



SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

The courage to make a difference

Report of the Secretary General to the Congress

XXIII Congress of
the Socialist International
Athens, Greece,
30 June - 2 July 2008

Global Solidarity: The *courage to make a difference*
XXIII CONGRESS OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL
ATHENS, GREECE, 30 JUNE - 2 JULY 2008

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

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THE COURAGE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

It is a pleasure to present this report to the XXIII Congress of the Socialist International in Athens. It is the first time we have held our Congress in this city which is so rich in the history of democracy and the promise of human endeavour, and I would like to thank our President George Papandreou, leader of PASOK, and our comrades and friends of PASOK for their efforts in hosting this gathering.

The period covered by this report has been an active and productive time for our International and I would like to record my appreciation to our President, to the leaders and to the members of our political family who have been at the forefront giving shape to all that we have achieved together.

We carry out our work at this Congress knowing that the world has reached a threshold. The people of this Earth, our only home, will either begin now to make the decisions that can ensure that the planet remains habitable for human life in the future or will increasingly endure the consequences of not doing enough in time.

What needs to be achieved and when with regard to global warming and climate change is now generally understood and agreed. How to accomplish it amidst the ever more complicated challenges of globalisation – particularly with regard to the perpetuation of conflicts, financial volatility, economic injustice and the vast migration of people in search of survival, dignity and a decent life for their children – is the question.

The answer will come from new forms of politics that the Socialist International is in a unique position to conceive, construct and carry forth. It will stem from the realisation that only social democracy – rooted in, connected with and fully respectful of all the world's citizens – can inspire the solidarity among people at the local, national and global levels necessary to make a difference in humanity's critical struggle to secure peace and stability, not only among ourselves but between us and the planet upon which we live. And it will succeed only if there is the courage to follow through with all that needs to be done.

ACTING NOW ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change constitutes the greatest challenge of our time, and tackling it is the most vital priority before us and is rightly at the top of our agenda at this Congress. The indisputable scientific facts of global warming and the impact of human activity on the earth's climate system with disastrous consequences mean decisive political action is needed now.

The goal of living in a Sustainable World Society, bringing a secure future for all our citizens and next generations, demands our best efforts. For this reason we established the Socialist International Commission for a Sustainable World Society to examine the crucial issues of climate change, energy and governance, and draw up a common, global, progressive blueprint on these fundamental matters. The establishment of this body is part of our long held commitment to the environment, which has been at the top of our priorities on the political agenda, and is a natural progression from our work on sustainable development. Tackling global issues, such as protection of the environment, is fundamental to the identity of our movement.

At the International's Council meeting in Santiago on 6-7 November 2006, which established the Commission, we said:

“To make the necessary course correction for building a sustainable world society requires immense political will and new forms of governance necessary to achieve coordinated action at every level, especially between nations and international bodies... The long held principles and values of the Socialist International, its belief in an interdependent world and its presence on every continent make it the only political organisation capable of successfully promoting such an effort.”

The Council in Geneva in June 2007 then elected Ricardo Lagos, former President of Chile and a Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Climate Change, and Goran Persson, former Prime Minister of Sweden, as the Commission Co-Chairs. Attaching great importance to this initiative, the Socialist International has brought together leading personalities, among them serving and former heads of state and government ministers from different continents, in this fifteen-member

Commission to lend their experience, vision and capacity to this task. Those on the Commission are drawn from both member parties of our International and other relevant actors of the international community, from Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Germany, India, Mexico, Morocco, Panama, Poland, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, with invited guests from China. In this way, we aspire to harness the potential to articulate from the world of progressive politics a way forward to address global environmental concerns, climate change and the issues of governance required to deal with these common challenges.

“Since globalisation is here to stay, it is necessary to establish progressive guidelines that will make possible to have a sustainable society, not only at the national level, but also at the world level... There are a growing number of international issues that cannot be solved at the national level. Migration, international trade and internet financial flows, maintenance of a world peace, pandemics that cross national borders, international terrorism, climate change are just a few examples of the need to solve these problems.” *Socialist International Council, Geneva, 29-30 June 2007*

London meeting: The urgency of the task

The inaugural meeting of the Commission for a Sustainable World Society was held at 10 Downing Street on 19 November 2007, hosted by Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Leader of the British Labour Party, just days after the presentation of the IPCC Synthesis Report of the Fourth Assessment Report in Valencia, Spain, which provided scientific evidence that the warming of the climate system was unequivocal and set out potential targets for CO2 emission reductions for policy-makers.

Echoing the sentiments of the Commission members, Prime Minister Brown said that allying environmental care and stewardship with social justice and economic progress was the urgent challenge facing social democrats everywhere, one that was transforming the role of government. The Prime Minister, Co-Chair of the Commission Goran Persson, members of the Commission at the meeting, the President and Secretary General of the Socialist International, along with Ministers from the British

government, all took an active part in the discussion, during which the urgency of the task of the Commission was underlined, as was the vital role of our International and partners had to play in developing a model where economic development, combating poverty and protecting the environment were combined, with the firm conviction that a socially and ecologically sustainable society could create new opportunities for economic growth, employment, social protection and a cohesive society. It was felt that the high-level, representative composition of the Commission was fundamental to this work. Participants also highlighted the need for identifiable aims for action to tackle the issue of climate change, setting a course with both immediate and long-term policies; the responsibility of developed nations towards developing countries with a new spirit of North-South dialogue and action; the need to find a way to ensure sustainable development with energy security and environmental concerns; the key role of the citizen in addressing climate change; and, the importance of international institutions increasing their effectiveness.

“No country can deal with this issue alone, neither can the planet afford to leave any country behind. Too many people in different regions of the world are suffering, exacerbating social divisions, cultural differences and inequality within and among nations. Climate change needs a common, adequate and effective multilateral response. This can only be provided by ensuring the necessary governance at all levels.” *Socialist International Commission for a Sustainable World Society, London, 19 November 2007*

The Commission decided on the priorities of its work, defining and outlining its tasks and activities, as well as addressing the current environmental agenda ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali in December, and issued a statement reflecting its discussions.

Santiago meeting: Advancing common sustainability in an interdependent world society

The Socialist International Commission for a Sustainable World Society next met on 24 March this year, in Santiago, Chile, a week before the United Nations Ad-Hoc Working Groups were due to gather in Bangkok for their first sessions as set out by the Bali roadmap.

In the midst of great media interest, the Commission met with the participation of H.E. Michelle Bachelet, President of the Republic of Chile, and was chaired by Commission Co-Chair Ricardo Lagos.

Introducing the discussions, Lagos underlined that the issues before this Commission were for the first time truly global in nature and could only be resolved globally; problems might begin nationally but the effects soon spread worldwide. The perspective progressive forces could bring to the international agenda on climate change included initiatives for all, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Speaking at the opening, President Bachelet underscored the new sense of urgency felt by the international community in tackling climate change. A new political consensus was gathering to generate global political action, to which the role of progressive ideas was fundamental. Climate change was not simply a sophisticated concept that only applied to developed countries, but a reality for the world's most vulnerable which required a new global capacity.

The participants also included H.E. Martin Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama and leader of the Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD; Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa; Beatriz Paredes, President of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI, Mexico; Sergei Mironov, Chairman of the Council of the Russian Federation; Mohammed Elyazghi, Minister of State of Morocco; Elio Di Rupo, Minister of State and leader of the Socialist Party, PS, Belgium; Aleksandr Kwasniewski, former President of Poland; Mona Sahlin, Chair of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, SAP; Marco Aurélio Garcia, PT, Brazil; Zhijuan Zhang, Vice-Minister of China; and myself. The Commission engaged in another lively debate on raising environmental issues higher up the political agenda and promoting a comprehensive and truly global approach to climate change. It considered how to combine ecological concerns with technological advances, growth and sustainability, as well as public and private cooperation. The importance of unprecedented solidarity between developed and developing nations was highlighted, as was the vital contribution of politics to the international climate change agenda. A statement was unanimously agreed which underlined that global governance was no longer a concept but an urgent

need, in an ever more interdependent world where crises touched everywhere. Bali had provided a window of opportunity but the multilateral system required leadership and an understanding of the global implications and consequences in a changing world. Development, the Commission agreed, had to go hand in hand with sustainability, not dictated by markets alone and greater education was needed.

A Call from Antarctica

In connection with the Commission meeting in Chile, a group of the participants visited Antarctica and Patagonia in the days prior to the discussions in Santiago, from Friday 21 March to Sunday 23, to gain a greater understanding at firsthand of the effects of climate change in that part of the world.

At the Eduardo Frei Chilean base, located in one of the 'hotspots' of global warming on the white continent, in the Antarctic peninsula which has warmed faster than anywhere else in the Southern Hemisphere, the political leaders were given briefings by those responsible for the base, one of the largest in the region where some one hundred people are permanently stationed, and by a leading glaciologist who made a presentation on the dramatic and rapidly changing environmental circumstances in the continent, affected by human activity in other parts of the globe, resulting in collapsing ice shelves and less sea ice in areas of the Antarctic where warm air and exposure to ocean waves were causing the ice to break up.

From Antarctica, Ricardo Lagos on behalf of the participants appealed to the international community to undertake a new path to preserve and safeguard the environment for present and future generations.

The work goes on

The Commission will next meet in Sweden in September 2008, where it will consider more in-depth ideas and proposals on financing, technology transfers and mitigation, in advance of the UN Climate Change Conference, in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008. The first Commission seminar will take place in St Petersburg following this Congress on 14-15 July, with a focus on tackling climate change with economic growth based

on equity, employment and respect for the environment; assessing alternative sources of energy; and strengthening national and international regulations to protect water and forests.

The programme of work continues with meetings of the Commission in India in March 2009, culminating in the last meeting, together with the presentation of the Commission's final report in connection with the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2009. In conjunction with these meetings, further seminars will be held with political and social leaders and experts in South Africa in November this year; and in 2009 in Washington D.C in February and in China at a date to be announced.

WORKING FOR A WORLD IN PEACE

The fundamental commitment of the social democratic movement to lessen conflict and reduce threats to peace in the world today remains as strong and vital as ever. We must remember that our security is linked and coexists with growing inequalities between rich and poor countries; with dramatic migratory tensions; with an increasingly threatened environment; with hunger and pandemics which always strike the weakest; with poverty and the marginalisation of millions of people; and with the labour and sexual exploitation of many children and women.

We in the International understand that the prospects for human progress, for a fairer, more justly governed world, are greatest when people can live free of conflict and without fear. And we know, too, that the task is never completed, that working to achieve and preserve peace is a part of life, virtually everywhere. The quest for peace - between nations, among peoples, across boundaries of language, culture and faith - is fundamental to the identity we share and a mission we will always embrace.

Building a more secure world

Our first Council following the last Congress in Sao Paulo was held in Madrid on 7-8 February 2004, hosted by the Spanish Socialist Workers' party, PSOE. The discussions centred on the main theme of "How do we build upon the Social Democratic vision for a more secure world?" and approximately 400 delegates from our members from every continent participated.

Three specific panels were held under the main theme. The first was on "Prospects for peace in the Middle East", with contributions from leaders and members of the Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian member parties as well as from other parties from that region and beyond; and the second panel "Ensuring a democratic future for Iraq", included the participation of leaders and representatives from Iraqi parties and others. A Resolution on the Middle East and another Resolution on Iraq were adopted by the Council. A third panel discussion focused on "Regional efforts toward greater security and democracy" with contributions by delegates from other regions of the world.

“At this historical moment, with so many uncertainties, the responsibility of the SI and of its member parties becomes extremely important. This is a moment loaded with uncertainties and concerns in the search for a road that may lead us to an international order with greater security, peace, dialogue and greater equilibrium between poor and rich countries.” *Madrid Declaration, Socialist International Council, Madrid, 7-8 February 2004*

Overcoming acts of terror

Just over a month after the Madrid Council, on 11 March 2004, horrendous bomb attacks were perpetrated in the city which took the lives of so many innocent people. The Socialist International immediately expressed its strongest condemnation of the unprecedented murderous terrorist attack in Europe and we extended our deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims.

At the polls the following weekend, the Spanish people reaffirmed and massively demonstrated their faith in democracy and their institutions, electing the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE, on 14 March, and a new government led by PSOE General Secretary José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. We greeted the victory of our Spanish comrades as a reaffirmation and a clear message for peace and security in a world faced with many uncertainties, equally saluting their victory as a message of hope and confidence in the values and principles of the social democratic movement for a more humane, more peaceful, and fairer world. The country returned to the ballot box this March and gave a clear endorsement to the government's programme, reelecting a PSOE administration for another term.

It was with immense sadness that we then had to condemn further indiscriminate acts of terror when they were perpetrated in London on 25 July 2005. We stood firm alongside the people of London who reacted calmly and courageously in the face of such acts of barbarism, demonstrating that the values of freedom, tolerance and humanity shared by the citizens of London and all other cities of the world, cannot be destroyed, contrary to the designs of the criminals behind these attacks. We expressed our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to all those who had been touched by these despicable acts.

Such moments of violence and tragedy only reaffirmed and strengthened the resolve of our International, as pursued collectively by all our member parties in every region of the world, to eliminate terrorism everywhere and bring to justice all those responsible for acts of terror, to strengthen peace, to deepen democracy and to guarantee respect for human rights.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The International has been closely involved and our presence felt in the Middle East region for many years during this major conflict deeply affecting both Palestinians and Israelis. Our solidarity with the people there and their dreams for a more peaceful, prosperous future has been steadfast during even the most difficult moments. We have remained committed to supporting all possible efforts in the region to achieve peace, ensure respect for human rights, provide economic opportunities for all its citizens and strengthen democratic governance based on social democratic values. Recognising the Middle East's important place in the world, we firmly believe in the crucial role of the international community in achieving a lasting peace in the region and are convinced that there will be no solution, nor peace, without dialogue and negotiation.

Our work in the Middle East following the Congress in Sao Paulo, included in December 2003, our attendance at the signing of the Geneva Accords, a peace initiative launched by a wide array of Israeli and Palestinian civic leaders, begun nearly three years previously by Yossi Beilin and Yasser Abed Rabbo after the last official talks between Israel and the Palestinians had ended, with the intention that Israeli and Palestinian leaders would be encouraged to return to the negotiating table and we shared in that hope.

At our Council meeting in Madrid in February 2004, we had urged both parties in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to abstain from all use of violence and implement a ceasefire, reiterating the demand for an immediate resumption of negotiations based on the roadmap, which could lead to a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders with the possibility of land swaps, a capital for both states in Jerusalem and a just solution to the refugee problem. Following a decision taken by that Council, the Chair of our Middle East Committee, Thorbjørn Jagland, SI Vice-President Massimo D'Alema and myself, held talks in Brussels, Jerusalem, Ramallah and Tel

Aviv from 22 to 25 March 2004, on the seriously deteriorating situation in the Middle East. The first discussions, in an intensive programme of talks, were held in Brussels on 22 March with EU Secretary General and High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, and with European Commission President Romano Prodi on the European Union's role and contribution to the advancement of peace among Israelis and Palestinians. In Jerusalem, on 23 and 24 March, we met with Labour Party Chair and Leader of the opposition, Shimon Peres, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, Yossi Beilin, leader of Yachad. We then went to Ramallah, where we met with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Ahmed Qurei, and other members of the PA cabinet and Fatah leadership. On 25 March, as a result of the earlier discussions with both Israelis and Palestinians, a tripartite meeting was held with the participation of the leader of the Israeli opposition, Shimon Peres, the Palestinian Minister for Negotiations of the Palestinian Authority, Saeb Erekat, and ourselves, in which the current deteriorating situation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was examined and initiatives to urgently move forward the process for peace were discussed.

The following month, in a statement, our International regarded the Israeli Prime Minister's proposals for an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza as a welcome step. Withdrawal by Israel from the West Bank and Gaza and the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel was in our view a key objective for a definitive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On 18 September 2004, the International called for an immediate revival of the Quartet Committee and implementation of the roadmap, and on the international community to help the Palestinian Authority in re-building its security forces to resume control of Palestinian arms and restore the rule of law. The need for Palestinians to hold presidential, legislative and local elections was also addressed.

In November, the International held talks with Palestinian and Israeli leaders at critical times for both, as Palestinian institutions continued in the absence of their President, then undergoing treatment in a hospital in Paris, and Israelis debated their disengagement plan for Gaza. On the eve of a specially prepared meeting of our Middle East Committee in these

circumstances, Thorbjorn Jagland, Chair of SIMEC, and myself held talks on 1-2 November in Ramallah with Mahmoud Abbas, then responsible for the Political leadership of the PLO and Ahmed Qurei, Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority. Later in Jericho, on the afternoon of November 2 in the first part of a two-day session of our Committee, we held discussions with Nabil Shaath, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, Saeb Erekat, Minister for Negotiations and Abbas Zaki, responsible for international relations of Fatah, among others. On November 3, the Committee members convened in Jerusalem for a second session, this time held at the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, with the participation of the leader of the Israeli Labour Party Shimon Peres, Amir Peretz, Chairman of the Histadrut, as well as members of the leadership of the Yachad party, including Abu Vilan. The deepening of the tensions in the region, the increasing toll in human lives, the continuing spiral of violence and the lack of a political horizon for peace in the Middle East - major concerns for the Socialist International - formed the basis of the discussions which sought to define, in advance of the Council meeting in Johannesburg later that month, the most effective ways in which the International could continue to actively support efforts for peace.

Sadly on 11 November 2004, the Palestinian people lost their President Yasser Arafat and the Socialist International honoured his memory and his legacy, as a symbol of the unity of the Palestinians and their aspirations for the establishment of a state of their own. The Council at its meeting in Johannesburg four days later paid tribute to Arafat and extended its sympathy to the Palestinian people.

The International sent an observer delegation to the Palestinian Presidential elections held on 9 January 2005. On this occasion we met in Ramallah with representatives of the Palestinian Authority, members of the leadership of Fatah, with Presidential candidate Mahmoud Abbas and with officials from the Palestinian Central Elections Commission (CEC). On election day, members of the delegation followed the voting in various electoral districts, visiting polling stations in Jenin, Tulkarim, Nablus, Qalqilya, Ramallah, Jericho, Bethlehem, Hebron, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Discussions after the poll were again held with Fatah and with Palestinian officials, including Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath. Following a collective evaluation by the delegation, a statement was issued greeting the clear election of Mahmoud

Abbas as President of the Palestinian Authority. After the elections, on 10 January, the delegation also held discussions with Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin on the formation of a new government in Israel that day and on the new opportunities arising in the region to regain a horizon for peace and to implement the agreed roadmap.

On 23-24 May 2005 we held our Council in Israel and Palestine for the first time, marking another important milestone in the history of our International. As a platform for peace between the two peoples, and a bridge for understanding and dialogue, it was natural and fitting that amidst crucial developments and at a time of renewed hope, the entire International gathered there.

Under the main theme "For a Middle East in peace, with political and economic democracy: the social democratic vision", leaders and representatives from member parties and organisations attended from around the world. Reaffirming its commitment to supporting in every way possible efforts in the region to achieve peace, ensure respect for human rights, provide economic opportunities for all citizens and strengthen democratic governance based on social democratic values, the Council gave a number of pointers on how to move forward.

Peace, democracy and cooperation were the best way to combat terrorism, we said, and the international community had to unite to take a clear stand against all terrorist activity. Clear incentives for peace had to be established, and we called upon all regions to increase cooperation with the Middle East. We underlined that the planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip had to be coordinated with the Palestinian Authority as a part of the roadmap and followed by negotiations on final status issues, and insisted that all settlement activities and the building of the wall on Palestinian territory had to be halted. We extended our support to the further strengthening of the reform process in Palestine and to the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to stop all forms of violence, disarming militia groups.

Later in August, the International welcomed Israel's disengagement from Gaza and some West Bank settlements. We joined the Palestinian and Israeli peoples in believing that this decisive step demonstrated that further and other necessary measures could be taken towards peace through a process of negotiation, compromise and concessions from both sides.

The International returned to observe the Palestinian legislative elections held on 25 January 2006, and declared them to have been free and fair, commending the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people for the peaceful and orderly way in which the vote was carried out. We expressed our appreciation for the way in which Fatah accepted the results of the election. The delegation reaffirmed its confidence in the Palestinian political institutions and expressed its support for President Mahmoud Abbas.

The Council meeting some days after in Athens, on 30-31 January 2006, an event which would be marked by the election of our Greek party leader, George Papandreou, as the new President of the International, underlined the commitment of the global social democratic movement to reinforce international cooperation based on shared values and principles. Under the main theme "Peace, Democracy, Solidarity - among peoples, across cultures", the Middle East was a special focus of attention in discussions which included Amir Peretz, then recently elected leader of the Israel Labour Party, Ilan Halevi from Fatah, and Roby Nathanson from Yachad.

"The International reaffirms that the peace process begun in Oslo, the roadmap and the return to serious negotiations to achieve a two-state solution based on mutual recognition, on justice and respect for human rights, and on international law and agreements already signed, remain the only way to overcome stalemate, end violence and achieve a lasting peace." *Socialist International Council, Athens, Greece, 30-31 January 2006*

Deeply concerned at the continuing conflict and the spiralling hostilities, the Socialist International Presidium met in Samos, Greece, on 15 July 2006 to pay special attention to the latest grave developments affecting the Middle East, in particular the situations on the Israeli-Lebanese border and in Gaza, and the developing crisis with regard to the use of nuclear technology in Iran. In advance of the meeting, the President and I had visited some of the countries concerned in the region.

The Presidium called for an end to the cycle of violence with indiscriminate attacks on the civilian populations of Israel, Palestine and Lebanon. It appealed for all sides to abide by and respect international law, the decisions of the United Nations Security Council and the expressed will of the international community for an end to confrontation and violent action.

At our Council meeting in Santiago, Chile, in November 2006, representatives from our member parties in the Middle East updated delegates on the latest developments and participated in the discussions under the theme "New Horizons for Peace: Promoting Solutions to Conflicts".

When the Council met in Geneva on 29-30 June 2007, we were delighted to be joined by the President of the Palestinian National Authority, H.E. Mahmoud Abbas who gave a keynote address on prospects for peace in the Middle East and on the Palestinian-Israeli situation.

"The foundation for progress towards a solution lies in the principle of partnership, agreement on the legal terms of reference and commitment to agreements signed, so we can achieve solutions to the problems stemming from decades of bloody and bitter conflict, a partnership that takes into account the legitimate concerns of the other side, and paves the way to a new and different future for both Israelis and Palestinians." H.E. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority, Socialist International Council, Geneva, 29-30 June 2007

The Council expressed its recognition of the leadership and work of President Abbas at such a crucial time. We called for an immediate end to the violence in Gaza and remained committed to dedicating our efforts to preventing a humanitarian disaster there. We considered the promotion of the Arab Initiative for Peace as an opportunity to move forward a comprehensive agreement in the region, including peace treaties between Israel, Palestine and Syria, and called on our member parties to encourage Israel and Syria, on the basis of their declarations of good will, to enter into serious negotiations to find an agreement for full peace between them. The International reiterated its appeal to the Israeli government to resume negotiations for a permanent accord.

During the month of August, the Co-Chairs of the SI Middle East Committee, Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre of the Norwegian Labour Party and Piero Fassino of the Democrats of the Left, DS, Italy, visited the region for a round of talks with leaders and representatives of the SI Israeli and Palestinian member parties, as well as other members of the Israeli and Palestinian governments.

In advance of the Annapolis Conference, which was held a month later, we held a meeting on 29 and 30 October 2007 in Tel Aviv and Ramallah, with delegates of both the Israeli and Palestinian member parties taking part in the proceedings in both cities. The discussions on the prospects for peace, which counted on the participation of our President George Papandreou, and in which I took part along with the Middle East Committee Co-Chair Piero Fassino and Deputy Foreign Minister of Norway Raymond Johansen as acting Co-Chair, focused on the urgent need to advance the stalled peace process and to seize the new opportunity which had arisen to find a framework upon which to build a sustainable peace. Our session in Tel Aviv opened with the Israeli perspective, with contributions by Ehud Barak, Leader of the Labour Party and Minister of Defence, and Yossi Beilin. The next day, in Ramallah, the Palestinian perspective was introduced by the Chief Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qurei, former Palestinian Prime Minister.

Among the key questions addressed in the meeting were the immediate need for visible and tangible changes on the ground, including a ceasefire, the release of prisoners, the lifting of road blocks, access and freedom of movement, an end to arms smuggling, military build-up and militia activity, stopping the confiscation of land and the freezing of settlements. Equally, the need to address the security and humanitarian situation in Gaza and the restoration there of the legitimate institutions of the Palestinian Authority was seen as fundamental to achieving a comprehensive peace. Tackling the core issues of the conflict - Jerusalem, refugees, borders, security, settlements, water, economic development - was stressed as urgent and crucial to both Palestinians and Israelis. Participants agreed that essential to a lasting peace was placing Jerusalem, by a mutually agreeable solution, as two capitals for two nations and that a fair, creative and realistic approach to the refugee question, taking into account the national character of the Israeli state and the expectations of the Palestinian people, was needed, accompanied by the active support of the international community. The meeting unanimously approved a statement highlighting the shared views.

The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to be at the forefront of the concerns of the International, as, in our view, it is crucial for peace and stability in the whole region. During the period covered by

this report, a lasting peace based on a two-state solution with secure borders, along with the strengthening of the legitimate political institutions of the Palestinian Authority, have remained central to the position of the International.

Supporting the democratic forces in Lebanon

Lebanon, a country that plays a vital role as part of both the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern communities, has undergone critical events during this period and the International has offered its support and solidarity to the forces for democracy there, among them our member party, the Progressive Socialist Party, PSP, and its leader Walid Jumblatt.

On 4 April 2005, following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri the previous February, which had sparked mass popular demonstrations, we held a special one-day meeting of our Mediterranean Committee in Beiteddine, Lebanon. Members of the opposition, including representatives of Democratic Renewal, Movement of the Democratic Left, Mustaqbal, Kataeb, Kornet Chehwan, Lebanese Forces, Free Patriotic Movement, National Block, Democratic Gathering and representatives of Independents, took part in the discussions alongside the SI-member PSP, headed by Walid Jumblatt. Lebanese guests and the numerous SI member parties participating engaged in detailed discussions which covered the main issues affecting Lebanon, which were reflected in the agreed Declaration. In that document we expressed our strong condemnation of the assassination of the former Prime Minister, highlighting his leadership in the process of national reconstruction. We further deplored all acts of violence in the country and affirmed our support for the Lebanese people in their call for truth and justice in regard to the killing of Hariri and other acts of political violence.

The meeting expressed its full solidarity with the people of Lebanon, the PSP and all democratic forces in the country as they reaffirmed the independence and sovereignty of Lebanon, its democracy and constitutional integrity, the foundations for holding free, fair and transparent national elections which were due on 29 May through to 19 June. The International remained committed to closely monitoring the situation in the country, particularly with regard to the withdrawal of Syrian forces.

We returned to Lebanon to observe the elections in May and June. The International welcomed the outcome of the vote and the clear majority won by the Alliance, which included the Future Movement, the SI-member Progressive Socialist Party, and others, as a new beginning for Lebanon. SI representatives, who followed different rounds of the elections over the course of a month in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and cities of the North, including Tripoli and Zgharta, witnessed an election in which there were no significant incidents and which was characterised by citizen and voter participation and enthusiasm, in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance.

Alarminglly the situation deteriorated in Lebanon during 2006, and the Presidium, when it met in Samos in July that year, received a report from Walid Jumblatt on developments in the south of the country. Two weeks later we had to call for an end to hostilities and for an urgent and immediate ceasefire in the south of Lebanon. We asserted that a new dynamic for peace was required: the indiscriminate aggression by Hezbollah on Israeli civilians and the Israeli bombing in Qana underlined dramatically how mistaken the logic of war was, we said, which had thus far driven policy and events in that region. We called for a ceasefire supported by a United Nations Security Council Resolution; immediate access for UN humanitarian relief to the victims; the release of all those held captive; a strengthening of the authority and integrity of the state of Lebanon through the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1680; with the deployment of a multinational peace force on the Israeli-Lebanese border, and with the resumption as soon as possible of peace negotiations between the authorities of Israel and Palestine.

We were shocked and deeply dismayed at the assassination of Pierre Gemayel, the Lebanese Minister of Industry and one of the leaders of the 14 March movement, on 22 November 2006. We strongly condemned this act of violence and reaffirmed our solidarity with the Lebanese people and their democratically elected government. Coming at a particularly crucial time for Lebanon, and as the Lebanese cabinet was in the process of approving the establishment of an international tribunal, supported by the United Nations Security Council, to bring to justice those responsible for the killing of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and twenty-two others, the political assassination of Gemayel clearly sought to undermine the

country's stability and fragile democracy. We appealed for national unity in the country and reiterated our firm support for the democratic forces there, rejecting all forms of outside interference in the internal affairs of the country, and the continuation of the vital reconstruction process.

In this context, we held an extraordinary meeting of the International in Beirut on 16 December 2006 to examine the grave situation there. The meeting was hosted by the Progressive Socialist Party, PSP, and included the participation of the leaders of the 14 March Movement. The meeting began with a minute's silence in memory of all those Lebanese who had lost their lives in recent times. At the opening, interventions were made by the leader of the Kataeb Party, Amin Gemayel, father of the recently assassinated Minister of Industry, Pierre Gemayel; the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party and host of the event, Walid Jumblatt; the leader of the Future Movement, Saad Hariri, son of assassinated Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, myself, and the President of Socialist International, George Papandreou, who chaired the meeting.

The conclusions of the meeting highlighted the International's support and solidarity with the efforts of the members of the 14 March Movement, and of the government, to maintain peace and stability in the country and to carry out the creation of the Special Tribunal. Equally, we were united in making a renewed call for an end to foreign intervention and the attempts by external forces to destabilise the country, as well as for the implementation of the resolutions in relation to Lebanon adopted by the United Nations Security Council. The meeting was followed by discussions with Prime Minister Siniora and the President of the Lebanese Parliament Nabih Berri.

It was with sadness that we learnt on 13 June 2007 of the assassination of Walid Eido, Lebanese parliamentarian, which we condemned in no uncertain terms. Eido was the third member of Lebanon's pro-democracy majority in the parliament to be killed in a bombing in the past two years and the International continued to deplore these concerted and continuing attacks clearly designed to divide the country and undermine the hopes of the Lebanese people for peace and stability.

The situation in Lebanon continued to be of concern when the Council met in Geneva on 29-30 June 2007. Walid Jumblatt addressed the meeting and we reaffirmed our backing of the legitimate and democratically elected

government of the country and called for the respect of the parliamentary institutions, for the re-establishment of its free functioning and for the application of the constitutional process to arrive at an election, within the legal timeframe, of a new President of the Republic. The International urged the rigorous application of UN Security Council resolutions 1559, 1595, 1701 and 1757 to put an end to terrorist attacks, and called on the Arab and international community to take measures to secure the Lebanon-Syrian border and to end all illegal infiltration of people and military equipment coming from Syria. We called for the speedy implementation of the United Nations international tribunal and expressed our wholehearted solidarity with the Lebanese people in their quest to reaffirm the independence, sovereignty, democracy and the unity of their country.

Continuing our focus on developments in Lebanon, the Socialist International reconvened in Beirut when its Mediterranean Committee met on 25-26 April this year, hosted by the PSP. On the eve of the meeting, on 24 April, we had the opportunity to meet with the Maronite Patriarch, His Eminence Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir; Prime Minister Fouad Siniora; and Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri. The next day the *Committee's discussions centred first of all on the situation in Lebanon*, under the theme "Working together for a united, democratic and stable Lebanon: the contribution of the international community". Our Lebanese hosts expressed deep concern about the current institutional crisis affecting the country following the continuing failure of Parliament over the previous eighteen months to agree on the election of a new President and the fact that the Parliament in the present circumstances was not functioning. The Committee members pointed to the need for all the Lebanese political forces to respect the constitutional process and the democratic rules; to the importance of keeping alive dialogue and thus moving forward the political process; to achieve the implementation of the unanimously adopted national dialogue resolutions, particularly those related to Lebanese-Syrian relations, including the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two states, and the delineation and demarcation of the borders between the two countries. While noting the third anniversary of the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon, the members of the Committee stressed the need of the international community to see a Lebanon in peace as a prerequisite for stability in the region.

In the days and weeks that followed our last discussions in Beirut, thanks to the efforts of the Lebanese themselves, a number of issues raised at our meeting were achieved. We remain committed to accompanying Lebanon in the realisation of the hopes and aspirations of the great majority of its people for peace, democracy and independence.

The way forward for Iraq

The International has never underestimated the incredibly difficult moments in which Iraq has lived in recent years, and we have offered our steadfast support and solidarity along the way. At our Council in Madrid in February 2004 we addressed the question of a democratic future for Iraq, and issued a resolution underlining the complexity of the situation just eight months after the official end of the war in the country, one in which violence and terrorism continued, resulting in many victims both among the Iraqi civilians and among soldiers from the international forces. The Council welcomed the end of the dictatorship, but remained convinced that security, stability, democracy and peace in Iraq were still far off. Our belief was that a deep change was necessary in the transition process and we urged the international community to promote this change giving the United Nations full and effective responsibility for the Iraqi transition and reconstruction, implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1511; organising a multinational force in Iraq under the authority of the UN; accelerating the transfer of power to Iraqi authorities recognised by all the components of Iraqi society; and, helping the Iraqi people to move forward in building a secular, democratic, multiethnic and multi-religious state.

On the eve of the NATO Summit in Istanbul assembling Heads of State and Government from North America and Europe, we gathered in that city on 25 and 26 June 2004. Our meeting focused on strategies to strengthen peace and democracy internationally, addressing key areas of concern including the situation regarding Iraq, the Middle East, the struggle against terrorism, the role of international institutions in promoting peace, democracy and human rights and on issues on the agenda of the NATO Summit. Reiterating the International's position against military interventions outside the framework of the UN Security Council, we expressed the need for a stronger and more effective role by multilateral institutions, starting with the United Nations. We welcomed in this context the unanimously

adopted Resolution 1546 of the UN Security Council, endorsing the formation of the interim government and the holding of democratic elections by January 2005, as a significant step towards the beginning of a new phase in Iraq's transition. We reaffirmed the importance of strong support from the international community to help the Iraqi people to approve a Constitution and to organise free and fair elections. Meeting days in advance of the handover on 30 June, when the Interim Government of Iraq would assume effective responsibility and authority, we stressed the importance of this event. The International strongly condemned all terrorist and other acts of violence taking place in Iraq, fully aware that stability, democracy and peace in Iraq were closely related with the solution of security problems, and expressed fear that the electoral process might be affected.

30 January 2005 saw the holding of legislative elections for the newly-formed 275-member Iraqi National Assembly, with 8.4 million votes cast. As the reconstruction process continued, we asked for a stronger role by the UN in the democratising process, when we met for our Council in May 2005. The International called on all countries to support a democratic Iraq, one which could lead to the restoration of full sovereignty of the Iraqi people. The future Iraqi constitution, we underlined, had to give all peoples in the country equal rights, and the rights and the role of women were of special concern. The Kurdish population also had to be able to exercise their rights within the framework of a united and federal Iraq.

We expressed our condolences following the dreadful tragedy that took so many lives during the religious procession in Baghdad on 31 August 2005. We extended our solidarity once more to the people of Iraq and remained steadfast in the struggle to defeat terror. We stood together with all those who had to live in the climate of violence and fear in which such tragedies could occur.

Jalal Talabani, leader of SI-member Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK, was re-elected President of the Republic in April 2006, the first president elected under the new Constitution, which had been approved by referendum the October before. It was our great privilege to receive and listen to the President when he came to share with us his views on the way forward for his country, at the Council meeting in Geneva on 29-30 June 2007.

“We come to you from the new federal and democratic Iraq. An Iraq that afforded the widest range of democratic freedoms for its people on the ruins of a criminal dictatorship that committed many crimes against the people and betrayed the homeland... We have also started to regain our national sovereignty and our diplomatic relations with the world. But the security task including the rebuilding of the armed forces and combating terrorism, which is a joint responsibility of the Iraqi government and International coalition, remains unfinished. We are striving to return this responsibility to the hands of the freely-elected Iraqi government.”

H.E. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, Socialist International Council, Geneva, 29-30 June 2007

In Geneva, the International paid tribute to the efforts of President Talabani. We reiterated our strongest condemnation of the terrorist acts against the different sectors of Iraqi society, and our full support for the initiatives to strengthen national reconciliation and to guarantee the incorporation of all sensibilities and social sectors in the democratic political process. We called on other states in the region to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq, respecting its independence and sovereignty, as well as its national unity. We also called for financial assistance and support for any terrorist activity from abroad to stop. Whilst recalling previous resolutions of the SI, the Council urged the end of the presence of all international troops and for their withdrawal as soon as possible when circumstances allow and with the support of the Iraqi people.

Kurdish Question

The International has continued its longstanding solidarity with the Kurdish people, and we expressed our outrage and condemnation of the bombings against the Kurdish political parties at the beginning of February 2004, at their respective party headquarters in the city of Arbil in northern Iraq. Those criminal acts, which took the lives of dozens of people and killed senior members of both political parties, were attacks not only on the Kurdish people but against all those engaged in the effort to build democracy and guarantee freedom and security throughout Iraq.

The SI Working Group which addresses the Kurdish Question met in London on 9 November 2005 for a review of developments affecting the

Kurdish people, with first hand reports on their respective national situations by delegates from Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. Participants had the opportunity to *discuss in detail the outcome of the referendum on the Iraqi constitution, the implications for the Kurds in Turkey of the membership negotiations with the EU, and the grave situation affecting the Kurds in Iran following the latest repressive actions by the Iranian regime.* The Working Group recognised the key role played by the Kurdish parties in Iraq in the development and strengthening of democracy and its institutions, expressing its concern over the ongoing terrorist activities intent on destabilising the country; welcomed the advances made by the Kurdish political forces in Turkey in uniting to form one single political party, the Democratic Society Party; and deplored the latest acts of aggression and grave human rights violations carried out by the Iranian government against its Kurdish population. At the same time the Working Group welcomed the increased cooperation among the Iranian Kurdish groups and the formation earlier that year of the Congress of Nationalities for a Democratic Iran, with the common goal of seeking a federal solution for the nationalities question in that country.

The International visited Northern Iraq from 28 to 30 May 2006 for a far-reaching examination of the Kurdish issues there. Preliminary discussions were held with the leadership of the PUK at Qalachualan on Sunday 28 May, and then the SI Working Group on the Kurdish Question convened in Dukan, outside Suleymania, on Monday 29, with the participation of delegates from the PUK and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP, of Iraq, which heads the regional government in Arbil, as well as the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan and Komala from Iran, the Democratic Society Party, DTP, from Turkey, and representatives from SI parties in France, Greece, Italy, Norway and Sweden. Conny Fredriksson, Chair of the Working Group, chaired the proceedings, which were addressed at the opening by the leader of the PUK and President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Jalal Talabani, and myself.

The discussions focused first on the situation in Iraq following the formation of a new Kurdistan regional government and a government of national unity in Baghdad. The PUK and KDP representatives described the evolving situation in their region. There were many challenges still to be faced, however, the democratic experience continued to bring positive

developments in their economic, cultural and political life. One of the problems resulting from Saddam Hussein's policies were the consequences of the forceful removal of people from Kirkuk and the placement there of people from other regions of the country. In this regard, the implementation of Article 140 of the current Iraqi Constitution, relating to the normalisation of Kirkuk, was regarded as crucial. The meeting commended the political parties for their cooperation and united action in forming the new regional government, as it called for continued support for their work to strengthen democracy and advance economic progress.

The situation of the Kurdish people in other countries in the region was also addressed. Conditions for the political representation of Kurds and their enjoyment of other rights in some countries of the region remained limited. Cooperation among different political groups was perceived as a positive step. It was highlighted that the only way to protect and foster the rights of the Kurdish people remained in the political arena and in advancing and deepening democracy without resorting to any form of violence. The work of the Democratic Society Party in advancing Kurdish issues was recognised. The continuing hardship suffered by the Kurdish population in Iran was deplored and the increased levels of cooperation that were being established between different Iranian Kurdish groups were noted. After the closure of the meeting, a special gathering took place with hundreds of PUK activists, who I addressed on a wide range of issues and the work of the International.

On Tuesday 30 May, we visited the city of Kirkuk. Meetings were held with the head of the PUK in Kirkuk, Jalal Jawher, and with the Governor, Abdul Rahman Mustafa, who briefed us on the background to the present situation affecting the city, the provisions for its future included in the Constitution of Iraq and the serious problems of the displaced people - both Arabs and Kurds - and of the refugees housed in the city's Shorija stadium, who were also visited by the SI delegation. A large meeting was held with the entire Kirkuk Provincial Council headed by PUK member Razgar Ali, where a lively debate was held on the situation affecting Kirkuk and its bearing on Iraq as a whole.

Concerns over Iran

The International during this period has been following with concern the situation in Iran regarding its nuclear programme and the state of human and civil rights in the country.

At our Council meeting in Tel Aviv and Ramallah in May 2005, the International called for a solution to the controversy over Iran's nuclear programme, stating that the international community had to harmonise their policies.

In a statement issued on 27 October 2005, the Socialist International strongly condemned the call by Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for Israel to be "wiped off the map" as deeply offensive and dangerous at a time when the situation in the Middle East had reached another delicate point. We called upon the international community to unite in rejecting this statement and to take the steps necessary to ensure that Iran acted responsibly as a nation of the world, in both its actions and its words.

We continued our efforts in support of peace and security in the region as tensions escalated. On 26 June 2006, SI President Papandreou and I went to Teheran, for meetings with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani, to reaffirm the backing of the International for negotiations leading to a resolution of the nuclear issue in the country. We conveyed our position advocating a negotiated resolution toward an accord on verifiably peaceful uses of nuclear technology in Iran.

As part of the International's efforts to contribute to a diplomatic solution to this critical question, the Presidium, at its meeting in Samos the following July, also held discussions with the Iranian Foreign Minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, and conveyed to him the concerns and opinions of the social democratic movement on this unresolved issue.

The visit to Tehran underlined the long held belief of all the members of the International that multilateral efforts based on serious dialogue are the only means to resolve difficult issues in a meaningful, fair and lasting way.

Nuclear disarmament

On the 60th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of the Japanese city of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, and the strike three days later against Nagasaki, we reaffirmed our commitment to promoting nuclear non-proliferation and achieving the overall goal of nuclear disarmament. The continuing development and enhancement of nuclear capabilities by countries in both the developed and developing worlds mean that we continue to live with the dreadful prospect that nuclear weapons might again be used. The peril is heightened by ongoing tensions in a number of places and the threat of nuclear devices being used for terrorist purposes. It is therefore crucial that the international community renew its determination and redouble its efforts to ensure that the world today and future generations never witness the kind of horror that befell Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We had long been concerned about the mounting tensions surrounding North Korea's moves toward nuclear capability and on 9 October 2006 the announcement by North Korea that it had detonated an atomic weapon in an underground test was vigorously condemned by the Socialist International. Such a dangerous and totally irresponsible act threatened stability and peace in Asia and the Pacific, seriously undermining global anti-proliferation and disarmament efforts and the prospects for reconciliation between North Korea and South Korea. We urged all involved in the six-party nuclear disarmament talks between North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia and the United States to redouble efforts to get the negotiations back on track.

In this context, we have equally stated our support for the efforts of the Social Democratic Party of Japan to uphold article 9 of the Constitution, as well as the country's non-nuclear policy, regarding them as a positive foundation and model.

“The task of advancing the common agenda for peace and security in the region goes hand in hand with the goal of strengthening democracy and democratic institutions.

At the same time, reducing tensions between nations, ending the nuclear threat, overcoming challenges to stability and resolving

internal conflicts are critical for the region to be able to maintain economic growth, promote development that is sustainable and to institute programmes necessary for protecting the environment.”
Socialist International Asia-Pacific Committee, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 13-14 May 2005

Supporting a return to democracy in Pakistan

Our support for Benazir Bhutto and the Pakistan People’s Party, PPP, in their struggle to restore democracy and respect for human rights to their country defined clearly our stand in the face of the forces of authoritarianism and of extremism seen in that part of the world.

Mistakenly many have supported authoritarianism and denied democracy to oppose extremism, so generating a society, as Benazir Bhutto herself understood all too well, which destroyed freedoms and political rights. On the contrary, we shared with her the belief that only with more democracy, with more freedoms, without dictatorship, could you win the battle against extreme politics and extreme politicians.

Speaking at our Council meeting in Geneva in June 2007, Benazir Bhutto, taking the floor on the theme “Working for peace and stability in a world of conflicts without borders”, shared her concerns for the region and for her country, where long periods of dictatorship had created a culture of lawlessness, private militias, suicide bombers, child soldiers, rampant proliferation of weapons and drugs and a “slow slide to extremism” was apparent.

“Democracies undermine the forces of terrorism and democracies undermine conflict by empowering the people and addressing their social and economic needs. Democracies create a culture which respects the rule of law... The democratisation of Pakistan is critical for the people of Pakistan but it is also critical for the larger global community.” *Benazir Bhutto, Socialist International Council, Geneva, 29-30 June 2007*

Viewing the general elections as a “window of opportunity” for democracy to be reinstated, Bhutto went back to Pakistan. The Socialist International joined the international community in vigorously condemning the horrific

bomb attacks upon her return on 19 October 2007. Two weeks later, we denounced the suspension of the constitution and the imposition of emergency rule in Pakistan, and called for the immediate restoration of democratic governance and the full respect for fundamental political rights and civil liberties.

It was with immense sadness that we learnt of the assassination of Benazir Bhutto on 27 December 2007, a cowardly and brutal act which we vigorously condemned. We paid homage to her: a committed, dedicated figure permanently at the forefront of the struggle for democracy, stability and peace in Pakistan and in that region of the world. With her passing, we said, her country lost a great leader, democracy lost a key defender, and the world lost a strong advocate for peace and stability.

Elections were held in February this year, in which the PPP emerged as the largest force, and formed a coalition government. Two months later, the Pakistan Peoples' Party was the host of the meeting of the SI Asia-Pacific Committee which took place in Islamabad on 30 May 2008 in a much changed Pakistan. In opening the meeting, the PPP Co-Chair Asif Ali Zardari warmly welcomed and thanked the International for the steadfast support shown to the PPP and its leadership during the difficult times of persecution, exile and authoritarianism in his country.

Today, thanks to the will of the Pakistani people, they were leading a government resulting from the return to democracy which his party had fought for. The role of his late wife and PPP leader, Benazir Bhutto, had made all this possible. We honoured the memory and the leadership of Benazir Bhutto, for whom democracy was a cornerstone of her struggle and said how proud we were that she had made the International her platform to voice the aspirations of the Pakistani people for freedom, peace and democracy. With her actions and her coherence, she had changed Pakistan and she had also sent a powerful message across the world in favour of the principles and values at the core of our political movement.

The meeting's discussions focused on the current situation in Pakistan and the tasks ahead after two months of a PPP-led government. In these debates, along with Party Co-Chair Zardari, participated, among others, Foreign Minister Mahmood Qureshi, Information Minister Sherry Rehman,

Finance Minister Syed Naveed Qamar, Minister for Water and Power Raja Pervez Ashraf, and PPP Secretary General Jahangir Bader.

Regarding the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the Committee agreed unanimously to support and adhere to the request made to the United Nations by the newly elected Parliament for a UN investigation into the circumstances of her death.

In the course of the debate it was clear that despite the fact that Pakistan had many challenges to face and problems to overcome, and that expectations were high, there was a new situation in the country in which the strengthening of the democratic political institutions came first and a new moment in the country's history with opportunities for change, a process in which the PPP is the catalyst for the new agenda for Pakistan.

Overcoming conflict in Nepal

The situation in Nepal has been at the forefront of our concerns in recent years and we reaffirmed our solidarity with the country's democratic forces, including SI-member the Nepali Congress Party and other political organisations that cooperate with the International, on numerous occasions and have been unstinting in our support for a return to democratic rule.

At our meeting of the Asia-Pacific Committee in Cambodia on 8-9 October 2004, we voiced our great concern as increasing waves of violence directed against the civilian population by the CPN-M insurgents and called for the loss of innocent lives to stop immediately. On 10 February 2005, we responded to the troubling turn of events there and condemned the suspension of the constitution and the detention of political leaders, human rights activists and journalists. We called on the authorities to quickly restore democratic rule. The people of Nepal continued to endure great pain in the ongoing violent conflict in the country, and it was our firm belief that peace and security could be achieved only through the return to democracy, the strengthening of democratic institutions and sincere efforts toward negotiations by all sides.

When the Committee gathered in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 13-14 May 2005, the situation had worsened, and we reiterated our call to the authorities to reinstate all political and civil rights to the Nepali citizens,

release immediately all political prisoners, including the Prime Minister who had been at the head of the last government, other cabinet members and senior political leaders, and fully restore democratic rule. At the same time, the Committee deplored the continuing targeting of civilians by the CPN-M insurgents and welcomed the deployment of UN human rights monitors in the country.

The situation continued to deteriorate and escalating confrontation between the government forces of King Gyanendra and citizens were very disturbing, and on 11 April 2006 we called for them to stop. The people of Nepal were suffering greatly because of the conflict between insurgents and government forces and the climate of insecurity and fear had become far worse since the ending of democracy more than a year before.

The municipal elections forced through by the government in February were found by the international community to be fundamentally flawed and only heightened tensions in the country. We supported the peaceful efforts of the seven-party coalition demonstrating for democratic change and reaffirmed our solidarity with the democratic forces, reiterating our belief that only through democratic rule, based on fully free and fair elections, could Nepal carry out a broad based process of negotiation leading to a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The International called upon the world community to unite in its position toward Nepal and to encourage in every way possible the government of King Gyanendra to swiftly restore the country's democratic institutions, guarantee political rights and civil liberties and undertake an open and integrated approach to national dialogue.

With the parliament reinstated, it was with pleasure that we welcomed the peace agreement signed on 21 November 2006 between the coalition government of Nepal, led by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, of the Nepali Congress Party, and the rebel insurgents. The Comprehensive Peace Accord brought an end to the eleven-year armed conflict that had cost over 13,000 lives and which had continuously destabilised the country, and set out a new course, in which politics and dialogue, not violence and terror, were the framework upon which to move forward the real agenda for development, prosperity and the wellbeing of the Nepalese people. I was able to visit the country in December to convey our wholehearted support

for the peace agreement and held fruitful discussions with the new prime minister and leaders of the democratic forces and I accepted their invitation to hold a meeting of the International there to contribute to the process.

On 10-11 February 2007, we convened for a meeting of the Asia-Pacific Committee in Kathmandu to signal our support and solidarity with the people of Nepal and its democratic institutions at this crucial time. Those taking part in the meeting were warmly received in Kathmandu by all the political parties who had subscribed to the 2006 peace agreement, including a public opening attended by some 2,000 people, including party leaders, members of parliament, party activists, intellectuals, members of civil society and representatives of the media. The Committee reaffirmed its support for the 2006 Peace Accord in Nepal, urging that it be fully implemented and respected by all involved. It called on the eight-party coalition to remain united on the fundamental priority that the forthcoming election process should be free, fair and transparent and announced that the International would send a delegation to observe the Constituent Assembly elections.

At our Council meeting in Geneva, we remained focused on developments in Nepal and welcomed former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and Sushil Koirala, Vice-President of the Nepali Congress Party and a Member of Interim Legislative Parliament of Nepal to share their experiences. Firmly supporting the consolidation of democracy and the strengthening of sustainable peace in Nepal, we urged all sides to work together to achieve secure political conditions in which free and fair elections could be held. The International called on the former insurgent forces to abide by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between them and the seven political parties, as well as to the UN-witnessed Agreement on the Management of Arms and Armies.

From 7 to 12 April 2008, a delegation of the Socialist International was present in Nepal to observe the elections for a Constituent Assembly which took place on 10 April. These elections opened a new phase in the country's history as they set the course for the drafting of a new constitution destined to establish a new set of institutions to govern Nepal. Following the polls, the delegation presented its impressions of the electoral process and the political conclusions drawn from the meetings and exchanges it had held

with political leaders and authorities of the country. Highlighting the peaceful and orderly manner in which the elections were carried out, the delegation expressed its recognition of the civic and democratic commitment of the Nepali people; congratulated the Election Commission and all the officials involved for the way in which the electoral process was conducted; commended the leaders and members of the political parties for their efforts and their democratic perseverance without which there could be no progress, and declared that in their view the elections had been free and fair. In their assessment, the reported incidents which would lead to a repeat polling in a limited number of places did not compromise the integrity of the elections. The delegation also underlined the need for the key parties which have conducted the process this far to continue working together to secure stability and the proper conditions for the implementation of the agenda resulting from the elections.

Since then, the Constituent Assembly of Nepal has initiated its activities and, on the eve of our last Asia-Pacific Committee meeting held recently in Islamabad, voted to bring an end to the monarchy in the country, a monarchy which too many times in Nepal's history was associated with authoritarian forms of government. We greeted that decision as an historical step in strengthening democracy and freedoms in that country.

Conflicts in Africa

The SI Council met in Johannesburg on 15-16 November 2004, nearly ten years after the International gathered in Cape Town, our first Council in a newly free South Africa. With "The Progressive Agenda: The priorities for our movement today" as its main theme, this gathering of the Council underlined the commitment of the International to the concerns of the African people and the International's strong presence in the continent.

On the eve of the Council, a working meeting of the SI Presidium was held with the participation of the President of the Republic of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki. The plenary sessions of the Council, opened by ANC Deputy Leader Jacob Zuma, included panel discussions on the African Union and the region, empowering women ten years on from Beijing and fulfilling the commitments of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. We had the opportunity to focus on the ongoing conflicts on the continent and,

with the strong voice and authority of our own member parties in Africa, the Council constructed a message for peace:

“Achieving peace, security and stability for the people of the African continent. The senseless conflicts and wars on the continent must be ended. They have caused so much pain and suffering to the people and turned many of them into refugees and have displaced and forced others into exile. This requires that the people must accept that dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts are the only way to guarantee enduring peace and stability, respect for ethnic, cultural and religious differences and for human rights. We must strive for a culture of peace among Africans.” *Council of the Socialist International, Johannesburg, South Africa, 15-16 November 2004*

Attention on Côte d’Ivoire

Throughout this period, the situation in Côte d’Ivoire has been on our agenda. We have been fully committed to supporting and accompanying the process of peace and national reconciliation in the search for an end to the crisis in this nation.

At our Africa Committee meeting in Dakar on 12-13 July 2004, we expressed our alarm that the deadlocked peace process in Côte d’Ivoire was completely destroying the efforts in favour of unifying the country and only served to prolong senselessly the anguish and suffering of the Ivorian people and the West African sub-region. We called on all parties concerned to conform to the agreements reached, the constitutional legality and the respect of the institutions of the Republic.

We remained deeply concerned about the prevailing situation in the country. At the Council meeting in Johannesburg, we agreed a resolution recalling the overwhelming responsibility of the armed rebellion and its operatives in the Ivorian crisis, and deploring the violation of the ceasefire by the national armed forces of Côte d’Ivoire (FANCI). We reminded the parties concerned that respecting the signed agreements was the only legitimate way out of the crisis, and appealed to them to work to this end and restore peace through dialogue. We appreciated the initiative of the African Union and supported the mission entrusted to President Thabo

Mbeki, and noted that the United Nations was equally involved in dealing with the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, mindful that the mandate of the UN clearly included disarmament while the process of political reforms had to be pursued and accelerated.

By April 2006, when the Africa Committee met in Niamey, Niger, on 24-25 of that month, we joined in commending President Laurent Gbagbo and the FPI, finding encouragement in their efforts in favour of dialogue, peace and national reconciliation. We urged Ivorian political actors to respect the signed commitments in the framework of the different peace agreements and to put in place Resolution 1633 of the UN Security Council sincerely and responsibly, so as to carry out, without delays or preconditions, the process of disarmament, redeployment of administration and of voter identification. We lent our full support to the African mediation efforts and to the initiatives of the United Nations.

The Socialist International then welcomed the considerable effort made by President Laurent Gbagbo to reach and sign, together with Prime Minister Soro, the agreement of Ouagadougou of 4 March 2007. At the meeting of the Africa Committee in Ghana on 15-16 June 2007, the International welcomed this agreement, aimed not only at ending years of fratricidal war and the disarmament of the rebels, but also at securing a lasting and honourable solution for the parties, and called for its successful implementation.

Pascal Affi N'Guessan, President of the Ivorian Popular Front, gave a keynote address to the Council in Geneva later that month and the Council reiterated the International's full support in defence of democracy in the country and condemned all attempts to destabilise that process. It called on all parties to continue to work closely together for the successful implementation of the Ouagadougou agreement.

On 14-15 June this year, the SI Africa Committee met in Abidjan, the capital of Côte d'Ivoire, where representatives of close to 30 parties and organisations took part in the discussions, highlighting the International's support for the process all these years to advance peace, stability and national reconciliation in the country, which resulted now in an agreed electoral timetable for the holding of Presidential elections on 30 November this year.

The meeting, which counted with the participation of His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo, was addressed at its opening as well by Pascal Affi N'Guessan, Ousmane Tanor Dieng, Leader of the PS, Senegal, and Chair of the SI Africa Committee, and myself.

Participants were unanimous in welcoming the notable advances in the peace process since the signing of the Political Accord of Ouagadougou in April 2007 and in congratulating the President and the Prime Minister for following the path of dialogue. The meeting addressed the importance of international solidarity and the involvement of international institutions in accompanying the peace process. We called on the Independent Electoral Commission and other bodies involved to act impartially to guarantee free and fair elections on 30 November 2008, and pledged our support for this process, agreeing to send a delegation to observe the forthcoming elections, and adopting a resolution on Côte d'Ivoire.

In the discussions the need for democracy was underlined as paramount to peace, stability and social progress, and its reinforcement a vital necessity. In this context, it was also stressed that fundamental to a strong democracy was the adherence to the rule of law, good governance which took into account all citizens, the elimination of corruption, the development of real strategies to reduce poverty and misery - all of which undermine democracy - as well as the need to promote a democratic culture through adequate education.

Several other situations of conflict in Africa were reviewed from a national, regional and global perspective. Solutions put forward included strengthening the capability of the African Union to resolve crises, making the United Nation's intervention system more democratic, and the fight against impunity. The representation of women at all levels of decision-making in the prevention of conflicts was underlined, as was the need to accord particular protection to women and children as well as to people fleeing from conflict, and to put an end to the impunity of sexually motivated crimes.

The Committee also expressed its grave concern over the danger of civil war in Zimbabwe, the post-electoral situation in Equatorial Guinea, and the instability in Guinea Conakry, calling on the governments of these three countries to observe the rules of equity and transparency for the sake of civil peace and democracy.

Deteriorating situation in Haiti

Haiti was a focus of the 2004 Madrid Council where particular attention was given to the leaders of democratic opposition from the country who addressed the serious developments there. In February 2004, the SI expressed its grave concern at the further deterioration of the situation in Haiti and the mounting violence in that country. The International has long worked for democratisation and social justice for all Haitians and we called on then President Aristide to act in the interest of the country and of its people, respecting their right to security, political freedom and peaceful expression.

We reaffirmed our full solidarity with our member parties in Haiti who were operating under very difficult conditions, KONAKOM, PANPRA, and the OPL, and continued to back their efforts to achieve democracy and respect for human rights in the country. While closely following the diplomatic efforts underway in response to the crisis, we decided to send a mission to Haiti.

This mission visited the country on 24-25 May 2004, in order to support the democratic transition in the country, the democratic political forces there and the process to form a single social democratic party undertaken by the three SI member parties. Those who were in Haiti for this purpose included myself, Hatuey De Camps, SI Vice-President (PRD, Dominican Republic); Charles Josselin, a former minister of international cooperation (PS, France); and Senator Fernando Martín, Executive President of the PIP, Puerto Rico. Meetings were held with the Provisional President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, and the members of the Governing Council; the Provisional Electoral Council and with the leadership of the Democratic Convergence, as well as with civil society organisations and leaders of human rights groups. Talks were also held with media officials and representatives of the press.

The following January we held a meeting of the Latin America and Caribbean Committee in the country's capital, Port-au-Prince, on 21-22. The meeting's discussions centred on the situation in Haiti. The inaugural session was attended by some 300 guests from across the Haitian political spectrum and addressed by Prime Minister Gérard Latortue; the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Haiti and Head of the UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Juan Gabriel Valdés; the leaders

from the SI member parties, Victor Benoit from Konakom and Serge Gilles from Panpra; the Chair of the Committee, Rolando Araya; and myself.

Discussions reflected the political advances made in previous months in the country, noted the efforts of the interim authorities, including the President and the Prime Minister, and the contribution of different political actors in creating a climate of confidence conducive to the success of the established electoral timetable, which included the holding of municipal elections in October and parliamentary and presidential elections in November that year. Special recognition was made in the debate of the role played by MINUSTAH in the improvement of the internal security in Haiti and participants underlined the SI's support for its member parties in their efforts to unite and together face the forthcoming elections, committing the International to continue its involvement in Haiti. The Committee issued the Declaration of Port-au-Prince addressing these issues. A Declaration was also agreed regarding the second theme of the meeting's agenda. On the evening of Friday 21 January, a special meeting with the President of the Republic of Haiti, HE Boniface Alexandre took place, during which the involvement of the International with the struggle of the Haitian people over the years was highlighted.

Consistent with our commitment to support the merging of our member parties in the country, I later returned to Haiti for the unifying Congress to form the Union of Haitian Social Democrats, the Fusion, on 22-23 April 2005. The new party then stood in elections, held on 7 February the following year, that were observed by a delegation of our International, whose members included Peggy Cabral de Pena Gomez (Dominican Republic, PRD); Paul Cozigon (France, PS) and Fernando Martin (Puerto Rico, PIP), and myself. Our delegation, which met with the leader of our member party, Victor Benoit, and the Fusion candidate, Serge Gilles, the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and members of the government, cooperated closely in its endeavours with the United Nations Mission and the Organisation of American States.

We have continued to pay close attention to developments in Haiti, including the latest unrest provoked by the consequences of the food crisis, which reverberated around the world, and the Fusion leadership has been part of every major initiative we have undertaken in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Colombia

Ending violence and securing peace in Colombia remains a key concern for the International. The fate of all those, like Ingrid Betancourt, held in the jungles of that country in the hands of irregular armed forces for so many years, is totally unacceptable for us, as it is totally unacceptable for the entire international community.

The Socialist International member parties from Latin America and the Caribbean convened in Santa Marta, Colombia, in May 2004 for a meeting of the SI's Committee for the region, hosted by our members there. The Committee addressed the challenges for peace in the region, as well as good governance and democratic stability as the main themes of its discussions, and put on record in clear terms the position of our International against the violence which had taken the lives of so many Colombians, and in favour of restoring peace and normalcy in the daily lives of the millions affected.

We continued to call for peace in Colombia at our Council meeting in Santiago in November 2006, where we expressed our active solidarity with the efforts to secure the release of those kidnapped for political reasons by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), as well as all the other Colombians kidnapped by other illegal groups, and called on the guerrilla group FARC and the legitimate authorities in Colombia to act without delay to restore the freedom of those held captive.

In June 2007, at the Council meeting in Geneva we condemned the violent death of 11 deputies who were kidnapped by FARC and expressed our condolences to their families, the Colombian authorities and the Liberal Party, of which some of the victims were members. The International called for the administration of justice to be supported, democracy strengthened and reiterated its conviction that the stability and security of Colombia were only possible on the basis of greater truth, freedom and democracy.

The same spirit of solidarity with our Colombian comrades marked the meeting we held in Asunción, Paraguay, on 12-13 December 2007 with our member parties in the region, when we supported their efforts in the search for a humanitarian solution to the situation of the hostages.

The Latin American and Caribbean region has felt intensely in the last months both the concerns for those who are suffering at the hands of the FARC and their families, and the repercussions that this situation and the actions of those who are party to this conflict have had in the entire region, in particular in the relations, at times extremely strained, between Colombia and its neighbours. The social democratic forces in the region while constantly working for peace, understanding and dialogue have not ceased in the midst of these tensions to uphold and defend the fundamental principles which guide the relations between states and defend above all democratic values and human rights.

The Balkans

Support for democracy and conflict resolution in the Balkans has also been a long held commitment of the International, as we have continued to work to foster a climate of confidence and trust in the region and to promote social democratic values, recognising that these have played in this part of Europe a very central role not only in the shaping of governments and democratic, open and transparent political institutions in the region, but also in advancing multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies and allowing diversity to flourish.

With this purpose in mind, we held a round of consultations on the future of Kosovo that took place in Sofia on 30 November 2005. The gathering provided an opportunity for the parties directly concerned to address this challenging and delicate issue. Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev, President of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, acted as the host of our discussions. Among participants were the Leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci; the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Democratic Party, Serbia, now Foreign Minister, Vuc Jeremic; the then Prime Minister of the FYR Macedonia and SDUM President, Vlado Buchkovski; leaders and representatives of our parties in Albania and Romania; and George Papandreou and myself.

During the discussions the importance of the parties concerned being involved themselves in resolving the issues related to Kosovo was underlined. Points of agreement included, among others, the essential need for a democratic, multi-ethnic Kosovo in which the human rights of

all citizens were respected, and a Kosovo integrated in the region and within Europe, with economic opportunities for citizens and the means to combat organised crime.

It was further agreed that instability must be avoided, and participants warned of the multiplication of secessions and the creation of "greater" nations, for they could lead to human rights violations, ethnic cleansing, extreme politics and politicians and further instability. Those taking part emphasised that real security required policies of inclusion that benefited all, and that the development of a common European perspective and the role of the European Union in achieving this were essential.

A commitment was taken to keep working to support political forces which shared social democratic values in the region, and to step up efforts to promote a climate of trust and create further opportunities for dialogue with and between the parties concerned.

Our work on the future of Kosovo and its neighbours continued at our Council in Athens, which highlighted peace, stability and integration in the Balkans. That discussion was introduced by Prime Minister Stanishev and by the President of the Romanian Social Democratic Party, Mircea Geoana, and included contributions from the President of Serbia and Leader of the Democratic Party, Boris Tadic; the leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi; and the leader of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama.

Issuing a resolution, we reaffirmed our support and solidarity with the people of the Balkans in their efforts for peace, stability and the development of a European perspective. With regard to the challenges faced within the process of negotiations on the future status of Kosovo and its neighbours, we emphasised the importance of finding solutions that could chart a positive road ahead for a fully democratic, multi-ethnic region with complete respect for the human rights of all its citizens. We recognised the need to avoid instability and imposed solutions that could lead to renewed conflict over the issues of the future Constitution and final status. The International expressed its full backing to the United Nations overall in their work to find a settlement acceptable to all.

Following more than a year of negotiations, direct talks and contacts involving the UN Special Envoy and the political actors in Belgrade and Pristina, which resulted in a lack of agreement or common ground between the two parties with regard to Kosovo's future status, a Socialist International delegation visited the region to hold discussions with political leaders and authorities involved on the future status of Kosovo and the process undertaken by the international community on this issue.

The delegation, composed of SI President George Papandreou, Prime Minister Stanishev, Romanian party leader Mircea Geoana, and myself, visited Belgrade and Pristina on 20-21 March 2007 for talks in Belgrade with the President of the Republic of Serbia and President of the Democratic Party, Boris Tadic; with acting Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, and with the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Serbia. In Pristina, discussions were held with members of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK); with Hashim Thaçi, Leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo; with the then Prime Minister of Kosovo, Agim Çeku, as well as with representatives of the Serbian community in Kosovo.

Among the main issues raised was the need to advance the process of the international community's involvement in Kosovo in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 1999, to arrive at a definition of the future status of Kosovo which would secure peace and stability for the people of Kosovo, Serbia, and the whole region. The members of the delegation highlighted the responsibility of the international community in maintaining peace and stability in the region, particularly as the UN Security Council was due to discuss the report of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General in the coming weeks, and underlined the important role of Europe in opening a new political dimension in its relationship with Serbia and Kosovo as well as opportunities for more social and economic development.

The Socialist International leaders reaffirmed the full engagement of the organisation to the region's future as well as the SI's commitment to remain involved in developments there. It was an issue which was on the agenda when the Council met in Geneva a few months later. We welcomed the cooperation among the socialist and social democratic forces in the Balkans, and believed the contribution of its member parties to be vital to the

stability and the integration process into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. The International encouraged further dialogue between the Kosovars and the Serbs in order to find a balanced and flexible solution and we called on all states to avoid any unilateral decision referring to Kosovo.

The International remains willing and ready to continue working with the social democratic forces in the region to secure solutions that provide stability and opportunities for all the peoples there.

Cyprus

The SI Mediterranean Committee gathered in Limassol, Cyprus, on 26-27 March 2004 during the run-up to the April Referendum in which Greek and Turkish Cypriots voted on the issue of reunification. The meeting was the first organised by our International in Cyprus and was hosted by SI-member EDEK Movement of Social Democrats from the Greek Cypriot community. Participants from the Turkish Cypriot community included leaders and representatives of the Republican Turkish party, CTP, the Peace and Democracy Movement, BDH, and the United Cyprus Party, BKP, while delegations came from SI member parties from throughout the Mediterranean and Europe.

Under the theme, "Towards a common future for the people of Cyprus", discussions focused on promoting new economic opportunities in a united Cyprus, strengthening the common cultural heritage, further developing social democracy in Cyprus, the importance of local authorities in bringing people together, and how a resolution of the Cyprus issue would contribute to peace and stability throughout the Mediterranean.

The Committee agreed a Declaration that reflected the longstanding hope of the International for a mutually beneficial solution acceptable to all Cypriots leading to a united Cyprus, underlining the critical role for social democracy in the future of the country. The following April, Greek Cypriots did not pass the referendum on reunification, though Turkish Cypriots did. We continued to closely follow developments in the country, remaining ready to support all renewed efforts to achieve a united, democratic Cyprus.

When the Mediterranean Committee met in Naples on 4-5 May 2007, we highlighted the need to redouble the international community's efforts to find a definitive solution to the problem of Cyprus. The Committee welcomed the beginning of the demolition of the wall separating the Greek and Turkish sides in the Cypriot capital, Nicosia, as a sign of thawing which we believed should lead to the demilitarisation of the separation zone and to the opening up of the old city to the free movement of people.

Most recently in Lebanon in April 2008, the Mediterranean Committee received a report from representatives of both communities on the latest situation in Cyprus. The Committee welcomed the renewed talks between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders in the framework of the United Nations and decisions to prepare the future negotiations for a reunified island. We underlined our ongoing commitment to contributing to that process.

SETTING THE GLOBAL ECONOMY ON A NEW PATH

The International through its work has sought to issue a clear message to those peoples not benefiting from globalisation. For the worldwide social democratic movement, sustainable development must ensure equity and employment, added to which the world now rightly demands environmental protection. Our proposals have always recognised the interrelated aspects of the world economy where globalisation, economic and social demands, and respect for the environment cannot be separated. Equally we have consistently advocated economic supra-state regional integration within a context of social advancement and peace.

A progressive agenda for Africa

Today more people than ever before live in democracies. Everyday more people rise from oppression, famine, sickness and illiteracy, but it will be to a great extent in Africa that our success or failure as a political movement will be judged on what we are able to achieve. As Africans work to move forward their democratic agenda to bring development and opportunities in their countries, the International has been contributing towards the elaboration of a new paradigm, recognising that future prosperity for all is intimately entwined with the defeat of poverty and underdevelopment in the continent.

“Africa remains the poorest continent in the world. Overcoming the poverty and underdevelopment that the African people continue to suffer will require a concerted global effort to overcome the legacy of colonialism. As was the case with the Marshall Plan and similar successful interventions that succeeded in defeating poverty and underdevelopment, ending Africa’s exclusion from the global economy will require that the affluent make available the resources necessary to achieve this end.”
Council of the Socialist International, Johannesburg, South Africa, 15-16 November 2004

Our Council when it met in Johannesburg in November 2004 also considered the economic dimension. In our view, in forming the African Union, the peoples and leaders of the continent had made the unequivocal statement that Africa must unite. In order to achieve sustainable economic

development that would result in the continuous improvement in the standard of living and the quality of life of the African people, the Council agreed that the implementation and support of all NEPAD objectives and initiatives were of paramount importance. Equally vital, in our view, was the need to qualitatively change Africa's place in the world economy, so that it was free of the yoke of the international debt burden and no longer merely a supplier of raw materials and an importer of food and manufactured goods. In this context, the Council underlined that debt cancellation was still a priority. Central to ensuring positive change for Africans was the strengthening of the genuine independence of their countries and their continent in relations with the major powers, and enhancing their collective role in the determination of the global system of governance in all fields, including politics, the economy, security, information and intellectual property, the environment and science and technology.

The Council also unanimously agreed a resolution on sustainable development and the fulfilling of the commitments of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in 2002, prepared by the Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment at its meeting in Berlin on 15-15 October 2004. The Council reaffirmed the strong commitment of the International to achieving the Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals towards ending extreme poverty by 2015 and the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation, and underlined 'the need for a new global partnership encompassing economic development, social advance and environmental protection, as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development'.

The fight against poverty

The fight against poverty is without doubt the major challenge facing Africa. At our Council in Johannesburg in November 2004, we reaffirmed the vital importance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) in setting quantitative targets for halving extreme poverty by 2015 and applauded their aim to cut poverty in its many dimensions: low income, hunger, lack of education, gender inequality, disease, environmental degradation, insecurity of shelter and lack of access to safe water and sanitation. We underlined that the most important challenge for the next decade lay in their

implementation, and we urged member countries to “localise” the Goals, through a strategy of advocacy and MDG awareness-raising campaigns within countries and with the involvement of local actors.

Convening at the United Nations Office in Nairobi on 8-9 April 2005, the Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment made the point with regard to the issue of the Millennium Development Goals, that in order to eradicate poverty, the African continent had to be able to count on international financial assistance, which had to be concentrated on public services. In this way there would be improvements to the infrastructure; a health system giving priority to the prevention of HIV/AIDS and to the pre- and post-natal healthcare of women and children; information technologies; a free education system at all levels; professional training; and housing policies to give better living conditions. The meeting also addressed the impact of globalisation in Africa and the continent’s influence on governance in a global society. Delegates from Africa and other continents underlined that the effects of globalisation had thus far largely marginalised Africa and that the international community had an obligation to support efforts to increase the share of African exports in the global trading system. We reiterated that democratic governance was essential for Africa to advance, including respect for human rights, free and fair elections, a multi-party political system that encourages the participation of women, decentralised decision-making in government and vibrant and effective trade unions.

At the following Council meeting in Tel Aviv and Ramallah in May 2005, we reviewed the level of attainment of the MDGS and considered 2005 to be a key year offering a unique set of opportunities to give added momentum to achieving the goals. We emphasised that although improvements had been made in some areas, a lot was still to be done. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the number of people living in poverty there was greater now than in 1990. We called for particular efforts in Africa, which on current rates of progress would not meet any of the Goals by 2015. The Millennium Goals were technically and economically within our reach, we asserted, but the political will to place them at the centre of local, national and international policies was lacking.

On the eve of the United Nations 2005 World Summit, held in New York on

14-16 September, a number of Heads of State and Government participating in the event gathered under the auspices of the Socialist International for informal discussions that centred on the Summit negotiations, the UN reform process and the Millennium Development Goals. Regarding the MDGs, the participants called for a global partnership for development, which would include putting in place the institutions and mechanisms most responsive to ordinary citizens, especially the poor who were striving to improve conditions in both urban and rural areas, and fully empowering women, who were most affected by violent conflict, economic crisis and environmental degradation, and who could and should play a central role in the decision-making and development process.

In 2006, the 6th World Social Forum was organised as a polycentric undertaking, with meetings planned for Bamako, Mali, during 19-24 January; Caracas, Venezuela, during 24-29 January; and Karachi, Pakistan, in March. Reaffirming the solidarity of the International with the African continent, on the occasion of the gathering in Bamako, we organised two roundtable discussions highlighting crucial challenges facing the people of the continent. Held on 21 January, the first roundtable focused on "Advancing the democratic agenda in Africa" and participants underlined that good governance, the strengthening of democratic institutions and free and fair elections were necessary for Africa to be able to stand strongly in the world and overcome the divide between North and South. The second roundtable, "Overcoming poverty and hunger, achieving sustainable development in Africa today", placed emphasis on developing human resources for effective management of the economy and social development as necessary for both ending poverty and ensuring sustainable development.

The Athens Council also highlighted the struggle against poverty and inequality. Former Prime Minister Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Party for Democracy and Socialism of Niger, PNDP; Minister of Development Cooperation, Carin Jämtin of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, SAP; and the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Leader of the Mauritius Labour Party, addressed the core issues.

The Council insisted once again that the severe situation of poverty in Africa had to be urgently addressed. There was clearly a need, it

recognised, for increased coherence between different policies, such as trade, development, agriculture and environment, if the Millennium Development Goals were to be reached. We called upon all governments to honour the Monterrey consensus, including the commitment of the developed world that at least 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income should be spent on development assistance and for the developing world to live up to promises around good governance.

The Africa Committee, at its meeting in Praia, Cape Verde, on 20-21 October 2006, hosted by our member party there the African Party of Cape Verde's Independence, PAICV, and opened in the country's National Assembly by Prime Minister and PAICV President, José María Neves, gave an overview from the continent on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as looking at democratic governance in the region and the impact of migration on Africa. The Committee emphasised that considerable disparities existed between different African countries. Certain nations were in a position to be able to reach some of the goals by 2015. However, the situation was not very encouraging for the majority of countries on the continent. The crucial role of political parties in mobilising awareness, the will and necessary resources to successfully achieve the goals was underlined by the participants. On one hand, the political forces of developed countries had the task of ensuring that their respective governments fulfil their promises and, on the other hand, the political forces of countries from the South had the responsibility of advancing through good governance the potential of African nations and organising available human and economic resources, and to act for the common well-being. Also, the Committee agreed, the political parties of the North and South had to move forward on the reform of international institutions, in a way that ensured opportunities for all in a framework of a new multilateralism and the essential reform of the rules of international commerce with fairer trading in a globalised economy.

We are now reaching the mid-point of the timeframe set out by the Millennium Development Goals. It will be crucial to step up efforts from all in this common endeavour of the North and South of the world economy to achieve these goals, and certainly the urgency of the task is reflected in what the International has been doing during this period.

Food crisis

The International had addressed on earlier occasions some of the underlying causes at the centre of this crisis, such as the deregulation of the agricultural sector in many economies, the neglect of the agricultural sector in many developing countries, the role of subsidies to agriculture in developed countries with its consequences at the global level, the role of agrofuels, energy prices and financial speculation, but above all the unequal distribution of food.

From the earliest signs of the disturbances in Haiti, the food crisis has been a matter of concern for our members in different regions of the world. In the Dominican Republic in our Conference in mid-April, through the voice of the leaders of our member party there, we took a stand to support the demands of the people of Haiti who were still suffering dramatic shortages.

When we met in Islamabad in May 2008, we emphasised how the Asia-Pacific continent had been particularly affected by this crisis. Our member party in Pakistan, PPP, will be part of a group of parties of the International from the South and North of the world economy that will be presenting a proposal at our Congress on this crucial question.

At the meeting of our Africa Committee in Abidjan in June 2008, we also focused on the impact of the food crisis on the African continent. Participants agreed international solidarity was urgently needed, along with an emergency international aid plan.

The need to feed all peoples is an imperative from which none of us can escape - it is the very essence of humanity, as we have underlined in our discussions. The food crisis is intimately linked to other issues on our agenda, as we have seen it undermining democracy and leading to conflict. What our Congress will say on this matter can certainly make a difference to many.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean is also a part of the world where cycles of poverty and marginalisation persist. Although the region's economies have known a period of growth in recent years, great economic disparities

with a high level of inequality and social exclusion continue. Social democracy and our own International in the region through its initiatives and discussions in Latin America and the Caribbean have continued to promote more just and inclusive societies including responsible interaction with the economy and the environment, as well as integration, a priority on every continent in our overall response to the challenges of globalisation.

“It is not true that there is only one way to organise economic relations in a democratic society. We must look again at the economy, from a democratic viewpoint, emphasising that different economic policies exist and that each of these has its own impact on democratic development. Economic questions must again become part of politics.” *Meeting of the Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, Santa Marta, Colombia, 7-8 May 2004*

Our meetings in the region during the period of this report - from Colombia to Haiti, from Peru to Uruguay, from Nicaragua to Chile, from Paraguay to the Dominican Republic – have been held at a time of significant advances of the forces on the left in the region. This new scenario has presented new opportunities for many of our parties to find and implement social democratic policies.

When the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment met in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 9 November 2007, as part of its programme to examine regional dimensions of the world economy, it continued these discussions. The meeting included contributions on behalf of the Argentinian hosts, from former President of the Republic, Raúl Alfonsín, of the Radical Civic Union, UCR, and Clorinda Yelicic from the Socialist Party of Argentina, PS. From the Socialist International, the Committee Chair, Christoph Zöpel, Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD, and myself addressed the meeting. Special contributions were presented from two invited regional organisations, the first by Oscar Cetrangolo from the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC, and the second by Raúl Alconada from the Organisation of American States, OAS.

Among the tasks to be carried out by socialists, in the opinion of the participants at the meeting, were: consolidating and deepening democracy; strengthening and improving institutions; providing equality of opportunity; overcoming the social deficits of democracy; and fighting the lack of solidarity in globalisation. There was a clear need to advance the ethic of solidarity, citizen's participation, and the modernisation of the economy and society. The objectives of socialists in the region should be economic growth but with social advancement, we said, and in this sense the role of education was crucial, as was the fight against poverty.

One of the main challenges facing the region was how to sustain the present economic growth and fiscal solvency resulting from current international conditions, and the development of social protection policies promoting social cohesion. In relation to the latter, participants insisted on the need for adequate systems of social security, pensions, health, and education as well as the need to strengthen the financing of public policies and overcome the weaknesses of the taxation system in policies for redistribution. Another element which arose in the debates was the need to appreciate the varying aspects and particularities of each subregion – Mexico, Central America, Brazil, the Andean region and the Southern cone – and the need for specific policies for each one of them.

The possibilities for the countries of the region to connect their production and consumer infrastructures continued to offer great potential for real integration, which still remained in the distance. Participants at the meeting underlined the priority attached to advancing the agendas for integration to also give impetus to the participation of the region in the new ways in which the economy and politics are organised at global level.

Asia and the Pacific

Given the increasingly important role played by the South Asian Region in the global society, with India, Pakistan and Bangladesh the 2nd, 7th and 8th most populous states in the world respectively, the Socialist International Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment met in New Delhi, India, on 15 and 16 January 2007. Sustaining growth, ending poverty and benefiting citizens in the economies of South Asia, the expanding role of India in the world economy and the

impact of globalisation in the region were the main issues for discussion. Political leaders, experts, academics, parliamentarians, representatives from social organisations, think-tanks and foundations participated in the discussions, including, from the host country, former Prime Ministers Sh. H. D. Deve Gowda and Sh. I. Kumar Gujral, and delegations from India's ruling Congress Party, Janata Dal (Secular) and the Socialist Front.

Committee members heard contributions on the advances and challenges for strengthening democracy in South Asia, a crucial precondition for economic progress. The recent positive developments in Nepal and the democratic deficit as experienced in Pakistan and in other countries were addressed. The changing role of the region in global politics and economics, and the enormous impact that globalisation was having on the subcontinent - where a great proportion of the world's population lives - were highlighted in many contributions. Particular sectors of the economies of the region affected by current economic policies internationally, such as the agricultural sector in India, undergoing a serious crisis, were assessed. With regard to India, the delegation of the ruling Congress Party presented an overview of government initiatives and programmes, such as the national employment guarantee act as well as the development of rural infrastructure, to tackle, at their very roots, poverty and internal migration from rural areas to big Indian cities.

Contributions and expert analyses presented at the meeting pointed to the significant momentum of economic growth in India and some other countries in the region, to the development of an entrepreneurial sector willing and ready to compete on a global scale, but also to the need to focus on equity, regional balances and the eradication of poverty. The underlying convergence in the discussions was the need to do what the social democratic movement had done in other parts of the world at national level: to build a consensus to ensure that the interests of those who were left out were looked after and protected, with a concern for poverty, an emphasis on employment, health, education, gender equality, defence of the environment and greater equality in international economic relations.

Transitional economies

Meeting in Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, on 9-10 September 2007, the Socialist International Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment examined the processes of transition underway in countries such as the Ukraine and Russia and similar economies, evaluating current policies, trends and approaches, with the goal to further the development of common social democratic priorities and policy proposals.

The economic situation of Ukraine was addressed with contributions by Vitaliy Shybko, International Secretary of SPU and Chair of the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee; Yury Buzdugan, leader of SDPU; Oksana Kuziakiv, Chief Executive of the Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting, Ukraine, and Igor Burakovsky, the Institute's Director. During the debate, positive trends of the Ukrainian economy were highlighted — amongst them an annual GDP growth of more than 7 per cent and the expected accession to the World Trade Organisation. However the need for further economic and social reforms was underlined, action on pensions and salaries in particular, as well as the need for modernising heavy industry and enhancing competitiveness. Also emphasised were the need for good governance and greater efforts to combat corruption and to strengthen the rule of law to sustain growth, attract foreign investments and improve the business climate in general, and that reforms on education and the health sector were essential, together with a fairer distribution of the country's resources, to achieve sustainable development and a better quality of life for its people.

Sergei Glaziev, Deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation and a member of the Academy of Sciences of that country, presented an overview of the economic situation in Russia and discussed in detail the role the Russian economy played in the region.

The Committee's discussions underlined the importance of strengthening democratic institutions in the entire region and the positive effect of competitive politics on market economics, as well as the fundamental importance of the rule of law. Also, the need to ensure that natural resources should be used to finance development and social investment, including health, education and housing.

Proposals and concrete measures

Recent developments have radically changed global economic dynamics and financing around the world is reaching its limit. Our response as a global movement at this time of economic uncertainty in many parts of the world is needed more than ever.

The SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment concluded its activities during this period with a meeting in London on 6 June 2008. Participants considered the draft statement which is before the Congress under the theme “Setting the global economy on a new path: to bring growth and opportunities for all”. Members of the Committee agreed it was vital to take into account the fundamentally altered dynamics of the world economy in the last few years. They emphasised the need to express a clear message with proposals and concrete measures for multi-level governance of economic policy at the state level, at the supra-state regional level and at the global level. The statement presented to the Congress highlights the need for a more democratic United Nations system at the global level; global welfare statehood; fairer world trade; effective distribution and production of raw materials and energy; reforming the global financial markets; financing development; working for global inclusive and equitable labour; and the responsibilities of the private sector in a globalised economy.

GIVING MIGRATION A HUMAN FACE

Globalisation, economic divide, political conflict and environmental degradation are generating waves of migrations across the world. While the phenomenon of migrations is not new, it constitutes one of the most pressing issues today for nations and the international community and requires just and fair answers for citizens around the world, in line with our values of solidarity, democracy and social justice. The Committee on Migrations was established at our Council in Madrid following the Sao Paulo Congress as a response and an acknowledgement of the role of migration and the need for a common social democratic approach to this issue. The question of migration is central in the process of globalisation of the world economy and equally crucial to the challenges of democratisation and of building a fair and more humane global society. During this inter-Congress period the Committee has taken its discussions with different partners to many parts of the world for a far-reaching and thorough examination of how to place human beings at the heart of the international migration agenda.

Latin America and the Caribbean

The inaugural meeting of the Migrations Committee was held in Zacatecas, Mexico, on 21 June 2004, chaired by Amalia Garcia (Mexico, PRD), the Chair of the Committee, who was subsequently elected as Governor for the state. Zacatecas, the Committee observed, offered a definitive example of a region that had experienced migration for many generations, while Mexico represented a country which receives migrants, as well as being a transit country and one from which migrants depart, principally to the United States.

The meeting under the title "Migration, a human right" explored current trends in migration by examining the case of Zacatecas and Mexico. The meeting discussed a plan of work for the Committee, "A social democratic strategy for migration", and defined the Committee's priorities. Underlining that the political rights of all migrants were inseparable from human and social rights, the Committee took into account the complexity of the phenomenon of migration and its consequences in terms of family, society, culture and the economy, as well as the widening of political rights.

“The ever greater numbers of people migrating in this world do not want to abandon their countries or their families. They are compelled by a complex array of economic, social and environmental forces and must confront enormous risks, exploitation and rejection as they relocate, even as globalisation provides for increasingly freer flows of goods, services, finance and technology. This requires greater realism on the part of North and South to prepare a package of cooperative measures that can ease the plight of migrants and enhance the potential benefits both to them and the sending and receiving countries.” *Socialist International Council, Santiago, 6-7 November 2006*

The Maghreb

“The role of migrations in North-South relations” was the focus of the main theme when the Committee met in Casablanca, Morocco, a nation with huge responsibilities with regard to migratory flows given its geo-strategic position. Convening on 27-28 March 2006, the Committee, hosted by the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, USFP, gathered following the report in 2005 by the United Nations Global Commission on International Migration and the humanitarian crisis caused by the massive influx of hundreds of illegal immigrants from Sub Saharan Africa to Morocco in September and October 2005, and in advance of the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development which was to be held the following July in Rabat.

The meeting opened with introductory remarks by Mohamed El Yazghi, First Secretary of the USFP and a Vice-President of the International; Committee Chair Amalia Garcia; and Nouzha Chekrouni, Minister for Moroccans Abroad and a Vice-Chair of the Committee, and myself.

In the course of the discussions, the forty delegates from SI member parties in Africa, Latin America and Europe reaffirmed that as a platform for peoples from different cultures and realities, the International had the capacity to contribute effectively to developing partnerships between North and South and to give a more human face to globalisation and to migration. They underlined the complex nature of migration, which on one hand contributed to social and economic development of countries, as well

as to the opening up and the cultural enrichment of diverse communities, while on the other, its causes are also linked to a growing inequality between industrialised and developing countries, to poverty, armed conflicts and the violation of human rights in the originating countries. The Committee also took note that illegal migrants often lived in shocking conditions, with many being subjected to systematic exploitation by human traffickers, particularly women and children. In this regard, the delegates took the opportunity to reiterate the need, under all circumstances, to respect the human and labour rights of migrants. To this end, they recommended the acceleration of the process to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by the United Nations in 1990.

The Committee gave special mention to the building of a wall on the Mexican-United States border, proposed by the US House of Representatives in December 2005, which sought to criminalise those without papers and impose punitive measures on them. The Committee decided to pay close attention to the outcome of the legislative process in the US, so that the human and labour rights of migrants and their families were guaranteed.

Eastern Europe

The Committee on Migrations then gathered in Chisinau on 21 and 22 July 2006 to examine a subject which touches the lives of many people in the Republic of Moldova - East-West Migration. The meeting was hosted by the Social Democratic Party, SDPM, and the Democratic Party of Moldova, DPM, and was the focus of great attention in the country, where alongside delegates from SI member parties, a number of NGOs and other representatives of international organisations working on this issue participated in the discussions.

The different aspects of migration in the country and in Europe were analysed in depth, drawing on the positive and negative effects of migration and the policies, approaches and other initiatives required from the public sector and the civil society to address positively the issue. The particular case of illegal migration was discussed at length, highlighting the absence of status for illegal migrants in the country of destination and

all the subsequent dangers: illegal employment and labour exploitation, lack of access to health care systems and violations of their human rights.

One of the most disturbing effects of migration in the region highlighted was that of human trafficking, especially women and children, an issue upon which the Committee members called for combined and collective efforts of both governments of origin and destination countries, with the participation of the private sector, the civil society and NGOs, emphasising the need for more public information and awareness campaigns to combat the trafficking of human beings.

Another aspect underlined in the discussions was the need for the international community to move forward more decisively in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals to overcome poverty and other conditions that are today forcing people to migrate. Delegates also emphasised the need to deepen co-operation between governments to strengthen the protection of the rights of migrants and further develop the capacity of response of the international institutions to migration.

Among specific suggestions addressed was also the strengthening of the political rights of migrants making it possible for them to vote from abroad for the elections in their country of origin, as a specific policy to be promoted by social democrats. The Committee equally expressed its support for the call of the Moldovan delegates for more humane procedures with regard to the status of Moldovan migrants.

During the programme of activities in Moldova, I was able to meet with the President of the Republic, H.E. Vladimir Voronin, and the President of the Moldovan Parliament, Mr Marian Lupu, received a delegation of the Committee.

Sub-Saharan Africa

The Socialist International Africa Committee when it met in Praia, Cape Verde, in October 2006 looked at the human, economic, social and political impact of migration in Africa. The member parties of the Socialist International on the continent undertook to carry on their efforts in their own regions to contribute to developing a social democratic roadmap with regard to migration.

This was a key issue for society in the 21st century, the Committee underlined, and a fundamental question to safeguard human, social and political rights of all, including those of migrants. It was essential to give a more human face to migration today, an issue which, we said, called into question the very identity of our movement.

The Committee recognised that the globalisation of the economy and the lack of opportunities for too great a number of people had accelerated migratory flows towards the industrial, economic and financial centres across the world. That process today had to face, on one side, the growing and very human aspirations for a better life which drove more and more people to cross borders, and, on the other, a new form of victimisation of migrants caused by the unscrupulous actions of those who profit from unregulated immigration.

Improving the regulations affecting migrants and making them more humane, whilst ensuring an ordered and regulated flow through policies with responsibility shared between the originating and destination countries, were considered essential commitments to be undertaken. This should translate, we underscored, into responsible action in migratory matters in the originating countries, as well as the destination countries putting into practice active policies of integration, such as assistance, and the strengthening of efforts of developing countries to generate jobs and opportunities for their own citizens.

The Committee also welcomed the content of the Declaration of the Euro-African Conference on Migration which had been held in Rabat the previous September.

The Mediterranean

Pursuing their analysis of countries dealing with different aspects of migration, members of the Committee then convened on the island of Rhodes in Greece and the city of Marmaris in Turkey on 24 and 25 October 2006, respectively. Hosted by the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, Pasok, and the Republican People's Party, CHP, the Committee considered and exchanged views and experiences on the changing nature of migration, where countries evolved from being places of emigration to become receivers of immigrants. The debates gave a focus on countries with

maritime borders and irregular migration, and the affect on countries where large numbers of migrants were in transit, as experienced in Greece and Turkey.

The Committee noted that correctly managing migratory flows required instruments that took into account the capacity to receive migrants and the needs of the labour markets in the host countries. It underlined the need to redouble efforts against unregulated migration which fed the traffic of human beings and exploitation, which victimised women and children especially. The Committee once again warned against these new forms of slavery.

We highlighted the need for a coherent policy of co-development. International cooperation could become indispensable in contributing to the economic, social, cultural and political stability of originating countries, we said, and in this regard gave our support to the holding of the Forum on Migration and Development in July 2007 in Belgium.

The Committee noted the need to strengthen public systems and services in host countries in order to guarantee their level and quality. Our aim, we stated, was to bring about a host society that was more cohesive and integrated, strengthening public services and promoting the indispensable conditions of equality of access to health, education and social services.

The Committee underlined the need for dialogue, commitment and co-responsibility between originating countries, transit countries and host countries. Current international migration could not be approached from unilateral or local perspectives, but to the contrary, we supported bilateral and multilateral strategies which combined the economic and social needs of the receiver countries with promoting the political, economic and social development of the originating countries and avoiding the draining of human resources there.

We advocated building strategies which avoided marginalising immigrants but instead promoted the presence, participation and expression of immigrants in all aspects of the collective life of our countries. The very widening of the citizenship, we proposed, would become a pillar of cohabitation, and so the best way of guaranteeing security. For this, we had to find ways of implementing participation in public affairs, primarily with the right to vote.

Once again we condemned the construction of the wall on the US-Latin American border and respectfully called on the United States Congress to move forward integral migratory reform which would give order and certainty to migration in that country. The Committee reiterated that the solution to migratory flows did not lie in building physical barriers between countries.

Asia and the Pacific

The Philippines, the country with one of the largest proportion of migrant workers abroad, was a fitting choice of venue when the Committee on Migrations took its discussions to the Asia-Pacific region on 21-22 September 2007, meeting together with representatives from a broad range of international, regional and non-governmental organisations working on migration issues, in the country's capital, Manila.

Examining migration issues from the perspective of the Asia-Pacific region, the discussions on the agenda focused on migration and development, the impact of female migration, irregular labour migration in a globalised economy, and migration issues on the international agenda. Committee Chair Amalia Garcia opened the meeting, alongside Norberto Gonzales, Leader of the PDSP and Secretary for National Security of the Republic of the Philippines, and Loretta Rosales from the leadership of the Akbayan Party.

Taking part in the debates alongside the SI members, were representatives from the International Organisation for Migration, IOM; the International Trade Union Confederation – Asia Pacific, ITUC-AP; the Migrant Forum in Asia; the Asian Migrant Centre; the Center for Migrant Advocacy; the Athika Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative; the Development for Women Network, DAWN; the Scalabrini Migration Centre; the Kanlungan Centre Foundation – Centre for Migrant Workers; the Philippine Migration Research Network, PMRN; the Filipino Domestic Workers' Union, FDWU; the KAKAMMPI Association of overseas Filipino workers and their families; and the organisation Unlad Kabayan.

The Committee noted that, if properly managed, migration could contribute to the development of both countries of origin and of destination. On this theme, great emphasis was placed in the debates on the

need to strengthen the rights of migrants and of including these rights in the development agenda, and a number of recommendations were agreed. The impact of female migration received particular attention during the discussions and a series of proposals and initiatives were put forward. Irregular migration and the need for policy responses that properly addressed its root causes were examined, together with related legislation, procedures and criteria to deal with this issue. Human rights and the rights of migrants were placed at the centre of a 'people first' approach to migration and the responsibilities of states were highlighted, as was the need for cooperation among all stakeholders in migration, among them, governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, civil society and the migrants themselves. The results of the meeting were included in the Manila Declaration which summarised the debates and detailed a series of proposals and initiatives agreed by the Committee.

North America

Convening on 2-3 June 2008 for its final session in advance of the Congress, the Committee on Migrations rounded up its series of regional discussions in the United States. The meeting was held in Los Angeles, a unique city where the size of its immigrant population, with more than a third of its 9.9 million residents comprised of immigrants, is the largest such community in the United States. California is in itself the eighth largest economy in the world and the richest State in the Union, owing its prosperity in significant measure to its migrant workers. The large presence of unauthorised and mixed-status families and the growing size of the second generation of migrants in Los Angeles typified the need for comprehensive immigrant reform legislation in the US as well as the necessary measures to give immigrants the skills and confidence to engage more fully in the social and civic life of the city.

At this meeting, members of the Committee and guests from Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Greece, Guatemala, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Turkey, the USA and Venezuela, were joined by California Senator Gil Cedillo, representatives of various North American non-governmental organisations working with immigrant communities, by academics from US and Mexican universities, and by a City Commissioner of Los Angeles.

Focusing first on current developments in the United States with regard to migratory issues, the Committee addressed the theme "North America: Comprehensive immigration reform and civil and human rights". Senator Cedillo, in his analysis of the situation, shed light on the existing legislation which fell short of responding to the real needs and on the collapse of comprehensive immigration reform legislation in the US Congress. It was noted that the United States as a whole included some 13 million undocumented migrant workers who lived and worked in the country, playing a key role in the functioning and growth of the US economy, an issue which needed to be addressed meaningfully, combining higher levels of legal, permanent immigration with programmes for temporary work which protected the rights of both temporary migrant and domestic workers.

Taking the example of Los Angeles in terms of the positive impact of migration, delegates also discussed "Promoting diversity: the role of cities and urban areas in immigrant integration" as the second theme, noting the dynamic, multicultural "mosaic" which the city had become. However, it was noted that in the absence of a national integration policy, it was largely left to state and local governments to implement ad hoc programmes, a matter which required serious attention nationwide and upon which the future vitality of the country's cities and economy depended. In this regard, basic citizens' rights needed to be enhanced in areas such as access to affordable health care, quality schooling, higher education, and job opportunities, in order to properly engage all in the civic life of the country.

"Global economic instability and immigrant workers' rights" was the third theme of the debates, at a time when worldwide financial turmoil and insecurity continued to jeopardise the position of an already vulnerable section of society. It was underlined that resistance to migration from the South had increased due to security fears, economic uncertainty and mounting racism, a typical expression of which could be seen in the construction of the wall along the Mexico-US border. The 2,000 mile US-Mexican border highlighted, more than anywhere else in the world, the contiguous, side-by-side meeting of the developing and the developed worlds. Participants stressed the urgent need for greater cooperation between countries of origin and destination, as well as transit countries, in order to provide adequate social protection for migrants, especially for

women and children, and support programmes for those deported, who should not be criminalised, but rather should be helped to be reinstated into the social and labour fabric of their countries. Similarly, programmes were needed to help migrants wishing to return to and contribute to the economies of their countries of origin.

All the discussions of our International during this period on the issues raised by migration have reiterated the need for the socialist movement to put forward brave, responsible and imaginative answers to the phenomenon of migration. These should be based on our democratic values and respect for human rights. As opposed to conservative policies that view the process of migration as a conflict, the socialist vision recognises migratory flows as great challenge full of opportunities for countries of origin and destination, if managed with appropriate progressive policies.

ADVANCING THE GLOBAL SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AGENDA

“The people shall govern” in Africa

At our Council meeting in Johannesburg in November 2004, we set some goals aimed at creating the conditions for an “African renaissance”. We recognised that the first task of the African social democratic movement was to achieve unity, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation among the peoples of Africa and among the African states. Peace and stability had to prevail on the continent, and the necessary institutions had to be built to deepen political, economic and social integration there. The second task for the movement was that of developing new forms of partnerships throughout African societies and governments. This would include mobilising civil society, including women, youth, labour and the private sector, to act together to maximise impact and create the conditions for a better way of life. From our social democratic perspective, Africa’s future required the establishment of democratic political systems to ensure the accomplishment of the goal that “the people shall govern”, to be guaranteed by free and fair elections.

Democracy and electoral processes in Africa

Preceding the Johannesburg Council, the Africa Committee had met in Dakar on 12-13 July 2004, hosted by the Socialist Party, PS, of Senegal, and its leader Ousmane Tanor Dieng, Chair of the Committee, where the issues of democracy and electoral processes were at the top of the agenda. Some 200 specially invited guests from the Senegalese political spectrum including the leaders of the parties which made up the ‘Cadre Permanent de la Concertation de l’Opposition’, CPC, the alliance of parties in the opposition which included the PS of Senegal, joined delegates from 24 member parties of the International.

Following a rich and fruitful debate, the Committee emphasised the interdependence of democratic rule, economic development and peace. Underlining the need for free and transparent elections in order to guarantee stability, social peace and the willing participation of all in development, delegates acknowledged that although considerable democratic progress had been made in certain African countries, in others, to the contrary, the holding of elections which were neither free, fair, nor

transparent, clearly showed that electoral power had been taken away. The political deadlock in Mauritania, the Republic of Guinea, Cameroon, and in Equatorial Guinea, raised particular concern.

With problems of governance and poverty widely present in Africa, delegates agreed that good governance was a condition, a means and an end, to achieving development. Participants noted the mixed results of adjustment policies, under which the continent had long been subjected, notably their impact on the life of the poor: unemployment was getting worse and there was insufficient importance placed on education, health and employment. It was felt by the representatives of our parties that integration was the best way forward for development, noting the experiences of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, WAEMU, the Organisation for the Development of the Senegalese River, OMVS, and the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS. Participants shared a feeling of optimism, that Africa was “behind but not condemned”, we said, and globalisation had to become an opportunity for the continent as well.

Call for action in Sudan

Further in keeping with what matters to Africa and to the African people, we took a clear stance on the situation in Darfur, Sudan, and called for urgent action by the international community. As we said in Athens at the Executive meeting of the SI on 18 September 2004, “the massive loss of life, the gross violation of human rights and the immense suffering in Darfur, effectively genocide”, required the international community to implement the “international responsibility to protect” through the United Nations Security Council. We should not allow the same images to be endlessly repeated of terrified people and powerless peacekeepers.

Welcome developments in Mauritania

During this period, the International was also engaged in following up the situation in Mauritania, and we worked for the release of Ahmed Ould Daddah, leader of our member party there, the Assembly of Democratic Forces, RFD, and other leading opposition politicians following their arbitrary detention. The party went on later to successfully contest legislative elections in December 2006 and Daddah came second in the first

democratic Presidential election in the country since 1960 which took place in March 2007. The RFD, having existed for years in an undemocratic political system, is now a party inspiring and at the forefront of democratic change in its country.

Reversal in Togo

Meanwhile, the reversal of democratic practices in Togo and the deteriorating security situation during the succession process following the death of Eyadéma Gnassingbé was cause for great alarm. In February 2005, the SI appealed for the restoration of democratic transition of power in the country and deemed unacceptable the violation of the constitution. We expressed support for the efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, to find a peaceful solution to the crisis and reaffirmed our solidarity with the SI member Democratic Convention of African Peoples, CDDP, and other opposition parties seeking to exercise their democratic rights.

Socialist priorities for Africa

The Africa Committee met in Niamey on 24-25 April 2006, hosted by the Party for Democracy and Socialism of Niger, PDS, for wide-ranging discussions on the priorities for socialists and social democrats on the continent, namely the resolution of conflicts, the fight against poverty and the promotion of democratic governance.

Representatives of our parties from the region highlighted that after decades of conflicts, Africa was "in urgent need of peace". This could be achieved, they asserted, by putting into practice policies which eliminated the deep-rooted causes of the conflicts, as well as a strategy for prevention of conflicts, through public policies, through the United Nations as an intermediary, and through a strengthened partnership of regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa.

Tackling the issue of poverty on the continent, the participants outlined requirements and proposals for solutions to this ingrained issue. Among them, the need to put in place a system of global taxation aimed at promoting equitable economic development, and to modernise state institutions and legal frameworks in Africa to foster the efficient

implementation of development policies. The region needed to pursue the political struggle against attitudes to the detriment of international trade rules, and against the iniquity of the measures of the WTO with regard to poor countries, while advancing the reform of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions in order to allow Africa to better make its voice heard. Finally, we said, Africans had to continue the fight for total cancellation of the debt and to put the debate on a new financial agenda for Africa at the top of global priorities.

The Committee also examined the obstacles facing the democratic experiences in Africa and defined social democratic responses to the challenges many in the region were facing. Among these, we said was the promotion of free and transparent elections, the guarantee of democratic alternation of power, freedom of the press and the development of a democratic culture. In particular, the Committee proposed the creation of a Willy Brandt Fund within the framework of supporting political parties and also invited the United Nations to work on this theme.

The delegates also discussed the specific cases of Senegal, condemning the deviation of an increasingly arbitrary regime, of Guinea where the situation was particularly worrying, and the case of Chad, where the absence of democracy was behind almost forty years of conflict. Within the framework of the meeting, a delegation of the Socialist International also held, on the second day, discussions on the themes addressed by the Committee in Niger with the President of the Republic, Mamadou Tandja.

Redressing democratic deficits in Africa

With regard to effective democratic governance on the continent, our member parties in Africa have examined on many occasions the constitutional frameworks, electoral processes and the role of political parties. In their view, a deficit with respect to constitutions in some parts of the continent exists, including an inadequate "constitutional culture" and at times constitutions that are too ambiguous. The efforts to achieve effective democratic governance in Africa and the democratic rule of law constitute a common priority for social democracy. Equally, solid, firm and transparent political institutions, citizens' participation and dialogue between political forces and civil society figure prominently in party

programmes. Our Africa Committee during this period often felt the need to restate the need for an independent judiciary and the credibility of magistrates. Central to these efforts for institution building was the need for independent Electoral Commissions to guarantee free and fair elections, the lack of which has led to so many of the conflicts in the region.

Guinea: cause for concern

During 2006 we viewed the situation in Guinea with great concern, where the rifts at the heart of the government were precipitating the decline of the state. In January 2007, the Socialist International was deeply disturbed by the violent repression in Guinea carried out by the armed forces, police and presidential guard, which cost the lives of demonstrators during the national protests calling for the removal of President Lansana Conté, who had been in power for over 20 years. The SI firmly condemned these acts of violence and lent its solidarity to the people of Guinea. They had been demonstrating following a call to strike by the country's main trade union organisations in favour of democratic change in Guinea, in protest at the corruption and misappropriation of public funds, and for better living conditions for the entire population. We reiterated our firm support and solidarity with all the forces working peacefully for democratic change in the country, including political parties, trade unions, women and the youth of Guinea, and among them, our member party the Guinean People's Assembly, led by Alpha Condé.

Democratic freedoms curtailed in Senegal

The deterioration of the political situation in Senegal during 2006 was equally troubling. The proliferation of intimidation, including arrests of democrats, political opposition leaders and journalists, demonstrated the authoritarian deviations of an increasingly arbitrary regime which the SI Africa Committee denounced and condemned at the meeting in Niger in April that year.

January 2007 saw further worrying events in Senegal and we expressed our grave concern that the democratic freedoms and political rights gained by the Senegalese people were not being upheld and respected by the authorities there, following the postponement of parliamentary elections, the curtailment of the rights of the opposition by the government and the

arrest and detention of opposition leaders. The presidential elections went ahead in February and we lent our solidarity to the candidate and leader of our member party, Ousmane Tanor Dieng, during the campaign under these difficult circumstances. The Socialist Party then withdrew, along with other opposition parties, from the postponed parliamentary elections in June 2007, given the irregularities in the electoral process and lack of guarantees for a free and fair poll, and we have continued our work with our Senegalese comrades as they remain a solid reference for democracy in the country.

First meeting of SI in Ghana

The Socialist International held for the first time a meeting in Ghana, on 15 and 16 June 2007, hosted by SI-member the National Democratic Congress of Ghana, on the occasion of the gathering of its Africa Committee. Fulfilling democratic commitments, resolving conflicts in Africa and tackling urban poverty were at the fore of the discussions, along with an evaluation of electoral processes, an examination of the case of Côte d'Ivoire and an assessment of urban poverty and the development of policies for job creation.

Allowing political actors, stakeholders and observers to participate in the elaboration and implementation of electoral processes at all stages was viewed as vital by the Committee. Mechanisms needed to be created to enable this, it asserted, as well as more value and scope, at all levels, given to the intervention of stakeholders and the role of observers in elections. A system of sanctions which would hold leaders and governments who did not respect democratic rules accountable, as well as established electoral procedures, needed to be designed and applied, in order to avoid citizens taking the brunt of such abuses.

To counter urban poverty, the Committee felt policy-makers needed to ensure that education systems placed emphasis on training young people in agriculture to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to play productive roles in their communities and to prevent rural-urban migration. Policies for job creation should also include training managers in all economic sectors. We added that governments should enter into specific global alliances with both governmental and non-governmental

organisations in order to create more jobs in the rural areas with the view to developing them and to attract young people.

Struggling for democracy to eradicate national conflict

In Equatorial Guinea, the Convergence for Social Democracy, CPDS, the main opposition force and a member of the Socialist International, was yet again forced to compete in an electoral process in May this year marred by the use of public funds and state media for the campaign of the ruling party, the Democratic Party for Equatorial Guinea, PDGE; the denial of international press access; the fostering of a climate of fear which spread as far as polling stations on voting day; the vilification of opposition leaders during the election campaign and the physical abuse of their supporters; and reported election irregularities.

Although the government of Equatorial Guinea had committed itself before the country's citizens and the international community to work for the development of multiparty democracy, these elections, we stated, demonstrated that the country was still far from this in reality. Social peace and stability, we stressed, would only result from free, fair and transparent elections and the government of Equatorial Guinea should be reminded of its obligations to respect the political, democratic and human rights of its citizens.

The International reaffirmed once again its solidarity and support for the leaders and members of the Convergence for Social Democracy, as they continue their work to ensure democratic governance in their country, and they will share with us at this Congress their hopes for the future of their country.

The worsening situation in Zimbabwe has also been a matter of grave concern for many. The climate of fear and intimidation in which Zimbabweans have been living in the midst of the electoral campaign that has been unacceptably derailed because of reported violence, deaths and beatings led our Africa Committee when it met in Cote d'Ivoire to warn of the serious dangers of civil war. At the same time, social democratic parties and leaders around the world have been urging the authorities to ensure that the people there can freely exercise their constitutional rights to elect the leadership they believe is best for Zimbabwe.

Social democratic advances in Latin America and the Caribbean

Huge social democratic advances have been and continue to be made in Latin America and the Caribbean. Today, the great majority of men and women living in the region elect their governments freely and fairly and have seen significant progress in the respect for human rights.

With the election of governments formed by member parties of the International in Panama, Uruguay, Chile, Costa Rica, Peru, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Paraguay and our member party participating in the government of Brazil, real opportunities have opened up to establish policies to tackle the pressing issues facing the people on the continent. The International and social democracy are today more than ever mapping the way forward for Latin America and the Caribbean and we continue to be a strong and consistent voice for the strengthening of democratic institutions, greater equality and fairness in the region and for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

A Progressive Panama

On 2 May 2004, an observation mission of the Socialist International was in the Republic of Panama for the election of Martin Torrijos, leader of SI-member the Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD, who took office in September that year.

President Torrijos, who is a member of our Commission for a Sustainable World Society, at the last meeting of this Commission in Santiago, Chile on 24 March this year, shared the experiences of his government in delivering a major infrastructure project, that of enlarging the Panama Canal, with environmental priorities at its centre. The expansion of the Canal had climate change issues at its core, he reported, both in the technology used to build it in a sustainable way and in the reduced carbon emissions the development would ensure through greater productivity.

Assessing social democratic progress in the Latin American and Caribbean region

When members and guests of the Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean met in Santa Marta, Colombia, on 7-8 May 2004, the discussions

centred on three main themes - overcoming the challenges to peace in the region; good governance and democratic stability; and policies for trade which is fair, free and which promotes regional integration.

The Committee gathered its thoughts in a paper 'The achievements and deficiencies of democracy', welcoming the huge gains made but keeping a critical eye on developments. Formal democracy, it stated, had to be accompanied by the pursuit of equality and by 'second generation' social and human rights which focus on human dignity and on the nature of citizenship. The International, it reiterated, had always upheld these principles, which were extremely relevant to the growing danger that democracy as such might come to be considered "beside the point" and thus might not be sustainable.

The Committee also highlighted the central aim of democracy to develop various aspects of citizenship. Democracy, it said, required genuine choices and the power to carry these out, in order to avoid the growing tendency for society to distance itself from the democratic system. The relevance of democracy for citizens depended not only on perfecting the mechanisms of representation, but equally on developing new paths to bring us closer to a participatory democracy, enabling social organisations to expand their role in the democratic process.

Delegates also agreed a Motion of Gratitude to Raúl Alfonsín, who for five years had been at the forefront of the work of the Committee, thanking him for his leadership and commitment which found expression in our activities and achievements in the region during this period.

Actors for regional integration in the Caribbean

Regional integration was one of the focuses, together with the strengthening of our presence in the Caribbean, when, in February 2005, I had the opportunity to visit the leaders of the six Socialist International member parties which were then in government in the English-speaking Caribbean: Prime Minister P.J. Patterson of Jamaica and the People's National Party; Prime Minister Owen Arthur of Barbados and the Barbados Labour Party; Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Unity Labour Party; Prime Minister Kenny Anthony of St. Lucia and the St. Lucia Labour Party; Prime Minister Denzil Douglas of

St. Kitts-Nevis and the St. Kitts-Nevis Labour Party; and Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit of Dominica and the Dominica Labour Party. Their parties' relationship with the International and how to further a coordinated approach of our political family to their region, and enhance their cooperation within the context of the Caribbean Community, Caricom, comprised our discussions.

In March the following year, P.J. Patterson retired from political life following a career in which he served as prime minister of his country for an unprecedented four consecutive terms of office. In the name of the International, I had the opportunity to express, to the People's National Party, our appreciation of his achievements and reiterated the high regard in which he was held within the family of the International, highlighting the vital role Jamaica played under his leadership.

Inclusive, fair and democratic governance

The Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean took its discussions to Lima, Peru, on 6-7 May 2005, to advance strategies for inclusive, fair and democratic global governance and to further define policies and proposals of the progressive forces in the region. The meeting was hosted by the Peruvian Aprista Party, PAP.

The Declaration of Lima, reflecting the discussions held, emphasised the importance of strengthening political party systems and reaffirmed that regional integration treaties must have social, cultural and political, as well as commercial, components to be viable and must guarantee protection for the least favoured sectors of society. It reaffirmed the need for the region to move towards economic and political integration in order to develop its potential in the framework of the global economy and politics, and to have a more substantive influence in both areas. The Committee also agreed a resolution enhancing the participation of youth in social democratic parties as part of a process of political renovation. We extended our best wishes and congratulation to José Miguel Insulza upon his election as Secretary General of the Organisation of American States, OAS, and vowed to continue contributing to strengthening and making this regional body more relevant in the fundamental issues facing the hemisphere.

Alan García, the leader of the PAP and Honorary President of the

International, went on to be elected President of Peru the following June. We were present with a large delegation to witness his success in the second round of voting and welcomed with great enthusiasm his return to the presidency.

Further advances made by progressive forces in Latin America

We were also very pleased with the victory in the presidential vote of Michelle Bachelet, the candidate of the Concertation of Parties for Democracy, at the elections in Chile held in December 2005 and January 2006. The International, which has a long relationship with Chile and the *Concertación*, was doubly pleased as Bachelet became the first woman to be elected President of Chile.

Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, a country under the leadership of President Tabaré Vázquez, was the venue of another meeting of the Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean on 3-4 April 2006. The Socialist Party of Uruguay, PSU, and the New Space party, NE, both of which are members of the SI and form part of the governing coalition, were our hosts. The meeting included the participation of leaders and representatives of 28 parties and organisations and was the subject of great media interest. The main themes of the discussions were the current changes in the political situation in the region and the development of common policies to address globalisation, and the challenges of regional and global governance, together with an analysis of national situations.

We underlined the priorities for the social democratic movement in Latin America and the Caribbean and the role of the International as a forum and instrument for reciprocal support, expression and cooperation of its members in the region. Special emphasis was placed on certain aspects of our work in the hemisphere, including the strengthening of representative and multiparty democracy, the defence and fostering of universal human rights and the rights of women, as well as the deepening of regional integration, in such a way that Latin America and the Caribbean could be on an equal footing with other actors in a globalised world.

Referring to the emerging plural left in the region, the Committee defined as the limits of its interaction with other forces the respect for pluralism and the rules of democracy, as well as the commitment to the most

neglected sectors of our societies. The role of the International as a global forum, the Committee said, made possible the voicing of a new type of internationalism for a different globalisation.

During the deliberations on a number of national situations in the region, particular attention was given to the forthcoming elections to be held in various countries in the following weeks and months, among them in Peru, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, Brazil and Venezuela, and in this regard the Committee adopted special resolutions on Peru and Mexico as well as a call for non-interference by diplomatic representatives in the electoral processes in Central America. In relation to Venezuela, the Committee agreed on a visit there in the near future by the Secretary General of the Socialist International and the Chair of the Committee, to hold a dialogue with its member parties, the government and other Venezuelan political actors on the organisation and preparations underway for presidential elections which were to be held in December.

The Report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Status of Puerto Rico, issued by the White House in December 2005, was also a matter for discussion by the Committee and a specific resolution on it was adopted. A resolution on the political participation of women and in support of an increase in their presence in areas of decision-making, as well as a declaration presented by the SI member parties in Argentina and Uruguay in favour of a rapid and definitive solution to the conflict resulting from the installation of cellulose processing plants on the Uruguay River, and a message of solidarity with the National Union for Hope, UNE, of Guatemala were also adopted by the Committee.

Elections in Mexico

As agreed at the Committee meeting in Montevideo, a delegation of the International observed the elections held in Mexico on 2 July 2006. Rubén Giustiniani and Oscar González, President and Secretary General of the Socialist Party, Argentina; Rafael Abinader, Rafael Lantigua and Peggy Cabral of the Dominican Revolutionary Party; Francesca D'Ulisse of the Democrats of the Left, Italy; Rubén Berríos, President of the Puerto Rican Independence Party; and, Frank Llewellyn, George Roberts and Daniel Reynolds of the Democratic Socialists of America, and myself were the members. Our work as observers was carried out from 29 June to 6 July,

and we held meetings with candidates and electoral officials, observed the vote and the count at various polling stations, and witnessed the post-election declarations.

We noted that the vote took place in a positive atmosphere of civic participation with a voter turnout of close to 60 per cent nationally and almost 70 per cent in the capital - and despite the complexities of the vote, which combined elections for President, Senate, Chamber of Deputies, and in some areas also for Governors, Mayors and State Legislative Assemblies, the Mexican electorate understood well the process and participated without significant incident.

The delegation members then followed the developments which unfolded in the hours after the polls closed, during which it transpired that contrary to previous expectations, no initial outcome of the presidential election could be announced at that time, given the closeness of the result. A process of adding up tally sheets of results as they came in from every polling station then continued throughout the night of 2 July and on Monday 3 July. On the morning of Tuesday 4 July, the PRD reported multiple inconsistencies and irregularities in the count and demanded a recount of all votes. On Wednesday 5 July, as part of the process, the count of the tally sheets from all the 300 electoral districts of the country was undertaken, finishing on Thursday 6 July with IFE declaring a difference of 0.58 per cent between the two leading candidates. Subsequently, the PRD and its coalition partners announced that they would challenge the declared outcome at the Electoral Tribunal, in accordance with Mexican Law.

In light of the situation, the SI delegation members considered it of the utmost importance that the Mexican people should have total certainty and confidence in the voting process, in its legality and its results, and that the Mexican electorate deserved a clear and definite winner. Furthermore, in view of the closeness of the presidential vote and the existence of serious reservations by one of the leading candidates about the announced figures and his demand for a recount, the SI observers strongly felt that complete transparency and full disclosure of information on the process were vital for political stability in the country and the ability of its democratic institutions to perform properly in this coming presidential period. The SI delegation also felt it was particularly crucial that the relevant authorities

did everything in their power to resolve this vital question openly and fairly, so securing the confidence of the Mexican citizens in their electoral system and institutions.

Nicaragua preparing for elections

Responding to an invitation by the Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN, the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean convened in Managua, Nicaragua, for a two-day meeting on 9-10 October 2006. Two main themes were at the centre of the Committee's discussions: 'Policies and Strategies for Deepening Democracy in the Region' and 'Overcoming the Social Deficit: Priorities of the International in Latin America and the Caribbean'. Preparations for the general elections to be held in Nicaragua on 5 November were also an issue of interest and attention for the members of the International participating in the discussions.

Speaking at the opening session of the meeting, the FSLN's leader and candidate for the Presidency, Daniel Ortega, said his government would place emphasis on peace, unity and reconciliation, an economic policy directed at promoting growth and more opportunities for the larger part of the country's population and a strong social strategy centred on health, education and employment for the country's poor.

Delegates exchanged views and experiences with regard to the issues included in the two main themes, and agreed a statement, highlighting the need for economic development with equity to overcome poverty. It also expressed concern at the indifference of multilateral bodies in the face of growing inequalities and the worsening living conditions of the peoples in the region, addressing the issue of the collapse of agrarian economies, which resulted in negative effects for the small agriculture owners and rural workers.

The agenda also included brief reports on the national situations of countries in the region, and specific resolutions were approved on Mexico and the Dominican Republic. The Committee also welcomed the joint initiative by the PRD of Panama and the PIP of Puerto Rico to hold a Latin American and Caribbean Congress on Independence for Puerto Rico, in Panama City on 18-19 November.

Council returns to Latin America

In this context of success at the polls for democratic, progressive forces, the International returned to Latin America for a meeting of its Council, in Santiago, Chile, on 6-7 November 2006, hosted by its member parties in that country. The *Concertación*, the alliance which brought President Michelle Bachelet to power, and to which the three member parties of the International in Chile belong, provides an experience and a valuable approach within the political scenario in Latin America, particularly with regard to achieving economic growth with solidarity and social protection.

The Council meeting was opened by the President of the Republic, with a speech in which she highlighted the work and contribution of the Socialist International to the emerging new global reality, where the full enjoyment of citizens' rights, the search for prosperity and social justice and international cooperation for development and peace are placed at the centre of the political agenda. In the opening session, the President of the Republic of Costa Rica and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Oscar Arias, also addressed the members of the Council, emphasising the role of progressive forces in three tasks he considered essential: putting a stop to the arms trade; halting the destruction of the environment; and ending poverty. Our President George Papandreou, underlined the global contribution of socialists to democracy and the defence of human rights, as had been demonstrated by the experiences of Chile and Greece. He reiterated the relevance of the International in a world which required new forms of global governance and new, coordinated, responses to the growing, common challenges.

Our debates focused on moving from national to global governance, as well as priorities for energy and climate change and promoting solutions to conflicts. We reiterated that the world was facing a growing number of critical issues that could only be addressed at the global level. Having long supported multilateral approaches in the conduct of world affairs, we advocated once again the strengthening of existing global institutions and the establishment of new ones where necessary. We expressed our understanding that these challenges required a progressive and humanistic response based on the belief in a common humanity that has been a pillar of our social democratic movement since it began.

“The Socialist International believes that rapid and effective responses to today’s global challenges require an interconnected set of global institutions with the active and balanced participation of the world’s nations. Through these institutions nations must make a determined effort to agree programmes and norms and means of enforcement - in other words, a deeper and more effective multilateralism that reflects the input of all the people of the world. The International reaffirms its commitment to working toward that goal in every possible way.

The International has always stood for democratic, just and equitable societies based on solidarity and belief in the public good. Today the task is to build an international framework of governance which will ensure that this vision and these fundamental commitments and objectives can be secured in these ever-changing times.” *Socialist International Council, Santiago, Chile, 6-7 November 2006*

Further electoral success in Guatemala

There was further success for the left at the polls when we greeted the election of Alvaro Colom, the candidate of the National Union for Hope, UNE, as President of Guatemala in November 2007. We were particularly satisfied as we had followed the process closely and repeatedly expressed our concern at the physical threats and intimidation against the candidate and representatives of the party.

Assuming the presidency on 14 January 2008, Colom highlighted his call for national unity in his inauguration speech and reiterated the need for dialogue and trust in Guatemala. Reaffirming his campaign promises, the President emphasised that the new administration would be based on social democracy and would have rural development and national security as its cornerstone.

In solidarity with democratic forces in Paraguay

The International met in Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, on 12 and 13 December 2007 in advance of the presidential elections, as its Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean convened to lend its support to the

efforts led by the coalition of democratic and progressive forces, the Patriotic Alliance for Change.

The meeting was opened by the Alliance's presidential candidate, Fernando Lugo, who shared with the participants the coalition's programme to bring about progressive change in the country, so ending 60 years of single party domination.

Giving an assessment of developments in the country, Paraguayan political leaders took the floor, among them Nils Candia of the Revolutionary Febrerista Party, PRF, and Carlos Filizzola of the 'País Solidario' Party, the SI member parties in the country, as well as Federico Franco, Authentic Radical Liberal Party, PLRA; Rafael Filizzola, Progressive Democratic Party, PDP; Gerardo Rolón Pose, Christian Democratic Party, PDC; Emilio Camacho, National Assembly Party, PEN; Víctor Bareiro, 'Frente Amplio' Party, PFA; Camilo Soares, Movement for Socialism Party, P-MAS, along with representatives of other forces involved in the coalition. The speakers outlined the process in the country which had led to the drawing up of a common progressive political platform, offering an alternative with Fernando Lugo as the Alliance's candidate for the presidency, and analysed the main tasks ahead of the coalition to win those elections.

In the following sessions, delegates exchanged views and shared their own national experiences on the importance of strengthening political institutions, culture and democratic practice in order to ensure progressive political agendas in the region. Participants underlined the need to overcome the social deficit through developing strategies which promote inclusion, equality and social protection, so guaranteeing better and fairer living conditions for all. Reflecting the outcome of the discussions, the Declaration of Asunción was adopted.

It was with immense pleasure and pride that I returned to Paraguay for the elections on 20 April this year. Fernando Lugo secured a convincing victory, with 41 per cent of the vote, obtaining a 10 point lead over the ruling Colorado party's candidate, Blanca Ovelar, and so introduced a new era in Paraguayan politics. Having suffered decades under an authoritarian regime, the country is left with a legacy of poor economic performance, poverty, corruption, weak and inefficient institutions, and deficient

infrastructure, and these will be the challenges facing Fernando Lugo when he takes office on 15 August this year.

Democratic challenges in Venezuela

We have accompanied the social democratic and other like-minded forces in Venezuela throughout these years, and have joined them in their concerted efforts to preserve democratic freedoms and to maintain a multi-party political system. In our regional discussions, we have expressed our solidarity with Venezuelan democratic forces and remained committed to support the stability of the democratic institutions there.

In December 2003, members of the opposition had collected signatures to trigger a referendum for a recall vote on President Hugo Chávez's rule, in line with provisions in the country's constitution. With 2.4 million signatures required, the Electoral Council accepted 1.9 million signatures, rejected 400,000 and ordered verification of more than 1 million. Venezuelan citizens were involved in this verification process on 28-30 May 2004 in over 2,700 centres. The Chair of the regional Committee, Rolando Araya, and I were in Venezuela as international observers to follow different aspects of the process of verification, along with observers from the Organisation of American States and the Carter Center. While in Caracas, we held meetings with the leaderships of the International's member parties in the country, and also met with leaders of the CTV trade union and of the Convergencia Democrática, the broad alliance of opposition parties, and other representatives of civil society organisations.

Venezuela's National Electoral Council then announced that the constitutional threshold of 20 per cent of the registered electorate for a referendum had been reached. The referendum was held on 15 August, with 59 per cent of the electorate voting not to recall President Hugo Chávez.

We continued in close contact with the forces striving for social democracy in Venezuela. In the legislative elections in December 2005, the opposition parties opted not to present candidates. In December 2006, we returned for the country's presidential polls as observers. Accepting defeat to Chávez, the opposition forces found a positive note in the share of the vote for their candidate, Manuel Rosales - 38 per cent of the vote was viewed as an

important step forward in the normalisation of political life in the country.

A constitutional referendum was called and took place in December 2007, and I had the opportunity, in contact with our member parties and other political forces working with the International, to monitor the vote. There were 69 amendments to the 350-article 1999 Constitution under question, among them abolishing presidential term limits, so allowing for indefinite re-election of the president; increasing the presidential term from six to seven years; ending the autonomy of the central bank; placing the president in charge of administering the country's international reserves; and, introducing changes to the country's administrative structures. The opposition "No" vote won under difficult conditions and gave Chávez the first major election defeat of his nine-year presidency. The vote was seen as an expression of the free will of the Venezuelan people, combined with a desire to return to a political system where balances and checks would emerge stronger.

A few weeks ago we stated our views concerning the decision by administrative authorities in Venezuela, without any due process or sentencing, to deny over 400 citizens the right to stand as candidates in the forthcoming regional and local elections on 23 November this year. This decision caused great disquiet and concern in Venezuelan and in international public opinion, as it is leading to the erosion of the right of this country's citizens to stand as candidates, as well as their right to elect a candidate of their choice, added to which was the fact that a large proportion of the people disqualified from standing were members of the democratic opposition.

In line with our ongoing commitment to actively work to remove all obstacles to electoral processes which impede or weaken democracy, we called for the respect of the legitimate rights of those who had been denied by those means to stand as candidates and for the immediate restoration of all their political and civic rights.

Dominican Republic

Our most recent activity in Latin America and the Caribbean was a Conference held on 17-18 April this year in Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic. We commemorated the contribution to the social

democratic movement and legacy of the prominent Dominican and Latin American political leader, José Francisco Peña Gómez, who passed away a decade ago this year, and discussed proposals and experiences of democratic socialism in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Conference began with the presentation of a video showing a collection of memories of Peña Gómez's life and work by a number of leaders from the global family of the Socialist International. In a special opening session, which I had the opportunity to address, Ramón Alburquerque, President of the host party, PRD, and a Vice-President of the International; Peggy Cabral, the widow of Peña Gómez, a Vice-President and International Secretary of the PRD; and, Miguel Vargas Maldonado, candidate of the PRD to the Presidency of the Republic in the May elections, spoke to the gathering attended by over 300 delegates.

Under the heading "José Francisco Peña Gómez: Ten Years On", the Conference discussions centred on: the legacy of Peña Gómez in Dominican politics; his influence on the development of social democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean and internationally; democratic socialist priorities for governments in the region today; the role of social democracy as an alternative force in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean; and lastly, democratic socialism as a global proposition for a changing world. Introductions to each theme were followed by lively and engaged question and answer sessions involving a broad number of participants and allowing for in-depth and wide-ranging discussions. The event ended with an overview of the debates and summary of conclusions.

I returned to the Dominican Republic with a strong delegation including comrades from Argentina, PS, Aruba, MEP, Curacao, MAN, Haiti, Fusion, and Venezuela, UNT, to observe the elections there in the middle of May, in which Miguel Vargas Maldonado secured 41 per cent of the vote to the incumbent president's 54 per cent. A recurring issue throughout the campaign and which emerged again strongly after the vote was the absence of equal opportunities among the candidates, as the presidential re-election in the country's constitution is not supported by the necessary legal framework to guarantee equal access to campaign resources, nor is the use of the state administration off limits in the campaign of the ruling party.

Asia and the Pacific

We have continued to step up our efforts to strengthen our presence in this immense and critical region of the world by furthering our cooperation with people and parties there. This period saw social democracy deepen its presence in Asia, and we took the opportunity to hold our first ever meetings in Mongolia and Cambodia. We have acknowledged the size of the task faced by social democrats in Asia and the Pacific, where the diversity of the region, with varying political, economic and social realities, presents us with the need to address the vastly differing scenarios in which the people there live.

We have continued to place emphasis on the need to further democracy, human rights and economic progress in Asia-Pacific, and as social democracy continues to grow in the region so too does the solidarity that binds our movement together.

Deepening contacts with social movements in Asia

The World Social Forum (WSF) was held in Mumbai, India, from 16 to 21 January 2004 and attracted the participation of more than one hundred thousand people. Among them were leaders and members of the International, participating in many of the seminars and discussions organised during those days. We organised a special meeting of members of the Socialist International, and leaders and representatives from SI members in India and other Asian countries, which took place on the first day of the Forum for an initial exchange of views which focused on the situation of social democracy in India, Asia and globally.

On the following day, we organised, as part of the WSF programme, along with the Socialist Front of India, a seminar on the theme "For a democratic, fair and responsible international governance". We later participated in a very well-attended discussion organised by the WSF on "Political Parties and Social Movements". SI participants also contributed to exchanges on United Nations reform and on the "Socialist Responsibility in Deepening Democracy Globally".

The role of the Socialist International in the World Social Forum, in line with our will to advance and deepen relations with social movements, was

welcomed by all and we undertook to take part in the fifth World Social Forum to be held once again in Porto Alegre in January 2005.

Dialogue with China

On 14-19 February 2004 a delegation of the International held talks in Beijing with the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The delegation, headed by our then President António Guterres and including leaders from Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and myself, met with Hu Jintao, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and President of the People's Republic of China and other ranking officials of the Party and the Government. Discussions focused on global governance and the reform of international institutions, future areas of cooperation and how to approach questions related to democracy and labour standards, among other issues.

China's voice will also be heard in the work of our Commission for a Sustainable World Society. Vice-Minister Zhang Zijuan took part in the Commission's discussions in Santiago, Chile, earlier this year and in line with our programme of activities, a seminar will be held in Beijing to focus on specific matters concerning climate change and related issues next year.

At our most recent meeting of the Asia-Pacific Committee this May, we noted with encouragement the talks initiated by Chinese officials with exiled Tibetan representatives, so that progress could be made towards a fair and lasting resolution to the issue of Tibet.

First SI gathering in Cambodia

Phnom Penh was the venue for a meeting of our Asia-Pacific Committee on 8-9 October 2004, with the participation of some 20 parties and organisations. Acting Prime Minister Sar Kheng and Minister Men Sam An contributed to the meeting's discussions on behalf of our hosts, the Cambodian People's Party.

The meeting in Phnom Penh was linked in all our minds with our intention to transmit a message of support and solidarity to the people of Cambodia who had endured the horrors of one of the world's most brutal regimes and who had managed to move forward with hope and in democracy in

the search for a better future. The Committee welcomed the outcome of the negotiations which had led to the establishment of the government, encouraged by the understanding reached between the main political actors in the country reflecting and underlining, in our view, the commitment and the democratic will of the Cambodian people. Equally, we were further encouraged by the decision of the Cambodian legislature to continue in the search for justice in regard to the past, in cooperation with the international community.

After learning of developments in Cambodia, participants discussed the social democratic perspective from Asia and the Pacific, with a broad exchange of views and experiences. The debates focused on peace and security, globalisation and governance, and on reports on developments in the various countries in the region. Following the deliberations, participants agreed a Declaration of Phnom Penh, in which the Committee underlined the direct link between the need to strengthen democratic governance and guarantee human rights, and prospects for achieving peace, security and an end to terrorism.

Meeting in Mongolia

As agreed in Cambodia, our next meeting of the Asia-Pacific Committee was held in Mongolia. The gathering, hosted by the SI-member the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, MPRP, and its leader and presidential candidate, Nambar Enkhbayar, took place on 13-14 May 2005 in Ulaanbaatar, the nation's capital city, and included the participation of delegates from countries in the region as well as from Europe. The meeting was held a week before the presidential elections, which Enkhbayar went on to win with 53 per cent of the vote, and followed the parliamentary elections in 2004 which had led to the forming of a Grand Coalition Government with the MPRP and the Motherland Democratic Coalition (MDC).

The Committee addressed the priorities of the International in the region – including democracy, peace and security – as well as the response to the tsunami disaster and situations in individual countries. Following detailed discussions, participants agreed a Declaration of Ulaanbaatar that reaffirmed our commitment to strengthening democracy in Asia and the

Pacific based on social democratic principles, and emphasised that the effort went hand in hand with the task of advancing the common agenda for peace and security. Particular concerns were expressed about developments and trends in Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Fiji, Bangladesh and other countries, as well as the continuing repression in Burma and the mounting tension with regard to North Korea.

The Committee reaffirmed the primary goal of deepening social democracy in the region, particularly through the strengthening of our political parties and organisations and heightened cooperation between them. We also urged redoubled efforts by the international community to promote peace in Sri Lanka and in Aceh in Indonesia, where continued threats and violence were hindering the distribution of disaster assistance.

The International has welcomed the achievements of the SI-member Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, MPRP, over the last years, and has appreciated the leading role of the party in the strengthening of the country's democratic institutions and ensuring Mongolia's progress. We wish them further success as they go to the polls just days before our Congress. I was able to respond to a fraternal invitation to go to Mongolia in July 2007, to see at first hand the commitment and work of the party to improve the lives of the Mongolian people and securing a society that stands for sustainable development, social justice and fairness for all its citizens.

Natural disasters devastating the region

The challenges faced by the nations of the Asia-Pacific region have been made more difficult during this period as people have been increasingly vulnerable to disastrous natural calamities. We have extended our solidarity to those affected in the immediate aftermath of destruction and raised awareness of the need to improve infrastructures to counter the long lasting damaging effects.

At our meeting in Mongolia, we underlined the need for greater cooperation among nations to strengthen the international community's response to these types of disasters, and that programmes for economic development and reconstruction had to be responsive to the poor and marginalised, who suffer the most devastating effects of natural disasters.

On this issue, the Committee noted that aid programmes were more effective and fair when carried out with transparency through the work of democratic institutions and in a safe, secure and lawful environment.

A matter of weeks ago, we expressed our heartfelt sympathy for the people of China following the devastating earthquake that struck the country and our recognition of the recovery efforts and the openness and role of the authorities and all those concerned in dealing with this enormous catastrophe. We also expressed, at our meeting in Islamabad, our dismay at the response by the Burmese government to the recent cyclone Nargis which occurred at the beginning of May this year.

Concern for breakdown of democracy in Thailand and Fiji

We remained alert to threats to democracy in the region and on 20 September 2006, we condemned the military coup carried out in Thailand and called for the immediate restoration of democratic institutions and respect for fundamental human rights, including the freedom of expression, association and assembly. We were particularly troubled by the announcement banning all political meetings and activities as well as the formation of new parties. The International called upon the international community to take a stand against the coup and unite in calling for the military forces to return the country to democratic rule.

We repeated our call at the meeting of the Asia-Pacific Committee in Nepal in February 2007 and noted with concern increases in political violence and human rights violations by the military and reaffirmed our position that economic and social problems could only be resolved through peaceful and democratic means.

We welcomed the return to elected government in Thailand last December as a positive development. However, we remained concerned about the authoritarian aspects of the prevailing Constitution and the increased polarisation in the country.

With regard to Fiji, the International has consistently supported efforts to uphold the respect for democratic rights and freedoms and overcome all forms of racial discrimination in the country. At our meeting in Nepal in February 2007 we deplored the coup that took place in the islands on 5

December 2006. The installation of an interim military government was, we stated, the latest blow to the prospects for a return to democracy there, and we fully supported the efforts of the Pacific Islands Forum to help towards a restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Fiji. We have continued our call for free, fair and transparent elections, condemning the ongoing restrictions on civil liberties and intimidation against the media there.

Protesting at the military regime in Burma

We have long voiced our concern for those suffering under the military regime in Burma and tirelessly called for the restoration of democracy and the unconditional release of the opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, and all other political prisoners, and acted to support the exiled National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) and the National League for Democracy.

When we met in Mongolia in May 2005 we reiterated our concerns and backed the statement by the United Nations Secretary General in support of reform in the country. We urged stepped up efforts by all in the international community to achieve democratic change and joined in the demand from the countries of the region that Burma should neither host nor chair the ASEAN the following year, while there continued to be no fundamental political changes to open the way for democracy.

Convening in Nepal in February 2007 we supported the resolution agreed by the UN General Assembly the previous December calling for the military government to end army operations that target civilians and systematically violate human rights in ethnic areas, and we urged the United Nations Security Council to renew efforts to agree a resolution in favour of democracy and human rights in Burma.

We continued to stand firm with the people of Burma and expressed our firm support and solidarity with the Burmese citizens who had taken to the streets nationwide in September 2007 to demonstrate their opposition to the ruling junta. The International saluted the Burmese people for their bravery and their dignified, peaceful resistance to the regime which continued to ignore their needs and perpetuated the political and economic hardship under which they lived.

We continue cooperating with the people and the democratic forces of Burma to overcome this difficult moment in their history and to put in place the institutions required to build a future of democracy, peace and prosperity which they so deserve. At our most recent meeting in the region, held in Pakistan at the end of May, we unanimously nominated Co-Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples' Party, Asif Ali Zardari, to visit Burma on behalf of the International to act in favour of the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, whose house arrest had been extended once again.

Concerns for South Asia

The International has been longstanding in its commitment to the peace process in Sri Lanka where the situation continues to be very troubling. Our Asia-Pacific Committee, meeting in Nepal in 2007, made a call for all possible efforts to be undertaken to bring the government and the insurgents back to the negotiating table. When we met in Pakistan in 2008, the 2002 brokered ceasefire had formally ended in January with the withdrawal of the government. We called again for international efforts to be intensified and expressed our hopes that the ceasefire could be re-established.

At our Nepal meeting in February 2007, we also highlighted the plight of neighbouring Bhutan. We remained concerned by the lack of democratisation and guarantees and respect for political rights and civil liberties in the country, and called for the release of all political prisoners currently being held there. We called for an end to the long held policy of discrimination in Bhutan against the country's ethnic Nepali population and other communities, thousands of whom had fled to Nepal, and urged the international community, particularly neighbouring nations, to actively promote a just resolution to the refugee crisis, including voluntary repatriation of refugees to Bhutan with full citizenship rights and human rights protection.

During this period, the International maintained its support for the peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue, fully backing initiatives for dialogue on this matter in past meetings of the Asia-Pacific Committee. We are now very encouraged by the exchanges which have again been undertaken between the governments of India and Pakistan, under the

leadership of our friends from the All Congress Party and our members from the Pakistan Peoples' Party.

We have remained deeply concerned about events in Bangladesh, including the detention of members of the Awami League and its leader Sheikh Hasina and representatives of other opposition groups. At our recent meeting in Islamabad we reaffirmed our call for an end to the state of emergency and for the freeing of those political leaders in prison. This, we said, was crucial for the holding of elections, announced for December this year, as the only way to ensure democratic governance in the country.

Democratic challenges in Central Asia

The International has long acknowledged that the people of Afghanistan require sustained support if they are to succeed in establishing a lasting democratic system and the rule of law. We supported the presidential elections, held under the most difficult circumstances in 2004, despite the limitations of security with regard to the vote. At the Asia-Pacific Committee's most recent meeting in Islamabad in May, the delegates emphasised the need to continue the international cooperation to ensure the safety and freedom of its citizens, especially women, and to secure peace and democracy in that country, which has presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for 2009.

We have remained concerned by the continuing challenges to democracy in Kazakhstan during this period. Following the parliamentary elections held in September 2004 which did not meet democratic standards, we voiced clearly our critical opinion and we persisted in our calls to the government to remove all restrictions on political activity and ensure freedom of the press in the presidential vote in 2005. Those polls were also found to be lacking in the necessary conditions for a free and fair vote and we have in the last two years advanced in our working relations with those in the political life of the country standing up for common democratic values. Equally in Kyrgyzstan, we have developed further our relations with those upholding political rights and civil liberties.

Struggle for democracy in Pacific islands

The International has discussed on several occasions the particular

challenges faced by small island states with regard to global warming, building democratic institutions, achieving and maintaining self-determination and attaining economic stability.

In line with that, the Asia-Pacific Committee has recognised the important role of democracies in the region, on more than one occasion, through their increased cooperation to stabilise state institutions under pressure, reduce ethnic tensions, and face social and economic demands that have threatened political stability. That was the case with the Solomon Islands in 2004, Papua New Guinea in April 2006 and Tonga in November 2006.

More election successes

A Labor government was elected at the federal polls in Australia in November 2007, after four terms of a Liberal/National coalition administration. Kevin Rudd, leader of SI-member Australian Labor Party (ALP), who had been elected head of the party the previous December, became the first Labor prime minister in 11 years. We celebrated this victory as a demonstration of the will of the Australian people for positive change to make a difference at home and abroad.

On 13 February 2008, the first official business of the new parliament under Rudd's premiership was a historic motion for a formal apology by the Australian Parliament to the Indigenous Peoples of Australia, which was unanimously adopted. We welcomed this milestone in Australian politics, one which put into practice the very values and principles we share throughout our organisation of respect for minority and indigenous rights, the promotion of tolerance and empowerment of vulnerable sectors of society.

In Malaysia, we were encouraged by the electoral advances of SI-member the Democratic Action Party in the elections in March this year, in which the party recorded its best ever performance, winning 28 parliamentary seats out of 47 seats it contested, and over 70 seats out of 102 state seats it stood for. The party hailed the vote as "an endorsement for the agenda of change to establish a healthy functioning democracy" and a historic breakthrough hopefully signalling the end of one-party rule in Malaysia. In previous meetings of the International during this period, we had raised our voice to protest at the suspension of the DAP president from parliament, as well as other moves against our members there.

Strengthening democracy in Ukraine

Our support for those working to deepen democracy and strengthen democratic institutions throughout the countries of the CIS has continued. An example of this is found in the case of Ukraine. In response to the gross irregularities during the run-off presidential election in November 2004, we made a strong appeal for the defence of democratic rights for the people of Ukraine. Their determined efforts resulted in a re-run of the second round of the presidential elections on 26 December that year and I was able to be in Kiev during the final days of the campaign and on the day of the vote. I met with the President of the Ukraine Central Elections Commission; the President of the Ukrainian parliament; and President-elect Viktor Yushchenko. On the evening of 27 December, following his victory, on behalf of the International I addressed a public gathering of tens of thousands of his supporters in the city's Independence Square.

A year on and we convened the SI Committee for the CIS and the Caucasus in Kiev, on 16-17 December 2005. The well attended gathering was hosted by the Socialist Party of Ukraine, SPU, and the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine, SDPU. Leaders and representatives from all of the SI member parties within the CIS and the Caucasus region attended, as well as delegates from other SI member parties belonging to the Committee from other parts of Europe.

Participants assessed the situation of social democracy in the region, including the positive developments in Ukraine and in Armenia where social democrats also were in government. Discussions centred as well on the deficit of democracy, particularly in Azerbaijan and Belarus. The Committee strongly condemned the use of violence in Azerbaijan against demonstrators protesting the extensive fraud that occurred during the elections there in November, and reaffirmed our support for our member party, the Social Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, and the political and civic forces in the country continuing to struggle for democracy and respect for human rights.

Building relations with Russia

On 19-20 May 2006 we organised a meeting of our Committee for the CIS and the Caucasus in Moscow. The meeting marked a new stage with a new agenda for relations between the International and Russia, affording us an opportunity to strengthen ties with social democratic and other progressive forces in the country.

From the host country, numerous guests from the State Duma, political organisations and the trade union movement were joined by representatives of SI member parties and guests from CIS countries and the Caucasus and from member parties in other countries of Europe.

Russian participants stressed the need to implement programmes which promoted social justice and protected human and labour rights in a system they believed did not value these ideals. Russian society and its social movements needed a social democratic voice which would speak for the many who had been left behind, while the powerful had been favoured mainly at their expense, and equally, that it was necessary, from the opposition, to develop a political alternative to the dominance of the single political force today sustaining power.

Focus on Belarus

At this meeting, we took the initiative to bring together a group of courageous and committed Belarusians from Minsk, including from the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Narodnaya Hramada) represented by a delegation headed by its Vice-Chair Oksana Bernatskaya; the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Hramada), whose delegation included Irina Kazulina; the Belarusian Social Democratic Party, represented by its leader and former President of the Republic of Belarus, Stanislav Shushkevich; the Belarusian Labour Party, represented by its leader, Aliaksandr Bukhvosta; and from the Belarusian Communist Party, represented by its leader Siarhey Kaliakin. We, together with them, reiterated our condemnation of the repression in their country and repeated our demand for all political prisoners to be freed. On that occasion, a special moment for us all, we manifested our conviction that these parties and those leaders were the pillar upon which democracy and freedom would be gained if they strengthened their efforts to form a united, democratic and common force.

Priorities for the Mediterranean region

Representatives of our member parties from the Mediterranean met in Valencia, Spain, on 24-25 October 2005 for a meeting of our regional Committee, hosted by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE. The critical place the Mediterranean held in the world was underlined during the opening by Joan Ignasi Pla, Secretary General of the Socialist Party in Valencia; Leire Pajín, State Secretary for International Cooperation; Bernardino León, State Secretary for International Affairs; and Trinidad Jimenez, then Chair of the SI Mediterranean Committee, on behalf of our hosts.

As the discussions moved forward delegates reiterated the need to give renewed energy to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership ten years on from the Barcelona Conference, and reaffirmed the commitment of the International to advancing peace, security, trade, cooperation and cultural agreements throughout the region. Following debates on the range of issues affecting the Mediterranean, participants agreed a Declaration emphasising the key challenges for social democracy as a necessary foundation for peacefully resolving conflicts, and the need to redouble efforts to ensure respect for human rights and freedoms, promote gender equality and abolish the death penalty. The expansion and revitalisation of democratic politics as a way to rein in and counter fundamentalism, ultra-nationalism and the use of terrorist actions was underlined as well.

In the Valencia Declaration the SI Mediterranean Committee also affirmed its full support for the Alliance of Civilisations, an initiative of Prime Minister Zapatero, which has great resonance in the region and connects directly to the principles and objectives of the Barcelona Process.

Politics and religion in the Mediterranean

It was in Naples, Italy, hosted by our member parties there, that our Committee turned to the issues of politics and religion, as well as economic cooperation within the region when it gathered on 6-7 May 2007, with the new Chair Elena Valenciano, PSOE International Secretary.

The relevance of the relation between politics and religion became evident in the course of the many contributions by different representatives from

various cultural backgrounds and sensitivities. All underlined the need to deepen understanding between cultures, the respect for religion, the importance of advancing and consolidating democratic achievements, the crucial role of tolerance, and of ensuring greater inclusion. The need to preserve the respective dimensions of religion and of the state, was restated, each in their own right, as a guarantee for freedom.

The priorities ahead for economic cooperation in the region as set out in the Barcelona Declaration were then reviewed. Such cooperation was central, we said, to our agenda to overcome economic and social inequalities which had become more acute and accentuated by the process of globalisation. The shared responsibility of the countries on both shores of the Mediterranean to fight poverty, unemployment and to open up opportunities for all was emphasised, as was the importance of persevering in broadening economic cooperation, trade, initiatives for integration and the legal framework to encourage new investments.

Way forward for the Mediterranean region

When colleagues from the Mediterranean met in Beirut at the most recent meeting of the Committee in April this year, they first addressed the pressing concerns in Lebanon, and later examined other issues facing the Mediterranean, such as “Which way forward for the Mediterranean region? Building on the Barcelona Process for greater integration and cooperation” and “Promoting Peace and Democracy in the Mediterranean Basin: Deepening intercultural understanding within and between nations”.

Participants discussed the proposed Union for the Mediterranean, which in their view should be a reinforcement of the Barcelona Process, with the participation of all the EU member states and the non-EU Mediterranean coastal states. The new European Neighbourhood Policy should maintain a multilateral approach in the relationship between the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, we said, and that democracy and peace would be at the centre of this process. Issues relating to the region’s particular vulnerability to climate change and the initiatives taken to date, such as the Mediterranean Hot Spot Investment Programme and the Horizon 2020 initiative were discussed. Migration and the fight against illegal immigration and related mafias were also addressed.

Local Authorities

Building and strengthening networks of cooperation between social democrats at the local level is at the centre of the work of our Committee on Local Authorities. That was also the subject when nearly forty mayors, guests and representatives of SI member parties from different regions participated in a meeting of the Committee in the city of Mons, on 16-17 July 2004. The Mayor of the city, Elio Di Rupo, leader of the Socialist Party, PS, leads the work of the Committee.

Discussions underlined the importance of greater coordination between social democratic local authorities on a number of global and regional issues, from protection of the environment to working for peace in the Middle East, as well as on specific concerns such as the network to “Free Ingrid Betancourt”, the former Colombian presidential candidate still held hostage in that country. The Committee heard contributions from the Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments, the Union of Socialist Local and Regional Representatives of Europe and the Socialist Group of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union.

As part of our series of events held in the framework of the 5th World Social Forum which took place in Porto Alegre from 26 to 31 January 2005, the SI Committee on Local Authorities gathered on 26 January at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Our debates centred on the question of local alternatives to globalisation and the role of local and municipal governments.

In conjunction with this event, we took part in a number of activities. A group from the International held discussions regarding the WSF and other issues with the leadership of the PT at a common working meeting. A discussion, under the heading: “International Action against Hunger and Poverty: The Search for New Financing Mechanisms for Development” was organised to lend support to the efforts of President Lula on this subject. We also co-hosted a debate with the PT on reform of the United Nations. At the Forum itself, SI delegates contributed to many of the debates held by civil society organisations, trade unions and other non-governmental groups. SI leaders and representatives also attended the presentation to the Forum by President Lula of the “Global Call for Action

against Poverty.” In addition, parliamentarians from SI member parties participated in the 5th World Parliamentary Forum during 29 and 30 January.

The Committee gathered again in Budapest on 16-17 January 2006 where it continued its work on initiatives to further the networks among social democrats at a local and regional level, sharing experiences with our Hungarian hosts. Among other issues touched upon included delivering efficient services of quality to local citizens. Themes agreed for future initiatives included sustainable development at the local level, humanising cities, strengthening relations between local and provincial governments and deepening participatory democracy in municipalities.

Reforming international institutions

A principal focus of the International during this period has continued to be the reform of key global institutions, part of our longstanding agenda to build a global framework that works to secure inclusion, rights, fairness, peace and sustainable development.

“Concerns with regard to security, the environment and the unacceptable increase in poverty, and the growing realisation in the world that we need to act collectively in response, have given a renewed sense of urgency to the task of reforming the United Nations and opening the way to a new global governance. At the same time, the current threats to peace and the health of the planet are interconnected with the enormous challenges that the world must boldly and effectively address with regard to sustainable development, democratisation and human rights.” *Statement of the Socialist International at the United Nations 2005 World Summit, 14 September 2005*

Since its founding the United Nations has been not only a symbol of the global yearning for peace, it has provided the principal framework for the international cooperation needed to ensure human progress in an increasingly complex and interdependent world. However to successfully meet the challenges of the 21st Century, the International has been calling on all its members to work together to revitalise and strengthen this indispensable institution and we have continued to add our contribution

on how best to achieve this. As was the case with the report we issued on the reform of the United Nations at our Council in May 2005.

In September that year, on the eve of the United Nations World Summit, some Heads of State and Government from the global social democratic family took part in informal discussions. They reached a consensus that there was an opportunity to move forward global governance based on democratic interaction between nations and a new multilateralism. The key would be to provide all states with the opportunity of participating directly in the process, and to guarantee the application of democratic principles within the United Nations as well as other international organisations at both the global and regional levels. Meaningful reform of the United Nations and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, they affirmed, could be accomplished. Success required the political will, momentum and steadfastness of all involved.

The same shortcomings with regard to democratic representation is present, in the view of our family, in the International Financial Institutions, given that inequalities in development and economic instability are among the main causes of insecurity in the world, a preventive approach to economic security on an international scale is necessary.

In our paper, adopted at our Council in May 2005, 'Financial and Economic Issues, The Bretton Woods Institutions and Global Economic Governance', we highlighted key questions that needed to be addressed and which would require progressive national leadership to be effective. Among them, how to link political and economic governance; how to mobilise global resources for cooperation and development aid; how to review "policy conditionalities" attached to foreign aid and credits; and how to deal with excessive capital market volatility and large public debt burdens affecting many emerging market economies.

With regard to global trade, there remains the urgent need for an effective system of arbitration if its great potential is to be realised, we said. The task remains to strengthen the political will to establish a global system of trade in goods and services free in the sense that all can participate and all can derive the benefits, while also defending the needs and interests of working people in the advanced economies. On 12 December 2005, the eve

of the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation, representatives of the International coming from the different regions of the world met in Hong Kong to review the priorities of the social democratic movement in relation to the issues to be addressed by the WTO. The Director-General of the WTO, Pascal Lamy, was specially invited to the meeting and engaged in an open exchange of views with the participants that focused on opening trade within a multilateral, rules-based system to achieve the objectives of the Doha Development Agenda. At the meeting it was underlined that trade as a development tool should be oriented towards fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals and, above all, to reducing and eliminating poverty. In this sense, the SI representatives welcomed the newly found voice and assertiveness of developing countries in the negotiations and recognised that the particular needs of the least developed countries require special attention.

A social democratic approach to global trade obviously links trade with workers' rights and labour standards. At our Council in Tel Aviv and Ramallah in May 2005, we adopted a paper on "Trade and social rights" in which our position was clear that the core labour standards, as defined by the International Labour Organisation, could and should be applied globally and this could happen without affecting in any negative way any comparative advantage of any country. Furthermore that doing so would be good for trade and development.

We have long supported multilateralism in the conduct of world affairs, but the strengthening of existing global institutions and the establishment of new ones where necessary, for the Socialist International is a priority, and our Commission for a Sustainable World Society will bring a new sense of urgency to the question which is beyond individual nations' capabilities and requires a progressive and humane response.

Universal human rights

The cause of human rights is a fundamental pillar of the global social democratic movement and an integral part of our work. In March 2006, the International welcomed the decision of the United Nations General Assembly to create a UN Human Rights Council, and the nearly unanimous support of UN members for the new body.

We strongly believed that the establishment of the UN Human Rights Council with a clear mandate to address human rights conditions on a regular basis was a major step forward, and that it provided a great opportunity to enhance the ability of the United Nations and the entire *international community to promote and protect human rights*. The International, having always upheld the highest human rights standards, continues to actively defend them wherever they are under threat, as is reflected in all that we do.

On 10 December this year the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be sixty years old and we join in commemorating and celebrating this remarkable achievement.

Final remarks

Our member parties are the lifeblood of a global democratic model based on liberty, social justice and equality of rights and opportunities, which is behind the ideals of this International. In these times of global politics and interdependence, the very existence of our organisation matters more, more to our members, more to the people that we represent.

At our XXIII Congress here in Athens we will reflect, discuss and agree ways that make a difference – to developing countries deserving a more level economic playing field, to children in a rural village longing to go to school, to migrants in cities far from home seeking respect and a living wage, to citizens on every continent yearning to live and participate in more equitable, sustainable societies.

Through social democracy people's voices can be heard, their contributions to a better future made and their courage in the face of the most difficult circumstances recognised. And it is also through the activities of our International in different parts of the world that we strive to match their courage with ever greater levels of solidarity, political effort and accomplishment.

IN MEMORIAM

Kalevi Sorsa sadly passed away in January 2004. Prime Minister of Finland four times in the 1970s and 1980s, Sorsa was Finland's longest serving premier. Leader of the Social Democratic Party of Finland, he worked in the Socialist International on peace, security and disarmament issues, chairing our Committees on these questions for many years.

In June 2004, we mourned the sad loss and honoured the memory of our dear friend and comrade **Leonel Brizola**, leader of the Democratic Labour Party, PDT. An Honorary President of the Socialist International at the time of his death, Brizola had been a prominent and popular figure in Brazilian politics over the last fifty years, most notably during his two terms as Governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

Sadly in November 2004, the Palestinian people lost their President **Yasser Arafat**, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Chairman of Fatah, who had led their aspirations for the establishment of a Palestinian state for nearly four decades. Arafat was always in his work with the Socialist International a partner for dialogue, a leader who dealt with the realities and with the challenges he faced.

We learnt of the sudden passing of **Alejandro Montesino**, of the Radical Social Democratic Party, PRSD, of Chile, in December the same year. Warm and witty, Montesino dedicated his life to fighting for social justice and the defence of human rights and, like many other Chileans of his generation, he was tireless in his efforts to restore democracy in his country.

We were deeply moved by the passing of **Hans-Jürgen Wischnewski**, a leading figure in the Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD, in February 2005. He played an integral role in our work, particularly on the issues of resolving conflicts and securing peace. Serving as Chair of our Middle East Committee for many years, Wischnewski actively took part in numerous missions and initiatives of the International.

We lost **Robin Cook** from our family suddenly in August 2005. Cook entered the House of Commons in 1974 and earned a reputation as a brilliant parliamentary debater. The British Labour government's Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from 1997 to 2001, Cook was President of the Party of European Socialists from May 2001 to April 2004.

Madhu Dandavate, one of India's most regarded leaders, lost a four year battle with a serious illness in November 2005. Dandavate entered into politics in 1970, going on to win his constituency seat five times. He was a minister in the socialist coalition government in the late '70s and early '80s. Together with his wife, Pramila, he was a frequent participant at activities of the International.

Peter Cook, Australian Labor Party Senator from 1983 to 2005, passed away in December 2005. Cook held various ministerial posts in the Hawke and Keating governments, taking the briefs of industrial relations, trade, and science and technology. Industrious and caring to the end, his last months were spent leading an inquiry into cancer treatment from the patient's point of view.

The loss of Professor **Joseph Ki-Zerbo** in December 2006 was a moment of great sadness for all who knew this eminent socialist who worked enthusiastically for the African cause. Ki-Zerbo, a leader of the SI member party in Burkina Faso, was highly respected in the social democratic family as a pioneer for an Africa which would work in a spirit of integration and reconciliation, without ever forgetting the traditional values of the continent.

As a leading opposition figure in modern Croatia and later at the helm of his country, **Ivica Racan**, who lost his life to cancer in April 2007, will be remembered for his contribution and dedication to his country, to Europe and to social democracy. Remaining firm in his belief in a social democratic alternative for Croatia at a crucial and troubled time, he represented the calm and reasonable voice of his nation.

With deep sorrow we learnt of the loss of **Erdal İnönü**, the greatly respected Turkish social democratic leader, in October 2007. Son of the second President of Turkey who was close to Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, İnönü also pursued a political career and, as the leader of the Social Democratic People's Party, served as Deputy Prime Minister from 1991-1993 and as Foreign Minister.

Benazir Bhutto, the first women elected Prime Minister of a Muslim state from 1988 to 1990 and 1993 to 1996, led the Pakistan Peoples' Party for over twenty years. A committed, dedicated figure permanently at the forefront of the struggle for democracy, stability and peace in Pakistan and in that region of the world, Bhutto was brutally taken in December 2007 on her return to her country.

Our former Secretary General from 1969 to 1976, **Hans Janitschek**, unexpectedly passed away in February 2008. An Austrian national and member of the Social Democratic Party, SPOe, Janitschek served the International with energy, enthusiasm and conviction. He went on to work at the United Nations headquarters in New York in different capacities.

Former Prime Minister of Egypt, **Mustafa Khalil**, a former Vice-President of the Socialist International, sadly passed away in June this year. Khalil, a leading member of the National Democratic Party, served his country for over 50 years, taking an active part in working for peace. He won international recognition as one of the architects of the 1979 Camp David peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

APPENDIX

Activities of the International during the Inter-Congress period and participation at other related events

XXII CONGRESS OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, São Paulo, Brazil | 27-29 October 2003 - The Return of Politics: For just and responsible global governance - For globalisation governed by the people

SI presence at the launch of the Geneva Accord | 01 December 2003

Socialist International meetings at the 4th World Social Forum, Mumbai, India | 16-21 January 2004

SI presence at Australian Labor Party National Conference | 29-31 January 2004

Meeting of the Presidium of the Socialist International | 06 February 2004

COUNCIL OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, Madrid, Spain | 07-08 February 2004 - How do we build upon the social democratic vision for a more secure world?

Socialist International talks with Chinese leadership | 14-19 February 2004

SI presence at Congress of the International Union of Socialist Youth, Budapest, Hungary | 27-29 February 2004

SI participation in meeting of Organisation of American States, Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, OAS/UPD, Washington | 10 March 2004

SI delegation meetings with EU officials on the Middle East, Brussels | 21 March 2004

Socialist International talks on peace in the Middle East | 22-25 March 2004

Meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee, Limassol, Cyprus | 26-27 March 2004

SI participation in the Congress of Democrats from the Islamic World, co-sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme, Istanbul, Turkey | 13-14 April 2004

Meeting of SI parliamentarians, 110th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Mexico City | 21 April 2004

SI presence at Congress of Party of European Socialists, Brussels | 24 April 2004

SI observation mission to elections in Panama | 02 May 2004

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, Santa Marta, Colombia | 07-08 May 2004

Executive meeting of the Socialist International, Budapest | 14 May 2004

SI mission supporting democracy and human rights in Haiti | 24-25 May 2004

SI observation mission to signature verification process for recall referendum, Venezuela | 29 May - 04 June 2004

SI presence at Peruvian Aprista Party Congress | 05-07 June 2004

Meeting of the SI Committee on Migrations, Zacatecas, Mexico | 21 June 2004

Meeting of the SI Committee on Peace, Democracy and Human Rights, Istanbul, Turkey | 25-26 June 2004

SI presence at Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE, Congress | 02-04 July 2004

Meeting of the SI Africa Committee, Dakar, Senegal | 12-13 July 2004

Meeting of the SI Committee on Local Authorities, Mons, Belgium | 16-17 July 2004

SI presence at Democratic National Convention, Boston, USA |
26-29 July 2004

SI presence at inauguration of President Martin Torrijos, Panama |
01 September 2004

Executive meeting of the Socialist International, Athens, Greece |
18 September 2004

Meeting of SI parliamentarians, 111th Inter-Parliamentary Union
Assembly, Geneva | 27 September 2004

SI presence at British Labour Party Conference, Brighton |
28-29 September 2004

Meeting of the SI Asia-Pacific Committee, Phnom Penh, Cambodia |
08-09 October 2004

SI presence at FES Conference on Social Democratic Parties and
Movements in East and South East Asia, Manila, Philippines |
14 October 2004

Meeting of the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the
Environment, Berlin, Germany | 15-16 October 2004

SI participation in Organisation of American States seminar, Georgetown
University, Washington DC | 21-22 October 2004

SI talks with Palestinian leaders, Ramallah | 01-02 November 2004

Meeting of the SI Middle East Committee, Jerusalem and Jericho |
02-03 November 2004

Meeting of the SI Finance and Administration Committee, Johannesburg,
South Africa | 14 November 2004

Meeting of the SI Ethics Committee, Johannesburg, South Africa |
14 November 2004

Executive meeting of the Socialist International, Johannesburg, South Africa | 14 November 2004

Meeting of the Presidium of the Socialist International, Johannesburg, South Africa | 14 November 2004

COUNCIL OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, Johannesburg, South Africa | 15-16 November 2004 - The Progressive Agenda: The priorities for our movement today

SI participation in PT Conference of Mayors, Brasilia, Brazil | 29 November 2004

SI participation in International Union of Socialist Youth World Council, Santiago, Chile | 03-05 December 2004

SI participation in International Confederation Free Trade Unions World Congress, Miyazaki, Japan | 08-10 December 2004

SI observation of presidential elections run-off, Kiev, Ukraine | 24-27 December 2004

SI observer delegation to Palestinian presidential elections | 06-10 January 2005

Meeting of the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment, Geneva | 14 January 2005

Meeting of the SI Latin America and Caribbean Committee, Port-au-Prince, Haiti | 21-22 January 2005

Meeting of the SI Committee on Local Authorities and SI activities at the 5th World Social Forum, Porto Alegre | 26-31 January 2005

SI presence at Democrats of the Left, DS, Congress, Rome, Italy | 03-05 February 2005

SI Secretary General meetings with heads of government in the Caribbean | 07-14 February 2005

SI participation at Conference on security in Russia with the SDPR,
Rostov, Russian Federation | 19 February 2005

SI presence at Democratic Party Convention, Belgrade, Serbia |
27 February 2005

SI presence at inauguration of President Tabare Vasquez, Uruguay |
01 March 2005

SI presence at Panhellenic Socialist Movement, Pasok, Congress, Athens
| 03-05 March 2005

SI presence at PT Anniversary event, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil |
19-20 March 2005

Meeting of SI parliamentarians, 112th Inter-Parliamentary Union
Assembly, Manila, Philippines | 02 April 2005

Meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee, Beiteddine, Lebanon |
04 April 2005

SI participation in US AID Workshop on political party programmes,
Washington DC | 06 April 2005

Meeting of the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the
Environment, United Nations Office at Nairobi | 08-09 April 2005

Meeting at the Organisation of American States, OAS, Washington DC |
11 April 2005

Meetings in Poland with the President of the Republic, government
members and SI parties | 12-14 April 2005

SI participation in unifying Congress to form Union of Haitian Social
Democrats, Port-au-Prince, Haiti | 22-23 April 2005

SI participation in Community of Democracies meeting, Santiago, Chile
| 27 April 2005

SI participation at Assembly of Organisation of American States, OAS,
Washington DC | 02 May 2005

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, Lima,
Peru | 06-07 May 2005

Meeting of the SI Middle East Committee, London, Great Britain |
09 May 2005

Meeting of the SI Asia Pacific Committee, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia |
13-14 May 2005

Meeting of the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the
Environment, Tel Aviv | 22 May 2005

Meeting of the SI Finance and Administration Committee, Tel Aviv |
22 May 2005

Meeting of the SI Ethics Committee, Tel Aviv | 22 May 2005

Meeting of the Presidium of the Socialist International, Tel Aviv |
22 May 2005

COUNCIL OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, Tel Aviv and
Ramallah | 23-24 May 2005 - For a Middle East in peace

SI presence at Social Democratic Party of Finland Congress |
09 June 2005

SI presence at Union of Popular Socialist Forces, USFP, Congress,
Casablanca | 10-11 June 2005

Meeting of the Presidium of the Socialist International, Madrid, Spain |
13 June 2005

SI observation mission to Lebanese elections | May and June 2005

SI presence at Party of European Socialist Council, Vienna |
24-25 June 2005

SI participation in international Symposium, Crete, Greece |
10-11 July 2005

SI presence at Dominican Revolutionary Party, PRD, Congress,
Santo Domingo | 16 July 2005

SI represented at UN NGO Conference, New York |
07-09 September 2005

SI presence at Global Progressive Forum, Milan, Italy |
09-10 September 2005

Meeting of SI Heads of State and Government at United Nations World
Summit | 15 September 2005

SI presence at British Labour Party Conference, Brighton |
27-29 September 2005

Meeting of SI parliamentarians, 113th Inter-Parliamentary Union
Assembly, Geneva | 17 October 2005

Meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee, Valencia, Spain |
24-25 October 2005

Meeting of the SI Working Group on the Kurdish Question, London |
09 November 2005

SI presence at Social Democratic Party, SPD, Congress, Karlsruhe,
Germany | 14-16 November 2005

SI presence at Socialist Party Congress, PS, France |
18-20 November 2005

Meetings in Pristina with government and party leaders |
27-28 November 2005

SI Consultations on the future of Kosovo, Sofia, Bulgaria |
30 November 2005

Meeting of the SI Finance and Administration Committee, Brussels,
Belgium | 09 December 2005

Socialist International meeting on eve of WTO Conference, Hong Kong |
12 December 2005

Meeting of the SI Committee for the CIS and the Caucasus, Kiev, Ukraine
| 16-17 December 2005

SI observer delegation to Chilean presidential elections |
15 January 2006

Meeting of the SI Committee on Local Authorities, Budapest, Hungary |
16-17 January 2006

Socialist International roundtables, 6th World Social Forum, Bamako, Mali
| 21 January 2006

SI observer delegation to the Palestinian Legislative Elections |
23-26 January 2006

Meeting of the SI Finance and Administration Committee, Athens,
Greece | 29 January 2006

Meeting of the SI Ethics Committee, Athens, Greece |
29 January 2006

COUNCIL OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, Athens, Greece |
30-31 January 2006 - Peace, Democracy, Solidarity: among peoples, across
cultures

SI observer delegation to the Haitian elections | 06-08 February 2006

Meetings with SI member party in San Marino | 13-14 February 2006

SI presence at Democratic Party Congress, Belgrade, Serbia |
18-19 February 2006

SI presence at inauguration of President Michelle Bachelet, Chile |
11 March 2006

Meeting of the SI Committee on Migrations, Casablanca, Morocco |
27-28 March 2006

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean,
Montevideo, Uruguay | 03-04 April 2006

SI presence at Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, SDUM,
Anniversary Congress, Skopje | 19-20 April 2006

Meeting of the SI Africa Committee, Niamey, Niger | 24-25 April 2006

SI presence at Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT, National Meeting,
Sao Paulo, Brazil | 28-30 April 2006

SI presence at inauguration of President Oscar Arias, Costa Rica |
08 May 2006

SI observer delegation to Dominican Republic parliamentary elections |
15-17 May 2006

Meeting of the SI Committee for the CIS and the Caucasus, Moscow,
Russia | 19-20 May 2006

Meeting of the SI Working Group on the Kurdish Question, Northern
Iraq | 28-30 May 2006

SI observer delegation to Peruvian presidential elections (second round)
| 01-05 June 2006

Meeting with SI Middle East Committee Co-Chairs, London |
08 June 2006

SI presence at SAMAK Congress, Finland | 11-13 June 2006

Meetings of SI President and Secretary General with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani, Tehran, Iran | 26 June 2006

Meetings of SI President and Secretary General with Israeli Minister of Defence, Amir Peretz and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tzipi Livni; and Yossi Beilin, leader of the Meretz-Yachad Party, Tel Aviv | 27 June 2006

Meeting with SI Middle East Committee Co-Chairs and representatives of Israeli and Palestinian member parties, Geneva | 28 June 2006

SI observer delegation to the Mexican elections | 29 June-06 July 2006

Meeting of the Presidium of the Socialist International, Samos, Greece | 15 July 2006

SI presence at international Symposium, Samos, Greece | 17 July 2006

SI participation at the International Union of Socialist Youth World Festival, Alicante, Spain | 18-19 July 2006

Meeting of the SI Committee on Migrations, Chisinau, Moldova | 21-22 July 2006

SI presence at inauguration of President Alan Garcia, Peru | 28 July 2006

Meetings in Egypt with NDP leadership and Secretary General of the Arab League | 29-31 August 2006

SI presence at Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE, Madrid | 15-17 September 2006

SI presence at National Democratic Party, NDP, Congress, Cairo, Egypt | 19 September 2006

SI presence at Social Democratic Party, SDP, Congress, Aalborg, Denmark | 23 September 2006

SI participation in meeting of socialist mayors in Brussels |
24 September 2006

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and Caribbean,
Managua, Nicaragua | 09-10 October 2006

Meeting of the SI Africa Committee, Praia, Cape Verde |
20-21 October 2006

Meeting of the SI Committee on Migrations, Rhodes, Greece, and
Marmaris, Turkey | 24-25 October 2006

Meeting of the SI Ethics Committee, Santiago, Chile | 05 November 2006

Meeting of the SI Finance and Administration Committee, Santiago,
Chile | 05 November 2006

Meeting of the Presidium of the Socialist International, Santiago, Chile |
05 November 2006

COUNCIL OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, Santiago, Chile |
06-07 November 2006 - Governance, energy and climate change, new
horizons for peace

SI presence at the Latin American and Caribbean Congress for the
Independence of Puerto Rico, Panama | 18-19 November 2006

SI observer delegation to Venezuelan presidential elections |
01-05 December 2006

SI presence at Party of European Socialists Congress, Porto, Portugal |
07-08 December 2006

SI presence at Social Democratic Party, PSD, Congress, Bucharest,
Romania | 10-11 December 2006

SI participation at Senghor memorial event, Jean Jaures Foundation,
Paris | 14 December 2006

Extraordinary meeting of the Socialist International, Beirut, Lebanon | 16 December 2006

SI participation at Dominican Revolutionary Party event, Santo Domingo | 08 January 2007

SI presence at inauguration of President Daniel Ortega, Nicaragua | 10 January 2007

Meeting of the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment, New Delhi, India | 15-16 January 2007

Meeting of the SI Ethics Committee, Paris, France | 05 February 2007

Meeting of the SI Asia-Pacific Committee, Kathmandu, Nepal | 10-11 February 2007

SI presence at Party of Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI, event to elect new leader, Mexico | 04 March 2007

SI presence at Socialist Party, PS, Chile, Council meeting | 09-10 March 2007

SI presence at Swedish Social Democratic Party, SAP, Extra Congress, Stockholm | 17-18 March 2007

SI presence at Finnish parliamentary elections | 18 March 2007

SI leaders in Belgrade and Pristina for discussions on Kosovo Status | 20-21 March 2007

SI presence at Party of European Socialists Leaders' Conference, Berlin, Germany | 24 March 2007

Meeting of the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment, London | 15-16 April 2007

SI presence at Democrats of the Left, DS, Congress, Florence, Italy |
19-20 April 2007

SI presence at Norwegian Labour Party, DNA, Congress, Oslo |
20-21 April 2007

SI presence at first round French presidential elections |
22 April 2007

SI presence at Democratic Left Party, PID, Congress, Ecuador |
27-28 April 2007

SI attendance at memorial service for former Prime Minister, Ivica Racan,
Zagreb, Croatia | 02 May 2007

Meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee, Naples, Italy |
04-05 May 2007

SI presence at second round French presidential elections |
06 May 2007

SI presence at Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, LSDP, Congress,
Vilnius | 19 May 2007

SI presence at Israeli Labor Party leadership elections | 27-29 May 2007

Meeting of the SI Africa Committee, Accra, Ghana | 15-16 June 2007

SI presence at the British Labour Party Leadership Conference,
Manchester | 24 June 2007

SI Ethics Committee Mission to Slovakia | 24-26 June 2007

Meeting of the SI Ethics Committee, Geneva | 28 June 2007

Meeting of the SI Finance and Administration Committee, Geneva |
28 June 2007

Meeting of the Presidium of the Socialist International, Geneva |
28 June 2007

COUNCIL OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, Geneva | 29-30 June
2007 - Working for global peace and stability in a world of conflicts
without borders

SI visit to Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh | 02-08 July 2007

SI presence at Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party event |
11-13 July 2007

SI presence at international Symposium, Paros, Greece | 20-21 July 2007

SI presence at Social Democratic Party, SDP, Congress, Podgorica,
Montenegro | 28 July 2007

SI participation in the International Union of Socialist Youth, IUSY,
Centenary event, Berlin, Germany | 25 August 2007

Visit by the Co-Chairs of the SI Middle East Committee to the region |
05-07 August 2007

SI participation at PT Seminar on "Left and Progressive Governments in
Latin America", Brazil | 30 August 2007

SI presence at PT Congress, Brazil | 31 August – 01 September 2007

SI participation at the Socialist International Women, SIW, Centenary
event, Stuttgart, Germany | 08 September 2007

Meeting of the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the
Environment, Kiev, Ukraine | 09-10 September 2007

SI presence at Greek legislative elections | 16 September 2007

Meeting of the SI Committee on Migrations, Manila, Philippines |
21-22 September 2007

SI presence at the British Labour Party Conference, Bournemouth |
24-26 September 2007

SI participation at Anna Lindh Seminar, 100 years of Bommersvik | 19-20
October 2007

SI participation at Socialist Youth of Spain, JSE, meeting, Salamanca,
Spain | 21 October 2007

SI participation at Movement for Socialism, MAS, Congress, Caracas,
Venezuela | 23 October 2007

SI presence at Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD, Congress,
Hamburg | 26-27 October 2007

Meeting of the SI Middle East Committee, Tel-Aviv and Ramallah |
29-30 October 2007

Meeting of the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the
Environment, Buenos Aires, Argentina | 09 November 2007

SI participation at event of Centenary of the International Socialist
Congress, Stuttgart, Germany | 11 November 2007

Meeting of the SI Commission for a Sustainable World Society, London |
19 November 2007

SI participation in seminar on "The Left in Latin America", Uruguay |
22 November 2007

SI observer delegation at Venezuela constitutional referendum |
30 November – 03 December 2007

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean,
Asunción, Paraguay | 12-13 December 2007

SI participation at African National Conference, ANC, National
Conference, Polokwane, South Africa | 16-20 December 2007

SI presence at inauguration of President Alvaro Colom, Guatemala |
14 January 2008

SI participation at the International Union of Socialist Youth, IUSY,
Congress, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic | 25 January 2008

Meetings in China with CPC officials | 29-31 January 2008

SI participation in National Democratic Institute meeting on political
parties, Brussels | 11 February 2008

SI presence at Panhellenic Socialist Movement, Pasok, Greece, Congress
| 12-13 March 2008

SI presence at Socialist Party, PS, Congress, Chile | 14 March 2008

SI presence at the Council of the Party for Democracy, PPD, Chile |
15 March 2008

Visit of the SI Commission for a Sustainable World Society to Antarctica
and Patagonia | 21-23 March 2008

Meeting of the SI Commission for a Sustainable World Society, Santiago,
Chile | 24 March 2008

SI presence at Progressive Governance Conference, London |
04-05 April 2008

SI observer delegation to Constituent Assembly elections in Nepal |
07-12 April 2008

“José Francisco Peña Gómez – Ten Years On” SI Commemorative
Conference, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic | 17-18 April 2008

SI observer mission to Paraguayan elections | 19-21 April 2008

Meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee, Beirut, Lebanon |
25-26 April 2008

SI observer delegation to Dominican Republic elections | 15-17 May 2008
Meeting of the SI Asia-Pacific Committee, Islamabad, Pakistan |
30 May 2008

Meeting of the SI Migrations Committee, Los Angeles | 02-03 June 2008

Meeting of the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the
Environment, London | 06 June 2008

Meeting of the SI Africa Committee, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire |
14-15 June 2008

Meeting of the SI Ethics Committee, Athens, Greece | 28 June 2008

Meeting of the SI Finance and Administration Committee, Athens,
Greece | 29 June 2008

Meeting of the Council of the Socialist International | 29 June 2008

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