Addendum Slip

European and External Relations Committee

1st Report, 2012 (Session 4)

The Scottish Parliament’s EU Priorities for 2012

SP Paper 93

Please note the attached response from David Martin MEP as an addition toAnnexe J.
Priorities for the year ahead

The European Union is facing tough economic conditions at home with high unemployment and financial uncertainty. The challenge for the coming year will be to maintain an outward focus: increasing trade to help boost economic growth and contribute to job creation, ensuring the EU remains the leading voice in reforming the international and European banking sector, and pursuing the highest possible international standards for the environment, human rights and sustainable development.

Ongoing trade negotiations

Negotiations are ongoing between the EU and various countries to conclude international trade agreements covering the trade in goods and services, investment, dispute mechanisms and sustainable development. With India negotiations continue on a possible EU - India Free Trade Agreement which will hopefully result in a huge reduction in tariffs for spirits, particularly Scotch whisky. With Canada, the complaint lodged at the WTO against the EU ban on the trade in seal products will affect the ongoing negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. The importance of human rights standards in trade agreements continues to be high on the agenda with the European Parliament called this year to assess and vote on the Free Trade Agreement with Colombia, where the assassination of trade unionists is the highest in the world.

Trade and development

The EU's relationship with developing countries is also an importance focus for the Union this year. Currently the Parliament is examining proposals from the Commission to radically reform the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) - the preferential trading scheme which has been in place since the 1970s, giving developing countries easier access to the European market as a tool to encourage economic diversification and poverty-alleviation.

At the same time negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) continue. EPAs will hopefully provide stable trade agreements between the EU and the poorest countries in the world to contribute to the EU's commitments in international development. Commission proposals on ways to stimulate recent slow progress in EPA negotiations will be looked at closely in the Parliament this year. And with the recent publication of the Commission's Trade and Development strategy, the future of European Union development assistance will be heavily debated.

ACTA

The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) has come before Parliament for consent. A highly controversial agreement signed by the EU and 10 countries, ACTA is intended to enhance international cooperation in tackling commercial scale copyright violations. The Agreement covers counterfeit products such as designer clothes, car parts and medicines, as well as online piracy of music, films etc. Protecting our creative industries and
Scottish intellectual property from large-scale copyright violation is crucial, particularly during a financial crisis, but there are many concerns over the interpretation and implementation of ACTA which the Parliament will be considering carefully this year. Of particular concern are fundamental freedoms in relation to the monitoring of online activities and an increased risk of the seizure of legitimate generic medicines destined for the developing world.

**Animal welfare**

With the recognition in the Lisbon Treaty that animals are sentient beings, the EU's commitment to strong animal welfare legislation has been reinforced. This year we continue to monitor the implementation of Directives on phasing out battery cages for hens and sow stalls for pigs. Scotland and the rest of the UK are ready to comply with the new legislation and it is only fair that other Member States do the same.