

**Catherine Ashton**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, allow me just to refer to some of the comments that have been made.

Mr Guardans Cambó, Mr Hutchinson and Ms Hall, you all in different ways talked about the past and our need to do better. I agree with that. I may not completely agree with the analysis, but I do agree that this is an opportunity to look forward, and part of that is about looking forward to the involvement not only of this Parliament but also of parliaments across the ACP. Of course, it is up to individual nations how they involve their own parliaments. We have to be very careful – and I know honourable Members would want me to be – in not imposing what I think upon any other country. Let me say to Mrs Kinnock, that I look forward to the meeting with the Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA).

Mr Martin in particular, but others too, talked about the need to have our reviews and, again, I agree, particularly in this economic climate, it is absolutely essential that we monitor and review. I will be very interested to continue the dialogue with honourable Members about how we engage Parliament in that, but also your ideas on how we can make this monitoring

and review really effective and make those countries that are working with us feel very positive in that direction.

Mr Sturdy and Mr Martin, 'most favoured nation' is, as has been said, designed to capture in a sense those large countries that have not supported the process we have been involved in. It is not about damaging South-South trade or damaging in any way, shape or form the opportunities and the sovereignty of those countries that wish to open up trade. That is why we have a ceiling on the amount of world trade that a country must be involved in before this particular provision kicks in. I have to say we are always looking for any flexibility we might have within that too.

Concerning customs revenue: Mr Arif and Mme Jouye de Grandmaison, until 2013 the EDF covers this and we are interested in making sure that economic growth and fiscal change can also support nations so that they are not reliant upon this revenue solely, but actually find new ways of supporting their economies.

Whatever happens on bananas, the preferences will continue to be better for those countries than anywhere else. But we are very mindful of preference

erosion and, as we explore agreements which we have waited for many years to try and sort out, we need to take that on board, and I intend to that.

Mr Van Hecke, Ms Mann and Mrs Kinnock: what one gets, the other gets.

Let me be absolutely clear: I am happy to write to anybody anywhere, but certainly to Côte d'Ivoire to say that the flexibilities that we have been in discussion with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) will apply to them because there are one or two things only specific to that region that they would not want, but those that they wish to have they can have. I am very happy to put that in writing anywhere, any time to anyone. So please just tell me what you want me to do.

Mr Ford and Mr Fjellner talked about the importance of trade generally and I agree completely with that analysis. I think Mr Fjellner said that more trade rather than less trade is what we need in this economic climate, and I completely agree with that.

Mr Caspary, freedom to take on their own future to take into their own hands – I agree completely. And those countries that have developed economically without EPAs – well, India and China would be two examples, I suppose.

Mr Kamall, too, echoed this theme that I think is very important, that we allow nations to develop and grow and allow them to do so by developing their economies and supporting them through development and trade linked together.

Mrs Kinnock, the development link is very important, but **the binding aid commitment is in the Cotonou Agreement – it is already there**. What this is about, for us, is using EPAs to enable the preferences, the priorities on development to be established on a joint basis, which is extremely important.

Finally, I want to just do something I do not often get a chance to do, which is to pay tribute to the team who are working with me. Our chief negotiator sits behind me. He has been doing all the work with SADC. My colleagues are here and I just wanted to make sure that you recognised that they are extraordinarily supportive and absolutely committed to the agenda I have spelled out.

For me, I hope that you will vote in the spirit in which I have put before you what I am trying to do. I give you my full commitment to continue it, but I

really hope I can get your support to take forward the agenda in the way that I have described. That would be of enormous importance to me and I hope you are able to do so tonight.