

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by congratulating the Commission on having produced such a comprehensive, well-balanced and well thought out communication. In particular, the communication ranges across all the available sources of energy and devotes considerable attention to different geographical regions across the world. Moreover, the report takes into account supply, safety, security and environmental factors, research and a whole range of other considerations illustrating its thorough-going nature.

My response to this communication can be divided into an appreciation of its strong points but also an awareness of one or two areas that could potentially be improved.

In so far as the positive aspects to the Commission communication are concerned, I fully endorse the four priorities that are:

*Building up the external dimension of our internal energy market;

* Strengthening partnerships for secure, safe, sustainable and competitive industry;

* Improving access to the sustainable energy for developing countries;

* and, finally, better promoting EU policies beyond its borders.

However, the core that runs through this is the strengthening of coordination of EU Energy policy between the Commission and the member states across the EU-27. This is something that I whole heartedly approve of. The fact that the Europe will be able to speak with one voice will give Europe much greater influence in international forums.

However, there are three areas in which some improvement might be made.

Firstly, if it is certainly the case that progress has been made in the northern-southern and eastern "neighbourhoods" of Europe, the report remains a little vague concerning the region of the Southern Atlantic. By this I mean such states as Nigeria, Angola and Brazil.

Secondly, South America represents a vast, untapped resource and more attention - at least from the point of view of energy policy - would undoubtedly be welcome.

Thirdly, there is perhaps a tendency when speaking about the emerging countries to concentrate on China. The other emerging countries not much less significance - and I am thinking of the growing influence of India in particular - and these latter would seem to have been partially forgotten.

Finally, with regard to the developing countries, if energy policy in this sphere is already on the right track, much still needs to be done. In particular, Europe should engage more actively in capacity building. To give a concrete example: in Mozambique vast amounts of gas have been discovered. However, they lack a regulatory framework. If Europe were to assist them in developing this respect, this would increase European influence in a region where the Asian countries are already extremely active.

Against this background, I look forward to working with the other rapporteurs on these matters. Thank you very much.