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Hearing of French Minister Ségolène Royal

EMIS inquiry committee 24 November 2016

Ségolène Royal, France's environment minister, appeared before the EMIS committee in Strasbourg today. The much-anticipated hearing got off to a rocky start, as Ms Royal arrived 40 minutes late due to a delayed flight, and the Members therefore only had an hour for their questions. The tone of the hearing was overall quite heated, and the Members appeared frustrated at the lack of time and the sometimes general nature of the replies.

Several Members, asked Ms Royal to provide an explanation for the apparent discrepancy between her own public statements and the actions of France within the Technical Committee on Motor Vehicles (TCMV), which was responsible for deciding on the details of the real driving emissions (RDE) testing procedure. Indeed, it was pointed out that, while she had herself criticised the conformity factors adopted by the TCMV in October last year, France was one of the main actors in pushing for a delay in the introduction of RDE. According to Ms Royal, the civil servants representing France within the TCMV had acted without consulting her, and therefore insisted that decisions be brought to the ministerial level in the future. She stated that the politics on this issue had changed since her arrival in the ministry. However, EMIS co-rapporteur Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy also remarked that, according to the minutes of the TCMV meetings, the French delegation's insistence on delaying the introduction of RDE and introducing high conformity factors was due to instructions "from above", which it had received after Ms Royal took position as Environment minister.

Throughout the hearing, Ms Royal insisted multiple times on the exemplary reaction of her Ministry to the scandal, stating that France was the only country to have set up an independent and transparent inquiry committee only 8 days after news of Volkswagen's cheating was made public in the U.S., and to have heard national carmakers as well as other brands.

Several other questions were asked by Members regarding the impartiality of the French authorities towards Renault, amongst other things referring to the Financial Times article which accused the Commission Royal report of omitting crucial details about the French carmaker. Ms Royal denied these accusations, stating that the journalist in question had later been contacted by the Commission Royal and had written another article calling it very transparent. When asked by French Greens/EFA MEP Karima Delli why France had not ordered recalls from Renault despite several of its vehicles exceeding the legal NOx limits by as much as 15 times, Ms Royal requested that France would cease to be denigrated, and

especially French car manufacturers. She stated that a recall plan had been negotiated with Renault to bring its vehicles in line with standards. Ms Royal also lamented that car manufacturers were being pitted one against the other, and considered that the allegations that cheating from Renault was being covered up by the French authorities are the result of unfounded assumptions made by Renault's competitors.

Lastly, quite a surprising answer was given to a question asked by Karima Delli, concerning why Ms Royal's Ministry did not act on behalf of the French government to challenge the introduction of the conformity factors that she had called unacceptable. Indeed, Ms Royal stated that no challenge was made because she expected the European Parliament to reject the commission proposal.

- **Ségolène Royal's answers to EMIS written questions**

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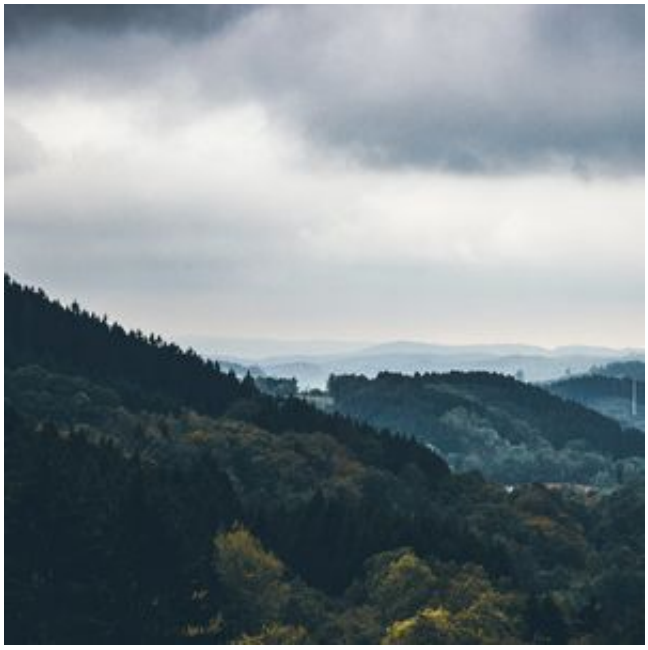


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