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Ashton hearing

Ashton hearing reveals lack of vision for EU's foreign policy

Catherine Ashton, designated Vice-President of the Commission and High Representative for EU Foreign and Security policy, faced a hearing in the European Parliament this afternoon. Greens/EFA foreign affairs spokespersons **Franziska Brantner** (Germany) and **Ulrike Lunacek** (Austria) commented:

"The Commission Vice-President in waiting has shown herself to be a true diplomat: rich on words, poor on specifics. Her hearing has revealed no clear sense of vision, no initiatives and no plans of her own. We're buying a pig in a poke.

It is commendable that Lady Ashton has shown a willingness to meet NGOs on human rights issues in different parts of the world. We also welcome that she will involve the Parliament in budget questions related to the external action service. Overall, however, we do not see any commitment to develop a political vision and we remain unclear on what she hopes to achieve over the next five years.

MEPs are being asked to give our approval to a Commission that will have major question marks surrounding its new 'foreign minister' and her diplomatic service. It is still unclear how Ashton will work together with other Commissioners who have responsibilities for external affairs, including the dossiers for European neighbourhood policy and development.

The committee awarding last year's Nobel Peace Prize may have seen fit to make a decision on the basis of good intentions. The European Parliament ⬚ representing and answerable to almost 500 million citizens ⬚ cannot afford to do the same."

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