



Foreign & Commonwealth
Office
EU Directorate
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

11 January 2010

Mr John Walker
(by email: request-23397-aff573d6@whatdotheyknow.com)

Dear Mr Walker,

Thank you for your email of 18 November about the European Commission. It has been forwarded to the Europe Directorate as the department which deals with this subject.

When a new Commission needs to be appointed, the current Commission may act in a 'caretaker' capacity after the expiry of its mandate to protect the interests of the EU, to fulfil its obligations under the Treaty, and to ensure the continuity of public service.

Until a new Commission is appointed, the current Commission would continue in a caretaker capacity carrying on for a short period of time with limited powers. During such a caretaker period, as we know from past precedents, the Commission would be able to act and take those decisions which are essential for the discharge of its existing formal responsibilities. It can also fulfil its international responsibilities. This has happened before, for example, with the Prodi Commission in 2004 and in 1995 with the Santer Commission.

The Prime Minister has welcomed the appointment of Baroness Ashton as the EU High Representative. In this role, Cathy Ashton will have a unique role over the next five years in shaping the global Europe of the future.

Yours sincerely,

L Kurt

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