the Copenhagen Conference last month. This is unacceptable.

It is absolutely vital that the major carbon emitters – namely the US, China, Japan, India and the EU – meet as soon as possible in 2010 and set a deal, before it's too late. It cannot be underestimated how crucial it is that we all reach a universal agreement on reducing CO2 emissions that will limit increases in the average global temperature to no more than two degrees C°. At the Copenhagen no legally binding targets were set. Instead 'recognition' that temperature rises should be limited to no more than 2 degrees C° were included. One

consolation, however, was a promise to deliver £62 billion a year by 2020 to help developing nations tackle the scourge of climate change.

## **EU Commissioner Hearings**

Since returning from the Christmas break, the Parliament has been extremely busy. From 11 – 19 January the new Commissioner's Hearings were held. These Hearings were an opportunity for the MEPs to meet with the new Commissioners, to enter into open dialogue and to question the priorities of the Commission. They were, in effect, 'job interviews' as Parliament will be voting whether or not to approve the new Commission on 26 January. If approved, the Commissioner's will serve for a five year term, and be accountable to the Parliament. Bulgaria's nominee for the post of EU Commissioner – Rumiana Jeleva – withdrew her candidacy following the power of MEPs who questioned her financial interests and business associations.

At Commissioner Semeta's Hearing (he is responsible for Taxation and Customs Union, Audit and Anti-Fraud) I expressed my concern about the proliferation of falsified medicines in Europe. The EU must strengthen its measures to protect all citizens from the dangers of counterfeiting and piracy. It is absolutely shocking the number of people who suffer further ill-health, or even death, from purchasing 'fake' medicines.

## **Tough Legislation to Tackle Caffeinated Alcohol**

The health risks and social costs associated with caffeinated alcohol are astronomical. A recent police report confirmed that 5,000 crime reports, 500 of which were violent, have been linked with caffeinated alcoholic drinks. The sheer levels of caffeine, mixed with the alcohol, renders such drinks as dangerous and there is a growing concern that young people across Scotland and Europe are abusing these substances. In recent years there has been a serious crackdown in the US following the rise of 'energy beers'. In 2007, a study conducted at Polmont Young Offenders institute revealed that 40% of the offenders who had been drinking before their offence, had consumed an caffeinated alcoholic drink.

As a member of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, I have recommended that the EU looks into the banning of caffeinated alcoholic drinks. Such a move would be of great benefit to Scottish consumers, the police and the local community who for long enough have suffered as result of this phenomenon.

## **Haiti**

The humanitarian disaster in Haiti following the earthquake needs our response – urgently.

While the international response to the Haiti earthquake has been swift, the victims still desperately need our help. If you decide to donate money or alternative aid, such as food or clothing to Haiti, please be mindful of the charity that you pick. Check beforehand that it is a recognised charity, with a registered website.

The Big Give, funded by the Reed Foundation, managed to optimise donations by pledging to double the amount raised for the emergency appeal. As far as the Charities Trust is concerned, the matched donation initiative is the first of its kind in the UK.

Although the Big Give are no longer doubling donations for Haiti, they have managed to raise over £13,000 so far thanks to their scheme. You can still make a donation by visiting their website [www.thebiggive.org.uk](http://www.thebiggive.org.uk)

### **Get in Touch!**

For more information about my work in the Parliament, please do not hesitate to contact my office. Remember I am here to represent you, so if there is any issue that you would like me help with, just get in touch.

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