

Wednesday, 22 October 2008 - Strasbourg

Draft general budget 2009 (Section III) - Draft general budget 2009 (Sections I, II, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII and IX) (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes, draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. – Madam President, it is an endless political bone of contention that Heading 4 is chronically underfinanced. It prevents us from fulfilling our external commitments in crisis areas: in Kosovo, Palestine, Afghanistan and Georgia. We are completely unable to build up a solid common foreign and security policy on a long-term basis as long as the Commission and the Council keep on adopting this budgetary strategy of under-financing external relations and just giving ad hoc responses to the latest crisis, which attracts all resources and attention, such as Georgia today. The latest priority overshadows the previous one.

For the EU to become a global player, more money is needed in Heading 4. With the current financial envelope, it is impossible to satisfy the needs of the different budgetary lines. This is the reason why the Committee on Foreign Affairs strongly supports the strategy of the Committee on Budgetary Control seeking to restore the PDB on all budget lines and thus increase the budgetary lines for Kosovo by EUR 40 million and Palestine by EUR 139 million.

We also support the asterisk amendment. In other words, the Council and Parliament must allow utilisation of the flexibility instrument, and of all other available instruments provided for in the Interinstitutional Agreement, to allocate EUR 250 million on the food facility instrument, EUR 40 million on Kosovo, EUR 80 million for Palestine and EUR 20 million for Afghanistan.