Positive UK backdrop to Europe elections

London Conservative MEPs’ team up for fight ahead

With the UK confirmed as the fastest growing economy in Western Europe, unemployment figures dropping to 7.1% and crime falling by 10% in England and Wales, conditions going into London’s May 22 European and local elections are very favourable for the Conservatives.

In addition, a 30% reduction in net immigration figures show that the government is committed to its pledge and to preventing EU benefit tourism abuses, while in finally returning radical cleric Abu Qatada, Home Secretary Theresa May has succeeded where many other home secretaries have failed in resisting the powers of the European Court of Human Rights.

Prime Minister David Cameron has made a solemn promise if re-elected to go into government in 2015 to renegotiate Britain’s relationship with the EU and following this an In/Out referendum on EU membership in 2017. The PM has also safeguarded the City of London by ensuring double majority voting in the European Banking Authority, and secured a commitment that would stop UK participation in any future Eurozone bailouts.

Conservative MEPs for London are: Charles Tannock, Marina Yannakoudakis and Syed Kamall

Proud after 5 years of this Parliament to be number one

I remain the number one MEP in London and for the UK Conservatives ranked on crucial key performance indicators by the independent ranking website www.mepranking.eu.

In this Parliament, I have asked 602 official questions to the EU institutions. By contrast, the average number of questions asked by London MEPs is 216 and for all UK MEPs just 101.

The Sunday Telegraph stated I was the MEP who gives taxpayers the best value for money. I received this rating because of “near-perfect attendance”, “moderate to low expenses” and for “bombarding” EU officials with questions about their responsibilities.

As a long-standing friend of Bangladesh, I addressed a Bangladesh Hearing regarding the January 5th 2014 scheduled parliamentary elections.

Speaking at the EP friends of Pakistan reception to Malala Yousafzai, shot by the Pakistan Taliban for advocating girls’ education. She was awarded the EP Sakharov prize in recognition of her bravery and human rights campaigning.

With fellow Conservative MEPs and the Rt. Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP, the Attorney General for England and Wales, I raised concerns about the workings of the European Arrest Warrant across the EU, and highlighted the need for all Member States, including the UK, to use the mechanism in an effective and consistent manner.

With RBKC Cllr Jonathan Read, Chairman, Your Credit Union and its membership officer. Credit Unions are not-for-profit financial co-operatives owned and controlled by their members, operating like a community self-help ethos seeks to recapture the spirit of mutual building societies and is one I strongly support.

Attending a demonstration against Ukrainian President, Viktor Yanukovich’s, decision not to sign an Association Agreement with the EU at the Vilnius Summit. This is a sad decision that has the potential to deprive Ukraine of a democratic and Euro-Atlantic future and I am monitoring events closely in that country.

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Foreign Affairs Committee MEPs have overwhelmingly backed my progress report advocating further talks over the accession of Montenegro to the EU.

Since gaining candidate status in December 2010, Montenegro has made real inroads on its path to EU accession, and following the Commission’s recent glowing progress report, EU-Montenegro relations are progressing well.

The country remains a good example of what can be achieved in the Balkans; just seven years ago, it held a referendum on breaking away from Serbia, the country that had dominated it for centuries. Not only has Montenegro worked hard to introduce lasting and meaningful reforms in the political, economic and social spheres, but it has even overtaken Serbia in the negotiation process.

There is broad national consensus in Montenegro on European integration. Even the most hardened opponents of the government share this goal.

But there are some worrying signs; while Montenegro must be commended for its vibrant free press and diverse civil society, there is a risk that the media, and some NGOs, have to a certain extent occupied the space of a formal governmental opposition, and there are also real issues of media intimidation.

This all creates the risk that the internal divisions within Montenegro society could substantially delay the process of EU integration, although if all necessary reforms are maintained the country could become the EU’s next member state, albeit in 2020 or 2021 at the earliest.

Talking to news channel JN1 on the outcome of the Geneva 2 talks with Iran. I welcomed the breakthrough, reiterating my belief that peaceful means of dealing with Iran’s nuclear ambitions should be exploited to their fullest extent.

Supporting Number 10’s initiative on reducing burdensome EU regulation, as set out in the report from the Prime Minister’s red-tape task force of leading business figures. The initiative’s aims mean that Europe should be about helping businesses to grow and employ more people to get economies moving and create wealth, without over-regulating.