

In addition to its action on monitoring compliance with Community law, the Commission submitted a proposal to the Council in February 1998 on amending Directives 83/182/EEC and 83/183/EEC to adapt them to internal market requirements. The Council has not yet adopted that proposal. Lastly, the Commission is currently preparing an overall communication on vehicle taxation.

The Commission believes that its action will significantly improve the situation of the European citizen in this area.

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(<sup>1</sup>) OJ C 163 E, 6.6.2001, p. 133.

(<sup>2</sup>) OJ L 105, 23.4.1983.

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(2001/C 174 E/084)

**WRITTEN QUESTION P-3573/00**

**by Stavros Xarchakos (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(13 November 2000)

*Subject:* Cultural Olympiad

In conjunction with the extremely important winter and summer Olympic Games, from 2000 to 2004 Greece is promoting the institution of the Cultural Olympiad. Can the Commission say what its position is with regard to this institution, whether it intends to fund it and whether a suitable legal basis exists? If so, what appropriations does it propose to allocate?

**Answer given by Mrs Reding on behalf of the Commission**

(22 December 2000)

The Commission welcomes the idea of a programme of European cultural events to accompany the 2004 Olympic Games. However, the Commission has so far neither been informed of any specific programme nor received any application for financial support and cannot therefore, at this stage, voice any opinion on the subject of the 'Cultural Olympiad'.

The Commission would, however, like the Honourable Member to be aware that it is able to offer support for cultural initiatives within the framework of, and subject to the criteria of, the 'Culture 2000' programme, which is the Community's single financing and programming instrument for cultural cooperation, and which is based on Article 151 (ex Article 128) of the EC Treaty.

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(2001/C 174 E/085)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-3581/00**

**by Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(17 November 2000)

*Subject:* Letter of 23 March 1998 from Commission Member Leon Brittan to Thabo Mbeki concerning the TRIPS agreement

There are reports of long-running conflict between many developing countries and the pharmaceutical industry on the production and/or purchase of low-cost medicines by developing countries. In accordance with the TRIPS agreement, concluded under the WTO Agreement in 1994, and which is binding on all WTO member states, such countries can, in certain circumstances, switch to producing or purchasing low-cost medicines.

1. Is it true that European Commission Member Leon Brittan wrote to South African Vice-President Thabo Mbeki on 23 March 1998 to prevent South Africa from taking up the option under the TRIPS agreement of producing low-cost medicines itself or buying them abroad?

If so, what was the precise content of the letter and what arguments are used to justify such action?

2. Has any other, comparable, action been taken by the European Commission?

If so, what?

### **Answer given by Mr Lamy on behalf of the Commission**

*(15 December 2000)*

1. The Commission does not oppose the use by World Trade Organisation (WTO) Members of legitimate possibilities offered by the Trade related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPs) agreement. On the particular issue of compulsory licensing, the Commission acknowledges the WTO members' right to resort to this instrument, provided that the conditions set out in the TRIPs agreement are respected. A copy of the letter mentioned by the Honourable Member has been forwarded to the Parliament.

2. No.

The Commission would also refer the Honourable Member to its answer to Written Questions E-2316/00 by Mr E. Meijer<sup>(1)</sup> and P-2672/00 by Mrs H. Maij-Weggen<sup>(1)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 136 E, 8.5.2001.

(2001/C 174 E/086)

### **WRITTEN QUESTION P-3584/00**

**by Laura González Álvarez (GUE/NGL) to the Council**

*(13 November 2000)*

*Subject:* Damaged British nuclear submarine HMS Tireless, docked in Gibraltar

The British nuclear submarine HMS Tireless has been docked at the British naval base in Gibraltar since 19 May 2000 for repairs to its damaged primary coolant circuit. The British authorities have given conflicting accounts regarding the extent of the damage, whilst the repair period, initially announced as lasting only three months, has now been extended to summer 2001. The Royal Navy prohibits repairs to nuclear-powered submarines in ports with facilities such as those in Gibraltar (Z-class ports) and only authorises such repairs in X-class bases such as those at Devonport and Faslane in the United Kingdom, which have medical equipment, evacuation plans and special machinery. This fact, together with the hypothetical danger of a radioactive leak to public health, has prompted requests from the Autonomous Government of Andalusia and the mayors of the areas of Spain bordering Gibraltar that the submarine be moved back to the United Kingdom.

Could the Council approach the British and Spanish authorities with a request that they provide the inhabitants of the Gibraltar area with precise, ongoing and comprehensive information as to the potential risks, the extent of the damage and the repair plans, that they guarantee permanent monitoring of radioactivity levels in the local water and air and, should the vessel undergo repair in Gibraltar, that they implement a nuclear emergency and evacuation plan, which the Gibraltar area currently lacks?

Could the Council recommend that the damaged submarine be moved back to the United Kingdom, where it could undergo repair at a specialised and safe base?