

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

INVITED COMMITTEES:

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COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND DEFENCE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

CONFIRMATION HEARING OF

KAJA KALLAS

VICE-PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
SECURITY POLICY

(Foreign Affairs and Security Policy)

TUESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2024

BRUSSELS

1-0002-0000

IN THE CHAIR: DAVID MCALLISTER*Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs*

1-0003-0000

(The hearing opened at 09:01)

1-0004-0000

David McAllister, *Chair of the AFET Committee*. – Dear colleagues, dear guests, a very warm welcome to you all, to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and, of course, especially to Ms Kallas, the designate for the post of the Vice-President of the European Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. In addition to the members of AFET, let me welcome our colleagues from the invited committees, namely DEVE, INTA and FEMM, and our subcommittees, DROI and SEDE, and I see the chairs are already present – a warm welcome to you, dear colleagues.

The purpose of this confirmation hearing is twofold. On the one hand, we will evaluate whether the Vice-President-designate is qualified to be a member of the College of Commissioners. And on the other hand, we will assess whether she demonstrates the appropriate level of expertise in her prospective portfolio.

This hearing, dear colleagues, presents a key moment in parliamentary scrutiny of our executive, because it increases the accountability of the Commission to Parliament. On 22 October, we received Ms Kallas replies to our written questions. Her responses have been distributed to Members and published also on Parliament's website. The JURI Committee assessed the question of potential or actual conflict of interest and has not raised objection to the holding of the hearing.

Now, please allow me to very briefly describe the structure of this hearing. Firstly, the Vice-President-designate will be invited to give an opening oral statement of no longer than 15 minutes. Thereafter, we will turn to the questions from the Members. The questions will be structured in four rounds.

As we are all now very aware, in the first round we will have the questions by the eight political groups. In that round, we will have 5-minute slots, including the possibility of a follow-up question from the same Member. In the second round, we will have the questions by the Members based on the overall distribution of speaking time among the political groups, including a representative from the non-attached Members. In that round, we will have 3-minute slots.

In the third round, we will have the questions by the chairs of the invited committees. These will also be 3-minute slots. The fourth and final round of questions will be once again by the eight political groups in reverse order, also with 3-minute slots. At the end of the hearing, the Vice-President-designate will have 5 minutes to make her closing statement.

Please note that the total time of this hearing is strictly limited to 3 hours. We have a lot of speakers and there's absolutely no reserve, and it is my job to stick to these 3 hours. Therefore, I ask all colleagues to respect the allocated speaking time. You will have only 1 minute to ask your question and 1 minute is, by the way, 60 seconds. Please don't start arguing with me if a minute might be 70, 80 or 90 seconds, it simply isn't. For 2 500 years, 1 minute is actually 60 seconds, and I don't think we should change that, at least not in today's meeting. So please respect the time limit.

I would also like to recall that under our Rules, the hearing shall aim to 'develop a pluralistic political dialogue between the Commissioners-designate and the Members', and that the Commissioners

designate should 'enjoy a fair opportunity to present themselves and their opinions'. Therefore, dear colleagues, please respect the smooth conduct of this hearing. And it also goes without saying that we cannot tolerate any disruption of the good order, any improper behaviour or any offensive language.

Interpretation will be provided in 23 official languages. All speakers can therefore use their own language. But I would like to kindly remind you that you need to be interpreted, therefore please don't speak too quickly. The hearing will be streamed live on Parliament's website, and it will also be possible to access a video recording within a few minutes after the hearing.

Before I now give the floor to you, dear Kaja Kallas, I would like to stress the importance this committee puts on close cooperation and dialogue between the Vice-President / High Representative and the European Parliament. We acknowledge your readiness to cooperate with Parliament, in particular regarding your engagement to be regularly present in committees and plenaries, to follow up on Parliament's initiatives, and to timely share information with us. This is particularly important in the context of the revision of the Framework Agreement. We count on the full implementation of your commitments and on your full cooperation to also inform my committee in advance of all upcoming proposals.

The growing instability and the rise of unprecedented challenges in the immediate new European neighbourhood and the international environment certainly demand close and efficient cooperation for EU actions on the global scene.

A final point: within the last years, specifically, Parliament's role in the EU's external action has grown, combining its legislative, budgetary and scrutiny powers with multiple forms of engagement with countries and societies from outside the EU. Therefore, it is important to reinforce the parliamentary dimension of the external action of the EU, and ensure close interinstitutional policy, dialogue and cooperation.

That's all from my side. We now kick off and I give the floor to Kaja Kallas for her opening statement of 15 minutes.

1-0005-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, honourable Chair, honourable Members, it's always a pleasure to be here in the European Parliament. You know, 10 years ago, I was actually in your seat questioning the Commissioner-designate. I never would have imagined that I would be in the hot seat today, but here I am. So today, I'm here to ask for your confidence in me to be the next High Representative of the Union, as well as the Vice-President of the Commission.

The European Union, for me, above all means freedom. Estonia's painful past has taught us the value of freedom – what it means to live without it, but also what it means to live with it. I grew up behind the Iron Curtain, with no choices and no freedom. Since we regained our independence, I've had the chance to live a life full of opportunity, democracy and freedom.

As a country, Estonia had the same chance. As soon as we escaped the Soviet prison, we joined the European Union and NATO. We vowed that we would never be alone again. Together, we are so much stronger. And this is why – should you confirm me in this post – I will do my utmost to serve the European interest and strengthen the European Union's position in the world.

This will not be an easy 5 years. There is a full-scale war going on in the European continent: Russia's against Ukraine. I see autocratic coalitions forming around us and menacing geopolitical shifts

taking place all across the world. I see actors such as Russia, China, North Korea, Iran aiming to change the rules-based international order. I see China and Russia weaponising interdependencies and exploiting the openness of our societies against us. We must be aware of what the threat is and respond accordingly, together with our closest allies and partners, and without losing one inch of who we are.

The EU has so much to offer: for our own citizens, in the values we stand for, and the fundamental rights, opportunities and security that we provide. And for our partners: as a champion of peace, prosperity and a world where might does not make right. We must leverage what we have. Do better, if you will. Listen better, if you will.

Honourable Members, there are two urgent priorities very close to us: Russia's war against Ukraine and the open conflict in the Middle East. Victory for Ukraine is a priority for us all. The situation on the battlefield is very difficult and that is why we must keep on working every day – today, tomorrow and for as long as it takes – and with as much military, financial and humanitarian aid as needed. This must be underpinned by a clear path for Ukraine to join the European Union. What we fight for here is European security and European principles. This is our defence of the UN Charter and the global principles behind it.

In the Middle East, conflict rages on, following the heinous attacks against Israel on 7 October last year. My heart goes out to every victim and their loved ones. In the European Union. I see strong unity among Member States on these fundamental points: first, the need for an immediate ceasefire and unconditional release of all hostages; second, calling on all parties to exercise utmost restraint; third, our focus on humanitarian support; and fourth, our unwavering commitment to the two-state solution, with the EU's support for the Palestinian Authority and Israel's right to exist recognised across the region.

This is a good basis for our political and diplomatic work to help to end the open conflict, and also to be ready for the day after. As President von der Leyen has said, whatever the current difficulties, our responsibility is to work for a better future.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is a motto I often repeat: our neighbour's problems today are our problems tomorrow. For most of our neighbours, the European Union has a strong power of attraction – from the Western Balkans to Ukraine. As one voter said as she left the polling booth last month in Moldova: Europe offers a life with choices. Enlargement is a geostrategic investment that is in the European Union's own interest. It makes our Union stronger. It makes new members of the European family more stable and secure, and it makes us all prosper. In the next five years, we need clear results here. I will work hand in hand with the Commissioner for enlargement to achieve this goal.

Likewise, I will work together with the Commissioner for the Mediterranean, with the dedicated pact for the region. By working together with our partners across the Mediterranean, building comprehensive, mutually beneficial and respectful partnerships, we will strengthen regional stability and economic integration.

Our freedom to move within the European Union is one of our most treasured assets. We must protect our external borders for it to work. We cannot be both borderless inside and out. I will work together with the Commissioner for migration to build comprehensive, tailor-made, mutually beneficial partnerships. This is what our citizens expect from us. By combining our work across many areas, we can protect our external borders and prevent loss of life, while addressing the root causes of migration in the best way possible.

Honourable Members, the world is shifting. We Europeans are sometimes still unaware of our own power and resources, but we cannot afford this any longer. We need to get our act together, together with our partners around the globe. We can defeat every threat that comes our way if we stay united – from 'cyber-attacks' to information manipulation and external hostility against our democratic processes. We have successfully turned away from Russian fossil fuels to build up our own energy security.

I will work to safeguard the European Union's geopolitical and economic security, too. This is central to our engagement with China, for example. China has changed over the past few years. It is now more a competitor and a systemic rival. Our dependencies towards China in key sectors are our vulnerability. We need to de-risk.

There are two pressing challenges here: structural imbalances between the EU and China that have created unfair competition, and China's support to Russia. Without China's support to Russia, Russia would not be able to continue its war with the same force. China needs to also feel the higher cost.

Likewise, in the Indo-Pacific, our existing relations with Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, and with other South-East Asian partners, can help us navigate tensions in the region, including the South China Sea.

Honourable Members, today we fear an open war on our continent that absorbs us all. Let us turn this fear into action. We cannot accept that Russia, Iran and North Korea produce more equipment and ammunition than the whole Euro-Atlantic community. We need to invest more in defence and shoulder more responsibility. We have the means to outproduce them. I will work with the Commissioner for defence on this.

We must also improve our readiness to face new kinds of security challenges. This calls for a drastic change of mindset across all layers of society – a readiness to defend the Union because we are proud to be part of it. The new stronger Europe will also make a stronger NATO. In an unstable world, we need strong alliances. The transatlantic relationship is the biggest economic and security partnership in the world. It has brought prosperity and security to both sides of the Atlantic. As with all partnerships, they must be built on what works best for both sides. This will not change. The EU and the United States are stronger and safer when we work together.

We will strengthen our mutual security by working more closely with the United Kingdom. Our relationship with India has so much unexplored potential. I will work together with other Commissioners to form a new strategic agenda. Likewise with Africa: our 2025 summit with the African Union is a major opportunity to discuss our common agenda. This will only work if it is a partnership of equals, in which our cooperation spans skills to trade, migration to climate change and resilience. The upcoming summit with the Latin American and Caribbean countries is an opportunity to do the same. We can deepen our ties to this region because we share so many values and interests.

Honourable Members, peace is not merely the absence of war. It is daily work for justice, human rights and a better life for all. This is what I want us to keep channelling through our partnerships on the ground.

I'm also wholeheartedly committed to promoting a just and inclusive green transition by intensifying the EU's green diplomacy, as well as the implementation of global commitments in this regard.

Honourable Members, the European Union has an immense power of attraction in our quality of life. We carry a huge economic weight, and we are both a rising security and a long-standing geopolitical actor. Should you confirm me, my job is to make the best use of these exceptional qualities to open the door to a better and brighter future for our citizens, together with our partners across the world. I hope – of course if you confirm me – that you will put me under the same scrutiny as you have my predecessors. And as an ally of this House, I promise to inform you and ensure your views are part of our foreign policy decisions.

I also believe that we all must engage more with our citizens on foreign policy, because we should be looking forward and constantly striving to be better together: with regions and countries who share our views, our values and geopolitical interests; with partners with whom we seek to form mutually respectful and mutually beneficial relations; and with our European citizens, who expect us to stick to who we are and work for a better future. Thank you.

1-0006-0000

David McAllister, *Chair of the AFET Committee*. – Vice-President-designate, thank you for your opening statement.

We start now with the first round of questions by representatives of the eight political groups. You have 1 minute for the question and 2 minutes for the answer. And only in this round, there is a possibility of a follow-up question from the same Member. Once again, this is no longer than 1 minute and then 1 minute for the reply.

1-0007-0000

Michael Gahler (PPE). – Our approach towards meaning acting in support of Ukraine is the key challenge and most important issue to be addressed from the very beginning of your mandate.

While one major challenge is to keep the unity inside the EU, the other one is how to interact with the new Trump administration. As you will be in office before the new US administration, do you nevertheless plan to contact and impact on the incoming team already ahead of the 20 January to acquaint them with our points of view? Could you already illustrate how you see the division of labour in future between them and us?

Do you plan to commit our Member States to your suggestion, as Estonian Prime Minister, to invest 0.25 % of the GNP in support of Ukraine? In your introductory statement, you did not explicitly refer to it. Or would that only be your worst case contingency planning in case the US would drop out almost completely out of the Ukraine support?

1-0008-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you for your question. Every time when I, as Estonian Prime Minister, went to the United States, I always met with representatives of both parties, both Democrats as well as the Republicans, and I've already had good contacts with a few of the people who are close to the President-elect in the United States. For example, I've met the Vice-President JD Vance and I've met also several people that are engaging with the policies in the United States.

I think, of course, we will seek connections, we will seek meetings with the incoming President-elect and his team to form common policies, because what I see globally, around the world, is that we are the strongest allies and we have to keep sticking together. If the United States is worried about what

happens in the South China Sea, they should be most worried about how we react to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, so it is also in their interest to do so.

What comes to different initiatives, then we have had many. I mean, I was happy to read that, for example, my initiative on one million rounds of artillery shells to Ukraine has now reached – better late than never – but it's still achieved.

On the 0.25 %, I still feel that, you know, if everybody could do this 0.25 %, we could outlast Russia in this regard. So, I hope that I will try to convince others also to go with this initiative because it is very important to the security of our continent, but not only, to the global security as a whole.

1-0009-0000

Michael Gahler (PPE). – Thank you very much. A follow-up question.

As a multi-hatted person, being Commission Vice-President, High Representative, presiding over the Foreign Affairs Council and being the head of the European Defence Agency, your task is to see to it that the interinstitutional cooperation runs smoothly, and that your experts in the defence agency and those working under the command of the Defence Commissioner - who control the budget that - do not afford interinstitutional infighting.

How do you plan to arrange this cooperation with your colleague Kubilius?

How could one organise joint daily work on projects that have been identified to be prioritised?

And could you even imagine that some of them permanently sit together and work on a daily basis, in spite of having different payrolls?

1-0010-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Yes, thank you. This is a very good question.

I think that regarding European taxpayers as well as our partners outside Europe, we are one team Europe. So that's how we should also work.

I've already sat down with the Commissioners-designate that are in my cluster, but also with those that I will work very closely with, including the Commissioner for defence, Andrius Kubilius. We share a common view and a common goal as to how we should divide the work. We should also reflect or mirror this back to the institutions: please do not inter-fight with each other over who has competences over what! We have to focus on what we have to get done and executed and implemented.

I really see the willingness on Andrius Kubilius's side to work together, as well as I have the will to do it. I see the willingness of other Commissioners as well. I really want to have this Team Europe spirit.

1-0011-0000

Yannis Maniatis (S&D). – Chair, the rules-based international order built on multilateral cooperation is seriously threatened by the resurgence of revisionist international actors promoting the notions of balance of power and exclusive zones of influence.

Traditional alliances such as the Transatlantic Alliance are weakening, as demonstrated by the Trump I administration's withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the Global Migration Pact. The EU had played an instrumental role in securing these agreements, but as a supranational organisation has not the power to effectively counter aggressive, demagogic and revisionist power politics.

With the Trump II administration, an improvement of the rules-based international order over the next years seems not an objective or a priority of the new US administration.

So, which measures will you therefore take to ensure that the EU is able to play an influential and leading role to foster a rules-based international order, and to improve the EU's capacity to act autonomously and be less dependent on others.

1-0012-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – I'm a strong believer in multilateralism, and I intend to work for the multilateralism as well in different organisations.

What we have to do in order for multilateralism to really work is to listen to everybody. Sometimes maybe we can do it better than we have so far. Of course, we have our big allies, big partners that we have in the world, that we share the same values and we work closely together.

But we also have other partners all across the world in Africa and Latin America, Caribbean, that we can work with. They also have their worries regarding the multilateral organisation. So I feel that in order to make the organisation stronger, we really need to listen to them as well in this regard and work for questions that they have. For example, the international financial organisation, access to capital – such that they have addressed in these multilateral fora.

Of course, the United States is our biggest ally. It continues to be so. We work closely together with them to achieve results.

1-0013-0000

Yannis Maniatis (S&D). – Now currently, credibility, consistency and effectiveness of EU external action are at their lowest due to the diverging and sometimes competing interests of the Member States, as exemplified lately by the damaging Hungarian EU Presidency that does not follow EU position but its own agenda, as well as by the multiplicity of actors involved in the EU external action.

Question: how will you as Vice-President / High Representative make sure that EU external action is coherent and that there is clarity over the competences of all institutional actors responsible for the external representation of the EU?

1-0014-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – We are 27 different countries and 27 different democracies. So, of course, working together is much harder than autocracies where you just decide, but it has its benefits: when we get our decisions together, then we work as one.

We have so much leverage that we can use, of course, when we come to common decisions. Of course, we see the obstacles how to reach these common positions, and we need to work very hard to reach those common positions.

We have the Treaties in place. In the Treaties we have the possibilities also to use different tools to reach common decisions. But the first interest is that everybody is on board; and when we have decided, that we also talk with one with one message. So, to have one message, but several voices that speak. Because this is unique to the European Union, that we have the leverage of 27 countries and also the Commissioners to speak outside the European Union and deliver our message there.

1-0015-0000

António Tânger Corrêa (PFE). – Senhora Alta Representante, em primeiro lugar, diplomacia é acerca de isenção e transparência. Queria perguntar à senhora candidata se está de acordo que se deve ser, no seu posto, isento e independente ou se, pelo contrário, se devem tomar partes. Recentemente, proferiu certas declarações relativamente a Estados-Membros, nomeadamente a Hungria e a Polónia, que não são nada isentas e são bastante polarizadas. A pergunta que lhe faço é se vai fazer assim o seu mandato, como o seu antecessor, ou se vai mudar e vai ser transparente e independente.

A segunda questão é como é que vai criar o Estado palestiniano num território que não tem continuidade territorial e em que dois movimentos, um dos quais terrorista, têm ascendência sobre o povo e ganham eleições? Como é que vai efetivar, de facto, um Estado que não tem condições mínimas para sobreviver neste momento e que está em guerra? Portanto, gostava de saber a sua opinião. Como é que isso vai acontecer?

1-0016-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for your question.

I will work so that the European Union will be around the table, so that we are not left outside the room anywhere.

I was listening to your question, and it sort of implied that I have said something bad about Poland or Hungary. That's not true. I've worked with Hungary and Poland around the European Council table, and it's not always easy to bring everybody's views on board, but there's a real spirit of compromise around that table to find common positions. And I think we should continue with that.

When it comes to a Palestinian state, we work for the two-state solution, and that's why we are also supporting the Palestinian Authority.

Of course, Israel also has to respect their fundamental principles. I mean, one of the founders of Israel, Ben-Gurion, said that Israel is founded on security and justice: two principles. So that also means that the Palestinians have a say in that region. But first, we have to focus on the ceasefire and the release of hostages and humanitarian aid coming to the region.

Besides, all parties need to exercise the utmost restraint in this region, then we can also work for the day after. But in order to talk about the two-state solution, the Palestinian Authority should also have more basis to be more equal in these negotiations.

1-0017-0000

António Tânger Corrêa (PFE). – Muito obrigado pelas explicações. Gostava de lhe perguntar o seguinte: agora vai ser a chefe do Serviço Europeu de Ação Externa – é um serviço que tem apresentado deficiências graves e que pretende ser, digamos, representação diplomática externa de todos os países da União Europeia. Nós somos contra isso, porque isso afeta a soberania dos países,

e não queremos que os serviços diplomáticos dos vários países sejam prejudicados pela atuação desses serviços. Relembro que o Tribunal de Contas da União Europeia fez um péssimo relatório sobre o Serviço. E eu queria perguntar-lhe se, de facto, vai reformar o Serviço numa perspetiva de respeitar as soberanias dos países e dar-lhe mais eficácia, porque, até agora, a eficácia tem sido muito pouca, pouco acrescentou às antigas delegações da Comissão, como era no tempo do Tratado de Maastricht. Vai fazer alguma coisa nesse sentido? E, exatamente, o quê?

1-0018-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – I don't think that acting together somehow hinders the sovereignty of Member States, it's actually the opposite. We have 27 different countries and where there are smaller countries and bigger countries acting together, it makes us all stronger. We don't give anything away, but actually we are stronger with talking to the outside world and I feel that actually the sovereignty of Member States is better protected this way.

Maybe, you know, there are some big countries that are able to do it on their own, but I think the majority – who was the person who said that there are only countries who are small countries and those who don't realise yet that they are small countries? So, this is the case what we have in the European Union and I think the sovereignty of all states is better protected if we do this together.

What comes to the efficiency then, I see a lot of room for improvement there, I agree with you. I mean, having been a prime minister putting together several budgets, I'm really, really aware of, you know, different parts where we can do things better and again, to have this spirit of Team Europe in mind.

1-0019-0000

Adam Bielan (ECR). – Chair, dear Prime Minister, first of all, let me congratulate you for your nomination. I am pleased to see a candidate from our region being considered for this important position.

Your nomination comes at a critical time for the European Union, with the pressing deadline of 2030 for Member States to be prepared for a potential conflict against Russia. We are facing significant defence shortfalls due to decades of underinvestment. Joint procurements alone will not suffice to address these challenges.

Similarly to Mr Gahler, let me ask you, how do you plan to reinforce deterrence against Russia independently of the United States or NATO? Specifically, what measures will you, together with the Commissioner for defence, steer to strengthen the European defence industry, reduce barriers to trade and investment, and provide clear demand signals? How do you plan to involve SMEs and to ensure the capabilities we require, in general, are both interoperable and interchangeable?

1-0020-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – I agree with you that there has been significant underinvestment in defence for a very long time in Europe. In 2014, NATO countries took the defence investment pledge to invest at least 2 % of their GDP in defence. And now we are in 2024 and not everybody is doing this.

The problem with defence is that when you need it, it's actually too late to make decisions. So we have to make decisions now when we are in peacetime in order to be ready when the situation comes. And maybe if we are preparing well enough, we won't have to face the very serious situation

we are talking about, because it also acts as a deterrent to Russia: 'don't even think about Europe because we can fight back.'

Together with the defence Commissioner, in 100 days, we will come up with the white paper on defence. It has different elements. I will spare you now because I don't have so much time to go into details, but we can have discussions I'm sure.

1-0021-0000

Adam Bielan (ECR). – Considering that the European Union and NATO now share 23 members and acknowledging that NATO remains the principal security guarantor for the Euro-Atlantic region, my follow-up question is: how do you envision the EU adding value in areas where NATO is not already active? With Member States having a single defence budget to allocate between EU and NATO initiatives, what is your strategy to ensure complementarity with NATO, avoid duplication of efforts and ultimately restore effective deterrence with Russia?

1-0022-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – I see the European Union and NATO as having two different roles. NATO is a defence alliance, it's a military organisation, whereas the European Union is an economic alliance. We can talk about and think about how we invest in defence, how we boost the defence industry.

So I think that making the European Union stronger in that regard, meaning we also have our own defence industry, also makes NATO stronger. I don't think that the European Union needs separate military powers from NATO, because in the case of a big military crisis, it is very important how the chain of command is, ie. who gives orders to whom. If we have two parallel structures, the ball just might fall between those chairs, and we don't need that.

So I really see really the synergy between NATO and European Union so that NATO prepares the military plans, whereas the European Union and its Member States really focus on how these ammunition and capabilities are fulfilled.

1-0023-0000

Hilde Vautmans (Renew). – Good morning Kaja, and welcome back in this Parliament! We're very glad to see you back here. You've been a colleague of ours a very long time. So we know also your fire and your competence on this matter.

I just came back from the transatlantic dialogue in the States, in Texas, with the delegation of this Parliament. And we were really confronted with the change of leadership in the States. I think all my colleagues mentioned it already. You really feel it also when you're over there. And no matter how you slice it, America is going to distance itself from Europe. That's what we really feel over there.

So for me, I think it's five minutes to midnight for Europe, but also for Ukraine. And I know it's your big passion to combat the war in Ukraine. And when you hear Trump saying, I will end it in a few hours or a few weeks or a few days, my question is:

What do you think that Europe needs to do to help to end this war?

I think that's the first very concrete question I have for you. And that was my minute already.

1-0024-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you for your question, Hilda.

It is true that we need to get our act together, and we have been talking about this for quite some time already, and to really show our resolve in this case that we are behind Ukraine as long as it takes.

Why is it really necessary? When we see what is happening in Russia and what kind of impact the war has on them, of course, their narrative is that, you know, the sanctions don't work and it doesn't have any effect, but it's actually not true.

So they are really hoping to outlast Europe and the allies of Ukraine. And we shouldn't give them that because otherwise the security of Europe is under threat. But also the security of the world is under threat.

If the US is worried about China or other actors, then they should also be worried about how we respond in Russia's war against Ukraine, because we see how Iran, North Korea, China more covertly, and Russia are working together, and these are the alliances we see across the world forming, menacing, I mean, supporting Russia in Ukraine, but also, Iran acting in the Middle East. But also, I mean, Iran's actions in the European Union, if we take Sweden for example.

So these are all the things that we really need to take into account when we talk about this situation with our allies. But it's clear that we have to do more to produce more defence capabilities, ammunition. We have to do more ourselves for Ukraine.

1-0025-0000

Hilde Vautmans (Renew). – You talked about the sanctions against Russia. A very concrete question:

Should we make the sanctions against Russia unlimited in time, instead of renewing them every six months? Because, you know that Europe always takes them for six months, and then Putin reacts immediately by taking sanctions for one year. So he's always ahead of us.

So what do you think of that option?

Secondly, you talked about it yourself. The help that Russia gets from China and North Korea:

How will Europe respond to them concerning their help to Putin in that war?

1-0026-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – First, on the renewal of sanctions. It needs a Member States' decision. So everybody has to approve this. And I've been around the Council table listening to this discussion very, very carefully. And I don't see the unity there.

But I think the positive side is that we are able to renew the sanctions every six months. But yes, it would be best if it would be turned around.

With regards to the other actors, I think we have to be very clear that it has consequences. I mean, China's support for Russia, for example, it also should signal to China that it has a higher cost for them. I mean, Iran, it's also a question how we should respond. So we should discuss among the Member States, considering what we see Iran doing in the Middle East, what they do with their

nuclear program, how they are intervening inside the European Union. If we take the Swedish example.

So, what more should we wait for to really come up with a stronger plan in this regard? And, and I'm willing to take this up and discuss with the foreign ministers.

1-0027-0000

Hannah Neumann (Verts/ALE). – We are very happy to have you here, Kaja Kallas. With Donald Trump in power in the US and those undermining human rights and international law closing their ranks, namely – you said it – Russia, Iran and North Korea, the EU is needed more than ever. More than ever to protect the universal values of human rights, international law and just peace, and to support all those fighting for these values under dire circumstances.

While these aspects were somehow absent from your mission letter, you alluded to them in your replies to Parliament. However, I'm still trying to get a sense of your level of ambition there. So what do you intend to do, concretely, to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the EU's external action?

And how will you support human rights defenders, democracy and environmental activists, and civil society organisations in the coming five years? Because in many places around the world, they are actually our closest allies.

1-0028-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Yes, thank you for your question. This is true. Human rights are the fundamental principles of the European Union, so maybe the feeling is that we don't have to repeat it all the time because it's the values we all share and we all fight for. Again, coming from a country that escaped the occupation and built up their own country, we really see the value of the rule of law, for example, for the prosperity of the country as well.

So I agree with you that civil society organisations are our allies in this case, in all countries. I intend to raise the human rights issues wherever we have interactions with our partners, as have my predecessors in this regard. I'm also ready to impose sanctions on the people who violate the human rights, as has been done before.

On democracy, it is also quite worrying that we see that democracies all around the world are in decline. We need to really help those forces that fight for democracy, because democracy really brings prosperity to the people and, therefore, all the worries we have with migration, poverty, are easier to fight. So I intend to invest my time in talking to the human rights organisations and also civil society organisations on the visits, for example.

1-0029-0000

Hannah Neumann (Verts/ALE). – Thank you for your reply. Supporting those fighting for freedom and universal values is one side of the coin, we just spoke about it. The other one is a clear and principled stance towards all those violating these values and fuelling violence.

We are very aware of your strong position when it comes to Russia, and I can tell you that we support you in this regard. We, however, so far, know less on your position towards other aggressive and hegemonic actors.

Will you be equally clear there? What do you mean by what you just said 'taking a clear stand'? Or, more concretely, how will your policy change compared to that of your predecessor? And, more concretely, will you advocate with Member States to finally list the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as what they are – a terror organisation?

1-0030-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Many, many questions there. Of course, violating human rights in all the countries that we deal with, we always have to raise those issues. So all the comprehensive partnerships that we have with those countries also give us the possibility to raise those questions, otherwise we wouldn't be around the table at all, so they wouldn't listen to us as well.

When I talk about comprehensive partnerships, then I think of elements, you know, that we also listen to the other side and listen to what they are interested in, and also what are the views and values that we bring to the table. We need to really take this into account where we are working on the agreements with countries. We are not able to work with perfect democracies all the time and this is the values that we have to raise all the time when we have these types of meetings.

So how am I different from my predecessors? I mean, I'm just different.

1-0031-0000

Marc Botenga (The Left). – Monsieur le Président, merci. Madame Kallas, vous êtes candidate au poste de haute-représentante – c'est un peu la ministre des Affaires étrangères de l'Union européenne, si l'on veut –, alors parlons principes: à la suite de l'invasion illégale de l'Ukraine par la Russie, vous avez dit que la Russie était un État terroriste, que les soldats russes se comportaient en terroristes, entre autres parce que, écriviez-vous dans un tweet, la guerre russe a laissé beaucoup d'Ukrainiens sans eau, sans chauffage. D'ailleurs, cet été, le Haut-Commissariat des Nations unies aux droits de l'homme a évoqué le terrible chiffre d'au moins 641 enfants ukrainiens tués depuis le début de la guerre. C'est un bilan horrible, évidemment.

Maintenant, si on déplace un peu le regard vers Gaza, les Nations unies parlent d'au moins 13 319 enfants palestiniens tués, soit vingt fois plus qu'en Ukraine. Les victimes des bombes israéliennes seraient à 70 % des femmes et des enfants. Israël bloque nourriture, médicaments, eau, et affame une population. Est-ce que, aujourd'hui, vous définiriez le régime israélien comme terroriste? Et l'armée israélienne? Par ailleurs, quelles sanctions proposez-vous contre Israël, qui viole le droit international et les droits de l'homme?

1-0032-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – As I said in the beginning, it is very hard to see all the victims in different conflicts, whether it's in Ukraine, it's in Palestine, in Israel or in Sudan, for example. So, these are the conflicts that we all have to look at and give our most help to this.

I mean, we are focused on giving humanitarian aid to Gaza, for example. We are also the ones who are raising the issues that you pointed out with Israel. We have the association agreement with Israel and there should be also an association council with Israel, where all the Member States can raise the issues that you pointed out to exercise also restraint by all parties to really save the civilians.

In accordance with the humanitarian law, attacking civilians, attacking civilian infrastructure is not allowed anywhere in any conflict, although we see this happening all the time. It's really

heartbreaking to see that and we are trying to make and do our utmost to stop this, but it's very hard.

We have to work together with our allies. We are not here alone. When it comes to Palestine or Gaza, there is the United States that we have to work with in order to achieve peace on the ground. There are Gulf countries that we have to work with to achieve results on the ground, also to work for the day after.

I mean, after I was nominated by the European Council, the first foreign ministers that came to see me were actually the foreign ministers of Jordan and Saudi Arabia to talk about what is happening in the Middle East. I also had the telephone conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt to talk about what we can do together.

1-0033-0000

Marc Botenga (The Left). – Monsieur le Président, je pense que c'est ce «deux poids, deux mesures» qui est justement reproché à l'Union européenne. Quand la Russie viole le droit international, nous sanctionnons. En revanche, quand Israël viole le droit international, nous allons discuter avec les Israéliens.

Permettez-moi d'aller vers l'Afrique: en République démocratique du Congo, des supposés rebelles occupent illégalement un village après l'autre. Il faut y voir la patte du Rwanda et du régime de Paul Kagame. Selon un rapport des Nations unies, le Rwanda intervient au niveau militaire directement sur le territoire congolais, et cela pour y voler, pour y piller les ressources naturelles et pour les vendre à l'Europe.

Que fait l'Europe face à ces violations du droit international et vis-à-vis de la souveraineté congolaise? Eh bien, elle conclut un accord avec le Rwanda sur les matières premières, elle offre un soutien financier aux forces militaires rwandaises. L'un de ses États membres – la Pologne, pour ne pas la citer – offre même une aide militaire massive.

Comment expliquez-vous que l'on réagisse fortement quand la Russie viole la souveraineté ukrainienne, mais que l'on conclue des accords avec le Rwanda quand Kigali occupe illégalement la République démocratique du Congo par le biais d'une intervention militaire?

1-0034-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Regarding Congo, the inclusive dialogue regarding the root causes of the conflict is necessary, and you mentioned this, that it's about critical raw materials. What Europe can do is to help them really to come up with reasonable trade for the critical minerals as well.

I'm glad to see the progress regarding the Rwanda process there. So it is, of course, very difficult to see the Rwandan troops in Congo as well. What the European Union is doing is targeting really restrictive measures, that means sanctions, we have sanctions on over 30 individuals and some entities as well.

So, what we can do there is to really help regarding the critical minerals. I think we also need sustainable trade regarding the critical raw materials because it's also in the interest of us, but we have to work together with our partners in the region to achieve a result in that conflict.

1-0035-0000

Alexander Sell (ESN). – Zweieinhalb Jahre Krieg in der Ukraine, über eine Million Tote, 400 Mrd. Euro nach Kyjiw überwiesen. Donald Trump will das beenden. Der größte Geldgeber der Ukraine wird dann wegfallen. Die Amerikaner sind kriegsmüde. Nur in Brüssel hat sich diese Kriegsmüdigkeit noch nicht eingestellt. Erst kürzlich hat die Kommission weitere Milliarden für Kyjiw versprochen. Mit welchem Ziel? Frau von der Leyen sagt, dass allein die Ziele von Selenskyj die Politik der Europäischen Union bestimmen sollten. Man wolle die Ukraine unterstützen „*for as long as it takes*“.

Frau Kallas, Sie wollen Frau von der Leyens Außenbeauftragte werden. Ich frage Sie deshalb: Erstens, warum verfolgt die Europäische Kommission Ziele, die in Kyjiw formuliert werden? Wäre es nicht besser, unsere eigenen Interessen zu vertreten? Zweitens, werden Sie neben der Unterstützung des Kriegs auch eine diplomatische Lösung anstreben, also das Gespräch mit Selenskyj und Putin suchen? Und schließlich drittens, ist Ihnen der Friedensplan des künftigen amerikanischen Präsidenten bekannt, und werden Sie diesen Plan unterstützen?

1-0036-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you. Everybody wants peace, but there's a difference between peace and peace. We want sustainable peace because if we just give in to the aggressor and say, okay, take what you want, then all the aggressors or would-be aggressors all across the world, would get the note: okay, this pays off!

You go for your neighbour's territories, you kill some people, you kill your own people and then you walk away with more than you had before. That's why we say that we have to support Ukraine, not give in to Russia.

Just to end, if aggression pays off somewhere, it serves as an invitation to use it elsewhere. That is our worry.

1-0037-0000

Alexander Sell (ESN). – Deutschlands Wirtschaft schrumpft, Russlands Wirtschaft wächst. Unsere Sanktionen schaden nicht Russland, sondern uns. Das ist das Ergebnis einer aktuellen Studie des deutschen Wirtschaftsministeriums. Vor drei Jahren exportierten deutsche Unternehmen noch Waren im Wert von 27 Mrd. Euro nach Russland, im vergangenen Jahr nur noch von 9 Mrd. Euro. Wir müssen allerdings feststellen: Nicht alle Unternehmen in Europa halten sich an die Sanktionen. Vor einem Jahr wurde bekannt, dass Ihr Ehemann, Frau Kallas, weiterhin Geschäfte in Russland macht, auch nach Beginn des Krieges. Sie selbst sollen 350 000 EUR investiert haben.

Frau Kallas, in Deutschland stehen ganze Industriezweige vor dem Aus. Tausende Familien in Schwedt, Wolfsburg oder Ludwigshafen werden ihrer Existenzgrundlage beraubt, und zwar durch eine Politik, die Sie zu verantworten haben, für sich selbst aber offenbar nicht gelten lassen. Ich frage Sie deshalb: Wie lassen sich Ihre Forderungen nach Russland-Sanktionen mit dem Russlandgeschäft Ihres Ehemanns vereinbaren?

1-0038-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – First on the question of the Russian economy. This is a Russian narrative that you are repeating. The Russian economy is not doing well.

I give you the facts. The interest rate of the Russian central bank is 20 % – this is how they assess how their economy is doing. The Russian national fund has been completely depleted. And then

the gas revenues that they use to fund the war are not the same as they were before, because Europe is not buying any gas from Russia anymore.

When it comes to the claims regarding my husband, these claims are completely wrong. These have been thoroughly investigated in the Estonian media and all that want to find out the facts can do so.

1-0039-0000

David McAllister, *Chair of the AFET Committee*. – Colleagues, we come now to the second round of questions posed by the Members based on the overall distribution of speaking time among the political groups, including a representative from the non-attached Members: 1 minute for the question and 2 minutes for the answer. No follow-up questions.

1-0040-0000

Sebastião Bugalho (PPE). – Chair, good morning Ms Kallas, on the Taiwan issue, I understand your team will work with a framework of different scenarios. Will any of those contemplate a scenario where we as a Union don't do anything? If the People's Republic of China changes the straight status quo unilaterally and by force, will you work to reinforce our institutional ties with Taiwan and in which areas?

And in Latin America, we are aware that regimes such as Venezuela pose as a proxy for Mr Putin's Russia and are training Hamas and Hezbollah fighters today. Will you commit to fight the Russian threat not only in our continent, not only in our borders, but throughout the world?

Also, artificial intelligence is changing foreign policy. With you, will the European Union lead the way against the proliferation of mass disinformation being used today as a weapon against democracies such as our own?

1-0041-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – So many really different questions. First, on Taiwan, we support no unilateral changes to the status quo. I think this is very important that we work with our Asia Pacific partners to really take down the tensions in the South China Sea. This is in the interest of all of us, considering Taiwan, for example.

What comes to Russian threats all across the globe, I totally agree with you. We see these signs, whether it's in Latin America, in Africa or Asian countries. The misinformation, the competing of narratives, but also the competing of investments and the global power struggle there. So I think what we have to do is be present, but also to show our presence and talk about what we do, because we actually do a lot more than the Chinese or the Russians are doing in these regions.

What comes to the artificial intelligence, of course, this is a new challenge to us all, because it brings just so much more power or leverage to the spread of lies and misinformation. Like Churchill said after the Second World War, lies are halfway across the world when the truth gets its pants on. And now put in today's information area, truth doesn't stand a chance. But we have to work with this, and we also have to use the artificial intelligence to counter this misinformation spread.

1-0042-0000

Marta Temido (S&D). – Senhora Vice-Presidente indigitada, nas suas respostas escritas, afirmou que as orientações políticas da Comissão e a sua carta de missão seriam a sua bússola. No entanto, como já foi referido, na sua carta de missão, estão ausentes as referências aos direitos humanos.

Concretamente, o que lhe queria perguntar é como é que irá garantir que a ação externa da União Europeia continua a ser orientada pelos valores fundamentais.

Por outro lado, nas suas respostas escritas, também referiu que fará dos direitos humanos, da democracia e do Estado de direito a sua prioridade estratégica. Como pretende, portanto, refletir esta prioridade, por exemplo, em áreas como a segurança, a defesa ou o comércio internacional?

E, por último, refere que irá abordar os direitos humanos no seu diálogo com países terceiros e que irá fazer um acompanhamento sistemático da forma como estes são respeitados. Como vai mesmo fazer esse acompanhamento? Podemos esperar, por exemplo, uma avaliação periódica e sistemática para saber se os países cumprem as cláusulas de direitos humanos nos acordos internacionais e nos memorandos de entendimento? Estará disposta a assumir uma posição firme e a apelar para que sejam retiradas consequências do desrespeito grave e persistente dessas cláusulas?

1-0043-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – As I mentioned before, human rights are the basic values of the European Union. This is fundamental to the Treaties and, of course, the Treaties are the guidance for all the work that the Commission does. It's clearly at the centre of European external action as well.

On security and defence, there are important steps that we have to take to ensure human rights are also followed in international humanitarian law. This is what I mentioned before: that in conflicts, it is a breach and violation of humanitarian law when civilians are attacked or civilian infrastructures are attacked, for example.

So in trade agreements, when we have discussions with different countries, we also raise the issues regarding human rights. And I think the European Union is the best organisation to do that, all across the relationships that we have with other countries.

1-0044-0000

Wouter Beke (PPE). – Thank you, Ms Kallas. My question pertains to our approach towards Africa. While there is currently a lot of attention on Ukraine and the Middle East, Africa is one of the continents of the future, where we must invest as a Union. Strategically, it's essential for us to be present on the continent to ensure we have a voice there and not leave it entirely to China or Russia.

There are significant challenges related to demographic shifts, security issues – think of the remarkable presence of the Wagner Group, for example – agriculture, development, migration. Besides, Africa is an essential partner in accessing critical materials and diversifying supply chains, which are now monopolised by China.

Furthermore, I would like to inquire about the focal points of this strategy. Africa is vast and the challenges are numerous, so we will need to concentrate on specific regions and topics. What are your key priorities in this approach?

1-0045-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – I agree with you that Africa is very close to us, and we need to really keep Africa in mind when we talk about global partnerships as well. We have, hopefully coming up, a summit with the African Union in 2025, where we can address all these issues that we have with African countries.

I have met some of the leaders of different African countries, and what I hear back from them is that we need to have equal partnerships – more at eye level – so that we listen to their worries and so that they are able to listen to our worries as well, like it is in all relationships. It has to work for both sides. Like you mentioned, critical raw materials, energy cooperation, cooperation on migration: these are fundamental points that we really have to work on with our African countries.

And also fighting the narratives. We do a lot on the African continent, if you think about the Global Gateway investments, and we don't talk about that much. So I have talked and discussed with other Commissioners that we should also use this leverage that we have in the European Union – not only the foreign ministers, but also the Commissioners – to really cover Africa as a continent, as all countries, to show that this is important to us and cooperation with them is important to us as the European Union.

1-0046-0000

Kinga Gál (Pfe). – Ms Kallas, during the last years, we witnessed from the High Representative declarations made, steps taken, which were very much ideologically party-politically driven, damaging the integrity legitimacy of the EU.

This did not help in the governance conflicts, neither to reach a common position in the Council as, after all, Member States' competence has to be respected in foreign policy.

What will you do to keep impartiality and to avoid ideologically party-politically driven statements or actions? How do you intend to reconcile the spirit of compromise, as you just said, with the push to have more decisions based on a qualified majority vote?

1-0047-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – As I said, with 27 different democracies, it's not always easy to find the common position, but the spirit around the European Council table is really the spirit of compromise. Really, this is the way this works, that you take into account what others are saying, the worries that are there.

What is important for me is that European Union would be a geopolitical player outside of the European Union as well, so that we are not playing ourselves in the corner in some disputes. Therefore, we need to come up with the common position that we can all defend, and when we come up with the common position, then we can also use the leverage of, you know, foreign ministers and Commissioners to have this Team Europe spirit outside.

Is it going to be easy all the time? No. We have the rules in place. Sometimes, we can also discuss how we can come to decisions quicker, because this is what our citizens expect from us.

1-0048-0000

Alberico Gambino (ECR). – Signor Presidente, signora Vicepresidente designata, in un contesto globale sempre più complesso, caratterizzato da minacce ibride e instabilità, il Mediterraneo e l'Africa rappresentano evidentemente una forte criticità per le loro implicazioni geopolitiche, energetiche e migratorie.

Per favorire la stabilizzazione di queste aree, l'Italia ha avviato il cosiddetto Piano Mattei per l'Africa, che mira a costruire un nuovo partenariato con le nazioni africane, creando in loco opportunità di sviluppo e assicurando una cooperazione virtuosa con le stesse.

Naturalmente, questa iniziativa, già apprezzata anche a livello di G7, potrebbe essere più incisiva, se resa sinergica con altre di livello europeo.

La ritiene una linea condivisibile? A quanto sembra, già dalla risposta che ha dato prima, vedo che Lei ritiene assolutamente condivisibile questo progetto. Ritiene di voler sviluppare future sinergie tra questa iniziativa e la strategia "Global Gateway" dell'Unione europea?

1-0049-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – The Mediterranean is our close neighbourhood. And I think because we have now a separate Commissioner for the Mediterranean, it also shows how much importance the Commission is giving to that region. We have a very good relationship already, but we need to work for more.

That's why, together with the Commissioner for the Mediterranean, we are coming up with the pact for the Mediterranean. That would be a comprehensive approach addressing all the issues: energy cooperation, cooperation regarding skills, management of migration, different topics there.

So I think this is the approach that we all agree on. We will work together, investing in the people of the region so that people don't have to leave their homes, because migration is dependent on people leaving their homes, and they don't want to leave their homes if they don't really have to. And therefore we need to work that they would have jobs and there would be more prosperity in that region.

1-0050-0000

Urmas Paet (Renew). – Mul on väga hea meel, et lõpuks on tekkimas välisasjade kõrge esindaja, kes saab eesti keelest aru. Ma olen ka eelkäijatega seda üritanud, aga pole kuigi hästi välja tulnud. Nad lihtsalt eesti keeles pole mind mõistnud.

Dear colleagues, don't worry, I will proceed in English. I just exchanged few sentences in our secret language.

My question is that hybrid war of Russia against Europe is ongoing. We have more and more authoritarian regimes cooperating to each other. At the same time, European Union's foreign policy impact is not on the level it should be. We have much bigger potential in this regard.

So my question is that if we look at diplomacy, development, cooperation, foreign trade, defence cooperation, unfortunately these pillars are not functioning together in the EU. So what is the plan to increase the EU's foreign policy impact to the level it should be bringing these four very important foreign policy elements together?

1-0052-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, I will not respond in our secret language. I think what we see more globally is the increasing cooperation between the players like Russia, North Korea, Iran, and more covertly, China. This is what we can't close our eyes to, and therefore we need to really cooperate more. First, inside the European Union, that means cooperation between different institutions, but also within the institutions. I have already had very good meetings with the different Commissioners-designate that will deal with the external issues and I really have a very positive feeling that we will cooperate very well because there is a real willingness to do so, so that we are not fighting regarding whose competence it is, but rather how we achieve these goals. So I really believe in this.

Like you point out, the different pillars only work when we cooperate. And I think the new structure of the Commission actually pushes everybody to cooperate more because it's more intertwined, the organisation itself.

I'm quite positive that we start with the right foot and hopefully it continues throughout the mandate that we are really able to achieve results in foreign policy, being a geopolitical actor all across the world and also in defence, which is very, very crucial at this moment.

1-0053-0000

Raphaël Glucksmann (S&D). – Madame la Vice-Présidente désignée, les Ukrainiens font beaucoup plus que leur part du travail. Ils sont la ligne de résistance de l'Europe tout entière. Mais nous, est-ce que nous faisons notre travail? Quand la Corée du Nord, à elle seule, livre plus de munitions que l'ensemble des pays de l'Union, on peut légitimement en douter.

J'ai des questions précises à vous poser: comment comptez-vous obtenir la levée des restrictions sur l'utilisation des armes que nous fournissons à Kiev? Comment comptez-vous avancer sur la confiscation des avoirs publics russes gelés en Europe? Comment comptez-vous par ailleurs augmenter la capacité de défense des pays européens contre les attaques hybrides menées par la Russie de Poutine contre nos démocraties?

Le Parlement, depuis des mois et des mois, pousse les États européens à agir de manière plus décisive et plus ferme, et nous comptons sur vous pour faire écho à nos demandes, qui, jusqu'ici, n'ont pas été écoutées.

1-0054-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Yes, this is true. What I said is that we see Russia, North Korea, Iran producing more ammunition than the whole Euro-Atlantic community together. And this can't be the case. I understand that we are very peaceful communities, but right now it's a question of defence really. And we need to invest in defence in order to deter all those actors that I just mentioned from taking any further steps.

Restrictions on arms: it's very difficult to see these restrictions, because they really keep Ukraine from defending itself as it's possible. But it also gives, on the other hand, the boost to our defence industry to produce more in Europe, because we can't possibly imagine that somebody else will tell you that you can defend yourself, but not in the way that you want to defend yourself. And that's why, if we produce these things ourselves, then we don't have those restrictions.

When it comes to the confiscation of Russian frozen assets, I will not use the word 'confiscation' because it's really using the frozen assets in a legal way. We recognise that Russia has a legitimate claim towards us because we have their assets, but Ukraine also has a legitimate claim towards Russia, because every day they are destroying Ukraine. And so if we make a settlement of those claims, then Russia can later on claim back whatever is left over. But I doubt, considering what is going on, that there is anything leftover for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

So I think, you know, it's fundamental. Our taxpayers are asking us: why should we pay for this? And we shouldn't, because we are not destroying those countries. Those who are destroying – and Russia is destroying Ukraine – should pay for this.

1-0055-0000

Isabel Wiseler-Lima (PPE). – Madam High Representative-designate, thank you for being with us. We hope that after confirmation, we will see you very often here.

I have two more specific questions on protecting democracy. The first one regarding press freedom. Press freedom is a cornerstone of democratic societies. In view of protecting democracy around the world, how do you intend to support the media and journalists who are fighting to get the facts out?

And the second one gives you the opportunity to pick up on questions that have been made before. In a context where surveillance technologies, foreign interference and hybrid attacks represent growing threats to privacy and human rights, what specific measures do you envisage to ensure that the European Union protects not only the fundamental rights of citizens, but also the integrity of democratic systems in the face of these challenges?

1-0056-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Media freedom is the front line of democracy really. Considering the false information that is around, journalists are really doing the work to bring the truth to the people. And it's very hard, especially in those contexts where people are working in regimes that are not in favour of the media freedom.

European Union is doing a lot to protect the journalists. So we have the organisation Protect the Defenders; under this, 12 400 journalists have received the protection. And we need to continue this work, definitely.

What comes to democracy? Together with Commissioner McGrath, we are working for the 'democracy shield', so how to really help democracies? We have cases we can see; Moldova is a recent case. There was a really strong push by Russians and their disinformation to influence the results of democratic elections. But it went well. So Moldovan people were able to use their democratic rights. And we need to do this elsewhere as well.

1-0057-0000

Ville Niinistö (Verts/ALE). – Ms Kallas, the new reality of the climate crisis is already here, and it's affecting adversely the lives of our European citizens, like in the devastating flooding in Valencia.

The countries of the world are currently convening in the UN climate conference, and the circumstances are nervous because of the risk of climate denialism creeping back into the US Government and also whether countries like China can raise up their role in addressing climate change.

So my questions are, with the possibility of a Trump-led US shifting away from traditional alliances, multilateral organisations and commitments to climate action, how can the EU build new global partnerships to safeguard European interests?

Specifically, how would you approach cooperation in climate diplomacy with emerging powers like Brazil, India, China and South Africa?

And what other potential partners do you see as crucial for ensuring the EU remains a strong force in promoting climate action and fighting for the protection of the environment and biodiversity in the international stage?

1-0058-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – The new climate change reality is already here, like you say. I mean, anybody who is watching the news and seeing what is happening in Valencia can see that this is really crucial that we need to deal with these things.

It's also clear that we can't do this alone. We can only do this together with our partners. Our biggest ally is the United States and, of course, we need to work with them. But we also have partners in the Latin American and Caribbean countries that have a huge biodiversity, they have a really great impact on the climate change. We need to work with those partners that you mentioned in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

And it's also to really bring the awareness of people all across the world. This UN climate conference is going on in Baku right now and we are there present, we need to address these issues, but there is so much work to do on the climate diplomacy, really, to bring everybody on board, because we have one globe.

1-0059-0000

Łukasz Kohut (PPE). – It is time to stop relying on others for our security. It is time to act. I believe that preparing for the worst case scenario should be one of Europe's top priorities. No one in Europe has sounded the alarm on how disastrous the 'business as usual' approach to Russia is for the countries on the eastern flank. No one in Europe understands the severity of Putin's threat better than our countries. No one in Europe spends more on defence than Poland and Estonia. The entire EU must finally follow our lead.

I believe it is your new role to unite these efforts in order to achieve a more integrated European defence system. What is your position on creating European military units, including a permanent rapid deployment capacity under the operational command of the Union? Are you going to take actions in order to develop these kind of capabilities? Last but not least, do you see a possibility to deploy those units permanently in the Member States, such as Poland or the Baltic states?

1-0060-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – I agree with you that our defence is our own issue and problem that we have to deal with, and we all need to invest more in defence. When we had the meeting in Versailles after the war started in Ukraine, in the discussions with the other prime ministers there was this understanding that defence is actually regional – not that everybody is defending their own country, but we are defending the region, Europe, as a whole. And that also needs to be reflected in the steps that we take: that we are in this together.

You know, sometimes when I go across Europe and go to countries that are more neutral to the war, so to speak, and they say, 'you are very close to the war, so how are you there?' I usually take the geographical distance and say 'you are much closer to the war than we are, if you take the distance'. So we are in this together. This is my point.

When it comes to military in Europe, then most of the European Member States are also members of NATO. NATO is a military alliance. And in the military, the chain of command – who gives orders to whom – is very important. I don't think we should create an alternative to that, because you have the European army – you have the Latvian army, you have the Estonian army. We have the structures in place, how the cooperation works on a NATO level, but if we create an alternative structure, then it would just be confusing when the real conflict could be hitting our continent. So this is why I support clear synergy between the two organisations, but not competing.

1-0061-0000

Pernando Barrena Arza (The Left). – Dear Commissioner-designate Kallas, my question will refer to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenians. Taking into account the recent report of Freedom House on the ethnic cleansing of Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh and the recent resolution of this House, where MEPs called for the independent investigation of those crimes, will the European External Action Service consider beginning an investigation into the crimes committed by Azerbaijan against the civil population of Artsakh?

1-0062-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Armenia and Azerbaijan are very close to our borders as well, so it is in our interest that there is stability in the region. I have met with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and I think we can work together in our efforts also for the peaceful solution in that region. It's not only important for the stability of the region but also for transport corridors and energy cooperation that we have with this region. So I intend to also invest my time in meeting with the parties to achieve a peaceful result there.

1-0063-0000

Hana Jalloul Muro (S&D). – Designated High Representative / Vice-President, Ms Kallas, what will be your actions to maintain international law and international humanitarian law?

We have seen the UN legislation on UNRWA that will increase the starvation, diseases and killing of civilians, mainly kids in Gaza. We have seen illegal settlements in the West Bank growing exponentially, trying to eliminate the 1967 borders set by the United Nations as essential for the recognition of the Palestinian state. We are witnessing the pressure to the ICJ and to the ICC. We have seen double standards.

What are you going to do to maintain international law and international humanitarian law?

You have not mentioned these two terms in your opening speech, which is really concerning. You have to work out what you are going to do for the ceasefire and UNRWA in Gaza and Lebanon.

Will you pressure to stop settlements, maybe initiatives such as revoking double citizenship for settlers?

How will you support the ICC?

Will you pressure to suspend the EU Israel Association Agreement that should be based on respect for human rights?

Are you going to pressure for arms embargo in order to end the war ASAP, and to bring the hostages back home?

1-0064-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – As I said before, I'm a strong supporter of international humanitarian law. That means really protecting the civilians in all the conflicts. You can't attack civilian infrastructure or civilians. And this is done. So in terms of the Middle East conflict, we are also calling for exercising the utmost restraint for all the parties in this conflict.

Of course, we are also working with the organisations to really give the humanitarian aid to the region.

Regarding the accusation of double standards, in the Middle East we are the biggest donor of the Palestinian Authority. We are the biggest donor helping the Palestinian people in that region. And we try to and continue to do so. It is in our interest to achieve ceasefire in this region. We work with our partners to achieve the ceasefire. We work in order to get the release of hostages in that region.

As far as violent settlements are concerned, the EU doesn't recognise the violent settlers. We have sanctions in place for those people.

And with regard to the association agreement, the Association Council should be a good place to address the issues with Israel by all the 27 countries. So I hope that the Association Council actually meets so that we can address the issues that are there.

My goal is that the European Union would be around those tables where we discuss these issues.

1-0065-0000

Roberto Vannacci (Pfe). – Secondo il rapporto Draghi, che è diventato il vero guru di questa nuova Commissione, la crescita ridotta e la perdita di produttività dell'Unione europea sono dovute a tre fondamentali cause esterne, di cui due sono la perdita del più grande fornitore di energia dell'Unione europea, ovvero la Russia, e – la seconda – la rimessa in discussione degli equilibri geopolitici e la crescita delle tensioni internazionali.

Lei, come Alto rappresentante designato, ci può dire, per favore, quali sono i primi tre provvedimenti – solo i primi tre – per, in primo luogo, recuperare il più grande fornitore di energia dell'Unione europea, ovvero la Russia, e, in secondo luogo, appianare le tensioni internazionali e quindi porre fine alla guerra tra Russia e Ucraina?

1-0066-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – The Draghi Report indeed was a very good report. It has many elements to all the Commissioners who will work in the Commission. And regarding defence, for example, he says very clearly that we need to work together regarding this.

What comes to the energy supplies, we also have a Commissioner for energy in the Commission, who is dealing with the energy issues more. What comes to the High Representative, then my area of expertise is the comprehensive partnerships, where we also address the issues regarding energy when we talk with the Mediterranean countries, for example, or countries outside the region that also could bring energy to our continent.

So, how to end the war. The war will end when Russia realises it made a mistake, like it did in Afghanistan, when it withdraws the troops because it realised it can't win in Ukraine. This is the same here. If we are behind Ukraine and really showing our resolve that we are supporting them, then Russia will realise that they have made a mistake and they can't win this war. Because, like I mentioned before when I answered one of your colleagues, the economy is not doing well in Russia. They have to come up with some very difficult decisions, but it's also very hard on our side. That I agree with.

My point is that whether we make this short-term effort that is painful for all or we try to circumvent this and think that we don't have to do it, somebody else does it, but somebody else doesn't do it. My point is that in the end, we will pay more than if we concentrate our efforts now.

1-0067-0000

Arkadiusz Mularczyk (ECR). – Pani Premier! Pani Komisarz! Polityka zagraniczna Unii Europejskiej opiera się na promocji i respektowaniu praw człowieka, praworządności, sprawiedliwości tranzycyjnej oraz sprawiedliwości po konfliktach wojennych, jak to Pani wspomniała. W kontekście wojny w Ukrainie czy na Bliskim Wschodzie zasady takie jak prawo do odszkodowania, reparacji, zadośćuczynień nabierają szczególnego znaczenia.

Jest zrozumiałe, że Unia Europejska wzywa kraj agresorów do zapłaty odszkodowań. Powstaje jednak pytanie, dlaczego Unia Europejska nie stosuje tych samych zasad do własnych krajów? Takie kraje jak Polska czy Grecja wystosowały oficjalne noty dyplomatyczne do rządu Niemiec w sprawie odszkodowania za skutki zbrodni wojennych popełnionych podczas II wojny światowej. Niemcy nie odpowiedziały pozytywnie na te noty. Również Unia Europejska nie zabrała w tej sprawie głosu.

Czy nie uważa Pani, że w Unii Europejskiej powinny powstać mechanizmy mediacyjne, które prowadziłyby do rozwiązywania sporów dotyczących spraw historycznych pomiędzy krajami, tak ażeby budować prawdziwy dialog i pojednanie pomiędzy członkami Unii Europejskiej i nie budować wrażeń, że mamy podwójne standardy wobec krajów zewnętrznych i krajów wewnętrznych Unii Europejskiej?

1-0068-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Of course my portfolio would be dealing with the external affairs of the European Union, not the internal disputes that we have inside. But we see that the world is on fire, so we have to stick together. We are in this European Union all together. Of course, we all have our histories, but the value of European Union is that we are around the same table now. Let's concentrate on our future together rather than the past that is different. We see very many good examples inside the European Union where this has been done.

When it comes to multilateral organisations and the reparations for different damages, I feel that when we talk about international law, then the United Nations Charter is actually very good. The principles there are very good. Maybe we should really develop international law further to have concrete consequences. What happens if you really breach the United Nations Charter? If you think about history, every time when we had global crises, then the international law develops further. I think it is also the possibility to further discuss the development of international law. What could be there in order to prevent wars in the future?

1-0069-0000

Helmut Brandstätter (Renew). – Dear Kaja Kallas, you talked about Africa and you talked about the upcoming summit and you said we need an equal partnership. Actually, Europe is a humanitarian superpower. On the other hand, Russia and also China, they exploit Africa. Russia, even with terrorist groups like the Wagner Group.

How can we balance our value-driven policy with a more interest-driven policy, which probably would be necessary for our European industry too?

The second question: we know that Russian propaganda, including in the so-called Global South, is very good, especially in Africa. What can we do to counter that? What can we do to explain much better how valuable the European Union is and what we are doing, as I said, as a humanitarian superpower?

And the short question, as far as Belarus is concerned: it's a terrible dictatorship with thousands of political prisoners and a strong opposition outside the country with Ms Tsikhanouskaya. But, can we help, you know, to free prisoners and to support the opposition?

1-0070-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for your question. I think we need to intensify our cooperation with African countries, to really listen to them and sit down with them on an equal basis. I think this is very important for the dignity of both parties. In order for relationships to work, we need to take both sides into account.

When it comes to the question of values versus interests, I don't actually think there's a conflict here. I give you one example: the rule of law. The rule of law is one of the values we stand for, and it is also something that investors are interested in. If investors trust your legal system, then they also trust to invest in your economy. And when they invest in your economy, then it means jobs and growth for that country and prosperity for that country. So, it really goes hand in hand and I don't really see a conflict there.

Then when it comes to the Russian influence in Africa, you know, if we see and take the maps of, you know, Russian militias in Africa, when we take the investments of China, for example, and we put those maps on top of each other, we see that they are overlapping.

As you said, Europe is a humanitarian superpower. We are doing a lot, but we are not talking about it so much and we are not that visible. But we should, because we actually have the leverage of 27 countries to be present. So what we already have discussed with other Commissioners, as well as the foreign ministers, is how to use this leverage, how to really go in depth to see where we are in Africa and talk about that and show that.

1-0071-0000

Andrey Kovatchev (PPE). – Dear High Representative-designate, in this challenging time for the world, the European Union needs a strong voice in the world and this is why I would prefer to refer to you as our strong, future foreign minister of the European Union.

Even if there's peace in Ukraine, the Russian responsibility to rebuild Ukraine, what they destroyed, will be there.

What will be your next steps in the EU sanctions regime against the Kremlin and against other global actors confirmed to be helping Putin's war against Ukraine and heavily destabilising the Middle East like the Iranian regime – also, the question of putting the Republican Guard on the terrorist list – but also North Korea, Venezuela, Cuba?

What additional measures do you plan to put into place for the fight against the circumvention of EU sanctions via third countries?

And, as you mentioned the United Nations Charter but we cannot rely only on this, do you intend to initiate or support a legislative initiative allowing a legal basis for the transfer of Russian assets, and not only the profit from these Russian assets but the Russian assets, not only capital but also real estates, in the European Union to Ukraine?

1-0072-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for your good words.

When it comes to sanctions, next year the criminalisation of the circumvention of sanctions will enter into force. How we implement the sanctions is very important. That is very, very true. One side is to talk to those countries who are helping the circumvention of the sanctions, but the other side is who is actually really dealing with this, who is trying to gain a bit more, and it is our European companies.

That is the big question we should all ask: why do some companies still think, 'It doesn't concern me, really, I mean, I'm benefiting from this, I'm profiting from this in the short term because it doesn't concern me' and, at the same time, complaining on the other side, 'Why doesn't this war already end?'. It doesn't because we don't focus our efforts, really, and we have to focus our efforts.

So when it comes to the use of assets, I agree with you. Like I said before, I think it's not fair that our taxpayers have to pay for something we are not destroying. So it should be Russia who pays.

It is a situation where we have the assets. I can go into detail about the legal argumentation as a lawyer myself, but I don't have the time here and the Chair will call on me then, but we can talk about this. It is possible to do and I think we will get there sooner rather than later, and we should get there sooner, because that also has an effect on ending the war sooner.

1-0073-0000

Sven Mikser (S&D). – Aitäh, hea Kaja! Jõudu Sulle su tulevases raskes töös!

My question is this: the next five years obviously won't be easy. And a very significant part of the global agenda, including security agenda, will be shaped by the relationships between the US and China. And we Europeans clearly have a stake here. We need to coordinate closely with our American partners in order to promote multilateralism and global trade, but also to ensure support for Ukraine. Especially in the light of last week's elections in the US, we need a very principled and strong EU voice also in this transatlantic coordination.

So which initiatives do you suggest to maintain close EU-US coordination on issues such as Ukraine but also on China? And do you intend to propose to the Member States a review of the EU strategy on China to address the number of challenges posed by China?

1-0075-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Yes, we have to work with the United States because it's our biggest ally. We have done so before, and we are not the ones who are electing the president for our partners. So we need to work with all the administrations. We have been able to work with all the administrations of our allies, and I'm sure that we will do that again.

We will have to coordinate our policies on different issues. What comes to China, then talking to United States, I think it's also important to emphasise that if the United States is worried about China, they should first be worried about Russia because it is clear that it has global impact on different relationships.

What comes to China policy then? We have our own European China policy in place and we need to follow that. We need to treat China as more a competitor and systemic rival. We need to really de-risk. We need to take those areas where our vulnerabilities are the greatest and we know which these things are. But we should also not underestimate our own power, because we also have a leverage in the relationship with China, because we are a huge economic power, in that matter. So I think this is our approach that we should have and of course closely also coordinating with our other transatlantic partners.

1-0076-0000

Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE). – Señora Kallas, me voy a referir a América Latina. Necesitamos prestar más atención a esta región. Por un lado, tenemos que recuperar el respeto de la democracia y de los derechos humanos en Venezuela, Cuba y Nicaragua. Desgraciadamente, el Acuerdo de Diálogo Político y Cooperación con Cuba de 2016 no produjo resultado alguno en este ámbito. Y no podemos ser complacientes con estos regímenes, además, aliados de Rusia e Irán en la región.

Por otra parte, la Unión Europea busca diversificar —usted lo ha dicho, el *de-risking*, por ejemplo— sus relaciones económicas y comerciales. Y América Latina representa una gran oportunidad económica y de inversión y también para proveernos de importantes materias primas. De ahí la conveniencia de los acuerdos comerciales y de asociación con estos países.

Le pregunto por Venezuela. ¿Qué acciones llevará a cabo para intentar asegurar que el señor González Urrutia pueda asumir el cargo de presidente el próximo enero? ¿Va a hacer gestiones con países de la región como Brasil o con los Estados Unidos? Por cierto, ya sabrá usted que Marco Rubio será el nuevo secretario de Estado.

Por otra parte, ¿se compromete usted a concluir de una vez los acuerdos con Mercosur y México que esperamos desde hace tanto tiempo?

1-0077-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Latin America and the Caribbean is a region very close to our values and interests. The region is clearly a logical partner for us. I hope that we have the Latin America and Caribbean summit in Colombia in 2025 to discuss these issues and how we can cooperate more, having these comprehensive partnerships with them.

When it comes to Venezuela, clearly the democratic space in Venezuela is shrinking and there is no proof of the results of the elections. So how we can proceed? We can support civil society. We have to work with our partners in the region: Brazil, Argentina, other players there.

When it comes to Russian and Iranian influence, this is clear. We see it in Latin America too. The partnership with us should be more logical but we need to invest in that partnership as well. That is very clear.

When it comes to Mercosur, the bigger geopolitical picture is the trade agreements. We need the trade agreements. It's for 700 million people, covering this. And if we don't do a trade agreement with them, then this void will be filled by China. I was really surprised to read in my materials that from 2020 to 2022, Chinese investment in Latin America increased 34 times.

And this is my point: if we are not there, they are. Therefore, I think that we need to proceed with this. Every agreement is, of course, double-sided – it also has rights and obligations for both sides – but we need to work with that.

1-0078-0000

Κώστας Παπαδάκης (NI). – Είπατε, κυρία Kallas, να καθορίσουμε νέους κανόνες σε σχέση με τις γερμανικές αποζημιώσεις από τον Δεύτερο Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο. Όμως, υπάρχουν συγκεκριμένες διεθνείς συμβάσεις από τις οποίες απορρέουν συγκεκριμένες υποχρεώσεις για τη Γερμανία. Αυτές καταπατούνται σήμερα και σε αυτές πρέπει να τοποθετηθείτε. Σε σχέση με τα υπόλοιπα, παρότι οι λαοί της Ευρώπης δυναμώνουν όλο και περισσότερο την αντίθεσή τους στην πολεμοκάπηλη ευρωενωσιακή πολιτική που παρουσιάσατε, η Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση τους περιφρονεί με τη γιγαντιαία οικονομική υποστήριξη και πολεμικό εξοπλισμό του καθεστώτος Zelensky στην Ουκρανία, ρίχνοντας λάδι στη φωτιά του πολέμου

NATO-Ρωσίας, με τη στήριξη του ισραηλινού κράτους κατακτητή για τη γενοκτονία του παλαιστινιακού λαού, κράτους που χτυπάει ακόμα και δομές του ΟΗΕ εισβάλλοντας στον Λίβανο, αλλά και με τη στροφή της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης σε καθεστώς πολεμικής οικονομίας. Οι λαοί πληρώνουν με καθηλωμένους μισθούς, βαριά φορολογία, ακρίβεια, ενεργειακή φτώχεια, έναν βαρύ λογαριασμό εμπλοκής Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης και κυβερνήσεων, των εξοπλισμών, των δανείων, της μετακύλισης κυρώσεων. Το ερώτημα είναι τι άλλο εκτός από κλιμάκωση των ιμπεριαλιστικών πολέμων με θύματα τους λαούς, μπορεί να προεξοφλεί η συνέχιση και περαιτέρω επιδείνωση της ίδιας αδιέξοδης πορείας που υπερασπίζεστε;

1-0079-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – I am not sure I really got the question right because I did not say anything about new rules for Germany to pay the reparations.

So, when the question is about whether the wars have an impact on us, then of course they have. That's why we should work for trying to end these conflicts all across the world, because they have an impact on us.

But really, if we just give in, then we also have an impact on us. If we just say that we live in a world where 'might makes right', then the stronger parties will just try to take over the weaker ones.

In terms of international law, then international law is a protection for the small countries so that the neighbours do not attack them. Therefore, we need to protect international law and develop it further so that there would be peace in the world.

1-0080-0000

Hermann Tertsch (Pfe). – Señora candidata, me alarma un poquito que, para la primera pregunta que ha tenido sobre Iberoamérica, yere tanto en su valoración. Hay unos resultados muy concretos ya de las elecciones en Venezuela y dan por ganador a Edmundo González Urrutia; él es el ganador y el presidente electo de Venezuela aunque no lo reconozca el señor Maduro. Por eso yo creo que hay ya un reconocimiento de esa victoria y de esa elección dentro del Parlamento Europeo. Por eso me preocupa que estemos todavía en ese nivel de información.

Otra cuestión. Respecto a Cuba, el Parlamento Europeo en repetidas ocasiones ha exigido que se anule el Acuerdo de Diálogo Político y de Cooperación que le reporta dinero a una dictadura. Las democracias europeas están financiando a la criminal tiranía de Cuba, que es el máximo autor de la expansión del narcocomunismo por toda Iberoamérica con el Foro de São Paulo. Y no ha hecho nada su antecesor. Queremos saber si va a cambiar de política y no va a ser una protectora de Cuba como lo ha sido el señor Borrell.

1-0081-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Well, I can say it again, I mean, Venezuela, it's clear that the will of the people has to be respected. And we have to work together with the partners in the Latin American and Caribbean regarding this. So we are not the the sole players there.

When it comes to Cuba, it is clearly, as you say, a communist country, with very close ties with Russia. Human rights issues are an issue that we are also raising in the context that we have with Cuba.

1-0082-0000

Nicola Zingaretti (S&D). – Commissaria candidata, io rimango convinto, come tutti noi, che il multilateralismo rimanga l'unica via possibile per soluzioni condivise ed efficaci per la stabilità e per la pace. Per questo l'Unione europea deve essere attiva.

Qual è la sua opinione sullo stato di salute delle Nazioni Unite? Cosa intende fare per rilanciare il ruolo di pace, nel mondo, delle Nazioni Unite? Cosa pensa della presenza dell'Europa dentro il Consiglio di sicurezza delle Nazioni Unite con un suo singolo esponente?

A proposito dell'America Latina e della necessità di aprire con ogni angolo del mondo le nostre relazioni, conferma e si impegna a concordare il vertice UE-CELAC nel 2025, come occasione di un confronto alla pari tra due angoli importanti del nostro mondo?

1-0083-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – I'm also a big believer in multilateralism. And United Nations is the organisation where countries are present and where United Nations Charter is the one that is protecting really the small states.

But what I'm saying when I'm talking about developing international law further is that if you look into the history, then United Nations was established after the Second World War that there wouldn't be any wars in the world. The principles are there. Now, we see that our African partners, our Latin American partners are saying that these international laws are not always taking them on board when it comes to the institutions, for example. And we have to listen to them, when it comes to the international finance architecture, for example; this is an issue that they always raise.

So the question on the summit: yes, there is going to be a Latin American and Caribbean European summit in Colombia 2025. There should also be a summit with the African Union in 2025. So the calendar is already packed. I think these are the options and possibilities to raise all these issues that we were talking about before and what our allies and partners in these regions are also worried about.

1-0084-0000

Mika Aaltola (PPE). – *Kallis Kaja. Hästi vastatud.* I'm one of those people who can understand the secret language of Estonian. And I also appreciate your understanding of the Russian-geopolitical grammar. You were right. And one of the reasons why you are here is because of that.

But my question has to do with the Arctic region, and that's one of the things that was missing, although it is vitally important. It is a region in flux. The multilateral fora has collapsed or frozen. The Arctic Council is not working, and it is a place where China is also increasingly present besides Russia. The status quo, military status quo, is changing in their favour.

So what policies, what type of strategies can you see that would be feasible, for example, building military mobility infrastructures in the region?

Understanding better what is the European Arctic. So is that going to be part of your package in 100 days?

1-0085-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – The Arctic is definitely a very strategic region. It's sometimes overlooked because the neighbouring countries, there are not so many. But it's true that we see

increasing activity in the Arctic. There are research vessels of Russia and China that are not really research vessels.

So, we know all of this and therefore we need to really invest more of our time in that region because it's not only in terms of military and military mobility, it's also in terms of climate change, the cooperation regarding this, and it's also in terms of the global situation and the global struggles.

And I would add to this, to the Arctic, I would actually also add space because we are so much interconnected and everything that is happening in space has an effect on us and, to add to that, cyberspace is the same.

Now, I had the chance in 2021 to chair the first-ever cybersecurity meeting of the UN Security Council and what was interesting there was that all the parties except two – and you can guess which were the two – were agreeing that international law should also apply in cyberspace. So this clearly shows that this struggle is bigger.

1-0086-0000

Leoluca Orlando (Verts/ALE). – *(inizio dell'intervento senza microfono)*... senza il coinvolgimento del Parlamento europeo, ha concluso accordi controversi con leader autoritari del vicinato meridionale per contrastare partenze di migranti e richiedenti asilo.

Che misure verranno applicate per evitare che fondi europei raggiungano entità responsabili di violazioni di diritti umani contro i migranti? E come pensa di colmare deficit democratici e mancanza di trasparenza rispetto al mancato coinvolgimento del Parlamento europeo?

Una seconda domanda: quali misure intende adottare per sostenere organi di giustizia internazionali nel contrasto dei più seri crimini internazionali in diverse aree del mondo? In particolare, quali comportamenti e sanzioni, conseguenti e concreti, intende proporre e prendere a seguito della dichiarazione della Corte internazionale di giustizia di occupazione illegale di territori palestinesi da parte del governo israeliano? E ciò al di là di inviti alla moderazione, che sono invece accompagnati dalla continua strage di civili palestinesi e da un Israele che attacca UNIFIL.

1-0087-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – When it comes to the human rights issues, we have to address those human rights issues with all the partners that we have and the discussions that we have. Can we always work with the perfect democracies? No, unfortunately. This is the situation that we have globally, that there are more people living under autocracies than there are under democracies. This is the situation that we are in. But should we then drop the human rights? No, we shouldn't. We should always address this.

When it comes to managing migration, these are the comprehensive partnerships that we have with the countries that we are talking about migration. Again, you know, it goes hand in hand with the prosperity of those countries as well, because people don't want to leave their homes. They will leave their homes when they have to. So if they have a jobs, if it is a peaceful country, then they don't have to leave their homes and we don't also have the migration pressure.

When it comes to Palestine, we are supporting Palestine. We are the biggest donor of the Palestinian Authority. We are also the biggest donor of UNRWA to support the Palestinian people every possible way, to get the humanitarian aid to those territories. And when it comes to the violent settlers, we have sanctions in place and we don't recognise the occupied territories after 1967.

1-0088-0000

Małgorzata Gosiewska (ECR). – Szanowna Pani Komisarz! W Pani wystąpieniu zabrakło mi Białorusi, a właśnie dzisiaj obchodzimy Międzynarodowy Dzień Solidarności z Białorusią. Białorusini w 2020 roku jednoznacznie pokazali swoje przywiązanie do wolności. Jakie narzędzia zamierza Pani wykorzystać, by wesprzeć tę proeuropejską orientację białoruskiego społeczeństwa?

Stany Zjednoczone dysponują specjalną ustawą – federalne prawo, które z jednej strony wspiera białoruskie siły demokratyczne i wolne media, a z drugiej nakłada sankcje na reżim Łukaszenki. Czy nie uważa Pani, że warto pomyśleć o podobnym rozwiązaniu w Unii Europejskiej?

Według danych białoruskich organizacji, białoruskiej organizacji *Wiesna*, na Białorusi jest obecnie ponad 1 300 więźniów politycznych. Wiemy doskonale, że jest to liczba zaniżona. Przebywają w dramatycznych warunkach, nie ma z nimi kontaktu, umierają w niejasnych okolicznościach. Jakie działania mogą, według Pani, przyczynić się do uwolnienia więźniów politycznych na Białorusi?

1-0089-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – I didn't mention Belarus in my introduction, like I didn't mention 170 other countries because of the time constraint. But it is true that European Union is dealing with all the troubles in the world. When it comes to Belarus, then in December we will have a Belarus day. Also, we are constantly in contact with the opposition of Belarus. I've met with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya several times, and we will continue to discuss what more can we do to support the democratic will of the Belarusian people.

Like you say, it's very worrying. There are 1 300 political prisoners under this regime. So we will have to work together with the Belarusian opposition. But it's extremely hard, considering, again, the geopolitical situation.

So I think Belarus is very much affected by what happens in Russia. Why Russia is also taking up the fight is that they are afraid of the democratic space also expanding to Russia or to Belarus, because in the democracy people decide, and people say to the leaders every four years 'I don't like what you're doing'. So they will vote them down. You don't have the lifetime opportunity to stay in power and do whatever. In a democracy, you can't start wars because the people will say that you don't have a mandate for that. But in autocracies you have, and therefore we really need to focus our efforts that these autocratic powers don't win.

1-0090-0000

Petras Auštrevičius (Renew). – Dear Kaja, most welcome back to the European Parliament. You are most appreciated, and I am sure you recognise the importance of your close cooperation with the European Parliament. Only together, working hand-in-hand, can we accomplish many things.

While appreciating your geopolitical reading on major global issues, dear Kaja, I want to zoom in on two outstanding – to my mind – issues for the time being.

Firstly, containing the 'axis of evil' coalition requires a very effective system of restrictive measures or sanctions, as we call it. The current EU sanctions system does not stand up to criticism. I just make one reference, as Western-made components are still found in Russian missiles, which are hitting and killing Ukrainian people. What will you do to ensure an effective EU system of restrictive measures in the years to come?

Secondly, the terrorist regime of the Iranian mullahs, the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, are you going to make them be called a terrorist organisation?

1-0091-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – First, I promised to work together with the European Parliament, as I have also been a member of this House. I really cherish this cooperation, and I believe that we will have a very, very good cooperation in the future.

I agree with you that there is increasing cooperation between Russia, Iran, North Korea and, more covertly, China. We are seeing this in different parts of the world. One is the war in Ukraine, but it's also what is happening in the Middle East, if you think about what Iran is doing in the Middle East and add to that the nuclear programme that Iran is developing and also their involvement in European countries like Sweden, for example.

So the question is, of course, what more can we do? And when I'm in the office, if you confirm me, of course, then I intend to also raise this issue with the foreign ministers. How we should have a new approach to Iran, for example, and talk with our allies regarding this as well, because if we see all what is happening, then the question is, what more are we waiting for?

When it comes to sanctions, I don't entirely agree with you that the sanctions are not working. They are working. But it is true that there is circumvention. And the question is who is circumventing? It's the European companies. It's still the companies who think, 'It doesn't concern me. I try to profit as much as I can', but in the end we will all pay a higher price if we don't concentrate our efforts in the short term. Therefore, there will be criminalisation of the circumvention of sanctions, which is a good step, and there definitely will be more sanctions also on Russia, what we can do more to really stop these wars.

1-0092-0000

Petar Volgin (ESN). – Г-жо Калас, вие сте особено активна в създаването на политиките на ЕС, насочени срещу Русия и затова е нормално, че вашата съидейничка, г-жа Фон дер Лайен настоява тъкмо вие да оглавите външната политика на Европейския съюз.

Искам да напомня, че стратегията на управляващата все още във Вашингтон Демократическа партия и на нейните подчинени в Брюксел е да се подпомага Киев, за да се изтошава Русия, макар да е съвсем ясно, че войната не може да бъде спечелена от Зеленски. Само че по всичко личи, че новият американски президент, Доналд Тръмп, най-после ще прекрати тази смъртоносна игра и ще сложи акцента върху постигането на мир в Украйна, а не върху някаква нафантазирана от режима в Киев победа.

Ще подкрепите ли този дневен ред, който Тръмп ще постави и който светът очаква от него или ще продължите да настоявате Европа да действа в руслото на война до последния украинец? Или може би ще се противопоставяте на усилията на новата американска администрация за постигане на бърз мир в Украйна?

Ще продължите ли по онзи път, който води ЕС до самоубийство заради катастрофалните политики по отношение на мигрантите, заради зеления фундаментализъм, заради санкциите срещу Русия, които лишават Европа от евтини енергийни ресурси?

1-0093-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – First of all, Ursula von der Leyen didn't appoint me as a candidate, it was the European Council that did, which is the 27 European countries that decided that I could be the High Representative of the Union.

Second, I don't know anybody who is for war. I don't know any Ukrainians who are for war. They are for peace of all the people. Their people are dying there. But we have seen that if we have agreements that bring short-term peace, it's not lasting, but actually it brings more wars. This what has happened with Minsk Agreements, for example. It didn't bring peace, it brought more wars. The point is now to give really a sign to Russia that you can't do this.

Historian Timothy Snyder has very well said that in order for a country to become better, it has to lose its last colonial war. And Russia has never lost its last colonial war. We have to do everything that they will lose it now.

1-0094-0000

Irene Montero (The Left). – Señora Kallas, usted va a ser elegida previsiblemente como alta representante para hacer la guerra; es su principal prioridad. ¿Es consciente usted de lo que sufren los pueblos de Europa y también Ucrania, especialmente las mujeres y la infancia, con la guerra y con sus consecuencias: el aumento del precio de la energía y de los alimentos, el aumento de las violencias machistas, la mayor dependencia económica de los Estados Unidos con un Gobierno de Trump o recortes en servicios públicos para pagar el aumento del gasto militar?

Honestamente, ¿cree que es posible encontrar una victoria de Ucrania en la guerra? ¿En qué consiste, señora Kallas, esa victoria? ¿Está dispuesta usted a llevar a Europa al enfrentamiento directo entre potencias nucleares?

Y, por último, señora Kallas, el Estado terrorista de Israel ha celebrado su nombramiento. Hoy su Gobierno reconocía que quiere el exterminio planificado del pueblo palestino para echar a los palestinos de Cisjordania y anexionarse ese territorio ilegalmente. ¿Por qué no rompen relaciones diplomáticas y comerciales y practican un embargo total de armas a Israel? ¿Usted va a seguir incumpliendo la normativa europea para apoyar a los genocidas?

1-0095-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – Again, maybe I was not clear enough. I'm for peace and now the discussion is: what is a peace strategy and what is a war strategy? We have had the strategy, that you are thinking is a peace strategy, that we had with the Minsk agreements, for example. It didn't bring peace, it brought more wars. Therefore, we need to be in the position where Russia loses its last colonial war, that it doesn't wage any wars anymore. That is why we have to make this effort now.

If aggression pays off somewhere, then it serves as an invitation to use it elsewhere. And we will have more wars because all the aggressors or would-be aggressors in the world are carefully taking notes that, okay, this pays off, let's go for our neighbour's territories. That is what we are fighting here for.

When it comes to Palestine, of course, there are two sides, and this is that the security of Israel has to go together with the existence of Palestine. You know, if you go back to the establishment of Israel, for example, Ben-Gurion said that Israel is based on two principles: security and justice. You can't have that without the existence of Palestinians in that country, as well as the existence of Israelis. That is what we are all agreeing on, what we are united on in the European positions that I mentioned before, principles that we all agree on, and we need to work for that.

My heart goes out to every victim of the conflicts, whether it's in Ukraine, in Palestine, in Israel or Sudan for that matter. There are so many victims and we have to work on the humanitarian aid reaching them, but also on ending the conflicts.

1-0096-0000

David McAllister, *Chair of the AFET Committee*. – Thank you, Kaja Kallas. We now come to the third round of questions, and these will be posed by the chairs of our invited committees.

1-0097-0000

Barry Andrews, *Chair of the DEVE Committee*. – Thank you, Chair, and good morning, Madam Kallas.

As Urmas pointed out earlier on, development cooperation is a key pillar of a balanced foreign policy.

Now, in this regard, in your written answers, you committed to unwavering support for the Sustainable Development Goals and to Agenda 2030, underpinned by the new Global Gateway instrument.

But as you know, just 17 % of the goals are on track to be achieved by 2030, and the funding gap is estimated to be in excess of EUR 3 trillion.

So how will you ensure that the SDG indicators underpin a successful foreign policy and in particular, align the global gateway with the Sustainable Development Goals?

Secondly, in your written answers, you commit to a targeted approach to support for least developed countries, countries that are so-called fragile states affected by conflict and climate change.

So could you elaborate a little further on what you mean by a targeted approach to support for least developed countries?

1-0098-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Sustainable Development Goals are part of our policies and will be part of our policies in the future as well. How to reach those goals, how to help the countries reach those goals and what we have to do for this.

So I don't see really a conflict with the aid and the Global Gateway because Global Gateway is bringing investments to the region, which also means that there's prosperity in the region. It's also using the both the private as well as the public money to create jobs in the region and, and prosperity.

So I think this is also good for erasing poverty. Some countries are doing better, their neighbours are also doing better.

As far as concerns a targeted approach, the countries are very different. I mean, the countries that we work with, they have different issues and that is what I'm also saying when I say 'we need to listen more'. We need to listen to every country and their worries about different issues.

Regarding our internal policies that have an effect on on them, we know the discussion around deforestation. We know CBAM these kind of policies that we need to also listen to the worries of our partners before when we draft our own policies, but also the comprehensive approach to take into account what they are saying, where they need assistance from the European Union.

So to listen to them and draft the targeted approach to each and every country, not to really take, you know, Global South as one homogeneous group, which it is not.

1-0099-0000

Bernd Lange, *Chair of the INTA Committee*. – Chair, Ms Kallas, we are here in the House discussing the economic security policy. There's also a communication by the Commission from the beginning of the year. In your mission letter, I found now a new term: new foreign economic policy. What does it mean? And perhaps you can give me three priorities of this new foreign economic policy.

Secondly, how you will organise cooperation with the INTA Committee: information sharing, no decision without consideration, and your presence in the committee.

1-0100-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – New foreign economic policy. So it is policy taking into account our geopolitical interests, really. We have already discussed and I will continue to work together with the Commissioner for Trade how we should approach these relations. Again, we have many, many interests when it comes to energy, when it comes to transport, when it comes to critical raw materials all around the world. But all those countries that we are dealing with, they also have issues with which we could be helpful. So drafting this comprehensive approach with the Trade Commissioner regarding economic foreign policy is important.

Sometimes our internal policies also have an effect outside. That is also in our interests so that our economy does well, that our economy is competitive. Sometimes we have maybe let our guard down in this regard, that we don't defend our interests as much as we should defend our interests. I intend to work closely with the Trade Commissioner.

What comes to INTA Committee, of course, I want to make all the promises I can here, but then my staff will tell that the agenda is quite full. I will still try to work with the European Parliament as much as I can and come to discuss the issues in your committee as well when the agenda allows. Because the interesting or the conflict in my position is the High Representative should travel the world, whereas the Vice-President should stay put and coordinate. Trying to manage between those two positions is to use also the leverage of all the Commissioners as well as the foreign ministers. So I hope that I will be more present and then it gives me opportunity to come to the committees as well.

1-0101-0000

Lina Gálvez, *Chair of the FEMM Committee*. – So I'm going to ask you some questions on behalf of the FEMM Committee about some issues that unfortunately you have not mentioned so far.

How are you going to address the use of rape as a weapon of war, as well as tackle the issue of access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls in conflict areas?

What about female genital mutilation? Which European and international tools would you deploy, and how are you planning to ensure the European Union allocates adequate and direct access to resources for local civil society organisations, women's rights organisations and women's rights defenders? How will you work to make the situation of women and girls in conflicts a European Union a priority? You were asked this morning about especially the Sahel and the Middle East.

Could you commit to issue a European Union communication mandating that the European-led humanitarian responses seek to include support and financing for its RHR supplies and services?

And finally, with gender mainstreaming in mind, now that there is a gender backlash all over the world, especially with some of our closest allies.

1-0102-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – It is true that women make up half of our communities and very often, in the conflict areas, women are very much attacked and used in the conflicts. I was also very sad to hear that since last year, in one year, the women that live in the conflict areas has grown 50 %. So women and girls that are in danger in conflict areas has grown immensely. So what do we have to do with this? It is clearly a humanitarian law issue that attacking women and using them in conflicts is clearly one of the weapons that are used, which is very, very worrying. We can raise these issues and we will raise these issues in all the forums that we have. In external services, we will also take into account that we have more women who speak about these issues. And when I go to visits all around the world, I will definitely also meet with the women's organisations. And when it comes to the MFF, I will also raise the investment or funding of the civil organisations, so women organisations, in the future MFF discussions.

1-0103-0000

Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, *Chair of the SEDE Subcommittee*. – Chair, dear Kaja, on behalf of the SEDE coordinators, I would like to affirm SEDE's readiness to work with you to advance genuine European defence union. Given the recent US elections, it's essential that we move forward with urgency.

While we acknowledge some progress in implementation of the strategic compass, we all agree that more needs to be done, especially in supporting Ukraine. These were the main point of our written questions regarding a view of the strategic compass. Can you go now further today, launching a review of this compass using an updated threat analysis. And an updated threat analysis should also be a key foundation for the upcoming white paper of the future of European defence.

The second question, additionally, after you receive a positive evaluation, would you be willing to attend a SEDE meeting before the end of the year to further discuss our priorities and collective readiness to build this defence union?

1-0104-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Strategic compass was a very good document. Not only that it's a good document, but we also have worked with the implementation. There are many good initiatives under this strategic compass, if you think about the ASAP or if you think about the missions that we have also regarding helping Ukraine and training Ukrainian soldiers, for example. But there are other examples as well of what we are using on the basis of strategic compass.

Do we need a review of the strategic compass? I think it's a good document. What we really need, what you also were pointing, is a new threat assessment, how the threats around us have changed. I've already discussed with some of the officials how we can proceed with that threat assessment. Then it would be my intention that all the Commissioners would be aware of that threat assessment, even those who don't deal with the external action, because it has an effect on all the policies that we are really doing, that we are aware of what the threats really in the world are.

What comes to SEDE meeting this year, if you really approve me and you approve the whole Commission, and we are able to start in December, then looking already in the calendar, what we all have to do then, I'll be very honest with you, I don't think I can make it in December.

1-0105-0000

Mounir Satouri, *président de la sous-commission DROI*. – Madame la Haute-Représentante désignée, je pense que dans quelques minutes vous serez confirmée et que vous deviendrez la voix de l'Union européenne. Être la voix de l'Union européenne, ça peut être beaucoup ou ça peut être pas grand-chose: c'est vous qui allez le décider pendant cinq ans.

Je vous ai entendue engagée sur l'Ukraine, engagée sur les valeurs, engagée contre la Russie: je m'en réjouis. Sur plein d'autres sujets, je n'ai pas entendu cette conviction. Alors je vais vous interroger sur la boussole éthique – après ce qui vient d'être fait eu égard à la boussole stratégique –, sur les droits de l'homme.

L'Union a développé des outils tels que les dialogues sur les droits de l'homme ou le régime mondial de sanctions en matière de droits de l'homme. Qu'allez-vous faire pour rendre cet outil concret? Allez-vous en tenir compte pour dessiner la nouvelle politique internationale de l'Union européenne? Allez-vous prendre en considération les résolutions du Parlement européen? Allez-vous faire des droits de l'homme, du respect de nos valeurs la boussole, la colonne vertébrale de la politique internationale de l'Union européenne?

Je vous ai posé des questions précises; je souhaiterais avoir des réponses aussi concrètes que possible.

1-0106-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – As I said before, human rights are one of the fundamental values of the European Union, and it is essential that we have this tool of human rights dialogues.

We have the action plan that we are implementing on the human rights dialogues. We have 60+ human rights dialogues. We have around 35 annually that we have, including with the challenging countries, that we address the human rights all the time. We report this in public statements, and we will continue to do so. We have the annual report on human rights and democracy in the world that we are issuing and, of course, what more can we do is to support the strong civil society all across the world to address these issues.

So, I will definitely do a systemic follow-up on these issues, successive dialogues with those countries, and I will also ensure that I will inform the European Parliament of the planning as well as the outcomes of these dialogues to really address these issues.

1-0107-0000

David McAllister, *Chair of the AFET Committee*. – Thank you. In the fourth and final round of questions, we have the political groups, this time in reverse order. Once again, it's 1 minute for the question and 2 minutes for the answer. No follow-up questions are admitted.

1-0108-0000

Hans Neuhoff (ESN). – Frau Kallas, mit der Wahl von Donald Trump zum nächsten Präsidenten der USA sind Veränderungen in der amerikanischen Ukraine-Politik zu erwarten. Trump könnte die US-Militärhilfe einstellen. Sein Vize Vance sagt, dass für einen Frieden nicht nur die Krim, sondern auch Donezk und Luhansk bei Russland bleiben könnten. Vance spricht sich außerdem gegen die Aufnahme der Ukraine in die NATO aus.

Meine Fragen: Würden Sie bei einem solchen Wechsel der US-Politik dafür eintreten, dass die EU wie bisher unserem Verbündeten, den USA, folgt oder wären Sie dafür, dass die EU das Ziel der Rückgewinnung der verlorenen Gebiete auch ohne Unterstützung der USA weiterverfolgt –

whatever it takes? Zweitens, sind Sie der Meinung, dass die EU auch nach einem Rückzug der USA an der Freigabe von Marschflugkörpern für Ziele im russischen Kernland festhalten sollte oder würden Sie empfehlen, diese Beschlusslage einer Revision zu unterziehen?

1-0109-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Yeah, you definitely have one fan. But I'm surprised to hear that you know what Donald Trump is doing. I don't think that anybody really knows what is the new President-elect doing.

We definitely, first and foremost, have to, you know, get this information from the US, what they are planning to do. But if we look to the history, then the isolationism has never worked well for America as well. If America is worried about China, they should first be worried about Russia, and we will have these dialogues with the United States.

So I will not speculate on what America is doing or not doing. My intention is that Europe is around those tables when anything about Europe is discussed, that we are not left out anyway, and we have a say.

But when it comes to Ukraine, then the first ones who say how things could go or should go are the Ukrainians.

1-0110-0000

Jonas Sjöstedt (The Left). – We both live close to the Baltic Sea. It's a sensitive marine environment under threat, and the most urgent threat today is the Russian shadow fleet. This shadow fleet consists of often very old ships in a bad state. We have a real risk of environmental disaster coming soon. It's the same fleet that finances the illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. Many of these ships are uninsured, we often don't know the true owners, they often turn off their transmitters so we cannot surveil them – which is a very dangerous practice – and they often breach the sanctions. So far, our policies have failed to stop this traffic.

What concrete measures would you like to see when it comes to inspections, when it comes to actually preventing these ships from travelling across our national waters?

What initiatives do you plan to take to stop this very dangerous traffic from an environmental point of view that finances an illegal war and suffering in the Ukraine?

1-0111-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Yes, this is a very serious question. We see this shadow fleet very close to our shores, and we see the environmental risks that it also brings and the potential crisis that could go with it.

So what are we doing? Of course, we are working in the International Maritime Organisation to address this issue, because it's a global issue. We have to really talk and work with those countries that are providing the flags of these, because we have sanctioned the Russian ships.

Then, what is also there, what you mentioned is the insurance companies. So, I know that there is also a gathering of the insurers that talk about this: that, you know, they couldn't provide insurance to these ships, so the question is also who is sending the oil and what the ships are really, you know, bringing.

So it's a very difficult issue because, you know, Member States can only prevent them to be in their borders, but we have to work in the international maritime organisations to really address this issue and put more sanctions so that they can't leave the ports and be there at sea where they are potential risk to climate, they are potential risk to environment, to us all.

1-0112-0000

Sergey Lagodinsky (Verts/ALE). – Dear Kaja Kallas, thank you for your answers so far. I wanted to follow up on one issue. China has been systematically trying to reinterpret human rights and multilateralism. We have BRICS, which is trying to establish itself not only as a force that powers the voices of non-western countries, but also as a vehicle to decouple the Global South from our values and rules, and to subjugate it to the dictate of China and Russia.

What is our response? What is your response to the Belt and Road Initiative on the one hand, or attempts by Russia to tighten its grip over sub-Saharan Africa?

Global Gateway, which was mentioned here, was proclaimed as our way to invest into infrastructure, especially in the Global South. For now, the programme has not really taken off and the question is: how can we operationalise it? What are your plans in terms of making it more effective but also attractive to the Global South? What are the concrete ideas? How do you see the role of Global Gateway as part of our strategic package to counter Xi, Putin and, at some point, maybe also Trump?

1-0113-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – The BRICS, of course, is a group of countries that is not a homogeneous group of countries. But I think what we have to read into this is really the signal that they are sending: that these multilateral fora that we have right now are not addressing all the issues that the Global South has. I think in order to really reflect that we understand and listen, we should also move on with the reforms on the multilateral fora that we have to listen to them.

When it comes to the Global Gateway, I think it has a lot of potential. Not only that we have to use the Global Gateway, but we also have to show what we can do with the Global Gateway and what is the difference between the European Union and China for that matter.

We are trying to help those countries to use the resources that they have for the benefit of their people, also taking into account, for example, environmental aspects. I was watching one documentary about Chinese investment in Serbia and there it was clear that they are not caring about the people locally or their health because they only care about the prosperity that they get out of the factories that are there.

So, my point is that we have to show the difference that we bring, the quality of life that we bring to these regions and these people, because it's also in our interest that they do better because we have other worries about stability of the regions, but also migration. So, we definitely have to work together to use the tools that we have in place.

1-0114-0000

Dan Barna (Renew). – Dear Kaja, thank you for this rodeo of answers. I will come back to the subject of maintaining EU unity in foreign affairs. The capacity to speak with one voice on foreign policy matters a lot, but the rise of populism, illiberalism and polarisation within European societies poses a significant challenges to this unity.

So there are three layers to be addressed. The first one is the national level, and you already talked about this, about the way we are talking on and building common interests. The other two layers I'm asking for your position on are the local and the citizens.

Regarding local diplomacy at local level, in October 2022, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken appointed the first ever Special Representative for City and State Diplomacy, and he established a Subnational Diplomacy Unit within the State Department. Do you think that the EU should follow this approach?

And, since we are talking about improvement, would you consider creating a similar role and unit within the European External Action Service, as mayors, governors, county leaders and other local officials around the world are on the frontier of some of the biggest global challenges? This is the second layer.

And the third one is this never-ending challenge in democracy about enhancing citizens' engagement. How can the EU engage citizens more effectively in foreign policy debates, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and ownership for the EU's role in the world, whether we are talking about the Middle East, Africa, the Western Balkans or Moldova?

1-0115-0000

David McAllister, *Chair of the AFET Committee*. – Thank you. The prize for the longest question this morning goes to Dan Barna.

1-0116-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Congratulations on the prize!

I agree with you that we should engage more with our citizens on foreign policy as well. I think all this, what is going on in the world, is bringing foreign policy also to our people. I mean, it's not distant from anybody. What is happening elsewhere has an effect also on how we live here.

So it is an interesting idea of engaging the mayors and governors of local communities. I think we already have, in the European Union, institutions like the Committee of the Regions that are engaging the local communities more. How can we do this better? We need to work together with the European Parliament. You are the representatives of the people. You come from different regions. And you can also try to explain our foreign policy decisions to the citizens that you meet every time you go back to your constituency.

So I think, you know, it goes hand in hand. We need to discuss amongst ourselves and then explain it to our people. It was Plato who said that it's the role of the governing elite also to educate people. I think this is what we have to do: explain our decisions to our people.

1-0117-0000

Assita Kanko (ECR). – Good morning, Ms Kallas. You bring undeniable freshness and new energy in this room. I see focus, competence and respect for this Parliament. Thank you.

I am pleased to hear you underline making sure the EU is around the table and the necessity for a partnership of equals with Africa. To be honest, in that perspective, your predecessor was still living in the 1960s and, most of the time, sleepwalked through his term, calling everyone who opposed him 'far right', turning a blind eye regarding facts in the Middle East, showing incredible naivety

towards Russia and wearing an invisible muzzle when it came to acknowledging his flaws. Frankly, I am happy that Mr Borrell is about to leave the building.

Europe needs to take its responsibilities: in the Middle East, where Iran is threatening us; in Russia, where Putin mocks us; in Africa, where too many talents remain untapped; in Europe, where Jews are chased again, while we are giving our taxpayers' money to our enemies.

What will you do to stop the swindle? What will be your concrete actions to take Africa seriously and not merely as a vessel of the EU, but a genuine partner? Will the flow of money to Islamic terrorists and to dictators be investigated and cut off? And will our naivety towards Russia disappear? Can you answer the question of my colleague Lina Gálvez about female genital mutilation?

1-0118-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – First, thank you for your kind words.

When it comes to our relationship with Africa, then it really needs to be a partnership of equals. We need to have the eye-level context with African countries. And I feel that, coming also from a country that has experienced what it means to fight for its freedom, I am in a very good position to do that with the African countries, and I'm willing to invest my time in this as well.

For me, it is important that Europe is around the table whenever important issues are discussed, whether it's with the African countries or with other partners all around the world, or when it is the discussion about the different conflicts and wars that we have ongoing – that Europe is present, Europe is being listened to. We have a lot of power, we have a huge economic weight, we have the attraction of our quality of life, so we need to use these exceptional qualities that we have in order to also address the issues with our partners.

I hope that we have the African summit in 2025. I will do everything so that it takes place, and to really listen and start the discussions, also on my level, with the countries and listen to what their worries are.

When it comes to genital mutilation, of course this is an issue that we always raise. It's a human rights issue, and we will continue to do so.

1-0119-0000

Matthieu Valet (PFE). – Monsieur le Président, Madame la Commissaire désignée, la guerre en Ukraine a focalisé avec raison notre attention sur l'Europe de l'Est. Néanmoins, elle ne doit pas nous détourner des autres zones clés du monde, l'Afrique notamment – cela rejoint donc quelque peu la question de ma collègue.

En effet, nos relations avec les pays africains seront un élément structurant pour l'avenir de la sécurité de l'Europe. Justement, à force d'avoir une vision idéologique et moralisatrice de nos relations avec les pays du continent africain, le constat est que nous avons perdu en crédibilité et en influence dans cette zone.

Dans ce contexte, êtes-vous déterminée à renouer de vrais contacts et de bonnes relations avec les Africains, en les traitant d'égal à égal? Mais, surtout, êtes-vous prête à faire d'eux de nouveaux partenaires, notamment dans la lutte contre l'immigration illégale, le trafic d'êtres humains et le terrorisme, qui font peser de graves risques sur la stabilité et la sécurité européennes, mais aussi sur celle des pays africains de transit et de départ?

1-0120-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Relations with Africa. As I come from a country that also has experienced what it means to fight for freedom, I think we are in a very equal position with the African countries.

So we don't have a past, like some said, I'm a fresh face in that sense. I represent Europe, and I'm able to and I intend to invest my time in building those relationships.

Also listening to the worries that our African partners have. For every relationship to work, it has to work for both sides. And this is not only like you say, that, you know, we come and preach how our way of life should be. But also listen what is their aspect, how they see this.

When it comes to managing migration, then African countries are our partners in this and therefore it has two sides. One is that we are working together with them so that they would be more prosperous themselves because people don't want to leave their homes unless they really have to. So there are jobs, there is security and peace on the ground, and on the other side, managing migration so that we fight together against the human traffickers and smugglers and for all the human rights that have been breached on the way. So I see a lot of room for cooperation.

1-0121-0000

Nacho Sánchez Amor (S&D). – Señora Kallas, ser un actor global debe ser mucho más que un eslogan; hace falta voluntad política y hacen falta instrumentos: nuestro propio cuerpo diplomático, la diplomacia feminista, la diplomacia cultural, nuestra capacidad de inteligencia exterior, el reforzamiento del Equipo Europa, nuestras sanciones en materia de derechos humanos, los acuerdos comerciales y una defensa autónoma. Debo decirle que lo que más me ha preocupado de su intervención hoy es su enfoque de la defensa en Europa.

Pero el instrumento más poderoso de nuestra política exterior es el Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior, que sobrevive en medio de una obvia insuficiencia financiera. El recurso periódico a la financiación de la Comisión crea una dependencia financiera que se traduce inmediatamente en una dependencia política del Alto Representante, porque usted también representa el Consejo, no solo es vicepresidenta.

Además de los obvios problemas de representación exterior, que yo creo que requieren un sólido acuerdo interinstitucional, ¿cómo piensa asegurar la sostenibilidad financiera del Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior sin que sea simplemente absorbido en todos los sentidos por la Comisión?

1-0122-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Very, very good question. The idea behind the External Action Service is that the service works for everybody. It works for the Council, it works for the Commission, it works for everybody. And it should work like this because the European taxpayers or the third countries that we are working with don't really understand whether it's a person from External Action Service or Commission or the Council. For them, it's Team Europe. It's one Europe. And I think this is what we have to keep in mind all the time.

So I see the problems we have with the budget of the External Action Service. And I really am very grateful for the European Parliament's cooperation on this, that has always emphasised also the importance of the External Action Service funding because we can't close any missions that we have. This is our representation on the ground in all those countries. We have to have that.

At the same time, we also need to look into what we do. And I'm ready to audit and invest into really the efficiency of the service. What we do, is there a doubling of the things? Is there competition? What I already see between different entities in this regard. I'm willing to invest my time in this to really bring more efficiency also without losing really the External Action Service and the service around the globe.

1-0123-0000

Željana Zovko (PPE). – Madam Vice-President / High Representative-designate, the challenges Ukraine faces today in its ambition to join the EU echo a story which began in the Western Balkans in the 90s. Croatia successfully defended itself and joined the EU.

Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina was once seen as a success story of the United States and EU diplomacy following the Dayton Peace Agreement. Bosnia and Herzegovina is in a stalemate because of its inability to reform its electoral law and uphold its power-sharing principles. We have witnessed where this can lead in the Lebanese case.

How will you engage with our transatlantic partners to help preserve the Dayton Peace Agreement and ensure lasting stability on our southeastern border, and thus also do some preventive diplomacy finally from the past part of High Representative?

1-0124-0000

Kaja Kallas, Commissioner-designate. – The Western Balkans is a very important region, very close to our neighbourhood, and also we have two tracks there.

One is the enlargement track that we have to work with together with the Commissioner for Enlargement. As I said before, I think we really need to have success stories in five years in terms of enlargement, because it's for the prosperity of the region but it's also to give hope to the region. I always bring this example that enlargement is really a convergence machine. I mean, in my own country, the income per capita was 36 % of the European average before we joined and now it's close to 90 % of the European average. So it works as a convergence machine.

The other track is, of course, the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, where all my previous predecessors have invested a lot of time into, which would bring stability to the region.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have the mission in place and we see that there is a lot of tensions in that region. So I think in the really first part of my mandate, I also need to go to the region and talk to the countries there to see what we can do, because, like you say, the Dayton Agreement when it was put in place was very good, but now I see what people also in the region are telling, that it lacks parts of it.

So we need to develop this further, what we can do in order to help Bosnia and Herzegovina with the reforms that they need to do in terms of also proceeding with the enlargement. And I think, again, we shouldn't treat enlargement as a zero-sum game, like everybody's in or everybody's out. We can take the merit-based approach with every single country and, and see what we can do.

1-0125-0000

David McAllister, Chair of the AFET Committee. – Let me thank all Members for their questions and the Vice-President-designate for all her answers.

Before we close the hearing, I would now like to invite Madam Kallas to make a brief closing statement of up to 5 minutes.

1-0126-0000

Kaja Kallas, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you. This is a very interesting experience: being in your seat is actually quite more comfortable than being in my seat. But this is just the feeling that I have right now.

Thank you for the intense discussion. As I said, as an ally to this House, I will definitely continue to cooperate with you on different aspects. All of you have very different areas of expertise and it is always very, very interesting to learn from you in this regard. So I definitely intend to listen.

And what I want to stress in the end is that, again, we are stronger when we are united. I don't mean only united in terms of Europe and the 27 countries that we have in Europe. I also mean in terms of different institutions. We work as Team Europe for the same purpose: that there would be security in Europe and we deliver for our citizens a happier and better future, and also to our neighbouring countries the security and peace that we all need.

So thank you once again, and I hope that you will approve me in this post and we get to work together more. Thank you.

1-0127-0000

David McAllister, *Chair of the AFET Committee*. – Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, before I close the meeting, one important announcement: with regard to the next steps, please be informed that AFET coordinators will meet at 13:00 in camera to evaluate the hearing.

And I would like to say to you, Kaja Kallas, *suur tänu*. I think that's Estonian for 'thank you'. We're all starting to take Estonian lessons now.

And since the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs, my friend Bernd Lange, is here: dear Bernd, it was your guideline to conclude this meeting in 3 hours. With 6 minutes over time: mission accomplished, sir!

Thank you for your good cooperation. Well done, Kaja Kallas!

1-0128-0000

(The hearing closed at 12:08)